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Elizabeth Anne Scarbrough

The Aesthetic Appreciation of Ruins

Elizabeth Anne Scarbrough

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Reading Committee:

Ronald Moore, Chair

Jean Roberts

Michael Rosenthal

Alison Wylie

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

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Abstract

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Elizabeth A. Scarbrough

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Ronald Moore, Professor
Philosophy Department

It is the goal of my dissertation to explain our peculiar aesthetic fascination with architectural ruins and to show why ruins are worthy of our time and aesthetic appreciation. I propose a model of aesthetic appreciation specific to ruins, one that not only presents a methodology of interpreting and evaluating ruins, but also suggests how we ought to preserve and display these objects of immovable material culture.

I discuss four key examples: Bannerman Castle (Fishkill, New York), Mỹ Sơn Archaeological Site (Quảng Nam Province, Việt Nam), Gas Works Park (Seattle, Washington), and the recent “rust belt” ruins (Detroit, Michigan). Before proceeding to my aesthetic account I propose a definition of “ruins”—a difficult task for many reasons. Foremost, it is not clear when a structure sufficiently decays to become a ruin or when a ruin sufficiently decays to become a pile of rocks and cease being a ruin. This is a classic example of the sorites paradox. If one seeks a definition of “ruins” that delineates such rigid markers as necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, the project is hopeless. I define “ruins” from the perspective of social ontology, where I argue these objects are partially constituted by their communities viewing them as such.

The literature I draw upon is interdisciplinary. Philosophical, literary, museological, and art historical texts buttress my contemporary account of ruins appreciation, which encompasses ruins of antiquity as well as modern-day ruins. I argue that the role of the picturesque in ruin appreciation has been overemphasized, while the role of ruins in theories of the sublime has been underemphasized. Ultimately, however, I argue for a pluralistic account of the aesthetic value of ruins.

My account of ruins provides a unique framework for the ethical identification, preservation, and consumption of ruins. If we see ruins as in the process of decay, and we have good reasons to respect the aesthetic integrity of ruins, we ought to allow a ruin to rinate. Paradoxically then, in order to “preserve” the special aesthetic value of a ruin, we should allow it to decay. Another paradox centers on ruin appreciation, which historically has been wedded to tourism. While all tourism provides challenges for ruin preservation, contemporary ruins face unique worries of exploitation, exploitation of descendant and co-existent ruin communities as well as exploitation of the ruin itself.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to Catalina V. Scarbrough

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION AND CASE STUDIES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

*Yesterday...I saw some ruins, beloved ruins
of my youth which I knew already...I thought
again about them, and about the dead whom I
had never known and on whom my feet trampled.
I love above all the sight of vegetation resting upon
old ruins; this embrace of nature, coming swiftly
to bury the work of man the moment
his hand is no longer there to defend it,
fills me with deep and ample joy.*

(Gustave Flaubert, letter to a friend, 1846)

At first blush, Flaubert's ruin fascination might seem like an eighteenth century aristocratic fancy, an artifact of a bygone era. However, the contemplation of ruins' meaning and of their beauty is still very much alive. While the ruin heyday might have occurred during the eighteenth century's obsession with the picturesque, the business of ruin contemplation began before the eighteenth century and continues to this day. In the past few years there has been a surge of this "ruinlust,"¹ especially in the United States. Modern day landscape photographers and photojournalists have flocked to modern ruins; the resulting photographs have been labeled "ruin porn."² Ruin porn tours for aspiring photographers have surfaced in economically hard hit cities, such as Detroit. The question remains, why – if ruinlust was just a product of the eighteenth

¹ "Ruinlust" is a term, I believe, coined by Dame Rose Macaulay in *Appreciation of Ruins*.

² These images have been labeled pornographic because many believe they are exploitative. What, precisely, the photos exploit is open to debate. The strongest interpretation of this criticism is that the photos make money off of the misery of others. For some interesting articles on this phenomenon see: *CNN*: http://articles.cnn.com/2010-11-10/us/detroit.environment_1_motor-city-detroit-free-press-figure?s=PM:US (Neild, "'Ruin Porn' Detroit Becomes Pin-up for Reinvention - CNN.com.")
New York Times: <http://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/pushback-on-ruin-porn-of-detroit/> (Dickson, "Pushback on 'Ruin Porn' of Detroit.")
The Huffington Post: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ian-ference/on-ruin-porn_b_816593.html (Ference, "On 'Ruin Porn.'")

century obsession with the picturesque—are we still intrigued by ruins?³ I believe that ruins remain important objects of aesthetic appreciation due in part to the variety of modes of appreciation one might employ in engaging with them: ruins can be appreciated as part of a picturesque landscape, as architectural marvels, for their formal aesthetic properties, for the trains of associations they produce, for their historical importance, and for what they symbolize to various cultures. My goal is to explain our peculiar aesthetic fascination with architectural ruins and to show why ruins are worthy of our time and aesthetic appreciation. In the dissertation I will be proposing a model of aesthetic appreciation specific to ruins, one that not only presents a methodology of interpreting and evaluating ruins, but also suggests how we ought to preserve and display these objects.

More has been written about the aesthetic appreciation of ruins outside of analytic aesthetics than inside the discipline. This includes articles and books written in the fields of Germanics, Sociology, English, Architecture, Archaeology, Museology and Art History—just to name a few. However, while these literatures will be helpful in the dissertation, I will focus mainly on the literature in philosophy, and mainly Western philosophy of the analytic tradition. Within analytic aesthetics, various sub-disciplines can be shown to have useful things to say about the aesthetic appreciation of ruins. I will look, for example, at the literature in the aesthetic appreciation of gardens (e.g., Ross, Carlson), philosophy of architecture, and the aesthetic appreciation of nature (e.g., Parsons, Carlson, Berleant, Eaton, Moore). So there are *intradisciplinary* as well as *interdisciplinary* divides that I hope to bridge.

³ The eighteenth century was filled with ruin fascination. And, as it turns out, we are too. However, as we turn to accounts of the appreciation of ruins in chapter four we will see that, through a careful analysis of the eighteenth century aesthetic appreciation of ruins (through the lens of the picturesque), many of the insights of this ruin heyday are shallow at best. Better models of appreciation can, and will be argued for.

I will begin this with four examples: Bannerman Castle (Fishkill, New York), Mỹ Sơn Archaeological Site (Quảng Nam Province, Việt Nam), Gas Works Park (Seattle, Washington), and the Michigan Central Train Station (Detroit, Michigan). These examples will help show what I find ontologically curious, aesthetically interesting, and ethically important about ruins.

My first chapter presents the examples mentioned above. I have picked four disparate examples to illustrate the features of ruins I wish to investigate. The presentation of these cases should help the reader see the force of my project. After discussing these four case studies, my second chapter consists of a discussion of the ontological nature of ruins, and a definition for these ontologically curious objects. I will argue that the ontological status of ruins informs our aesthetic appreciation of them. Chapter three is composed of an extensive literature review, dealing with theories of art appreciation, nature appreciation, garden appreciation, and architectural appreciation. In chapter four I will turn to my own philosophical account of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins, building on those accounts discussed in the previous chapter. I will also briefly discuss some ethical considerations for ruin stabilization stemming from my aesthetic and ontological accounts. There are two appendices to chapter four: the first details international laws dealing with ruin conservation; the second details national laws for ruin protection. The ethical account of ruins stabilization I present in my fifth and sixth chapters is informed by some of the national and international legal precedents for artifact conservation and appreciation. These appendices aim to show that while my account of ruin appreciation and stabilization may seem radical, there does exist legal precedent for many of the assumptions that I make.

1.2 BANNERMAN CASTLE

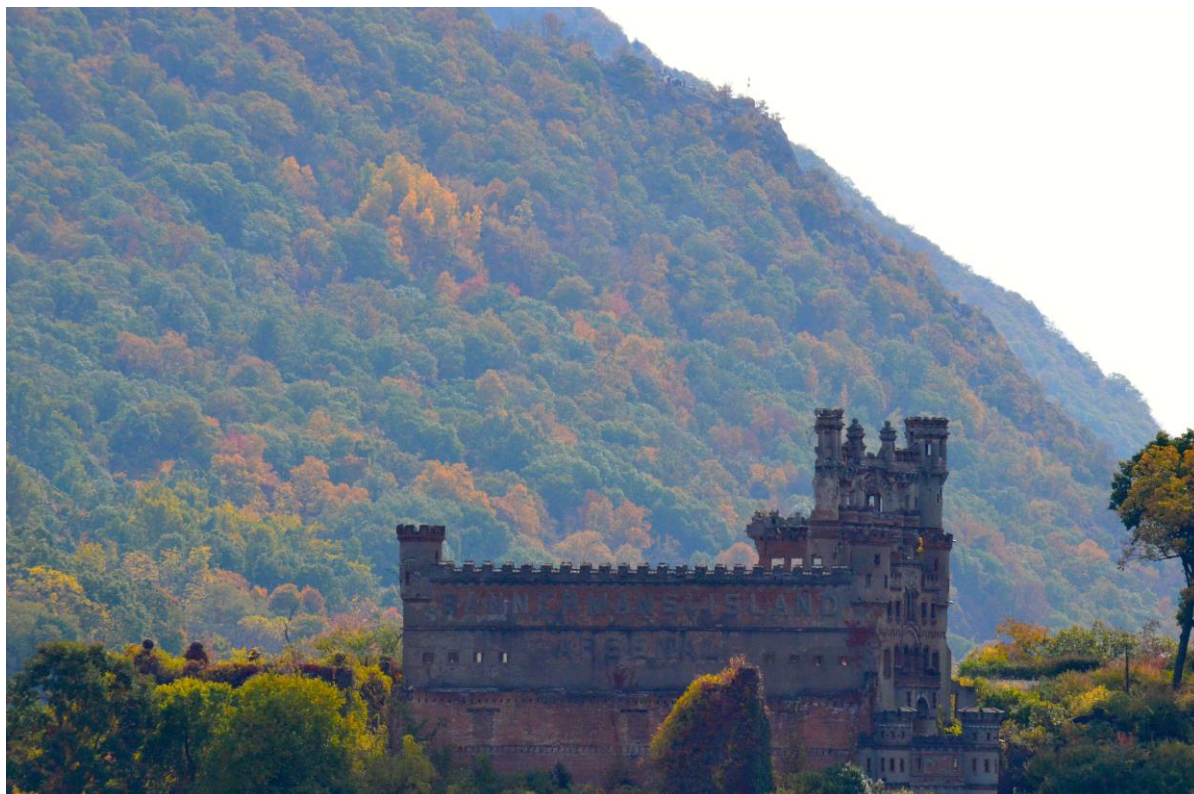


Figure 1.1. Bannerman Castle, photo by Fareed Awan

“To The United States” (1827) - Goethe
America, you have it better
Than our old continent;
You have no ruined castles
And no primordial stones.
Your soul, your inner life
Remain untroubled by
Useless memory
And wasted strife.

Bannerman Castle is the Hudson River Valley’s most famous ruin. Francis Bannerman VI, a Scottish immigrant, was the proprietor of the largest military surplus store in the 1900s. By the end of the nineteenth century, he had more weaponry than most countries and needed a safe

place for his arsenal. He began building the Bannerman Castle and Armory on Pollepel Island in 1901. Inspired by Scottish castles and Moorish fortifications, Francis Bannerman shunned architects and engineers, preferring to design this eccentric structure himself. In the 1960's, the descendants of Francis Bannerman VI could no longer afford the property and abandoned the island and so it was sold in 1967 to the State of New York,⁴ at which point much of the weaponry (now considered antiques) was either purchased or donated to the Smithsonian Institute. A few years later a fire of unknown origins ravaged the island, leaving only the shell of the buildings remaining. New York decided to restrict access to the island, fearing that the structure was unsound and that a secondary collapse could happen at any time. In the following decades, this restricted access policy added to the island's lore and mystique. Interest in the island and the arsenal grew until (in 1994) a non-profit group called The Bannerman Castle Trust was formed. Partnering with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP), the trust raised (private) funds to tend to the ruin, removing overgrowth from the roads and footpaths. The Trust began hosting various "hard hat tours" of the ruin, including (and perhaps most importantly for my argument) tours for artists.

There have been two major collapses of the arsenal in recent years. The first occurred right after Christmas 2009 in which the southeast corner of the tower building collapsed. The second occurred on January 25, 2010, which left only the tower's west elevation intact. According to the Trust, "the unprecedented damage, caused by aging mortar and unprotected brick damaged by the elements, underscores the need for immediate action to save this endangered historic and scenic treasure in the Hudson River."⁵ While the trust does want to

⁴ Specifically, the island was sold to the Taconic State Park Commission via the Rockefeller-controlled Jackson Hole Preserve, which had been incorporated by the newly formed Hudson Highland State Park. (Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 76.)

⁵ "Hudson Valley Ruins: Bannerman's Castle Collapse 2009/2010."

stabilize the current structure, its goal has never been to repair or restore the Castle or arsenal.⁶ The Trust is dedicated to *stabilizing*⁷ the structure only, thus preserving it as a ruin.⁸

In thinking about the Bannerman Castle, the first question we might ask ourselves is: *What makes the Bannerman Castle a ruin and not just an endangered historic site? And why would this classification be important?* Another question we might ask is: *What makes the Bannerman Castle aesthetically pleasing?* Notice that the Bannerman Castle Trust labels the castle both a “historic” and “scenic” treasure, emphasizing the importance of both its aesthetic and historic qualities. Finally, we might ask: *What obligations do we have toward this structure in light of its status as an aesthetically valuable ruin?* Ought we seek to preserve it as a ruin (and allow it to decay, or remain in a semi-decayed state)? If so, what principles could we use for guidance? I believe questions of these sorts fall into three broad categories: “ontological” or “definitional” questions, aesthetic questions, and ethical questions. Because these categories are not always distinct, they provide messy and challenging terrain for those who wish to write philosophically about ruins.

The Bannerman Castle serves as a good case study for several reasons. First, the Bannerman Castle is a good example of how an architectural ruin is tied to landscape values.

⁶ Currently the trust is installing a new roof and shoring up some walls of the Bannerman family house. These projects are labeled “stabilization efforts,” and not “restoration” for a reason: they want the castle to remain a quasi-ruin. However, it is unclear how much “stabilization” can be done to the ruin before it turns into a restoration. Here we have yet another sorites problem to deal with. In chapter five I provide an account of what efforts can rightfully be seen as restorations, and which efforts are done in the name of ruin “stabilization.”

⁷ Notice that I use the word “stabilization” and not “repair” or “reconstruction” or even “conservation.” As I will discuss in chapters five and six, the preservation of ruins requires stabilization of the site, not reconstruction. We want to stabilize the ruins to make them accessible to visitors, but we do not want to destroy their conceptual integrity by repairing them. This idea will seem at odds with what most people think of preservation, since, in order to preserve a ruin, one must allow for a certain amount of decay.

⁸ In 2007 the Trust received a \$350,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Fund to stabilize the residential structure. Since 2007 the Trust has raised close to \$200,000 towards the matching grant. More about the stabilization can be found here: <http://bannermancastle.org/category/bannerman-residence-stabilization/>

These landscape values can be purely aesthetic, by which I mean “narrowly aesthetic” – or having only to do with the senses (i.e., what one can immediately see, touch, hear, taste, or smell). These narrowly aesthetic features may include how the ruin “looks” against the land.⁹ These landscape values can be imbued with historical information—for example how that structure relates to that particular part of the world, the nation, the city, or the structure’s relationship to an architectural style and history. Or, they may show how that structure reflects the views of the architect, etc. In other words, we may talk about the purely formal aesthetic features (or what I call “narrowly aesthetic”) of ruins in a landscape, and there are wider aesthetic features of a ruin in the landscape, which may include biographical, historical and sociological information about the site.

Bannerman Castle is tied to the history of the Hudson Valley – now an important place for American ruins. The region is connected to the famous Hudson River School of painters, including Thomas Cole.¹⁰ Cole once bemoaned the absence of ruins on the Hudson in the

⁹ This may remind the reader of the picturesque notion of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins, which will be discussed in further detail in chapter four.

¹⁰ Three years after Mary Shelley wrote *The Last Man*, a novel in which the hero escapes the European plague (literal decay) by sailing to The New World, Thomas Cole painted one of the most famous ruin-covered landscapes, *The Course of Empire: Desolation*. Thomas Cole was the first great painter of the American Wilderness and founder of the Hudson River School. An Englishman born in Lancashire, he immigrated to the United States in 1818 at the age of seventeen. The American School of Catastrophe, prevalent in the region in the 1820s, was a religious movement which prophesized the end of days and decried the materialism they found rampant in wealthy New Yorkers. This movement is reported to have had an impact on the painter who dedicated his twenties to painting large pastoral landscapes of the Hudson River Valley. These landscapes heralded nature as God’s creation on earth, and reaffirmed his conservative Methodist beliefs. In 1832 Cole made a journey to Italy. The excavation of the Forum had begun and Cole was eager to be inspired by it. Upon his return from Europe, Luman Reed (fellow Hudson River Valley resident, and patron of the arts) commissioned Cole to paint five great canvases on a theme for his New York apartment. What resulted was the series *The Course of Empire*. *The Course of Empire* comprises five sequential paintings, including: *The Savage State*, *The Arcadian (or Pastoral State)*, *The Consummation of Empire*, *The Destruction of Empire*, and *Desolation*.

nineteenth century, but in the twentieth century the area became replete with them.¹¹ After years in which the Hudson River Valley became identified with pollution and economic decline and many of its buildings were abandoned, it is now experiencing a rapid population growth, especially on the riverfront. Commercial and residential developers threaten the abandoned structures; it seems as if all a developer has to do is label a building “unsalvageable” in order to demolish the ruin to start new construction. While most historical societies focus on sites that have already been restored or preserved, other historic landmarks have been left to ruinate.¹² Bannerman Castle exemplifies wide landscape values; it reflects the biographical history of its eccentric creator, while also reflecting its connections to the important Hudson River School painters, and the iconic Hudson River Valley.

Second, Bannerman Castle is a good case study because many observe that the structure appears more beautiful in its ruined form than at the height of its architectural form. This is partially evidenced by the fact that the ruined structure has spurred much more artistic production than did the original structure.¹³ Several companies run “artistic” tours of Pollepel Island, which leave at dusk and dawn to maximize photographic effects.¹⁴ Bannerman Castle has appeared in nearly every book about American ruins, and has inspired countless professional photographers. It also has appeared in a number of high fashion shoots, including one for

¹¹ As I will discuss in chapter four, these ties are important cultural associations ruins possess. It is significant that the Hudson River Valley was the home to a host of different art movements, since ruins often inspire artistic creativity.

¹²The Hudson Valley boasts at least eighty-five historic sites found abandoned in this region. (Rinaldi and Yasinsac, *Hudson Valley Ruins*, 2.)

¹³ For example, Jane Bannerman’s paintings of the structure can be purchased through BCT.

¹⁴ “Hudson River Adventures.” <http://www.zerve.com/HRAdventure/Photo>

*Esquire Magazine*¹⁵, a fact that reinforces the idea that emergent properties of ruined structures can make them more appealing than their non-ruined aesthetic cousins.¹⁶

Third, this is a case where no one is advocating for the total repair or reconstruction of the structure. Friends of the Bannerman Castle want to keep the ruins as close to their present ruined condition as is safe. They value the interplay of stone and nature and want to allow a certain amount of vegetation to encroach upon the structure.

Finally, Bannerman Castle is a good case study because it has a rather restricted cultural scope. That is to say, Bannerman Castle has existed in only one country, under the auspice of only one major culture. During its existence, the land has (legally) belonged to but one people who have had a relatively stable political life. If this castle had belonged to various different peoples, and represented vastly different things to those peoples, it would be a more complex object of aesthetic appreciation and interpretation.

¹⁵ “How Fall’s Best Coats Make a Very Rugged Commute.”

¹⁶ Throughout this dissertation I will use the term “architectural cousin” to refer to the architectural structure that the ruin once was. So a ruin’s architectural cousin is its past self, realized before ruination.

1.3 MỸ SƠN



Figure 1.2. Mỹ Sơn, photo by author

While Bannerman Castle serves as a domestic case of ruin appreciation and protection, Mỹ Sơn is an exemplary international one. Its UNESCO status and importance to the world community illuminate certain debates in cultural property protection that seem relevant to ruin appreciation. Mỹ Sơn Archaeological Sanctuary is in the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam. The Sanctuary, nestled in the Quảng Nam province of central Việt Nam, is the foremost Champa archaeological site, and is the largest archaeological site in Việt Nam. At the time of its rediscovery in 1898, the site had 71 relics comprising 14 architectural groupings. Before discussing the ruins at this remarkable site, I will briefly review the history of the Champa Kingdom.

The Champa Kingdom dates back to the second century when early settlers revolted against Mandarin rule to gain sovereignty.¹⁷ The territory and political structure of the Champa Kingdom has been described as a mandala composed of a loose federation of regions, each with their own political and economic centers. Hinduism was introduced to the Champa Kingdom in the fourth century. At this time, the Cham people constructed Mỹ Sơn.¹⁸

Mỹ Sơn religious sanctuary was protected in a deep valley surrounded by high mountain ranges. Unlike similar temple structures in Indochina (such as Angkor Wat), Mỹ Sơn's iconography remained Hindu.¹⁹ At that time, Champa was becoming an increasingly important seaport for East Sea trading. Subsequently, traders from the Middle East converted many of the Cham people to Islam.²⁰ In the fifteenth century, the Champa Kingdom was completely destroyed. By the sixteenth century the Cham people had integrated with the Vietnamese. Today, the Cham are one of fifty-four ethnic groups recognized by the government of Việt Nam.

The Champa ruins at Mỹ Sơn consist primarily of brick temple towers called *kalans*, built successively from the late fourth/fifth centuries until the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries. A kalan is a corbel structure composed of bricks that are stacked in a slightly offset manner. Similar to

¹⁷ The name “Champa” first appears in Sanskrit in two early inscriptions: one dating from 658, found in Việt Nam, and the other dating from 668, found in Cambodia.

¹⁸ The Champa Kingdom was physically arranged partly according to Hindu conceptions of state, but was also deeply influenced by the Cham people's preoccupation with the natural dualism between male and female. According to Cham legend, two clans ruled the Kingdom: the Areca (male) clan, and the Li-u or Coconut (female) clan. In Hindu fashion, one hub of the Champa Kingdom was set upon a mountain, as a symbol of the God Siva, and a second hub was set near a river, as a symbol of the Goddess Ganga. Each region contained three such centers, one for trade, power, and religion. In Việt Nam, the mountain of the Champa Kingdom was the ‘cat tooth’ mountain, the river was the Thu Bồn river, the port city was what is modern day Hội An, the royal city was Tra Kieu, and the religious sanctuary was Mỹ Sơn. Mỹ Sơn was the center of religion for the “male” city, placed near the Cat Tooth Mountain, while Po Nagar Nha Trang was the religious center for the “female” city.

¹⁹ There is evidence, however, that some Cham kings converted to Buddhism around the 11th century. King Indravarman II, for example, practiced Mahayana Buddhism, breaking from Hinduism.

²⁰ If you ask the (mostly Buddhist) central Vietnamese people what a defining feature of the descendants of Champa, they are likely to respond by telling you that the Champa are darker skinned, have curly hair, and are Muslim.

Khmer and Central Javanese architecture, the Cham produced kalans with a three-level pyramid shaped roof.²¹ The kalan temples were erected to honor the God-Kings. The first temple at M̃y Son was built from wood around the fourth century and its purpose was to aid worshipping the God-King Bhadresvara, the original mountain God-King of Champa.²² It is believed that when the God-Kings died, they were buried at these temples, but the gravesites have long since been robbed and little archaeological evidence remains.²³ Other structures on the site include ceremonial halls (mandapa), gate-towers (gopura) and a tower for offerings (kosagraha).

One of the most notable features of M̃y Son's temples is their construction material. The bricks have very little room between them, as if they were melded together during the construction process. As a consequence, no vegetation can grow between them. How the bricks were fitted together is the first of two great mysteries of M̃y Son. Additionally, on the bricks we see several frieze designs that were sketched and left unfinished *in continuity* with finished designs. How the sculptural reliefs were carved onto the side of the kalan walls is the second great mystery. No disjointed lines have been found, suggesting that the friezes on the sides of these buildings were carved into soft bricks once the tower structure was already erected.²⁴

²¹ The main sanctuary typically would have a flat, square foundation and would house the sacrificial yoni-linga. The yoni, representing the female genitalia, was used in ritualistic, water-cleansing ceremonies. The lingas, representing the male phallus, would be placed in the yoni during these ceremonies.

²² Trà Kỳ Phương and Nakamura, "The M̃y Son and Pô Nagar Nha Trang Sanctuaries: On the Cosmological Dualist Cult of the Champa Kingdom in Central Vietnam as Seen from Art and Anthropology."

²³ Evidence for this comes from Ancient Chinese records, dating back to 380-413 CE. These records indicate that the land was gifted to this God-King for the specific purpose of erecting and maintaining a kalan.

²⁴ An Italian report released in 2001 theorized the following:

- (1) The bricks were fired at a temperature below 850 degrees Celsius
- (2) No lime was used for the mortars between bricks
- (3) The joints between bricks are so thin that no moisture seems to be able to penetrate them from the outside
- (4) The contact between the bricks was probably improved by the presence of a natural glue or resin

Mỹ Sơn was “rediscovered” in 1885 by a group of French soldiers. Between 1896 and 1902, several French archaeologists catalogued (and pillaged) the site.²⁵ In 1930, the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO), a French institute dedicated to the study of Asian societies, was formed and “restoration” work began in earnest. The EFEO used cement, gravel and iron—materials that seem barbaric to many today—to “restore” (by crudely reconstructing) some of the Champa Kingdom temples. In 1939, a dam was built to divert a river from flowing near the site, which helped to preserve the tower at A9. French reconstruction and restoration continued until the beginning of the Vietnam War.

From 1966-1968, Mỹ Sơn was under the control of the Front for the Liberation of the South and in August of 1969, a bomb dropped by an American B52 bomber struck Mỹ Sơn, reducing its largest temple to heaps of unrecognizable rubble. Bomb craters can still be seen in groups B, E, and F; the towers designated A1 and E4 were totally destroyed.²⁶ In 1970, under intense international pressure, President Nixon agreed to spare Mỹ Sơn from any further attacks. After the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese government de-mined Mỹ Sơn so that additional restoration work could continue. The effort cost nine workers their lives, and inflicted serious injury on eleven others. In 1980, Việt Nam partnered with Poland to restore Mỹ Sơn. A Polish

(5) The thick joints seem to help increase the strength of the masonry even though the bricks themselves are rather soft and not strong

(6) The lack of biological growth on the walls has led to a much lower degree of decay. Where the walls have been shored up using modern restoration techniques, vegetation abounds and scientist have seen faster decay of the wall structure.

One hypothesis is that the temples were built with par-baked bricks, which were mashed into place with a minimum of mortar. Once the bricks were in place, the carvings on the temple were made. After the carvings were festooned, some material (probably wood) was set against the walls of the temple and then lit on fire to further kiln the bricks into place.

²⁵ These scientists included Louis Finot, Lunet de Lajonquiere, and most famously, Henri Parmentier.

²⁶ There is some debate whether or not the tallest and most majestic kalan, A1, was destroyed during the American raid, or whether it was destroyed (pilfered) before, by the French. The records are unreliable

team of scientists consolidated the rubble, preserved stray bricks from the elements, and began to reconstruct some of M̃ Son's lost temples.

In 1999 UNESCO deemed M̃ Son a World Heritage Site. To be considered a UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site, a site must meet one or more of ten criteria. UNESCO determined that the M̃ Son temple complex satisfies two criteria, specifically criterion two and criterion three. According to UNESCO:

Criterion (ii): The M̃ Son Sanctuary is an exceptional example of cultural interchange, with an indigenous society adapting to external cultural influences, notably the Hindu art and architecture of the Indian sub-continent.

Criterion (iii): The Champa Kingdom was an important phenomenon in the political and cultural history of South – East Asia, vividly illustrated by the ruins of M̃ Son.²⁷

M̃ Son is truly a remarkable site. Not only is it one of the longest inhabited archaeological sites in the region, its oldest temples also pre-date temples found in the more famous Angkor Archaeological Park in Cambodia. Unfortunately, because M̃ Son was only recently given UNESCO World Heritage status, there is scant international research on the site and, far worse, until 1999, reconstruction attempts were haphazard, employing little to no technical expertise. Since relatively little international attention was paid to M̃ Son before 1999, the effects of these ill-advised reconstruction and restoration attempts remain quite visible. For example, the photo below shows one of the French restoration attempts on a column. The material used in this “restoration” was concrete. (See Fig. 1.3)

The questions that I asked about Bannerman Castle are relevant to the temples of M̃ Son. *First, what makes the kalans of M̃ Son ruins and not just an endangered historic site? And why would this classification be important?* M̃ Son is an interesting case study because of the diversity of structures on the site. There are structures that have been allowed to ruinate without

²⁷ “My Son Sanctuary - UNESCO World Heritage Centre.” <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/949>

any human intervention; there are structures that have (recently) been subjugated to ruin stabilization techniques;²⁸ there are structures that have been restored; and there are structures that have been completely reconstructed. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ontological importance of differentiating ruin stabilization, restorations, and reconstructions.



