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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Department of Art History and Archaeology

MEMORIALIZING DESTRUCTION:
PRESERVATION OF BOMBED CHURCHES
AS SECOND WORLD WAR MEMORIALS IN BRITAIN AND GERMANY

by

Julia Breen Reardon

A thesis presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

May 2011

Saint Louis, Missouri

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Dean of Arts & Sciences for financial support of my research for the summer of 2010. I am grateful to my committee members, Dr. Angela Miller and Dr. Eric Mumford, for their thoughtful insight and useful suggestions in the process of creating this final product. Above all, I thank my advisor, Dr. John Klein, for his relentless editing, his wide knowledge of applicable sources, and his general guidance over the last two years. I would also like to thank the Department of Art History & Archaeology for its support and for providing such a friendly and encouraging intellectual atmosphere, without which I would not have enjoyed this project nearly as much as I did. Finally, I want to thank my friends and family who supported me throughout this process.

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INTRODUCTION

The great wars of history do not generally find their way into contemporary cultural experience. The evidence of war is often noticeably absent from daily, visible culture. Subsumed into the landscape, even a war as comparatively recent as the American Civil War is deceptively peaceful in its remnants. These landscapes of association rarely have any clear physical remnants of such momentous events. The grassy fields that were once contested battle sites are now principally places for our imagination to inhabit. But the imagination struggles to create mental images of the bloody scenes that are perhaps more vividly conveyed by photography. In the effort to show a visible recognition of such imaginings, Western culture often shapes and defines its memories for posterity through new creation, in memorial monuments. These creations have a history almost as long as war itself, from the classical triumphal arch of the Romans to the stark monumentality of Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Through new creation, societies have the unique opportunity to reframe experiences of the war for posterity, giving a lasting form that organizes and clarifies memory, creating a tangible representation of historical, personal, and political experience.

Even with such added complexities, memorials have the primary function of preserving memory. As monuments they seek to make the impermanent and transitory both permanent and stable, and, as Pierre Nora states, to bring "the presence of the past within the present."¹ These sites streamline memory, history, events and emotions into a powerful and unified vision imparted to posterity for decades to come. In a fairly typical example from the First World War, a memorial was erected in London in 1920 in front of

¹ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 20.

the Royal Exchange Building (Fig. 1). The sculpture features two bronze statues of soldiers on either side of a stone pier, symmetrical and static, combining text and figure. Such a monument conveys the general narrative of the individual soldier, but it ultimately projects a distinct image of nationalism; the country is represented as stable and almost triumphant. As James Young notes, such memorials are often “not as anchored in history so much as in the ideals that generated them in the first place.”²

The memorials of World War II raise questions about these traditional requirements of memorial, in both appearance and purpose. This paper will focus in particular on the ruined churches of England and Germany, two countries heavily involved in the war, on both the offensive and defensive fronts. These countries are not alone in their preservation of World War II ruins. France, the United States, and Japan have their own versions of such memorials. Germany and England are, however, unique in their choices to preserve churches in particular, and in the large number of these memorials. If our study were expanded to include other types of sites, we might examine the case of the United States. Although U.S. territory received relatively little physical damage, there is the unique example of the U.S.S. Arizona, a battleship sunk during the attack on Pearl Harbor, which features a memorial reachable by bridge. Japan has the A-Bomb Dome, a monument to world peace, in Hiroshima. Several instances also exist of whole cities preserved in destruction. Oradour-sur-Glane, France was left as a ghost town after Nazi soldiers killed all the villagers and burned the town; its ruin now stands as a memorial to the lives lost there. These are, however, relatively isolated examples. Thus,

² James Edward Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 284.

the choice to focus on England and Germany arises from the fact that these two countries are the only two that feature a comparatively large array of preserved church ruins.

Such ruin monuments depart from the typical memorial in almost every way. Insofar as they are ruins, indicative of the processes of decay and what art historian Alois Riegl terms “age value,” they are hardly adequate conveyors of permanence. Indeed, ruins have historically symbolized the exact opposite of the permanence evoked by memorial monuments: the transience of human life and the works of humankind. And as buildings, without the aid of figural representation or named victims, they fail to evoke the local or immediate stories of those who sacrificed in the war.

One might assume that the remnants of a bombed church would be a less-than-ideal site for preservation after the Second World War. Such ruins would seem to stand for the sort of permanent injury that is usually forcefully healed as nations attempt to build anew, whether to acknowledge triumph in victory, or to move on from the humiliation of defeat. At face value, one might see ruins as neither triumphant nor forward-looking. However, a study of the unique cases of British and German bombed and damaged churches preserved in the wake of WWII suggest that these sites function in a much more complicated and often subtle way. The particular focus on churches as ruin monuments in both countries suggests the added implications of religion for these sites, creating comparisons with Christian sacrifice, as well as drawing on a history of churches as sites for romantic and otherworldly experience. As ruins, they layer past symbolic meanings, such as the transience of life, as well as the contemporary events that created them and framed them in a rhetorical and physical context. In the context of such traditional symbolic meanings, these postwar ruins serve to actively erase the memories

of the wartime experience for both the British and Germans in their own, distinctive ways.

In England, such structures have often been aestheticized, distanced in fact, from the war that created them, the war that they supposedly commemorate. In Germany, these sites tend to present an ambiguity about the war, telling no consistent story. They function almost as an empty void that may be appropriated and misappropriated, understood or misunderstood, and thus tell any possible version of the events of the war. For these reasons, such ruins present almost an anti-memorial, one that certainly involves war memories, but sometimes only through an attempt to erase or rewrite these memories.

Many churches were bombed during the war, despite calls on both sides to spare the cultural treasures of Europe. Some of these destroyed sanctuaries were renovated completely to their original state, famous examples being St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and the Cologne Cathedral. Still others were demolished, whether because repairs were economically out of reach, because the structures had little historical or cultural significance, or because the functional need for sacred structures diminished greatly with reduced parish populations after the war. In the end, it was the populace that most ardently called for the preservation of a select group of ruins in both Germany and England, evident in the public protests over plans to demolish the old ruins to make way for new structures in the case of both Coventry Cathedral and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. However, as we shall see, this presentation of ruins differed greatly between the two countries and was informative in shaping the continued public perception of the ruins as markers of the war.

In Britain, ruins were mediated through images, often officially sanctioned, and through rhetoric of a select group of academics. The cast of characters who played a role in this shaping of ruin identity included architecture critics, art historians, painters, and photographers. A central figure was Kenneth Clark, who singlehandedly selected artists employed by the government during the war. His personal viewpoint that “bomb damage is in itself Picturesque” pervades the images of ruins created by these artists as well as the repeated calls by Clark and others to maintain such ruins after the war was over.³

Through this process, the ruins took on a distinct distance from the war itself through a deliberately aestheticized portrayal. The paintings of war damage by war artists are often grouped under the label Neo-Romanticist, because of their preference for landscape over figural imagery, the emotional and imaginative over the factual and pragmatic. This aestheticization detaches such ruins from the politics and violence of their creation, allowing them to become retreats of a sort from the intensity of the wartime experience.

The voices of ruin preservation in Britain emerge from within a broader modernist discourse, namely the ideas of the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). One influential movement, termed “New Monumentality,” came from the ideas of such prominent CIAM members as Siegfried Giedion and Le Corbusier. New Monumentality was an especially resonant concept for those who sought to preserve ruined churches within a new, modern city fabric, by espousing the belief that modernism must still appeal to the general population.⁴ This particular influence is also exemplified in Le Corbusier's (never manifested) design for the war-damaged city of St. Dié, which

³ Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 212.

⁴ Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT, 2000), 150.

proposed incorporating ruins into a distinctly modernist architectural layout. However, much of this impulse to preserve ruins comes from a more conservative (politically and aesthetically) brand of English modernism, in contrast to the leftist modernism of newer members of CIAM, who sought to move away from the perceived despotism in such referential traditionalism.

In contrast to England, but also in the name of wartime propaganda, Germany refused to show the extensive devastation of the urban environment and thus the perception of its ruins is expressed through a wider spectrum of responses. Diversely described as problematically Romanticist, a continuation of prewar nationalistic aesthetics; as proof of victimhood during the war; or as a universal warning against war, such rhetoric reflects the deeply conflicted state of Germany in the aftermath of its defeat. The division of East and West Germany in 1949 adds to the complications surrounding the memorialization efforts. Germany, as a country unified only in 1870, rather late in comparison to other European nations, shows a very quick and intense emergence of nationalism. The division of the country witnessed a period of reassessment of this strong nationalistic spirit, especially in the West. The Allied occupation of West Germany leads to a much stronger correlation with the British postwar state, especially in the face of memorialization efforts. East Germany, in contrast, focused largely on antifascist memorials in a traditional and monumental style. In this context, this paper will largely focus on the area that is eventually designated as West Germany. In this vein, the paper is also principally restricted to the war damage as addressed in the fifteen years immediately following the war. As many have noted, and as is also visible in the parallel evolution in discourse on the intentions of postwar ruin memorials, the period after the

war witnesses a change from the initial impulse to deny and ignore the facts of the war to the trend in the 1980s and 1990s that continues today, which introduces the popular concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. This term describes the effort within Germany, largely among a generation that never experienced the war directly, to reconcile and directly address the history of the war, especially the tragedies perpetrated by the Nazis.

For both Germany and England, such churches function as sites of the larger tropes of war rather than the immediate local impact of war on the human population. Although these memorials take a unique and largely unprecedented form, they simultaneously continue earlier war memorial practices that seek to blunt the devastation and support the nation as a stable and continuous historical entity.

In this thesis, I seek to address how these church ruin memorials fit into the larger category of memorialization, especially within the context of the Second World War. This process involves an examination of a variety of media contemporary to both the bombing of the sites and the prolonged process of preservation. Relevant sources include painting, photography, literature, and film. Within in these genres, I have attempted to narrow my focus to citizens of England and Germany, especially those who experience the war personally. This paper will address the particular cases of the Coventry Cathedral in England and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. I compare and contrast the two, utilizing their similar levels of recognition and their similar processes of rebuilding (through competition and later additions). Examples of other churches, including Christ Church in London, St. Alban's in Cologne, and the Frauenkirche in Dresden will also offer important contributions. These sites have been selected for the relatively large amount of literature about their ruination and preservation process. In

making connections between the multiple references to such church ruins in popular culture, I will show the various tactics used to forget, ignore, or redefine aspects of the war through a reshaping of collective memory

CHAPTER ONE
THE HISTORY OF THE RUIN

History has largely been the story of creation rather than destruction.¹ Historians tend to emphasize continuation rather than rupture, life rather than death. But as long as there has been creation, there has been destruction, and, as long as creation has been symbolic, so too has destruction. Political psychologist Steven Kull even posits that destruction is caused by human attraction to these symbolic qualities of death and rebirth.² Whether human or naturally caused, ruin is the physical manifestation of destruction, and it is implicated with the meaning of destruction for the human world. Thus to describe the history of ruin is also to describe a history of destruction.

When ruins of man-made structures are fresh, the facts of destruction are still relevant to the meaning of these ruins, and the cause of destruction is vivid in local consciousness. However, time blurs the act of destruction, universalizing the events once the threat of a specific enemy is neutralized. Viewed centuries or even decades after they were created, ruins are perceived as essentially similar, despite being created in a wide variety of ways that change their local meaning considerably. The many associations that ruins have are often elided, so they lose their individual history of destruction. For example, the ruins of the monasteries and churches razed by Henry VIII in the fifteenth century have been divorced from the act of their creation, and now function solely as

¹ Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 3.

² Steven Kull, "Nuclear Arms and the Desire for World Destruction," *Political Psychology* 4, No. 3 (Sep. 1983): 563.

generic ruination. As in the case of Henry VIII's ruins, many famous ruins originated from human destruction, but with time it is nature that receives the credit for the damage.

The focus of this project, bombed churches preserved as ruins after the Second World War, demands a thorough analysis of the semiotic history of the ruin. Certainly the history of the ruin informs many of the decisions made about these churches, although these new ruins may also deviate in symbolic content from their predecessors. It is important to note that viewing the ruins of fresh destruction inevitably presents a different set of factors than the viewing of decades-old ruins. Time is imperative to the symbolic meaning of the ruin. Even if it is not time (through progression of natural decay) that created the ruin, time is necessary to provide *gravitas*, a weight and seriousness that prompts reflection on causes and effects that may produce an elegiac response in the viewer. Recent ruins, such as those from the war, are in this way distanced from the present. At the moment of destruction, ruins merely mark that particular moment of destruction, a given battle, a given war, rather than the downfall of an entire civilization or the mortality of humanity that the distance of time gives them.

In the twelfth century, Archbishop Hildebert wrote on the warning that Rome's ruins offered against earthly vanity. However, despite Rome's paganism, he notes "Still neither time's decay, nor sword, nor fire, Shall cause its beauty wholly to expire."³ With the distance of centuries, ruins took on not only a specifically Christian symbolism, as proof of the powerlessness of mankind in the face of God, but an undeniable aesthetic pleasure as well. In addition, Hildebert's sentence negates the main warning message by

³ Translation from John Sharpe William and J. A. Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle of the Kings of England: From the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1904), 368.

suggesting Rome's vain beauty cannot be wholly overcome by nature, God, or man. Nonetheless, Christianity managed to work a natural attraction to ruins into ideological symbolism. In 1462, Pope Pius II enacted a papal bull forbidding the dismantling of Roman ruins. Christopher Woodward suggests the bull was motivated by viewing ruins as models of "exemplary frailty," a humble vulnerability, worthy of human imitation, in recognition of a relative mortality when compared to divine resurrection.⁴

Christianity's close link to ruins mirrors its close link to the destruction that caused them. Henry VIII's campaign against English monasteries caused an important wave of English ruins that would linger in the country's national memory for centuries to come. Benjamin Disraeli's 1845 novel, *Sybil, or the Two Nations*, features these ruins quite prominently as a location of both personal and national memory. In the novel, the character Charles Egremont revisits a place of his youth: the ruins of Marney Abbey. Disraeli describes "A silence so profound among these solemn ruins offered the perfection of solitude," as Egremont "stood among the ruins that, as the farmer had well observed, had seen many changes: changes of creeds, of dynasties, of laws, of manners."⁵ Margaret Aston has written convincingly on how these ruins were left as a symbolic break with the past, and how this visible rupture caused increasing curiosity about the past, as well as provoking nostalgia in a variety of forms.⁶

Ruin has an interesting history as both weighty symbol and aesthetic amusement. The eighteenth century produced a vogue for ruins in the decorative arts and in

⁴ Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 89.

⁵ Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil; or, The Two Nations* (London: H. Colburn, 1845), 69.

