

# Shifting Sandstone

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## German Monuments as Vessels of Collective Memory

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## Introduction

Monuments are vessels of immortality, for they represent a moment in time intended to stand the test of time. Though monuments are often meant to represent a static period of time, monuments may take on different meanings through the decades. These meanings may radically differ from the original intentions of the builders or artists, for history can either defile or deify monuments. To interpret such artefacts in a vacuum for their aesthetics, feats of engineering, or original purposes would be a disservice to these monuments that bore witness to centuries of societal change.

Historian Michael Prince once wrote that nations often construct monuments to establish a visible connection to the nation's lineage and ideals as, "...statements about who we were, who we are and who we wish to be."<sup>1</sup> This is problematic when a dark past corrupts earlier structures or when the perpetrators erect new monuments to serve as political tools. It may be difficult to look beyond the stains of the immediate past; however, the evolution of monuments throughout the decades embody Germany's *Sonderweg*, the way German history has deviated from the common European narrative. Though all nations have their dark pasts, the volatile political landscape of Germany from its formation dominates modern discourse.

Due to the ever-shifting political and societal landscape, monuments are the battlegrounds for collective memory. The concept of collective memory originates from the works of French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs; he stated that society has its own memories which can influence how an individual views history and even their own memories and identity. His works, and the work of many other scholars and historians on similar issues, apply to monuments, for these structures are the framework of how society views their history and represents their values. Since values and ideals differ between generations, monuments too should gradually change to reflect these shifting ideologies. However, many

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<sup>1</sup> Michael K. Prince, *War and German Memory: Excavating the Significance of the Second World War in German Cultural Consciousness* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 41.

people view monuments as representing only a static time period rather than several eras. If monuments are windows into the collective memory of the Germany, then this interpretation of monuments being static objects presents a false narrative, for it relies on fragmented history told through only major events. WWII and the Cold War do not describe all of German history. Rather, the transformation and reception of these monuments are better described by a multidirectional history that ebbs and flows with time.

The history of monuments reflects the gradual shift in ideologies throughout German history and what values were treasured by society. Unfortunately, the carnage of WWII and the political upheaval during and after the Cold War destroyed many of these structures. Though many small-scaled monuments were destroyed, there were some too integral to German identity, too isolated from the world, or were just too “big” to remove. These monuments include the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, the Nazi Rallying Grounds in Nuremberg, the Battle of the Nations monument in Leipzig, the Kyffhäuser in Thüringen, and the Thingstätte in Heidelberg.

All of these structures have accumulated a wealth of personal and collective memories over the decades that make them worthy examples for case studies on the construction and influence of German collective memory. Based on when these structures were built, these monuments span multiple eras in German history from 1789 to the modern day. The monuments were products of their times, but many of them simultaneously reject and perpetuate ideologies that differ from their “static” meanings. How could university students use a Nazi amphitheatre as a venue to celebrate a pagan holiday? How can a monument commemorating Napoleon’s defeat in 1813 be displeasing to the Kaiser but celebrated by the Russians? The shift of these structures in the memory landscape offers a glimpse into the changing values and perception of German society – what images they idolize and what images they let fade away.

The premise of collective memory and the interplay between the individual and the community must be explored further before delving into the monuments themselves. One of the quintessential components of the theory relies on the relationship between memory and identity. This is applicable to both the individual and the community, for memory, “...captures simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side *and* the collective, social, and constructed side of your relations to the past.”<sup>2</sup> The significance of memory ranges from individual to individual; The Brandenburg Gate may be emblem of Germany to one person but a tourist trap to another. Despite these conflicting viewpoints, society determines the worth of certain memories over others. This makes the study of memory different from history which relies on documents and statistics for research. Memory, in contrast, relies on commemorations, monuments, memorials, and historical sites to represent the collective. This is not to diminish the individual’s role in the formation of the collective, for many memorials only come to fruition in thanks to “memorial entrepreneurs” – people who are willing to lobby on behalf of memorialization. These individuals spark public debates which then contribute to collective memory due to the clash of personal memories and values through negotiation and conflict. In essence, the study of collective memory relies on, “...a triad, a three-cornered relationship among highly resonant parts of a memory landscape, individuals, and groups...”who struggle to find meaning in the world around them.<sup>3</sup>

For the chosen monuments, a German perspective and the nuisances of the language must be acknowledged, for the English translations of these selected structures cannot reflect a critical aspect of German collective memory directly. Though the words monument and memorial are often interchangeable in English, the German words are *Denkmal* and *Mahnmal*

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (New York: Stanford University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Trace: Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990* (London: University of California Press, 2000), 9.

respectively. A *Denkmal* is the literal translation for a monument; however, a *Mahnmal* not only serves as a memorial but also as a warning directed towards the onlooker. The Brandenburg Gate would be considered as a monument while the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a memorial. From the selected structures, the majority of them are monuments in the German sense; nevertheless, some of them do possess elements associated with memorialization in their later iterations. One potential weakness of these monuments is that there is no dedicated Holocaust memorial while there are two Third Reich sites. This is not to minimize the importance of memorialization and the role of the Holocaust in collective memory. Rather, the chosen monuments, even the Third Reich structures, have risen and fallen in the memories of the nation and in their local communities. These monuments have proven to be, "...enduring, and tangible symbols of cultural continuity...It is as if the totality of physical symbols and historical signs have served as a kind of container that had enabled, counterbalanced, and at times even given direct and concrete meaning to the violence of German political history." The continuity and the treatment of these sites will serve as a reflection of the Holocaust and fascism instead of a direct analysis of a specific Holocaust memorial. This gives credence to the central argument proposed by analysing these chosen structures – monuments offer a glimpse into the collective memory of a community made visible by the treatment of the monuments throughout multiple political eras.

## The Brandenburg Gate

The Brandenburg Gate is the most iconic symbol of Germany and remains in the foreground of the memory landscape. King Friedrich Wilhelm II commissioned Carl Gotthard Langhans to build the gate in 1789 as a grand entrance to the city centre.<sup>4</sup> Crowning the gate is a quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses with a goddess at the reins. The charioteer is Victoria, goddess of victory, but there is some ambiguity as to whether she represents peace or war. Victoria and Eirene, goddess of peace, are two sides of the same coin, and they often accompany one another in popular imagery. However, historical circumstances severed the dual personas of peace and victory. The transition of the gate's charioteer into a war goddess occurred in response to her abduction. Napoleon's forces pillaged the quadriga from atop the Brandenburg Gate and returned to France with it as a spoil of war. Ironically, Napoleon's forces were the first to march under the gate as conquerors which the structure would later become known for under Bismarck.<sup>5</sup> Napoleon held the quadriga captive from 1806 to 1814 as a trophy on display in the Louvre which was a national embarrassment for Prussia.<sup>6</sup> The quadriga would later return to Berlin when Prussian forces marched on Paris near the end of the Wars of Liberation in 1813.

In the wake of her return, the goddess underwent her physical transformation into the goddess of victory, but it would take several decades for historical circumstances to cement her ideological transformation. Instead of the original Roman standard she once carried, the goddess now wielded a staff with an iron cross adorned by a laurel wreath with a Prussian eagle perched at the top.<sup>7</sup> Though the triumph over Napoleon became the dominant memory

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<sup>4</sup>Berlin.de, "Landesdenkmalamt Berlin: Brandenburger Tor," *Landesdenkmalamt Berlin*, accessed April 13 2018,

[http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/denkmal/liste\\_karte\\_datenbank/de/denkmaldatenbank/daobj.php?obj\\_do\\_k\\_nr=09065019](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/denkmal/liste_karte_datenbank/de/denkmaldatenbank/daobj.php?obj_do_k_nr=09065019).

<sup>5</sup>Berlin.de, "Landesdenkmalamt Berlin: Brandenburger Tor."

<sup>6</sup>Willmuth Arenhövel and Rolf Bothe, *Das Brandenburg Tor: 1791-1991 Eine Monographie*, trans. Vanessa Plumly (Berlin: Willmuth Arenhövel, 1991), 136.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 103.

associated with the quadriga, there were signs of the original message of peace still present. The reliefs between the columns depict the twelve tasks of Hercules which allude to the victories and reconstruction efforts of King Wilhelm II during the Dutch campaign of 1787.<sup>8</sup> The Centauromachy featured on the metopes symbolize that civilization can overcome barbarism. A statue of Mars sheathing his sword resides in the northern watch house while a statue of Minerva rests in the southern watch house.<sup>9</sup> Despite all of these symbols of peace associated with the gate, the triumphant march of the returning German troops from the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 under the Brandenburg Gate cemented the conversion of the gate and the quadriga as instruments of war for generations to come. Within a century, two groups of people instilled new meaning into the Brandenburg Gate. One group was the early nineteenth-century Prussians who altered Victoria to celebrate their victory over the French and to forget their embarrassment over the absence of the quadriga. The second group was late nineteenth-century Germans who used the gate to justify their aggressive political agenda. By circumstance or political ambition, the Brandenburg Gate was no longer just the public work of King Wilhelm II.