Figure 1.3 Mỹ Sơn botched restoration, photo by author

Because of the distinctive composition of the bricks used in constructing the kalans, it is quite easy to tell whether a structure has been allowed to ruinate or has been the subject of restoration or reconstruction. The different colors of the building material are clearly apparent in the picture

²⁸ One example of a ruin stabilization technique was mentioned in the previous section: a dam was built to divert a river from running through the Mỹ Sơn Archaeological Complex. Diverting the river spared several of the kalans from further wall collapses, but did alter some of the landscape values of the site. One of the hard questions this dissertation will attempt to address is how to adjudicate between disparate aesthetic values. On one hand, we have a desire to preserve the historic look of the landscape – including the preservation of streams, rivers, indigenous plants, etc. On the other hand, we have an interest in maintaining the architectural integrity of the structure. Which is more aesthetically valuable? Historically valuable?

above. Additionally, walls that have been restored or reconstructed have vegetation growing on them, whereas walls that have been left alone are free of vegetation.

The architectural marvels exhibited by M̃ Son are obviously basic to our finding M̃ Son beautiful. However, we could better appreciate the architectural beauty of the kalan in the height of its architectural integrity. If we primarily cared about architectural beauty, we would simply build a replica of the original non-ruinated structure.²⁹ Another reason we deem M̃ Son beautiful is its landscape values. The lushness of the valley, situated in thick forests with tall mountains in the background would be beautiful even if the ruins were not there. There is something delightful about the interplay between the cultural artifacts situated within the beauty of natural surroundings. However, if this were our only care, we could build “fake” or sham ruins in similarly beautiful valleys. The fact that this view and these buildings have been around for close to 2,000 years—that they have history—seems aesthetically valuable and important. One aspect of ruin appreciation I will attempt to explain is our aesthetic interest in originals.

When touring M̃ Son in the summer of 2012, my guide told me that once I rounded a particular corner to look upon the rubble where A1 once stood, I would feel “very, very sad.” He was right. Seeing only a pile of bricks where there once stood the largest kalan at the M̃ Son was very depressing. This feeling was exacerbated by the belief that my country had wantonly bombed this important piece of cultural property. I mention this because this realization struck me as aesthetically important, not just politically or ethically important. We bring our knowledge to bear on our aesthetic experiences. Ruins have a life span. A1 was no longer a ruin, but a heap

²⁹ While some architectural structures are designed to become more beautiful with age (e.g., weathered patinas on copper roofs), other structures are designed to be appreciated through their functionality. As these structures were religious in nature, and were intended to provide cover from rain so that water rituals could be performed, I am comfortable assuming that the intended beauty of the structure would be easiest to see before its ruination. Additional evidence for this claim is found in the fact that the brick used for the temples did not allow vegetation to grow on them.

of stones. And it was a heap of stones not because of damage caused naturally by the passage of time, erosion, or overgrowth of plants and trees, but rather because of damage caused by my nation's government in an arguably unjust act of war. This speaks to the ontological question about the lifespan of ruins, but also possibly speaks to the fact that, like human beings, different stages of ruination might seem more or less beautiful. If A1 looked perceptually identical, yet had decayed due to "natural" forces, such as time and water damage, our aesthetic engagement with the kalan could be altered.

UNESCO has decided that Mỹ Sơn is an important site because it documents a culture that adapted well to external cultural influence, and because the Champa Kingdom was an important political and cultural influence in Việt Nam. However, this speaks only to Mỹ Sơn as a site of archaeological data, and that is not the whole story. The buildings of Mỹ Sơn were beautiful; the ruins of Mỹ Sơn are beautiful. We want to protect this archaeological complex, in part, because of its beauty. This beauty is constantly threatened; a good deal of material has been pillaged from Mỹ Sơn *because* of its beauty. While I can find no accurate record of what has been taken from Mỹ Sơn and when it was taken, on-site workers report that in the 1940s and 50s French treasure hunters removed all of the faces of sculptures and friezes at Mỹ Sơn. When one visits the site today one is astonished that only one of a thousand "original" faces remains. While there are theories, no one is quite sure how many sculptures have been pilfered from the site, and no one is sure where the pilfered sculptures currently reside. This theft presents a not-so-unique problem for archaeological ruins: if items are repatriated to their places of origin, should they be reincorporated into the archaeological site? If so, how?

1.4 GAS WORKS PARK



Figure 1.4 Gas Works Park Forbidden Zone, WikiCommons

Gas Works Park in Seattle, Washington is a great example of a modern ruin. The old gas works have been allowed to rinate and have been incorporated into a thriving park. Before considering its status as a ruin, however, I would like to present a bit of history about the park and gas works. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Lake Union area of Seattle was the subject of a city planning battle. Virgil Bogue, a noted civil engineer, proposed the “Bogue Plan,” which would turn Lake Union into an industrial park unusually situated in the heart of the city. The Olmstead Brothers, the nation’s leading landscape design firm, recommended that the Lake Union area be used for a public park. Even though voters rejected the Bogue plan, Lake Union nonetheless became an industrial park by 1917.

The Seattle Lighting Company³⁰ was a major tenant of the Lake Union industrial park. In 1906, it built a coal gas processing plant on the shores of Lake Union. The plant's main product was illuminated gas used for lighting. Factories were not uncommon in that part of town as Lake Union's industrial district housed sawmills, ship builders, and iron works. In 1937, the Seattle Gas Company switched their production from coal gas to oil, as coal-to-gas generators were becoming prohibitively expensive. Their new oil facilities included offices, laboratories, storage tanks, a boiler house, pumps and compressors. Between 1940 and 1954, however, the plant's business plummeted as Seattle began to import natural gas. Consequently, the Seattle Gas Company ceased gas production in 1956, abandoning their buildings in due course.

In 1962, the City of Seattle purchased the abandoned land and buildings for \$1,340,000. Eight years later, development of the park began. In 1971, the Park Board approved Richard Haag Associates' design to preserve the gas company's grounds and transform the land into a park. In 1976, Gas Works Park opened to the public.

Richard Haag's designs were revolutionary. He foresaw the value of these industrial structures and desired to preserve them for future generations. Haag noted that he wanted to keep the industrial features on the park for their aesthetic value.³¹ For this, he was awarded the President's Award for Design Excellence, presented by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ALSA), in 1981. Notably, Seattle's Gas Works Park is the sole surviving example of a gas works from that era of U.S. history.

Some of the revolutionary design features of Gas Works Park include its "earth mound" made from the rubble of the original office building's foundations, the "play barn" which was

³⁰ The company changed their name to the Seattle Gas Company in 1930.

³¹ I will discuss this in more depth in chapter six.

converted from the pump house, and the “picnic area” converted from the boiler house.³² The play barn consists of brightly painted piping on which kids can play. The picnic area, which is located near the play barn, houses picnic tables and small grills. The park is currently used for picnics, for protests, as a concert venue, as a wedding venue, and for festivals. It has an amazing view of downtown Seattle, and is the most popular spot from which to watch Seattle’s Fourth of July fireworks display.

³²KSHSJ The site had been contaminated through its years of use as a coal plant. As a result bioremediation was used to decontaminate the soil. The park was closed in 1984 since it was deemed too contaminated. In 1985, the polluted soil was covered with a one-foot cap of clean soil. Later, in 2001, a \$4 million decontamination effort was initiated. Currently there are concerns about tar contamination; the park receives weekly checkups for tar concerns during the summer months.



Figure 1.5 Gas Works Park, Tower Close-up, WikiCommons

The play barn and picnic area have been repurposed from pump and boiler houses; this ingenious repurposing of industrial space is worthy of time and attention. But since my focus is on ruins, I will not spend any further time discussing them. In the second chapter of the dissertation I distinguish ruins from buildings that have been repurposed (such as the play barn and picnic area); Gas Works Park does have two groupings of structures that have not been

repurposed and have been left to ruinate. These two groupings comprise the industrial ruins housed on the park, and appear as imposing towers against the Seattle skyline. The first grouping is composed of six synthetic natural gas generators with accompanying attendant processing towers, and the second grouping contains an oil absorber and oil cooler. The first grouping was built in 1937, and the second in 1947. A chain-link fence now surrounds these towers because they are not safe to climb. (see Fig. 1.5)

The towers have been left to rust, and ruinate. That these towers have been intentionally left to ruinate for their aesthetic properties is most relevant to the analysis I present. So, when we ask the ontological question “Why are these towers at Gas Works Park considered ruins and not merely historical artifacts?” we have a very clear answer: they are considered ruins because they have been intentionally left to ruinate. They were left to ruinate because the park’s designer saw the aesthetic value in ruining industrial objects.

What makes this ruined structure aesthetically pleasing? A case study of an industrial (or modern) ruin is vital to this project. To present a unified account of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins, I need to show that this appreciation is essentially the same whether one views ancient Grecian ruins or modern American ruins. While most of the academic literature of ruins has focused on the notion of the picturesque applied to ruins of antiquity, I will show that modern ruins, too, can be viewed through the lens of the picturesque (as well as the sublime and other lenses). To do so, I will explore how ruin appreciation—be it in a gas plant or a Scottish castle—draws upon the Kantian notion of the sublime. Richard Haag described the ruined gas works of Gas Works Park as where “towers were ferro-forests and their brooding presence became the most sacred symbols.”³³ His use of the phrase “brooding presence” suggests a looming, fearful,

³³ Reed, Shum, and Lowry, *Groundswell*, 25.

foreboding feeling when viewing this ruin. His sense of fear, tangled up with a feeling of the sacred smacks of the Kantian notion of the sublime.

Rose Macaulay's *Pleasure of Ruins* speaks to these industrial, or "new" ruins. She states:

New ruins have not yet acquired the weathered patina of age, the true rust of the barons' wars, not yet put on their ivy, nor equipped themselves with the appropriate bestiary of lizards, bats, screech-owls, serpents, speckled toads and little foxes which, as have been so frequently observed by ruin-explorers, hold high revel in the precincts of old ruins . . . But new ruins are for a time stark and bare, vegetationless and creatureless; blackened and torn, they smell of fire and mortality.³⁴

Gas Works Park is an exemplar of Macaulay's modern ruin for a number of reasons. First, Gas Works Park is just old enough that its smell of mortality has faded. Newer ruins, such as the remaining trident of the World Trade Center (which has been incorporated into the 9/11 memorial), are too fresh for us to see their beauty. When we look upon a church that has been recently devastated by war or natural disaster, we are flooded solely with compassion for the victims. When the Seattle Gas Company first closed its plant, the site of the towers ruining would predominantly symbolize to Seattleites the loss of jobs, the failure of laissez-faire capitalism, and the downfall of factory work in the United States. While the towers at Gas Work Park still retain these associations, the associations do not dominate our mental landscape as they might once have. It is easy to see from this and other kindred examples that the newness or oldness of ruins matter to our aesthetic appreciation of them. Moreover, the motivation underlying a decision to allow a structure to ruin matters. Here the gas towers were intentionally ruined for their aesthetic qualities. Some structures, such as Hitler's Bunker (*Führerbunker*), have been allowed to ruin to express a political position.³⁵ Other structures,

³⁴ Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 453.

³⁵ The German government has allowed the *Führerbunker* to ruin to show the visible passage of time between the Third Reich and contemporary Germany. They have left the bunker unmarked and

such as the ruins on the Croatian rural coast, have simply been ignored by their governments. Or, in the case of the industrial ruins of Detroit (discussed later), the government lacks the funds to reconstruct or repurpose disused buildings and so they are left to ruinate. In the next chapter, I will argue that the intention behind a ruination can affect its aesthetic appraisal.

Second, Gas Works Park is an exemplary modern ruin because it stretches the classification of “architectural.” Although most of my account focuses on architectural structures, narrowly defined, my account of ruin appreciation extends beyond that and applies to industrial ruins. By showing that it can do so, I provide a basis for supposing that my account may also apply to other objects as well, including shipwrecks,³⁶ gardens, cars, musical instruments, and possibly even persons.

Finally, I have been asking the question: *What obligations do we have toward a structure in light of its status as an aesthetically valuable ruin?* My account of the aesthetic importance of ruins will show that it is important to allow some structures to ruinate. Currently many buildings and disused industrial spaces are seen as wastes of space. Especially in the case of industrial ruins, disused sites are sometimes seen as having no value. Worse, they are places that attract graffiti, drug deals, and other forms of deviancy.³⁷ As mentioned earlier, industrial ruins have recently attracted positive attention, with many ruin goers calling them “modern gothic,” focusing on feelings of “post-industrial nostalgia,” and even describing them as “picturesque.”³⁸ For the last ten years, there have been websites dedicated to “urban exploring,” defined as “the exploration of man-made structures, usually abandoned ruins or not usually seen components of

overgrown in an attempt to prevent the bunker from turning into a shrine for Neo-Nazis. I will rely on this example later on in the dissertation.

³⁶ I find addressing shipwrecks very problematic because they are also underwater graveyards. As such, their classification as a ruin is complicated. There are above water ruin-graveyards as well, such as Pompeii and the site of the Twin Towers. This dual classification will be discussed in chapter two.

³⁷ Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

the man-made environment.”³⁹ Some cities, such as Seattle, have started to recognize the aesthetic potential of ruined structures.⁴⁰

Gas Works Park provides us with a great example of the aesthetic potential of an industrial ruin. Haag had the foresight to see the aesthetic importance of allowing the gas works to ruin. As a result, he gave us a beautiful vista and allowed a relic of a bygone era to survive. In my final two chapters, I will show that, as a culture, we see value in these sites and, because of that, we feel compelled to preserve them. In other words, we might have compelling reasons to allow some structures decay.

³⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_exploration, accessed 1/27/2012

⁴⁰ Down the street from my house is a disused building that the city has allowed residents to graffiti. The result is quite beautiful. Every week I see a new, free artwork on the sides of the building. Street artists have incorporated some of the crumbling edifice into their designs. As Edensor states in *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*, “Ruins are unpoliced spaces in which a host of artistic endeavors may take place, blurring the distinctions between practices deemed transgressive and rational. Most obviously, they provide a extensive area of vertical surfaces for the inscription of graffiti artists, for graffiti is almost ubiquitous presence in those ruins in which access is easy.” (Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, 33.)

1.5 MICHIGAN CENTRAL TRAIN STATION



Figure 1.6 Michigan Central Station, photo by <http://thearmoryfoundation.com/>

My final example is that of another modern ruin, the Michigan Central Train Station in Detroit, Michigan. Unlike Gas Works Park, the Michigan Central Train Station (MCS, as it is often referred to as) has received no public funds to turn it into a public-use space. Its current function, if it has one, is as a symbol of Detroit's decline. As Dan Austin has written on "Historic Detroit," "Nothing symbolizes Detroit's grandiose rise and spectacular fall like Michigan Central Station."⁴¹ Austin describes MCS as "Detroit's Ellis Island," where many immigrants took their first steps on Michigan soil. The history of the building is fascinating. The Michigan Central railroad started buying land in the "Corktown" neighborhood in the fall of 1908; by the spring of 1910 the had acquired fifty acres. In December of 1931 the *Detroit Tribune* reported that the city

⁴¹ Austin, Dan, "Historicdetroit.org."

spent \$680,619.00 (or \$14.75 million today adjusted for inflation) for the land (and the three pre-existing buildings on the land that they later had condemned). The city also desired to reserve the land in front of the train station as a public park, which they intended to name after President Teddy Roosevelt, who had passed away in 1919. Landscaping for the park followed in 1920, permits were obtained for building the train station on May 16, 1910, and the steel for the building was scaffolded in December of 1912.

Michigan Central Railroad was a subsidiary of the New York Central Railroad, which was owned by William Vanderbilt. The architects of the building were Warren & Wetmore of New York, and Reed & Stem of St. Paul, Minnesota. Charles A. Reed and Allen Stem were known for their designs of railroad stations while Whitney Warren and Charles D. Wetmore were known for their hotel designs (which many believe can be seen in the design of the building's office tower). Writing for the *Architectural Record* at the time, Harold D. Eberlein wrote:

The exterior of the Detroit Station presents an extraordinary lack of continuity of conception. Seen from a distance, the casual observer, unless otherwise informed, would never take the two parts of the station to be portions of one and the same building, so utterly different are they. Each part taken separately might be good. Joined together, they are architecturally incongruous.⁴²

But many were in support of the design, seeing it as a return to classicism and romanticism. The building looked clean, not reminiscent of the soot-covered buildings many of that time period associated with coal trains. MCS was a three-story train depot with an eighteen-story office tower. It was composed of eight million bricks and one hundred and twenty-five thousand cubic feet of stone and seven thousand tons of structural steel. The foundation was made of twenty thousand cubic yards of concrete. At the time it opened, it was the tallest railroad station in the

⁴² Ibid.

world and the fourth tallest building in Detroit. When all was said and done the railroad spent \$16 million on the building (\$332 million adjusted for inflation).

The building was dedicated on January 4, 1914, but a fire on December 26, 1913 made the old depot unusable and rushed the final construction of MCS. The *Detroit Tribune's* headline on December 28, 1913 read, "Walls of Historic Structure Still Hot From Flames While Trains Roll into \$2,500,000 Depot, One of Finest in the Country." The *Tribune's* article elaborates:

The new station was aglow, not with fire as was the old one some hours previous, but aglow with thousands of electric lights which glimmered high above the one and two story dwellings ... Thus the new station stood last night, lights shining from windows high above the building line in the neighborhood, a sentinel of progress and a monument to the old depot which burned, as well as a marker to the railroading of today.⁴³

In December 1931 the *Free Press* wrote: "The grandeur of the interior is something that will be lasting, for it is of marble, brick and bronze, all of this is set off by one of the best lighting schemes ever installed in a building."

The MCS was magnificent structure in its day; large in scale with its huge bronze doors with mahogany trim and marble finishes. "It was the most beautiful station in the country outside of New York or Chicago – a feather in the city's cap!" Wihla Hutson, whose father was a Michigan Central Railroad conductor, told the *Free Press* in 1982, "You'd have thought you were in Buckingham Palace."

At its peak around two hundred trains left the station per day (around WWI); and in the 1940s around four thousand passengers used the train station per day. Some of its famous patrons included Presidents Hoover, Truman, and F.D.R., actor Charlie Chaplin, inventor Thomas

⁴³ "Walls of Historic Structure Still Hot From Flames While Trains Roll into \$2,500,000 Depot, One of Finest in Country."

Edison, and entrepreneur Henry Ford. Some of the iconic train lines traveling to Detroit had fanciful names like “The Motor City Special,” “The Twilight Limited,” and “The Wolverine.”⁴⁴

The train station fell into decline with the rise of government-subsidized highways and the rise of airline commuters. In 1956 the New York Central System (the owners of the MCS) tried to sell the station for \$5 million (\$40 adjusted for inflation), but there were no takers. Consequently, the waiting room was closed in April 1, 1967. Many of the iconic walnut benches (formerly housed in the waiting room) were sold for a mere \$25 a piece.

In 1968 New York Central and Pennsylvania rails merged to form Penn Central, a sign of optimism and hope for the railroad industry. Unfortunately the company filed for bankruptcy two years later. In 1971 Amtrak was formed, which took over MCS, and with the oil crisis in 1973, MCS saw a modest boost. Amtrak invested \$1 million in MCS, adding bus terminals to the station. The terra cotta was cleaned, the Corinthian columns scrubbed. On April 16, 1975 the station was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

In April 1985 the station was sold to the Kaybee Corporation; the sale was finalized on the seventy-second anniversary of the station’s opening (sale price undisclosed). Kaybee landed an Urban Development Action Grant to convert the station into a \$30 million office and retail center, but the \$3.25 million in federal funds was later withdrawn due to insufficient progress. On January 5th, 1988 the last train rolled out of the station, seventy-four years after the first train rolled in. In an editorial from January 1988, the *Free Press* wrote, “More than a mere excursion into nostalgia, the shutdown of the Michigan Central Depot should be the occasion of serious reflection about what we once were, what we have lost — and what, given sufficient will, we could regain.”

⁴⁴ Austin, Dan, “Historicdetroit.org.”

Real estate developer Mark Longton Jr. bought the terminal in December of 1989 and had plans to turn it into a casino or nightclub (named the “Midnight Express”). However, Michigan voters wouldn’t approve the allocation as use as a casino and did not allow casinos until 1996. Longton was able to keep looters out for a few years, through his pistol-packing threats, but the site succumbed to looters in the mid-1990s. Brass fixtures, copper wiring, decorative railings, rosettes from the ceilings and marble were all stolen. Graffiti filled the waiting room, and windows were smashed for sport.

The Controlled Terminals Inc. of Detroit (headed by billionaire Manuel Moroun) bought the building in 1995 and erected a razor wire fence to detract the looters. Although city inspectors recommended demolition in 1994, the buildings remained intact. On October 3, 2004 the then-Mayor of Detroit, Kwame Kilpatrick, announced that he wanted to turn the building into the city’s new police headquarters and police museum. The project was projected to cost \$100-\$150 million and would take 18 months, but the plan was called off later that year.

In May 2009 a plan was proposed to lease the MCS to the federal government as a possible Homeland Security and Customs and Border Protection headquarters, but the federal government didn’t seem interested. After this failed attempt the Detroit City Council passed a resolution requisition that Moroun demolish the station (to the tune of \$5 to \$10 million dollars) at his expense. This didn’t happen.⁴⁵

The building (now a ruin) still stands. To many it serves as a powerful symbol of the fall of Motor City, the demise of capitalism, and the demise of the optimism and former prosperity of the United States. In an article for the *New York Times Magazine*, Mark Binelli describes the sort of tourism Detroit’s ruins receive: “[W]hile conducting my own tour for a guest, a group of

⁴⁵ A detailed timeline of events can be found here:
<http://www.freep.com/article/20131226/NEWS05/312260032/>

German college students drove up. When queried as to the appeal of Detroit, one of them gleefully exclaimed, “I came to see the end of the world!”⁴⁶

Further, many Detroiters’ dislike for Moroun clouds their judgment on his plans for the MCS. In recent years Moroun has funneled millions of dollars to foil a campaign to build another bridge crossing into Canada, since he is the proprietor (and beneficiary) of the current (sole) toll bridge, the Ambassador Bridge. This privately owned bridge carries approximately 25% of all traffic between Canada and the United States and has caused much controversy in the region.⁴⁷

Many in Detroit hate the gawkers who flood into the city to take pictures of this monolith. In an article from February 24, 2015, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that Chamberlain Glass & Metal of St. Clair might be reaching an agreement with the Moroun family to replace the broken windows. This would require replacing more than 1,000 damaged windows, which extend sixteen stories above street level. Graham Architectural Products (of York, Pennsylvania) have been working with the Morouns, “to determine a system that is not only sensitive to the historic value of this building, but also meets the high standards of a modern office tower.”⁴⁸ In 2014 the *Detroit Free Press* reported that the Moroun family said they would look into installing a new elevator to help with the renovation work. The Moroun family has reportedly spent an estimated \$4 million on securing and cleaning the station, interior demolition work, and asbestos and water removal. And a spokesperson for the Moroun family, Dan Stamper, said that the family would dedicate \$80 million to fixing up the station in coming years, but didn’t say how the station would be used (or repurposed).

On the 100-year anniversary of the train station (December 26, 2013), the *Detroit Free Press* ran an article about the fate of the MCS. In the article, the MCS is referred to as “Detroit’s

⁴⁶ Binelli, “How Detroit Became the World Capital of Staring at Abandoned Old Buildings.”

⁴⁷ Helms and Blair, “Mich. Billionaire, 84, Jailed over Bridge Dispute,” *USA Today*, January 12, 2012.

⁴⁸ Gallagher, “New Windows, New Life for Train Station?” *Detroit Free Press*, February 24, 2015.

most notorious eyesore.”⁴⁹ Many in the ruin porn community would disagree.⁵⁰ The moniker “porn” is telling, and is only used for modern ruins. Ruin porn stand unique in that the porn modifier signifies both the alluring and exploitative aspects of the photographs. There are many websites dedicated to “food porn,”⁵¹ including foodporn.com, where the “porn” moniker is there to simply describe the alluring nature of the photographs. Ruin porn both signifies the alluring aspects of the photographs but also the exploitative aspect of aestheticizing grief. I will discuss this ruin porn movement in my final chapter. Notice that while the predominant medium of the eighteenth century picturesque was painting, the medium of this contemporary ruin porn is photographic. This is important because the way many approach these modern ruins is by photographing them, not by walking around them, touching them, etc. Unlike Mỹ Sơn where you can go up to the kalans and walk inside, many of the structures of the ruin porn movement are condemned. And, unlike Gas Works Park, the government has not given them any money or attention. As with the case of the MCS, many ruin porn structures have been standing condemned for decades, their owners unable to spend the money to either repair, repurpose, or tear down. These structures will provide a good case study for us since their use is slightly different than that of Gas Works Park, although Gas Works is a modern ruin. They are also different from ruins of antiquity as they are not predominantly used and admired for their ability to endure.

⁴⁹ Ibid. *Detroit Free Press*, February 24, 2015.

⁵⁰ Ruin porn now has its own rather informative Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruins_photography. To see Getty Images of Detroit ruin porn, please visit: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/30/detroit-ruins_n_4519731.html.

⁵¹ According to Wikipedia, food porn is a “glamourized spectacular visual presentation of cooking or eating in advertisements, infomercials, blogs, cooking shows or other visual media . . . Food porn often takes the form of food photography and styling that presents food provocatively, in a similar way to glamour photography or pornographic photography.” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Food_porn, Accessed April 23, 2015.

The MCS is considered a ruin for many reasons, but perhaps paramount among them is the fact that it has attracted tourism as such. It has spurred artistic production, and photographic tours, much like Bannerman Castle. It is not simply or predominantly a historic site because people do not flock there to study its architectural form or see an exemplar of a particular type of architecture. MCS seems to inspire aesthetic contemplation as a symbol of the fall of Detroit, and perhaps as the fall of the United States or capitalism. I have asked of all the ruins in this chapter why the ruin has been left to ruinate. In the case of the MCS the answer is clear: insufficient funds for repair, repurposing, or removal. Many ruins become ruins because a culture cannot repair what has been broken; ruins of this sort litter Detroit's landscape as such serve as a good fodder for modern day ruin gazers and contemplators like myself.

1.6 CONCLUSIONS

The three questions I have asked of the ruins discussed in this chapter are the three organizing questions of this dissertation. First, *what makes a ruin a ruin, and not just an endangered historic site? (And why is this classification important?)* Second, *what makes a ruin uniquely aesthetically pleasing?* Third, *why should we allow some structures to ruinate?* Each question follows from its predecessor. Before I discuss my account of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins, I will present an analytical account of what a ruin is, emanating in a definition of 'a ruin'. In developing this account, the next section asks and answers various important, broad, ontological questions about ruins.

Chapter 2. THE ONTOLOGY OF RUINS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will discuss the ontology of ruins. Ruins, as we will see, are curious ontological objects in part because they are not fully artifactual, nor are they fully natural. There are definition questions we can ask about ruins. For example where does a ruin start, and where does it end? When is a building simply in disuse and when does it become a ruin? Likewise, when does a ruin turn into a heap of stones? Is a well-preserved but empty building a ruin already because it has lost part of its practical and social function? Is a ruin a result of a process or the process itself? There are questions we can ask about the authenticity of ruins as well: Does it matter whether a ruin is the work of nature or human activity? Are manufactured ruins (or follies) ruins, or some other sort of object? How might we define the authenticity of a ruin in the era of tourist consumption? Are ‘industrial ruins’ ruins proper or some other sort of ontological object?

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section (section 2.2) discusses our everyday use of the term ‘ruin’, and our everyday practices regarding decaying architectural structures. Through our discussion of ordinary language and practice we will see that age-value plays an important role in our cultural relationship to ruins. In the second section (section 2.3) I discuss the need for a socially constructed definition of ruins; in connection with this I discuss essentialist definitions, institutional definitions, and socially constructed definitions and show how socially constructed definitions best suit the peculiar ontological objects that ruins are. In the third section (section 2.4) I survey the past literature where other philosophers, art historians,

and heritage management consultant professionals have tried to provide a definition for architectural ruins and finally (section 2.5) I pose my own definition.

2.2 ORDINARY LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES

2.2.1 *Ordinary Language*

The word ‘ruin’ generally implies loss. For example the utterances “my career is in ruins” and “my new blouse is ruined,” usually mean that the object in question is not capable of repair. Similarly, when we say a building is in ruins, we generally mean that the building is beyond repair. In the case of the blouse that is “in ruins,” we have a desire to get the stain out. It would be strange to assert that the blouse was “a ruin.” But perhaps this terminological difference arises from a general willingness to abandon a wine-stained blouse, whereas many people agree that there is something valuable and worth preserving in the rubble of an architectural ruin. And while the creation of the architectural ruin (through destructive forces such as nature or war) might not have been welcomed, the ruin may possess a value that the non-ruinated structure does not.

My example of the blouse raises another question: Can my favorite t-shirt from high school (the one that is now faded and full of holes) be “a ruin?” It is not common to use the term with artifacts like clothing. But we often do find appealing clothing that looks worn. Some fashion moguls design clothes to have a weathered or worn appearance just as some architects design buildings with a weathered or worn patina. Clothes designed to look worn, such as jeans with rips and tears, seem distinct from clothes that have become ripped or torn through use. A designer who intentionally creates an item of clothing with rips and tears is trying to mimic age value.