⁶ Margaret Aston, "English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973): 232.

landscape. At the peak of popularity, ruin motifs were featured on household utensils, porcelain, and other domestic decorations.⁷ The intersection of *memento mori* and luxury object might seem incongruous to today's audience, but this might be explained through the secondary and tertiary associations of the ruin. The ruin's meaning expanded to denote more than the mortality of human life, taking on a certain nationalistic tone. Particularly relevant is the landscape of association, evoked by writers such as Walter Scott. In his essay "The Provincial Antiquities of Scotland," Scott writes about Roslin Glen, not especially notable for its natural beauty but because of its "associations, dear to the antiquarian and historian."⁸ He describes "mouldering ruins of the castle, with its triple tier of vaults, [which] were long the abode of the proud family of the St. Clairs."⁹ Scott goes on to convincingly resuscitate the figures of this family, "which carried our imagination back to the Scottish barons and warriors of antiquity..."¹⁰ Scott and other Gothic writers thus utilized ruins in landscape to evince the history of the land, particularly the semi-mythologized history of the nation. Scott's contribution to Gothic revival and ruin appreciation is even visible in his own memorial, in Edinburgh; where its dark, soot-covered silhouette seems jarringly aged against the pristine neoclassical backdrop of Princes Street (Fig. 2).

⁷ Paul Zucker, *Fascination of Decay; Ruins: Relic, Symbol, Ornament* (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 19681), 61.

⁸ Walter Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.: In Three Volumes ; Biographical Memoirs, Essays, Letters ; with Notes. Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1847), 697.

⁹ Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 697.

¹⁰ Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 697.

The picturesque garden was considered an essentially English style, in opposition to the more rigid symmetry of the French traditional garden.¹¹ Ruins were a main element of the picturesque sensibility. New conceptions of gardens also blossomed in Germany in the eighteenth century. C.C.L. Hirschfeld's *Theory of Garden Art* (1785) encourages an adoption of the picturesque style, but also states, "Already we have something more than just the beginnings of a German sensibility in our gardens, although in order to distinguish these from the old style we call them English."¹² He suggests the nationalistic styling of gardens, of great importance to many European countries. Hirschfeld claims the picturesque style to be equally German. Linda Parshall notes the political implications of Hirschfeld's "natural" style: "He endorsed the English insistence that their style was democratic, the opposite of despotism of the formal garden... The new approach to landscape was thus political in a philosophically detached way..."¹³ From the beginning of ruin appreciation in both England and Germany these styles, merely decorative to the modern viewer, were inherently connected to conceptions of national ideals.

The Romantic movement, also expressed in painting and architecture, continued to promote a specifically Christian theme. A.W.N. Pugin advocated a return to Gothic sensibility with the nostalgia for a simpler, more Christian time. Pugin implies that these features are integrally connected to the English national character, exemplified in his use of the Gothic style for the rebuilt Houses of Parliament in 1840. Pugin goes as far as to state: "were it not for the remains of the edifices produced during the Middle Ages, the

¹¹ Michel Makarius, *Ruins* (Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2004), 120.

¹² C.C.L. Hirschfeld, in Linda B. Parshall, ed. *Theory of Garden Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 98.

¹³ Parshall, *Theory of Garden Art*, 50.

architectural monuments of this country would be contemptible in the extreme.”¹⁴ Pugin attributes this high point of artistic production to the “fostering care of the Catholic church.”¹⁵ German painting also continued this course of religious emphasis. Caspar David Friedrich’s paintings utilized ruin as a spiritual metaphor for the transience of mortal life. About his 1808 *Ruin of a Monastery* (Fig. 3) he writes:

In the calm, quiet twilight, the interval between day and night, there still stand the huge remains of past centuries, rising up above the sickly present in pointed arches and vaults as witnesses of a former grand past. The hut of an old man, which has also already gone rotten, leans on the inside of the walls, which are still strong enough to support and protect more recent times.¹⁶

The juxtaposition of the stable, grand ruin and the shoddy, new hut show the comparative moral degradation of more recent times. For both England and Germany, the experience of the sublime made its way into the discourse of both landscape and ruin. The sublime is vast and overwhelming, creating an ecstatic thrill in the viewer, through a scene equally terrifying and beautiful.¹⁷ In his work *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self*, Scott Lukas notes that the sublime or picturesque attribute does not exist within an object itself, but in the “spectator’s subjective or imaginative way of

¹⁴ Augustus Welby Pugin, “On the Wretched State of Architecture at the Present Day,” in Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger, *Art in Theory, 1815-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 162.

¹⁵ Pugin, “On the Wretched State of Architecture at the Present Day,” 162.

¹⁶ Caspar David Friedrich, Äußerung über ein eigenes Werk, überliefert von C.G. Carus 1841, in Jörg Traeger, ed. *Caspar David Friedrich* (New York: Rizzoli, 1976), 63.

¹⁷ Carl Gustav Carus, *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting: Written in the Years 1815-1824; with a Letter from Goethe by Way of Introduction* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2002), 15.

perceiving it.”¹⁸ In this way, ruins hold no implicit meaning, but are shaped by the values and insights of the culture that contains them.

Within the discourse of ruin semiotics, we see a wide range of possible interpretation, including the seemingly disparate sentiments of sublimity and nostalgia. Describing the markers of the sublime, cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove lists: “Holy fear, gloom and majesty, seriousness, infinity, exaltation, vastness and grandeur.”¹⁹ It is difficult to reconcile such feelings with the nostalgia that such ruins also evoke. However, it is possible to find some similarities. The experience of nostalgia and the experience of the sublime both engage with the unobtainable: nostalgia, as the desire for the unobtainable and the sublime as the recognition of the unobtainable. Both terms, characteristic of Romanticism, are then definable by that which they are not: the local, the present, the mundane, the immediate, and the tangible. Interestingly, it is precisely these antitheses that are usually the forces responsible for the destruction leading to original ruination. Thus both nostalgia and sublimity wholly reject the violent processes of war and the specificity of human narrative.

A central part of the picturesque garden, the folly, or the artificially created ruin, is also in some ways contrary to the whole idea of ruin itself. Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1716-1783), a landscape designer, incorporated the folly ruin into numerous designs for the estates of the English aristocracy. In contrast to the symmetrical garden *à la française*, these gardens instead strove for varied and unexpected views to evoke a

¹⁸ Scott A. Lukas, *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 120.

¹⁹ Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 226.

variety of emotions in the viewer. The English landscape garden also incorporated some deeper ideological tenets, noted in John Locke's description of the garden's purpose:

One is to walk around it, committing mental impressions to memory as one proceeds. The English philosopher holds that understanding nature means turning its discovery into *history*... From this point of view, ruins, totally absent from French gardens, will acquire a pride of place in a new image of nature.²⁰

In a contradiction to the “folly” label, which suggests thoughtlessness, these artificial ruins functioned in a more serious way to process and create history, with a distinctly nationalistic flavor.

Clark notes that it is “just as well that many sham ruins were made of ephemeral materials,” because this way they “did not outlast the trend.”²¹ These creations distorted time and process to create a work that was still symbolic of the truth of time and process. Writers in the eighteenth century, however, declined to see them this way. Hirshfeld suggests that since gardens themselves deviate from nature (they are merely an imitation of nature), artificial ruins are not inappropriate. According to both Locke and Hirshfeld, the authenticity of such ruins is of minimal concern in this period.

Even actual destroyed buildings, those that were not purposely created as ruins, are altered in ways to enhance the perceived aesthetic appeal of such structures. As we will continue to see, the truly “authentic” ruin does not exist, and if it does, it only exists because it is not appreciated as an aesthetic composition, and is thus not ruin but remains. Although we don't often see evidence of such obvious human intervention in purported “ruins,” it is because they, like gardens, have been normalized to satisfy viewer expectations. Because it is nature itself that takes on a symbolic meaning, we expect to

²⁰ John Locke, quoted in Makarius, *Ruins*, 125.

²¹ Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (London: J. Murray, 1962), 65.

see nature in these places, rather than human creation. Ruins continue to be altered, controlled, contained by humans. Despite their desolate image, they are proof of continued interaction, intervention by people. This intervention is visible in anything from the ruin continually filled with more “rubble” for tourists to take as souvenirs, to the carefully maintained archaeological site, to the neatly cut lawns of the churches in England and Germany.

As much as we are drawn to decay, we are also repelled by it, creating an inherent contradiction. We attempt to “control” the very thing that fascinates us - mortality and the course of time, which cannot be altered. Alois Riegl puts it well in his appeal against this type of false preservation:

Just as monuments pass away according to the workings of the natural law – and it is precisely for this reason that they provide aesthetic satisfaction – so preservation should not aim at stasis but ought to permit the monuments to submit to incessant transformation and steady decay, outside of sudden and violent destruction.²²

Riegl’s plea to allow for nature to take its course sees very little attention in actual architectural practice, but shows continual relevance in contemporary artistic theory and in some practice. For example, Anselm Kiefer’s postwar work is itself a type of ruin, often showing the physical decay of the materials that created the work. Despite the art world’s appreciation of and fascination with such work, it finds itself unable to embrace the necessary conclusion of such a meaning; when a piece of Kiefer’s work falls from the support onto the highly polished gallery floor, it is not swept away with the other detritus, but carefully reattached.

²² Alois Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments,” in Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski, eds. *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), 59.

To aestheticize ruin is to arrest it, to preserve it, whether through the canvas, physical maintenance, photography, or memory. The human impulse, so attracted to the meaning of destruction, cannot restrain itself from the necessity to immortalize it. Thus, as we look at the war memorials from the Second World War, we must keep in mind the *creative* component of such things. As much as the grandiose marble statue, engraved monument, these memorials are things of human imagination. Their presence marks our simultaneous attraction and repulsion to the inevitable fact of decay and mortality. François René de Chateaubriand attempts to explain this contradiction in *Mémoires d'outre-tombe*:

All men have an unspoken attraction for ruins. This feeling arises from the fragility of our nature, a secret conformity between destroyed monuments and the fleetingness of our own existence. . . . Man himself is no more than a collapsed building, the rubble of sin and death, his incomplete sentiments, his inadequate thinking, his broken heart – in him, all is ruin.²³

Chateaubriand reinforces the notion of the viewer who sees himself in the image of the ruin. All ruins contain something about the general mortal condition of humankind, and viewers are inevitably attracted to the horribleness of this truth.

Going back to Riegl's earlier point about how monuments ought to be allowed to decay naturally, we note his exception "outside of sudden and violent destruction."²⁴ Riegl argues for what we might call a "natural" cycle, mimicking that of human mortality:

We are as disturbed at the sight of decay in newly made artifacts (premature aging) as we are at the traces of fresh intervention into old artifacts (conspicuous

²³ François René de Chateaubriand, quoted in Makarius, *Ruins*, 115.

²⁴ Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments," 59.

restoration)... Thus modern man sees a bit of himself in a monument, and he will react to every intervention as he would to one on himself.²⁵

Despite the fact that sudden death can be natural for both monument and person (disease for humans, natural disaster for monument), Riegl interprets this event as unnatural. Truly, all factors of destruction are natural at some level, in that they all originate in nature, whether primarily or secondarily. Riegl sees “sudden and violent destruction” as aberrant, unnatural, and necessitating prevention. Riegl’s words betray a human attachment to the living condition. Just as our inclination to preserve is always visible, mirroring our desire for immortality, so too is our disgust at what Riegl terms “decay in newly made artifacts (premature aging).” It is not accidental that Riegl parenthesizes the human equivalent of this, because it is the source of our connection to these buildings, especially in terms of their perceived mortality. Riegl makes the argument to allow a natural death of architecture, something that has proven time and time again to be impossible for humans to allow. Just as we are shocked at the sight of violent destruction of buildings, like the young life taken, we are likewise likely, given the choice, to immortalize monument, in a way that we cannot immortalize ourselves.

Riegl’s notion of age-value and demand for natural decay is applicable to the situation of World War II and its aftermath. Hitler’s architect, Albert Speer, was keenly aware of the likelihood of eventual ruin of the Nazi capital of Berlin, and attempted to build structures that would be beautiful even in destruction (a characteristic nod to Rome). Voiced in his concept of *Ruinenwert*, he shows a Rieglian acceptance of the inevitability of eventual mortality, with an ironic blindness to the looming violent death. In greater irony, the postwar decision to preserve church ruins blindly refuses to accept a

²⁵ Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments,” 59.

slow death, immortalizing the violent moment in “stasis.”²⁶ Like the reckless youth cheated from a long life, a slow and far-off decline, the postwar German state shows the shock of its unexpected death, and contrary to all original intentions, attempts to preserve remnants of the death as if trying to reclaim the lost life.

This metaphor of ruin as human body is ripe for understanding much of the later discourse around the ruin, especially in the twentieth century. In fact, it is possible that the ruins of World War II have been used so often to evoke the human destruction as to lead to more recent accusations of the anthropocentrism of urban destruction.²⁷ In other words, architectural destruction is often shown in the media only in order to allude to human casualties (images which are more taboo), rather than actual architectural destruction. We might view this as a semiotic reversal of the original meanings of ruins as detached from their historically-specific context and imbued with aggrandizing motifs that are greater than the scale of human loss. Perhaps it is the images of World War II that precipitated this change, through the immediacy of the images, both aestheticized and humanized for a universal audience.

We have seen how ruins are linked to issues of time and memory, but in their nature, they inherently function already as memorials. They are complements to the incomplete, imperfect memory.²⁸ In the specific instances of ruins preserved as war memorials, it is worth considering as how ruins fit within the larger field of memorials

²⁶ Riegl, “The Modern Cult of Monuments,” 59.

²⁷ In reference to the 1992-95 Bosnian War, Martin Coward, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction* (Routledge, 2010), 13.

²⁸ Rebecca Solnit, et al.. *After the Ruins, 1906 and 2006: Rephotographing the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 20.

itself. Specific cases of ruins preserved as memorials are difficult to find before World War II. More often, ruins stood as temporary memorials, the most logical reminder of impact of war. The Tuileries, burnt in 1871 by Commune rebels, was left standing for twelve years before its remains were finally pulled down.²⁹ However, the Tuileries ruin lived on when, in 1884, the manufacturer Wessel placed an architectural fragment from the ruin on the island of Schwanenwerder as a memorial (Fig 4).³⁰ Although this column has an epitaph, the dates provided are those of the lifespan of the Tuileries, suggesting its function as a memorial to the building itself rather than to the event or any human casualty.

Another unusual instance of a ruin serving as a memorial is that of the thirteenth century Château de Coucy in France, which was originally ruined in the seventeenth century. The chateau faced further destruction in 1917 at the hands of the German army, and for this reason serves as a World War I memorial.³¹ In this case, we might infer that the ruin status and memorial status are separately established rather than connected features. World War II, however, prompts a new relationship between war and ruin. Michael Roth suggests that in the wake of the war, “culture itself came to be cast as a ruin, as a troubled witness to the violence of humanity rather than as a spectator of the sublime powers of nature.”³²

²⁹ Michael S. Roth, *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1997), 15.

³⁰ Eugeniusz Gasiorowski, “Die Ruine als Gedenkstätte und Mahnmal,” *Osterreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 33 (1979), 84.

³¹ “Château de Coucy,” Le Centre des Monuments Nationaux, <http://www.coucy.monuments-nationaux.fr/#details>.

³² Roth, *Irresistible Decay*, 20.