Though the events of the nineteenth-century made certain that Victoria represented victory, the personality of the goddess at the reigns was ambiguous since the gate's conception. In their correspondences during the gate's construction around 1790, the architect and sculptor Schadow and Langhans respectively used the terms *Freigöttin* and *Siegesgöttin* interchangeably; however, they do explicitly use the name Victoria throughout the text. By the same token, historian Zita Pöthe states in her book *Perikles in Preußen* that wings are the defining feature that differentiates Eirene from Victoria, and it is difficult to justify the goddess's wings as a mere design choice.<sup>10</sup> Though sound in reasoning, this logic runs counter to known design changes for the sake of aesthetics. The Roman standard the goddess

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>9</sup> Berlin.de, "Landesdenkmalamt Berlin: Brandenburger Tor."

<sup>10</sup> Zitha Pöthe, *Perikles in Preußen: Die Politik Friedrich Wilhelms II* (Berlin: epubli, 2014), 218.

wielded during the Napoleonic Wars was not the original design. At first, the design was of a helmet attached to a spear, a chest plate, and two shields. However, Schadow later admitted that, “people said it looks like a lantern,” so the Academy of Art ordered a new victory sign.<sup>11</sup> There were also considerations of a wardrobe change for the sake of appearances; “In a letter from Schadow to Langhans on 26 November 1794, a ‘flying robe’ was considered in order to add layers to the statue since the Academy considered her too ‘stiff and bare.’”<sup>12</sup> Thus, to claim the goddess must be Victoria based solely on the wings is too broad of an assumption, especially considering other elements that adorn the gate.

A relief underneath the quadriga facing the city depicts Eirene at the reins, not Victoria. The relief features a procession led by Hercules followed by several deities. The figure directly behind Hercules is a winged goddess who is likely Victoria, not for her wings but for what she is holding. In her hands is the original design for the victory sign meant to be held by the goddess in the quadriga – armour with two shields. Also featured in the procession is a chariot driven by a different goddess; this is likely Eirene who holds a laurel wreath in an outstretched hand towards Hercules and Victoria.<sup>13</sup> If Eirene is the charioteer on the relief, is she also steering the quadriga above? The identity of the goddess is not as clear-cut as some people claim based on these contradictory images.

This contradiction can be remedied by acknowledging the idea that the goddess is Victoria and Eirene simultaneously. The builders were aware of the duality of peace and victory embodied by several aspects of the gate.

Langhans described in 1788 in his 'Pro Memoria' the representation of the Quadriga on the attic as the 'triumph of peace' ...But that does not mean - as later authors like to write - the goddess of peace, Eirene, is the charioteer. Rather, the idea might have been rooted in this - in connection with the rest of the decorative elements – as it can be read in the description of the attic relief from 1793: "Peace as a natural

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<sup>11</sup> Emil von Siefert, *The History of the Brandenburg Gate and the Quadriga*, trans. Vanessa Plumly (Berlin: Writings of the Association for the History of Berlin, 1912), 41.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Arenhövel and Bothe, *Das Brandenburg Tor*, 111 Fig. 122.

consequence of victory." Here, the charioteer, since her first mention, was also always referred to as ‘Victoria’...<sup>14</sup>

The term “Triumph of Peace” is the solution to this identity crisis and all the contradictions previously mentioned. That same expression provides insight as to why King Wilhelm II commissioned this public work. The Brandenburg Gate commemorates the king’s peace-keeping efforts in Denmark after all. In his letters, Langhans wrote this following in regards to a planned relief facing the *Tiergarten* not featured in the final design: “the bas-relief underneath [the quadriga] means the protection of the just weapons; they lend them their innocence. - On the other side was to be set, as by these weapons, seven scattered arrows, tied together once again into one bundle.”<sup>15</sup> Those seven arrows represented the seven warring provinces of Denmark Wilhelm II reunited by the end of the Dutch campaign. This restoration of peace was only accomplished through victorious combat; the king even referred to the Brandenburg Gate as *Friedentor* because of the peace he established, not for his victory. The winged goddess at the helm of the quadriga is Victoria which Langhans explicitly makes clear. However, she is not the victory goddess the Second Reich Germans interpreted her to be. She ushers peace, she does not incite endless war.

With this distorted precedent that Second Reich Germans solidified, the Nazi regime would continue to misinterpret the original message of the Brandenburg Gate to serve its political agenda at the gate’s expense. Very little of the gate changed during WWI and the Weimar Republic, but the monument became the backdrop to the rise of fascism. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1933 after the National Socialists gained power, a torchlight parade took place through the gate to celebrate Hitler’s victory in the general election.<sup>16</sup> The regime continued to use the Brandenburg Gate as propaganda due to its neoclassical structure and for its new associations with victory and war. The gate continued to serve as the foremost symbol of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 130.

<sup>15</sup> Langhans, Gotthard Carl, “Pro Memoria,” listed in Arenhövel and Bothe, *Das Brandenburg Tor*, 319.

<sup>16</sup> Berlin.de, “Landesdenkmalamt Berlin: Brandenburger Tor.”

Germany, with fascist modifications. Banners bearing the swastika hung from the columns during the 1936 Berlin Olympics which influenced the international community’s perception of the structure.<sup>17</sup> Strangely enough, the gate was not a notable piece of Albert Speer’s vision of Germania or the *Welthauptstadt*, the world’s capital, so it is difficult to gauge how important the gate was to Nazi leaders. However, due to the structure’s close proximity to key government buildings, the Allied bombing of Berlin damaged the gate. The quadriga was unsalvageable; however, the gate remained standing.<sup>18</sup> Despite its destruction, the Soviet troops who occupied the city posed with Soviet flags on top of the Brandenburg Gate which showed the monument’s significance to other people besides for Germans.<sup>19</sup> Only the Mars statue emerged unscathed; the rest of the structure resembled the war torn landscape.

The Brandenburg Gate remained in ruins during the occupation period and would receive conditional restoration in the 1950s as a joint operation between West and East Germany. With the whole city in disarray, the Brandenburg Gate was of little priority to the occupying troops. The senate of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) approached the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the hopes of repairing the Brandenburg Gate in 1950, but the offer fell through.<sup>20</sup> The gate remained in its dilapidated state until 1956 when the GDR then approached the FRG on a joint reconstruction effort – the East would repair the edifice of the gate while the West would remodel the quadriga. Faced with this lopsided proposal, Margarete Feinstein states, “West Berliners and West Germans resented the

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<sup>17</sup> “The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed on March 29, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-olympics-berlin-1936-inauguration-of-the-olympic-torch-relay?series=19686>.

<sup>18</sup> Solveig Grothe, “Devastation of War: Archival Discovery Reveals a Ruined Berlin,” *Der Spiegel Online*, May 7, 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/devastation-of-war-archival-discovery-reveals-a-ruined-berlin-a-693452.html>

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Arenhövel and Bothe, *Das Brandenburg Tor*, 66 Fig. 46

<sup>20</sup> Margarete Myers Feinstein, *State Symbols: The Quest for Legitimacy in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, 1949-1959* (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 80.

implication that they were not contributing their share to the repair of the beloved monument, and feared the communists were attempting to use the gate for propaganda purposes.”<sup>21</sup>

The reconstruction of the Brandenburg Gate sparked an ideological battle and exposed the hypocrisy that stems from the weight of collective memory. The West Germans rebuilt the quadriga with the Iron Cross, so this replica had all the “blood and iron” connotations. The East German government was not pleased with Victoria, for the East Germans wished to repurpose the Gate as a symbol of peace. This was important for the East because the Brandenburg Gate became associated with anti-communism sediment in recent years. On several occasions, protestors would climb the gate to remove the red flags planted on the remnants of the quadriga. One of the most notable instances of such an event was during the Soviet blockade in 1948.<sup>22</sup> The East hoped that by funding the majority of the reconstruction costs, these anti-communist actions would be forgotten. This planned backfired. Newspaper titles from Western publications included “Wird die rote Fahne eingeholt?” in *Die Welt* or “Rote Quadriga?” in *Der Tag*. These headlines played into the fear that the Brandenburg Gate would become a communist symbol rather than the German national symbol.<sup>23</sup>

In the end, the East declared an ultimatum - the goddess could not wield a staff carrying an iron cross and a Prussian eagle. Although the West created a perfect replica of the quadriga as it was before the onset of WWII, the finalized version held only a staff with a hollow laurel wreath in 1958. Though the Brandenburg Gate was restored, both sides were left unsatisfied. The East did not radically alter the meaning of the gate and came out looking like the aggressor due to their treatment of nearby historical sites such as the *Reichstag* and the Berlin Palace. On the other hand, the West failed to realize that their insistence on a

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid, 81.

<sup>22</sup>“Tragödie in Fortsetzungen,” *Der Spiegel* Online, November 9, 1948, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-44418799.html>

<sup>23</sup>Arenhövel and Bothe, *Das Brandenburg Tor*, 160.

faithful restoration with the Prussian and militaristic elements also constituted their own form of propaganda in its recreation of the past. Both East and West Berliners recognized that the joint reconstruction effort was a façade to use the Brandenburg Gate as a political tool and to reshape Berlin in their image.

The East's and the West's polarization of the Brandenburg Gate shattered any chance of a symbolic reconciliation between the two Germanys. In a sense, it was almost fitting that the gate would become a symbol of a divided Germany. This was the Brandenburg Gate of the Cold War - a symbol stripped of its history and incorporated into the very foundation of the Berlin Wall. Despite being a shell of its former self, the monument continued to exhibit power and influence on Germans and on the world. Most Americans know of the gate from President Reagan's infamous "Tear Down This Wall" speech, and many others from across the globe know of the gate from watching footage as the Berlin Wall fell. Eventually, the east-west rivalry that plagued the gate during its reconstruction dissipated, and the Brandenburg Gate became once again the symbol of a unified Germany. These recent memories remain in the foreground of today's society while old recollections have begun to fade. The journey of the quadriga is a long one; some destinations are no longer in sight. What lies ahead is also unknown, but the gate will continue to persist in German consciousness for years to come.