The commercial effort to mimic age value for monetary gain (in both commercial goods and tourist experiences) relies on the underlining aesthetic value that people place on age value. Just as designers who intentionally create blue jeans that look old, there are designers of fake or sham ruins, buildings that are designed to appear like old ruins. These fake ruins are called “follies.” Follies are often described as architectural structures that are designed solely for aesthetic pleasure and/or to provide aesthetically pleasurable viewsheds. Follies are usually not considered art-objects. Examples include fake ruins, gazebos, obelisks, fake forts, fake towers, and fake Grecian or Romanesque temples. One classic example is the Folly at Hagley Hall (Warwickshire, England), designed by the famous folly-builder Sanderson Miller.⁵² The Folly at Hagley Hall was designed in the early gothic style. Its tower was built intact so that the landowner could use the tower to survey his land. The walls were designed to appear ruined.



Figure 2.1 Hagley Hall, photo by Jamie Jacobs⁵³

⁵² Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins*, 27.

⁵³ <http://www.jamiedeluxe.com/sham-ruins.html>

Of primary importance is that in all three cases (the fake old jeans, the fake old patina, the fake ruin), the designer intends to create the illusion of age value. As I explain later, age value is essential to the experience of a ruin.

2.2.2 *Age Value and Restoration Practices*

In her article “Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past,” Carolyn Korsmeyer argues that age value should be considered an aesthetic feature, and one that should be valued. She uses the case study of Old Town Warsaw to show the important connection between genuineness and age-value. When the Nazis fled Warsaw, they managed to reduce the city to rubble; the famous Old Town was later rebuilt to attract tourists. In her article Korsmeyer imagines a tourist who feels transported to the past when placing her hand against the stone wall,. However, the walls of this reconstructed Old Town were rebuilt from rubble of a neighboring city (Szczecin, Poland). There is a sense in which the tourist still experiences the past, but has she touched Old Town Warsaw? While Korsmeyer’s larger aim is to defend an account of genuineness where genuineness is an aesthetic property, her discussion of age value is also useful to understanding the aesthetic value of ruins.

Genuineness, she asserts, is a necessary condition for age value. Korsmeyer states, “the agedness of the historical artifact – an aspect of this stone wall that is the best candidate for being the closest continuer in the preservation of old Warsaw’s identity through time – is in the aesthetic frame.”⁵⁴ The case of Old Town Warsaw is complicated by the fact that the rebuilding stones were actually old, even if not the original Warsaw stones. In Korsmeyer’s view, age value is not always in the aesthetic frame, but often is, especially when encountering historical objects.

⁵⁴ Korsmeyer, “Aesthetic Deception,” 121.

The observer of a ruin engages with an object that has endured something, such as war, mismanagement, or just time; this endurance is intrinsic to the experience. With an artifact (such as ruins) whose age is in the aesthetic frame, “palpable presence is optimal. Because touch is not permitted in museums and galleries to protect the objects on display, the subtle operation of this sense is probably more obvious elsewhere, such as historic cities or even natural settings.”⁵⁵ This quotation is especially relevant for ruin-visitors because engaging with a ruin *in situ* is a multi-sensory experience that may (or should) involve touch.

While no one disagrees that artworks and artifacts have historical value, aesthetic empiricists separate (extrinsic) historical value from (intrinsic) aesthetic value. Age value, they would argue, is an historical, not aesthetic, property. However, the historical / aesthetic distinction is not an easy one to make. In contrast to the aesthetic empiricists, Korsmeyer argues, and I agree, that age value is always inseparable from the sensible. Using famous Austrian art historian Alois Riegl to buttress her argument, Korsmeyer discusses his distinction between historic value and age value with reference to ruins and monuments. Riegl explains, “age value manifests itself immediately, through visual perception appeals directly to our emotions.”⁵⁶ For

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 122. There are those who believe that only those qualities in an object that can be directly perceived are within an aesthetic frame, meaning only those qualities that are perceptible can be called properly aesthetic. These people most often align with the group of people referred to here (in this dissertation) and elsewhere as the “aesthetic empiricists.” Korsmeyer and many others argue that some non-perceptible properties (or non immediately perceptible properties) should also be considered aesthetic. Examples of these properties include: genuineness, uniqueness, certain information about the provenance of an artwork, etc. What’s at stake here might be a minor point – whether a certain experience of a place or artwork can be called an ‘aesthetic’ encounter or should be called something else. For more on this debate see Currie, *An Ontology of Art*, chap. 2.; Davies, *Art as Performance*, chap. 2.; Lamarque, *Work and Object*, chap. 6.

⁵⁶ The longer quotation here is actually quite poetic, if somewhat classist: “When compared with other values, age-value has one advantage over all the other ideal values of the works of art in that it claims to address one and all and to possess universal validity. It rises above differences of religious persuasion and transcends differences in education and in understanding of art. And in fact, the criteria by which we recognize age-value are as a rule so simple that they can even be appreciated by people whose minds are otherwise exclusively preoccupied with the constant worries of material existence. The most simple-minded farmhand is able to distinguish an old belfry from a new one. This advantage of age-value

example, age value attaches to perceived properties of a large tree (through sight). To this, Korsmeyer adds that age value is often felt, for example, on the texture of stones, or unevenness of paths, etc.

Age value and historic value can conflict. When we value an object for its historic properties, we have a desire to preserve the object. Yet some standard preservation techniques can erase the appearance of age value. The debate over art restoration illustrates this conflict. In “On Restoring and Reproducing Art” Mark Sagoff distinguishes restorations that are “integral” from restorations that are “pure.” Integral restorations adhere to a plan of the artwork (a sculpture, say) to recapture the original look of the piece, and can use non-original material to achieve the sense of aesthetic unity intended by the artist. Pure restorations allow for reattachment of broken pieces and cleansing of the surface, but do not allow for the addition of non-original material. This is to say that when an historic site is “in ruins,” choosing to preserve the historic value risks losing some age value. Conversely, choosing to preserve an historic site’s age value to make the passage of time sensibly manifest risks losing some historic value. This is, of course, if we define ‘historic value’ as giving the viewers a sense of “what it was like.” Some others (including many archaeologist) might believe ‘historic value’ is served by preserving evidence of the impact of historic events that give the site its importance. These two conceptions of ‘historic value’ may overlap, but are not identical. If we take the conception of ‘historic value’ that tries to give its audience a sense of “what it was like,” we can see how this conflicts with the aesthetic impact of age value. This concept of ‘historic value’ favors integral restoration. For

contrasts sharply with historical value, which rests on a scientific basis and therefore is acquired only by means of reflection. Age-value manifests itself immediately through visual perception and appeals directly to our emotions.”(Bann, *The Inventions of History*, 125.)

example, the famous York Cathedral rose window is currently under restoration.⁵⁷ This multi-million pound and multi-year process involved dismantling the window and restoring the constituent panels in accordance with *Guidelines for the Conservation and Restoration of Stained Glass* (Nuremberg, 2004) put out by the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (CVMA) of Great Britain (also inline with ICOMOS).⁵⁸ The recommendations of the CVMA include the following:

- the greatest possible retention of the original substance [whether *in situ* or in a more stable architectural environment]
- the highest possible protection against expected future damage (conservation)
- the closest possible rendition of the original artistic appearance (restoration)
- consideration of the possibility of undoing any interventions applied (reversibility)
- exact description of the state of the original and recording of the interventions applied (documentation)⁵⁹

The tension here, and the tension for many charged with restoration, is the one between “the greatest possible retention of the original substance” and maintaining or recreating “the closest possible rendition of the original artistic appearance.” The York Glazier Trust (the “oldest and largest stained glass conservation studio in Britain” according to their website⁶⁰) discussed the process of restoration and the decision to change the stain glass’s color:

Art historical sources provided evidence for a pale blue cloud across the top of the panel. This cloud was reinstated by conservators and painted based on other clouds in the window. The blank red stopgap glass inserted during the 1950’s restoration below the

⁵⁷ Thank you to Peter Lamarque for pointing this case out to me and allowing me to read his preliminary analysis about the restoration process.

⁵⁸ “Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi: Conservation of Stained Glass.” <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/conserv/index.html>, accessed June 20, 2015.

⁵⁹ Muller et al., “Science in the Service of Restoration,” 65–99.

⁶⁰ “Welcome: York Glaziers Trust.” <http://www.yorkglazierstrust.org/?idno=1011>, accessed June 20, 2015.

covering figure in blue was replaced with new red glass, painted with the suggestion of feet, to tone in with the surrounding original pieces.⁶¹

Here a decision was made to present the stain glass with the closest possible rendition of the original artistic appearance over a preference for using only original materials. The restorers recreated clouds and feet. And perhaps this was the right decision to make for this stained glass (I will remain neutral on this issue). But here we can see a case where age value was weighed less heavily than historic value (or presenting the glass as it would have looked during the time period in which it was created).

The UNESCO-approved technique for restoring immovable cultural property is anastylosis, a process more akin to pure restoration than integral restoration. The practice of anastylosis is a compromise between these two values. According to Article 15 of the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments, “All reconstruction work should however be ruled out a priori. Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and this use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form.” For example, the UNESCO practice permits a structure to be rebuilt after a bombing, but its battle scars will be seen.⁶²

Michelangelo’s *Pietà* in the Vatican provides a helpful visual point of reference. After Laszlo Toth’s attack on the *Pietà*, which caused the detachment of Mary’s arm, nose, and eyelid, art restorers (perhaps) preserved its historical value through integral restoration. If, instead, art restorers had used anastylosis, obvious cracks and chips in Mary’s body would have remained visible. The choice to perform an integral restoration shows that the museum does not see the

⁶¹ <http://www.yorkglaziertrust.org/?idno=1011>

⁶² Examples of anastylosis and the tension between historic value and age value will be discussed in chapter five.

primary value of the *Pietà* to be age value. In choosing integral restoration, the history of the attack has literally been erased. As Korsmeyer states, “A good cleaning and repair restores an object’s appearance, but the presence of new paint or patches reduces the affective resonance of its age value.”⁶³ In the case of ruins, I will argue that age value should be preserved in order to keep both the aesthetic and ontological integrity intact.⁶⁴

2.2.3 *Ordinary Practices*

In addition to explicating the ordinary practices of language (how we commonly use the word ‘ruin’), I would now like to discuss the ordinary practices of preserving or demolishing decaying architectural structures. Decaying buildings are not usually left to ruinate. They typically are demolished, repaired, restored or re-purposed.⁶⁵ As mentioned in chapter one, many of the historic abandoned buildings along the Hudson River Valley have been recently demolished.

⁶³ Korsmeyer, “Aesthetic Deception,” 123.

⁶⁴ Returning to the example of my old t-shirt, can it be a ruin? When I choose to put a patch on a jacket, one that is obvious to an observer, I am preserving the jacket’s age value. This is a type of pure restoration. Does it mean I value the shirt as a ruin? Certainly not. Age value functions in many ways; it functions in a particular way in ruins. Once we have a settled definition of ruins, I will return to the clothing example.

⁶⁵ Of course, part of the power of ruins is that they remain while so many similar structures have been lost. This is often referred to as the “Ozymandias Effect,” named after Percy Bysshe Shelley’s poem “Ozymandias”:

I met a traveller from an antique land
 Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
 And on the pedestal these words appear:
 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Hudsonvalleyruins.org is a site where ruin aficionados can post warnings of impending demolition. Every year, the website's creator, Rob Yasinsac, posts a "demolition year in review."

He states,

[D]evelopers and community governments continue to wage battle against our historic buildings. Millions of dollars in public money, and even more from private developers, were spent this year to remove significant buildings from the Hudson River Valley landscape. I cannot help but think how nice it would be if even a percent of some of that money was spent to preserve some of these now-lost structures.⁶⁶

Several of the ruins demolished in 2012 were on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Union Free School, which was built in 1913 and placed on the register in 1991. Perhaps this predilection toward demolition is a uniquely American attitude. According to Christopher Woodward (author of *In Ruins* and *American Ruins*) the generation of Americans after the War of Independence believed that their nation consisted of God's chosen people and that this New World would be free of decay, as if "like an infectious condition decay could not cross the Atlantic."⁶⁷ As such a young nation, says Woodward, Americans seem like a population obsessed with the cult of the new. Authors who write on modern ruins (e.g., industrial ruins) blame another culprit. In *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*, Tim Edensor argues that when a building becomes a ruin, its use-value changes.⁶⁸ He states,

Industrial ruins...are, in official parlance, 'scars in the landscape' or 'wastelands' whose use-value has disappeared. Formerly hubs of dense activity within the city from and through which flows of people, matter and energy coursed from far and near, such ruins might appear quiescent and useless by comparison to their former state.⁶⁹

Part of Edensor's project in *Industrial Ruins* is to show that ruins still have value, albeit a different one – one that isn't easily understood in a capitalistic society obsessed with exchange

⁶⁶ From "Demolition Year in Review 2012" <http://www.hudsonvalleyruins.org/rob/>, accessed 2/2/2013.

⁶⁷ This idea is evidenced in Mary Shelley's book *The Last Man*, in which the hero escapes the decay of Europe by sailing to The New World. (Woodward, *In Ruins*, 196.)

⁶⁸ Edensor, *Industrial Ruins*, 21.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

value. Buildings have obvious use-value; a theater is used to show movies and to pull in money for the theater owner, theater workers, and movie industry. A church's use-value is to provide a space of worship. Ruins' use-value is aesthetic and not easily commodified. Both Yasinsac and Edensor believe these ruins are worth saving to preserve the special use-value ruins have. I will argue that the value of ruins lies in their unique aesthetic properties, and the sort of important aesthetic experiences they elicit. Something not explicit in either Yasinsac or Edensor's discussions is my belief that once a ruin is restored, repurposed, or reconstructed, its use-value changes once more.

When we conceive of a structure as a ruin, our engagement with the structure is different than when we conceive of it as an historic, dilapidated structure. If we regard it as a ruin, we might desire to stabilize the structure to make it safe to experience. If we regard it as an historic, dilapidated building, we might desire to reconstruct, restore, re-purpose or conserve it. Both ruins and restorations have value. In my last chapter I will show how communities must weigh the respective merits of differing structures when determining whether or not to restore a decayed building. Consequently, I believe that an appropriate definition of 'a ruin' should distinguish ruins from structures that are *reconstructions* or *re-purposed* buildings.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ginsberg makes this point nicely in *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Ginsberg, 299).

2.2.4 a. Reconstruction

If ruins are distinct from reconstructions, restorations and re-purposed structures, an appropriate definition of ruins will honor this (albeit somewhat porous) distinction. However, these categories often blur together, so defining each is difficult. Some individual cases, however, are obvious; most are not. For example, the G1 temple at M̃y Son archaeological complex may be considered a reconstruction.⁷¹



Figure 2.2 M̃y Son G1 Kalan

A photogrammetric project using basic 3-D modeling was used to project what the G1 temple once looked like intact. Once this was done, stones were collected from piles of rubble near the site and pieced together like a three-dimensional picture puzzle in an attempt to reconstruct the

⁷¹ A case study of how to reconstruct a ruin using basic 3-D imaging, can be found here: http://www.isprs.org/proceedings/xxxviii/5-w1/pdf/barazzetti_etal.pdf. The example discussed is the G1 temple at M̃y Son.

temple. At first this might seem like an obvious case of reconstruction; the aid of computer-generated graphics and modeling to re-construct the temple might seem to make this evident – but according to UNESCO, this is a case of restoration. UNESCO considers this a case of restoration because since the reconstruction of the kalan followed the practice of anastylosis: the reassembling of parts without introduction of non-original material. The resulting structure still looks like a ruin to many because the structure is still only partially present. However, we can easily imagine a case where there was more original material to work with and the reconstructed temple looked (felt, etc.) identical to its pre-ruinate state, we might consider this a reconstruction. This is a difficult case for the ontological status of ruins, and as such provides us with an interesting border case. The difference between reconstructions and ruins will not always be clear. However, later I will present a definition of a ruin that will assert, contrary to UNESCO, that G1 is, in fact, a reconstruction and not a ruin proper.

According to the ICOMOS Burra Charter, a reconstruction is a case where we are returning a damaged building to its pre-damaged state by introducing new materials. While UNESCO and ICOMOS generally recommend against reconstruction, ruin reconstructions have been approved in cases where the historic and cultural significance of erecting a reconstruction is great. For example, Korsmeyer's example of Old Town Warsaw's historic center was a UNESCO approved reconstruction. Another example is that of the Dresden Cathedral, *Frauenkirche*. Both are examples where war completely erased something of value and the reconstruction was seen to restore some of that previous value. In these cases the artistic value, cultural value, and historic value outweighed the special sort of aesthetic value one receives from a ruin. In reconstructing *Frauenkirche*, the ruination value and age-value were lost during the reconstruction process. However, cultural and historic value was gained.

2.2.5 *b. Repurposing*

Repurposed sites, too, raise interesting boundary issues. A great example of a ruin being repurposed is that of the condominiums at the National Park Seminary, located just outside of Washington D.C.⁷²



Figure 2.3 National Park Seminary

The National Park Seminary had seen several incarnations. It was first built as a summer resort (1887) and then turned into a finishing school for young women called the National Park Seminary (1894). It operated as a school until it was seized under the War Powers Act and annexed for the Walter Reed General Hospital. The army used it as a rehabilitation center until

⁷² For an example of one of the condos on the market, see this *Washington Post* article: Orton, “House of the Week | National Park Seminary Condo for \$870,000.” (www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/where-we-live/post/house-of-the-week--national-park-seminary-condo-for-870000/2013/03/21/5acbd7dc-925e-11e2-9abd-e4c5c9dc5e90_blog.html.)

the end of the Vietnam War (1972). After the war it was quickly and completely abandoned.⁷³ As in the case of the Bannerman Castle, a non-profit group, *Save our Seminary*,⁷⁴ rallied around the effort to save the ruin and was able to preserve the architecture, although not preserve the ruin.⁷⁵ The whole site was in ruins (and I think the community would have called it a ruin); the Save our Seminary movement was only able to generate support for rehabilitating or repurposing the site (versus getting support to preserve the site as a ruin). The group allowed an historic renovation company to convert the building into 50 condominiums, 66 rental apartments, 90 townhouses, and 12 single-family residences. Some buildings on this site are still in the process of being restored.⁷⁶ The grounds have also become a site for historic preservation advocacy: guided tours are offered, as is an on-line lecture series about its architectural design.⁷⁷ An on-site museum about the history of the site has also been created. I believe this is a clear case of a site being repurposed, and through repurposing the National Park Seminary the community has preserved a structure that would have otherwise been lost.

However, this preservation comes at a cost. While the architects call the National Park Seminary project a “rehabilitation” of the historic buildings, the purpose of the buildings has been completely altered, some have been taken down to provide for parking garages, and new materials have been added to the pre-existing structure. The overall look of the facility has been kept intact, but very little else has. In terms of our previous discussion, this is an integral

⁷³ Growing up in the D.C. area, I was particularly enchanted with this building. It had been fenced off, looked vaguely governmental and entirely intriguing. It was enticing to trespassers, and I probably would have if it hadn't been so decayed. It was obviously dangerous.

⁷⁴ www.saveourseminary.org.

⁷⁵ The distinction being made here (preserving the architecture while not preserving the ruin) will be made clearer in the next sections.

⁷⁶ Progress on the former gymnasium can be seen at: <http://www.davidsonarchitects.com/construction-forensics/case-studies/national-park-seminary.html>.

⁷⁷ www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNUzYqlaVF4.

restoration, i.e., the look has been preserved, but the original use-value of the structure has changed.

2.2.6 c. *Keeping ruins as ruins*



Figure 2.4 Veneranda Club, photo from club website

A less obvious case is the Veneranda Club in Hvar, Croatia. The Veneranda Club is the largest discothèque on the Ibiza-like island off the coast of Croatia.⁷⁸ This club is surrounded by and embedded in Roman ruins. This is an interesting case since, unlike the National Park Seminary, the ruin has not been repurposed in order to serve a different function. Rather, “the ruin” remains intact with the club existing around and within it (see Fig. 2.4). Thus, the ruin is *seen* as a ruin, and its use value is primarily aesthetic. By contrast, the National Park Seminary cannot reasonably be called a ruin in its current state. Here it seems the Veneranda Club has done a nice

⁷⁸ For good images of the club, see: <http://www.veneranda.hr/>

job of *stabilizing* a ruin, but not repurposing it or reconstructing it. The use value of the structure is decorative, so it is being used for its aesthetic age-value.⁷⁹ Later in this chapter I argue that the use-value of a ruin is primarily aesthetic. If this is the case, then the Veneranda Club has successfully incorporated a ruin into the décor of their nightclub.

2.2.7 d. *What is ruin restoration?*

Finally, what does it mean for a ruin to be restored? As Ginsberg states in *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, “Ruins would be ruined by restoration.”⁸⁰ Conservationists often lump ruins and historic buildings together, treating them as the same with respect to preservation techniques. A smaller group of conservationists, led in part by John Ashurst (Professor of Heritage Conservation at Bournemouth University), argue that ruins should have different protocols for preservation and conservation than historic buildings. From a conservationist point of view, how much of a structure we preserve and at what cost is a tricky question. Do we preserve the ruin as found? How much can be changed from the ruin as found while still preserving the ruin’s authenticity? How much of the natural surrounding environment can be changed to preserve the ruin? Can streams be diverted? Can uprooting vines be removed? Is anastylosis too aggressive? Too strict? According to Ashurst:

The conservation of ruins, as far as we can achieve it, should be about the continuity of truth. In practical terms, this is to say that the evidence of the past which the ruins represent should be so accurately and painstakingly observed and recorded, and so well protected and maintained that their true story will survive.⁸¹

But what is the true story? Should the ruin’s story tell us how the structure became a ruin?

Should the structure reflect the time and period in which it was created or in which it fell into

⁷⁹ I will discuss ruin use-values later on in this chapter.

⁸⁰ Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, 298.

⁸¹ Ashurst, *Conservation of Ruins*, xxxix.

decay? I believe that before asserting that a ruin should tell a story, we must know what a ruin is and how it functions in society.

In this section I discussed the ordinary use of the term, and showed how age value is relevant to both our ordinary use of the term and ordinary practices regarding old or decaying structures. I also discussed the potential differences between a ruin (Veneranda Club ruin), a reconstruction (G1 in Mỹ Sơn), and a repurposing of a ruin (National Park Seminary). These differences are marked in ordinary practices and should be captured by a definition of “ruins.” But, as we will see, these are not hard and fast distinctions. There will be overlaps, and practices involving balancing multiple ways of valuing sites that are in the process of decay. There will be resolutions to save some of these structures from destruction, and others will be allowed to ruinate. Later, I will say something about what ruin stabilization practices should entail if we are to preserve the special aesthetic value of ruins.

2.3 RUINS AS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED

2.3.1 *Introduction*

In coming up with a definition of a ruin, it might be useful to follow Ian Hacking, who famously said, “Don’t ask for the meaning, ask what’s the point.”⁸²

So one might ask, “what is the use of our concept of ruins?” Willard Van Orman Quine states that we can approach any definitional project (e.g., “*What is a ruin?*”) from a conceptual framework, a descriptive framework, and an explicative framework. The explicative investigation is:

an activity to which philosophers are given and scientists also in their more philosophical moments...the purpose is not merely to paraphrase the definiendum into an outright

⁸² Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, 5.

synonym, but actually to improve upon the definiendum by redefining or supplementing its meaning.⁸³

This is in contrast to conceptual and merely descriptive approaches. While the conceptual approach asks: “What is our concept of a ruin?” and the merely descriptive approach which asks what concepts track our epistemic vocabulary, an explicative investigation delves into the usefulness of any such definition. In my subsequent investigation I intend to be responsive to both our current concept of a ruin and how our epistemic vocabulary tracks a ruin. I will show that a definition of a ruin is most usefully understood as being socially constructed.

It is worthwhile to recall that essentialist definitions of art have rarely been successful, and I believe will be equally unsuccessful in the case of ruins. The recent history of aesthetics is replete with counterexamples to traditional essentialist definitions, usually showing that proposed defining characteristics are not necessary or sufficient conditions for identifying the definiendum. Social constructivist approaches provide an alternative to essentialist definitions. While social constructivism is more often discussed within the philosophy of science, feminism, and race theory, there is precedent for taking a social constructive approach to drawing distinctions.

In the previous section of this chapter, I discussed the *descriptive* approach to defining ruins. I discussed both the language of ruins and the practice of ruins, and showed that age value plays an important part in the aesthetic appreciation of objects. The importance of age-value is evident in some of our social practices, such as folly (or “sham” ruin) construction, buildings and furniture designed with weathered patinas, and jeans (and other items of clothing) that are designed to look worn. With regard to decayed buildings, American culture, more often than not,

⁸³ Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” 24–25.

demolishes them. Buildings are rarely restored or repurposed. Buildings are left to ruinate even less often.

I now intend to contrast my descriptive account of ruins (presented earlier) with a socially constructed account. Any account that refers primarily to social factors to disambiguate one object from another can be referred to as a social constructivist account, and institutional accounts of art are such an example. As I argue later in this chapter, ruins are ontologically such only *in part* because they have been treated as such by a particular community. Thus, in my view, a good definition of a ruin will explicitly refer to social practices. To be sure, there are relevant features of ruins that we use in disambiguating ruins from dilapidated buildings; later in the chapter I will identify some of these common features. But first, I will discuss what a social constructivist definition of ruins would look like, and why it might help us. Then I will look at a conceptual analysis of a definition of “ruins” by examining previous attempts within the philosophical aesthetics literature to define ruins, which have been incomplete at best.

2.3.2 *Socially Constructed Definitions and Ian Hacking*

In “Why Ask What?” Hacking reports that talk of social construction has been liberating for many people. Conversations about race, gender, and culture have been radically transformed by increasing attention to social construction. When we know a concept is socially constructed, we know it can be changed; it no longer is part of the natural order of things. Thus, one of the points of acknowledging that some concepts are socially constructed is to make it clear that these concepts could have been constructed otherwise. Hacking believes there are three major claims involved in saying that a concept, X, is socially constructed:

(1) X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable.

(2) X is quite bad as it is.

(3) We would be much better off if X were done away with, or at least radically transformed.⁸⁴

My account takes (1) seriously but does not go as far as (2) or (3). While (2) and (3) make sense for liberatory or revolutionary accounts of race and gender, my account of ruins is just designed to show that as artifacts partially constituted by human beings, our conception of them could have been otherwise.

Another helpful distinction that Hacking employs is the distinction between ideas and things. Using a silly example, the idea of a haircut is the concept of human hair that has been styled, while the thing that is the haircut is the physical matter in the world. For our purposes then the “idea” of a ruin (I believe) is socially constructed, whereas the “thing” of a ruin (i.e., the stone and land and other matter) is not. Ideas, obviously, do not exist in a vacuum. Hacking speaks of ideas existing in a matrix (while acknowledging that the words ‘ideas’ and ‘matrix’ are imperfect, but still helpful). The matrix in which an idea exists includes all the relevant social realities, which includes physical matter and social relations. Because ideas exist in this matrix, they appear to be common sense, almost innate.

This leads us to a precondition to (1), namely:

(0) In the present state of affairs, X is taken for granted; X appears to be inevitable.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?*, 6. Hacking implies that most social construction include these three claim (but leaves the door open for social constructions that don't). He is clearer that all social constructions involve claims (0) and (1).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

It may seem obvious to some people that certain buildings in disuse are ruins, however this need not have been the case. Thus the thing of the ruin need not be the way it is, but also the idea of ‘ruins’ is the result of historical contingencies. If we lived in a society where old buildings were always torn down to use for materials for other buildings, we wouldn’t need the concept of a ruin. If buildings were so few and far between that there was never such a thing as an abandoned structure or disused building, we would not need the concept of a ruin.

As previously stated, my account relies on (0) and (1) while not going as far as (2) and (3). Traditionally social construction accounts are normatively laden (as we see from (2) and (3)). Hacking states, “ ‘Social construct’ is code for not universal, not part of pan-cultural human nature, and don’t tread on me with those heavy hegemonic (racist, patriarchal) boots of yours.”⁸⁶ People use the term to fight against harmful essentialist definitions.⁸⁷ If essentialism about genders puts people in bad gender arrangements, then perhaps recognizing that gender is a social construction can liberate us from these confines. My project does have a normative component, but not one quite so revolutionary. I will not argue that the idea of a ruin is “hegemonic” or racist or even patriarchal (although the term “cultural patrimony” might be patriarchal). In the last two chapters of the dissertation I will, however, address how universalist concepts of ruins (and the value of ruins to the world as a whole) has been used to exploit local populations. There my account becomes a little bit more revolutionary. I will argue that in acknowledging that the concept of a ruin is a social one, we should allow different societies to construct their own concepts of ruins.