The memory implicit in ruins is perhaps best evoked historically in John Ruskin's assertion that architecture, especially domestic architecture rather than monuments, is the main location of memory for society.³³ As artifacts of living rather than monuments created solely for memorialization, ruins carry with them an inherent sense of loss. As we trace the history of ruins through to the twentieth century, lines are increasingly blurred, but there is a sense that we move from nostalgia to memory. That is to say, from the yearning for a time or place romanticized by distance, perhaps never even experienced, to memory, where World War II ruins evoke a real and lived past, personal recollections of a very specific, and generally not pleasurable, time and place. In *The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal writing about today's impetus for nostalgia coming from a mistrust of the future, states, "We may not love the past as excessively as many did in the nineteenth century, but our misgivings about what may come are more grave."³⁴ Although the ruins that appear in the twentieth century are clearly tied to the historically-aware Romantic movement, they are more complex than mere nostalgia for the past.

Juhani Pallasmaa has noted the necessity of memorials to counteract the "cultural amnesia" produced in the twentieth century from the increased speed of the world. Perhaps because of the ubiquitous media presence (capturing moments, replaying key parts of history) our culture seems increasingly focused on the *moment* of physical change, as if it embodies the simultaneous psychological change that accompanies destruction. Peter Eisenman's suggested proposal for Ground Zero shows the apex of the growing desire to commemorate moment rather than impact (Fig. 5). Eisenman's

³³ Stanford Anderson, "Memory in Architecture," *Daidolos* 58 (1995): 23.

³⁴ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 11.

proposal shows crumpled buildings, as if they were in the process of falling, what Marita Sturken calls “a form of compulsive reenactment... a constant reminder of the shock of that moment.”³⁵

It is worth noting that Eisenman’s proposal is only the first instinct of a grieving culture. It was ultimately rejected, and many perceive such a suggestion as inconceivable now, almost a decade after the event. Even if the twentieth century shows an initial stressing of “moment,” because the era of immediate impact warfare can identify a “moment,” this is not a lasting trend. In this sense, the photographs and paintings of destruction that circulate during the war are a type of ruin themselves.³⁶ The images of this ruin, shortly after the destruction, mark the first existence of the ruin.

As we move to the case of the war itself, the most crucial difference about the ruins from the Second World War becomes strikingly obvious. These ruins are outright evidence of civilization felling civilization, where technology replaces nature as the catalyst for destruction. As such, ruins show the threat of a power greater and swifter than God’s: the irrational deployment of technology by mankind that warps time and supersedes natural process. Roth writes,

The sentimental attachment to the ruin, the contemplative gaze that finds some sign of renewal in nature’s growth on a broken stone, has been shaken, diverted. The promise of understanding the past and of the renewal or even redemption that this understanding might provide seems empty or a lie in the wake of the extremities (and the threat of nuclear annihilation) that turned a world into (potential) ruins. The regular rhythms of nature have been replaced in our time by the enormity of our capacity for ruination.

³⁵ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 220.

³⁶ Solnit, *After the Ruins*.

Despite the intensity of Roth's language, the ruins of World War II are not mere harbingers of apocalypse. Returning to my original discussion of destruction, recall the shifted reading of ruin that arises several decades or centuries after original destruction. Time blunts the initial destructive impact of ruins, but so too does the framing of ruins, through actual physical manipulation, or photography, painting or film. Is it possible that it is precisely this horrible human "capacity for ruination" that ruins themselves can create distance from? The unique cases of the Second World War suggest that this may be the case.

In writings and image replication, we see evidence of a much more complicated dialogue with the multivalent ruins of the previous decades. For the Romantics, and indeed for others who aestheticized ruin, the appeal of ruin and decay increased with distance.³⁷ This distance could be physical, as many ruinscapes are shown from a distance, or in a pastoral setting where inhabitants aren't presented in the foreground. Distance can also be suggested in the process of viewing, as a viewer is outside of the picture plane; or through artificiality, in the simulacrum – which purifies the work. It is precisely the additional distance of association that Susan Crane identifies as the source for a different conception of the ruin for the postmodern. Crane suggests that the postmodern viewer can never experience Goethe's sublime, and therefore the ruin only evokes an "expected emotion, a secondary affect," or as Anthony Vidler calls it, "a historically closed sensation."³⁸ Thus it is not an absence of these original meanings that

³⁷ David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 168.

³⁸ Susan A. Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 23.

contemporary viewers experience, but a layering of the more recent meanings onto previous, traditional symbolism. At the crucial intersection between the pre-nuclear and post-nuclear world, the church ruins of England and Germany speak to historical continuity and rupture. The semiotic status of these ruins, ambiguous and layered, signaled the fragile state of the world itself, poised between what it had lost and what it had gained.

CHAPTER TWO POSTWAR RUIN PRESERVATION IN BRITAIN

The previous chapter's discussion of the Romantic tradition and the importance of distance from the ruin will be key for examining the case of Britain's bombed churches preserved after the war. It is evident that the framing devices for these ruins that emerged during the war were clear catalysts for postwar decisions regarding preservation. The narratives that circumscribe these buildings are clearly identifiable in the writings of academics, in war-time photography, and in the paintings of John Piper, an artist employed by the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC). This group not only encouraged the initial movement towards ruin preservation, but also was responsible for *interpreting* these ruins, through a range of media, and for a variety of stated purposes. By and large, these writings and images historicize, distance, romanticize, and aestheticize church ruins, thereby delivering them into history and compromising their status as memorials, sites for memory.

This chapter examines the justice of the designation of these sites as memorials and the path to which they were labeled as such. Although often denied primacy as memorials per se (instead considered principally as gardens, places for solitude and meditation - also notable features of such memorials) – their mediation through painting and photography functions in itself as memorial, perhaps leading to the conclusion that designation follows function. An examination of such sites in Britain speaks to the influential role of an elite group of neo-Romanticist painters and supporters, who shaped the presentation and symbolism of war ruins through their images, called for their

preservation, and even had a hand in the corresponding church additions like those at Coventry Cathedral.

Architectural historian Marc Treib notes that, for modern society, ruin functions as “*aide mémoire*, or *lieu de mémoire*... to retard the fading of memory or to grant a sense of history to new construction.”¹ I will argue that the British ruins of the Second World War do not fit into Treib’s neat categories of memory creation. These church ruins are designated to memorialize on some level, perhaps only nominally, but their presence also indicates the desire to deny memory and forget the war. Without the possibility of oblivion, there is no memory, and contrarily, without the possibility of memory, there is no oblivion. In his work on oblivion, Marc Augé claims that forgetting is necessary to memory; allowing us to “establish continuity with the older past, to eliminate the “compound” past to the advantage of a “simple” past.”² For Augé, forgetting is the only way to live in the present. For a nation that was shocked by the war devastation experienced on the home front, survival, rather than memorialization, became a primary concern.

The layers of allegory retained by the ruin overwhelm the connection to any discrete, concrete meaning (connection to event/time) for a culture. Writing on allegory, Craig Owens claims that both the ruin and the photograph are allegorical, because of their similar status as things that are fragmented and contingent.³ For Owens, allegory expresses layered meaning and is unstable on its own and, as such, is dependent on

¹ Marc Treib, “Remembering Ruins, Ruins Remembering,” in Marc Treib, ed. *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 197.

² Marc Augé, *Oblivion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 56.

³ Craig Owens and Scott Stewart Bryson, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 55-56.

external referents. Both the images of the ruins and the ruins themselves are dependent on the memory and experience of the British people. After the war, viewers without this experience are left with only the allegories, empty of original reference. Within such a situation, the meaning of these ruin memorials is blurred to such an extent that they lose their place as reminders of the war and are instead subsumed into the modern cityscape.

The dialogue around ruins after the Second World War indicates the complex and sometimes contradictory moods of the British towards the war; towards the country, and towards the postwar remnants of conflict. Such ruins, although symbolic of the high toll of human – especially civilian -- and cultural loss, also presented certain opportunities. Mass destruction led to a post-war economic boom, by forcing the country to rebuild its industrial landscape in a unified, technologically-advanced manner.⁴ Besides an opportunity to build anew, the absence itself of older buildings was lauded by some for its unique benefits. When rubble was cleared across London, archaeological finds emerged, including the discovery of numerous Roman ruins. In a more abstract sense, we see an atavistic appreciation for destruction, harkening back to the old trope that such material devastation is God's punishment on humanity.

At one point in the war, the Director-General of the Ministry of Information suggested a poetic verse to Kenneth Clark (who ran the War Artists Advisory Committee) for a postcard featuring the ruin of Coventry Cathedral:

“Thank God for war and fire
To burn the silly objects of desire
That from the ruin of a church thrown down

⁴ William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent 1945-2002* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 3.

We see God clear and high above the town,”⁵

This is a puzzling sentiment for a souvenir postcard, to be sure, and although we might read it as an appeal to the old, almost superstitious beliefs about war, the source of the suggestion makes clear the possibility that it is also an attempt to put such events in a positive light. Clark did not follow through on this suggestion, and it is not difficult to see the perceived inappropriateness of such thoughts for the intended message to British citizens. Clark’s proposal could not express a more different sentiment than that of the impromptu wooden cross, created from the charred remains of Coventry Cathedral and carved with the inscription “FATHER FORGIVE,” which now resides in the rebuilt Sanctuary of the Ruins and Resurrection in the rebuilt Cathedral (Fig. 6).⁶ Such a statement explicitly places the blame for these wartime decisions on human shoulders.

Noting the previously discussed levels of allegorical meaning in both actual ruin and ruin depiction, it becomes necessary to examine these visual reproductions. Such works influenced both the public – as propagandistic tools, and also reflect the artist’s personal goals, as aligned with the preservation cause. As head of the War Artist’s Advisory Committee, Clark personally enlisted the efforts of several artist friends whom he sought to both aid financially and protect from the dangers of the war. One such choice was the artist John Piper, whom Clark initially bonded with over a common passion for the English Romantic artist J.M.W. Turner.⁷

⁵ Anna Wickham, quoted in Louise Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral: Art and Architecture in Post-War Britain*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 10.

⁶ H. C. N. Williams, *The Pictorial Guide to Coventry Cathedral, Consecrated 25th May, 1962* (London: Pitkin Pictorials, 1962), 8.

⁷ Meryle Secrest, *Kenneth Clark: A Biography* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1985), 110.

John Piper's images of ruined sites, addressed at large audiences of Londoners, were clearly intended as propaganda in support of the war. His painting *Coventry Cathedral, November 15, 1940*, was reproduced in magazines, postcards, and was shown at the National Gallery in 1941, in one of a number of exhibitions of war art (Fig. 7).⁸ Piper created this painting shortly after the bomb hit the cathedral, and its attempt to suggest journalistic recording of the scene is exemplified in the date provided in the title. Noticeably absent from the work are any human figures. The viewer is left with an abstracted image, a clear depiction of atmosphere and color without an exact sense of the violent context from which it emerged. Stuart Sillers proposes that Piper's work expresses a continuity with the Romantic tradition, and finds particular problems with his tendency towards an abstraction that detracts from the emotional or moral meaning in the scene; a "reductive picturesque."⁹ Frances Spalding takes issue with this analysis, arguing that such detachment was never Piper's intention. Instead, Spalding claims that Piper expressed empathy with the architectural ideal rather than the human ideal. He notes that this is perhaps because human suffering would have been censored.¹⁰ Regardless of the dispute about Piper's personal intentions, I think we must agree that the end product neglects the human experience, and also represents a carefully crafted image about the status of the war. Piper's primary interest in the architectural plight reflects broader emotions about the war, almost an inability to look at the human tragedy of the war in

⁸ Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 112.

⁹ Stuart Sillers, *British Romantic Art and the Second World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 33.

¹⁰ Frances Spalding, "John Piper and Coventry, in War and Peace," *The Burlington Magazine* 145, No. 1204 (Jul., 2003): 492.

comparison with the more abstract, poignant, and sometimes beautiful aspect of the material devastation.

Although Piper is one of the few artists from the WAAC to tackle the specific subject of the ruined churches, the Romanticization of war ruins is visible in the work of several other war artists working at the time. Official war artist Paul Nash's 1940-41 work, entitled *Totes Meer*, which is German for "dead sea," depicts a wrecked German airplane in Oxfordshire, England (Fig. 8). The reference to Caspar David Friedrich's *Das Eismeer* (The Sea of Ice) is clear here (Fig. 9). Both of these paintings describe the ambiguity of destruction, both natural and manmade. Nash's plane becomes lost in the background of the landscape, the moonlight gleaming off the metal like ice. The Friedrich work, evoking the overwhelming and awesome power of nature over man, evokes the ultimate Romantic, sublime expression. This is somewhat upended by Nash, who shows a landscape dominated by the works of man, both in creation and destruction; the overpowering force of nature is replaced by the devastation that humanity may wreak upon itself. Echoing the poignant Coventry Cathedral plea "FATHER FORGIVE" – this is a world not beset by the upheaving forces of natural cycles, but destroyed from within by its inhabitants.

Images of the city of Coventry contributed to the early mythologizing of the hit on Coventry, giving it an almost legendary and highly symbolic status for the Allies.¹¹ These images show almost a "pornography of victimhood," continually emphasizing the inhumanity of the Germans in targeting English cultural monuments. This mythology ignores similar British offensive tactics, in the 1945 bombing in Dresden, for example,

¹¹ Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral*, 7.

where the wide-scale devastation and civilian suffering is since considered to have been largely unnecessary for Allied victory. Such elevation of the ruin's status also indicates the extent to which this victimhood is largely framed around the architectural casualties rather than the human (civilian) experience of the war. As the architectural historian Louise Campbell notes, "in order for the raid on Coventry to be represented as an outrage to decency, the city had to be publicly represented as an innocent victim and her citizens' response stoical."¹² The term "Coventration" was used by both Germany's propaganda and Britain's counterpropaganda to describe the intense devastation of the city.¹³ The constant comparison to Guernica, bombed by Hitler's Luftwaffe in 1937, suggests the intended self-identification of Coventry as a completely innocent party.¹⁴ The Birmingham Gazette's headline on November 16, 1940 – "Coventry – Our Guernica" reinforces this comparison.¹⁵ Both bombings received similar attention from the media, underscoring the perceived injustice of such destruction in nonmilitary zones. The similarities in the rhetoric of victimhood also portrays the Nazis as almost anti-Christian. Later references to the "martyrdom" of Coventry (city and cathedral) echo the Christian theme of perpetual references to Guernica as the "holy city" of the Basques.¹⁶

¹² Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral*, 8.

¹³ Kenneth Hewitt, "Place Annihilation: Area Bombing and the Fate of Urban Places," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73, No. 2 (Jun., 1983): 272.

¹⁴ Spalding, "John Piper and Coventry," 488.

¹⁵ Frances Spalding, *John Piper, Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 179.

¹⁶ In an April 30 cable, Ambassador Claude Bowers describes the attack, referring to "Guernica 'holy city' of the Basques."

Such religious themes carried over into Picasso's famed painting of the attack, entitled *Guernica*, described at the time as a "modern Calvary... a religious picture, painted with not the same kind, but the same degree of fervour that inspired Grünewald and the Master of the Avignon Pieta, Van Eyck and Bellini."¹⁷ A comparison of Picasso's famed *Guernica* painting and Piper's Coventry works suggests the significant differences between the respective situations. Picasso's work, though abstracted, directly addresses the gravity of civilian suffering in its flayed limbs and disjunct bodies. Again, in Piper's work, we note the relative acceptability of structural destruction as a stand-in for more taboo images of human suffering. This architectural empathy thus replaces the emotional responses of the population, suppressed to show both innocence and a positive, united front towards the war.