## The Battle of Nations Monument

The largest monument in Europe, the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*, the Battle of Nations Monument in Leipzig, still dwarfs modern buildings. Sometimes referred to as the Völki, the monument is three hundred feet tall and weighs thirty thousand tons. The structure commemorates its namesake, but it is better known to an English audience as the Battle of Leipzig of 1813. This conflict marked the shifting of the tides, for Napoleon suffered his first major defeat on the battlefield against the rest of Europe. The opposing coalition consisted of Prussia, Austria, Russia, Sweden, and small other Germanic states. Until this battle, Napoleon's only defeat thus far was a reluctant retreat from Russia in the previous year; hence, many scholars consider the Battle of Nations as the precursor to the more infamous confrontation at Waterloo. Though it is easy to portray the Wars of Liberation as the tale of Europe against France, the ethnicity of the troops led by Napoleon were not as clear cut; there were many "Germans" fighting alongside the French. For example, the Kingdom of Saxony, which ruled Leipzig at the time, aided Napoleon alongside other Germanic states such as the Confederation of the Rhine. After several days, the coalition routed Napoleon from the city leaving over 93,000 dead and wounded to achieve this victory - The battle would be the largest conflict known to Europe until the World Wars.

When the coalition exiled Napoleon in 1814, there were already calls for a memorial to mark the battlefield. While surveying the battlefield in the aftermath of the conflict, Karl Bertuch declared that, "This hill will remain eternally memorable in history. Here on the afternoon of the glorious 18th of October, the three allied monarchs, Alexander, Franz, and Frederick William...conducted the operations of the victoriously advancing army... There is no better place to gracefully mark the memory of this great time on the part of the Germans

than this hill by a dignified monument.”<sup>24</sup> The prominent nationalist Ernst Mortiz Arndt also sought to commemorate the battle; however, unlike Bertuch who mentioned the monarchs, Arndt considered the battle as a symbol of national unity. He called for festivals, “from Straslund to Trieste and from Memel to Luxembourg” where people would celebrate with festive “folk” clothing, oak leaves, and alms-giving to veterans from the battle.<sup>25</sup> In particular, nationalists lauded the Freikorps or “free corps” composed of young men who volunteered to unshackle the yoke of French oppression.<sup>26</sup> Already, nationalistic writers such as Arndt attempted to construct a narrative invoking the German nation rather than the victorious monarchs. As previously mentioned, the mere existence of French-German auxiliary forces weakened this argument, and the majority of combatants were reluctant Prussians conscripts rather than nationalists.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the political situation of 1815 alarmed the monarchs who feared the spectre of revolution. Due to this, the Prussian government stressed loyalty to the monarchy rather than to the national spirit; after all, King Friedrich Wilhelm III decreed that all the graves of the fallen should be marked, “For King and Fatherland.”<sup>28</sup> Despite multiple calls by nationalists for a large-scale monument, only small headstones scattered across Leipzig marked the massive battle that took place there.

Efforts to construct a massive memorial began in the late nineteenth-century by the next generation of German patriots. The driving force behind the project was Clemens Thieme who founded in 1894 the Association of German Patriots for the Establishment of a *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* in Leipzig.<sup>29</sup> The goal of the organization was to build the monument

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<sup>24</sup>Cited in Sylvia Kabelitz, “Die Völkerschlacht wird zum Denkmal. Zeugnisse von 1913,” Leipziger Universitätsbibliothek, accessed June 23, 2018. <https://www.ub.uni-leipzig.de/ueber-uns/ausstellungen/ausstellungen-2013/voelkerschlacht/>

<sup>25</sup> Ernst Mortiz Arndt, *Ein Wort über die Feier der Leipziger Schlacht* (Frankfurt: Eichenberg, 1814), 10-11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of Germany, 1790-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 88.

<sup>28</sup> Hertleb Renate, *1813: Die Zeit der Befreiungskriege und die Leipziger Völkerschlacht in Malerei, Graphik, Plastik*, exhibition catalogue (Leipzig:1989)

<sup>29</sup>Sylvia Kabelitz, “Die Völkerschlacht wird zum Denkmal. Zeugnisse von 1913.” Leipziger Universitätsbibliothek, August 30, 2013, accessed on June 23, 2018.

by the hundredth anniversary. The writings of Arndt and other German nationalistic writers inspired Thieme to form this organization. The association grew to 42,000 members within its first year and even gained the patronage of Otto von Bismarck.<sup>30</sup> The possibility of erecting a memorial of this magnitude was only possible through wide-spread public enthusiasm and support. Lotteries, donations, and private investors raised the six million marks needed to cover the construction costs. Thieme was named an honorary citizen for his 60,000 mark donation alongside his lifelong commitment to the project.<sup>31</sup> The city council of Leipzig was a large contributor; they provided the land for the monument for free, and they provided 2,000 marks for the nation-wide competition to select the architect.<sup>32</sup> The *Patriotenbund* compiled a list of demands of what they desired to see in the monument. It had to be a Christian monument, and it had to be a, “monument of the Volk, a landmark for the mighty rise of the German people by which all hearts were unanimously ignited in fiery enthusiasm for heroism, love of fatherland, and loyalty.”<sup>33</sup> After several competitions, Thieme selected Bruno Schmitz from Düsseldorf as the winner. This choice of an outsider to be the architect encapsulated the nationalistic fervour surrounding the monument. With the unification of Germany in 1871, this effort to construct a fitting memorial had transcended former regional territories. From donations to members, the association in their pursuit of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* fulfilled the wishes of the last generation of “German” patriots.

The opening ceremony of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* on October 18, 1913 exposed the Kaiser’s cold deposition towards the monument and all those involved. For the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig, Kaiser Wilhelm II and all the federal princes of the

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<sup>30</sup> Jason Tebbe, “Revision and ‘Rebirth’: Commemoration of the Battle of Nations in Leipzig,” *German Studies Review* 33, no. 3: 626

<sup>31</sup> Otto Rudolph, *Plaudereien von Bau des Völkerschlachtdenkmal*s cited in Thomas Topfstedt, “Das Leipziger Völkerschlachtdenkmal,” in *Das Jahr 1813, Ostmitteleuropa und Leipzig: Die Völkerschlacht als (trans)nationaler Erinnerungsort*, ed. Marina Dmitrieva and Las Karl (Köln: Böhlau, 2016), 150.

<sup>32</sup> “Völkerschlacht-Denkmal bei Leipzig,” Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Accessed August 21, [https://histbest.ub.uni-leipzig.de/receive/UBLHistBestCBU\\_cbu\\_00001794](https://histbest.ub.uni-leipzig.de/receive/UBLHistBestCBU_cbu_00001794)

<sup>33</sup> Jason Tebbe, “Revision and ‘Rebirth’: Commemoration of the Battle of Nations in Leipzig,” 628.

German Reich arrived to a crowd of around 100,000 people.<sup>34</sup> Thieme gave a speech, the Kaiser did not. Thieme declared that the monument was a, “sanctuary of the entire German people, sanctified by the sacrifices of good and life for the freedom of the Fatherland, sanctified, because here our heroes shattered the oppressive fetters of the conqueror...to become a community of brothers again.”<sup>35</sup> The rest of the ceremony was surprisingly short; the Kaiser was on his way as quickly as he arrived. Wilhelm II gave Bruno Schmitz and the other sculptors the lowest medals of honour possible for their contributions. This was especially bizarre for Schmitz who the Kaiser lauded on multiple occasions for his past architectural feats.<sup>36</sup> The Kaiser was not fond of the monument since its conception; he only contributed 10,000 marks to the construction - a trifling amount compared to Thieme’s own contributions as a private citizen. The hyper-nationalism invoked by the monument was too unsettling for the Kaiser and the newly established German government to condone.

To understand the Kaiser’s concerns, one must look at the physical design of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* and what it represents. Every aspect of the monument and its surroundings oozes German nationalism or rejects standard norms. The pyramid-like design recalls ancient Egypt rather than Rome. Though faithful to Arndt’s original design of a colossal pyramid, the design was such an abnormality in an era defined by neoclassical Wilhelmine monuments. An enormous statue of the Archangel Michael, patron saint of Germany, towers over the entrance with the description “God with us” written above. The main features of the Völki are the crypt and hall of fame. Inside the crypt, four fallen warriors are each accompanied by two *Totenwächter*, guardians of the dead. Surprisingly, this is the only honour given to the dead in this entire memorial. Visible from the crypt, the hall of fame is directly above where four gigantic people stand watch. These four figures represent the

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<sup>34</sup> Marc von Lüpke, Pyramide des Patrioten, *Der Spiegel Online*, October 18, 2013, accessed May 28, 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/einestages/voelkerschlachtdenkmal-in-leipzig-a-951286.html>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Trace: Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990*, 47.

four virtues associated with the German people – sacrifice, bravery, faith, and fertility.<sup>37</sup> All of these statues are about ten meters tall. The interior dome depicts 313 riders galloping into combat in a style similar to Assyrian and Egyptian artwork; at first glance, it would be hard to tell if this was a memorial to the Napoleonic Wars or the Crusades.<sup>38</sup> Outside the monument is a reflection pool surrounded by two rows of oak trees, often associated with German masculinity.<sup>39</sup> Arndt inspired the oak trees, for he yearned for a memorial lined by an oak grove as a, “cemetery of great German men.”<sup>40</sup> Despite all these features, the only people represented in this monument are Germans, not Austrian, Russians, or Swedes. Even the crypt honouring the German dead is overshadowed by the representatives of German virtues above the crypt. This is not a memorial to the dead but a German nationalistic *Denkmal*.

