

Heritage and Society

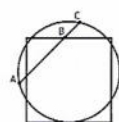


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—
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Heritage and Society

Edited by Robert Kusek and Jacek Purchla

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TYPESETTING

Wojciech Kubiena (Biuro Szeryfy)

PRINTING AND BINDING

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International Cultural Centre

Rynek Główny 25, 31-008 Krakow, Poland

tel.: +48 12 42 42 811, fax: +48 12 42 17 844

e-mail: sekretariat@mck.krakow.pl

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The Longing for History and Patterns of Exclusion: Heritage and Society in the City of Dresden

Tobias Strahl

Technische Universität Dresden (Germany)

In der Verwandlung enthüllt sich das Wesen der Dinge immer als je dasselbe, als Substrat von Herrschaft.

(Max Horkheimer / Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*)

On 7 February 2017 an installation called *Monument* was inaugurated in the historical centre of the city of Dresden. Though such events are common in a city with a brisk and diverse cultural life, things were different here. From the very beginning *Monument* was accompanied by an almost hostile protest. Giving his opening address, Mayor Dirk Hilbert even became target of personal insults and physical threats.

Monument is the work of Syrian-born artist Manaf Halbouni, who grew up both in Damaskus and Dresden and holds a diploma in sculpture from the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Dresden. For his installation the artist assembled three discarded omnibuses as an upright monolithic block in Dresden's Neumarkt, in front of the the historical Frauenkirche, reconstructed in 2005 (George Bähr, 1726–1743). According to the artist, *Monument* was created on the basis of an image from the war-torn city of Aleppo, showing three similar buses erected at the entrance of a street with the aim to protect people from sniper fire. Images like this are familiar since the war in Bosnia where streetcars and buses served the same purpose along the so-called *Snajperska aleja* [Sniper Alley] in the besieged city of Sarajevo. Halbouni's *Monument* was intended to challenge imaginations of war, destruction, and sacrifice amongst its audience. In doing so, it provoked a strong emotional response from the Dresden public, ranging from fierce repulsion to euphoric acclamation. *Monument* can be seen as marking the fundamental division of the city's society regarding its heritage.



Image 1: Manaf Halbouni's installation *Monument* in front of the reconstructed Frauenkirche (2005) at the Neumarkt in Dresden during an on-site inspection with the artist on 9 March 2017
© Tobias Strahl

To understand the extent of the issue it is important to note that the Dresden Neumarkt is not just any city square and the time chosen for the inauguration of Halbouni's *Monument* was not arbitrary either. On 13 and 14 February 1945 allied bomb raids against Nazi Germany destroyed much of the city's historical core. On 15 February the already damaged Frauenkirche finally collapsed. The commemoration of the event – commonly known as “the destruction of Dresden” – is solemnised on a yearly basis ever since. The Neumarkt over time became the centre of the official commemoration rituals. It is a symbolic place in more than one regard.

Thus, Halbouni's installation was perceived as an alien or even hostile object in a familiar location. It disturbed the imagination of a “reborn” historic building, the Frauenkirche, and its environment, a historicised reconstruction of Dresden's *Altstadt* [historic city]. Therewith, *Monument* challenged the idea of not just a rebirth but also of rectified history in general. It reminded the city and its visitors of a complex and disturbing history – including both pride and guilt. Moreover, it connected past

traumata (World War II) with the current one (the war in Syria), demanding consciousness and responsibility. In an interview with the local media Halbouni explained:

A distinct symbolism is meant to emerge as a reminder that the church was not always as intact as it is now. I wanted to create an antithesis to the place here which has been completely rebuilt. I remember being a child and the Frauenkirche was standing there as a ruin.¹

Halbouni's installation was a wedge driven in between a heritage and its heirs. *Monument* was labelled a "Schrottdenkmal" [monument of junk], "Denkmal der Schande" [monument of shame] or even as "entartete Kunst" [degenerate art]. The Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk [Central German Broadcasting] had to close the comment function at its website since the majority of remarks contained "hate, agitation, or defamation."² The reactions on the Facebook page created in support of *Monument* by the presenter of the installation, the Städtische Galerie für Gegenwartskunst [City Gallery for Contemporary Art], were controversial as well, containing encouragement and insults alike. By April 2017 at least four dozens of video clips of different authors had been uploaded to the platform YouTube expressing discontent with the city's support for Manaf Halbouni and his installation. Mayor Dirk Hilbert was called a "Volksverräter" [traitor against his nation] who allegedly planned to "destroy the culture of remembrance of the 13 February."³ The politician even received death threats when he said in an official statement on the commemoration of the destruction of Dresden in 2017: "There are still attempts to reinterpret history and portray Dresden in a victim-myth [...] Dresden was not an innocent city; that has been scientifically analysed [...]"⁴ With this statement the Mayor questioned a crucial element of the so called "Dresden

1 Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR, desk), "Buswracks vor der Frauenkirche erinnern an zerstörtes Aleppo," [in:] *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk*, 7 February 2017, <http://www.mdr.de/sachsen/dresden/kunstwerk-manaf-halbouni-frauenkirche-busse-102.html> (access: 2 May 2017).

2 Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR, desk), "Gegner stören Einweihung von 'Monument' in Dresden," [in:] *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk*, 8 February 2017, <http://www.mdr.de/sachsen/dresden/streit-um-kunstwerk-monument-in-dresden-100.html> (access: 12 July 2017).

3 Ibidem.

4 Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, "Buswracks...", op. cit.

Myth" and therefore the identification of a large part of the city's society with its history and heritage. But what actually is this myth about and what makes it so delicate that its critical evaluation can even provoke death threats?

The Dresden Myth

Unquestioned for decades, the number of critical evaluations of the Dresden Myth⁵ has grown over the recent years. The older, more conventional studies focus on the reputation of Dresden as a city of art and culture on the one hand and its partial destruction through allied bomb raids in the last days of World War II on the other. In popular depictions the glamour of the city has been romantically overdrawn; its destruction, however, was exaggerated to monstrous dimensions. The extent of the city's fall – from alleged fabulous glamour to inexpressible destruction – has fostered dramatic narrations.

Particular elements of the popular tradition have been questioned by the journalist Goetz Bergander already in 1977.⁶ Later others, most notably Oliver Reinhard, Wolfgang Hesse, Matthias Neutzner, Niels-Christian Fritsche, and Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, have outlined the genesis of the Dresden-Myth and its significance for the unique identity of the city and its citizens.⁷ The remarks of the historians Matthias

5 Already in 2005 Dresdner Geschichtsverein [Dresden Historical Society] published a brochure with this title addressing the romantic glamorisation of the city: Dresdner Geschichtsverein (ed.), *Mythos Dresden: Faszination und Verklärung einer Stadt*, Dresden 2005. In 2006 the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum [German Museum on Hygiene] addressed elements of the Dresden Myth with a particular exhibition on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the city: Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden (ed.), *Mythos Dresden / Eine kulturhistorische Revue*, Dresden 2006.