I believe concepts of ruins count as nontrivially socially constructed. That is, the idea of ruins is socially constructed, while the real objects on the ground are not constructed in the same sense. Obviously, ideas and objects interact. As Hacking states, “Moreover, classifications do not exist only in the empty space of language but in institutions, practices, material interactions with

⁸⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁷ Hacking believes that there are “gradations of constructionist commitments” that arise from claims 0-3. From least demanding to most they are: historical, ironic, reformist and/or unmasking, rebellious, and revolutionary. A historical social constructivist may remain neutral as to whether the idea of X is good or bad, merely delving into the history of the term. In the stage of “irony,” someone recognizes that X is contingent, and something we cannot avoid in our everyday lives. Taking social constructivist commitments further, we may recognize that X is historical, but advance that X is quite bad or harmful; this is the reformist commitment of social construction. The flip side to the reformist commitment is the unmasking of the X, which attempts to strip X of its authority through unmasking its construction. Finally the rebellious constructionist is an activist who tries to change the world with respect to X. (Ibid., 19–21).

things and other people.”⁸⁸ Being designated a ruin (the conceptual construction) changes the way people interact with the object on the ground.⁸⁹

I have argued up until this point that the concept (or idea) of ruins is a social construction. But what about the ruin itself? Is it socially constructed? Sally Haslanger, in her “Ontology and Social Construction” states that:

Something is a *social construction in the generic sense* just in case it is an intended or unintended product of a social practice.⁹⁰

At first this definition might seem tautologous. Anything that is a social construction is, by definition, a product of a social practice. So, any intentionally created artifact would fit under this definition. If I whittle a spoon for the purpose of eating, the spoon, in a very real sense, is generically socially constructed. As the definition states, not all objects that are generically socially constructed require the intention of a maker. For example, Haslanger refers to natural languages as things that are generically socially constructed, yet are not the result of the intent of an individual agent.

If social factors (intended or not) play a role in the construction of an object, according to Haslanger, that object is causally constructed:

Causal construction: Something is causally constructed *iff* social factors play a role in bringing it into existence, or to some substantial extent, in its being the way that it is.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁹ Hacking makes an additional distinction between interactive and noninteractive kinds. An interactive kind can interact with their ideas. People are interactive kinds; for example, being diagnosed depressive might change how I conceive of myself and how I act. Further, my input around my depression might change the classification ‘depressive’ if I have enough political power in the scientific community. Hacking calls these ‘looping effects.’ Ruins, being non-interactive kinds, are not altered simply by being classified as ruins. They do not take up the designation in the same way a person with consciousness can. (*Ibid.*, 32.) Although a non-interactive kind, a ruin can engage with its classificatory concept and participate in this looping effect. Once a series of objects in a particular culture are deemed ruins, the disparate class of objects themselves my effect and change the original classificatory concept. I believe this to be the case with modern or industrial ruins; the classificatory concept of ruin has been expanded to include industrial objects (e.g., the gas works).

⁹⁰ Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 86.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 87.

Now, how might these distinctions relate to architectural ruins? Architectural ruins are buildings that are in the process of decay.⁹² It would seem obvious that at least some ruins are causally constructed, meaning that some social factors play a role in creating them and maintaining them as ruins. Let's consider the cases discussed in chapter one.

In the case of Bannerman Castle, social conditions played an instrumental role in allowing the physical causal conditions to reduce it to its state as a ruin. In the 1960s, Bannerman's descendants could no longer afford the property and sold it to New York State. At this point, the castle structure had already fallen into disuse because the family could no longer afford to keep it up. New York decided (or functionally decided through inaction) not to repair the structure immediately. As it happens, in 1967 a fire ravaged the whole island, including the castle. One might reasonably argue that it was the passage of time, the fire, and Mother Nature that caused the castle to become a ruin. However, I think it is just as reasonable to argue that it was the lack of human appreciation, protection, and intervention that (partially) caused the castle to fall into ruin. There were multiple causal factors at work which brought the castle into ruin, some of them natural and some of them social, and some of the social factors occasioned the natural factors. Further, once the structure was *in ruins*, nothing was done to bring it back to its former state. Bannerman Castle earned its reputation for being the Hudson River Valley's most famous ruin only after that understanding formed (that the structure would not be repaired). If "something is a social construction in the generic sense just in case it is an intended or unintended product of a social practice," then Bannerman Castle would be appropriately

⁹² Though I have not argued for this feature yet, it is reasonable to assume that some form of decay is one common feature attributed to ruins by most common sense notions of a ruin.

categorized as generically socially constructed.⁹³ While no one planned for the architectural structure to change from a castle to a ruin, this transition is the unintended but foreseeable result of a set of social practices. The social practices in question include historic building preservation, park creation and maintenance, tax schemes for new developments, value placed on site-use, etc.

Social factors played a significant role in bringing the ruin into existence. The fact that the Bannerman family could no longer afford the property is just one such factor. While the castle came to its ruined state through social factors that played a part in its process, it was further recognized as a ruin and this is when it was constitutively socially constructed as such. Here we recognize two sets of social factors at play: those at play in creating a ruin, and those at play in deeming the resulting structure a ruin. So, social factors causally create a ruin, and social factors (in part) deem the structure a ruin. I will return to this notion of deeming in a bit.

In the case of Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary, the causal construction of the structures qua ruins is less obvious. It is not entirely clear why or how the Champa Kingdom was destroyed in the fifteenth century, but we know that the Cham people left the area and integrated into the rest of Vietnamese society. What is now known as Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary was rediscovered in 1885 and then conceived of as ruins by the archaeologists. The Cham people's abandonment of Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary suggests that social factors played a causal role in bringing the ruins into existence, i.e., the site is causally socially constructed.

The ruined gas work at Gas Works Park has a more obvious causal construction. Richard Haag intentionally designed Gas Works Park to include the gas works. It is, therefore, beyond doubt that social factors played a role in the construction of these ruins. Moreover, the gas works

⁹³ I think it is often the case that social factors or practices produce a ruin without this outcome being intended. Take many of the ruins in Detroit, for example. There was not a conscious decision to create a ruin, rather tax and zoning laws, bankruptcy, and other factors allowed (or positively encouraged) buildings to fall into disuse.

have been intentionally left to ruinate, as illustrated by the protective fence surrounding them and the directive that no restoration work be done to the structure.

So far, I have discussed how the concept of a ruin is socially constructed and how the objects on the ground are causally socially constructed. Haslanger states that “our classificatory schemes, at least in social contexts, may do more than just map preexisting groups of individuals; rather our attributions have the power to both establish and reinforce groupings which may eventually come to ‘fit’ the classification.”⁹⁴ In reference to gender identity (Haslanger’s case), this looping effect (a term borrowed from Hacking) is arguably negative.⁹⁵ Ian Hacking developed the term ‘looping effects’ to describe the effect of categories and concepts used by social scientists to shape the behavior and self-understanding of those they study. For example, in diagnosing a patient “depressive” this diagnosis classifies an individual; the individual may change in light of this diagnosis and she may in turn help change the category of “depressive disorder.”

Does classifying something as a ruin affect the way we see it as a ruin? Does classifying something as a ruin help us see it fit the definition of a ruin better? In my view, the answer to these questions is “Yes.” For example, in the case of Bannerman Castle, social factors played not only a causal role in creating the ruin, but also a discursive role in socially constructing the Castle as a ruin. The social construction of Bannerman Castle (the thing) as a ruin involved relevant communities taking the object up as a ruin, or deeming the structure a ruin. It is now to this deeming process that I turn, with help from institutional theories of art.

⁹⁴ Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 86.

⁹⁵ In Haslanger’s terminology, items that can be described by this looping effect are called discursively socially constructed. According to Haslanger: “*Discursive construction*: Something is discursively constructed just in case it is the way it is, to some substantial extent, because of what is attributed to it.” (Ibid.) I will not be using this term, but will instead refer to deeming ruins as such – and the effects that deeming can have on a structure.

According to the institutional accounts of the definition of “art,” art objects become art objects only once a reputable member (or expert) of the art world community deems them such.⁹⁶ While it might be too strong to say that ruins are only ruins once the relevant community deems them such, it is quite reasonable to assert that a ruin is such because, to a substantial extent, we deem it as such. Looking at an institutional account with reference to the Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary is instructive of the usefulness of institutional accounts as applied to ruins.

A group of French soldiers “rediscovered” Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary in 1885. For the sake of argument, suppose that, implausible as it may be, in 1884 Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary had been completely devoid of human presence since the fall of the Champa Kingdom. Would it be true that in 1884 Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary was a complex of ruins? According to an institutional account of ruins, the answer would be “No.” According to the institutional account, Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary would be considered a complex of ruins only after the relevant social group deemed it a complex of ruins. An institutional account would have to address that relevant communities had the relevant expertise to deem Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary ruins.

In discussing institutional accounts, I will focus my attention on George Dickie’s “new” institutional theory of art presented in his book, *The Art Circle*, which was written in response to the criticism of Dickie’s earlier book, *Art and The Aesthetic*. As previously stated, institutional accounts are a particular type of social constructivist accounts. In *Art and the Aesthetic*, Dickie defines a “work of art” as “(1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has had conferred upon it the status of a candidate for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a

⁹⁶ George Dickie’s first account of the institutional theory of art asserts that an object becomes an art object when “the status of candidate for appreciation” is conferred upon it “by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld).” (Dickie, *Art and the Aesthetic*, 34.)

certain social institution (the artworld).”⁹⁷ Monroe Beardsley criticized this definition by stating that while Dickie had characterized the artworld as an informal practice, phrases like “conferred status” and “acting on behalf of” seem like part of a formal institution.⁹⁸ In light of this criticism, Dickie refined his account, rejecting his previous definition as being overly formal, stating that being an artwork is not a status that is conferred, but is rather “a status which is achieved as the result of creating an artifact within or against the background of the artworld.”⁹⁹ Dickie jettisoned the notions of “status conferral” and “acting on behalf,” preferring the notion of a framework (borrowed and tweaked from Arthur Danto). Dickie also insisted that the artworld is multifaceted, “consist[ing] of a set of individual artworld systems, each of which contains its own specific artist and public roles plus other roles. For example, painting is one artworld system, theater is another, and so on.”¹⁰⁰ Dickie admits that there is a certain amount of arbitrariness of being an artworld system, acknowledging the same point that Hacking makes, that the concepts and systems employed could have been otherwise.

What would a Dickie-style institutional account of ruins look like? Ruins and artworks are disanalogous in important ways: ruins are only partly artifactual; artifacts are intentionally created for a purpose whereas ruins are not intentionally created for a purpose; etc. Yet we might be able to tweak Dickie’s account to serve our purpose. For Dickie (and Danto) there cannot be artworks outside a culture. Similarly, I believe there cannot be a ruin outside of a culture. The concept of a ruin is a cultural kind, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The concept of ruin is socially constructed, and ruins themselves are partially socially constructed. The question remains whether or not a certain public must deem or confer ruin-status to objects for ruins to

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Beardsley, “Is Art Essentially Institutional?,” 202.

⁹⁹ Dickie, “The New Institutional Theory of Art,” 200.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 204.

exist. I think the move Dickie makes, moving away from conferring to “status achieved” alleviates some of the worries about who is and is not included in the so-called “artworld.” How then, would a ruin have its “status achieved”? One such way would be to be deemed a ruin by UNESCO or other national and international heritage preservation societies. While UNESCO deeming a structure is (perhaps) a sufficient condition for ruins status, I will argue it need not be necessary.

Let’s go back to the example of Mỹ Sơn. Is UNESCO deeming Mỹ Sơn a ruin sufficient for it achieving status as a ruin? I do not think the answer is an obvious “yes.” I can imagine a case where an international body, like UNESCO, believes an object to be a ruin and would like to confer status as a ruin, yet the local population and descendant communities disagree with the designation. Or, I can imagine a case where UNESCO believes an object to be a ruin and the local and descendant populations have no cultural concept of a ruin. What should be done in these cases? The ontological question at hand is perhaps easier to answer than the political one. UNESCO, as an interested community¹⁰¹, does seem to have the power to deem something a ruin – if only for its members and purposes. This acknowledgement of the ontological status of the object in question need not be shared universally. Differing communities might have different standards or concepts in mind. And I don’t think this sort of relativism should bother us. If the point of the concept of a ruin is to acknowledge a category of objects that provide people with powerful aesthetic experiences, then the lack of agreement should not worry us. The agreement becomes worrisome when conferring an object ruin status changes what is allowed to happen to the object. If UNESCO “deems” an object a ruin and this deeming comes with it some prescription of what the local population can do to said object (which it in fact does), it is the

¹⁰¹ I am not interested in policing who would be considered part of a “ruinworld” community. I think any population interested in ruins could count. What becomes complicated is how to weigh the interests of these stakeholders.

prescription that is worrisome, not the conference of the ontological status. So while I believe that UNESCO has the ability to deem something a ruin (a sufficient but not necessary condition), I do not believe that UNESCO should have the ability to prescribe actions without the consent of other relevant stakeholders. Likewise, I believe local and descendant communities may deem a structure a ruin – conferring the ontological status of ruins to an object in the world. However, they may not, by themselves, have the political legitimacy, to impose sanctions or restrictions on what should be done with the object. Thus, a community may confer status to an object deeming it a ruin.¹⁰²

But does a community need to recognize a structure as a ruin? Mỹ Sơn, in 1884, had no community. It was nestled into a closed-off valley and no descent or local community was aware of the temple complex.¹⁰³ Was Mỹ Sơn in 1884 a collection of ruins? An institutional account could address this only counterfactually: Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary could be considered a ruins in 1884 only if some relevant community had been present in 1884 to deem it such. History negates the essential premise. Yet there was something really there – really real – about the temples and kalans at Mỹ Sơn in 1884. I believe we are able to define “ruins” (the concept being socially constructed) in reference to physical characteristics and thereby keep some qualities of a ruin *really real* in an objectivist sense. The fact that some relevant communities view Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary as a ruin simply bolsters its status as a ruin, but is not a strictly necessary condition. The practices that involve the deeming and appreciation of objects as ruins are still tied to certain sorts of physical understandings of the objects and their history. So, while we could think of a

¹⁰² Could a community be wrong? That is, could an interested community deem a structure a ruin inappropriately? I think that they could, if the culture had agreed upon a definition (conceptual framework) for a ruin and then picked out a class of object that do not satisfy some set of important criteria. But first we need to talk about relevant criteria for ruin status, something that will be addressed later in this chapter.

¹⁰³ I think this is a contentious claim, yet the French archaeologists who rediscovered Mỹ Sơn the following year could not find locals with knowledge of the temple complex.

practice that used the term ‘ruin’ to refer to all sorts of other kinds of objects, that would simply not be the practice about which I refer. The social construction of the concept of ruins doesn’t lead to an anything goes kind of promiscuity with respect to deeming objects as ruins, simply because the deeming of ruins is already anchored by and tied to the norms and aims of a practice centered around constructed objects and their historical decay.

I turn next to a conceptual analysis of ruins. After discussing that conceptual account, I propose a definition of “ruins” that both captures some of the virtues of several accounts I discuss and answers the question, “Why have a concept of ruins?”

2.4 PREVIOUS DEFINITIONS OF ‘A RUIN’

2.4.1 *Introduction*

Few philosophers have attempted to define “a ruin.” A definition of ruins is hard to pin down for several reasons. First, it is not clear when a structure sufficiently decays to become a ruin or when a ruin sufficiently decays to become a pile of rocks and cease being a ruin. This is a classic example of the *sorites* paradox. If one seeks a definition of ‘a ruin’ that delineates such rigid markers as necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, the project might be hopeless.

Second, a ruin is an ontologically curious object because it clearly bridges the artifactual / natural divide. Because a ruin is hybrid: partly built by humans and partly created by nature, a proper definition of ‘a ruin’ must capture this hybridism. But what counts as “natural?” Is a building destroyed by a wartime bomb created by a natural process? If not, many a modern structure would not properly be considered “a ruin.” On the other hand, if human-caused events were deemed “natural” (as many in the burgeoning field of ‘ecological urbanism’ deem them), the artifactual / natural distinction would be meaningless.

Taking account of those and other issues, I aim to establish a comprehensive definition of ‘a ruin’ that can effectively inform how society acts on such a structure. I will begin by assessing the definitions put forth by Gionata Rizzi, Robert Ginsberg, Florence Hetzler, and Donald Crawford.

2.4.2 *Rizzi*

Gionata Rizzi is a self-proclaimed ruin expert, an architectural conservation professor, and an advisor to the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the World Monuments Fund. He asks (and I paraphrase): But what is, in fact, a ruin? An art historian, an archaeologist and an architect would probably answer in different ways, depending on the specific work that each specialist is required to carry out and on the cultural, technical and scientific approach of each discipline.¹⁰⁴¹⁰⁵

Rizzi defines ‘a ruin’ as “*a building which, having lost substantial parts of its architectural form, has ceased to function as such.*”¹⁰⁶ Rizzi’s definition betrays his own disciplinary bias by referencing only the architectural form and function of building. For example, Rizzi’s definition unjustifiably excludes objects that are not buildings. According to Rizzi, an underwater shipwreck – a classic example of a ruin – would not be a ruin because it is not a building. There are other problems with his definition as well.

¹⁰⁴ Ashurst, *Conservation of Ruins*, xx.

¹⁰⁵ Rizzi predictably omits philosophers from his analysis of the question. Philosophers strive for universal definitions that are true for all people, across all time. At the risk of betraying my philosophical methodological bias, I assert that epochs, disciplines, and cultures have enough commonality to make worthwhile this task of defining ‘a ruin’ in a way that art historians, archaeologists, architects, *and philosophers* can accept.

¹⁰⁶ Ashurst, *Conservation of Ruins*, xx.

First, Rizzi's definition is ambiguous. What counts as having "lost substantial parts of its architectural form?" Reasonable minds may disagree on what it means to "have lost" something, on what is "substantial," on what constitutes a "part" of a building, and on the scope and limits of a building's "architectural form." Detroit's Michigan Train Station is a prime example. The Station is widely considered one of Detroit's iconic ruins, yet no single, significant "part" of its "architectural form" has been "lost," let alone "substantial parts." On the other hand, the Station has fallen into disuse: its windows are broken; layers of dust coat its interior; and folks no longer use it. Those characteristics suggest that the Station is 'a ruin' despite its lack of substantial loss of its architectural form. Ambiguity is a common problem of defining "a ruin," but Rizzi's definition creates more ambiguity than it resolves.

Second, Rizzi's definition is unduly limited to a small subset of the relevant aesthetic features of a ruin. A building is greater than the sum of its architectural features, and much more dynamic. For example, a building interacts with its site, the surrounding nature, and people in unique, meaningful ways. Ruination can be the loss of a structure's relation to its site, nature, and people relating to it. Rizzi's definition completely disregards those interactions.

Finally, Rizzi's definition unduly requires a ruin not to retain its original function. While true for some buildings, such as Detroit's Michigan Train Station, there are many other objects that we could or should consider 'a ruin' despite retaining some or all of their original function. Club Veneranda in Croatia, for example, incorporates ruin-walls into its outdoor club structure. The walls function as walls, yet appear in the form of a ruin. Their use is wholly incidental to their status as ruins. A church is another example. Its main function is to be a place of worship. A ruined church that remains safe enough to enter could serve its original function without losing the characteristics that make it a ruin.

2.4.3 Ginsberg

Robert Ginsberg is one of the few philosophers to define ruins. In *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (2004), he defines a ruin, in its aesthetic sense, as “***the irreparable remains of a human construction that, by a destructive act or process, no longer dwells in the unity of the original, but may have new unities that we can enjoy.***”¹⁰⁷ Like Rizzi, Ginsberg’s definition betrays a methodological bias. But unlike Rizzi, Ginsberg focuses on a ruin’s aesthetically relevant features, rather than its original, physical form. Ginsberg’s definition has four salutary traits, but a few drawbacks as well.

First, on the one hand, Ginsberg’s “ruins” encompass non-buildings, improving on Rizzi’s definition. On the other hand, Ginsberg casts too wide a net. His definition does not rule out objects such as a chef’s fallen soufflé, hardly a ruin. It would be difficult, but not impossible, to appreciate the “new unity” of the ruined soufflé, which would place it squarely within Ginsberg’s definition. And that’s a *reductio ad absurdum*.

Second, Ginsberg’s definition does seem appropriately to rule out non-artifactual objects from ruins. While a bird’s nest could be ‘in ruins’ (after my cat attacks it), I would hardly want to call it ‘a ruin.’ Again, the terminological difference between ‘a ruin’ and ‘in ruins’ is proven to be relevant.

Third, while too broad, Ginsberg’s definition does point us in a useful direction as it signifies that a ruin is ontologically (and therefore conceptually) distinct from its architectural cousins, and other types of material culture by virtue of the fact that it results from a destructive act or process, a process that both creates a new unity created and forms an object of value.

¹⁰⁷ Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, 285.

We should note that Ginsberg uses the language of destruction, even though what results he finds valuable. Yet, as Edensor pointed out (in *Industrial Ruins*) although the process of decay is damaging to an original architectural structure, we need not call this process destructive. If we see buildings (and other man-made structures) as having a life cycle (much as humans have a life cycle), it would be odd to call all changes to that structure destructive. Some changes seem obviously destructive, such as a building being bombed in a war. Other changes, wrought over long passages of time, don't necessarily seem so. What's important here is that the use-value of the structure has changed through some process of decay or transformation.

Finally, Ginsberg's definition is helpful in that it allows for new ruins as well as ruins of antiquity. New ruins, such as the fallen Twin Towers, can result from a violent, brief act of destruction. New ruins, like those in Detroit, may result from a gradual destructive process (the disinvestment of resources in the city center, a collapsing economy, the "white flight" from the city, racist city and state laws which effected the predominantly African American inner city community, the downfall of the manufacturing economy, etc.).

Ginsberg notes that a ruin is the "irreparable remains" of human construction. But why insist that the remains be irreparable? As stated in my previous section, ruins can be seen as socially constructed objects. A culture often decides to divest itself of a particular structure. This does not mean that the destruction is irreparable. An example previously discussed is that of Detroit's Michigan Train Station. The train station is far from beyond repair. We could, if we so choose, pour money and resources into restoring the structure; but for one reason or another, we choose not to. Therefore, I do not think "irreparable" captures what we are looking for, especially when considering "new" ruins.

2.4.4 *Hetzler*

In “The Aesthetics of Ruins: A New Category of Being,” Florence Hetzler states that “A ruin can be defined as *the disjunctive product of the intrusion of nature without loss of the unity that man produced*,”¹⁰⁸ She acknowledges that the product will be different from the original object, and states that a third type of beauty emerges from the ruin. Before ruination there existed “artistic beauty” in the original creation of man, “natural beauty” seen in the surrounding nature, now there is “ruin beauty, which is a new category of being.”¹⁰⁹ This ruin beauty takes us closer to the sublime than either artistic beauty or natural beauty could.¹¹⁰ She also states that, “*In a ruin, so-called natural beauty intersects with human-made beauty in a unique manner*,” but does not describe what this unique manner entails.¹¹¹ The new unity created by the ruin is seen as a synthesis of human and nature. Further, she notes that “a ruin is architecture *and* sculpture *and* nature in time, place in space.”¹¹² She also states that the sense of touch is foregrounded (something we discussed in our section on age-value). There are sounds (e.g., echoes) smells (e.g., mold, must, wild flowers). Ruins retain power because they seem resistant to time.

While much of her account focuses on the aesthetic experience of the ruin, we can glean distinctive features of the Hetzlerian definition of ruins. First, ruins create a new category of being, one that is neither merely artificial nor merely natural. Second, she believes that the original unity in the original architectural structure or other object created by man is not lost in ruination, but is instead transformed into something that seems architectural, sculptural, and natural all at once.

¹⁰⁸ Hetzler, “The Aesthetics of Ruins,” July 1, 1982, 105.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ I will talk about the sublime later.

¹¹¹ Hetzler, “The Aesthetics of Ruins,” July 1, 1982, 105.

¹¹² Ibid., 106.

Hetzler is vague about the relationship between natural and artifactual when she states “*In a ruin, so-called natural beauty intersects with human-made beauty in a unique manner.*”¹¹³ Here, vagueness undercuts the value of the proposed definition. What exactly is this “unique manner”? Other objects seem to intersect the artifactual/natural divide in interesting ways. For example, what distinguishes, under this definition, a ruin from a contemporary landscape art earthwork, such as Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*? A final worry I have about her definition is the fact that she asserts that the original unity created by human beings is never lost. I worry because there are many cases where the base of an architectural structure is found, but we have no idea how the walls and the roof combined. We have already discussed an example of a reconstruction that used fancy computer rendering programs to extrapolate what a roof structure might look like (Mỹ Sơn), but we could just as easily imagine a case where not enough information was available to make an extrapolated 3-D image. In these cases the original man-made unity has been lost, but I still think we would want to call the structure a ruin.

I will now turn to one last definition of ruins found in the philosophical aesthetics literature before turning to my own.

2.4.5 Crawford

In his article, “Nature and Art: Some Dialectical Relationships,” Donald Crawford characterizes a ruin as a “hybrid object.” Hybrid objects are those that result from the *unharmonious co-mingling of the artifactual and the natural*. Crawford labels this unharmoniousness a “dialectical relationship.” He believes that in classical and neoclassical aesthetics there was nothing unharmonious about the relationship between the artifactual and the natural. For example, in

¹¹³ Ibid., 105.

landscape painting of the 1800s, nature provided the model for the artist's composition. In this case, Crawford asserts, there seems to be no tension in using a landscape as the model for the landscape painting.¹¹⁴ The two are not in opposition, and thus are harmonious.¹¹⁵ Other art forms, such as contemporary conceptual art, do not embody this dialectical relationship since they simply do not interact with the natural environment in any significant way.

Earthworks such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) embody a dialectical relationship in that they do not fit nicely into the paradigm of scenic beauty or the paradigm of conceptual art, but capitalize on these elements in creating a new beauty compounded of both of them. The landscapes Smithson creates are not traditionally beautiful, as an English or Italian garden might be. Nor do they comfortably align themselves with conceptual art, since earthworks focus attention on visual physical mass instead of the concepts they attempt to embody. We may call the class of objects, *Spiral Jetty* included, that embody this dialectical relationship "hybrid objects."

Crawford states two important features of this class of objects which can contribute to a loose definition of the new category: First, **hybrid objects "can be seen as relating to both natural and artifactual elements interacting in other than purely harmonious or straightforwardly causal ways."**¹¹⁶ Second, this struggle produces a third object of aesthetic appreciation. The above attempt at a definition of hybrid objects covers a larger conceptual terrain than just ruins and environmental art. Wind chimes, totem poles, ruins (as well as follies), some kinetic sculptures (including some mobiles), and sound sculptures (like Seattle's

¹¹⁴ Crawford admits that the relationship between landscape and landscape painting might not be dialectical, not because the two interact harmoniously, but because the two simply do not interact. He does not, however, flesh this suggestion out any further.

¹¹⁵ As I will discuss in the dissertation, Crawford's use "tension" and "harmonious" as it applies to the relationship between nature and art is mysterious and needs some elucidation.

¹¹⁶ Crawford, "Nature and Art," 50.

“Soundgarden,” or Zadar, Croatia’s “Sea Organ”) are all captured under the hybrid object umbrella. Hybrid objects can be defined as those that involve *some sort of* causal relationship between the artifactual and the natural *in some sort of* aesthetically relevant way. Crawford’s notion of not being “purely harmonious or straight-forwardly causal” is puzzling and vague, just in the same ways Hetzler’s definition was.¹¹⁷

Ruins are a subset of these hybrid objects. Crawford’s “dialectical” relationship is instantiated in the tension between the natural elements manifest in a ruin and the artifactual elements presented. Crawford details several important features that set ruins apart from other hybrid objects¹¹⁸:

- (1) Ruins are, for the most part, aesthetically unintended,
- (2) Ruins have a past history, “usually rich in meaning and associations,”¹¹⁹
- (3) Ruins are incompletely ruined; they are the material remains of something that has been severely modified,
- (4) They have aesthetic foci often not found in the original aesthetic unity,
- (5) Ruins possess an inherent reference to both the future and the past.

The first two of these features are the most important in that it is these two features (aesthetic unintendedness and historical/time associations) that set ruins apart from their hybrid brothers and sisters. It is what makes ruins unique, and even more difficult to capture.

As difficult as it is to formulate a definition of a ruin, we now have identified some useful materials to work with. First, modifying Ginsberg’s account, we may say that ruins are the surviving remains of human construction that, through an ongoing “destructive” process have come to constitute a new aesthetic unity.¹²⁰ Borrowing from Crawford, we may say that this ongoing “destructive” process is dialectical in nature, a process that involves *some sort of* causal

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 49–50.

¹¹⁸ I believe Crawford believes this to be a shopping list of characteristic features: ruins will have some subset of features, but need not have them all or any one in particular.

¹¹⁹ Crawford, “Nature and Art,” 52.

¹²⁰ I put destructive in quotes since, while the process of decay usually seen as destructive, the process of decay creates positive aesthetic features and, in this sense, is not destructive.

relationship between the artifactual and the natural *in some sort of* aesthetically relevant way. Additionally, we can put Crawford's five features (that distinguish ruins from other hybrid objects) to work, as long as their implications and assumptions are detailed and discussed in full. In what follows I want to address the prospects for devising a definition of a ruin along these lines.

2.4.6 *Reworking these definitions*

We can learn from both the negative and positive aspects of previous definitions. I will start with the negative aspects. First, I worry about the looseness in these definitions. Rizzi states that ruins "have lost substantial parts of their architectural form," but does not inform us how much a building must lose. I proposed some counter-examples to this claim, such as the Michigan Train Station in Detroit. Second, I worried that Rizzi includes only architectural structures as ruins, and focuses only on the architectural properties of ruins. Many objects can be considered ruins (e.g., shipwrecks) that are not buildings, and even architectural ruins have aesthetic properties that are not purely architectural. Finally, Rizzi insists that the ruin cannot retain its original function. The counter-example I engaged with here was that of a ruined church. Any useful definition proposed would have to handle these worries.