The fervent nationalism the *Völki* embodied sparked political tension between the Kaiser and the Patriot Bands. The Wars of Liberation spurred a real possibility for a united Germany. Almost half a decade later, the Revolutions of 1848 sent similar ripples across the German states. By the time Thieme dedicated his life to turning the Leipzig monument into reality, Germany was a unified nation for two decades. It seemed strange that the new German government would not endorse the monument that many Germans considered the birth of the nation. Both Kaisers were patrons of historical sites, especially ancient ones or monuments constructed in honour of their legacies. However, the *völkisch* memories associated with the Battle of Nations was a dangerous prospect to the government. The Leipzig monument did not pay tribute to the Kaiser or Prussia in any capacity; Prussia may have fought in the battle, but the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* is a monument to the *Volk*, not a *Kaiserdenkmal*. “More than other national monuments, the Leipzig monument stood more explicitly against Wilhelm II’s embrace of classicism just as it stood for the radicalized ethnic

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<sup>37</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Trace: Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870 – 1997* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 65.

<sup>39</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Trace: Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990*, 46.

<sup>40</sup> Gunter Mai, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896-1996* (Brühl: MVR Druck, 1997), 36.

instead of the Reich government ...”<sup>41</sup> The ambiguity was a potential threat to the Prussian core of the Reich government just as it was a threat to the Prussian crown in the wake of the Wars for Liberation.

Due to the *Völki* representing German qualities without swearing allegiance to historical figures, it was easily co-opted into the fascist agenda. Few changes occurred during WWI and the Weimar Republic besides for occasional public events such as soccer matches.<sup>42</sup> During the Third Reich, Hitler was fond of the monument; “...on 16 July 1933, the NSDAP held a rally here at the end of its Saxon *Gauparteitages* (District Party Day). The climax was Hitler’s speech; he appeared at the foot of the structure alongside other party leaders, in order to present himself as an advocate of the legacy of the 1813 warriors.”<sup>43</sup> Unlike the victorious Prussians, Hitler’s generation lost against France and her allies during WWI. To undermine this humiliation, Hitler casted himself as a spiritual successor to the 1813 warriors. Continuing this trend, the fascists reinterpreted the monument as a symbol of their revanchist policy. Weeks before Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia, a German politician proclaimed at the steps of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*, “You may now say: there is no danger at all! ... Peace is assured for a long time ... Yes ... whoever speaks, or even thinks like that, belongs to those still uneducated... 'The ethnic state will have to fight for its existence; ...”<sup>44</sup> Even though the *Völki* was meant to represent victory over the French, its ambivalence to German virtues made it compatible with fascist ideologies such as *Liebesraum* or an aggressive foreign policy. There were no physical changes to the structure besides from swastika banners hanged on the exterior; this was a testament to how easily Nazis reinterpreted the existing elements to justify their narrative. When WWII began,

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<sup>41</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Trace: Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990*, 46.

<sup>42</sup> Steffen Poser, “Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Volkerschlachtdenkmal zwischen 1914 und 1989“, in *Von Kult zur Kulisse: das Volkerschlachtdenkmal als Gegenstand der Geschichtskultur* (Markranstädt: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1995), 82.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

Leipzigers held memorials for their dead at the *Völki* following in the tradition of the 1813 soldiers, just as Hitler compared himself to.<sup>45</sup> When American troops marched on Leipzig, a small band of fanatic Germans boarded themselves inside the monument where they stored two months of supplies for the impending siege.<sup>46</sup> However, after a couple of days, the German troops surrendered and abandoned the monument.

The flexibility of the Leipzig Monument that the Nazis abused saved it from destruction during the Cold War. Though the monument could not be taken down under Directive No. 30 since it was a Second Reich structure, there were still calls for its demolition. The justifications were for resources; a monument composed of thirty thousand tons of concrete and granite was enticing in war-torn Germany. That never came to fruition because as part of the Soviet bloc, the Battle of the Nations Monument was reinterpreted as a monument to German-Russian friendship. “Albert Norden, member of the Political bureau of the SED, claimed the "progressive tradition" of the liberation wars for the GDR as the "banner bearer of the nation, the perpetuator and finisher of the work of those who gloriously fought here 150 years ago."<sup>47</sup> After all, Prussia and Russia fought together against Napoleon just as East Germany and the Soviet Union fought against fascism and capitalism. Once again, this new memory of cooperation conflicted with the physical components of the monument which made no reference to Russia, Austria, or Sweden. In this sense, the physical record conflicted with the most recent memory.

Though the monument was not demolished thanks to this false memory, the *Völki* remained in the limelight thanks to sports. The city of Leipzig held several sporting competitions and used the monument as a backdrop for these ceremonies. Since there was still a chance of German unification in the 1950s, the sports festival was called the German

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<sup>45</sup> “Weihestunde im Völkerschlachtendenkmal,” *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, October 1, 1943, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Michael E. Haskew, “Last Stand in Leipzig, 1945,” *WWII History Magazine*, April 3, 2017, accessed June 14, 2018, <http://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/wwii/last-stand-in-leipzig-1945/>

<sup>47</sup> Steffen Poser, “Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Völkerschlachtendenkmals zwischen 1914 und 1989“, in *Von Kult zur Kulisse: das Völkerschlachtendenkmal als Gegenstand der Geschichtskultur*, p 96.

Gymnastics and Sports Festival; West German visitors numbered around 32,000 for the 1956 festival even if West German athletes were not allowed to compete.<sup>48</sup> The event would only gain the GDR label in the 1960s when any chance for unification vanished. Even though the Soviets saw the monument as a symbol of cooperation, East Germans could have viewed it as a beacon of hope of German unification – a closer interpretation to what Thieme and Arndt intended the Battle of Nations Monument to represent.

The *Völki* encapsulates the ambiguities and dangers of *völkisch*, nationalistic themes. After all, this monument is such an enigma for German monuments. It embodies quintessential elements of German identity from the granite stone, the oak trees, to references to an ancient Germanic past. On the other hand, the monument is an outlier in this deluge of neoclassical structures during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It even fails as a memorial to the fallen since the only reference to the actual conflict is a crypt. Nothing else pays homage to the Battle of Nations. Yet Germans and Soviets alike viewed the battle and the monument as a unifying force. The Battle of Nations gave birth to the idea of the German state, the fascists viewed themselves following in the legacy of the victorious 1813 soldiers, and the Soviets looked to the historic battle to smooth German-Soviet relations. No other monument represents the beauty and ugliness of German society from the nineteenth century onwards.

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<sup>48</sup> Molly Wilkinson Johnson, *Training Socialist Citizens: Sports and the State in East Germany* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 139.

## The Kyffhäuserdenkmal

The Kyffhäuser shares a similar narrative as the Battle of the Nations Monument, but it is worthy of its own section based on fundamental differences. Bruno Schmitz, who was the architect for the Leipzig Monument, also constructed the Kyffhäuser a few years prior. Unlike Bruno Schmitz’ other accomplishments, the Kyffhäuser remains an obscure tourist attraction to this day despite being the third largest monument in Germany. The first factor that differentiates the Kyffhäuser is that it is a *Kaiserdenkmal*, a monument dedicated to a Kaiser. This difference was the main point of contention the German government held against the Leipzig monument which lacked any features commemorating the Kaiser. The second aspect that differentiates these two structures is the location of the Kyffhäuser. Located in the federal state of Thüringen, this region is one of the most mystical places in Germany - even the pronunciation of Kyffhäuser comes from the Old German dialect. The monolith lies on one of the peaks of the Kyffhäuser Mountains where the name originates from. The builders chose to construct the monument next to the ruins of a castle from the *Hohenstaufen* era during the twelfth and thirteenth-centuries.<sup>49</sup> The region is rich in history and myths which inspired the main attraction of the Kyffhäuser – a larger than life stone carving of Barbarossa.

The myth states that Barbarossa slumbers deep in the mountains awaiting his return to the waking world. Barbarossa is the mythical figure of King Frederick I, a Holy Roman emperor who ruled for the majority of the twelfth-century who drowned in 1190 while fighting during the Third Crusade. According to the myth, Barbarossa and his troops will awaken to restore Germany to its former glory that it experienced during the Holy Roman

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<sup>49</sup> “Kyffhäuserdenkmal,” *Tourismus im Thurnigen*, accessed June 10, 2018, [http://www.kyffhaeuser-denkmal.de/web/de/content/content.php?areaid=2&menuID=84&active\\_menu=3&vhm=&area=Kyffh%E4user-Denkmal&menu=Kyffh%E4user%20Denkmal&content=](http://www.kyffhaeuser-denkmal.de/web/de/content/content.php?areaid=2&menuID=84&active_menu=3&vhm=&area=Kyffh%E4user-Denkmal&menu=Kyffh%E4user%20Denkmal&content=)

Empire.<sup>50</sup> The presence of ravens flying over the mountain is a sign of Barbarossa’s influence; when the ravens disappear from the skies, Barbarossa will reawaken.