6 Goetz Bergander, *Dresden im Luftkrieg: Vorgeschichte, Zerstörung, Folgen*, Köln, Wien, and Weimar 1994 (1977).

7 Matthias Neutzner, *Lebenszeichen: Dresden im Luftkrieg 1944/45 [eine Ausstellung der Interessengemeinschaft "13. Februar 1945" e.V.]*, Dresden 1994; Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, "Das Canaletto-Syndrom: Dresden als imaginäre Stadt," [in:] *Ausdruck und Gebrauch*, vol. 1 (2002), pp. 78–88; idem, "Dresden als Raum des Imaginären: 'Eigengeschichte' und Mythenbildung als Quelle städtischer Identitätskonstruktionen," [in:] *Dresdner Hefte: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 23 no. 84 (2005), pp. 88–99; Oliver Reinhard, Matthias Neutzner, and Wolfgang Hesse (eds.), *Das rote Leuchten: Dresden und der Bombenkrieg*, Dresden 2005; Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, "Die wiedererstandene Stadt: Dresden nach der 'Wende' zwischen Aufbruch und Selbstisolierung," [in:] *Keine Gewalt: Revolution in Dresden 1989 [Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Stadtmuseum Dresden v. 22.7.2009–10.1.2010]*, Holger Starke (ed.), Dresden 2009, pp. 168–192; Karl-Siegbert

Meinhardt⁸ and Thomas Widera⁹ have contributed to the body of essential texts on the topic. To the commitment of a younger generation of scientists we owe remarkably detailed and profound investigations. Most significant are the texts of Claudia Jerzak,¹⁰ a former student of the aforementioned sociologist Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, and the art historian Katja Marek.¹¹ A critical examination of the city's commemoration rituals can be found in the publication *Gedenken abschaffen* [Abolish commemoration] of the Autor_Innenkollektiv "Dissonanz" [Authors Collective Dissonance].¹² Recently a compressive summary

Rehberg, "Freiheitsgewinn zwischen Bürgerstolz und Identitätsbedrohung: Dresden nach der deutschen Wiedervereinigung," [in:] *Dresdner Hefte: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 27 no. 100 (2009), pp. 8–15; Niels-Christian Fritsche, Matthias Neutzner, and Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (eds.), *Erinnerung, Gewalt, Verdrängung: Dresden und der 13. Februar / Katalog zur Ausstellung im Buchmuseum der Sächsischen Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden / 29. Januar bis 3. April 2011*, Dresden 2011; Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, "Bühnenbilder des Untergangs: Das Staatsschauspiel und die ambivalente Kontinuität eines traumatisierten Erinnerns an die Zerstörung Dresdens," [in:] *Staatsschauspiel Dresden: 100 Jahre Schauspielhaus*, Wilfried Schulz, Harald Müller, and Felicitas Zürcher (eds.), Berlin 2012, pp. 195–206; Matthias Neutzner, *Erinnerungsort Heidefriedhof / Geschichte und Perspektiven*, Dresden 2014.

- 8 Matthias Meinhardt, "Der Mythos vom 'Alten Dresden' als Bauplan / Entwicklung, Ursachen und Folgen einer retrospektiv-eklektizistischen Stadtvorstellung," [in:] *Städte aus Trümmern / Katastrophenbewältigung zwischen Antike und Moderne*, Andreas Ranft and Stephan Selzer (eds.), Göttingen 2004, pp. 172–200.
- 9 Thomas Widera, "Gefangene Erinnerung: Die politische Instrumentalisierung der Bombardierung Dresdens," [in:] *Alliierter Bombenkrieg: Das Beispiel Dresden*, Lothar Fritze and Thomas Widera (eds.), Göttingen 2005, pp. 109–134.
- 10 Claudia Jerzak, "Gedenken an den 13. Februar 1945 / Perspektiven Dresdner AkteurInnen auf die Entwicklung von Erinnerungskultur und kollektivem Gedächtnis seit 1990" (master thesis, 2009, unpublished); eadem, "Da seht ihr's, jetzt wisst ihr's: Friedenspolitische Initiativen im Gedenken an die Bombardierung Dresdens seit 1980," [in:] *Gedenken abschaffen / Kritik am Diskurs zur Bombardierung Dresdens 1945*, Autor_Innenkollektiv "Dissonanz" (eds.), Berlin 2013, pp. 59–75; eadem, "Sakralisierte Räume und die Institutionalisierung multiperspektivischer Erzählung," [in:] *Erinnern wozu?*, Uwe Hirschfeld (ed.), Berlin 2015, pp. 125–158.
- 11 Katja Marek, "Rekonstruktion und Kulturgesellschaft / Stadtbildreparatur in Dresden, Frankfurt am Main und Berlin als Ausdruck der zeitgenössischen Suche nach Identität" (Dissertation), Kassel 2009.
- 12 Autor_Innenkollektiv "Dissonanz" (eds.), *Gedenken abschaffen / Kritik am Diskurs zur Bombardierung Dresdens 1945*, Berlin 2013.

was published by the authors Matthias Neutzner and Karl-Siegbert Rehberg.¹³ Furthermore, a number of publications deal with certain aspects of the younger history of Dresden and, therefore, the Dresden Myth as well. I will refer to these works where it seems appropriate. The list above is not exhaustive; it contains only the most noted authors. To avoid unnecessary reiterations I will summarise at this place only the findings which are absolutely essential for the understanding of the subject.

Pictorial imaginations are of fundamental importance within the myth of Dresden. The prominent skyline of the residential city – consisting of the Catholic Court Chapel, the palace and the Knöffelschen Häuser, crowned by the Frauenkirche – joins with the Augustus Bridge and the meadows of the river Elbe into an ideal totality of domesticated nature and culture. With his drawing *Dresden from the Right Bank of the Elbe below the Augustus Bridge* (1748) Bernardo Bellotto (known as Canaletto, 1721–1780) captured this view of the city for eternity.¹⁴ Named after its creator and commonly known as “Canaletto view,” the prospect was already part of a deliberate enactment of the city. Initiated by the Elector of Saxony August the Strong (1694–1733), it was continued also by his son Frederick August II (1733–1763). Under the reign of the two electors, famously remembered as *augustäisches Zeitalter* [Augustian age], significant architectural structures such as the Frauenkirche and the Catholic Court Chapel (Gaetano Chiaveri, 1739–1755) were erected. For these buildings amongst others Dresden later gained the (misleading) designation of a “baroque city.” As famous as the architecture from this period are the art collections also initiated by the Saxon Elector August the Strong. The splendid enactment of Dresden as a residential city was a result not least of the rivalry between Saxony and Prussia.¹⁵ Based on its fabulous splendour it is said that the city received the flattering designation

13 Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, “The Dresden Frauenkirche as a Contested Symbol: The Architecture of Remembrance After War,” [in:] *War and Cultural Heritage / Biographies of Place*, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Dacia Viejo-Rose (eds.), Cambridge 2015, pp. 98–127.

14 Cf. Katja Marek, “Rekonstruktion...,” *op. cit.*, pp. 38ff.

15 *Ibidem*, pp. 38ff.