We learned from Ginsberg that a definition of a ruin should not be so broad as to include objects such as soufflés. I also disagreed with Ginsberg that the ruin has to be the remains of something irreparable. I believe there is one other problem with Ginsberg's account. Ginsberg asserts that a ruin is the result of an act or process of decay. Why must it be a result? This makes it sound like a ruin is a static object, rather than an object in transition. I believe that a ruin should be conceived of as being in the process of decay. This is an important difference, since it demands that we conceive that a ruin is in a process, rather than the ruin being the result of a

process. In order to preserve the conceptual integrity of the ruin, one must allow it to continue this process – allowing the architectural structure a finite lifespan. In preserving the conceptual integrity of ruins, we will be preserving the process of decay, age-value, authenticity, historical properties, and landscape values.

Viewing objects as having a lifespan is not unique to ruins. It is a value that has been respected with other objects as well. In “Conservation and Cultural Significance,” conservator and museologist Miriam Clavir discusses the Zuni’s desire to allow some objects to decay. She quotes Nancy Marie Mithlo, a Zuni ethnologist and curator as stating, “Preservation is completely opposite of our concept of deterioration and disintegration as a means of refurbishing and reentering into the afterworld.” This shows that conceiving of an object as something with a lifespan is not unique; many indigenous cultures believe that to respect objects is to allow them to decay. David Lowenthal begins his article, “The Value of Age and Decay” by stating, “All artifacts are mortal.” Further he states that, “Decay and demolition come to be viewed not as implacable enemies to conservation, but as inescapable adjuncts of our relations with all components of the built environment.”¹²¹

While Hetzler acknowledged that artifacts have a lifespan, her definition was vague on how natural beauty and human beauty intersect. It seems that Hetzler’s definition would have a hard time disambiguating ruins from other sorts of ‘hybrid objects’ (such as those Crawford discusses). And finally, Crawford’s definition of hybrid objects, while very useful, setting them in the context of a broader category (i.e., hybrid object), is vague. In asserting that hybrid objects are those with a less than harmonious co-mingling dialectic between the natural and artificial, he has left us with an open-ended puzzle. While he tries to give us some examples of art objects that are straightforwardly harmonious (e.g., landscape painting), and those that are not (e.g.,

¹²¹ Lowenthal, “The Value of Age and Decay,” 41.

many earthworks), the class of objects presented is not enough to give us a clear distinction. Crawford's five characteristics of ruins are most promising, but still have some ambiguity.

First, he states that ruins are, for the most part, aesthetically unintended.¹²² He does not, however, give us an example of intended ruins, and I will argue that, except in one particular case, ruins are not aesthetically intended. Feature two is also vague, as almost all older objects have a past that is "rich in meaning and association."

I will also have to say something more specific about when ruins begin and when they end. Crawford's discusses this in his third condition, albeit vaguely. Crawford's fourth condition is similar to both Ginsberg and Hetzler's: the ruin is a discrete aesthetic object from that of its purely architectural cousin. The aesthetic focus often evokes references to both the future and the past.

2.5 MY POSITIVE ACCOUNT

Having discussed some of the defects of other accounts, in this section, I argue in favor of a new definition of 'a ruin'. This definition seeks to avoid some of the pitfalls of the definitions previously discussed, while retaining some of their positive features. First, following Crawford's lead, I will provide a list of relevant features of ruins; and then I will present my own definition for 'a ruin'.

Many ruins have – either by virtue of their construction or by virtue of how we perceive them – the following six features I discuss below. Again, I wish to avoid an essentialist definition of ruin for the reasons presented earlier. I believe ruins have more of a family resemblance; many of the following features come in degrees and should be weighed in conjunction with one another.

¹²² This feature of ruins has been noted by a number of others, including Ginsberg and Macaulay.

1. Ruins are aesthetically unintended.¹²³ This property distinguishes ruins from other types of artifacts, and puts them in particular contrast to follies (i.e., ‘fake ruins’¹²⁴). Thus, if a folly is aesthetically compelling it is so in a sense that is derivative of the aesthetic value of real ruins. While we might be able to appreciate an aesthetically intended part of the ruin, such as an architectural feature, the ruin (i.e., the structure in the process of decay) itself was not aesthetically intended. For example, we might still be able to marvel at the intended elegance of a flying buttress, but the fact that the buttress no longer supports a structure (due to the ruination) is not aesthetically intended. The absence of interaction between the buttress and the structure it was intended to support is both aesthetically unintended and aesthetically relevant.¹²⁵

Where there are cases in which an artist produces a structure designed to ruienate (such as a totem pole), this structure would be classified as some other sort of object.

Anticipating how a structure would ruienate does not determine whether the later ruiened form will be ‘a ruien.’ Some (including Woodward) have noted that Hitler’s appreciation of Greek and Roman ruiens inappropriately focused on their role as monuments, and thus ‘missed the mark’ with respect to how one ought to appreciate such structures as ruiens. I will discuss this point more in the next chapter on the authenticity of ruiens. With regard

¹²³ Note that this feature is an alteration of one of Crawford’s features. Crawford states that ruiens are often aesthetically unintended. I’m making the stronger claim, which I will defend in the next chapter, that ruiens are always aesthetically unintended.

¹²⁴ I classify follies in two types, or traditions: those created and built by a folly artist (often referred to as “sham ruiens”), and those which are composed of actual ruiens which have been radically dislocated from their original site. In classifying these structures as “follies,” I am following the standard use of the term in the folly literature.

¹²⁵ Thanks to Brandon Morgan-Olson for the illustrative example of a flying buttress that no longer buttresses any architectural structure.

to ruins created by war: while the opposing army wants to “bomb the city back to the Stone Age” or “leave the city in ruins,” armies are not intending the aesthetic qualities of the ruined structure but are trying to leave the structures non-functional. I will discuss this example in the next chapter on the authenticity of ruins.

2. Those structures that we choose to value as ruins are often valued in part due to their historic properties. When we choose to view an object through the ruin-lens, we often include historic properties with the ruin-frame. *Ruins often reflect a history abounding with cultural associations and historical relations. The historical ties ruins have will often place them in the category of ‘cultural property.’* As discussed earlier, historic properties and age-value often overlap. Ruins will be recognized as such because of these properties of (ascribed) historical and cultural significance – whereas the first feature presented references how they came to be in a state that could be so valued. Surprisingly, none of the definitions I survey focus on ruins’ historical properties.

3. In a ruin, age-value is esteemed. We should be reminded of Korsmeyer’s account of age-value and genuineness here. Ruins are valued in part because they evoke the importance of age-value. Even in the case of new ruins, the ruin expresses this age-value through perseverance. (For an example of this, think of the two remaining tridents after the attack on the Twin Towers. These tridents now reside in the 9-11 memorial. Their age-value is marked through their sheer perseverance:



Figure 2.5 Trident of Twin Tower in 9/11 Museum, wiki commons

4. Ruins show a change in use-value. As Tim Edensor argues in *Industrial Ruins*, ruins are often seen as devoid of value and consequently devoid of use. A building that can no longer serve its primary function becomes a blight to many communities. He argues that instead of being dysfunctional, the building's function has been changed or altered. When a decayed arsenal (such as Bannerman's) no longer can complete its primary function it is often seen as useless. If my arsenal cannot keep my weapons stored safely, then what use is it? Edensor and I argue that if the arsenal is understood as a ruin, its use-value has not diminished, but has merely changed.

As I have pointed out, Rizzi insists that the ruin cannot retain its original function. The counter-example I presented was that of a ruined church. I want to allow for ruins that, unlike that of the arsenal example I just presented, still retain their original function. A church that is ruined can still serve as a place for worship, but it acquires an additional aesthetic use-value on top of its (continuing) function as a place of worship. Before ruination the church was used for worship, and as a venue to keep parishioners out of the cold and wet. Let's suppose the church has lost some of its roof due to ruination. After ruination, the function of keeping parishioners out of the elements is no longer there, but perhaps parishioners find it a more aesthetically pleasing place to worship. As they see it, God's glory is shown in the nature that encroaches on the man-made. Here the use-value of the church could be altered: the primary purpose of the church still exists, but some of its subsidiary purposes have been altered. **And**, a new aesthetic unity has been born, one that could aid in worshiping.

Also remember that Ginsberg thinks that ruins are the irreparable remains of human construction. If by this he means that the building's use-value no longer exists, then I disagree.

5. Ruins are distinct from reconstructed or repurposed buildings. We do not see them as structures waiting for reassembly. As previously discussed, ruins are distinct from buildings that have been reconstructed or repurposed. This speaks to their use-value, for in a ruin we see part of its use-value in its beauty. This also speaks to society's role in deeming something a ruin. If nothing is necessarily "beyond repair" as Ginsberg

states, then which items we decide to repair and which items we decide to allow to ruin become part of a social practice.

6. “A ruin” has an aesthetic unity distinct from its merely artifactual cousin. When we look at a ruin, we admire something above and beyond its mere architectural structure. We see this distinction being made by Hetzler, Crawford, and Ginsberg. They all argue, in their different ways, that the ruin is a third object of appreciation, one born from the co-mingling of the artifactual and the natural, but not merely reducible to the two. Crawford discusses this when he classifies the ruin a ‘hybrid object.’ Hybrid objects are those that involve a dialectical relationship between the natural (broadly construed) and artifactual. Hetzler states that “In a ruin, so-called natural beauty intersects with human-made beauty in a unique manner.”¹²⁶ (And Ginsberg states, “a ruin is the irreparable remains of a human construction that, by a destructive act or process, no longer dwells in the unity of the original, but may have **new unities that we can enjoy.**”¹²⁷ These new unities exist in the co-mingling of the artifactual and the natural.

I now turn to a proposed definition. My definition will not be as pithy as those previously presented, since I am trying to avoid the pitfalls of the other, overly vague definitions.

A ruin is the remains of a large-scale human-built physical structure which

¹²⁶ Hetzler, “The Aesthetics of Ruins,” July 1, 1982, 105.

¹²⁷ Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, 285.

- a. incorporates architectural elements designed to last for a significant period of time;**
- b. is in the process of decay;**
- c. as such shows its age-value either in the encroachment of nature onto the artifactual or through its altered use-value; and**
- d. creates, through the process of its decay, a new, unauthored aesthetic unity.**

Now let me turn to the specifics. First, a ruin is the remains of a large-scale human-built physical structure. What does it mean to be “large-scale”? Here I have in mind any structure that is larger than human-sized. My water heater is not large-scaled, while my car is. This is roughly the condition I am aiming at. There are two reasons I include this condition:

- (1) First, ruins must be human-made; they cannot be the remains of an animal-made structure. We do not value ruined beaver-dams in the same way we value “a ruin.”
- (2) Small-scale structures are not ones we call “a ruin.” While a water heater can be ‘in ruins,’ I do not think it is ‘a ruin.’ When we think of ruins we think of large-scale human buildings (churches, amphitheaters, etc.), cars, ships, amusement parks, castles, etc. A ruin is not a small thing.

The second part of the definition states that a ruin is **a structure that incorporates architectural elements designed to last through a significant period of time.**¹²⁸ By lasting, I’m assuming that the materials used are those that could, under the right conditions, outlive a normal human lifespan. Again, cars, ships, houses all are eligible candidates. Foodstuffs, temporary shelters, a child’s fort, are not. This feature also excludes my old ripped t-shirt as well. The t-shirt is not something that we think of as containing architectural elements, and it is not designed to last through a significant period of time.

¹²⁸ For example, this condition rules out large-scale soufflés! I can image a bizarre chef who desires to make the world’s largest soufflé. Soufflés are difficult constructions, and many would argue that they contain architectural elements. But they are not designed to last.

The condition that **this structure is in the process of decay, and as such shows its age-value** is a variation on Ginsberg's definition, which stated that a ruin was the result of a destructive act or process. My alteration reframes the ruin as being in a *constant* state of decay. As I argued earlier, to respect a ruin is to respect its conceptual integrity. The conceptual integrity of a ruin consists in its being in a process of decay. The contribution of decay to the conceptual integrity is shown in two ways: one is that we see the encroachment of nature onto the artifactual. This is evident in older ruins, such as those of Angkor Wat and M̃y Son. The other is that we re-conceptualize a thing's use-value. We see this in newer ruins, such as the Michigan Train Station in Detroit.

In saying that **through the process of decay, a new aesthetic unity is born**, I am making a point affirmed in almost all prior accounts of ruins: The decay brings about a third object of appreciation, which has its own aesthetic unity, one that is distinct from that of its architectural predecessor.

In saying that **this new unity is unauthored, and that the community decides not to repair the structure**, I am saying that the new aesthetic unity is not aesthetically intended. Later in the dissertation (last chapter) I will discuss how much intervention we can allow for something to still be considered a ruin. Needless to say, a ruin's ruination is tolerated by society, but its ruination is not specifically designed. This condition both allows for the social construction of ruins, and sets ruins apart from authored artworks. This condition sets ruins apart from both buildings (which are authored by an architect) and earthworks (which are designed by an artist).

It is time to ask if my definition is appropriately socially constructed. Remember that "something is causally constructed *iff* social factors play a role in bringing it into existence, or to

some substantial extent, in its being the way that it is.” Societies decide not to repair or repurpose structures, and in this sense ruins are causally constructed. Remember also ”something is discursively constructed just in case it is the way it is, to some substantial extent, because of what is attributed to it.” We see objects are ruins, with new unities, in part because we decide not to allow the repair of the structure, and we allow the structure to ruinate. But my definition of ruins is only weakly pragmatically constructed (a distinction is *weakly pragmatically constructed* if social factors only partly determine our use of it) since social factors only partially constitute the ruin. Some objects will “fit” better than others, some objects will exist on the borderlands, and some objects will be ruled out.

It is appropriate at this point to pause and ask, “*What is the point of having **this** concept of a ruin?*” Here is my answer: This definition helps tourist bureaus, cultural preservationists, historical society members, ruin enthusiasts, urban planners, and other interested communities adjudicate between different structures conceptually. There is a bit of an activist agenda here: when we conceive of something as a ruin, we see it as in the process of decay. Therefore, as I will discuss later, if we want to protect or “conserve” ruins, we will have to allow them to decay (somewhat). The definition I have presented and the inventory I have presented of six relevant features of ruins give some indication as to why a community might want to allow something to be ‘a ruin’ instead of running to demolish or repair it.

Chapter 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to present the reader with a basic understanding of the historical literatures dealing with the aesthetic appreciation of ruins. Through a discussion of these literatures, I hope the position of my account in the ongoing theoretical discussion will become clear. I will first discuss the divide in the aesthetic of nature between cognitivist and non-cognitivist accounts within the contemporary literature in the aesthetics of nature. In providing some information regarding contemporary accounts of nature appreciation, I will show that historical accounts of ruin appreciation have interesting and informative overlap with these contemporary views. After discussing issues in the aesthetics of nature, I turn to historical accounts, which can be roughly divided into classical and romantic.

Classical and romantic accounts of ruin appreciation are often seen as antithetical approaches. I will argue that both can be useful in ruin appreciation. Further, I will argue that this dichotomy helps us understand differing ways we come to appreciate a ruin, but presents an incomplete picture: there is more to ruin appreciation than either the romantic or classical accounts can allow for. Along the way, I will discuss some recent trends in the aesthetic appreciation of ‘things that are no longer there’ to elaborate on the relevance of these historical accounts to current aesthetic appreciation.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ A richer definition will be provided later, but the aesthetic appreciation of things that are no longer there include places like the original site of the Globe Theater, which is now traced onto the concrete of a parking lot.

After discussing the classical and romantic accounts of ruin appreciation I turn to two important historical theoretical notions relevant to our discussion: that of the picturesque and the sublime. I will argue that the role of the picturesque in ruin appreciation has been overrated, while the role of the sublime has been underrated.

When, in the next chapter, I turn to recent accounts of ruins that focus on fitness and hybridity, I will aim to retain the relevant and useful details from historical accounts surveyed here, while supplementing them with insights from contemporary accounts.

3.2 COGNITIVE AND NON-COGNITIVE MODELS OF NATURE APPRECIATION (AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO RUIN APPRECIATION)

Ruins' ontological hybridity presents a challenge. By focusing on *either* natural objects *or* artificial objects, traditional aesthetic theories have lacked the perspective from which to prescribe an aesthetic appreciation of hybrid objects. A possible solution to this puzzle is presented in the environmental aesthetics literature that claims that aesthetic appreciation of nature requires a distinctive approach in order to include aspects of appreciation missing in many other types of aesthetic appreciation. Often ignored aspects of nature appreciation include the indeterminate and varying character of nature, the multisensory experience, and the diverse understandings of nature. Due to these properties we, as aesthetic perceivers, have great flexibility in what we decide to attend to in nature, and how we decide to direct our attention. Ruins appreciation also involves multisensory experience and diverse interpretations. In this sense ruins appreciation is similar to nature appreciation.

Nature models aim to capture what is important in the aesthetic appreciation of nature; as such they only have the conceptual resources to address a constitutive but one part of a ruin (i.e.,

the natural part). Similarly, art models can prescribe how we ought to attend to the architectural part of the ruin, or how to attend to the ruin as a two-dimensional landscape, but cannot capture the natural features constitutive of ruins. I believe any adequate account of how one ought to engage aesthetically with ruins will draw from both art models and nature models of aesthetic appreciation. Therefore my account of how we ought to appreciate ruins aesthetically will be hybrid in this way: it will draw from both the literature dealing with the aesthetics of natural environments and the literature in the philosophy of art (broadly construed).¹³⁰

There is another sense in which my account will straddle entrenched divides in aesthetics. The cognitive/non-cognitive divide is familiar to those working in the aesthetics of natural beauty. Loosely speaking, cognitive theories are those that emphasize the centrality of knowledge in the appreciation of natural beauty. These theories come in many flavors, but many of them (e.g., the theories of Carlson, Rolston, and Eaton¹³¹) focus on the use of scientific categories in nature appreciation. Allen Carlson's Natural Environmental Model (NEM) is a paradigmatic example of a cognitivist theory of the aesthetics of natural environments. Carlson, like many environmental aestheticians, believes that nature and art must be appreciated in different ways. For Carlson, the key to appreciating nature aesthetically is to appreciate it through our scientific knowledge. Carlson's NEM borrows Paul Ziff's notion of aspection.¹³²

¹³⁰ As accounts of the appropriate appreciation of art objects are more ubiquitous, I focus on models of nature appreciation. Additionally, in this chapter I use the terms "aesthetic appreciation of nature" and "aesthetic appreciation of the environment" interchangeably. Some argue that the two are distinct.

¹³¹ An introduction to Carlson's cognitive model for the aesthetic appreciation of nature can be found in his "Appreciation and the Natural Environment," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring, 1979): 267-275. For an introduction to Holmes Rolston III's cognitive model, please see his "The Aesthetic Experience of Forests," in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, edited by Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, 182-195. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2004. A good introduction to Marcia Muelder Eaton can be found in the same book. See her "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature," in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, edited by Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant, 170-181. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2004.

¹³² Ziff, *Philosophical Turnings*, 71.

Ziff describes different ways of attending to an art object depending on the type of object.

Aspection (seeing the object first this way, then that) provides guidelines or boundaries for our aesthetic experiences and judgments of certain art objects. Different art works have different boundaries, which will yield different acts of aspection. While many paintings can be viewed from one location, other works of art (e.g. sculpture, architecture) require you to walk through space. Thus painting and sculpture require different acts of aspection.

Carlson also draws upon Kendall Walton's "Categories of Art" in which Walton argues that we need art historical information to make well-informed aesthetic judgments.¹³³ For example, if I were to judge Jeff Koons's "Balloon Swan" as a failure of minimalist sculpture, I wouldn't be attending to the properties of "Balloon Swan" which makes it a successful piece of (non-minimalist) contemporary pop sculpture. In order to appreciate "Balloon Swan" appropriately, I must categorize it appropriately.

Drawing upon the insights of Ziff and Walton, Carlson argues that the proper aesthetic appreciation of nature involves acts of aspection through the lens (or category) of scientific knowledge.¹³⁴ Just as knowledge of the art's kind (e.g., opera, painting, sculpture) informs our appreciation, scientific information about nature informs our aesthetic appreciation of it. Thus, to truly appreciate an ecosystem or an object in that system, one must have (some) scientific knowledge in order to employ the appropriate act of aspection. Importantly, one must not treat nature as one would treat art, turning a natural object into an art object¹³⁵, or transforming an

¹³³ Walton, "Categories of Art."

¹³⁴ While Carlson gives priority to appreciation informed by scientific knowledge, he does acknowledge the role of common sense in our aesthetic appreciation of nature.

¹³⁵ The 'object model' – as Carlson calls it – asks the appreciator to take the object out of its natural environment (decontextualize it) and observe its formal properties such as symmetry, unity, etc. When we decontextualize natural objects we turn them into a bizarre subcategory of "readymade" sculptures, and this does not capture what is characteristic of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. When appreciating the natural object as an art object, we are appreciating only a limited set of aesthetic properties, namely those

experience of an open field into an imagined landscape painting.¹³⁶ Carlson acknowledges that nature is importantly unframed and as a consequence when we try to frame nature by turning a natural object (e.g., driftwood) into a free standing object, or when one tries to frame nature by experiencing it as if looking through a Claude-glass, one imposes a frame that should not be there. This approach is labeled “cognitivist” because it emphasizes the importance of cognition in aesthetically appreciating nature *well*.

Non-cognitive theories are those that emphasize the subjective aesthetic experience of natural beauty and often focus on the role of the imagination. These include theories put forth by various philosophers, including Hepburn, Berleant, Carroll, Godlovitch, Foster, Saito, and Brady.¹³⁷

Emily Brady presents one such non-cognitivist model in her article “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature.” Using Carlson’s NEM as a foil against her own account, she argues that basing the aesthetic appreciation of nature on scientific categories is flawed because it is “too constraining as a guide for appreciation of nature qua aesthetic object.”¹³⁸ She provides four core criticisms of Carlson’s scientific approach. First, she asserts that Carlson’s account rests on a faulty analogy, the analogy being that just as aesthetic appreciation of art requires knowledge of art history and criticism to help place art in its correct category, we should use

formal properties that we find in art. This type of appreciation does not capture the nature of the aesthetic experience that we are after when we want to appreciate nature qua nature. It would seem as if appreciating an object as nature requires us to place it in its natural context, to see the honeycomb as part of the bee life cycle and to appreciate the purpose and role it plays in nature.

¹³⁶ The ‘landscape model’ asks us to aesthetically appreciate a natural landscape as we would appreciate the painting or picture of that natural landscape. We are asked to attend to the scenic qualities of the landscape, to appreciate its lines and form. Unlike a painting, which is already presented to us as a framed object, we should likewise frame the landscape. This model reinforces the subject/object distinction, by asking us to place ourselves outside or in opposition to the landscape that we are trying to appreciate.

¹³⁷ Essays from Ronald Hepburn, Arnold Berleant, Stan Godlovich, Cheryl Foster, Yuriko Saito, Noel Carroll and Emily Brady can be found in Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant’s edited volume, *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*. (*The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2004.)

¹³⁸ Brady, *Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, 158.

natural history (e.g., geology, biology, physics) to place nature in a correct category. In a (now) famous counter-example to the NEM, recounted by Brady, Noël Carroll raises the worrisome case of the waterfall.¹³⁹ Carroll asks: What scientific category must we fit a particular waterfall in order to appreciate it aesthetically? If the only category that we need is that of a waterfall, then the NEM need not rely on scientific knowledge at all, but just rely on ‘common sense.’

Brady’s second criticism is that Carlson’s approach is not practically useful. Using Carlson’s criteria for a successful model of aesthetic appreciation against him¹⁴⁰, she argues that the NEM does not carve out a unique path of aesthetic appreciation, citing Carroll’s waterfall example as one that shows that the NEM requirement for scientific knowledge collapses into a requirement for common sense. Third, Brady argues that even if we grant that scientific knowledge *could* enrich an aesthetic appreciation of nature, it does not seem essential to aesthetic appreciation. Ecological value, she argues, is – and ought to be – a distinct (while still overlapping) category of value.

Finally, Brady argues that the scientific approach is too constraining since proper aesthetic appreciation of nature requires “freedom, flexibility, and creativity.”¹⁴¹ I will return to this point later.

Brady’s claims that the most desirable model of aesthetic appreciation of nature will: (a) be able to distinguish aesthetic value from other types of value, (b) provide a structure to make aesthetic judgments which are not merely subjective, and (c) solve the problem of how to guide

¹³⁹ See Noel Carroll, “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History,” in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, eds. Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2004), 95.

¹⁴⁰ As cited in her article, Carlson’s criteria are that (i) A model of aesthetic appreciation must carve out a distinctive path and (ii) A model of aesthetic appreciation must provide understand of aesthetic value that is not merely personal or arbitrary. (Brady, *Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, 158-159).

¹⁴¹ Brady, *Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, 159.

the aesthetic appreciation of nature without reference to art models. She believes that the aesthetic appreciation of nature ought to use perceptual and imaginative capacities guided by Kant's concept of disinterestedness. She details four different types of imagination: (i) *exploratory*, which is the imaginative search for unity in perception, (ii) *projective*, where we intentionally see something as something else, (iii) *ampliative*, which moves beyond mere imagination to draw upon other cognitive resources, and (iv) *revelatory*, where the ampliative imagination has led to the discovery of an aesthetic truth.¹⁴² In describing revelatory imagination she states, "Invention stretches the power of imagination to its limits, and this often gives way to a kind of truth of knowledge about the world – a kind of revelation in the non-religious sense."¹⁴³

Criticisms of this "imaginative approach" focus on the possibility of an unfettered imagination producing absurd trains of aesthetic inquiry. For example, one might look at the ripple pattern reflecting on the water of a lake and imagine that the ripples look like the ridges of the potato chips you recently cut out of your diet. From here you begin a train of thought which leads you to worry about processed food, factory farming, and fad diets. This seems like an unproductive, and unaesthetic, train of thought. To combat this 'unfettered imagination' worry, Brady gives us some guidelines to prevent self-indulgence and irrelevant trains of thought. She believes the Kantian notion of disinterestedness can help prevent the sort of train of thought I just rehearsed. Focusing our imagination skills to non-practical, non-instrumental uses may guide us away from self-indulgence. Further Brady gives us guidelines for what she calls "imagining well." She believes "imagining well" should be thought of like an Aristotelian virtue: it is acquired only through practice and only becomes a virtue once it is a matter of habit. This is a

¹⁴² Brady, *Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, 163.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

non-conceptual model of aesthetic appreciation in that it does not rely on previous concepts of art or nature for deep aesthetic appreciation.

As previously stated, I believe an account of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins should incorporate both conceptual and non-conceptual models. Imagining well does not seem to preclude using scientific categories, although Brady seems to think that conceptual accounts are too limiting. If imagining well is an Aristotelian virtue, then there should be a sense on the part of the aesthetic participant when to employ scientific categories and when not to. Surely, sometimes focusing on scientific categories can cut aesthetic pleasure off at the knees.

An example of this phenomenon can be seen in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*:

The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book – a book that was a dead language to the uneducated passenger, but which told its mind to me without reserve, delivering its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice . . . In truth, the passenger who could not read this book saw nothing but all manner of pretty pictures in it, painted by the sun and shaded by the clouds, whereas to the trained eye these were not pictures at all, but the grimmest and most dead-earnest of reading matter. . . I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river. . . The sun means that we are going to have wind to-morrow; that floating log means that the river is rising; that slanting mark on the water refers to a bluff reef which is going to kill somebody's steamboat one of these nights . . . No, the romance and the beauty were all gone from the river...¹⁴⁴

This much discussed example shows that knowledge sometimes precludes aesthetic appreciation.

Turning to another example, as a flute player I am aware of passages that are particularly hard to play. One reason for their difficulty is the lack of a natural stopping place to take a quick breath. Whenever I hear another flute player perform one of such pieces, I am on the edge of my seat, anticipating when he or she will take a breath. The in-depth knowledge about the piece precludes my appreciating the overall sound of the music. Instead, I find myself focusing on the technical ability of the artists. According to Brady, am I not appropriately disinterested enough here? If

¹⁴⁴ Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 94–96.

that's the case, then almost any amount of expert knowledge (including scientific knowledge) will preclude aesthetic appreciation. There has to be a happy middle ground.

While this is a topic of ongoing debate it is slightly out of the scope of my project. Needless to say, I think Brady's suggestion that imagination can be seen as a virtue is useful to this project. Taking Brady's point one step farther, typical Aristotelian virtues have two vices: one of excess and one of deficiency. The vice of excess is usually the one aestheticians focus on when criticizing non-cognitive accounts of aesthetic appreciation: *unfettered* imagination. The vice of deficiency might not be as obvious at first. Here I think an appropriate way to conceive of a deficiency of imagination arises when we take Carlson's model too far. Viewing natural objects solely through their scientific categories (if that is even possible) limits our imagination to such a degree as to cut aesthetic enjoyment off at the knees, as in our Mississippi example.