The art and photography of bombed churches seem to go beyond the traditional avoidance of human death to the extent that these images largely avoid figural representation. Campbell explains that the focus on "architecture and abstract concepts rather than citizen morale" was a tactic to avoid the more controversial facets of the war. Piper and other artists focused the strong, conflicting emotions of the British populace into anger and sorrow over the loss of communal, cultural heritage – a distinctly nationalistic issue that reinforced the continuity of English history. Placing the war in directly historical tones – by referencing both the past when such monuments were built, the distinct history of the ruin landscape in Britain, and the future, by the suggestion of loss for posterity – distanced the British population from the current concerns and day-to-day struggles of the war. In this sense, the photographs and paintings are presented very much as premature memorials – evoking the public's premature mourning for what the

¹⁷ Herbert Read, "Picasso's *Guernica*," *London Bulletin* 6 (Oct, 1938): 6.

war lost in abstract and heroic terms. In this role, the ruin must be aestheticized to overcome the grave implications of the accompanying corporeal violence.

The work of another wartime artist, photographer Cecil Beaton, provides further support for the propagandistic intention of WWII ruin images in comparison with earlier precedents. Beaton's work with his friend James Pope-Hennessy in the 1941 book, *History under Fire*, presents this juxtaposition in the contrasted images of the Great Fire of London and the ruins of the *Blitzkrieg*. Despite foregrounding the extremely different circumstances of the two disasters, Pope-Hennessy consistently parallels the contemporary destruction with the seventeenth-century fire, simultaneously evoking historical continuity and association through the incorporation of accounts of the Great Fire's damage in describing the current state of damage to London buildings.¹⁸ He presents the contrast between Christopher Wren's St. Paul's Cathedral, photographed on December 30, 1940 (Fig. 10), and the burning of St. Paul's in the Great Fire of London in an engraving of September 1666 from Robert Wilkinson's "Londina Illustrata," (Fig. 11).¹⁹

Although intended to juxtapose the different degrees of damage to the cathedrals, this comparison is notable in other respects as well. Photographed from a high viewing point, the 1940 image is wholly devoid of human inhabitants, all the while evoking an almost journalistic attempt at documenting destruction. St. Paul's stands triumphant and almost untouched above the plumes of smoke that engulf the nearby buildings and the desolate street below. The 1666 engraving, presumably attempting a similar effort to

¹⁸ James Pope-Hennessy and Cecil Beaton, *History Under Fire; 52 Photographs of Air Raid Damage to London Buildings, 1940-41* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1941), 29.

¹⁹ Pope-Hennessy, *History Under Fire*, 11-13.

document the events of destruction, shows a wide expanse of shadowy cityscape with smoke billowing from numerous points in the image. However, the urgency and immediacy of the ongoing destruction is emphasized through the focus on the human figures fleeing in the left foreground. Though small against the impressive monumentality of the city, these figures are highlighted against the intense light pouring through the raised gate of one building that seems remarkably untouched by the fire. Men, women, children, and even a small dog carry their belongings with difficulty away from the scene of the fire, out towards the viewer. In this work, the human component of the scene brings to the viewer a highly emotional and immediate understanding of the destruction as it affected the people of the city. In contrast, the charred buildings of the photograph are devoid of human response or reaction, creating an icy, almost scientific detachment between the viewer (placed above the scene and thus implicitly out of immediate danger) and the circumstances of destruction.

The image, which appeared in the newspaper *Planet News*, is characteristic of the majority of Beaton's photographs that appear in the book. Devoid of humanity, these images project a new aloofness from the emotional realities of the war. Describing the project, Beaton writes, "Besides the vandalistic damage, we must show the tenacity and courage of the people..."²⁰ Perhaps Beaton believed this tenacity and courage was best shown through a general absence of people, replaced by the subject of architectural damage. Beaton's account of taking these pictures is detached with the associated human toll. He writes, "James P.H. and I ran about the glowing smouldering mounds of rubble... We could not deny a certain ghoulish excitement stimulated us, and our anger and sorrow

²⁰ Cecil Beaton, *The Years Between; Diaries 1939-44* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 52.

were mixed with a strange thrill at seeing such a lively destruction – for this desolation is full of vitality. The heavy walls crumble and fall in the most romantic Piranesi forms.”²¹ The neo-Romanticist appreciation of the aesthetic appeal of the situation, as well as the Sublime combination of “sorrow” and “thrill,” are evident in his words.

Because of the proximity of the damage, the Second World War provided a unique opportunity for wartime photography, and for the popularization of wartime photography through a more advanced popular press. Thus the photograph, already having earned an important place in earlier wars for its documentary abilities, now found a role as a more immediate and emotional connection between the populace and the war itself. Roland Barthes describes this new evaluation of the photograph as a stand-in for memorialization. He writes:

Earlier societies managed so that memory, the substitute for life, was eternal and that at least the thing which spoke Death should itself be immortal: this was the Monument. But by making the (moral) Photograph into the general and somehow natural witness of “what has been,” modern society has renounced the Monument.²²

Barthes suggests that for modern culture, the photograph is the monument, the location of memory. With the photograph, the need for the permanent and physical monument is gone. This claim is especially relevant for the situation in Britain, where the photographs of such ruins led the way to their eventual popularity. We might see the effort to preserve the moment of the photograph (through the preservation of the ruin) as contradictory to Barthes’ claim. But in some ways the photographs, the news images, and the painted

²¹ Beaton, *The Years Between*, 59.

²² Michael S. Roth, Claire L. Lyons, and Charles Merewether, *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1997), 48.

versions of these ruined churches have the primacy of communication and meaning for contemporary society. The Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Virginia provides another example of the potency of the photographic image in memory, realizing in sculpture the famed photograph of three soldiers hoisting the US flag on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima (Fig. 12). In this way, these images have an authority that the actual sites lack, especially in the case of the ruins, precisely because they are so easily relegated to the continuum of ruin “follies” in history.

Harry Watt’s and Humphrey Jennings’ 1940 short film *London Can Take It!* was an immensely popular piece of British war propaganda. Jennings, with his Surrealist background, depicts the “other-worldliness” and devastation of the Blitz, but deliberately avoids any representation of death or human casualties.²³ In this film, we see an interpretation of destruction parallel to that of the preserved church memorials, elucidating reasons for the deliberate distancing from the horrific details of the Blitz. The narration of the film describes how London “*raises her head, shakes the debris from her hair and takes stock of the damage done... she faces the day with calmness and confidence.*”²⁴ The “calmness” described in the film in the face of devastation is reflected in the later transformation of destroyed churches into places of “meditation.” One film still features St. Paul’s Cathedral shining through a gap in the smoke, which acts as a hazy frame for the church, symbolically representing London (Fig. 13).

²³ Jo Fox, *Film Propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany: World War II Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 113, 115.

²⁴ *London Can Take It!* Directed by Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings, 1940, London, England, UK, General Post Office Film Unit, Ministry of Information.

Despite the atrocities that artist John Piper inevitably witnessed when he photographed the still-fresh ruins of German bombs, his art and writing are resolutely unemotional. He concentrates on the pure visuals of the buildings at hand rather than any darker implications of the present situations. His essay for *Architectural Review* in 1947 calls for ruin preservation on a purely visual basis. Piper's references evade the current situation in England, using the term "decay," evocative of a time-based process, and commanding a history of abstract and generic ruin theory.²⁵ Yet, aware as he was of the contemporary state of ruin in England, he cannot have been referencing much *besides* war destruction. His description of three possible avenues for ruined buildings sharpens the idea that this essay was intended to address upcoming decisions about the ubiquitous ruins in the country. Of these three options - to allow the continual process of decay by leaving the building untouched; to restore the building, which he terms the "Scrape" way; or to arrest the decay and conserve the building, "termed the "Anti-scrape" way - it is clear that he advocates the last, yet he is eerily silent about the circumstances surrounding the destruction necessitating such plans.

Rose Macaulay notes at the end of her 1953 book, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, "Ruin pleasure must be at one remove, softened by art, by Piranesi, Salvator Rosa, Poussin, Claude, Monsu Desidero, Pannini, Guardi, Robert, James Pryde, John Piper, the ruin-poets, or centuries of time."²⁶ Her inclusion of Piper in this illustrious list of ruin-artists, provides a suggestions as to how we might view the war work of the artist. Piper's work anticipates the later preservation of church ruins as memorials. These memorials,

²⁵ John Piper, "Pleasing Decay," *Architectural Review* 102 (Sept. 1947): 85-94.

²⁶ Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1953), 454.

contrary to other war memorial efforts – which attempt to instill the immediacy of a temporally or physically distant war, with all of its pain and sacrifice - are instead intercessory monuments, blocking the directness of the bombings that were so foregrounded in the daily life of the English people.

Contrary to Germany, a distinguished and elite group advocated the majority of the English church preservations. Although undoubtedly supported by the public, this group was responsible for the first rousing cry for conservation. The public faces of this group included: landscape architect Lady Allen of Hurtwood, Lord David Burghley, Sir Kenneth Clark, Anglican Bishop F.A. Cockin, poet T.S. Eliot, architect H.S. Goodhart-Rendel, biologist Julian Huxley, economist John Maynard Keynes, and botanist E.J. Salisbury. In August of 1944 this group collectively wrote a letter to *The Times*, calling for a general plan of church ruin preservation.²⁷

Despite the inclusion of an Anglican bishop on the list of supporters, the movement was largely from outside of the Church of England, which had control and final say about these properties. There is some evidence of hostility on both sides of these groups, and even suspicion of the motivations behind the Church's role in preserving cultural integrity. Clough Williams-Ellis wrote in October 1945 that it was “widely asserted that the destruction of the City Churches by an alien agency was so welcome in certain influential quarters as a convenient solution to an awkward problem...” going on to state more assertively, “the City Churches allowed removable yet irreplaceable things and fittings to remain in mortal danger.”²⁸ Thus, the function of these buildings as

²⁷ “Marginalia,” *Architectural Review* 95 (Oct. 1944): xlv.

²⁸ Clough Williams-Ellis, “The Fragments that Remained,” *Architectural Review* (Oct. 1945): 116.

religious institutional space was distanced from their wartime status, as cultural relics belonging primarily to the people of London.

On the other side, the church expressed much (understandable) hesitancy about retaining churches in their ruined state Bishop Gorton voiced his concern thus: “You cannot have a ruin to represent the Church in Your City,” warning against the “false sentiment affectation” such a practice could encourage.²⁹ Despite the Anglican Church’s ambiguity about preserving ruined churches, it is important to note the religious and spiritual rhetoric surrounding the church destruction. Christopher Woodward recently wrote about Piper’s painting of Christ Church, in which “the sacredness of the church is somehow intensified in its destruction.”³⁰ A similar sentiment was expressed soon after Coventry Cathedral’s destruction, by onlookers who compared it to watching Christ’s crucifixion.³¹ In the context of a rhetoric that reclaims direct spiritual connection, unmediated by the Anglican practice and even created through Coventry’s explicit destruction, the Church’s initially negative reaction to ruin preservation is understandable. It is interesting to note that the Church would go on to successfully co-opt some of this dialogue, and Coventry’s eventual rebuilding is portrayed as the “glorious resurrection,” redeeming the ruin’s initial “death.”³²

In the literature of the time, these ruins are often referred to as “gardens.” The incorporation of greenery into the final plan both evokes the previous status of ruin’s

²⁹ Quoted in Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral*, 43.

³⁰ Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 216.

³¹ *Cathedral Reborn: Coventry, 1962* (Leamington Spa: English Counties Periodicals, 1963): 3.

³² *Cathedral Reborn*, 4-5.

place *within* landscape gardens and deliberately naturalizes the space. One might refer to the postwar novelist Rose Macaulay's assertion that: "New ruins for a time are stark and bare, vegetationless and creatureless; blackened and torn, they smell of fire and mortality."³³ Through the deliberate nurturing of softening and aestheticizing flora, the grim reality of these ruins is smoothed away. This greenery also signifies incipient rebirth; from destruction and chaos comes new life. Ivy-covered ruins of past decades are often referred to as nature taking back what is hers from civilization, a recapitulation of the resources originally taken from her. But the deliberate interference of humans in this case artificially speeds up this process, as if to erase the grim marks of civilization-on-civilization warfare. The ruin is naturalized, and in this sense, the war is distanced, assumed into long-past history. In 1944, Christopher Hussey furthers the sense of the memorials as an invocation of an English Romantic past: "Modern architects aim at continuing our unique national tradition of landscape design in the planning of the cities of the future. To preserve intact hallowed relics in settings of beauty is part of that tradition, and to consecrate them as memorials would be to materialize the conceptions of poets since Gray and Wordsworth."³⁴ This emphasis on Britain's natural landscape is also proposed as the antithesis of enemy Fascism, defined by the rigid and mechanistic control of both landscape and body.³⁵ Even the fascination with the emergence of various rare

³³ Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 453.

³⁴ Christopher Hussey, "Marginalia," *Architectural Review* 96 (Nov. 1944): li.

³⁵ Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology, and the British Landscape, 1927-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 206.

weeds that cropped up in the midst of the destruction suggests the embrace of the British people of a naturally picturesque and hardy national landscape.³⁶

Architecture critics J.M. Richards and Nikolaus Pevsner also wrote extensively in support of this aestheticizing approach to ruins, largely in *The Architectural Review*, which both men edited at different times. Significantly, Richards and Pevsner were also linked personally to other advocates of ruin preservation. It was in fact the help of friends like Kenneth Clark that allowed Pevsner to reach security in England, away after his flight from his German homeland.³⁷ Indeed, the support of Richards and Pevsner for picturesque Neo-Romanticism seems to other critics to have been a surprising turnaround. In response, another architecture critic, Reyner Banham bemoaned this tendency to romanticize ruins: “Two of the leading oracles of Modern Architecture appeared to have thrown principle to the wind and espoused the most debased English habits of compromise and sentimentality.”³⁸ In this statement, Banham reiterates the division of modernist critics between a modernism that espoused traditional functions and forms of architecture and those who rejected all reference to an undemocratic past. In this way, the preservation of ruins reflects only a certain vein of modernist postwar rebuilding, as their incorporation would have been seen as antithetical to the left-leaning goals of the younger generation of CIAM, among others. Such an effort to clear and rebuild in the

³⁶ “In the Ruins: London Makes Use of the Scars Left by the Nazi Blitz of 1940,” *Life Magazine*, (Sept. 27, 1943): 41.

³⁷ Nikolaus Pevsner and Mathew Aitchison, *Visual Planning and the Picturesque* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2010), 2.

³⁸ Reyner Banham, “Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945-1965,” in Nikolaus Pevsner and John Summerson. *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, (London: Allen Lane, 1968), 265.

modernist style in urban centers was already a popular sentiment before the destruction provided by the blitzkrieg.