Elbflorenz [Florence at the river Elbe] or Florence of the North from Johann Gottfried Herder.¹⁶

On 13 and 14 February 1945 Dresden after other German cities became a target of repeated allied bombardments. Approximately 25,000 people are believed to have lost their lives during the air raids.¹⁷ Large parts of the city's historical core, including the palace and the Frauenkirche, were destroyed. The attacks immediately were instrumentalised in the Nazi propaganda and exaggerated to monstrous dimensions. The alleged number of 20,204 casualties was increased to 202,040 by simply adding a digit.¹⁸ Although Dresden was a strategically important industrial city and a transportation hub close to the frontline, by winter 1945 the Nazi propaganda portrayed the attack as the destruction of an "innocent" city of art and culture by the "barbaric" enemies of Germany.¹⁹

Once established, this narrative of self-victimisation could be exploited also within the communist propaganda of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) after 1945. Phrases such as "Anglo-American bombing raids," "Anglo-American aerial terror," or "Anglo-American bombing terror" were meant to expose the alleged "infamous destructiveness of the capitalist Western powers."²⁰

Just as propagandistic exploitation established the myth of the brutal destruction of an innocent city of art and culture a variety of individual reasons contributed to its solidification. On the basis of the traumatic experience of the bombings, the denial of individual responsibility

16 Matthias Meinhardt, "Der Mythos...", op. cit., pp. 177–178.

17 In the background of a long lasting controversy in 2004 the city of Dresden installed a historical commission under the direction of the military historian Rolf-Dieter Müller. The commission could determine 25,000 casualties of the air raids; cf. Katja Marek, "Rekonstruktion...", op. cit., p. 50.

18 Goetz Bergander, *Dresden im Luftkrieg...*, op. cit., pp. 220ff.

19 Niels-Christian Fritsche et al., *Erinnerung...*, op. cit.; Claudia Jerzak, "Gedenken...", op. cit., p. 71; eadem, "Sakralisierte Räume...", op. cit., p. 126.

20 Matthias Meinhardt, "Der Mythos...", op. cit., pp. 187, 189; Niels-Christian Fritsche et al., *Erinnerung...*, op. cit.; Karl-Siebert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, "The Dresden Frauenkirche...", op. cit., p. 104; Hans-Rudolf Meier, "Paradigma oder Büchse der Pandora? / Die Frauenkirche – oder wie Dresden zum Zentrum der gegenwärtigen Rekonstruktionswelle wurde," [in:] *Die Alte Stadt, Vierteljahreszeitschrift für Stadtgeschichte, Stadtsoziologie, Denkmalpflege und Stadtentwicklung*, vol. 36 no. 1 (2009), p. 61 (59–76); a monument in Dresden's district Nickern still bears the inscription: "We remember the victims of the Anglo-American bombing terror."

for the Nazi-regime, nostalgic recollections of the undestroyed city, or a mixture of these and other reasons stories were added to an imagined history. We must not forget that discourses are manufacturing social reality and are strategies to handle it.²¹

In the light of the variety of possible motivations it becomes understandable that the number of documents in the form of text, imagery, and film footage motivated by the destruction of Dresden is barely manageable. A selection of publications which stands exemplarily for several thousand documents related to the topic was presented by the curators during the 2011 Exhibition *Erinnerung, Gewalt, Verdrängung – Dresden und der 13. Februar*.²² Amongst the most noted documents are for instance the personal letters and journal entries of the Dresden novelist Erich Kästner, the novel *Slaughterhouse-Five, or, The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (1969) by the American writer Kurt Vonnegut, or the scientifically set up work *The Destruction of Dresden* (1963) by the British historian David Irving – who, nevertheless, operated with forged figures. Fritz Löffler's richly illustrated book *Das alte Dresden* (1955), which on the backdrop of the destroyed city elaborates on its historico-cultural development until 1945, soon became famous; also well-known is Edmund Kesting's *Dresden, wie es war* (1955). Until today new adaptations of the subject in form of documentaries or entertaining feature films are created on a regular basis.

With the large number and formal variety of documents reproducing the events of February 1945 the frontier between fact and fiction became blurred. Different models for identification stand beside claims which are not backed by scholarly research or contain crude equations. The obviously false assertion of hedgehoppers chasing and killing civilians in the streets of Dresden in February 1945²³ or the equally false claim that Dresden was of no strategic value²⁴ became persistent in the popular discourse. The destruction of Dresden has been equated with the nuclear

21 Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, New York 2017, pp. 64ff.

22 Niels-Christian Fritsche et al., *Erinnerung...*, op. cit.

23 For the deconstructing of this the legend see: Helmut Schnatz, *Tiefflieger über Dresden? Legenden und Wirklichkeit*, Köln, Wien, and Weimar 2000.

24 Cf. Matthias Meinhardt, "Der Mythos...", op. cit., p. 172; Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, "The Dresden Frauenkirche...", op. cit.



Image 2: Richard Peter sen., View from the tower of the town hall towards south, Dresden after the bombardment of 13 and 14 February 1945, photographed between 17 September and 31 December 1945

© Deutsche Fotothek, 0044_df_ps_0000010

strike on Hiroshima,²⁵ the terror attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001, the city of New Orleans devastated by hurricane Katrina, or the war-torn Aleppo in Syria.²⁶ Thereby, the importance of the visual reproduction of the destroyed Dresden can barely

25 Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, "Dresden als Raum des Imaginären...", op. cit., p. 88.

26 Bernhard Honnigfort, "Von Leiden, Lügen und Legenden," [in:] *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 13 February 2015, <http://www.fr.de/panorama/dresden-von-leiden-luegen-und-legenden-a-496505> (access: 22 May 2017).

be overestimated.²⁷ Some of the pictorial records have framed the perception of the events more than others. One of the most influential images is Richard Peter's frequently reproduced *View from the Tower of the Town Hall...* (1945) (Image 2).

Heritage and Exclusion

The Dresden Myth is a local tradition which over time has developed a remarkable transregional impact. The precondition for this effect is the characteristic feature of cultural heritage itself: exclusiveness. Among the rich variety of evidence it can exemplarily be studied in the photography of Richard Peter sen. (Image 2). The image not only reduces the total of the city in the year of 1945 to a mere part of it; the historical circumstances of the destruction are excluded as well. That Richard Peter sen. used his camera precisely not to enable an objective view but, on the contrary, to deliberately stage a certain perspective becomes obvious with the inclusion of Peter Pöppelmann's sculpture *Allegory of Kindness* (1908/1909) in the foreground of the composition. It can be read as a bitter and melancholic comment and most certainly was intended as such. In his photograph Richard Peter sen. has combined testimony and personal comment. This fact alone would not be problematic if these two different categories were not regularly confused – with the result of a further simplification of the complex matter: an individual perspective becoming to represent the fate of a city in general.

The construction of a heritage is based on a very selective if not eclectic treatment of historical and social context. A lot of it is excluded, much less included. Insofar it is remarkable that the eminent contributions to the heritage theory of the last two decades²⁸ are not present even in the above-mentioned critical evaluations of the Dresden Myth. This neglect sometimes leads to misunderstandings. The central issue,

27 Cf. Wolfgang Hesse, "Bild-Geschichte(n): Dresden 1939 bis 1945 – Die Kriegszeit in Fotografien und Filmen," [in:] *Das rote Leuchten...*, Oliver Reinhard et al. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 166–261.