The people who lived in this region used to believe in Norse mythology, so the parallels between Barbarossa and Odin, often referred to as Wotan in German, are abundant. Odin, a warrior figure like Frederick I, is usually portrayed as an old man. He is depicted to have white hair unlike Barbarossa who has red hair; the name *Barbarossa* even means red beard. However, Odin’s son Thor tends to have red hair in most translations of the Norse myths which strengthens the physical comparison between the two warrior-kings. Both Odin and Barbarossa used ravens as messengers in their respective myths. The German people viewed Kaiser Wilhelm I as the living reincarnation of Frederick I who would unify Germany and return it to the glory days of the Holy Roman Empire, the First Reich in German history. As the modern Barbarossa, Felix Dahn coined the name *Barbablanca*, white beard, to pay homage to Kaiser Wilhelm I who carried on Barbarossa’s legacy.<sup>51</sup>

The German Kaisers used this popular analogy to claim legitimacy and stifle internal dissent by brandishing these metaphors as veiled threats. The myth of Barbarossa represented the possibility of a united Germany; after all, “the new nation-state has a historically anchored identity by referring to the mythical Heroes of the early days who were stylized to be proto-national forerunners.”<sup>52</sup> Barbarossa was not the only hero who symbolized the rising nationalism of the era; the *Hermannendenkmal* in North Rhine-Westphalia represented Arminius, a German hero who defeated three Roman legions. Though the Warriors’ Band built the Kyffhäuser in response to the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1888, his son Wilhelm II used the site to solidify his position with internal pundits. Ravens were often associated with Roman Catholics who Protestants considered enemies of the German state. Some people

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<sup>50</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Trace: Artifacts of German Memory 1870-1990*, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Stefan Goebel, "Re-Membered and Re-Mobilized: The 'Sleeping Dead' in Interwar Germany and Britain," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 4 (2004): 494.

<sup>52</sup> Gunter Mai, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896-1996*, (Brühl: MVR Druck, 1997), 16.

interpreted the myth so that Barbarossa would stir from his slumber only with the removal of ravens, Catholics, from German territories. At the end of the Franco-Prussian War, a speaker in Thüringen proclaimed that, “the black ravens that circle the site [the Kyffhäuser Mountains] are Catholic priests and Jesuits who actually belong in the camp of the Gauls, that is in France.”<sup>53</sup> Though religious tensions faded by the time of its completion, the Kyffhäuser was one of several national monuments which the government could have used to intimidate minority groups within the German community.

In regards to the physical features of the memorial, the most impactful set-pieces of the Kyffhäuser are the Barbarossa and the Wilhelm I statues. The Barbarossa statue and the main tower were constructed out of red sandstone mined from the mountain; the chasm underneath Barbarossa was actually a quarry used during the construction.<sup>54</sup> In this sense, the monolith is a natural part of the landscape strengthening the myth of Barbarossa residing within the mountains. The statue depicts Barbarossa waking up from his long slumber, grabbing his sword with one hand and his beard with the other. Some of his sleeping soldiers are also present, carved out of portions of the quarry below. Though an impressive sight, the copper equestrian statue of Wilhelm I dressed in military garb above Barbarossa captures the eye. Accompanying the Kaiser are two allegorical gods, one for history and the other for war.<sup>55</sup> From a viewing platform inside the tower, it is possible to experience the perspective of Wilhelm I gazing over the “green heart of Germany.”<sup>56</sup> Based on the positioning of Wilhelm I and Barbarossa, the Kaiser has succeeded Barbarossa as the saviour of Germany. From one Reich to the next, Barbarossa’s presence indicates that the legacy of the Holy

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<sup>53</sup> Hans-Michael Körner, *Staat und Geschichte im Königreich Bayern* (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1992), 281.

<sup>54</sup> "Kyffhäuserdenkmal," deutsche-schutzgebiete, accessed June 12, 2018, <https://deutsche-schutzgebiete.de/wordpress/kyffhaeuserdenkmal/>

<sup>55</sup> Kyffhäuserdenkmal, “*Tourismus im Thurnigen*,” accessed June 10, 2018, [http://www.kyffhaeuserdenkmal.de/web/de/content/content.php?areaID=2&menuID=84&active\\_menu=3&vhm=&area=Kyffh%E4user-Denkmal&menu=Kyffh%E4user%20Denkmal&content=](http://www.kyffhaeuserdenkmal.de/web/de/content/content.php?areaID=2&menuID=84&active_menu=3&vhm=&area=Kyffh%E4user-Denkmal&menu=Kyffh%E4user%20Denkmal&content=)

<sup>56</sup> Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870 – 1997* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 64.

Roman Empire lives on in the Second Reich. The presence of the First Reich castle just meters away from the Kyffhäuser solidifies this passing of the torch from one empire to the next.

The Kyffhäuser continued to witness the progression of German history from the Second Reich to the Third Reich through two additional leaders. The Warrior Clubs who funded the memorial used the site as a venue for many events; the representative meetings of the German Patriotic Association took place there every year in September, and Warrior Club youth groups gathered for festivals and field sessions in the mountains.<sup>57</sup> The most important member of these patriot bands was honorary-president Paul von Hindenburg who represented the Weimar Republic in German continuity. Hindenburg served under Wilhelm II as one of the Kaiser’s top generals during WWI and reigned over Germany as its last president during the Weimar Republic. On June 19, 1921 at the Kyffhäuser for a German Patriotic Association sponsored event, Hindenburg stated that, “Today the monument reminds us of the deepest fall of our people, of everything we have lost. The monument also reminds us, however, that we must not despair, but must work in faithfulness, with firm faith in the future of Germany and in serious, iron duty, each in his profession, in the re-establishment of the fatherland!”<sup>58</sup> Just as Barbarossa sleeps until his return, Germany would reclaim its former glory in time. Due to the cyclical nature of history, fascists viewed Adolf Hitler as the new Barbarossa to replace the decaying Weimar Republic. This was only possible in thanks to Hindenburg who facilitated Hitler’s rise to power. In this light, the erection of a Hindenburg statue near the Kyffhäuser in 1939 by the Nazis thanked him for his unintentional role in the rise of fascism. From Barbarossa, the Kaisers, to Hindenburg, the baton now rested in Hitler’s hand.

The Kyffhäuser became an imperialistic symbol under the Third Reich due to the promise of restoring former glories. This return to greatness became associated with

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<sup>57</sup> Gunther Mai, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896-1996*, 238.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 238.

reclaiming the territories lost under the Treaty of Versailles. The establishment of a hall of honour inside the Kyffhäuser reflected these imperialistic ambitions and revanchist policies. A plaque commemorating the dead from WWI and pledging allegiance to Hitler was the main feature of the hall; to each side of the plaque were dozens of flags that represented different branches of the military. Lastly, several jars filled with soil from previous “German territories” such as Danzig and East Prussia, now part of Poland, were present.<sup>59</sup> Wilhelm Reinhard, president of the German Patriot Association during the Third Reich, stated that, “The final coronation of the call for German unity in the Third Reich was bestowed upon Adolf Hitler, who rose from the steel bath of the World War.”<sup>60</sup> Hitler would be the next Barbarossa from a legacy of leaders who promised German hegemony in central Europe. Though Bruno Schmitz’s constructed this monument as a memorial to a Kaiser Wilhelm I, the Nazis repurposed the Kyffhäuser to justify Germany’s aggressive foreign policies as the fulfilment of the Barbarossa myth.

With the end of WWII, the fate of the Kyffhäuser was in a precarious situation under Soviet control. Unlike the Battle of the Nations Monument that could be reinterpreted as a joint war memorial from the Wars of Liberation, the Kyffhäuser, a monument to a German Kaiser, did not have that luxury. Soviet troops tore down the Hindenburg statue in 1945 and left it in a ditch to be rediscovered in 2003.<sup>61</sup> Installed in 1968/9, communist themed panels depicting German workers replaced the fascist plaque and urns in the former hall of honour.<sup>62</sup> Besides the forgotten Hindenburg statue buried in the ground, no Third Reich related emblems remained.

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<sup>59</sup> Bill Niven, “The Legacy of Second German Empire Monuments after 1945,” in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. Bill Niven and Chloe Paver (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010), 399.

<sup>60</sup> *Frankenhäuser Zeitung*, June 6, 1937.

<sup>61</sup> “Hindenburg Statue Feldherr in der Grube,” *Spiegel Online*, July 29, 2008, accessed June 20, 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/video/hindenburg-statue-feldherr-in-der-grube-video-33617.html>

<sup>62</sup> Bill Niven, “The Legacy of Second German Empire Monuments after 1945,” 401.