Beyond establishing a tie to the past, such a retrospective reference weakens the immediacy of the war. Perhaps there was recognition that over time these ruins would no longer hold the painful, specific memories that they did in the early years after the war. Some of the arguments of such picturesque memorials look ahead to the eventual tempering of the emotional pull of these monuments, effectively neutralizing the site and the war. The prescient words of Rose Macaulay echo this sentiment:

“Caen, Rouen, Coventry, the City churches, the German and Belgian cathedrals, brooded in stark gauntness redeemed only a little by pride: one reflects that with just such pangs of anger and loss people in other centuries looked on those ruins newly made which to-day have mellowed into ruin *plus belle que la beauté*.”³⁹

J.M. Richards notes a similar awareness of posterity’s recognition of such sites: “To posterity they will as effectually represent the dissolution of our pre-war civilisation as Fountains Abbey does the dissolution of the monasteries.”⁴⁰ Although a memorial is often created for posterity, it is often intended to retain the triumph of a moment, rather than collapse into a long line of aesthetically similar works, as it is suggested that these monuments do.

One of Christopher Wren’s many churches ruined in the war was Christ Church Greyfriars, an Anglican church located on Newgate in the financial district of London, directly across from St Paul’s Cathedral (Fig. 14). The church was damaged in the Blitz, but not as substantially as it appears now because a large portion was cleared away for

³⁹ Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 454

⁴⁰ J.M. Richards and John Summerson, *The Bombed Buildings of Britain* (London: Architectural Press, 1947), 2.

road widening after the war.⁴¹ The church had already been a victim of the 1666 Great Fire of London, precipitating the need for Wren's efforts. It was hit in 1940 and, once again, John Piper was on the scene to capture its image (Fig. 15). Christopher Woodward describes *Christ Church Newgate, December 1940* as "liquid with heat."⁴² There is a clear sense of moment in this Piper painting; yet again the desolation it represents disconnects it from the personal experience of Londoners. Nicola Lambourne points to the decision to create a garden ruin from this church, replete with trees to replace the missing aisle pillars, as an example of the "Romantic vision of the aesthetic possibilities of a ruin, inviting parallels with other popular ruins such as Tintern Abbey or Fountains," (Fig. 16).⁴³ It is notable that these trees are very much reminiscent of the prominent pillars of Piper's work.

Over the decades the ruins of Christ Church Greyfriars have been slowly cut away to provide space for various functional uses and in the 1980s Seeley Paget & Partners added a functional building to the base of the tower, which is retained as a "living memorial to the past."⁴⁴ The gradual reclamation and alteration of this monument by the city shows the extent to which this structure has been largely forgotten by its London community. Rather than sacred as memorial, it is valuable as something that is aesthetically pleasing, but only to the extent to which it does not impede practical use of the space. The alterations and garden additions erase the sense of any visible violence in

⁴¹ Trevor Rowley, *The English Landscape in the Twentieth Century* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 103.

⁴² Woodward, *In Ruins*, 216.

⁴³ Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe*, 182.

⁴⁴ John Wittich, *Churches Cathedrals and Chapels* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1988), 45.

the current state of the building; traces of the act of destruction are lost in the smoothly cut, symmetrical walls.

After much debate about the proposed plans for both the new building and the old ruins, Coventry Cathedral was rebuilt around the ruined remains in 1962 in a distinctly modern style (Fig. 17). Through an international competition, the architect Basil Spence was chosen to design the site. Spence's design, which he admitted later to be much less successful than he hoped, is notable for its continuation of the conversation between the new building and the ruin, an interaction largely forced by prevailing opinions of the general public. Kitty Hauser describes the new cathedral: "It is as if Spence's building is a bunker from which we may view the ruins of the past from a position of safety that is both physical and spiritual... classic prerequisites for an experience of the sublime."⁴⁵ Like the viewer who enjoys a thrill from viewing a Friedrich painting from the confines of a safe interior rather than the depicted wilderness, the new Cathedral provides a similar distance with which to view the ruins within the Romantic sensibility. Hauser's assessment explains the limited purpose of the new building. Besides its functional purpose, the new cathedral also frames the ruins, providing a viewer a necessary distance to aestheticize the structure, continuing in the tradition of old news photos of the ruins and Piper's paintings of Coventry. Many of the designs that weren't chosen actively incorporated the old ruins with the new building, in contrast to the final design's deliberate separation.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hauser, *Shadow Sites*, 252.

⁴⁶ Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral*, 47.

According to Christopher Woodward, Spence “failed to translate the vivacity of paint into concrete and glass; Piper’s painting – even if just a postcard reproduction in your pocket – is more alive and warm than the cold, grey, inhabited blocks of concrete.”⁴⁷ Spence had much to live up to in finding a suitable answer to the intense symbolism of the widely circulated images of the Coventry ruins. Spence clearly understood the power of this artistic precedent and went so far as to incorporate stained glass designed by John Piper in the new Cathedral. Another artist of the Neo-Romanticist movement whose work was incorporated in Spence’s church was Graham Sutherland. Sutherland had close ties to Kenneth Clark and also made several paintings of war ruins. His 1941 *The City: A Fallen Lift Shaft* features destruction near St. Paul’s Cathedral (Fig. 18). Sutherland wrote that the subject “suggested a wounded tiger in a painting by Delacroix.”⁴⁸ Critics viewed his war paintings as deliberately anthropomorphizing as well, suggesting human limbs and human damage through their less-offensive architectural counterparts.⁴⁹ Their Romanticist spirit was embraced by critics as well, as one wrote that Sutherland’s paintings were “intensely romantic and full of a spiritual agony which make them the finest tragic expression I know... of the suffering of a society at war.”⁵⁰ Sutherland’s spiritual, romantic portrayal of the war eventually earned him a commission for the

⁴⁷ Woodward, *In Ruins*, 218.

⁴⁸ Imperial War Museum website <http://www.iwmcollections.org.uk>, “1941 – The City: A Fallen Lift Shaft.”

⁴⁹ Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2007), 42.

⁵⁰ A.C. Stewer, “Round the Art Exhibitions,” *The Listener* (May, 1940): 980, cited in Martin Hammer, *Graham Sutherland: Landscapes, War Scenes, Portraits 1924-1950* (London: Scala, 2005), 20.

tapestries that adorn the Spence-designed Coventry Cathedral. Piper's and Sutherland's involvement in both popularizing ruins and in the process of adorning the "resurrected" Cathedral suggest the importance of their artistic vision in the contemporary perception of the war landscape.

The symbolic status of Coventry's ruin seems responsible for the impetus both to build anew and to retain components of the original ruin. Francis Eeles, secretary of the Central Council for the Care of Churches wrote to Provost Howard in 1940 against the idea of leaving the cathedral in ruin, because "it would be an outward expression of defeatism at which all her enemies would rejoice."⁵¹ This reaction, like many of the early dissenting opinions from within the Church comes early in the war. With time, however, postwar resentful feelings are trumped by the desire to move on from the experiences, exemplified in the eventual exchange of "relics" with the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche in Berlin.

Juhani Pallasmaa's words have striking applicability here when he writes that "architectural structures have the capacity of transforming, speeding up, slowing down, and halting time."⁵² The paintings and photographs surrounding these ruins are part of this manipulation of time, as an effort to both move on from the present to the future prematurely, and to accomplish this by looking to the traditions of the past. Andrew Shanken has questioned the idea that memorials should be permanent at all, considering

⁵¹ Quoted in Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral*, 23.

⁵² Juhani Pallasmaa, "Space, Place, Memory, and Imagination: The Temporal Dimension of Existential Space," in Marc Treib, *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, 18.

the general saturation of memorial and commemoration in present-day culture.⁵³ The examples provided by Coventry and Christ Church suggest conflicted identification as memorials, as well as their weaknesses within that identification, contradicted by the rhetoric of both their origination point as ruins and the current rhetoric regarding the meaning (or lack of meaning) of such structures as contemporary locales of memory.

To acknowledge the destruction of the war through material, permanent means is a necessary release from trying to hold onto the structural purity of a building that was lost; it is a cathartic stage in the process of moving on from the events of the war. Along the lines of Riegl's call to preserve visible evidence of the lived experience of a structure, Lebbeus Woods argues against the erasure of such violent "scars" in the urban fabric, which must be accepted in order to renew culture and place.⁵⁴ He writes:

The new spaces of habitation constructed on the existential remnants of war do not celebrate the destruction of an established order, nor do they symbolize or commemorate it. Rather they accept with a certain pride what has been suffered and lost, but also what has been gained.⁵⁵

At first glance we might think Woods would approve of this honesty to material experience found in the preserved ruins of Britain, but I think that these works continue the sort of avoidance created with reconstruction and erasure. Through deliberate reference to a previous historical type and the deliberate aestheticization of these landscapes, the experiences of the war are effectively anaesthetized for both contemporary culture and posterity.

⁵³ Andrew Shanken, "The Memory Industry and its Discontent: The Death and Life of a Keyword," in Marc Treib, *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, 238.

⁵⁴ Lebbeus Woods, *War and Architecture = Rat i Arhitektura* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), 31.

⁵⁵ Lebbeus Woods, *War and Architecture*, 14.

CHAPTER 3 CHURCH RUIN PRESERVATION IN GERMANY

This chapter examines how German postwar reconstruction embodies memory, memory of both the Second World War and of prewar Germany. The first two chapters provided an important background and comparison for this subject with discussion of Germany's ruin history and England's contemporary decision process. A central consideration for this topic is the extent to which churches in Germany, preserved as ruins, break with the traditional practices of ruin meaning and manifestation, or continue them, and whether this indicates a parallel acceptance or denial of history. As previously discussed, England clearly shows examples of both continuation, through aestheticism, and rupture, through rebuilding. While Germany shows similar readings of aestheticism and rupture, however, they are more problematic when they emerge from the much more contentious atmosphere that arose after the war in Germany. As such, many perceived traditional architectural continuity as a continuation of the wrongheaded worldview that led them into the war, aestheticization as glossing over Nazi atrocities, and the German's self-described victimization as a deliberate misreading of the facts of the war.

Unlike the situation in England, postwar Germany interpreted the physical landscape as psychologically and socially significant, as seen in the extensive literature of the time. Approaches to these ruins by their restorers variously signify attempts to forget or erase the war, as well as efforts to directly address the war and its atrocities. German reconstruction efforts display a great range of rhetoric and a range of solutions to the problems of ruined cityscape, reflecting the co-existence of ambivalence and disagreement within the populace about the legacy of World War II itself. Rudy Koshar

aply notes that the German city emerged from the Second World War as a “negotiated reconstruction, a compromise between various interpretations of the past and present.”¹

Pierre Nora’s seminal work on memory, “Les Lieux de Mémoire,” is a useful framework here as well. “Memory,” is a malleable construction, or as Nora states, “in permanent evolution,” inherently linked to place and space, and “a bond tying us to the eternal present.”² In Germany, collective memory of the war has become disrupted, disjunct and variegated. Thus places of memory function as places of multiple memories, or even absence of memory. Drawing on Koshar’s idea of a “negotiated reconstruction,” I want to propose that reconstruction of ruins reflects a reconstructed narrative of the war, whether a narrative of victimhood, an acknowledgement of the universal pain of war, or an unwillingness to remember at all.

German writer Heinrich Böll reflects on his personal experiences during the war in his numerous memoirs. In the essay “The Place Was Incidental,” describes an experience when he stopped at a town on the way to Cologne:

Twenty-two years ago I knew almost every building in the little town... Now I couldn’t recognize a single building, and the events that I remember found no place and no home; memory had become independent, the place no longer mattered, it had become irrelevant, arbitrary, interchangeable.³

In Boll’s writings, memory is almost homeless, precluding the possibility of memorial in monument at all, especially within the structures that existed prior to the war. As the English ruins, full of allegory and empty of specific meaning, are subsumed into

¹ Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 167.

² Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 8.

³ Heinrich Böll, *Missing Persons and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977), 36

meaningless artifacts and docile fragments, the German ruins are likewise too malleable, too open to interpretation and empty of specific reference to become definite signifiers of any aspect of the Second World War. In England, another country deeply affected by the war, this malleability of meaning does not, however, signify the absence of meaning, but rather that there is no definite and concrete meaning attached to the memorial efforts. It is precisely the wide variety of strong opinions that they specify that neutralized them over time, melded them into the lowest common denominator of a disparate collective memory in Germany.

Andreas Huyssen proposes a similar sentiment in his essay, “Nostalgia for Ruins.” Suggesting that commodity culture has made authenticity (analogous to Benjamin’s aura) obsolescent in ruins, Huyssen finds that the incorporation of ruins in contemporary culture only serves to create nostalgia for the old, genuine ruin (and presumably its earlier primacy to a semiotic meaning as well).⁴ Huyssen also suggests that modern ruins incorporate a new character of fragmentation, which is absent from the traditional ruin.

A key question in studying these ruin monuments in Germany is whether the preservation of ruins signals a departure from the past, or an embracing of it. We must examine the various continuities and contradictory departures of such a practice. The variety of ruin preservation and debate suggests Germans struggled with the answer. In some respects, ruins in Germany are honest to the truth of the war; they can be read as transparent, in that they are an admission of defeat. One might read such ruin monuments as reflecting a desire that the war would never happen again, showing direct engagement with the atrocities perpetrated by the Germans. In other ways, these ruins (like those in

⁴ Andreas Huyssen, “Nostalgia for Ruins,” *Grey Room* 23 (2006): 11.

England) are merely a continuation of the same nationalist tradition that landed the Germans in a war with much of Europe and North America.

Some similarities to the English process of ruin preservation suggest that the Germans also are influenced by the aesthetics of the extant ruins. In preserving these bomb-damaged churches, both England and Germany preserved ruins that had existed in situ for several years. For the English, this preservation came at the end of the war, as much of the damage was done fairly early in the 1940s; for the Germans this came years after the war – as they were subjected to the heaviest damage at the war’s end. In England, the fate of many ruins was not decided until the end of the war, whereas Germany lacked the funds to make immediate decisions about rebuilding. However, much of the devastated cityscape was demolished very soon after the end of the war, and then cleared by Trümmerfrauen (rubble women). These large-scale efforts to clean up the city left only a select group of ruins, especially those with significant cultural symbolism, like churches. It seems likely that the act of living with these isolated ruins, especially as they became more rare because of extensive postwar reconstruction, created an environment where they became more acceptable as people gained greater distance from the acts that created them.

Besides the deliberate disconnect of some Germans from the state of ruin surrounding them, there also existed a deeper, corporeal connection to the debris. Writing in 1948, Hans Vogel notes, “above all aesthetics and histories, the ruin has attained an existential importance for us today... We still stand, like the remains of our cities, confused, crippled, disrupted.”⁵ In this way, the German response to their ruins mirrors

⁵ Hans Vogel, “über alles Ästhetische und Historische hinaus die Ruine heute existenzielle Bedeutung für uns gewonnen hat... Noch stehen wir, wie die Reste unserer Städte, verwirrt,

the variety of responses to their current postwar condition. It is precisely this sense of disrupted body and memory that people share with the ruins to which their culture gives meaning.