28 Particularly: Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1992; Dietrich Boschung, Alexandra W. Busch, and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Reinventing "The Invention of Tradition?" Indigenous Pasts and the Roman Present*, Paderborn 2015; David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge 1998; Stefan Willer, Sigrid Weigel, and Bernhard Jusse (eds.), *Erbe / Übertragungskonzepte zwischen Natur und Kultur*, Berlin 2013; Markus Tauschek, *Kulturerbe*, Berlin 2013.

for instance, Matthias Neutzner and Karl-Siegbert Rehberg attempt to explore in their most recent text (2015) reads as follows: “[...] how communities turn cultural heritage into ‘remembrance objects’ and how this is inscribed into the fabric and meaning of that heritage.”²⁹ The implicitly expressed assumption that a cultural heritage would exist before the access of society which, therewith, turns it into a “remembrance object” misses the problematic matter of cultural heritage, i.e. the fact that its construction and exploitation are interwoven, evoking and sustaining each other. There is no such a thing as a neutral heritage objectively reflecting history free from individual memories whose projections would corrupt it. As the cultural anthropologist Markus Tauschek wrote: “Traditions and equally cultural heritage [are] to be conceptualised as effects of social practice.”³⁰ With the same intent the American historian and geographer David Lowenthal in his standard work on the theory of cultural heritage had written already in 1998: “Heritage exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error.”³¹ But that does not apply only to the attribution of meaning to cultural objects in totalitarian systems such as the Nazi regime or communist rule in Eastern Germany after 1945 – both phenomena are without doubt thoroughly analysed in the above-mentioned studies. This observation is rather valid for the construction of cultural heritage in general – regardless of the political system.³² If we agree on the at least partial arbitrary, moreover alterable³³ formation of a heritage, we will not search for (historical) truth in it but for the discursive conditions that made it favourable.

In this respect the majority of even the most critical evaluations of the culture of remembrance in the city of Dresden seem to be still caught by the potentially overwhelming impact of historical objects, most significantly the Frauenkirche, its ruin or its 2005 finished and consecrated reconstruction. However, monuments not uncommonly prevent the more instructive sight on the monument of text. Cultural heritage in that sense

29 Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, “The Dresden Frauenkirche...,” op. cit., p. 98.

30 Markus Tauschek, *Kulturerbe*, op. cit., pp. 77, 79.

31 David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade...*, op. cit., p.121.

32 Ibidem, pp. 121ff.

33 Stefan Willer et al., *Erbe...*, op. cit.

can be understood as a conflictive and exclusive discourse with its own rules – a discourse which does not only organise and sanction the handling of historical facts but also the individual access to cultural objects, the validity of interpretations as well as possibilities for the instrumentalisation and economical exploitation of heritage – in short: all patterns of exclusion. Professional expertise, thereby, is only one form of sanction and by no means always the most influential. The discourse on cultural heritage therewith proves to be a privileged venue for (political) power and legitimacy.³⁴ The history of iconoclasm³⁵ and other organised encroachments on the greater entities of inherited culture like language, tradition, religion, and architecture with the aim to establish, enact, retain, or destroy power have taught that impressively.³⁶

Political Instrumentalisation and Exclusion

The interdependencies of cultural heritage, identity, architecture, power, and memory for years have constituted a certain area of conflict within the political sphere. As one might expect, the political instrumentalisation of the events of February 1945 did not end with their exploitation by Nazi and communist propaganda. The peace movement of the GDR from 1980 onwards chose the ruin of the Frauenkirche as a symbol for its protest against international armament and, therewith, challenged the official commemoration rituals organised and sanctioned by the government authorities. In the course of its anti-western propaganda, the political leadership of the GDR declared the Frauenkirche a memorial in 1966. A plaque at the site mentioned the destruction of the church by “Anglo-American bombers” and called “the living to fight against imperialistic barbarism.” State-organised rallies were meant to channel all

34 Stefan Willer, “Kulturelles Erbe / Tradieren und Konservieren in der Moderne,” [in:] *Erbe...*, Stefan Willer et al., op. cit., pp. 160ff.

35 Cf. Dario Gamboni, *Zerstörte Kunst / Bildersturm und Vandalismus im 20. Jahrhundert*, Köln 1998; Eline van Assche and Jo Tollebeek (eds.), *Ravaged / Art and Culture in Times of Conflict*, Brussels 2014.

36 Cf. Eric J. Hobsbawm et al., *The Invention...*, op. cit.; Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation: Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzepts*, Frankfurt a.M. 2005; Ernest Gellner, *Nationalismus und Moderne*, Berlin 1991; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nationen und Nationalismus: Mythos und Realität seit 1780*, Frankfurt and New York 2004.

commemoration activities.³⁷ Through the initiative of the peace movement and under the protective hand of the evangelical church the memory of the destruction of the city, as it was coined by two totalitarian systems, now merged with the idea of reconciliation and peace³⁸ and, moreover, formulated a subtle critique directed against the oppressive political apparatus of the GDR which *de facto* excluded any participation of the civil society. Therewith, another complex meaning was attributed to the ruin of the Frauenkirche. Beside its significance within the Dresden Myth it could be further interpreted as symbol of peace and reconciliation as well as of protest against state authority. Challenged in its interpretational sovereignty, the authorities observed the peace movement and finally “cordoned off” the ruin of the Frauenkirche³⁹ in 1989.

But events came to a head and Helmut Kohl as the Chancellor of the German Federal Republic still in 1989 held a historic speech in front of the dramatically illuminated ruin of the Frauenkirche, which he later described as a “key moment on the way to German unity.”⁴⁰ As an experienced politician Helmut Kohl knew how to seize the historical moment to his favour. Perfectly aware of the historical importance of his carefully staged talk, he addressed the prominent victim myth of the city and its emblematic symbol – the Frauenkirche – when he said: “Here in front of the ruin of the Frauenkirche, at the monument to the dead of Dresden, I have just laid down a bouquet of flowers [applause]; also to commemorate the suffering and the dead of this beautiful and old German

37 Mark Jarzombek, “Disguised Visibilities, Dresden, ‘Dresden,’” [in:] *Memory and Architecture*, Eleni Bastéa (ed.), New Mexico 2004, p. 55 (49–78). Matthias Meinhardt, “Der Mythos...,” *op. cit.*, p. 196; Hans-Rudolf Meier, “Paradigma...,” *op. cit.*, p. 61; Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, “The Dresden Frauenkirche...,” *op. cit.*, p. 118.

38 The partnership of the parishes Coventry and Dresden had established this meaning through their efforts for reconciliation already in 1965. Cf. Claudia Jerzak, “Da seht ihr’s...,” *op. cit.*, p. 70.

39 Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, “The Dresden Frauenkirche...,” *op. cit.*, p. 119.

40 Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR, desk), “Helmut Kohls schwierigste Rede,” [in:] *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk*, 29 March 2010, <http://www.mdr.de/zeitreise/helmut-kohl-rede-dresden100.html> (access: 14 September 2017).

city.” Kohl closed his speech with the words: “May God bless our German fatherland.”⁴¹

This reaffirmed political monopolisation of the ruin – a monument on its own – interacted as a catalyser for the attribution of meaning to the shortly afterwards reconstructed Frauenkirche. The new building, *inter alia*, became the symbol of a reunited and likewise reconstructed protestant Germany and an important setting for the display of political power. The centre of Dresden, therewith, remained the political stage that it had already been in the overcome totalitarian system of the GDR.⁴² The repeated presentations of the former Chancellor Helmut Kohl in front of the Frauenkirche by the Dresden fraction of his political party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in 2000 and 2014 illustrate the political significance of the scenery. Also Angela Merkel as Helmut Kohl’s successor as leader of the CDU repeatedly proved her awareness of the symbolic importance of the new Frauenkirche. Her visits as German Chancellor, for instance in 2009 together with the US President Barack Obama or in the course of an election campaign of the Saxon CDU in 2014, were carefully staged choreographies in which the reconstructed Frauenkirche could not be missed. Chancellor Merkel’s most recent official visit to Dresden and the Frauenkirche was paid on the occasion of the celebration of the German Reunification Day on 3 October 2016. It was overshadowed by the crisis of her government, triggered by the position she took during the so called “refugee crisis.”