Though the Soviets were likely responsible for the destruction of the hall of honour and all fascist objects housed in the Kyffhäuser, the troops were more benevolent toward the structure than the local Germans who campaigned for its demise. The Soviets did pillage and destroy parts of the Kyffhäuser – the military flags were a favourite souvenir of the occupying troops.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, there were several accounts of Soviets officials advocating for its preservation.<sup>64</sup> It was the local German officials from Thuringia who called for its destruction. August Frölich, who was a member of the state assembly in 1950, stated this:

“I consider it absolutely essential that we seriously consider what structural alterations of the Kyffhäuser monument should take place. I feared that otherwise we would be reproached by some party with accusations of the injustices--committed by the state of Thuringia as well as its government and state. In what remains, I assume that our economy will be granted a valuable service by providing the equestrian statue of William I, provided that my assumption is correct, that this statue is made of bronze.<sup>65</sup>

There were two major points presented in this speech. The first was that the local Germans feared culpability for their involvement in the Third Reich and viewed the Kyffhäuser as an imperialistic symbol. The second point was the proposal to liquidize elements from the memorial for raw material and money; disassembling the entire monument brick by brick would have been too cumbersome. Opponents levelled similar suggestions towards the Leipzig monument, but the eagerness of the local Germans to erase their past, due to their own guilt, is unsettling. Besides the communist panels installed, the Kyffhäuser was identical to its original design during the Second Reich when it was not interpreted as an imperialistic monument. Otto Grotewohl, the first prime minister of the GDR, intervened in January 1951

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<sup>63</sup> Klaus Bemann, *Deutsche Nationaldenkmäler* (Berlin: Matrix Media, 2015), 212.

<sup>64</sup> Gunter Mai, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896-1996*, 244.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Gunter Mai, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896-1996*, 247.

to advocate for the preservation of the Kyffhäuser.<sup>66</sup> It is uncertain if Grotewohl’s intervention had any impact; rather, the cost to remove the “imperialistic” elements was likely too expensive for the local department of finance to approve or execute.<sup>67</sup> However, this difference in opinion within the East German population is fascinating, for it was the locals who clamoured for the monument’s defacement while the “outsiders” from Berlin and the Soviet Union petitioned for its preservation.

The Kyffhäuser represents the largest span of German history despite being a Second Reich construction. Starting with the Teutonic tribes who worshiped the Norse gods in these mountains, the monument represents seven different eras of German history - Norse, First Reich, Second Reich, Weimar Republic, Third Reich, Cold War, and now a European context. The logo for the hundredth anniversary of the Kyffhäuser had a subtle change; instead of the ravens associated with the Barbarossa myth, twelve stars glimmered above the monument – a clear reference to the European flag.<sup>68</sup> The fluidity of this monument testifies to how quickly the public’s perception of a monument or a historical figure can change overtime. It also disproves the static nature of monuments, for this monument was dedicated to Barbarossa and Kaiser Wilhelm I alone. Nevertheless, the Kyffhäuser continues to change to reflect the shifting values of Germany.

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<sup>66</sup> “Rülpst Zufrieden,” *Der Spiegel* Online, June 24, 1996, accessed July 2018, <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8939588.html>

<sup>67</sup> Gunter Mai, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896-1996*, 253.

<sup>68</sup> Bill Niven, “The Legacy of Second German Empire Monuments after 1945,” 404.

## The Nuremberg Nazi Rallying Grounds

The interplay between acknowledging the atrocities of the Third Reich in the post-war era while eradicating fascist structures is a difficult one; the preservation or removal of concentration camps face a similar predicament. The Nuremberg Nazi Rallying Grounds, *Reichsparteitagsgelände*, were one of these monuments. The Nazis chose to build the grounds in Nuremberg because of the city’s history, for, “Nuremberg's past as a free imperial city and one of the locations for the medieval Reichstag, the Imperial Diet or general assembly of the Holy Roman Empire, was easily reinterpreted to fit into the concept of the National Socialist Reich.”<sup>69</sup> The city was a stronghold for Nazi sympathizers in Germany, so the grounds consolidated party support in the region. Before the construction of the grounds, only a small park and a memorial hall built in 1929 stood on the grounds before the complete “nazification” of the space in 1933. The original purpose of the hall was to commemorate the soldiers from Nuremberg who fell in WWI. Though a small monument, the hall became an unwitting pawn; it was often the secret venue for fascist meetings before 1933. Eventually, the fascist co-opted the hall of honour as a main feature of the proposed rallying grounds.<sup>70</sup> The grand scheme for the grounds was never completed; the only structures completed were the Congress Hall and the *Zeppelinfeld*. These finished structures were featured heavily in the six Nazi rallies the grounds hosted along with their appearances in the propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*.<sup>71</sup> The structures that were not finished included the German Stadium, which would have been the largest stadium in the world to this day, and the *Märzfeld*. The proposed field would have been the German equivalent to the Campus Martius of the Roman

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<sup>69</sup> “The Nazi Rallying Grounds,” *Dokumentationszentrum Reichsparteitagsgelände Museen der Stadt Nürnberg*, accessed on July 2018, <https://museums.nuernberg.de/documentation-center/national-socialism/the-nazi-party-rally-grounds/nuremberg-as-the-city-of-nazi-party-rallies/>

<sup>70</sup> Markus Urban, “Perpetrator Sites in Bavaria,” in *Memorialization in Germany since 1945*, ed. Bill Niven and Chloe Paver, 105.

<sup>71</sup> “The Nazi Rallying Grounds,” *Dokumentationszentrum Reichsparteitagsgelände Museen der Stadt Nürnberg*.

Empire where war games and rallies took place. WWII postponed all construction projects leaving the grounds in a state of limbo until the Americans captured Nuremberg.

When Allied troops captured the city in April 1945, the treatment of the site in the immediate post-war era by the troops and the German citizens was not as severe as one may have expected for a site featured in Nazi propaganda. Allied bombers caused minor damage to the buildings compared to the rampant destruction of the old city sector of Nuremberg. However, the most blatant destruction of fascist symbols was when soldiers blew up of the large swastika which adorned the top of the *Zeppelinfeld*. This act was symbolic, for the Americans performed a ritual before the emblem’s demise. On April 22, 1945, the 3rd US Infantry Division held a ceremony at the grounds to commemorate the capture of Nuremberg.<sup>72</sup> On that day, a large American flag covered the swastika, and commanders received awards while standing at the podium Hitler spoke from during the rallies. On the 25th, the soldiers removed the flag and blew up the swastika; this was recorded and later broadcasted.<sup>73</sup> Besides the removal of other fascist symbols and clearing the grounds from rubble, Nurembergers left the buildings untouched. Only safety concerns or urban expansion spurred Germans into altering the grounds in significant ways. Germans demolished the iconic pillars which made the *Zeppelintribüne* so distinguishable in 1967 due to the columns being a safety hazard. The unfinished Olympic stadium became a warehouse and depot, and construction workers removed the pillars from the incomplete *Märzfeld* to make space for a residential district beside the grounds. The Nuremberg city council did not view the preservation of the grounds as a priority. It was not until 1974 when the Bavarian Conservation Department based in Munich classified the Rallying Grounds under new heritage protection legislation. This law decreed that Nuremberg was responsible for the

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<sup>72</sup> Geoffrey R. Walden, “Nürnberg Part 2,” *Third Reich in Ruins*, accessed on June 2018, <http://www.thirdreichruins.com/nuernberg2.htm>

<sup>73</sup> RobertHJacksonCenter, “Nuremberg Post War Footage,” YouTube, November 2014, accessed on July 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_2tt56uk5Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_2tt56uk5Y)

preservation and restoration of the site which it had previously ignored in favour of quick solutions.<sup>74</sup>

Aside from these modifications, the grounds were accessible for a wide variety of groups. The grounds became a “soldiers’ field,” and many events took place there to entertain the occupying troops. Unlike the Berlin Olympic Stadium which housed the British headquarters in Berlin and was off limits to the general public, Germans organized their own events on the Rallying Grounds.<sup>75</sup> The General German Automobile Club (ADAC) hosted one of their events in 1955 at the *Zeppelinfeld* which was open to Germans and soldiers alike. This utilization of the space differed from the Berlin Olympic Stadium where citizens were only allowed on the premises for certain events sanctioned by the British forces. From motor races, sports competitions, to the 1969 Jehovah Witness World Congress, almost anyone could use the *Zeppelinfeld* as a public space because of its functionality.<sup>76</sup> The practicality of these fascist buildings marginalized early attempts of commemoration. This was not the exception, for, “As in many other German cities, here too [in Nuremberg] there is no sense for many decades of the special historical significance of the Nazi structures.”<sup>77</sup> By not acknowledging the original purpose of the grounds, the Nurembergers could use the site without qualm. Another example of convenience outweighing the past in the state of Bavaria was the *Königsplatz* in Munich. The square was utilized as a marching ground for Nazi rallies during the Third Reich but was originally a park. The automobile normalized the square and the buildings around it, for “While the city’s increasing flow of traffic transformed Hitler’s granite-paved marching rounds...the *Königsplatz*’s abundance of open space offered itself to

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<sup>74</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 77.

<sup>75</sup> “New Use of the Former Reich Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg: The General German Automobile Club (ADAC) Hosts an Event on Zeppelin Field (1955),” *Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, accessed on July 2018, [http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=2528](http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2528)

<sup>76</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, 72.

<sup>77</sup> “The Nazi Rallying Grounds,” *Dokumentationszentrum Reichsparteitagsgelände Museen der Stadt Nürnberg*.

motorists as a convenient spot to park their cars.”<sup>78</sup> The functionality of these spaces outweighed the past associated with the sites in the immediate post-war era. This was detrimental to early efforts to memorialize the grounds or to acknowledge German culpability.