As in England, the anthropomorphic reading of churches is strongly linked to Christianity, specifically the narrative of Christ's crucifixion and the more general theme of Christian martyrdom. In "Das ist unser Manifest," Wolfgang Borchert wrote after the war, "We want to love this Germany as the Christians loved their Christ: for its sorrow."⁶ Parallel to this theme was the elevation of German soldiers who died in the war as Christian martyrs.⁷ Architect Emil Stefann explains the maintenance of ruined elements in the reconstruction of a church in Cologne as an effort to not "conceal the wounds that we have suffered."⁸ Much of this desire to display damage visibly echoes similar sentiments in Coventry – to hold up the damage to the city as proof of victimhood. However, such statements are more problematic for Germany, as they were the aggressors in the war so, in a sense, this damage was brought upon themselves. The preservation of church ruins is inherently problematic in this regard, as Gilad Margalit

angeschlagen, zerissen." Quoted in Eugeniusz Gasiorowski, "Die Ruine als Gedenkstätte und Mahnmahl," *Osterreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 33 (1979): 81.

⁶ "Wir wollen dieses Deutschland lieben wie die Christen ihren Christus: Um sein Leid." Susanne Veas-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt: Literature of Wartime Bombing in Germany* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2003), p. 84.

⁷ Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 61.

⁸ Gavriel David Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 45.

notes: “Prominently displaying wartime damage is tantamount to claiming that the Allied bombs were aimed at the Christian community.”⁹

The Inability to Mourn, a seminal work by psychologists Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich based on their interviews of war survivors, reaffirms this sense of victimhood on the part of the Germans:

In Germany the impression remains that remembrance of the German war dead is kept alive less out of reverence than as a means of apportioning blame. Thus we observe that people have livelier feelings about the avoidable destruction of German cities through Allied carelessness or destructiveness than they do about similar actions of their own...¹⁰

The Mitscherliches argue that such victimization is tantamount to refusing to remember the war as it was because such mentality is dishonest to the undeniable facts, especially the atrocities perpetrated by the Germans. Thus the preserved ruins that simultaneously call to mind Christian sacrifice and the corporeal damage of the war are only honest to a certain version of the story. This story refutes the role of Germans as perpetrators and thus these memorials “remember” the war in a way that ultimately denies the history of the war itself. In this way, England and Germany are not so different in their attitudes towards ruin monuments. Both countries embraced ruins as proof of their victimhood, although this came much later and perhaps less appropriately in Germany’s case. Both countries framed ruins in such a way that ignored various, immediate aspects of the war, embracing wider tropes of aestheticism, Christianity, and human nature to avoid the more unpleasant details that both sides faced in opposed positions of perpetration and victimization.

⁹ Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering and Memory*, 69.

¹⁰ Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (New York: Grove Press : distributed by Random House, 1975), 31.

The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, also called the Gedächtniskirche, serves as a multilayered memorial site (Fig. 19). Originally built as a memorial to Kaiser Wilhelm I by his son Kaiser Wilhelm II in the late nineteenth century, much of its decorative program commemorates various events in Germany's history. One relief by Hermann Hosaeus features the legendary Swiss soldier Arnold von Winkelried, heroicized during a fourteenth century battle between the Austrians and Swiss.¹¹ At a much more general level, one must remember that all churches have a basic function to commemorate the death of Christ, and thus all serve as memorials from inception. The church's status as a memorial is therefore hardly a twentieth century creation, but merely an added layer of meaning to a palimpsest of memory.

Like Coventry in England, the Gedächtniskirche became a media sensation in Germany after its bombing in 1945, appearing in so many photographs as to become a landmark for postwar Berlin.¹² At the convergence of six streets, it was a highly visible element of the city skyline.¹³ In another parallel to Coventry, it was largely the public that called for the maintenance of its distinctive ruins. In this case, the call for preservation was buoyed by the support of the Protestant Church.¹⁴ Egon Eiermann won the competition for the rebuilding of the site. Eiermann's plan called for four buildings to act

¹¹ Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 113.

¹² Simon Ward, "Sites of Memory, Sites of the Imagination: Monumental and Urban Space," in Christian Emden, Catherine Keen, and David R. Midgley, *Imagining the City. Volume 2, The Politics of Urban Space* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), 252.

¹³ Gisela Brude-Firna, "The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church: Politics Through Images," Modris Eksteins, and Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel, *Nineteenth-Century Germany: A Symposium* (Tubingen: G. Narr, 1983). 126.

¹⁴ Simon Ward, "Sites of Memory, Sites of the Imagination," 252.

as the new church. A steel frame supports concrete honeycombs filled in with colored glass to mimic the stained glass of a gothic cathedral. This scheme soon drew fire for his plan to demolish the ruin remnants. A local newspaper declared: “rarely has the press been so unanimous, rarely has the voice of the public risen as now, to save this symbol (*Wahrzeichen*) of Berlin.”¹⁵ A survey in the newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* found that more than 90% of respondents wanted to see the ruins maintained, including the presiding Berlin mayor, Otto Suhr.¹⁶ Another German newspaper reports having received over 47,000 letters debating the plans to get rid of the ruins.¹⁷ Eiermann himself, despite altering his design to accommodate public opinion, said of the ruins, “People will be able to tolerate this stump for only a few more years.”¹⁸ In the end, the public won and Eiermann built around the site of the old ruins. The design places the new, hexagonal bell tower in the place of the old church’s nave, next to the ruined tower. This new tower rises up to create both a visual parallel to the old ruin despite a marked difference in style. Despite Eiermann’s warning, the site continues to attract tourists and serves as an important landmark for Berlin.

Significantly, before the war the building had a very different connection to the landscape and populace, sometimes so tenuous as nearly to be broken. In the 1920s, a call arose to tear the building down in order to accommodate increasing traffic flow in the

¹⁵ Stephanie Warnke, “The Cold War of City Landmarks: Architecture and the Media in Berlin, 1950-70,” in Christian Emden, Catherine Keen, and David R. Midgley, *Imagining the City. Volume 2, The Politics of Urban Space* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006), 268.

¹⁶ Warnke, “The Cold War of City Landmarks,” 268.

¹⁷ Brude-Firnau, “The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church,” 126.

¹⁸ Marc Treib, *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 198.

area.¹⁹ The church was seen as anachronistic and out of touch with the modern urban life that surrounded it.²⁰ After the war and the damage to the Gedächtniskirche, the strong public reaction against the modern style of Eiermann brings to mind Huyssen's argument that modern ruins provoke nostalgia for precisely this type of anachronism. Alternatively, Andreas Schönle, writing about the Soviet Union, describes this same concept as a sort of "nostalgia for nostalgia."²¹ After the war this building, now even more anachronistic in its ruined state, could be, in a kind of double negative, refashioned as a symbol of escape from the perils of modern life.

The Gedächtniskirche, which reopened in 1987, features a plaque declaring the ruin to be "A place of warning against war and destruction and a call for reconciliation in Jesus Christ."²² If in the war both sides berated the others as un-Christian or inhuman, then the reconciliation efforts after the war similarly revolved around Christianity, and shared suffering, suggested in the symbolic exchange of ruined artifacts between Coventry Cathedral and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. Restoration plans were co-ordinated so that the new churches were eventually consecrated on the same day in 1962 and exchanged "relics" from the ruins, crosses made of nails, which are still displayed in each church.

¹⁹ Ward, "Sites of Memory, Sites of the Imagination," 251.

²⁰ Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces*, 113.

²¹ Andreas Schönle, "Ruins and History: Observations on Russian Approaches to Destruction and Decay," *Slavic Review* 65, No. 4 (Winter, 2006): 668.

²² "Ein Ort der Mahnung gegen Krieg and Zerstörung und ein Ruf zur Versöhnung in Jesus Christus." Ward, "Sites of Memory, Sites of the Imagination," 252.

Despite the Memorial Church's call for world peace, not dissimilar to many English memorial ruin inscriptions, writer Walter Kempowski asserts that "an instrumentalized Romanticism is perceived, the warning against warfare is not."²³ A significant and powerful disagreement surrounds the question of the status of the postwar ruin in Germany. Michael Roth counters Kempowski's claim that the building is Romanticized through ruin, stating that after the war "the sentimental attachment to the ruin, the contemplative gaze that finds some sign of renewal in nature's growth on broken stone, has been shaken, diverted."²⁴ Roth asserts that the war spells the end of nature's dominion over time, and cyclical renewal is superseded by more powerful and cataclysmic forces of manmade destruction.

A significant question that must be raised regarding these ruins is whether they show a break with the German nationalist past, or function as a continuation of these earlier traditions. English aestheticism and Romanticism provides a strong link to the past, and therefore it is necessary to also search their German historical counterparts for evidence of a similar link. Andreas Schönle notes that "Ruins can function as signatures of historical breaks, but such breaks paradoxically rest on the continuous presence of the past within the present."²⁵ Schönle points to the Gedächtniskirche as a particularly apt example of such a disjunction. Marita Sturken notes that aesthetics "almost always are

²³ "Ein instrumentalisierte Romantik begriffen [wird], die Mahnung gegen den Krieg nicht." Walter Kempowski, 'Ruine – Metapher und Wirklichkeit', in *Stadt der Architektur: Architektur der Stadt. Berlin 1900-2000*, edited by Thorsten Scheer (Berlin 2000): 233.

²⁴ Michael S. Roth, Claire L. Lyons, and Charles Merewether, *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1997), 20.

²⁵ Andreas Schönle, "Ruins and History," 652.

understood as antithetical to processes of grief.”²⁶ As Sturken notes, ruin memorials embraced for their aesthetic qualities in Germany disrupt the need to address and progress from the events of the war, which are oft-stated goals of memorialization.

Certainly, it is possible to point to a continuation of Nazi ideals and aesthetics in ruin preservation, as noted earlier in the paper. Hitler and his architect, Albert Speer, developed a *Theorie von Ruinenwert* that encouraged materials and designs that would be as attractive ruined as in they were intact.²⁷ Albert Speer’s imaginings of the great monuments of the Third Reich show them in a future, destroyed state, which suggest the hold that Romanticism still had on the German national self-consciousness. In particular, such policies reflect back earlier, to a concept of the Germans as the inheritors of the Roman Empire.²⁸ This parallel between Nazi *Ruinenwert* and the postwar ruins has a deeper level of connection to Rome as well, one clearly unforeseen by Speer, and exemplified in Archbishop Hildebert’s assertion that the Roman ruins serve as a warning against earthly vanity. In fact, in late 1945 the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* called the Peterskirche (a church dating to 1180 in Munich) “a ruin fallen victim to the boastful arrogance of the Nazis.”²⁹ Despite this sentiment, or indeed perhaps because of it, Peterskirche was rebuilt as an exact reconstruction, or as historian Gavriel Rosenfeld states, “a physical manifestation of the inability to mourn.”³⁰ So perhaps it was with a

²⁶ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 234.

²⁷ Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2001), 29.

²⁸ Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn*, 6.

²⁹ Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*, 33

³⁰ Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*, 32.

similar goal that German architect Reinhard Riemerschmid produced Rome as the model for preserving ruins in postwar Munich, stating, “we will suddenly begin to love what today still makes us shudder.”³¹

Riemerschmid imagines a very distinctive collective memory connected to such ruins, assuming a kind of unity in the disgust at the sight of the ruins, arising from disgust at the war itself. Further, Riemerschmid envisions that with time, ruins will stop functioning as touchstones of primary war memory and become worthy of love. It is difficult to imagine that any war memorial that is viewed with the first-hand knowledge of the injury, failure, and guilt of the war would be endearing. Instead, we must imagine that love comes only with distance, across time certainly, and with a certain aestheticism that allowed such structures to be appreciated by the English. Riemerschmid assumes that this distance does not already exist, that ruins are therefore palliative towards the pain of the German people, rather than affirmations of the absence of repressed pain and guilt.

In the writings of the British poet Stephen Spender, who toured Germany in 1946, Thomas Lekan finds an example of the deliberate subversion of the famed German Romanticism, notable in Spender’s description of Cologne as a “putrescent corpse city.”³² Lekan points to Spender’s disgust as one example of the broader European and American reaction against German Romanticism, which was widely understood as the source of the illogical thinking behind the Third Reich and the war it initiated.³³ Perhaps such rhetoric accounts for the discrepancies in opinion of these ruins as aesthetic

³¹ Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory*, 31

³² Thomas M. Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 252.

³³ Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature*, 253.

structures. In many ways, there are no “appropriate” means for Germany to commemorate the victims of the war. Aestheticism was too reminiscent of past German nationalism, yet more direct references to the sacrifice of citizens can be seen as a cast of Germany not recognizing its own wrongdoing.

For many Germans, the ultimate assault on German culture was to be found in the Dresden bombing in January of 1945. Besides the high civilian death toll, the bombing devastated a city considered to be a cultural jewel of the nation and an unnecessary victim of the war (as a non-military target). One oft-recognized example is the Frauenkirche, or Church of Our Lady, completed by Georg Bähr in 1743. After being hit in the attack, the famed dome of the Frauenkirche collapsed and remained in ruins until very recently (Fig. 20).³⁴ These long-lasting visual reminders of the war damage underscore the self-perceived victimization of Dresdeners. As Eleni Bastéa notes, “the ruins were left abandoned and the heap of blackened stones were designated a memorial to Allied atrocity.”³⁵ The decision to incorporate in the reconstructed church many of the blackened stones of the old building, in a process termed a “critical restoration,” maintained this element of remembered pain (Fig. 21).³⁶ Again, this goes back to the desire to display Christ-like war “wounds,” and thereby offer proof of the people’s undeserved suffering. The link between ruins and a sort of nationalistic martyrdom is a theme apparent from the very earliest part of the war. The 1940 German film

³⁴ Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 81.

³⁵ Eleni Bastéa, *Memory and Architecture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 55.

³⁶ Bastéa, *Memory and Architecture*, 56.

Wunschkonzert features a soldier playing Bach as the French destroy the church around him.³⁷ Although it might be perceived as honest to the effects of war and to the power of memory to retain war's physical damage, we must question what memories of the war this building attempts to preserve. According to Susanne Vees-Gulani, the 1995 "rebuilding of the Frauenkirche in Dresden and the exaggerated sentimentalization and mythical elevation of the process show that many Germans are still eager to define themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as the true victims of the war."³⁸ Thus, in both its destruction and later rebuilding, the church has been upheld as a symbol of national martyrdom. However, it is important to note here that the "victimized" reaction to ruthless British bombing tactics is not completely unjustified, given the prior mentioned targeting of cultural monuments to effectively break German morale.

Cologne was severely hit during the war, but shows only one instance of ruin preservation, in the Catholic church of St. Alban's. The church dates from the seventeenth century and features a copy of Käthe Kollwitz's famed sculpture *Mourning Parents* (originally created as a memorial for the First World War).³⁹ In 1955 the church ruins were united with those of the nearby Gürzenich (a festival house completed in 1447 and destroyed in 1943) as a space for events, to the design of architects Rudolf Schwarz and Karl Band. Schwarz wrote of his plan that "the ground would be covered with stones

³⁷ Wilfried Wilms and William Rasch, *German Postwar Films: Life and Love in the Ruins* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13.

³⁸ Vees-Gulani, *Trauma and Guilt*, 66.

³⁹ Koshar, *Transient Pasts*, 220.

and not prettied up with forgiving grass; and this space would be dedicated to the statues of a kneeling couple by Käthe Kollwitz expressing meaningless suffering.”⁴⁰

Directly adjacent to the St. Albans ruins is the 2001 Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, which formally engages with the ruins through a similar palette of stone colors as well as through openings to the church ruins on every floor (Fig. 22).⁴¹ This art museum shows a formal attempt to both respond to and take advantage of the ruin site as an aesthetic or artistic element. In this way the design suggests that the ruins are worthy of display, in much the same way as the art collection within the museum itself. Such a display works against Schwarz’s desire for the space not to be “prettied up,” in that the ruins still communicate primarily as aesthetic structures, rather than through the memorial function suggested within.