3.3 HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

3.3.1 *Introduction*

Accounts of ruins appreciation can be found in archaeological literature, as well as in sociological, art historical, and literary texts; all of these texts can be mined for interesting and useful features for an aesthetic account of ruin appreciation. Accounts can loosely be categorized as classical accounts and romantic accounts. The distinction between classical and romantic accounts loosely maps onto the cognitive/non-cognitive distinction found in natural aesthetics, but does not do so cleanly. Both the classical and romantic theories emphasize the activation of the imagination, but in different ways. As a generalization, the classical conception focuses on how the viewer might imagine the original architectural structure while the romantic conception of ruins regards ruins as symbols that spur on trains of thought.

3.3.2 *Classical Conceptions*

According to the classical conception, aesthetic appreciation of ruins requires imagining the existing ruin as a previously existing whole. This way of interacting with material objects is akin to what I will call the “archaeological model” of the appreciation of ruins. Both the classical conception and the archaeological model view the ruin as data. The object is taken to be instrumentally valuable in that it provides a basis for us to imagine and reconstruct past buildings and civilizations. Ginsberg acknowledges that, “The Classical attitude is a great supporter of archaeology as science: “Get in there and dig!”, it cheers.”¹⁴⁵ In furtherance of this conception, vegetation is frequently removed from ruins, as it is not seen as part of the aesthetic unity. Excavation and extraction is the focus. Under this classical conception, ruins are not to be left alone to decay further. Rather, “they are to be strictly governed by the state of our scientific knowledge.”¹⁴⁶ In this quote, I believe Ginsberg is asserting that the classical conception requires that societies arrest the decay at the ruin site in order to preserve the maximum amount of scientific data. In this sense, the classical (or archaeological) appreciation of ruins can be seen as a type of cognitive model of appreciation. Scientific categories pertaining to data, and categories associated with architectural design, are employed to facilitate aesthetic appreciation.

In a similar vein, there has been an emerging trend in aesthetics to talk about the aesthetic enjoyment of sites/building/places that no longer exist. This appreciation usually involves “imaginative reconstruction” and has similarities to the classical conception of ruin appreciation in so far as the aesthetic goal is to re-imagine what the original structure looked like. In “On Things That Aren’t There Anymore,” Jennifer Judkins discusses the aesthetic appreciation of

¹⁴⁵ Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, 324.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Note that many features of this account are incompatible with the definition of ruins I proposed earlier.

long-lost buildings.¹⁴⁷ Her examples include the site of the original Globe Theater (which is now traced onto the floor of a car park), and Hetch Hetchy Valley (which has since been flooded). Other examples include places where important events occurred but no artifact was built or remains, such as the case with Runnymede—where Magna Carta was signed. The aesthetic experience one might have with these sites Judkins envisages as one where there is an imaginative engagement between what is no longer visible and what was once visible. While one might agree that re-imagining is not in itself aesthetically valuable, she argues that this imaginative engagement is given aesthetic interest through genuineness and its relationship to age value. According to Judkins, site value is partially constituted by the cultural significance of what is there, what was there, and what happened there; it is also partially constituted by age value. Age value adds to site value in one of two ways: first, it can add value to the previously visible thing and second, it can historically enrich the sense of place. Like Korsmeyer, Judkins believes age value to be, at least in some cases, inside the aesthetic frame and therefore an aesthetically relevant feature of the place.

In her article “Architectural Ghosts” Jeanette Bicknell uses the term “architectural ghosts” to refer to human-made structures that no longer exist and now can be known only through “traces” that they have left.¹⁴⁸ These “traces” may appear in our memory, in the landscape, and through photographs, drawings, paintings and the like.¹⁴⁹ Bicknell distinguishes ghosts from ruins, stating, “If all that remains of a structure are piles of rubble or indentations in the ground, perhaps marked by a memorial plaque, then the structure is a ghost rather than a

¹⁴⁷ Judkins, “On Things That Are Not There Anymore,” 441.

¹⁴⁸ Bicknell, “Architectural Ghosts.”

¹⁴⁹ She uses the term “environmental ghosts” to refer to features of the environment that can no longer be appreciated “first hand.” Environmental ghosts might include a now disappeared glacier, Hetch Hetchy valley, extinct species, and the like.

ruin.”¹⁵⁰ She argues that a conception of architectural appreciation is appropriate for architectural ghosts, since architectural ghosts share many of the same characteristics as “paper architecture” (structures that were designed but never built). While she focuses her attention on “imaginative reconstruction” of these ghost structures, she does admit that while imaginative reconstruction may be required for appreciation, one could appreciate the structure itself as well as the traces. In explaining imaginative reconstruction, Bicknell discusses the work that we do when reading a book. Those of us who read the *Harry Potter* series imagined what Hogwarts castle looked like well before watching the first Harry Potter movie. When we encounter ghost buildings, we do similar work. We use photographs, memories and the like to reconstruct the building in our imagination. This is also, as Bicknell argues, directly akin to what we do in order to aesthetically engage with paper architecture. However, unlike paper architecture, ghost structures exhibit unique qualities such as vulnerability and ephemerality. Further, she claims, ghost structures, like ruins, provide *memento mori* in a way that paper architecture cannot.

Both of these accounts harken back to the classical conception of ruin appreciation, seeing the ruin as data for reconstruction. While Bicknell and Judkins emphasize imaginative reconstruction I would like to argue that while (imaginative) reconstruction is one type of aesthetic appreciation of ruins, it is not the only one, nor is it the most enriching. Any model of aesthetic appreciation ought to employ multiple avenues for aesthetic appraisal.

Where I think the classical account is lacking, and by extension, Judkins’s and Bicknell’s is the claim that we must value what was once there to value what is currently there. Judkins states that “we wouldn’t appreciate visiting things that aren’t there any more unless we can *identify* their exact location, *know* what is missing, and *value* what is missing.”¹⁵¹ I disagree.

¹⁵⁰ Bicknell, “Architectural Ghosts,” 436.

¹⁵¹ Judkins, “On Things That Are Not There Anymore,” 442.

First, Judkins has already mentioned cases where we can't identify the exact location of an historical event (e.g., Plymouth Rock) but we enjoy visiting the (approximate, or designated) site nonetheless because of the chance that it might be the genuine site. This concession undercuts her claim about the amount of knowledge we need in order to value a site. But more importantly, I believe we can value sites more in their ruined form than we did in the height of their architectural form. Bannerman Castle is a ruin that many believe appears more beautiful in its ruined form than in the height of its architectural form. Here it is not necessarily the case that we value what is missing; rather, what we value is the interplay between nature and artifact, the interplay between site and building, and the interplay between what's absent versus what is present. In ruined form, the aesthetically informative relation between the natural and artifactual becomes more pronounced, and thus more formative of our aesthetic attention. Bannerman Castle, shows that something can be seen as more valuable, or at least more aesthetically valuable, in its ruined form than in its previously intact form. This implies, at least, that what we are valuing is not the original architectural structure, but rather something that emerges once that structure is lost.¹⁵² Therefore, I don't think we always have to value what's missing in order to appreciate the places where things are no longer there.

Using an imaginative reconstruction model one might confine one's attention to a subset of properties of the site that would help with one's reconstruction. This seems very limiting, as one of the pleasures of ruins is that many of their alluring aesthetic properties are unintended. Returning to a familiar example, we might still be able to marvel at the intended elegance of a

¹⁵² This is partially evidenced by the fact that the ruined structure has spurred much more artistic production than the architectural structure. Several companies run 'artistic' tours of Polleppel Island, leaving at both dusk and dawn for several different photographic experiences. The ruined structure has appeared in nearly every book about American ruins, and has inspired countless professional photographers. Additionally, the ruined castle has appeared in a number of high fashion shoots, including one for *Esquire Magazine* (<http://www.esquire.com/style/fashion-story/best-mens-overcoats-1109>).

flying buttress, but the fact that the buttress no longer supports a structure (due to the ruination) is not aesthetically intended and aesthetically relevant. We may re-imagine the buttress' interaction with the no-longer-there building to re-imagine the total structure, but if that is all we do, we are missing out on all these opportunities to see beauty in the unexpectedness and unplannedness of decay.

While Bicknell states, “that one can indeed appreciate the structure itself as well as its traces,” she does not explain how one might engage with a trace. Further, she does not discuss whether the re-imagined architectural structure and the trace left behind would be two distinct ontological objects, and, if they are, whether models of aesthetic appreciation apply to each. According to my definition of ruins (which I will present in full later in this chapter), the process of decay creates a new aesthetic unity, one that has no single author or architect. Thus, I argue that as the re-imagined architectural structure is ontologically distinct from its trace, our aesthetic engagement with it should not solely depend on reconstructing the visual history of the trace. Again, one of the pleasures of ruins (and traces) is the unplanned beauty one stumbles upon, without reference to the original structure.

Positions previously taken (e.g., Bicknell, Judkins, Parsons, Carlson) overlook the specific kind of unity that the ruin possesses *without* reference to the original architectural structure.¹⁵³ Again, I believe this is due in part to the lingering hangover of the classical conception of ruins appreciation. Any model of aesthetic appreciation must, I think, take into account the new ontological unity of the ruin. Focusing on this new ontological unity allows us to focus on parts of the structure that were aesthetically unintended. For instance, when we look at Bannerman Castle, many of the features we admire are features of the building (e.g. pipes, internal walls, support structures), which we were never intended to see. As I pointed out, ruins

¹⁵³ Ginsberg, *Aesthetics of Ruins*, 325.

are aesthetically unintended. Any account of aesthetic appreciation will have to acknowledge the fact that ruins are unauthored in important respects. While we might be able to appreciate an aesthetically intended part of the ruin, such as an architectural feature, the ruin (i.e. the structure in the process of decay) itself was not aesthetically intended.¹⁵⁴

3.3.3 *Romantic Conceptions*

The romantic appreciation of ruins directs attention to the thoughts and emotions of the person absorbed in the experience of the ruin. In this model, the focus is on engagement with the forces of nature, acknowledging the flux of nature and time. This conception is emotive, drawing less on the scientific knowledge to be gained from the artifact and more on one's emotional experience. Here, the ways plants and animals encroach on the artifactual structure are foregrounded. The romantic conception of ruin can be readily observed in the paintings of G.B. Piranesi, the poems of Shelley, and the written word of Grand Tour diarists. Ginsberg states, "The ruin in the Romantic attitude is a temple of reverie. Here we sit apart from the world, while in the presence of its underlying flux. The ruin takes shape from the flow of our associations and sentiments. It breaks open the gates of the soul."¹⁵⁵

The Romantic mode of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins might be seen as an adumbration of Brady's imaginative model. Trains of association are foregrounded.¹⁵⁶ However, some trains seem more apt than others: the symbolic power of a ruin as *memento mori* and the experience of the sublime (which will be discussed later in this chapter) are both relevant stations on our journey.

¹⁵⁴ Part of the previous passage has been published in a symposium on the aesthetics of absence and ruin in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. (Scarborough, "Unimagined Beauty.")

¹⁵⁵ Ginsberg, *Aesthetics of Ruins*, 317.

¹⁵⁶ Archibald Alison, in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), discusses the notion of "train of ideas of emotions." Alison was also a non-cognitivist, who believed that to appreciate beauty fully one must be completely disinterested and divorce oneself from cognitive interest.

As I mentioned earlier, many theorists (including Ginsberg) believe that the classical and romantic conceptions are antithetical and can never be reconciled.¹⁵⁷ One can either see the ruin as data and reconstruct the original structure in one's mind (classical / imaginative reconstruction) or be flooded by the associations the ruin provokes (romantic). I do not believe that these two accounts are antithetical, and think they both can be utilized as parts of a 'hybrid' account of aesthetic appreciation. Just as with my discussion of Brady's and Carlson's accounts, I believe one can see a ruin as the basis for imaginative reconstruction, as well as a powerful symbol which spurs common trains of association in the viewer.

Importantly, we need to acknowledge that ruins are historical, and so cannot ignore the classical / archeological model's contribution to the debate. The need to acknowledge ruins' historicity corresponds to my second identity condition presented in chapter two (namely, that we cannot ignore that ruins are often valued for their historical importance). This feature often places ruins in the realm of "cultural property;" this label can (and often does) affect the way we engage with the objects. In *Thinking About the Elgin Marbles: Critical Essays on Cultural Property, Art and Law*, John Henry Merryman discusses the 'expressive value of cultural property.'¹⁵⁸ Some of the expressive values he points to include: truth, morality, memory, survival, identity, and community. As objects that represent historical truths, their authenticity matters and seems worthy of aesthetic appraisal. In "Aesthetic Deception: On Encounters with the Past," (previously discussed in chapter three) Carolyn Korsmeyer argues that "genuine" names a presumptive property of objects on which other aesthetic properties depend.¹⁵⁹ She argues that an object must be genuine for us to feel appropriately linked to the past, and holds

¹⁵⁷ Ginsberg, *Aesthetics of Ruins*, 326.

¹⁵⁸ Merryman, *Thinking About the Elgin Marbles*, 149.

¹⁵⁹ Korsmeyer, "Aesthetic Deception," 121.

that ¹⁶⁰ recreations (such as historic Williamsburg) can be educational, but are not as aesthetically powerful as the real historical objects, since they lack this element of truth.

Similarly, Merryman believes items of cultural property are the basis of cultural memory and identity. Genuine objects exhibit features of a past from which we construct our cultural memories.

Merryman also explores the notion that cultural objects embody moral attitudes. As discussed previously, many commentators have thought of ruins as “object lessons.”¹⁶¹ Seen in this way, ruins are symbols of man’s place in nature, and as such they may have special cultural significance. One of the reasons they serve as object lessons is that these structures have survived through extended periods of time. We look at the ruins, representing cultures long gone, and think about how these artifacts of culture have survived long after the cultures that produced them. Merryman states, “We cherish cultural objects as intimations of immortality, of the defeat of time. . . by their continued existence, they encourage further human effort to create something

¹⁶⁰Recall Korsmeyer’s example dealing with the recreation of an “old town” in Warsaw. A tourist touches what she believes to be an old stone wall and feels a sense of communion with the past of Warsaw. But, what if that wall had been rebuilt with old stones from a nearby town (Szczecin)? There is a sense in which she was still experiencing the past, but has she touched old Warsaw? She argues that “the agedness of the historical artifact – an aspect of this stone wall that is the best candidate for being the closest continuer in the preservation of old Warsaw’s identity through time – is in the aesthetic frame,” (Ibid, p. 121). An encounter can lose both its descriptive properties and its value if it is discovered that one has been deceived about the object of the encounter.

¹⁶¹One of the first Americans recorded to have studied Grecian ruins was the famous child prodigy and banker, Nicholas Biddle (b. 1785 – d. 1844). At age nineteen Biddle traveled throughout Europe, visiting Greek and Roman ruins. During this time he is reported to have railed against Lord Elgin’s removal of the Parthenon Sculptures; he wished that the marbles would remain *in situ* so that future generations of Americans could contemplate their “moral lesson,” (Woodward, *In Ruins*, 201). Biddle believed the ruins’ ‘moral lesson’ was one about the fall of empires, and the greatness of past civilizations. In a letter to his brother (June 1806), Biddle stated that “It is thus by collecting the scattered images of greatness and decay, we become interested in the misfortunes of a nation, and we are instructed in the melancholy but pleasing philosophy of ruins,” (Ibid). Biddle returned to the U.S., eventually to be appointed president of the Second Bank of the United States. He is commonly credited with inventing the Greek revival style of architecture typical in American banks today.

that will endure, to hold back the night of oblivion.”¹⁶² I believe that trains of imaginative thought that reflect the role of man in nature seem particularly romantic.

I now turn to two focal points within these historical models, that of the picturesque and the sublime, both of which can be evoked in the romantic appreciation of ruins.

3.3.4 *The Picturesque*

3.3.4.1 (i) Introduction

The picturesque is an aesthetic category popularized toward the end of the eighteenth century in Britain. The term seems to have first appeared in 1768, in an essay by Rev. William Gilpin entitled, “An Essay on Prints.” He defined the picturesque simply as, “a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture.”¹⁶³ Gilpin argued that, in the picturesque tradition, ruins were more able than other features of a landscape to offer variegated and complex patterns of light and color as a subject to the painter. Similarly, Christopher Hussey, in *The Picturesque: Studies in A Point of View* (1927), has called the picturesque, a “practical aesthetic for gardeners, tourists and sketchers.”¹⁶⁴ He argues that in the eighteenth century people began to read symbolic meaning into ruins; instead of seeing ruins as historical data (as the classical model proposes), ruins were seen as metaphorical vehicles. Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley-Cooper), Pope, and Walpole all remarked on the symbolic quality of ruins. The picturesque can be interpreted as a step away from classicism, and a step toward the romantic. Finding meaning in the look of ruins leans interpretation away from the classical toward the romantic view. In the eighteenth century, French, British, and German landscape architects were in demand and a

¹⁶² Merryman, *Thinking About the Elgin Marbles*, 104.

¹⁶³ William Gilpin. *An Essay upon Prints, Containing Remarks upon the Principles of picturesque Beauty* (London, 1768), “Explanation of Terms,” 2.

¹⁶⁴ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 51.

general interest in scholarly archaeology grew. The specter of the picturesque landscape still hangs in the background today; it appears in much of the literature on the aesthetic appreciation of nature, and in the (sparse) literature on ruin appreciation.

At the core of the notion of the picturesque is the prospect of converting natural scenes into pictures. Those who believe that the aesthetic appreciation of nature needs to be distinct from the appreciation of art disparage this “landscape” aesthetic. The “landscape aesthetic” assumes that one ought to employ a mode of aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment that is informed by the practice, and aesthetic criteria of, landscape painting. Eighteenth-century landscape painters used devices such as the Claude-glass to help “frame” the scene they wished to paint. These Claude-glasses became so popular in the eighteenth century that travelers and other flâneurs would use them without any intention to paint the vistas they saw. Allen Carlson has noted that if we are to adhere to the landscape cult’s practice of viewing the environment as a landscape painting, we are essentially forced to see the natural environment as static and as a mere two-dimensional representation. This leads us to have an incomplete and shallow aesthetic engagement with the natural environment, since we are not engaging with the multi-sensory, multi-dimensional ingredients of nature.

While many believe that viewing nature as picturesque forces us to see nature as something like landscape painting, the historical literature from the heyday of the picturesque reveals that there were myriad and conflicting definitions of the picturesque, some of which do acknowledge the multi-sensory experience of nature. Through looking at various definitions of the picturesque, I aim to correct mistaken perceptions of it that are ubiquitous in the aesthetics of natural environments literature. I will use this historical exploration to help determine whether the picturesque as a category is useful in a full and proper account of ruin appreciation.

3.3.4.2 (ii) Definitions

The picturesque was a particularly popular concept in eighteenth century English garden and landscape design. The eighteenth century marked a shift from rational and geometric French gardens to the artificially wild English gardens. The French influence waned in the second half of the eighteenth century, due in large part to an enlargement of acquaintance with rival modes of garden design in the age of “the Grand Tour.” The Peace of Utrecht in 1715 afforded gentlemen of means the opportunity to spend one year on the continent during their college years. These trips often culminated in an extended period of time in Italy, with a particular focus on the Roman ruins that littered the landscape. Often the touring gentlemen purchased prints, engravings, and other such memorabilia.¹⁶⁵ The interest in landscape painting that grew out of the Grand Tour tradition helped further the reputation of painters often associated with the picturesque, including Claude Lorraine, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa. One interesting consequence of this is that the picturesque, from its eighteenth century incarnation to today, is inextricably wedded to tourism.

As an aesthetic objective, the picturesque was mostly discussed in reference to landscape painting and landscape design. In many of the gardens inspired by these grand tours one can find follies—or “fake ruins.”¹⁶⁶ Follies had a variety of aesthetic purposes including to artistically mold the landscape, provide unique viewsheds from which to survey the land, and to display the wealth and taste of the landowner. The most popular of these follies on the English landscape were fake ruined towers. In *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland*, James Howley states,

¹⁶⁵ Hussey notes that due the Grand Tours a new class of Englishman arose – the Connoisseur. (Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 28.)

¹⁶⁶ There is no evidence of the existence of follies before the eighteenth century. In the eighteenth century I believe there are two types, or traditions, of follies: those created and built by a folly artist (often referred to as “sham ruins”), and those which are composed of actual ruins which have been radically dislocated from their original site.¹⁶⁶ An example of the former is the Folly at Hagley Hall (Warwickshire, England), designed by the famous folly-builder Sanderson Miller. A famous example of the latter is that of Virginia Water in Virginia Water, England.

“The attraction of towers to landowners is...an obvious one, as there is no better way to survey one’s estate or display it to others than from a high vantage point of one’s own creation.”¹⁶⁷

Additionally, many gardens were designed with “station points” where one should pause and reflect on the viewshed. So it would seem that the notion of the picturesque is a natural place for ruin lovers to look: the picturesque engaged not only lovers of nature, and lovers of architecture, but also lovers of gardens.

Two figures stand out in the history of the picturesque: Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) and Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824).¹⁶⁸ Price’s *A Dialogue on the Distinct Characters of the Picturesque and the Beautiful* (1801) and Knight’s *Analytic Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1850) are two seminal works on the subject. Price and Knight were educated men who went on Grand Tours. Both inherited estates at a young age. These experiences no doubt helped form their theories of picturesque beauty. Price inherited Foxley estate when he was only fourteen years old; Knight inherited Downton estate around the same age. Interestingly, from 1774-1778, Knight built Downton Castle, an unusual structure for its day due to its asymmetrical plan. The castle is now the namesake of and set piece for the British TV drama, *Downton Abbey*.¹⁶⁹

While their theories on the picturesque have some marked similarities, they differ in relevant respects. For instance, Price believed that the picturesque could be defined through its “roughness, sudden variation, irregularity, intricacy and variety,” and believed that the picturesque was an objective aesthetic quality that resided in the object itself.¹⁷⁰ His list of

¹⁶⁷ James Howley, *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 50.

¹⁶⁸ While I will discuss only Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) and Richard Payne Knight (1715-1829), two other men would be relevant to a longer discussion about the picturesque: William Gilpin (1724-1804) and Humphry Repton (1752-1818).

¹⁶⁹ Although the opening shot of the series is filmed at another English castle, Highclere Castle, built in the Jacobethan style with surrounding gardens designed by Capability Brown.

¹⁷⁰ Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, 133.

picturesque objects included: water, trees, buildings, ruins, dogs, sheep, horses, birds of prey, women, music, and painting. In contrast, Knight thought that the picturesque was a mode of association found within the viewer and thus any object can be seen as picturesque.

3.3.4.3 (iii) Price

Price's seminal work, *Essay on the Picturesque*, was originally printed in 1794, annotated and reprinted in 1796, and again in 1810. His target in this essay was one of the most famous landscape gardeners of the day, Lancelot "Capability" Brown, whose work can still be found today at the gardens of Blenheim Palace, Warwick Castle, and Milton Abbey, just to name a few. Brown's gardens broke from the French geometric style and were importantly influenced by his acquaintance with Italian landscape painters. Price denounced his gardens as formulaic, stating that Brown's work was seen as merely imitating nature, often looking very similar to a fallow field. In the *Essay*, Price imagines how Brown might interpret a landscape painted by Claude Lorraine. He supposes that Brown would smooth the terrain, clear all the undergrowth, and whiten (de-age) the buildings. He would take the vines from the ruin's walls so that "no architectural detail remained hidden."¹⁷¹ In other words, Brown was taken as being disposed to erase messy edges, age, and other irregularities in order to achieve his grand architectural plans.

Price's own account of the picturesque was influenced by Edmund Burke's work, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Burke believed that the beautiful and the sublime were distinct categories. According to Burke, the sublime elicited feelings of pain and danger while arousing terror and astonishment¹⁷²; the beautiful, by contrast, was associated with qualities of smallness, smoothness, and delicacy. A stormy sea was sublime; a swan was beautiful.

¹⁷¹ Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, 131.

¹⁷² I will be discussing the sublime in more depth in the next section.

Price thought Burke's system incomplete. It is obvious, he thought, that not every aesthetically interesting object is either sublime or beautiful. He proposed the picturesque as a third category, fitting between the two. The aesthetic qualities associated with the picturesque, according to Price, included roughness, sudden variation, and irregularity. Price believed that the picturesque is an objective aesthetic property of an object or scene. If a particular vista had the three properties Price mentions, it could be deemed picturesque. Almost any object can be picturesque, if it had one of the properties Price lists (e.g., roughness, sudden variation, irregularity).¹⁷³ Some objects Price mentions that can be seen as picturesque are women, buildings, ruins, music, and painting (Chapter III). He also maintains that sight was not the only sense that could perceive the picturesque. Other senses (such as touch) could perceive the necessary roughness, variation and irregularity. Unlike our original definition of the picturesque, Price's picturesque need not be intimately tied to painting, or even the visual.

3.3.4.4 (iv) Knight

Knight is well known for both his theories on the picturesque and his obsession with ancient phallic imagery. Luckily for us, his treatises on the aesthetics of landscape design focused on the former of these interests. Like Prince, Knight disagreed with the landscaping efforts of Capability Brown. This common dislike forged a union between Price and Knight for a time. Knight dedicated his first attempt at explicating the picturesque, *The Landscape* (a 'didactic poem') to Price.¹⁷⁴ By the second printing of *Landscape*, Knight had included an annotation that

¹⁷³ His theory was also a democratic one, stating that once a person knew his principles, he too can recognize and create the picturesque in his own home or land.

¹⁷⁴ The poem begins,

*How best to bid the verdant Landscape rise
To please the fancy and delight the eyes;...
T' adorn, arrange, to separate and select
With secret skill and counterfeit neglect
I sing – Do thou, O Prince, the song attend.*

openly criticized Price for his distinction between the picturesque and the beautiful. Price responded to this criticism with a note in his *A Dialogue on the Distinct Character of the Picturesque and the Beautiful* (1801) and a feud was born. While Price's essay primarily focuses on garden improvements, Knight's essay is more ambitious in scope. Knight aimed to provide a full-fledged theory of taste which referenced Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Reid, and Newton – just to name a few. Knight, contra Prince, believes that the picturesque is not an objective aesthetic property but rather a mode of viewing inside the aesthetic perceiver's mind. He states, "To a mind richly stored, almost every object of nature or art that presents itself to the senses, either excites fresh trains and combinations of ideas, or vivifies and strengthens those which excited before."¹⁷⁵ He acknowledges that those with disparate backgrounds might perceive the same object differently. Picturesque associations or combinations of ideas are those "which exhibit blended and broken tints, or irregular masses of light and shadow harmoniously melted into each other."¹⁷⁶ These associations, he believes, would only be available to those who had knowledge of landscape paintings:

This very relation to painting expressed by the word picturesque, is that which affords the whole pleasure derived from association; which can, therefore, only be felt by persons who have correspondent ideas to associate; that is, by persons in a certain degree conversant in that art. Such persons being in the habit of viewing, and receiving pleasure from fine pictures, will naturally feel pleasure in viewing those objects in nature, which have called forth those powers of imitation and embellishment."¹⁷⁷

From the above quote notice that Knight believes that the picturesque is a subjective aesthetic only available to those familiar with landscape painting. More specifically, the picturesque is a category of aesthetic experience shared by those who had experienced the Grand Tour, read the same books, enjoyed similar paintings, and the like. Price and Knight agree that the picturesque

¹⁷⁵ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 43.

¹⁷⁶ Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, 150.

¹⁷⁷ Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, 155-156.

involved irregularity, and both levied similar critiques against Capability Brown. However, Knight discusses the picturesque almost exclusively in terms of sight and relegates the class of objects that could be considered picturesque to those that can be seen. He ridicules Price by stating that we do not prefer pimpled (irregular) female faces to those that are smoothed,¹⁷⁸ or crooked limbs to those that are straight.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, as he sees it, irregularity is not a sufficient condition for something to be picturesque.

3.3.4.5 (v) The Importance For Ruins

In sum, for Price the picturesque is a pleasure received from one of our many senses, while, for Knight, it resides chiefly in the intellectual pleasure of forming associations of ideas. For Gilpin and for Knight, the picturesque was a species of beauty; for Price the picturesque represented a unique category. Part of Price's argument for this claim was that there are everyday objects to which we are attracted which arrest us yet do not elicit feelings of beauty or sublimity. These objects, he argued, could be called picturesque. While Price did believe the picturesque was a separate category, he did admit that there could be objects or scenes that might combine or mix elements of the beautiful and sublime with the picturesque.

Both of these theorists focus on landscape architecture. We might say that these men were not nature aestheticians but connoisseurs of the hybrid beauty that exists between the nature and art worlds. Both see the importance and connection between art and nature and the artificial. In a letter to H. Repon Esq. (a Capability Brown-apostle), Price writes, "nothing can be further from my intention ... than to recommend the study of pictures in preference to that of

¹⁷⁸ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 88.

¹⁷⁹ Ross, "The Picturesque," 277.

nature, much less to the exclusion of it. Whoever studies art alone, will have a narrow pedantic manner of considering all objects.¹⁸⁰

Philosopher Tim Costelloe states that the paradox of the picturesque is that its pleasure does not come from nature, but only from nature reconstructed.¹⁸¹ This remark aptly captures the intriguing nature of the picturesque. It is not nature qua nature that is appreciated, but viewshed artfully composed which are lauded. This is why gardens are often seen as picturesque. It seems then that the picturesque is ready-made for ruin gazing: ruins help frame nature into a pleasing composition for the eye under this conception.¹⁸²

What can the picturesque offer ruin lovers? I'd like to suggest not as much as one might think. The picturesque is a fancy connected to a moment in history where connoisseurs of art began to realize the important relationship between art and nature. Gardens became canvases for men to work on and with nature. It is therefore no surprise that follies were created and utilized. These sham ruins might be the true heritage of the picturesque, but the importance of follies speaks only to the beauty of ruins: during their grand tours these men marveled at ruins and wanted to replicate their experiences abroad at home. Follies were an attempt to recreate the effects real ruins aroused in them. Thus the power of the folly is derivative on ruins proper.