A policy of normalization was the earliest attempt at some form of commemoration, but many of the proposals were bizarre or detrimental. The main policy Nuremberg adopted to address the grounds was a policy of “profanation.” The term was coined by Hermann Glaser, Nuremberg’s Cultural Director starting in the 1960s.<sup>79</sup> Profanation trivialized the Rallying Grounds through everyday activities; these small, mundane actions chipped away at the aura that many Nazi structures possessed. For example, musicians and bands frequently used the grounds for concerts in the 1960s since the grounds offered a large venue. As Glaser admitted, there are weaknesses to this policy. These bands’ lighting effects evoked a sinister but familiar image, tied to the fascist past. Featured in Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* (1935), one of the most iconic images of the Rallying Grounds is Albert’s Speer’s “cathedral of light” where dozens of spotlights pierced the sky above the *Zeppelinfeld*. Thus, the contemporary usage of this site uncannily references this filmic memory, however, Glaser claimed that due to the policy of profanation, “The synthesizers and flood-lights of rock bands trump the fascist monumental aesthetic á la Riefenstahl.”<sup>80</sup> Though the lighting effects may harken back to popular Nazi imagery, these everyday actions diminish the fascist associations and normalize the site as a revised communal space for local Germans. The policy of profanation was the prevailing view of the Nuremberg administration when it came to confronting the fascist heritage of the Rallying Grounds.

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<sup>78</sup> Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 94.

<sup>79</sup> See Sharon Macdonald’s section on Profanation and the perspective of city official towards the fascist structure in *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted from Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, 88.

Another attempt to normalize the Rallying Grounds went a step too far even for the local citizens who then called for a proper memorial at the site. This bizarre attempt followed in a similar vein to Glaser’s policy of profanation, but even this was too extreme for locals. The proposal was to convert the Congress Hall into a massive shopping mall; services included stores, restaurants, cinemas, sports facilities, and even senior housing. The motto of the project was “Property with personality.” The personality was in reference to the shopping mall maintaining the current façade of the Congress Hall.<sup>81</sup> Albert Speer’s neoclassical style became the selling point for this new shopping mall. The proposal was broadly accepted by elective officials despite the projected cost of 500 million Deutschmarks. Justifications included the city’s lack of a commercial outlet of this caliber and the possibility of generating revenue. This surplus would cover the repair costs for the other buildings on the grounds – a thorn in the side of the government for several decades. Likely influenced by the policy of profanation, Treasurer Schmitz commented that he felt the proposal fitting, “in the spirit of the demystification [to] bring life into the building.”<sup>82</sup> The plan would have likely passed if not for the deluge of letters from outraged citizens who forced a community symposium to address the usage of the grounds. According to the local newspaper outlet, there was a general consensus among the public that the Congress Hall should not be used for commercial use and the site must be maintained, not destroyed, as a reminder of the dangers of National Socialism for future generations.<sup>83</sup> Memorialization was finally a priority. Unfortunately, it required a ridiculous proposal to spark this debate.

Though profanation was a viable approach in the early years, there were some risks associated with normalization, especially for later generations of Nurembergers. These everyday acts of profanation were carried out by ordinary citizens who were also coming to

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>82</sup> Liedtke Gerhard and Dietzfelbinger Eckart, *Nürnberg – Ort der Massen. Das Reichsparteitagsgelände Vorgeschichte und schwieriges Erbe* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004), 112.

<sup>83</sup> “Den Nachgeborenen stets zur Mahnung,” *Nürnberger Nachrichten*, July 11, 1988.

terms with their past. Though the power of these fascist structures lost influence on Nurembergers, the structures also disappeared from their view. Normalization minimized the importance of memorialization and documentation. Gerhard Liedtke, a Nuremberger author, captures this unease in reference to the *Volkfest* held at the grounds:

The picture is well known: on the left the half-circle of the Congress Hall, to the right the whole circle of the ferris wheel...Twice a year – in this almost cozy proximity – the *Volkfest* takes place. What is reckoned to be the gloomiest building in the city becomes a symbol of its gaiety. That isn’t meant to sound cynical. But it is disquieting that nobody is disturbed by the bizarre mixture, that nobody’s jolly good mood is upset. The secret is: the Congress Hall can only be seen by foreigners. To Nurembergers it is invisible. It stands in a blind spot. Nobody will deny that it exists. But nobody can really perceive it. This is because from early childhood they have been trained, by visiting the *Volkfest* twice a year, to develop a blind spot.<sup>84</sup>

Though Nurembergers saw nothing wrong with the usage of the space, the lack of physical documentation located at the site allows it to exert influence and awe on tourists who may be unaware of its history. This implication may sound strange, but there were multiple reports of tourists viewing the rallying grounds as Roman ruins – the exact impression Albert Speer wanted to convey in his “ruin architecture.”<sup>85</sup> This oversight has been corrected in leaps and bounds in recent years; information panels litter the grounds, and a museum now stands beside the Congress Hall, but these have been recent additions. To give some perspective, the first information panels were from 1989.<sup>86</sup> Though the local community may have come to terms with their past, the international community, thus, also requires a proper outlet to engage with these sites through its past historical context in the present.

The Nuremberg Nazi Rallying Grounds have undergone multiple transformations and were the site for many bizarre events hosted by Nurembergers, Germans, and foreigners alike. Some of these actions diminished the aura of the ruins to some people. On the other hand, the lack of gravitas unintentionally enhanced the aura to another group. The grounds are still used today for everyday events, but the presence of a documentation center and

<sup>84</sup> Liedtke Gerhard and Dietzfelbinger Eckart, *Nürnberg – Ort der Massen*, 112.

<sup>85</sup> Markus Urban, “Perpetrator Sites in Bavaria,” 106.

<sup>86</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, 88.

student-guided tours prevent the fascist history from fading away for both Germans and foreigners alike. This is not to imply that the grounds should not be used due to their Nazi past; rather, the grounds should be used while acknowledging history. Without continued memorialization efforts and community involvement, normalization will eventually marginalize inconvenient historical facts until they fade away from collective memory.

## Heidelberger Thingstätte

The Thingstätte is the least known of the chosen monuments, for these structures are generally only known to their local communities. A Thingstätte, also known as a *Thingplatz*, is an open-air amphitheatre part of the Blood and Soil policy conducted by the Ministry of Propaganda under the Third Reich. Carl Niessen coined the term to harken back to the Germanic tribes who conducted counsels in groves as described by Tacitus in *Germania*.<sup>87</sup> Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister of Propaganda from 1935 to 1945, spoke at many of the inauguration ceremonies for these amphitheatres. He emphasized the Thingstätte as National Socialism in stone.<sup>88</sup> After all, these amphitheatres were vessels of *völkisch* qualities based on the plays written and performed with this stage in mind.

Rather than historical dramas, these plays were *Thingspeile* that depicted the community as a “Cult.” The narrative of these plays reinforced what qualities the fascist ideology deemed acceptable. Frequent plays included Kurt Heynicke’s *Road to the Reich* and Richard Euringer’s *German Passion*. What differentiated the *Thingspiele* from other productions were their emphasis on the communities, and what virtues they should exhibit. Euringer even stated that, “Cult not “art” is the purpose of the Thingplatz.”<sup>89</sup> These qualities revolved around racial identity and the values German people were expected to uphold. Thus, playwrights used historical narrative to identify who belonged in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the community, based on these *völkisch* characteristics. According to these *Thingspiele*, German virtues were unalienable to the German people, and these qualities manifested themselves in all Germans throughout history. For example, August Hinrich’s *Die Stedinger* reenacts the slaughter of the Stedinger peasants by an army of crusaders during the medieval ages. This play glorifies the sacrifice of the German peasants, and sacrifice was one of the four major

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<sup>87</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 127.

<sup>88</sup> Jack London, *Theatre under the Nazis* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 73.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Euringer, “Thingspiel-Thesen I,” *Der Führer*, no. 182 (July 5, 1934).

virtues all Germans should possess. Though the crusaders slaughtered the peasants, their values persisted and lived on in modern Germany, fostered within the *Volksgemeinschaft*. The Thingstätte and the *Thingspeile* conducted on stage were the breeding ground for fostering the ideal National Socialist, for Germans should exhibit these innate German virtues.

Though based in history, the underlying message of these plays followed in a similar vein to the fascists’ political narrative – Western civilization had killed Germany, and the Third Reich would resurrect the nation. From the Romans to the Treaty of Versailles, fascists interpreted history as a series of insults towards German society. With WWI and the Weimar Republic as the backdrop of a decaying society, the Third Reich would breathe life into a dying nation. This emphasis on death and rebirth mimicked Christian beliefs which these playwrights often invoked. *German Passion*, which premiered in Heidelberg, followed this narrative beat for beat. The protagonist of the play, an “unknown spirit,” rises from the dead on a WWI battlefield wearing a crown of barbed wire to lead the living against evil spirits.<sup>90</sup> As stated by Erika Fisher-Lichte, “The ritual pattern of death and rebirth of the nation seems to have had an enormous appeal to nationally minded people...Undoubtedly, in combination with Christian mythology, it was able to trigger quasi-religious feelings, to be directed toward the nation...”<sup>91</sup> After all, the Thingstätte was not the only NS sponsored site built in Heidelberg; the fascists constructed a cemetery for WWI soldiers around the same time.<sup>92</sup> It would have been possible to see the Thingstätte from the cemetery, for they were built on opposing sides of the river. The Thingstätte and the cemetery were two sides of the same coin, life and death portrayed on and off the stage.