On the local level the enactment of the Dresden Myth for political reason took no different direction. All governments of the city and the Free State of Saxony after 1990 uncritically continued the commemoration of the destruction of the city as established through the propaganda of two totalitarian systems. In the unaltered narrative the city and its inhabitants were victimised while the historical context was largely excluded from the official rituals. Those who gathered for commemoration after 1990 still assembled “as the descendants of the victims not

41 Own transcript of Helmut Kohl’s speech on 19 December 1989 in Neumarkt in Dresden. For the speech in its full length see: Archive of the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, <http://www.mdr.de/zeitreise/video33944.html> (access: 14 September 2017).

42 Cf. Aleida Assmann, “Rekonstruktion – Die zweite Chance, oder: Architektur aus dem Archiv,” [in:] *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion: Konstruktion der Geschichte*, Winfried Nerdinger, Markus Eisen, and Hilde Strobl (eds.), München et al. 2010, p. 19 (16–35).

the perpetrators,” as the architect Niels Gutschow wrote in 2005 describing the official rituals in the GDR.⁴³

Dresden's victimisation finds its visible expression in a continued iconographic programme present in sculptures and imagery related to 13 February 1945. In a series of different memorials the one at the Heidefriedhof [Heath Cemetery] in the north of the city is of particular importance. The Heidefriedhof after 1945 became the major burial site for victims of the air raids on Dresden. Through the annual commemoration rituals the place gathered significance within the city's topography of remembrance comparable to the Frauenkirche in the Neumarkt. In 1965 a monument in the form of a circle of fourteen large steles was erected in the centre of the cemetery. While seven of these steles bear the names of concentration camps (Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen, Theresienstadt), the remaining seven display the names of destroyed cities (Coventry, Leningrad, Rotterdam, Warschau, Lidice, Oradour, Dresden). Although this equation of suffering – placing Dresden amongst the crimes perpetrated by Nazi Germany – soon became object of professional criticism,⁴⁴ the city continued with this narrative until recently. In 2005, on the occasion of the 60 anniversary of the destruction in February 1945, the city's officials presented a poster saying “Bagdad, Coventry, Dresden, Grosny, Guernica, Hamburg, Hiroshima, Leningrad, Morovia, New York, Sarajewo, Warschau – Destruction means Destruction.”⁴⁵

The Dresden Myth remained unchallenged in the yearly official commemoration rituals at their central venues – the Neumarkt and the Heidefriedhof. New memorials reminiscent of the victimised city were erected or are still about to be realised. On 19 September 2010 the sculpture *Trauerndes Mädchen am Tränenmeer* [Mourning Girl at a Sea of Tears] by

43 Niels Gutschow, “Stadtzerstörung und Gedenken: Hamburg – Dresden – Berlin – New York,” [in:] *Der Abschied von den Toten. Trauerrituale im Kulturvergleich*, Jan Assmann, Franz Maciejewski, and Axel Michaels (eds.), Göttingen 2005, p. 280 (267–293).

44 Matthias Meinhardt, “Der Mythos...,” op. cit., p. 188; Claudia Jerzak, “Gedenken...,” op. cit., p. 40; Hennig Fischer, “Im Kielwasser / Der Mythos Dresden und der Wandel der deutschen Nationalgeschichte,” [in:] *Gedenken abschaffen...*, Autor_Innenkollektiv “Dissonanz” (eds.), op. cit., pp. 35–50.

45 Andrea Hübler, “Aus alt mach neu / Das Dresden-Gedenken im vereinten Deutschland,” [in:] *Gedenken abschaffen...*, Autor_Innenkollektiv “Dissonanz” (eds.), op. cit., p. 208 (201–213).

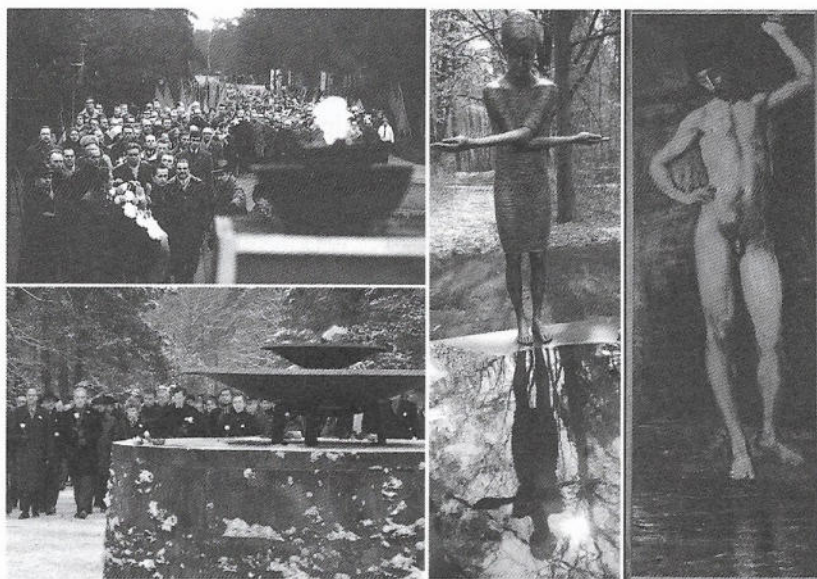


Image 3: Erich Höhne, Wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial of the victims of the Anglo-American air raids against Dresden on 13 and 14 February 1945, 1969 © Deutsche Fotothek, df_hp_0036201_038; official commemoration ritual at the Heidefriedhof on 13 February 2013, 2010 © Dietrich Flechtner; Małgorzata Chodakowska, *Mourning Girl at a Sea of Tears*, Dresden, Heidefriedhof, 2010 © Tobias Strahl; Hans von Marées, *Narziss*, 1875–1895 © Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz

the Polish artist Małgorzata Chodakowska was inaugurated at the Heidefriedhof. It seems that neither the city's authorities nor the artist herself were aware of the iconographic references of the sculpture to the myth of Narcissus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁴⁶

Another monument in form of a plaque with the inscription of the names of the known victims of the air raids of February 1945 is about to be realised in the memorial Busmannkapelle, which is currently under construction in the centre of the city.