One final lesson to draw here is that picturesque beauty need not be relegated to the "landscape model" of appreciation as Carlson and others accuse. Price acknowledges the multisensory nature of the picturesque, and even Knight's definition is not necessarily wedded to landscape paintings. Additionally, from both Price and Knight we learn that that the appreciation

¹⁸⁰ Price, *Essay on the Picturesque*, 3.

¹⁸¹ Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein*, 145.

¹⁸² Price, recalling the gardens of Villa Negroni states, "The more broke, weather-stained, and decayed the stone and brickwork, the more the plants and creepers seemed to have fastened and rooted in between their joints, the more picturesque the garden become." (Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 179).

of art can inform and add to our appreciation of nature—a topic of discussion I will return to later on in the next chapter.

3.3.5 *The Sublime*

3.3.5.1 (i) Introduction

After the rise of the picturesque, there was a move in British architecture to build bigger. Country estates became large. And many of the resulting structures were taken to be “Gothistic” in design. The desire for the picturesque landscape had given way to a new trend, directly influenced by Burke’s theory of the sublime and its emphasis on size.^{183, 184}

While the first reference to the sublime is in the first century AD, we see hints of its predecessor in Aristotle’s *Poetics*.¹⁸⁵ Aristotle believed that horrific events (in tragic plays) call upon fear and pity, resulting in a catharsis in the spectator. Elements of this view can be found in many theories of the sublime. However, the term really blossomed in eighteenth century British philosophy and, once again, the Grand Tour played a major role. Anthony Ashley-Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (now known simply as Shaftesbury) wrote about the sublime in *The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody*. While viewing the Alps during his “Grand Tour” he wrote:

Here thoughtless Men, seized with the Newness of such Objects, become thoughtful, and willingly contemplate the incessant Changes of their Earth’s Surface. They see, as in one instant, the Revolutions of past Ages, the fleeting forms of Things, and the Decay even of their own Globe...The wasted Mountains show them the World itself only as a humble Ruin, and make them think of its approaching Period.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 199.

¹⁸⁴ An example of this trend was discussed earlier. Downton Castle was large for its day and was done in a gothic revival style. At the time many thought it to be garish precisely because of its size.

¹⁸⁵ The first reference to the sublime is thought to be Longinus: *Peri Hupsous/Hypsous*. The sublime was said to inspire awe.

¹⁸⁶ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 55-56. See also Cooper, *The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody. Being a Recital of Certain Conversations upon Natural and Moral Subjects*.

He praises the mountains as sublime, claiming that mountains are the highest order of scenery.¹⁸⁷ Shaftesbury calls sublime scenery a “moral emblem” of ruin and decay, a *memento mori* on a gigantic scale. His sublime speaks of awe, of the finitude of human life, and of morality. The sublime, for Shaftesbury, is not contrary to beauty, but superior to it.

Joseph Addison also published comments about his Grand Tour in a work titled, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy etc.* He states “The Alps fill the mind with an agreeable kind of horror.”¹⁸⁸ Addison believes that we take sublime pleasure in “huge heaps of mountains, high rocks and precipices,” and we take pleasure in these because “[t]he mind of man naturally hates everything that looks like a restraint upon it, and is apt to fancy itself under a sort of confinement, when the sight is pent up in a narrow compass.”¹⁸⁹ Paul Guyer, philosopher and Kant scholar, interprets this passage to mean that Addison’s sublime is one where the spectator takes pleasure in the symbolic representation of the freedom of the imagination.¹⁹⁰

Schopenhauer, influenced by Kant, believes that, in the case of beauty, knowledge “gained the upper hand without a struggle” while with the sublime knowledge is only learned through a “violent” tearing away.¹⁹¹, ¹⁹² Encountering the sublime required an act of will, while experiencing beauty is passive. In all of these theories of the sublime (Shaftesbury, Addison, and Schopenhauer) we see some form of unease or struggle. The sublime was bigger, harder, and darker than the picturesque. Unlike the picturesque, whose beauty was aimed to charm, the sublime teaches us something. The two most influential theories of the sublime, to which I now direct my attention, are those of Edmond Burke and Immanuel Kant.

¹⁸⁷ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 55.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph Addison. *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy etc.*, 261.

¹⁸⁹ Addison, “Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, &c. in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703.”

¹⁹⁰ Guyer, *Values of Beauty*, 25.

¹⁹¹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 1, 201–202.

¹⁹² Another theory not discussed here is Friedrich Schiller. In *On the Sublime* Schiller claims that sublime objects make us aware of our own physical limitations.

3.3.5.2 (ii) Burke

In his Introduction to Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Adam Phillips writes, "Beauty and Sublimity turn out to be the outlaws of rational enquiry. Both are coercive, irresistible, and a species of seduction. The sublime is a rape, Beauty is a lure."¹⁹³ This quote reiterates Schopenhauer's thought that while beauty is easy, the sublime is a struggle. The sublime is dangerous, full of terror.

Burke's sublime can be found in both art and nature. For Burke the sublime exists in degrees, the strongest of which invokes astonishment from the viewer, mingled with a degree of horror.¹⁹⁴ Burke claims that the strongest forms of the sublime are usually found in the ideas of eternity and infinity.¹⁹⁵ In weaker forms, the sublime's effects include admiration, reverence and respect.¹⁹⁶ Burke states,

Whatever leads to raise in man his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph, that is extremely grateful to the human mind. And this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates.¹⁹⁷

When we experience the sublime, we feel as if the human mind has triumphed in the face of terror. This accomplishment is pleasurable, and thus we receive pleasure from what at first started as an unpleasurable experience.

Burke lists the attributes of the sublime as follows, and dedicates a chapter in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* to each:

1. Obscurity: For something to evoke fear, it must – to a certain extent – be obscure. If the true extent of a danger is known in full, it no longer can evoke the sort of fear

¹⁹³ Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, xxiii.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁹⁷ Hussey, *The Picturesque*, 58.

associated with the sublime. An example Burke provides here is of death: because there is such a mystery surrounding death, it can still evoke sublime fear.

2. Power: Burke states, “I know nothing sublime which is not some modification of power.”¹⁹⁸ Power, Burke believes, is associated with strength, violence, pain, and terror – so much so that one cannot think of one without the other. Powerful animals can be sublime. He states, “We have continually about us animals of a strength that is considerable, but not pernicious. Amongst these we never look for the sublime: it comes upon us in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness, in the form of the lion, the tiger, the panther, or rhinoceros.”¹⁹⁹

3. Privation: Burke includes vacuity, darkness, solitude, and silence in his list of privations. These are all sublime because they evoke terror.

4. Vastness: Vastness, defined as “greatness of dimension,” is included as a cause of the sublime because it has a “striking effect.”²⁰⁰

5. Infinity: Infinity had a tendency “to fill the mind with that sort of delightful Horror,” which Burke believed to be “the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime.”²⁰¹

6. Succession: Succession evokes the infinite in the mind of man, and therefore can trigger the feeling of the sublime. Burke mentions the use of succession in themes of architecture, including old cathedrals.

7. Uniformity – Uniformity too can produce the illusion of the infinite. Here too Burke discusses architecture.

After this list of attributes, Burke spends several sections discussing the sublime with reference to large buildings, monuments, and ruins. He mentions Stonehenge, stating that its rudeness increases its grandeur and makes it “difficult” to apprehend – difficulty being an element of the sublime. This is important to my project, because – unlike Kant – Burke discusses how buildings are uniquely suited to evoke the sublime.

Burke argues that the sublime is not solely connected to the visual.²⁰² Sounds may also be sublime; examples include excessively loud sounds, the sound of a raging storm, thunder,

¹⁹⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 59.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

artillery, and sounds in music that mimic these. Suddenness can also bring on the feeling of the sublime—whether it is in sound or in movement. Smells and taste can be sublime; however, Burke admits that the only smells and tastes that can be called sublime are those that are excessively bitter.²⁰³

But how does the sublime work? And how is it different from beauty? In describing how beauty functions, Burke states:

And, since it is no creature of our reason, since it strikes us without any reference to use, and even when no use at all can be discerned, since the order and method of nature is generally very different from our measures and proportions, we must conclude that beauty is, for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses.²⁰⁴

Sublime objects do contain “beautiful” properties that strike our senses and then affect our passions. However, Burke maintains that he does not know the “efficient cause” of either sublimity or beauty. Yet Burke maintains to have some insight into how the sublime is produced stating,

Having considered terror as producing an unnatural tension and certain violent emotions of the nerves; it easily follows from what we have just said, that whatever is fitted to produce such a tension, must be productive of a passion similar to terror, and consequently must be a source of the sublime, though it should have no idea of danger connected with it.²⁰⁵

The odd thing is that this terror brings with it delight, which Burke refers to as a “positive pleasure.”²⁰⁶ To more thoroughly explain this positive pleasure Burke takes up the case of melancholy. This “self-murder” or “difficulty” becomes pleasurable through the exercise of

²⁰² Burke does state that the color of the sublime should not be gay – not white, green, yellow, blue, pale red (pink?), violet – but should be black, brown, deep purple and the like. (Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 75.)

²⁰³ Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 78.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 121.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

“labour.” Labor requires mental powers; the exercise of the mental powers causes a sort of pleasure. As Burke states, the sublime is “exercise necessary for the finer organs.”²⁰⁷ Also, according to Burke, this labor is necessary to self-preservation, triggered by terror, and therefore essential to mankind.

In sum, objects (whether they be in nature or in art) contain properties (such as blackness, suddenness, powerfulness) that trigger a feeling of terror in us, a terror that ultimately produces pleasure. This pleasure arises from the exercise of our passions and our rational nature. This exercise is wedded to self-preservation and thus essential to mankind.

3.3.5.3 (iii) Kant

Burke’s influence on Kant’s theory of the sublime cannot be overstated. Like Burke, Kant recognized that in experiencing the sublime, something pleasurable resulted from an experience that could not be called beautiful. Like Burke’s, Kant’s conception of the sublime is tied to notions of awe and respect, and, like Burke’s, Kant’s sublime is found in the infinite. Kant took Burke’s nascent ideas and from them developed a full-fledged theory of the sublime. Unlike Burke, Kant believed that the experience of the sublime resides solely in the mind of man.

Very briefly, Kant’s theory of beauty states that our judgment that something is beautiful (i.e. a judgment of taste) cannot refer to any existence claim to ground that judgment. When making a judgment, first we take the information we are aware of, or representations (*Vorstellung*), and unify these representations to produce what Kant calls a ‘manifold of intuition.’ This whole process (intuiting representations and unifying them) is the work of our

²⁰⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 123.

imagination.²⁰⁸ Once the faculty of the imagination presents us with a unified representation of a thing, our understanding (*Verstand*) attempts to subsume this unified representation under a concept. For example, our intuitions of colors and shapes might be unified and subsumed under the concept of painting. In the case of judgments of beauty, our imagination is able to create a manifold of intuition forming a unity, but our understanding is unable to subsume the resultant unity under a concept. When our understanding realizes it is unable to subsume this unity, it bounces this unity back to our imagination in an attempt to restructure our representations in such a way that the understanding might be able to subsume. However, subsumption never occurs. What does occur is a harmony between the faculties of the imagination and understanding which Kant labels the ‘free play’ of the imagination and understanding. The beautiful pleases us because this free play is pleasurable. Beauty pleases us precisely because we are unable to subsume certain representations under a concept.²⁰⁹ This “free play” is pleasurable, and thus this sort of pleasure accompanies judgments of beauty.

At first blush it might seem as there is no room in Kant’s theory of beauty for displeasure: either an object excites the free play producing pleasure, or it leaves one indifferent. However, in the experience of the sublime Kant gives space to aesthetic displeasure. Kant states that the experience of the sublime produces an element of displeasure and an element of pleasure, on balance producing a “negative pleasure” which he states is akin to the mixed pleasure one experiences in the feeling of respect. Kant explains that the feeling of respect has both a negative and a positive component:

²⁰⁸ More specifically, this is the work of the imagination (which employs pure concepts of the understand) and the unity of apperception (which identifies all perceptions as mine).

²⁰⁹ If concepts are employed when making a judgment, then it is impossible to have made a pure judgment of taste. Kant distinguishes between ‘pure’ and ‘mixed’ judgments of taste. Mixed judgments of taste are those that, while grounded in this free play, involve concept recognition. However, the concept recognition does not serve as the ground for said judgments.

The moral law strikes down self-conceit. But since this law is yet something positive in itself, namely the form of an intellectual causality, i.e. freedom, it is, insofar as in opposition to subjective opposition, namely our inclinations, it weakens self-conceit, an object of respect, and insofar as it even strikes them down, i.e. humiliates them, it is an object of the greatest respect, this the ground of a positive feeling that is not of empirical origin and is known *a priori*. (Practical Reason, 5:73)²¹⁰

It is negative in that it strikes down self-conceit (which is not pleasurable) and it is positive (or pleasurable) since it shows us how we are capable of using our practical reason to guide our lives. In the case of the sublime, Kant states that “Since the mind is not merely attracted by the object, but is also always reciprocally repelled by it, the satisfaction in the sublime does not so much contain positive pleasure as it does admiration or respect, i.e., it deserved to be called negative pleasure” (CPJ, §5: 245).²¹¹ In this statement we can see some of the similarities to Burke: the sublime repels us (as does terror), and at the same time demands our respect.

Kant distinguishes two different types of the sublime: the mathematical and the dynamical. The paradigmatic example of the mathematical sublime is that of infinity (again, similar to Burke). With the mathematical sublime the:

feeling of the sublime is thus a feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude for the estimation by means of reason, and a pleasure that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason, insofar as striving from them is never less a law for us (CPJ, §27, 5: 247).

In other words, we feel displeasure in the fact that we cannot fully comprehend infinity, but feel pleasure in the fact that we at least have the ability to try. Guyer says it much more succinctly when he states,

that our attempt to grasp the magnitude of anything very vast by our ordinary method of reiterating some determinate unit of measurement... fails, because we cannot complete an infinite synthesis, and this fact is unpleasant to us; but the very fact that we even attempt

²¹⁰ Kant, *Practical Philosophy*.

²¹¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

to grasp the infinite by this means reveals to us that we have a faculty of pure reason that imposes this task upon us, and this realization is pleasing.²¹²

While the pleasure of the “free play” results from a harmony between the imagination and understanding, the negative feeling associated with the sublime results from the disharmony between “the ambition of the imagination and the power of the understand[ing].”

These feelings, and the sort of comprehension which results from these feelings, Kant believes are aesthetic in nature:

Nature is thus sublime in those of its appearances the intuition of which brings with them the idea of its infinity. Now the latter cannot happen except through the inadequacy of even the greatest effort of our imagination in the estimation of the magnitude of an object... Thus it must be the aesthetic estimation of the magnitude in which is felt the effort at comprehension which exceeds the capacity of the imagination to comprehend the progressive apprehension in one whole of intuition, and in which is at the same time perceived the inadequacy of this faculty. (CPJ §26, 5, 255)

In his discussion of the mathematical sublime, Kant surprisingly references two works of architecture: the pyramids of Giza and St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. He states that one must neither stand too close nor too far away from either structure in order to provoke an aesthetic judgment akin to the sublime. If one is too close, then one can only see individual bricks, and cannot appreciate the entirety of the structure. If one stands too far away, the size of the structure – its enormity – gets lost. Kant states, “For here there is a feeling of the inadequacy of his imagination for presenting the ideas of a whole, in which the imagination reaches its maximum and, in the effort to extend it, sinks back into itself, but is thereby transported into an emotionally moving satisfaction.” (CPJ, §26, 5:252). This is an interesting development, since it implies, perhaps, that artifactual objects could evoke the sublime and not just any artifacts, but large-scale architectural structures – which include ruins. While Burke’s sublime encompasses ruins readily, Kant is usually portrayed as only allowing for nature to be sublime.

²¹² Guyer, *Values of Beauty*, 157.

However, a necessary condition of the sublime is that it “demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses,” (CPJ, §25, 5:250). While Kant uses the pyramids at Giza to make a point about the experience of the sublime, Guyer insists that Kant never calls the structures sublime. He states that Kant’s view “seems to be that any works of human art, even ones of such grand scale as these are too obviously finite to induce a genuine experience of the sublime.”²¹³ But I am not entirely persuaded by this suggestion. Kant does seem to take the experience of the sublime to result from bearing witness to these objects. If these objects are not sublime-in-themselves, it doesn’t seem to matter since for Kant the sublime resides in the mind of man. If these objects are a useful tool to describe the experience of the sublime to his readers, the experience they evoke must be sufficiently similar to that of the sublime. I do not find it a happy accident that one of the two examples given is that of a famous ruin.

Kant’s dynamical sublime involves the recognition of the possible destructive forces in nature, which could result in our death. This recognition while initially unpleasurable leads to pleasure since these forces in nature (e.g., storms, winds, earthquakes) “allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature” (CPJ, §28, 5: 261). Kant states:

Bold, overhanging, and, as it were, threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightening and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity (*Vermögen*) to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level, and allow us to discover within

²¹³ Ibid., 158n16.

ourselves a capacity (*Beurteilt*) for resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to measure ourselves against the apparent all-powerfulness of nature,” (CPJ, §26, 5:261)

The experience of the dynamical sublime, then, is an experience of the enormity of nature and our role within it. We feel puny against the forces of nature, but also realize our reason gives us standing.²¹⁴ This feeling, more so than that of the mathematical sublime, is analogous to the moral feeling of respect. He states, “that the intellectual, in itself purposive (the morally) good, estimated aesthetically, must not be represented so much as beautiful but rather as sublime, so that it arouses more the feeling of respect (which scorns charm) rather than love and intimate inclination.” (COJ §29, 5: 271). As such, Kant believes, we have a duty to cultivate it.

Although Kant says nothing about artifacts in his discussion of the dynamical sublime, it seems conceivable that ruins too could evoke feelings of the dynamical sublime. The experience of ruins, like the experience of nature, can make man feel puny in relation to the universe (all of space and time). When looking at an ancient ruin, one thinks that one’s civilization too may fall and only leave behind remnants of its past glory centuries later. This feeling soon leads to another – one of wonder that although time waits for no man, and no civilization has ever bested Mother Nature – we, as humans, can leave something lasting. We can leave a mark that stands the test of time and proves that we are not as puny as originally thought.

Ruins show the passage of time and while one may still see them as removed from nature itself, this need not be the case. As discussed in my ontology chapter, ruins are hybrid objects – part natural and part artifactual. They cannot be reduced to either part.

²¹⁴ There is a debate as to whether or not these feelings of pleasure and displeasure occur in succession, or are concurrent. I remain agnostic and don’t believe solving this debate is relevant for the task at hand.

3.3.5.4 (iv) Applying theories of the sublime to ruins

In concluding our preliminary discussion of the sublime, we have learned a few things. First, an insight from Aristotle: those things that originally seem horrible might be the very things to produce a pleasurable catharsis. Ruins may first be encountered as terrifying. One common objection to viewing new ruins as ruins proper (e.g., Detroit's Michigan Central Train Station) is that new ruins evoke terror, pity, and gloom. In thinking about new ruins, we might think of the event that caused the structure to ruin (if it was not a slow process). When looking at the ruined tridents of the Twin Towers, I might think of the terrorist attack that led to their demise. In taking Aristotle's insight loosely, and Kant and Burke's notions of the sublime seriously, this feeling of terror is not antithetical to the sublime but necessary for it.

Second, ruins – like Shaftesbury's sublime, can be seen as a *memento mori* on a grand scale. As such they are perfect candidates for the sublime, including Kant's dynamical sublime. Ruins' relationship to the sublime is further evidenced by the fact that Burke spends much of his inquiry discussing architecture's role in producing the sublime. But while both ruins and architectural structures can evoke infinity, it is only ruins that bring with them the requisite terror necessary for the strongest feelings of the sublime. Only when man feels tiny in comparison to time/nature can he feel terror when looking at the remains of a human construction. It is here where Kant's notion of the sublime is much more convincing. Kant discusses how the ruins at Giza evoke the mathematical sublime, when viewing them properly, since they can evoke the infinite. However ruins seem much more powerful as symbols for the dynamical sublime, as they evoke feelings of awe and respect toward *both* the creation of man and the vastness of nature.

Modern-day adaptation of the sublime (such as one presented by Arnold Berleant) shows us how adopting the model of the sublime helps us sidestep the problems associated with

traditional models of aesthetic appreciation that divide the world into artifactual and natural.²¹⁵

The world is not so clean cut: there is no pristine nature, untouched by man and man is not so separated from nature. Further, our ideas of the natural evolve with our culture, and therefore are cultural themselves. The sublime, therefore, is a good model for such the modern world – and perhaps a wonderful model for ruins which are, essentially, hybrids.

3.3.6 *What we've learned from historical models*

We have learned many things from historical models. From the classical model we have learned that historical information importantly informs the aesthetic appreciation of ruins, echoing Merryman's claim about the importance of the authentic object as an object of truth. This leads to a core principle of ruin appreciation: **Ruins reflect a history abounding with cultural associations and historical relations. The historical ties ruins have will often place them in the category of cultural property.** The importance of this principle on ruin appreciation will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Additionally while it is not the only kind of aesthetic engagement, imaginative reconstruction cannot capture everything beautiful and interesting about ruins. What is missing from the classical model is the acknowledgment that the ruin is a distinct ontological entity from the building it was partially created from. This reinforces our discussion of the ontology of ruins

²¹⁵ In "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature," Arnold Berleant claims that Kant's notion of the sublime provides the direction we need for an appropriate model because it views nature as exceeding our power of framing and disinterested contemplation. Kant's sublime emphasizes continuity, assimilation, and engagement, without boundaries. Further, the sublime does not allow us to see ourselves as separate from nature; rather we are forced to see that we are but part of nature. The appropriate response to nature, for the sublime, is awe and humility, one that Berleant finds more appropriate. When we view nature as something that we live in, Berleant argues, our aesthetic appreciation is intensified. And since nature does not come framed, we can free ourselves from the aesthetic of discreteness and order which previous generations have been shackled to. Eloquently he states, "A single aesthetic applies to nature and to art because, in the final analysis, they are both cultural constructs, and so we are not talking about two things but about one." (Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, 86.)

that asserts that **ruins are aesthetically unintended** (and therefore distinct from their architectural cousins). In acknowledging this ontological feature we recognize that imaginative reconstruction and its resultant appreciation relies too much on architectural appreciation and not on the appreciation of ruins qua ruins. I conclude the following: **Any model of aesthetic appreciation ought to encourage multiple avenues for aesthetic appreciation.**

The romantic appreciation of ruins, while incomplete, directs our attention to some important features of ruin appreciation. The romantic model focuses our attention on the forces of nature and time more than on the land and architectural structure. It also allows the ruins to evoke certain trains of thoughts along the line of *memento mori*. It also acknowledges that vegetation is an important feature of ruin appreciation. However, defenders of this model often exclude more cognitive modes of appreciation, focusing on specific historical details.

Picturesque models showed us how art can inform the appreciation of nature (Price) and that ruin appreciation is wed to tourism and cultural identity. Knight's theory of the picturesque can be seen as a precursor of Brady's imagination model, and as such shows us that there is a rich historical tradition of seeing ruins as object which spur certain trains of association.

Finally, I assert that while the picturesque is more often associated with ruin appreciation, the sublime might be a more accurate category. The sublime's emphasis on both the positive and negative feelings associated with appreciation seem to fit the experience of ruins better. **As such, any model of ruin appreciation should be seen as deeply wedded to the sublime.**

I now turn to a trend in recent views of the appreciation of ruins, fitness accounts. And after a discussion of contemporary accounts, I will summarize the lessons learned from this literature and present a comprehensive list for ruin appreciation.

Chapter 4. MY POSITIVE ACCOUNT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter I discussed various philosophical literatures relevant to our discussion of ruin appreciation. First I discussed how aesthetic accounts of appreciation are typically divided into accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of art and the accounts of aesthetic appreciation of nature. I showed that, as a hybrid object, an object that is part artifactual and part natural, a ruin is not fully captured by either accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature or accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of art. Second, I pointed out how ruin appreciation straddles another divide in aesthetics, namely the cognitive/ non-cognitive divide found in the literature of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. I identified Carlson's Natural Environmental Model (NEM) as an example of a cognitive account, and Brady's imagination account as an example of a non-cognitivist account. Third, I argued that classical accounts of ruin appreciation (often seen in archaeological discussions of ruins) are cognitive in nature. The ruin is seen as data, instrumental in the reconstruction of historical events. I also considered the objection that this way of engaging with ruins is non-aesthetic, and therefore inapt as an *aesthetic* appreciation of ruins. I took issue with the classical account of ruin appreciation on several other grounds. I argued that we need not value what once was in order to appreciate what remains. I also argued that this way of appreciating ruins unduly restricts the focus of our aesthetic appreciation. Finally, I argued that we can engage with ruins "in the present tense" without reference to their past.

I placed the romantic conception of ruins within the rubric of non-conceptual accounts of aesthetic appreciation. I showed that Brady's imaginative model could be employed in the

romantic appreciation of ruins. I stated that while many believe that the classical and romantic accounts, the non-conceptual and the conceptual accounts, are antithetical, I believe them to be ampliative. I then turned to historical accounts of ruin appreciation in the literatures of the picturesque and the sublime. I surveyed in some detail Burke's and Kant's accounts of the sublime and concluded that, while ruins are often discussed within the framework of the picturesque, the sublime better captures what is unique to the aesthetic appreciation of ruins.

Some general conclusions from the preceding chapter include: First, conceptual accounts, while being properly aesthetic accounts of appreciation, carry with them (potentially) irresolvable problems. Second, while conceptual accounts have flaws, they also have merits. The aesthetic appreciation of ruins may include imaginative reconstruction of the sort Bicknell and Judkins discuss; but, as I have argued, this imaginative reconstruction does not constitute the entirety of ruin appreciation. Third, it is essential to acknowledge, as conceptual accounts of ruin appreciation do, that ruins are importantly historical. Seeing ruins as objects with a history is crucial to a deep aesthetic appreciation of them. Fourth, my discussion of the sublime places it within non-conceptual accounts of aesthetic appreciation. While this fact was not explicitly discussed, it should not come as a surprise. Kant's aesthetics, for the most part, is non-conceptual (at least in its account of free beauty) since aesthetic judgments are explicitly non-conceptual. We do not need scientific or other knowledge about nature in order for nature to elicit feelings of the sublime. I will now show that the sublime is more important to ruin appreciation than imaginative reconstruction is. This is not to say that non-conceptual accounts of appreciation inevitably win out over conceptual accounts. One of the goals of this chapter is to present an account of ruin appreciation that attempts to bridge this divide.

The overarching goal of this chapter is to synthesize the previously discussed material into a cohesive account of an aesthetic appreciation of ruins. I'll begin by reintroducing my definition of a ruin. This is important because I wish to show that the ontological status of an object is essential for determining what model of aesthetic appreciation to employ. For example, ruins and reconstructions will be appreciated differently. I argue that accounts of aesthetic appreciation that rely on ontology are necessarily, at least in part, conceptual. I will examine what I called Ontology Based Aesthetics (OBA). Appreciating a ruin *qua* ruin depends on us cognizing it as a ruin. In this sense, and to this degree, I am agreeing with Carlson's NEM. In discussing OBA, I will defend it from the sorts of criticisms leveled against NEM discussed in the last chapter.

After a discussion of OBA, I shall turn to what I believe is the most salient feature of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins: the fact that ruins are in the process of decay (a process that involves both natural and artifactual elements). My account will foreground that, when engaging with ruins, we must see them as objects that have a foot in three different times: the past, present, and the future. I will also discuss how, due in part to this tripartite nature, a *pluralist* account of aesthetic appreciation is in order. I will begin by comparing my account to other pluralist and hybrid accounts. I will then distinguish my account from Allen Carlson and Glen Parson's account of ruins from their book *Functional Beauty*. Carlson and Parson present, perhaps, the fullest and most recent account of ruin appreciation in the recent literature from analytic aesthetics. Finally I will respond to a few objections levied against my account of ruin appreciation.

4.2 OBA (ONTOLOGY BASED AESTHETICS)

What I would like to discuss in this section is how the classification of an object, in this case a ruin, importantly informs our aesthetic appreciation of it. This is not a radical concept, although some non-conceptualists (or non-cognitivists) might be wary of it. In Monroe Beardsley's last book, *The Aesthetic Point of View*, he states that aesthetic experience can be identified through five core criteria: 1) object directedness; 2) felt freedom; 3) detached affect; 4) active discovery; and 5) wholeness.²¹⁶ Only the first of these criteria is essential for our discussion at hand.

Beardsley asserts that an "aesthetic experience" must have the first of the five criteria, and at least three of the remaining four. This, I believe, indicates that the first criterion, as *sine qua non*, is the most important. While Beardsley directed his discussion to art objects, the point holds for ruins as well. Object directedness is the willingness to allow one's mental states to be guided by properties of the object at hand. What has been in the background of my account so far is that, in the aesthetic appreciation of ruins we must attend to the essential features of a ruin if we are to have a deep appreciation of ruins *qua* ruins.