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<sup>90</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, 124.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

<sup>92</sup> Rainer Stommer, *Die inszenierte Volksgemeinschaft: die "Thing-Bewegung" im Dritten Reich*, (Marburg: Jonas, 1985), 105.

Like a church, the design of the Thingstätte elevates and fosters community engagement in the productions. Just as monoliths mark holy sites, the ministry approved the Heidelberg Thingstätte for the mystical qualities of the region. The theatre lies next to the ruins of a Roman temple dedicated to Mercury and a Catholic monastrey. Though Heidelberg does not have a well-known myth such as that of Barbarossa, Germans treasured the Heidelberg Castle and the local university as historical landmarks. In regards to the physical description of the Thingstätte, the amphitheatre has no physical barriers between the stage and the stands. This lack of separation between the performance and the audience was intentional; Goebbels stated that, “The National Socialists will reunite people and stage. We will create a theatre of fifty thousand and hundred thousand; we will draw even the last Volk comrade into the magic of dramatic art...”<sup>93</sup> This quote harkens back to Max Reinhardt’s “Theatre for Five Thousand” but with the megalomaniac twist often associated with Nazi architecture. Ludwig Moshhammer, an architect who worked on other Thingstätte sites, reaffirmed this in an article in *Die Bauwelt*. He wrote that, “The performers and chorus can pour out onto the performance areas...so that the spiritual tension of the spectator rises towards a feeling of total communion with the play and full participation.”<sup>94</sup> The Thingstätte was the church, and the performers and the audience were active participants in the pseudo-religious plays. As a community, they congregated and consumed “holy communion” where the body and blood represented the *völkisch* spirit and those who died defending it. As the ministry had intended, the Thingstätte were sites of National Socialism captured in stone.

Despite the cultural revolution the ministry hoped these theatres would inspire, the Thingstätte had multiple issues, and Goebbels eventually abandoned them. The Blood and Soil policy never gained traction and was more of a pet-project of Goebbels. Inadequacy and repeated failures doomed the endeavour. Though the ministry projected over a thousand sites,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>94</sup> Eicher, Thomas, Barbara Pande, and Henning Rischbieter. *Theater im "Dritten Reich": Theaterpolitik, Spielplanstruktur, NS-Dramatik* (Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer, 2000), 37.

only around forty were finalized and recognized.<sup>95</sup> The acoustics were inconsistent and were subjected to fickle weather; there were times when the audience heard the flickering flames over the voices of the actors.<sup>96</sup> By October 1935, the ministry liquidized the Thingstätte program along with a mandate to change the name of these theatres; “...from this moment, any such terms as *Thing*, or *Thing* site may no longer be brought into conjunction with the Party...The various Thing sites...will be forthwith described as ‘open air theatre’...”<sup>97</sup> The local communities still used the sites, but the government distanced themselves from the cult-like terminology.<sup>98</sup> The last state-sponsored *Thingspiele* was performed at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. In the end, radio and film disseminated propaganda faster and was easier to regulate. Without constant surveillance, a *Thingspiel* could go rogue unlike a propaganda film financed and produced by the government. Germans still used the Heidelberg Thingstätte after 1936; however, with the start of WWII, the Thingstätte was left untended and forgotten in the mountains.

The Thingstätte shared a similar trajectory to the Nuremberg Nazi Rallying Grounds upon its rediscovery after WWII. Heidelbergers decided amongst themselves that the site should crumble unnoticed; the Heidelberg guidebook up to the 1960s stated that, "May this useless stone [the Thingstätte] become testimony of an unworthy time, and let it rot as soon as possible."<sup>99</sup> However, American soldiers occupying the city stumbled upon the theatre. The troops used the Thingstätte for multiple activities including as a basketball court and for jazz concerts. In retrospect, the musical component defies the original purpose of the Thingstätte. The Americans used the site to display American attributes rather than the intended *völkish* qualities the fascist built the theatre for. The Third Reich considered jazz

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<sup>95</sup> Gadberry, Glen. "The Thingspiel and Das Frankenberger Würfelspiel." *The Drama Review: TDR* 24, no. 1 (1980), p 103.

<sup>96</sup> Jack London, *Theatre under the Nazis*, p 75.

<sup>97</sup> Bundesarchiv Koblenz Zsg 101/6: 153-4.

<sup>98</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, p 145.

<sup>99</sup> Johannes Link, "Thingstätte Heidelberg: Nachkriegszeit bis heute (Interview), *YouTube*, accessed July 2018.

music degenerate, but it gained popularity during Allied occupation. As jazz music flowed down from the mountain, reluctant Germans came to accept and use the amphitheatre for their own events. The Thingstätte became the venue for religious services, pop concerts, and well-known performers such as Plácido Domingo and Montserrat Caballé.<sup>100</sup> Outfitted with modern commodities, the Heidelberg Thingstätte is a fully functional amphitheatre. This is not the exception; other popular Thingstätte include the Loreley Thingstätte that hosted Metallica and the Bad Segeberg Thingstätte where the annual Karl May Fest takes place. The only real resistance from Heidelbergers are concerns about increased traffic that may harm the small town environment.<sup>101</sup> Any association with the Blood and Soil policy that spawned these amphitheatres faded away.

The Heidelberg Thingstätte remains the most interesting of all the other Thingstätte mentioned so far because it is the most popular venue to celebrate *Walpurgisnacht*. Also known as the Witches’ Night, Walpurgisnacht occurs from April 30<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Many European countries celebrate this holiday by lighting bonfires to ward off witches and spirits, but the holiday originates from German culture and remains a prominent celebration for young adults. Thousands of students from the Heidelberg University trek up the Philosopher’s Way into the mountains to celebrate at the amphitheatre. Activities include drinking, music, fire dancers, and bonfires scattered throughout the site. The celebration has attracted more than 10,000 people in recent years including tourists.<sup>102</sup> The entire event is community-run; volunteers from the fire department and medical services organize the celebrations. In contrast, the local government does not endorse or provide assistance. 2018 was the first year the Heidelberg government banned any celebration of Walpurgisnacht at

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<sup>100</sup> Jack London, *Theatre under the Nazis*, 89.

<sup>101</sup> Johannes Link, “Thingstätte Heidelberg: Nachkriegszeit bis heute (Interview).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

the Thingstätte under the threat of a hefty fine.<sup>103</sup> The government cites safety concerns, but the celebration has taken place at the Thingstätte for decades, likely since the site’s conception.

In a sense, Walpurgisnacht celebrations represent the *völkish* qualities and folktales that the Nazis constructed the Thingstätte to promote. This is not to say that current use of the space promotes fascist ideals. Instead, these celebrations serve to counter the site’s former usages. As long as participants are aware of the site’s history, Heidelbergers should continue to use the Thingstätte. Heidelbergers have cultivated a sense of awareness to prevent oblivious tourist of thinking that they have stumbled upon Roman ruins. There are information panels on-site to inform visitors of the theatre’s past, and the city funds maintenance and provides transportation up the mountains.<sup>104</sup> In regards to *Walpurgisnacht*’s celebrations mimicking *völkisch* characteristics, the congregation that gathers for the event dispels this misconception. During the Nazi Regime, only people who exhibited *völkish* traits would have attended *Thingspiele* productions - in other words ethnic, white Germans. Instead, a diverse student body and tourists celebrate Walpurgisnacht together. This community defies what national socialists deemed “German.”<sup>105</sup> Though a Nazi-sponsored theatre, Heidelbergers have incorporated the Thingstätte into their community as a positive landmark rather than of a solemn reminder of the reach of fascism in all facets of life during the Third Reich.

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<sup>103</sup> Steffen Blatt, “Stadt Heidelberg verbietet Walpurgis-Feier auf der Thingstätte,” *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, December 7, 2017.

<sup>104</sup> “Mit dem Hangbus noch öfter zur Thingstätte: Der Gemeinderat beschließt die Erweiterung des Busangebots auf den Heiligenberg,” *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, May 11, 2015.

<sup>105</sup> For interviews with participants and volunteers at the Walpurgisnacht celebrations, see David Bilderbrand, “Dokumentation Thingstätte Heideberg ‘Fackelkinder,’ *YouTube*.

## Conclusion

Based on the extensive history each and every single one of these monuments bears witness to, the preconceived notion that monuments represent only a static period of time is incorrect. Rather, monuments shift to reflect an ever-changing society. For example, the journey of the quadriga of the Brandenburg Gate resembles the trajectory of German history. Monuments embody the ideals of multiple generations, but they can also serve to remind future generations of past failures. This is particularly true for monuments associated with nationalism and fascism. However, as these chosen monuments make clear, even if they are tainted with a dark past, these monuments have a place in German society.

These structures should remain, as either memorials or repurposed public spaces, as long as they can acknowledge the complicated history associated with these structures often forgotten by onlookers. The chosen fascist sites such as the Nuremberg Rallying Grounds and the Thingstätte have done well in documenting the past either in the form of information panels or nearby museums; however, these have been recent editions in the past three decades. On the other hand, unlike Germans in the immediate post-war period who denied the history surrounding them, these monuments now shine a light on a dark heritage that should never be forgotten, lest it repeats itself.

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