Over self-victimisation and the exaltation of the city's cultural wealth large parts of the "unwanted" heritage is excluded from the official narratives. Barely present in the public awareness is the significance Dresden had during the Nazi regime: That one of the first exhibitions of "*entartete Kunst*" [degenerate art] was held in in the city of arts and

⁴⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk III: 339–510.

culture is a historical fact that most of the Dresdeners are not too keen to recall. The same applies to the first book burning that professors and students of the Technische Hochschule [Technical University] organised at the Wettiner Platz on 7 and 8 March 1933.⁴⁷ Contemporary historians have labelled the historical Dresden as the “command post of the Saxon National Socialism”⁴⁸, a stronghold of antisemitism which had its ideological pillars in the “ultra-conservative educated middle-class.”⁴⁹ From the city of art and culture Hans Posse as the director of the Dresden Art Gallery organised the pan-European art theft for Hitler’s planned museum in the Austrian city of Linz.⁵⁰ *Gaukunstwart* Alexis Posse ousted the famous director of the Semper-Opera Fritz Busch for his solidarity with the Jewish artists of his theatre.⁵¹ A good part of the city’s art collection was sold off by the Nazis as “degenerate art.”⁵²

The exclusion of the unwanted heritage from the city’s official memory made the Dresden Myth particularly attractive for the Neo-Nazi movement. Already in 1990 the notorious Neo-Nazis Bela Ewald Althans, Michael Kühnen († 1991), and Christian Worch invited the British historian David Irving for a speech at Dresden’s Kulturpalast.⁵³ Irving, back then, had already begun to sympathise with the extreme right. In his above-mentioned work *The Destruction of Dresden* he operated with forged numbers regarding the victims of the air raid which he had adopted from the Nazi propaganda. That served the Dresden Myth and made Irving interesting for the Neo-Nazi movement in Germany.

47 René Haase, “‘Plötzlich,’ ‘Unerwartet,’ ‘Sinnlos’? / Dresden im Nationalsozialismus,” [in:] Autor_Innenkollektiv “Dissonanz” (eds.), *Gedenken abschaffen...*, op. cit., pp. 173–190.

48 Stefan Schirmer, “Hitlers Dresden / Historiker Mike Schmeitzner über neue Erkenntnisse zur sächsischen NS-Elite – und ihre Volkstümelei,” [in:] ZEIT ONLINE, 26 January 2012, <http://www.zeit.de/2012/05/S-Gesprach-Schmeitzner> (access: 22 July 2017).

49 Adina Rieckmann, “Braune Dramen / Machtergreifung an der Semperoper: Eine Ausstellung räumt mit der Legende auf, Dresden sei in der NS-Zeit eine unschuldige Kulturstadt gewesen,” [in:] ZEIT ONLINE, 12 May 2011, <http://www.zeit.de/2011/20/S-Verstummte-Stimmen/komplettansicht?print> (access: 17 May 2017).

50 Stefan Schirmer, “Hitlers Dresden...,” op. cit.

51 Adina Rieckmann, “Braune Dramen...,” op. cit.

52 Matthias Meinhardt, “Der Mythos...,” op. cit., p. 181.

53 Michael Schmidt, *Heute gehört uns die Straße...: Der Inside-Report aus der Neonazi-Szene*, Düsseldorf 1993, p. 125.

Eight years later, in February 1998, a group of approximately 40 Neo-Nazis for the first time ever tried to proceed with a march to the ruin of the Frauenkirche but were eventually stopped by the police. In 1999 a group called Junge Landsmannschaft Ostpreußen⁵⁴ for the first time successfully organised a right wing demonstration parallel to the official commemoration on the 13 February. Between 2005 and 2009 the number of the participants of the Neo-Nazi demonstrations around the annual commemoration rose from 4,500 to 7,000.⁵⁵ Dresden became a “place of pilgrimage” for Neo-Nazis,⁵⁶ a stage for Europe’s biggest parade of right-wing extremists.⁵⁷ The Neo-Nazi demonstration in 2012 registered 8,000 participants.⁵⁸ In 2008 the Jewish community of the city cancelled their participation in the city’s official commemoration ceremony at the Heidefriedhof. The chairwoman of the community justified the decision with the yearly increasing number of right-wing extremists who could participate in the same ritual without being confronted by the city’s officials. The key figures of the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) and other Neo-Nazi groups were present during the ceremonies on a regular basis.⁵⁹ Although this was a commonly acknowledged fact, it was of no consequence for the commemoration.

The initiative against the annually recurring Neo-Nazi rallies as well as efforts for a more critical evaluation of the city’s history and heritage originated from the political left spectrum and church-related groups. From 1993 onwards the extreme left Antifaschistische Aktion [Antifascist Action, ANTIFA] has been addressing the matter in its working groups in Dresden and Leipzig. Since 2000 it confronts the Neo-Nazi

54 Later renamed as Junge Landsmannschaft Ostdeutschland.

55 Claudia Jerzak, “Sakralisierte Räume...,” op. cit., p. 134.

56 Weit Medick, “Wie Neonazis Dresden zu ihrer Pilgerstätte machen,” [in:] *SPIEGEL ONLINE*, 14 February 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/gedenktag-wie-neonazis-dresden-zu-ihrer-pilgerstaette-machen-a-607669.html> (access: 6 April 2017).

57 Denni Klein and Ulrich Wolf, “Der 19. Februar in Dresden / Ein Sonntagnachmittag zwischen friedlichem Protest und drohender Gewalt,” [in:] *Sächsische Zeitung*, 18 February 2011, p. 13.

58 Grit Hanneforth, “Existiert ein gemeinsames linkes Selbstverständnis im Gedächtnis Dresdens?,” [in:] *Dresdner Hefte: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 35 no. 100 (2005), p. 29 (27–35).

59 Swen Steinberg, “Nicht Gedenkort, sondern Lernort,” [in:] *Gedenken abschaffen...*, Autor_Innenkollektiv “Dissonanz” (eds.), op. cit., p. 106 (105–116).

demonstrations with partially militant actions. Resistance from other groups of the civil society dates back to the year 2001. A common forum in a certain sense is the 2009 founded Bündnis Nazifrei – Dresden stellt sich quer [Alliance for a Dresden free of Nazis – Dresden stands transversely], whose first aim is to prevent physically the Neo-Nazi demonstrations through Dresden.

Reactions to the protest from the city's officials and the authorities of the Free State of Saxony were perceived as quite controversial. They can be interpreted as an attempt to keep exclusive interpretational sovereignty over the city's younger history, its heritage, and its symbolical values. The measures in this regard were of regulatory, juridical, definitional, and symbolic nature and in a disturbing way included both the Neo-Nazi activities and the protests against them. While declaring the yearly Neo-Nazi usurpation of the city a phenomenon brought in from outside and not belonging to Dresden and its society, the protest against it was in large parts marginalised and even criminalised. The offices from where activists organised its protests against the Nazi rallies were raided by the police already in 2010⁶⁰ and for a second time in 2011 in disregard of current legislation.⁶¹ In 2011 as well Dresden's Attorney Office illegally ordered the surveillance of 54,000 mobile phones⁶² of protesters, while the police encircled a group of demonstrators who aimed to confront the Neo-Nazi's march through the city. It was only in 2014 when the city officially recognized the Mahngang Täterspuren, a tour through the city to places of Nazi-perpetrated crimes, as an official part of the commemoration activities around 13 February.⁶³

In parallel to that politicians and authorities juristically tried to prevent other than the official forms of commemoration as well as

60 Deutscher Depeschendienst (ddp), "Räume von Anti-Nazi-Bündnis durchsucht," [in:] *DER TAGESSPIEGEL*, 19 January 2010, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/polizei-justiz/buendnis-nazifrei-raeume-von-anti-nazi-buendnis-durchsucht/1667090.html> (access: 18 September 2017).