Still other German churches seem to have faded from cultural memory, in a process similar to what has happened to Christ Church in England. The Wachau Church in Leipzig was preserved as a memorial to local civilians killed in the war, yet very little information is available about the site. Instead, the bombed-out shell has been overgrown with picturesque red and green ivy, providing an ideal setting for outdoor summer concerts (Fig. 23). An intense variation in church memorials exists within the country, partially defined by their urban context, as well as by their current function.

A major point of departure between Germany and England is how ruins were represented in art, photography, and film during the war. During the war, England, as we have already seen, sanctioned artists to document and publicize the structural damage

⁴⁰ Rudolf Schwarz, quoted in Gavriel David Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot, *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 56.

⁴¹ David Dernie, *New Stone Architecture* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 87.

throughout the country. Germany, in contrast, viewed evidence of war damage as a demoralizing message to the German public. According to Nicola Lambourne, “Goebbels’ original policy on the propaganda treatment of air raid damage in German cities was to under-report and minimise the physical effects of the raids.”⁴² This taboo in addressing visible physical damage continued to some extent after the war as well, as W.G. Sebald discusses in his *On The Natural History of Destruction*. Sebald references such ruin as a “moral” ruin, “taboo like a shameful family secret.”⁴³

Although paintings of ruins in Germany exist, they are hardly comparable to the situation of sanctioned war artists in England. Artists like Otto Dix and George Grosz certainly documented damage, but they were also working subversively against the Nazi party, perhaps reinforcing this concept that ruins and a victorious German state were incompatible. Otto Dix’s 1946 *Masken in Trümmern* or *Masks in Ruins* (Fig. 24) was created after he returned to a ruined Dresden at the end of the war. By conflating urban ruins and images of masked figures, Dix gives the viewer a frightening image of a false and damaged German nation. When John Piper made paintings for the English government and public, the way in which he characterized ruins reinforced the stability and positive message of the British purpose, while Dix, working unsanctioned, produced works that connected ruins to corporeal, human damage, a message in definitive opposition to the propaganda efforts of the Third Reich.

It is revealing that ruins featured very little in the German media, as compared to the English media. For a country so deeply saturated with propaganda and visual political

⁴² Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe*, 97.

⁴³ Winfried Georg Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (New York: Random House, 2003), 10.

messages, to ignore such obvious destruction must have had a significant effect on the population. Or perhaps it indicates a general unspoken consensus among the German people not to acknowledge explicitly such destruction, and instead to focus on the basic task of survival. It is clear that in England the prevalence of such iconography had a significant impact on how people viewed such structures: as stand-ins for the people themselves, and evidence of their victimhood, their resilience, and as objects of isolated and aestheticized beauty. The lack of attention to such structures in German art, news and photography, until well after the war, perhaps provides some explanation for the wide variety of sentiments surrounding them. On the other hand, the necessity of rebuilding, stressed in early war propaganda, may explain the prevalence of some sort of rebuilding throughout Germany, with many fewer examples of untouched ruins than there were in Britain. Joseph Goebbels worked tirelessly to keep a steady pace of repair to damaged buildings in the early 1940s, when damage reached a level that outpaced repair efforts, leading instead to public promises of a quick and easy rebuilding process by 1944.⁴⁴ The Nazi party supplied information that expressly forbade the discussion of destruction in propaganda through the *Redner-Schnellinformation* (Speakers' Express Information) because "the populace of areas under aerial attack, after the general confusion of a terrible night, get an entirely false impression of the damage, which leads to wild and exaggerated rumors about the extent of the casualties and damage."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe*, 94-95.

⁴⁵ "Ohne Sieg kein Wiederaufbau. Zur Luftkriegslage," *Redner-Schnellinformation*, Lieferung 67, Anfang September 1943.

In fact, some of the only scenes of war destruction that the Nazis produced (or sanctioned) – were those intended to demoralize the enemy. One leaflet intended for Allied troops suggests on one side the futility of the Allied effort:

“Since June 16th, London and southern England are being continuously blasted day and night by those mysterious flying meteors. The entire British press was immediately muzzled by rigid censorship. What a nice job your politicians do have now in hiding the truth about the disastrous effect of **V NUMBER 1**.”⁴⁶

The opposite side features what is apparently a scene of the English destruction mentioned (Fig. 25).

As a result, images of destruction largely appeared long after the war’s end, seen, for example in Hermann Claasen’s *Nie Wieder Krieg!: Bilder aus dem zerstorten Köln*, not published until 1994.⁴⁷ Claasen photographed the destruction of his native Cologne throughout the war, despite the significant political risk posed by such activities. Like Dix and Grosz, Claasen offers a (more veiled) criticism of the actions that resulted in the war. The title of his work echoes the call for pacifism from the First World War, and even presents another point of connection to the work of Käthe Kollwitz, through her popular 1924 lithograph *Nie Wieder Krieg!* (Fig. 26) – a popular saying in Germany during the time. There is a certain degree of irony in the fact that this statement from World War I, pleading that there should be no more war, is merely recycled at the culmination of the Second World War, much in the same way that the visual trope of the ruin is recycled from traditional usage as well.

⁴⁶ V-1 Leaflet, 1944, German Propaganda Archive, Calvin College Website, <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/ww2leaf.htm>.

⁴⁷ Hermann Claasen, Klaus Honnef, and Walter Müller. *Nie wieder Krieg!: Bilder aus dem zerstörten Köln*. (Köln: Wienand, 1994).

The examples of extant ruins in Germany are presented in German literature and popular culture in two distinct ways. They are romanticized and aestheticized, as Kempowski perceived in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, functioning to dull and distance the violence perpetrated by the Germans in the war. Alternately, and even concurrently, these ruins show evidence of the violence of their origins and thereby hold Germans up as the victims of the brutal devastation at the hands of the enemy. Within these two reactions to war, neither functions as an acceptance of culpability. James Young notes the dilemmas faced by contemporary German artists in commemorating the war as not victims themselves, but perpetrators. He calls the memorials that do arise from these issues “torn and convoluted.”⁴⁸ *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the German term to describe the process of coming to terms with the past, is especially relevant here, explaining the difficulties of reconciling collective German memory with the experiences of those victimized by the war, as well as those who fought against Germany. Young goes on to cite the recent appearance of public “countermonuments” in Germany, an attempt by artists who “explore both the necessity of memory and their inability to recall events they never experienced directly.”⁴⁹ This sentiment is visible in the church memorials of Germany as well; they are sites of contradiction, where the task of memorializing is itself a way to rewrite and thereby forget aspects of the war. W.G. Sebald discusses Germany’s unwillingness to examine its own history, that even when it does take a retrospective view “we are always looking and looking away at the same

⁴⁸ James Edward Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 7.

⁴⁹ Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 7.

time.”⁵⁰ In the wide variety of official designation and public reaction to German ruins, we see only a superficial attempt to come to terms with the Second World War. Instead, appeals to victimization, wider tropes of the weaknesses of humanity, and references to earlier traditions of aestheticism all show a desire to bury the memories of the war. In many ways, these ruins are not so different from those in Britain; all of these “memorials” are sites that deliberately forget the intimate experiences of war by their citizens. Despite the fact that in appearance and function, these ruined churches reflect a very traditional mode of commemoration, the bombed churches of the Second World War ultimately reflect a deeper antagonism towards remembering the historical narrative of the war as it truly occurred, functioning, in fact, as anti-memorials.

⁵⁰ Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, ix.

CONCLUSION

Despite the numerous incidents of ruin preservation after the Second World War in France, the United States, and Japan, the churches of England and Germany present more programmatic and analogous cases of ruin preservation after the war. The unique roles of both countries as both aggressors and victims of heavy devastation place such ruined churches at the forefront of a careful reconstruction of public memory regarding the war.

A plethora of other ruin sites, in both Germany and England, suggest that Coventry Cathedral, Christ Church, the Frauenkirche and Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church are far from isolated examples, but rather part of a richer trend of ruin maintenance. Other examples include St. Nikolai in Hamburg, Wachau Church in Leipzig, the Franciscan Church in Berlin, St. Mary Le Port in Bristol, Church of St. Luke in Bristol, St. Peter's in Bristol, Temple Church in Bristol and Holyrood Church in Southampton. These churches, often in less urban settings, have not seen the type of postwar supplemental construction featured in Coventry Cathedral and Kaiser Wilhelm, and because of this, are much less known and discussed.

Far more of these churches were preserved in England than in Germany. Perhaps the differences in attention to destruction between Germany and England also reflect the extent of the destruction. During the war, Germans at first tried to minimize the perception of destruction in their country; whereas England, by contrast, issued exaggerated reports of destruction. It is estimated that, overall, Germany lost about 39% of its built-up area, compared with Britain's relatively minuscule 3%.¹ Civilian casualties

¹ Kenneth Hewitt, "Place Annihilation: Area Bombing and the Fate of Urban Places," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73, No. 2 (Jun., 1983): 263.

correspond to these percentages, with Germany losing about ten times more civilians than Britain. Such statistics help explain the relative propagandistic stakes in the inevitable link between architectural and human life; showing how Germany needed to downplay the scale of devastation, while England could afford to play up its relatively light casualties to rally support for the war. The comparatively higher number of preserved English sites echoes the official wartime stance on urban destruction in the media – to draw attention to the acts of destruction on the English homeland. Germany's smaller number of preserved war ruins also reflects its tendency, during the war, to dismiss and ignore the growing levels of bomb destruction.

Today, more than fifty years after the end of World War II, Britain and Germany have transformed from physically devastated postwar cities into economically stable European powers. The heavy levels of destruction in Germany, as well as the postwar occupations, make its resurgence as a technological and economic powerhouse even more remarkable. As we have seen, such destruction was preserved in multiple forms, sometimes cast as picturesque, sometimes as stark, but almost universally distant from the war itself.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the English and German ruins is the more recent attention to the respective sites. In contradiction to the early twentieth century calls for the demolition of the Gedächtniskirche when it was intact, the ruin now has a new relevance to the German state. It fulfills a needed function in recognizing the trauma of the war (in the visible damage to the building), in terms viewed today as distinctly anti-triumphalist because of its contrast to the pure, intact neo-Classicism of the architecture of the Third Reich. In progressively more and more secular country, the

traditional functional value of churches becomes of less importance and thus these sites presents the opportunity to recast the sacred architecture of the past in new, secular and modern terms. A popular site for tourists, it represents a distinctively postmodern trend to embrace ruin elements. In the eyes of the current public, the original motivation for preservation is glossed over for a new, deeper reading - which attempts to acknowledge the war and with it, culpability for the country's actions. This complexity in remembrance is perhaps best illustrated in the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, the postwar process of coming to terms with the past. The concept embraces the now-ubiquitous fixation on the memory of the war, in the recent decades of national guilt and effort for repentance. Scholar Gavriel Rosenfeld notes the internal contradictions within the term, also mirrored in the ruin memorials, reflecting how *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* attempts to resist the original postwar impulse to forget and also demands a certain purging of memory to work through the experience of the past.²

In contrast, England's ruins have seen comparatively less attention from tourists, and they are often only noticeable as outliers because of their visible lack of connection to contemporary urban life. Their connection to the war lives only through the wartime imagery, in the paintings and photos that were so widely publicized at the time, that prompted the call for their survival and, correspondingly, through the minds of those who remember the actual events that appear in this imagery. Germany, for all its initial denial of damage and destruction in the popular press, now has room to react against the actions of the war by pursuing the opposite path: visibly acknowledging its destruction. The malleability of such sites, without an inherent or stable meaning and open to

² Gavriel David Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2.

interpretation, allows the nation to continually repurpose them, as a sort of ideological spolia. In the end, this is the greatest difference and contrast between the ruins of Germany and England: their respective semiotic stability. All of these ruins grew from similar sentiments, despite the very different positions of each country at the end of the war. However, the varied readings of German ruins have allowed a constant evolution to parallel the country's process of unburying the painful memories of the war, while England's ruins were successful to their original and primary (now obsolete) intent – to offer a calm respite from the travails of the war. It is interesting to compare the fate of these ruins with each country's respective economic developments. Germany's economy was able to capitalize on the voids left by the war, while England, less damaged and more stable, looks increasingly past its technological and economic prime. So too have these church ruin memorials either profited from an initial semiotic ambiguity, in the case of Germany, or contrastingly, become ineffectual and obsolete, as in the ruins of England – bound in the time of their creation and unable to communicate beyond their original propagandistic function.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1
First World War Memorial
Threadneedle Street, London
1920



Figure 2
George Washington Wilson
Edinburgh. Sir Walter Scott Monument
c. 1865-1885