61 Deutsche Presseagentur (dpa), "Durchsuchung der Linken-Büros am 19. Februar 2011 in Dresden war rechtswidrig," [in:] *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 7 October 2011, <http://www.lvz.de/Mitteldeutschland/News/Durchsuchung-der-Linken-Bueros-am-19.-Februar-2011-in-Dresden-war-rechtswidrig> (access: 18 September 2017).

62 ZEIT ONLINE, "Landgericht erklärt Funkzellenabfrage auf Demo für Rechtswidrig," [in:] *ZEIT ONLINE*, 23 April 2013, <http://www.zeit.de/digital/datenschutz/2013-04/funkzellenabfrage-dresden-landgericht> (access: 18 September 2017).

63 Claudia Jerzak, "Sakralisierte Räume...", op. cit., pp. 135, 153.

the protest at venues regarded as of symbolic value. Following a general ruling which became effective in 2000, only the city itself could organise commemoration ceremonies around the Frauenkirche and the Dresden Neumarkt.⁶⁴ Moreover, on the initiative of a coalition of the conservative CDU and the Freie Demokratische Partei [Free Democrat Party, FDP] the Saxon Law Concerning Processions and Assemblies was altered in 2012. Certain amendments enabled the authorities to prohibit assemblies or rallies at places “of historical significance” as “the Frauenkirche with the Neumarkt in Dresden” as well as on 13 and 14 February for large parts of the city centre.⁶⁵

Also “legitimate” forms of commemoration were sanctioned by official definition. Ordered by the city government in 2005, seven authors, amongst them the historian Matthias Neutzner as well as the personal advisor to the mayor of Dresden Peter Teichmann and the pastor of the new Frauenkirche Stephan Fritz, composed the *Rahmen für das Erinnern* [Framework for the commemoration], which aimed at interpretational sovereignty.⁶⁶ All authors are associated with the Church and are representing Dresden’s educated middle-class. Although the text meets all ethic fundamentals, it bears the mark of its non-transparent production and the exclusion of many of the democratic actors of other civil society initiatives.

With a “human chain” gathered around the city centre during the annual commemoration of the events of February 1945 the attempts to impose hegemony on the controversial discourse found a new symbolic expression. Established in 2010 under the rule of Mayor Helma Orosz, the “human chain” was reasoned to “protect” the city’s vulnerable core against “alien” usurpation with the help of the civil society. From that point of view

64 Ibidem, p. 140.

65 Klaus Weber, “Anti-Nazi-Klausel im Visier der Verfassungshüter,” [in:] *Legal Tribune Online*, 2 September 2010, <http://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/versammlungsgesetz-sachsen-anti-nazi-klausel-im-visier-der-verfassungshueter/> (access: 13 April 2017); idem, “Sachsens zweiter Anlauf gegen rechte Demos,” [in:] *Legal Tribune Online*, 1 February 2012, <http://www.lto.de/recht/hintergruende/h/neues-versammlungsgesetz-sachsens-zweiter-anlauf-gegen-rechte-demos/> (access: 24 April 2017). Cf. Saxon Law Concerning Processions and Assemblies from 25 January 2012, § 15 (2).

66 Landeshauptstadt Dresden, Autoren des Textes “Dresden, 13. Februar – Ein Rahmen für das Erinnern,” https://www.dresden.de/de/leben/stadtportrait/110/ereignisse/03/01/c_015.php (access: 19 May 2017).

the “human chain” could be understood as an integrative element. On the other hand, it projected all questionable and inconsistent elements within the own politics of memory to an ominous “outside” and, therewith, could also be read as a more or less conscious stride to avoid self-reflection and self-criticism.

The different efforts to retain interpretational sovereignty are oddly reminiscent of similar attempts by the state authorities of the GDR regime. The “human chain” around the city centre evokes memories of the cordoned off ruin of the Frauenkirche from 1989, exposing baffled authority which lost its ability to reflect and understand the (historical) context. The desperate efforts to control “legitimate” forms of memory provide an insight on how the totalitarian discourse of the GDR still affects a democratic society in the city of Dresden.

Historical Falsification or Symbol of Reconciliation?

The exclusive nature of the Dresden Myth has an impact on nearly all areas of the civic life of the city. Most prominent in that regard is the question of the final appearance of the city’s historical centre. One example of an exclusive initiative (in more than one respect) was the reconstruction of the historical Frauenkirche destroyed in the air raids of 1945. In February 1990 a group of 22 exclusively male academics gathered around the pastor Karl-Ludwig Hoch presented an open letter titled *Ruf aus Dresden* [Call from Dresden], which advertised for the “Reconstruction of the Dresden Frauenkirche.” Therewith, the letter reads, “a stone witness of the Christian belief would become anew.” Calling for international support, the initiative addressed the “victorious powers and the many people of good will in the USA, Great Britain, and all over the world.”⁶⁷ It seems to be a marginal finding but Russia, respectively the Soviet Union, is not mentioned explicitly in the document. It is present at best when the text addresses the “victorious powers” or the “many people of good will [...] all over the world.” Admittedly, the Soviet Union played no part in the attacks on Dresden in 1945. Nevertheless, beside all reasonable ideological reservations, a new start in the city would barely have been possible without its participation in the military alliance against Nazi Germany.

67 Peoples Initiative for the Reconstruction of the Frauenkirche (eds.), *Ruf aus Dresden*, Dresden 13 February 1990.

The debate on the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche (and subsequently the surrounding Neumarkt) was characterised in large parts by polemic aggravations and the neglect of the peculiar historical and societal background of the matter. The complex topic was reduced to the question whether a reconstructed scene would be more favourable than the preservation of ruins, while alternatives to these antagonistic and absolute positions were at no point seriously considered. Once more the symbolic dimension ousted the necessity of a more detailed analysis. Prominent critics have rejected the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche as an unhistorical falsification. Already in 1948 Dresden art historian Eberhard Hempel argued that such an endeavour could only be seen as historical revisionism.⁶⁸ Art historian Friedbert Ficker stated in 1990, when the reconstruction still was a mere idea, that the historical Frauenkirche “came into being together with its environment. A reconstruction in a meanwhile totally different environment would only create a foreign object.”⁶⁹ The project was criticised most profoundly by architecture theoretician Hanno-Walter Kruft, who viewed it as revisionist. In his essay *Reconstruction as Restauration* he expressed his concerns regarding a revitalised nationalism a reconstruction in negation of most of the historical context could foster. Kruft wrote:

A reconstruction is not primarily an urban, aesthetical, technical, or financial but a historical-moral problem. [...] If one decides to reconstruct a building which was destroyed not accidentally but based on a conscious decision, this means an attempt of an intervention into history. [...] The most prominent example is the already decided reconstruction of the Frauenkirche in Dresden. [...] Decisions like these are an expression of the Restauration [in its political connotation – T.S.] and reflect a confused and disoriented historical retrospective condition of the society.⁷⁰

Amongst the prominent proponents of a reconstructed Frauenkirche was art historian Jörg Traeger. In 1992 already he denied the educational

68 Hans-Rudolf Meier, “Paradigma...,” op. cit., p. 62.

69 Katja Marek, “Rekonstruktion...,” op. cit., p. 34.

70 Hanno-Walter Kruft, “Rekonstruktion als Restauration,” [in:] *Der Architekt*, vol. 9 (1993), pp. 524ff (522–526).

value of a preserved ruin in the centre of Dresden: “The dreadful cannot be cultivated and with wartime destruction in a tin can war cannot be banned.” The wish to preserve the ruin of the Frauenkirche as a memorial Traeger saw rooted in the romantic tradition whose contemporary adaption he rejected as “postmodern ruin romantic.” The reconstruction, he argued, was an “ethical imperative,” justified mainly by aesthetical reasons.⁷¹ Architect Niels Gutschow, on the other hand, tried to emphasise the societal perspective when he described a shift in perception of the historic city. After a post-war era in urban planning which favoured “new and better cities” and, therefore, broke with the city of the past, a new desire for history was about to evolve in the early 1970s, he argued in 2005.⁷² The trauma of loss, the wish for continuity and the desire for reconciliation are decisive for a new commitment to history [Geschichts-Engagement], the cultural scientist Aleida Assmann reasoned similarly to Niels Gutschow in 2010. According to her the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche was associated “with the message of the symbolic completion of World War II and the reconciliation of the former hostile nations in a new Europe.”⁷³

Not the least because of the overwhelming media coverage, the idea of reconstruction prevailed. As the art historian Gilbert Lupfer wrote: “public expectation – not only in Dresden – had literally swept away possible concerns of fundamental, ethical, or conservational nature.”⁷⁴ Consecrated and reopened in 2005, the reconstructed Frauenkirche gave prelude to the historicising composition of the surrounding Neumarkt. Advocated mainly by the NGO Gesellschaft Historischer Neumarkt Dresden [Society Historical Neumarkt Dresden, GHND] and once

71 Jörg Traeger, “Ruine und Rekonstruktion in der Denkmalpflege: Grundsätzliches zum Fall der Dresdner Frauenkirche,” [in:] *Architektur und Kunst im Abendland: Festschrift zur Vollendung des 65. Lebensjahres von Günter Urban*, Michael Jansen and Klaus Winands (eds.), Rom 1992, pp. 217–232; cf. idem, “Ruine und Rekonstruktion in der Denkmalpflege: Grundsätzliches zum Fall der Dresdner Frauenkirche,” [in:] *Das Münster*, vol. 49 (1996), pp. 218–226.

72 Niels Gutschow, “Stadtzerstörung...,” op. cit.

73 Aleida Assmann, “Rekonstruktion...,” op. cit., p. 18.

74 Gilbert Lupfer, “Dresdner Imitationen im Schatten der Frauenkirche. Vom Historischen Neumarkt zu den Sandstein-Tapeten am Altmarkt,” [in:] *Konstruktionen urbaner Identität / Zitat und Rekonstruktion in Architektur und Gegenwart*, Bruno Klein and Paul Sigel (eds.), Berlin 2006, p. 34 (33–48); cf. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg and Matthias Neutzner, “The Dresden Frauenkirche...,” op. cit., p. 123.

more against professional concerns,⁷⁵ the city quarter has been developed with modern buildings featuring façades based on historic examples. Nevertheless, the desire for a reconstructed heritage more than once proved to be “deadly” for authentic historical remnants. First of all, the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche implied the destruction of another monument – its ruin. Moreover, during the reconstruction of Dresden as well as the preserved historical basements of baroque buildings destroyed in 1945 and before were “disposed” in favour of an underground carpark.⁷⁶

Conclusion

In this article, instead of focusing on the positive form of cultural heritage, i.e. its monumental appearance and its references to history, I have tried to emphasise what is made absent in its body. The negative component of a heritage is a neglected aspect hitherto. It encompasses what needs to be excluded for its (re)construction. My aim was to outline a topography of the suppressed to locate the source of conflict in heritage. When Aleida Assmann detected a new “commitment to history” to explain the ever-growing number of initiatives for the reconstruction of lost architecture, she missed the topic insofar as history precisely is not the desire of these initiatives – but rather heritage as Lowenthal, Tauschek, and Willer et al. understand it. This is a subtle but nevertheless important difference. Thorough analyses of what actually was realised in Dresden and elsewhere have provided ample evidence for this interpretation.⁷⁷

The thought can be further developed. The exclusive nature of heritage results in an exclusion of heirs, too. If one visualises the discourse

75 Gilbert Lupfer, “Dresdner Imitationen...,” op. cit.; Wolfgang Kil, “Entsetzen am Neumarkt / Dresden: Wie die Stadt ihr Gemüt heilen und dabei auch noch Geld verdienen will,” [in:] *Der Freitag*, 8 December 2006, <https://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/entsetzen-am-neumarkt>, (access: 13 April 2017); Thomas Will, “Städtebau als Dialog / Zur Wiederbebauung des Dresdner Neumarkts,” [in:] *Historisch contra modern? Erfindung oder Rekonstruktion der historischen Stadt am Beispiel des Dresdner Neumarkts*, Sächsische Akademie der Künste, Dresden Stadtplanungsamt (eds.), Dresden 2008, p. 29 (28–32).

76 Mark Jarzombek, “Disguised Visibilities...,” op. cit., pp. 54, 71; Katja Marek, “Rekonstruktion...,” op. cit., p. 24; Wolfgang Kil, “Entsetzen am Neumarkt...,” op. cit.

77 Ulrich Conrads and Peter Neitzke (eds.), *Denkmalpflege statt Attrappenkult: Gegen die Rekonstruktion von Baudenkmalern: Eine Anthologie*, Gütersloh, Berlin, and Basel 2013.

on the Jewish community of Dresden after 1990 and the controversy triggered by the construction of the Neue Synagoge (Wandel, Hofer, and Lorch, 2001) the problem becomes comprehensible.⁷⁸ Other examples of marginalisation and exclusion concern the heritage of the Russian garrison in Dresden, the heritage of the functionalist modernism of the GDR, or the general reservations of Dresden's urban community towards modernist architecture.⁷⁹ The exclusive nature of heritage has another immediate social implication: only a few Dresdeners can afford to live in the reconstructed city centre. Heritage – in that way – can have a gentrification effect.

Finally, if the horrors of history and the crimes of a society can neither be preserved *in* nor prevented *with* monuments, as Jörg Trager claimed,⁸⁰ and, therefore, have no educational value at all, what then is the purpose of the preserved monuments of the Nazi terror and how could Manaf Halbouni's *Monument* provoke such a strong emotional reaction?

78 Anne Goldenbogen, "Dresden will die Kirche im Dorf lassen," [in:] *Jungle World*, no. 45 (30 October 1997), <http://jungle-world.com/artikel/1997/44/38215.html> (access: 5 May 2017); Hans-Rudolf Meier, "Paradigma...", op. cit.; Mark Jarzombek, "Disguised Visibilities...", op. cit.

79 Cf. Thomas Will, "Städtebau...", op. cit.; idem, "R@MIT in Dresden: The European City Between Restoration and Transformation," [in:] *The European City in Transformation*, Nicolas Pham and Mérit Heinen (eds.), Dresden and Delft 2009, pp. 14–19; Hans-Rudolf Meier, "Paradigma...", op. cit., pp. 74ff.

80 Jörg Trager, "Ruine...", op. cit.