Figure 3
Caspar David Friedrich
Ruins of a Monastery
1808



Figure 4
Tuileries Column
Schwanenwerder, Germany

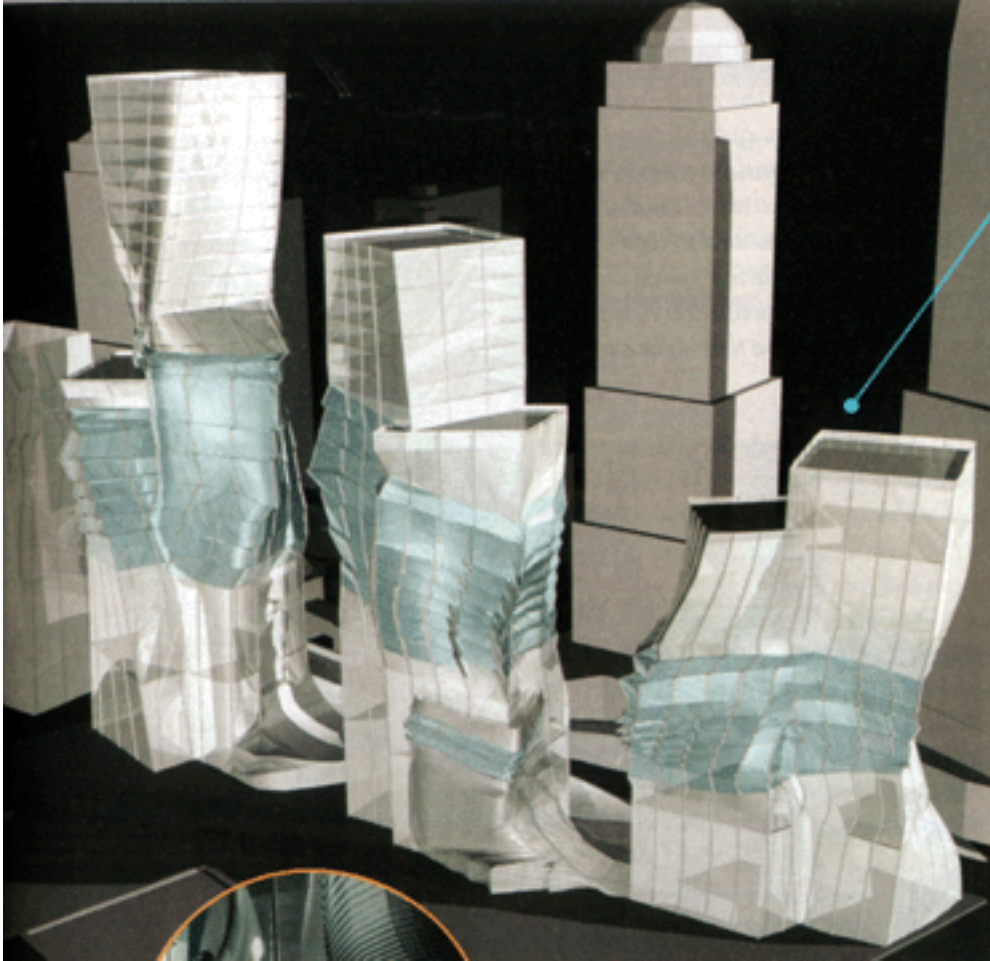


Figure 5
Peter Eisenman
Design for Ground Zero
2002



Figure 6
Charred Cross
St. Michael's Cathedral
Coventry, England

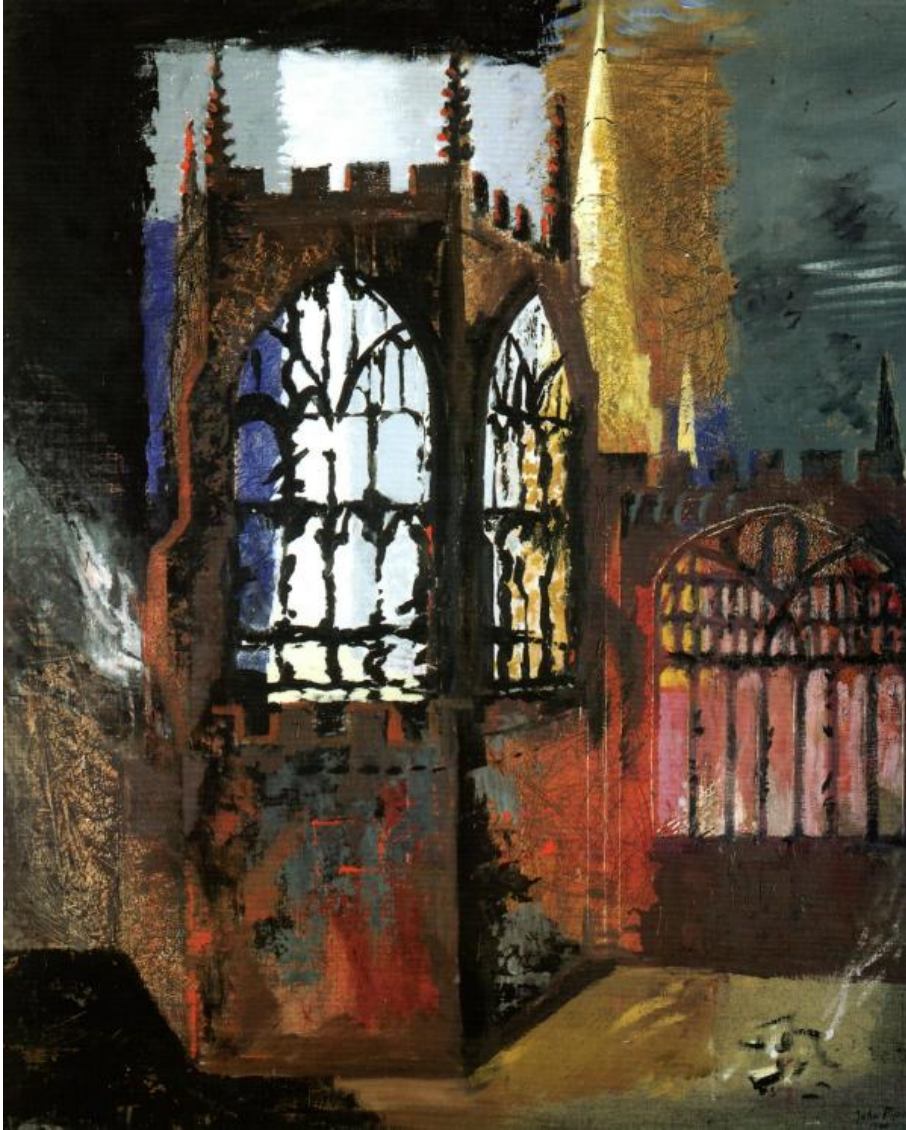


Figure 7
John Piper
Coventry Cathedral, November 15, 1940



Figure 8
Paul Nash
Totes Meer
1940-41



Figure 9
Caspar David Friedrich
Das Eismeer
1824



Figure 10
The City, December 30th, 1940
Planet News



Figure 11
The Fire of London, September, 1666
Wilkinson's "Londina Illustrata"



Figure 12
U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial
Arlington, Virginia



Figure 13
Film Still, *London Can Take It*
1940



Figure 14
Christ Church Greyfriars
Newgate St., London

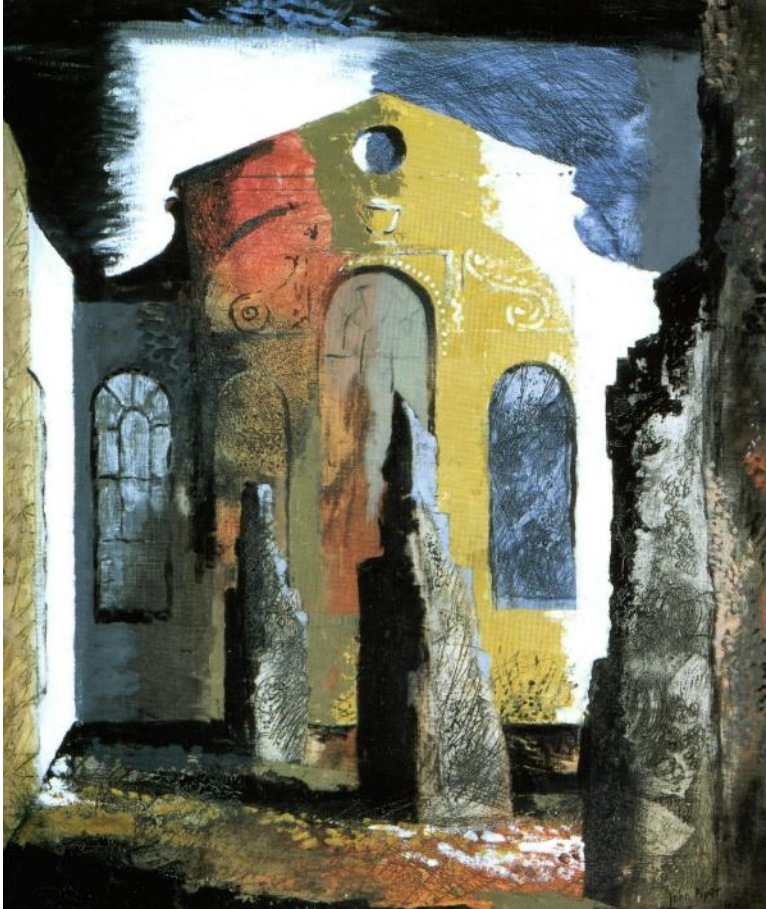


Figure 15
John Piper
Christ Church Newgate December 1940



Figure 16
Christ Church Greyfriars
Newgate St., London



Figure 17
Sir Basil Spence
St. Michael's Cathedral (Coventry Cathedral)
1962



Figure 18
Graham Sutherland
The City – A Fallen Lift Shaft
1941



Figure 19
Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church (Gedächtniskirche)
Berlin, Germany



Figure 20
Frauenkirche (after 1945 bombing)
Dresden, Germany



Figure 21
Frauenkirche (after rebuilding)
Dresden, Germany



Figure 22
St. Alban's
Cologne, Germany



Figure 23
Wachau Church
Leipzig, Germany



Figure 24
Otto Dix
Masks in Ruins
1946

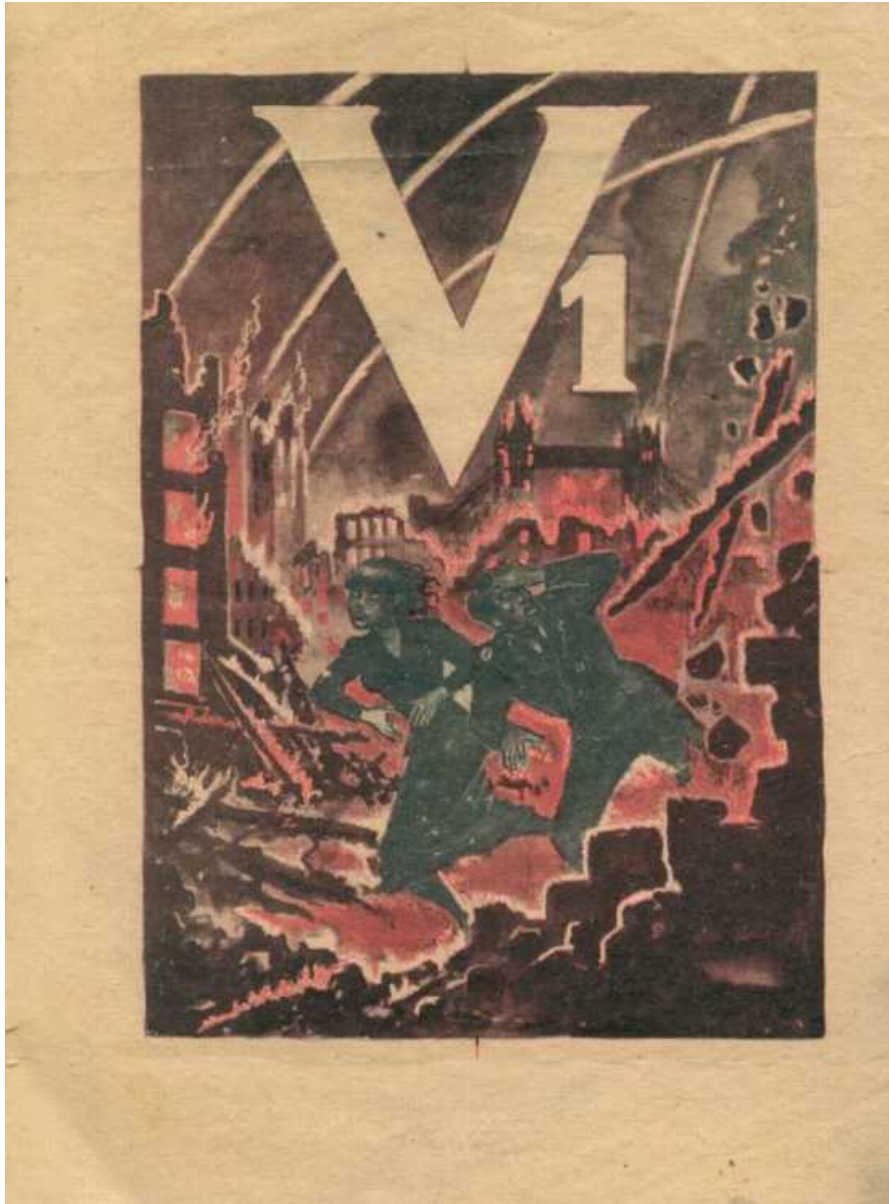


Figure 25
German Leaflet
1944

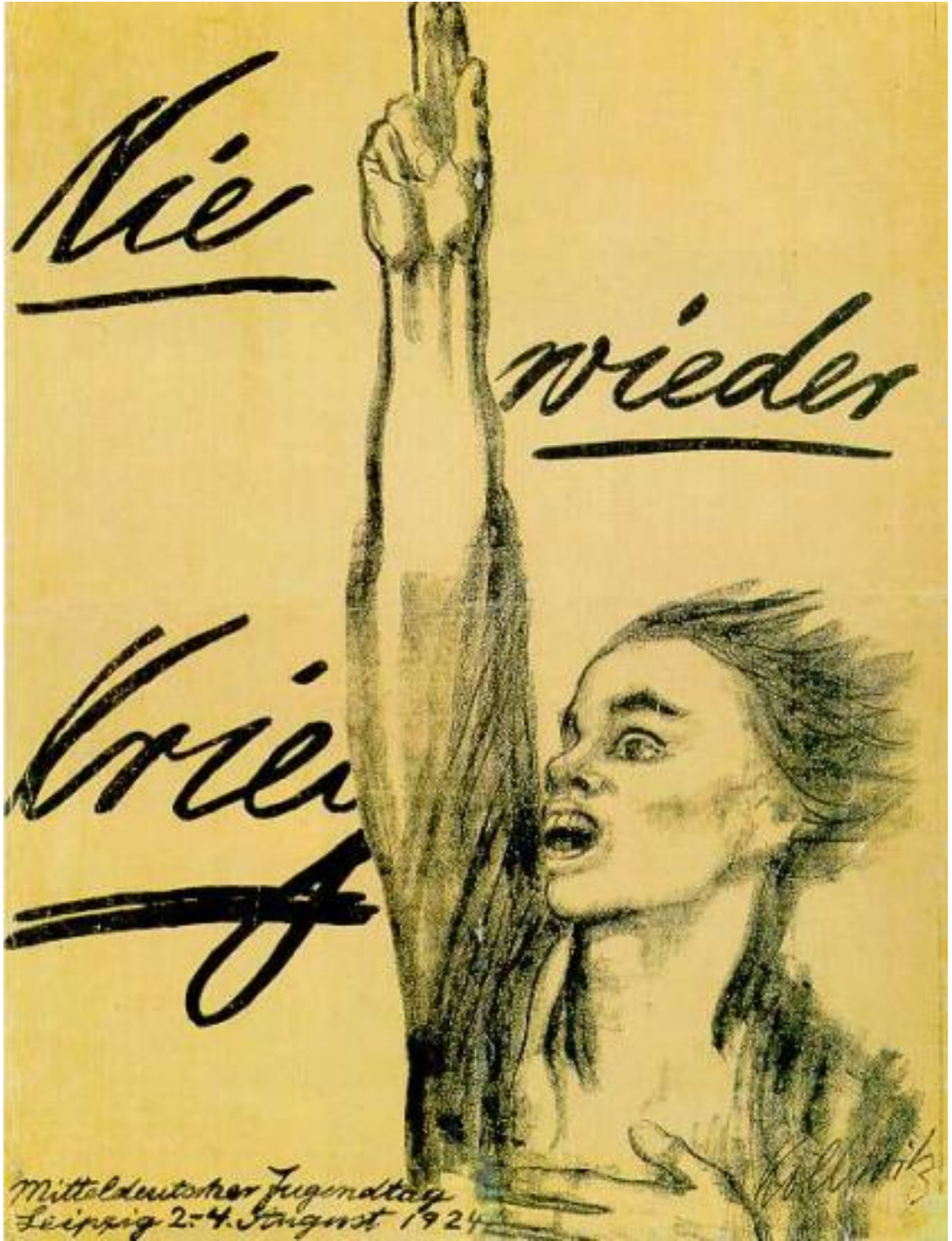


Figure 26
Käthe Kollwitz
Nie Wieder Krieg!
1924