To that end, a brief addendum to my definition of a ruin is in order. I openly acknowledge that it is not precisely clear when a structure sufficiently decays to become a ruin or when a ruin sufficiently decays to become a pile of rocks and ceases being a ruin. Ours is a classic case of the *sorites* paradox. If one seeks a definition of ruins that delineates such rigid markers as necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, the definitional project is hopeless. Instead I propose a definition of ruins from the perspective of social ontology, where, I argue, these objects are partially constituted by their communities viewing them as such. We recognize that there are salient political reasons for such a definition. By acknowledging the

²¹⁶ Beardsley, *The Aesthetic Point of View*, 288–89.

appropriateness of communities' status in identify and defining structures as ruins, these communities can exercise control over their own material culture. Additionally, recognizing the social constructivist nature of ruins preserves our desire to be culturally sensitive; the people who know these structures best, and care most about them will (often) be those that live near them or are culturally related to them. Further, those living in local communities inform the practices of engagement with these structures, and will be ideally situated to know whether or not something counts as a ruin. Whether or not something "counts" as a ruin, as I will show in the next chapter, will drastically change how communities interact with the object *in situ*. Finally, the motivation for a social ontology of ruins comes from wanting descendant and local communities to have control over their own cultural heritage. Thus, for the ruin observer to know that he or she is observing a ruin proper, a certain type of insider knowledge will be required. One will either have to have substantial knowledge of the culture or be a member of that culture (or possibly both) to know whether or not the structure has been deemed or considered a ruin.

With an eye to all of these considerations I proposed the following definition of a ruin:

A ruin is the remains of a large-scale human-built physical structure, and which:

- (a) incorporates architectural elements designed to last for a significant period of time;
- (b) is in the process of decay; and
- (c) as such shows its age-value either in the encroachment of nature onto it or through its altered use-value; and
- (d) creates, through the process of its decay, a new aesthetic unity.

When we discuss ruins we typically talk about larger-scale objects with architectural features that are in the *process* of decay – not the result of decay. I will discuss shortly why being in the process of decay (and not the result of decay) is so important.

This definition of ruins highlights several important features of ruins, an awareness of each of which will help inform our account of ruin appreciation. First, ruins are a subset of

hybrid objects (e.g., wind chimes, kinetic sculptures) having both artifactual and natural elements.²¹⁷ This is important because earlier accounts of aesthetic appreciation can account for both the artifactual and the natural. This also importantly links ruins to their environment, underscoring how the architectural structure engages and interacts with the local flora and fauna. Second, ruins are often objects valued for their historical importance.²¹⁸ All objects have a history, but ruins wear their history on their sleeve; this is part of our attraction to them and as such should be foregrounded when engaging with them. Third, ruins evoke time through their process of decay.²¹⁹ As I argued in chapter two, we must recognize this *decay as a process*. To arrest their decay is to remove an object from the category of ruins, because that category turns on the existence of an ongoing process. Fourth, because of this decay (and often because of their historical origin story) their age-value is prized.²²⁰

OBA asserts that the ontological status of a thing is important to the aesthetic appreciation of that thing. The features of a ruin highlighted in the definition are those that should be foregrounded in the aesthetic appreciation of a ruin. Thus, a person engaging with a ruin who brackets the fact that the ruin is in the process of decay will not have fully appreciated the ruin *qua* ruin. A ruin is a constellation of features and the aesthetic appreciation of ruins should recognize and celebrate the full range of these features.²²¹

²¹⁷ While this is not part of my definition, it is conceptually relevant as it shows the similarities between appreciation of non-ruin hybrid objects (e.g., earthworks) and ruins.

²¹⁸ This relates to my definition, section (c).

²¹⁹ This is my section (b) of my definition.

²²⁰ This relates to my sections (c) and (d).

²²¹ Someone might object that my account discusses only typical judgments of beauty, that is to say, judgments of the form “x is beautiful *qua* x.” Therefore, I would like to reiterate that in my discussion of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins I have not been discussing judgments of beauty; rather, I have been discussing how one ought to approach a ruin in order to have a rich aesthetic experience with it. I am not providing an account of what makes one ruin more beautiful than another. Rather than focusing on their beauty, I have chosen to focus on how to have a deep aesthetic engagement with ruins.

A careful reader might worry that I have presented a conceptual (or cognitive) account of ruin appreciation, i.e., an account of the sort to which I objected in chapter two.²²² I would call my own account, in contrast to Carlson's, *limitedly conceptual*, as it calls for knowledge of the ontological status of the ruin, but no more. One could imagine a *fully conceptual* or cognitivist account of ruins, an account (perhaps similar to the archetypical Classical / Archaeological model) that would require knowledge of the history of the object for full appreciation of the ruin. But the cognitive requirements of OBA are more modest. In this respect OBA is similar to Bicknell and Judkins' imaginative reconstruction accounts, which, while cognitive, do not go so far as to demand that one have precise knowledge of a given structure. In order to reimagine the ruin I do not need to know the whole history of the war to appreciate a ruined fort. In the next section I hope to make clear how the pluralism in my account can incorporate some of Bicknell's and Judkins's features while still asserting that imaginative reconstruction should not be considered the primary mode of aesthetic engagement with ruins.

4.3 RUINS AND THEIR TRIPARTITE NATURE

Now that we have discussed the underpinnings of OBA, I would like to present what I believe is one of the most important features of ruin appreciation. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a nexus for many of the critical features I highlighted in my definition of ruins.

Yves Marchand, photographer and author of *The Ruins of Detroit*, says, "[T]he ruin allows you to see the past, as well as your present condition, and what you're going to be – you can see all those three at the same time."²²³ In the present section I will argue that ruin appreciation must address a ruin's tripartite nature (seeing the past, present, and the future). The

²²² As a reminder Carlson's NEM states that in order for us to appreciate nature, we must see it through the lens of scientific knowledge.

²²³ Macdonald, "From Pompeii to Detroit."

classical conception alone cannot do this. It looks only backwards. The romantic conception cannot do this either. It looks primarily forward, only rarely addressing the present. Only when we see ruins as *mementos mori*, and as elicitors of the sublime, do we appreciate the timelessness of ruins consistent with their tripartite nature.

An essential part of ruin appreciation is engaging with what is actually there. As Robert Ginsberg said, “The site is the ruin.”²²⁴ In experiencing a ruin, we experience the ruin as part of the site, the landscape. Nature appreciation is mixed with landscape appreciation and more. Here we can borrow from Jenefer Robinson’s account of architecture. She says, “We need to *look* at a work of architecture, of course, but we also have to *move* through the building, *hear* how it reverberates, *smell* its atmosphere, touch and maybe even *taste* its surfaces.”²²⁵ This is all the more true of ruins. As hybrid objects that contain both artifactual and natural elements, there is even more for us to touch, to move in and around, and to smell. Thus, proper accounts of ruin appreciation need to account for more than just the architectural structure. Moreover, focusing on what is present on the ground has the benefit of increased accessibility to those who don’t have the requisite historical knowledge, because those who don’t have the historical knowledge can still have a rich aesthetic experience of the elements that remain. And those who have the appropriate historical knowledge don’t have to value what once was there to enjoy what remains. Viewing ruins in the present tense has another important advantage. It eliminates the need to disentangle purely historical features from aesthetic features. Sometimes historical properties can enter into the aesthetic frame, but we need not worry about this sort of delineating if we view ruins in the present tense.

²²⁴ Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, 83.

²²⁵ Robinson, “On Being Moved by Architecture,” 337.

Ruins not only point to the past and provide us with important aesthetic experiences in the present, they also point toward the future. Many people (including Flaubert) point to the mournful quality of ruins. We might mourn the loss of the complete architectural structure, we might mourn (in a nostalgic way) the loss of a culture, or we might mourn the loss of time. In some cases, we might even mourn the lives lost in or around the structure. But this mourning still looks backwards.

Ruins are especially effective as *mementos mori*. The sense that nature reabsorbs even the most permanent-seeming structures helps man to ruminate on his own mortality and the fleeting nature of life in general. Ruins are ephemerality writ large. As powerful symbols of the ephemeral, of the fleeting, as *mementos mori*, ruins so strongly point toward our future that this ought to be regarded as one of the most salient features of ruin appreciation. Both *memento mori* and the experience of the sublime address the tripartite nature of ruins: imagining the past, experiencing the present, and looking toward the future. We think about those who once lived, our own current experience, and what will be. Ruins are powerful aesthetic objects. The classical conception focuses on the past, using the ruin as a prop to reimagine the original architectural structure. The romantic conception very rarely focuses on what is in the present left to appreciate. Thinking of ruins as *mementos mori* and as elicitors of the sublime addresses the fact that ruins focus our attention in interesting ways on the past, present, and future. These approaches can certainly work together to provide us with rich aesthetic experiences.

4.4 ONTOLOGY BASED AESTHETICS (OBA) AND PLURALISM

In the previous section I discussed how both the experience of the sublime and *memento mori* capture the unique tripartite nature of ruins, objects that have a foot in the past, present, and the future. Classicism and accounts of imaginative reconstruction focus on ruins as objects that point

to the past, while romantic accounts often lack a foot in the present. I am arguing for an appreciation of ruins as objects which, through the process of decay, have a foot firmly planted in all three.

The tripartite nature of ruins seems to call out for a pluralist response. As hybrid objects they “escape the standard theories.”²²⁶ Their nature (as both artifactual and natural) makes them ideal candidates for pluralist models. One model of appreciation alone is not sufficient.

Additionally, as I mentioned before, ruins’ tripartite nature requires a pluralist account of appreciation. While theories of the sublime and *memento mori* suit the tripartite nature of ruins, theories such as imaginative reconstruction and Brady’s imagination model are also useful, as are architectural models of appreciation, such as Jenefer Robinson’s.

There shouldn’t be a presupposition that all of our aesthetic experience of ruins should be the same. Instead of aiming for a uniform experience, we should be aiming for experiences that are aesthetically meaningful and reward our attention and efforts. In other words, we should allow for the co-recognition of a variety of experiences rather than defending one account of meaning over another when it is possible to countenance them all. Pluralist (and/or syncretic) models of appreciation have the advantage of facilitating the reward for repeated encounters. The aesthetic appreciation of an object changes over time; our interactions are informed by our life stages. A ruin seen as an architectural curiosity in one’s infancy might be experienced as sublime in one’s adulthood. In this sense, both the ruin and our appreciation of it have a life span. As

Tom Leddy points out,

There is the life-span of the art work as it appears in our experience of it over one’s own lifespan and including developmental experiences we have of such a work, for example the second reading of a novel in middle age, and the last in old age. And then there is the life-span of the work within the culture. This too involves birth, maturation and decay,

²²⁶ Ginsberg, “Ruins.” Quoted from Bob Ginsberg, presentation on ruins from the PAC-APA, San Diego, California.

with further possibilities of rebirth as a new interpretations or renovation give the work new life.²²⁷

So, not only does pluralism allow for different aesthetic experiences at different stages of life, it can account for different aesthetic reactions a culture might have over its lifespan. I have allowed for cultural differences in defining ruins; similarly I believe we should allow for different aesthetic experiences depending on the lifespan of a culture.

Pluralist theories, whether moral, epistemological or aesthetic, attract stock criticisms. The most recalcitrant is that pluralism is prone to falling into relativism. A single over-arching principle of aesthetic appreciation might be ontologically cleaner, but it also has a greater likelihood of being false. While the monism/pluralism debate will not be settled in this dissertation, let me (for a moment) take seriously the worry that pluralism of this sort might devolve into an “everything goes” type of aesthetic response.

I have already discussed the response to the “everything goes” criticism when discussing Brady’s “imagination” account. I believe that she responded adequately in claiming that there is no such thing as unfettered imagination; there are always limits. There are always some trains of thought that are better than others, some sort/type/brand of appreciation that seems more appropriate than others. Here there can be no hard and fast rules; there are no necessary and sufficient conditions. But I can say this: our appreciation will be constrained by the features of the object itself. It is, I will argue, ontology-based aesthetics (OBA) that can constrain and inform our pluralism. When we worry that our notion of appreciation is straying too far afield, we need only remember the features of ruins foregrounded in our definition; these features can pull us back in the right direction.

²²⁷ Leddy, “Aesthetics of Ruins Comments on Ginsberg’s Paper.”

4.5 HOW MY ACCOUNT FITS WITH EXISTING LITERATURE

4.5.1 *Moore and Syncretism*

This pluralist account of ruin appreciation is not without precedents. My account fits nicely with a few contemporary pluralist accounts of aesthetic appreciation. In his article, “Appreciating Natural Beauty as Natural,” and in his book *Natural Beauty: A Theory of Aesthetics Beyond the Arts*, Ronald Moore details a pluralist model of aesthetic appreciation.²²⁸ Moore argues that the appropriate way to aesthetically appreciate nature is syncretic; rather than using any one particular model, we should draw from multiple models. This syncretic way of appreciating nature re-integrates our appreciation of natural objects and artworks. Moore insists that we “approach the qualities of things we think worthy of admiration in nature through lenses we have developed for thinking of aesthetic qualities at large – not art, not literature, not music, not politics, not urban planning, not landscape design, but all of these and more.”²²⁹ If the goal of our aesthetic appreciation is to use those parts of our intelligent awareness that suit the object, then this model can include all modes of aesthetic appreciation. Such a model gives us the freedom in which to approach hybrid objects such as ruins.

But while such a model enables us to explore many modes of appreciation, it does not tell us what modes of appreciation are relevant to which objects. Some might see this as a weakness of the syncretic account, but I believe that the charm of the syncretic model is that it challenges us to come up with specific accounts of appreciation for different types of objects. In the case of ruins, it allows us to employ imaginative reconstruction when looking at a ruin (pointing to the

²²⁸ Ronald Moore “Appreciating Natural Beauty as Natural.” in Carlson, Allen and Berleant, Arnold eds. *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004), 216.

²²⁹ Ibid, 216.

past), to employ theories of the sublime, and still to pay attention to the multi-sensory nature of aesthetic experience of ruins in the present.

One might worry that different modes of appreciation might preclude one another. When Moore declares that syncretism is the Unitarianism of aesthetics, a precocious deist might ask if one can be both Jew and Buddhist, both Jesuit and Bahá'í?²³⁰ Am I capable of experiencing a particular ruin using both conceptual and non-conceptual models of appreciation? I think we find that some models are not only compatible, but also ampliative. For example, non-cognitive models of the appreciation of natural beauty which focus on “trains of ideas” or “associations,” may be informed by more cognitive model such as Carlson’s NEM.²³¹ Scientific information about an object of delectation can spur more interesting, and perhaps, more productive trains of thought. If we know that a particular flower blooms but once a year, that scientific information can be utilized to ground a fruitful aesthetic experience. Likewise, architectural information about the ruin and an historical narrative of the people who once inhabited the structure will inform and help shape the aesthetic engagement with the object.

But some models might be incommensurable; it might be impossible to employ two models at the same time, to have two experiences of appreciation at the same time. In this scenario we might decide to alternate between two different modes of appreciation. Take, for example, the film critic. Film critics often watch movies twice: once to allow themselves to enjoy the film – to immerse themselves, if you will. The second time a critic will watch the movie focusing on technical aspects of the production with an eye toward their criticism. The “technical” mode and the “immersion” mode might very well be incompatible, but one might be

²³⁰ Moore, *Natural Beauty*, 39.

²³¹ Those who argue for “associative” models of aesthetic experience might include: Archibald Alison (objects spur “trains of ideas of emotions” in Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste.*), John Dewey (“trains of ideas” in Dewey, *Art as Experience.*), and Emily Brady (“imagining well” in chapter 6 of Carlson and Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments.*).

able to switch off and on between the two. Likewise, in encountering a ruin, a technical imaginative reconstruction might preclude a more romantic train of thought. If this is the case, there is nothing stopping me from having one experience after the other as the appreciation unfolds throughout time. There is no one-principle-fits-all solution for all ruins. What my definition aims to provide is a characterization of aesthetically relevant features that one must attend to when aesthetically engaging with ruins. These multiple avenues for aesthetic pleasure favor a syncretic model, or pluralist model, of aesthetic appreciation. We must draw upon whatever models we have at our disposal, including conceptual as well as non-conceptual models, art as well as nature models, historical modes and contemporary models alike.

4.5.2 *Crawford and Ruins as Hybrids*

My account of ruin appreciation is informed and inspired by Donald Crawford's discussion of hybrid objects (including ruins) in his "Nature and Art: Dialectical Relationships." As we've seen in chapter two, Crawford believes that ruins are hybrid objects that exemplify a certain "dialectical" relationship.²³² Unfortunately, Crawford does not throw much light on this dialectical relationship; he says only that it "can be seen as relating to both natural and artifactual elements interacting in other than purely harmonious or straight-forwardly causal ways."²³³ For

²³² Crawford, "Nature and Art," 50. Crawford tries to provide more information on this dialectical relationship with a rather enigmatic footnote:

Gary Shapiro has suggested to me that my position thus stated is closer to the "left" than to the "right" Hegelians' notion of dialectic, insofar as I resist the view that the conflicting forces are negated in the dialectical process and subsumed under a higher unity. It may be that the extended aesthetic object in the cases discussed above can be described as a unity of interacting forces, but it does not seem that they thereby dissolve; nor does the notion of an evolutionary dialectical process seem applicable here. (Footnote 24)

This footnote takes a very strange stand on "left" (or young) versus "right" Hegelians and attributes to them positions they arguably didn't hold. And ultimately, it does not help to elucidate the unharmonious dialectical relationship.

Crawford, nature has visible effects on the ruined object. This might include rust on metal objects, the smoothing and weathering of stone, the rotting of wooden beams, vegetation growing on an architectural structure, etc. In architectural ruins, nature's toll can often be seen as destroying the past splendor of the architectural aesthetic unity of the original (non-ruined) artifact. So, a tension exists between the architectural structure's power to withstand the effects of nature and nature's ability to ultimately conquer all human artifacts. When aesthetically experiencing a ruin, our consciousness shifts back and forth between the awareness of human resistance to natural forces and nature "as the destroyer of the most carefully planned human monuments."²³⁴ This is why, according to Crawford, the more monumental the original structure of the ruin, the better the ruin serves this expressive function.²³⁵

We have already observed the emphasis, in the historical literature on ruins, on the distinction between the classical and the romantic conceptions of ruins.²³⁶ In classical theory ruins embody the past by presenting a fragment of the missing whole. This fragment provides us with a prop with which to imaginatively reconstruct the ruin and past civilization. Crawford notes that it is unclear, under his conception, whether information acquired through scientific techniques can be used in this imaginative reconstruction. I think it can.

On the romantic conception, ruins spur a train of thought that awakens the perceiver's sense of history. Crawford finds the romantic conception melodramatic, yet admits that it is prevalent in the literature. Crawford also states that the romantic theory can account for the visually stimulating dialectic between nature and artifact that we see in the ruin (such as the

²³⁴ Crawford, "Nature and Art," 54.

²³⁵ As I said previously, I am not interested in providing an account of typical judgments of beauty, but I think Crawford's suggestion is an interesting one.

²³⁶ This distinction does not just exist in Ginsberg, but also in: Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins.*; Zucker, "Ruins. An Aesthetic Hybrid.,"; Kaufmann, *Time Is an Artist.*; Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins.*; and Hetzler, "The Aesthetics of Ruins," July 1, 1982.

pleasing nature of lichen on stone). According to the romantic conception, we should focus our attention on the mysteries of the past and the transience of the present. Common to both conceptions is the importance of apprehending the monuments of the past personally.

I take Crawford's account to be a "hybrid" one because it tries to walk the line between the classical (conceptual) and romantic (non-conceptual) accounts of ruin appreciation. He does so in a way that I hope my own account does. Furthermore, his pluralism makes it one of the strongest accounts of ruin appreciation in the literature. However, it falls short on a few counts, as I will show.

As I have indicated, Crawford's account was an inspiration for my own. His understating of hybridity and the dialectical nature of ruins are central features of my own ontology of ruins. By its own admission, Crawford's account of ruins is but a sketch. Crawford briefly mentions the two predominant trends in the literature (the romantic and the classical), but leaves major questions unaddressed. Can, for instance, the two accounts be fused to inform an aesthetic experience? (I have argued that often they can and when not we can use the accounts in succession.) Moreover, Crawford is not clear about why we cannot use scientific knowledge in our reconstruction efforts. (I believe that we can, and should!)

There are other problems with Crawford's account. He focuses too much on the ruins of antiquity to the exclusion of an accurate account of the aesthetic appreciation of new ruins. Crawford briefly mentions new ruins in his article, stating that they may provide the viewer with an object of aesthetic attention that could be viewed under the classical conception of ruin appreciation. He argues that new ruins cannot be viewed under the romantic conception, since they lack "an inherent reference to both the future and the past," which he believes is an essential

feature of ruin appreciation.²³⁷ He believes that we are unable to project ourselves into the past of a recent ruin. I have already stated why I find this argument unconvincing; the Michigan Central Train Station example presented in my first chapter was designed to show that we are able to interact with ruins of the recent past in much the same way as we do with ruins of antiquity. In chapter six I will focus my comments on new ruins, and show their similarities to ruins of antiquity.

4.6 HOW MY ACCOUNT DOES NOT FIT IN WITH EXISTING LITERATURE

4.6.1 *Carlson and Parson*

The account of ruin appreciation presented by Allen Carlson and Glen Parson in their 2009 book *Functional Beauty* is at odds with the one I have presented. In this section I will attempt to demonstrate the superiority of my account.

Carlson and Parson (C&P) present what they call a fitness account of beauty. Their general aim is to provide an account of functional beauty, and to apply this account to four modes of appreciation: the appreciation of nature, of architecture, of everyday objects, and of art. They strive to provide a unified account that can handle such disparate objects. Citing sources from ancient Greece and seventeenth and eighteenth century British philosophy, they show that the idea of functional beauty has historical precedents. For example, they cite David Hume who thought looking fit is the essence of “one species of beauty.”²³⁸ C&P reject an intentionalist account of “fit,” ultimately favoring a “proper function” account of fittingness.²³⁹

²³⁷ See my ontology section (chapter two) for Crawford’s conditions.

²³⁸ Parsons and Carlson, *Functional Beauty*, 2012, 102.

²³⁹ C&P initially endorse an intentionalist account of function, citing art and everyday examples. However, this intentionalist account is less convincing when applied to the case of nature. Due in part to the nature-lovers’ worries, they oppose the intentionalist’s account. Another reason they move away from

According to C&P, the function of an artifact is determined not by the intent of the author, maker or implied author, but by the object's adoption and repeated selection as an "X" in the marketplace. Thus, repeated selection in the marketplace is the analogue to natural selection in evolutionary theory. A proper function is defined as the following:

X has a proper function F if and only if Xs currently exist because, in the recent past, ancestors of X were successful in meeting some need or want in the marketplace because they performed F, leading to the manufacture and distribution of Xs.²⁴⁰

An easy example of a proper function would be that of any tool. A hammer's proper function is to drive in nails precisely because, in the past, hammers proved generally useful in driving in nails. A less obvious, but still apt, example would be the drug bupropion. The drug was originally manufactured to treat a major depressive disorder, affecting the levels of dopamine in the brain. However, after success in the marketplace as an anti-depressant, patients started reporting to their doctors that the drug also aided them in smoking cessation. Consequently, bupropion was marketed and promoted successfully as Zyban, an anti-smoking drug. Thus, according to C&P, bupropion has two proper functions as determined by marketplace success: one as an anti-depressant and another as a smoking cessation aid.²⁴¹

an intentionalist's account is that many objects seem to have appropriated more functions than originally intended. While not originally intended as such, beer is a very effective slug poison and many people buy it for just that purpose. Thus, we need examine not just any function the object might have, but the object's "proper function."

²⁴⁰ Parsons and Carlson, *Functional Beauty*, 2012, 75.

²⁴¹ An obvious objection appears: what about new items in the marketplace? C&P discuss this problem and state that new items are poorly grounded in the market place and as such it is hard to find their proper function. Take, for example, a new drug that is designed to lower blood pressure. After many years of prescribing the drug, doctors discover that it is not very effective at lowering blood pressure, but is very effective at relieving nightmares. Consequently, after some more R&D, the drug company re-brands the drug not as a blood pressure medication, but as a medication helpful for those suffering from PTSD. If the drug is then successfully prescribed and re-prescribed for PTSD, then the marketplace has shown that the proper function of the drug is to relieve nightmares associated with PTSD. (The drug prazosin has a similar history to the one I just described.)

While C&P admit that functional beauty is merely one type of beauty, they often seem to argue that it is the most important type. Further, they argue that there are three types of functional beauty: (1) beauty in an object appearing fit (whether or not it actually tracks fitness), (2) beauty in foregrounding traits that exhibit the efficient achievement of a given end, and (3) items that seem to have contra-standard properties, which do contribute to their fitness through “pleasing dissonance.”²⁴²

In C&P’s account of architectural beauty, appearing fit for some function is an aesthetically good-making feature of a building.²⁴³ Ruins, however, look unfit for their function; yet we often find them beautiful. Thus they pose a problem for functional beauty, since, as C&P claim, “Buildings that have, through damage or neglect, acquired properties that interfere with their ability to perform their function seem to look poorer for it.”²⁴⁴ Therefore, we would expect ruined structures to look poorer than their non-decayed architectural cousins.

C&P suppose that the ruin-lover would object to their account, “If ruins look unfit, why do they seem to display no evidence of this negative aesthetic quality?” The first (failed) response to the ruin-lover’s objection that C&P offer is that while ruins do have the quality of being unfit, we can bracket that quality off and attend only to the other, more beautiful qualities the ruin possesses. We can bracket off the ruin’s utilitarian properties to better focus on the ruin’s formal properties. C&P admit that since the eighteenth century, ruins have been a source of aesthetic pleasure as exemplars of the picturesque and sublime. By focusing on these formal

²⁴²Ibid, 94. As an example of this “pleasing dissonance,” C&P provide is that of certain light fixtures in modern buildings where some heavy mass seems to “hang suspended implausibly in mid-air” (C&P, 99). This produces a visual tension that we find pleasing.

²⁴³ Hume makes a similar point in the *Treatise*.

²⁴⁴Ibid, 162. C&P further qualify this claim by stating that their privileged role of “function” does not stem from a concern for human welfare. Their example is of an old house: suppose we stumbled upon a ruined, unusable house. If we were to smash one more window, we could still claim that the house looks worse, even though it is equally unusable. This example illustrates that their notion of functional beauty (in the case of ruins) does not crucially depend on human welfare.

properties (e.g., the beautiful curve of an arch, the pleasing pattern of moss on stone) we can better understand ruins as subjects of the early picturesque. C&P claim that nowadays, however, ruins are seen more as historical curiosities than objects of beauty.²⁴⁵ C&P do not defend this empirical claim, and I hope that throughout this dissertation I have given readers many reasons to challenge it.

C&P believe this solution fails for two reasons. First, it focuses on the formal properties of a ruin, barring all cultural associations. Second, observers don't always abstract away from the original function of a ruin, since it is common for observers to mentally reconstruct the ruin (as we have noted in our discussion of imaginative reconstruction accounts). C&P argue that a ruin of a forum is still a forum, just a ruined one. We look at a heap of stones and a ruined fort in different ways, and yet, "the ruined structure's apparent lack of fitness will not contribute to a negative aesthetic quality in that structure."²⁴⁶

The real solution to this puzzle, according to C&P, is that the history of appreciation of ruins lies in the romantic tradition: "in particular, the expressiveness of ruins seems to explain why their apparently looking unfit fails to translate into an aesthetic flaw."²⁴⁷ While ruins do possess the negative aesthetic quality of looking "unfit," this quality coexists with the positive aesthetic quality of expressiveness. When we witness a ruin, we may be overwhelmed with its expressive qualities—so much so that we lose sight of the (relatively minor) quality of being unfit. To illustrate their case, Carlson and Parsons propose the following thought experiment: imagine that a "new" Mediterranean island is discovered, and that on this island is a lost ancient Greek tribe.

²⁴⁵ C&P breeze by this point, stating not much more than, "It is probably safe to say that today ruins are no longer as enthusiastically aesthetically appreciated as they once were, and perhaps are admired more as historical curiosities." (Parsons and Carlson, *Functional Beauty*, 2012, 162.) I believe my extended examination on ruins in this document, and all of the recent photographic interests in ruins, proves them wrong.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 164.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 164.

The tribe is modern except that they live in structures that were common in Greece 2,500 years ago. As the thought experiment goes, the modern tribe abandons the island, and subsequently an earthquake damages the recently abandoned buildings so that these structures are perceptually indistinguishable from the ancient Grecian ruins, although they were built a mere fifty years ago. C&P believe that the only difference between actual ruins and the buildings in this thought experiment is that ruins consist of ancient artifacts worked upon by “the slow passage of time” which are expressive in a way that these structures are not: “The wreck of a classical ruin would express ideas such as the transience of life and the relentless passage of time, for example, while the wreck of the lost isle would not.”²⁴⁸ C&P muse on how a tourist would react to these “new” ruins: “I paid all this money to come and see these wonderful buildings, what terrible luck . . . If only I had come a day or two earlier, I could have viewed these buildings in all their glory.”²⁴⁹ They claim that such comments would be “entirely reasonable responses,”²⁵⁰ concluding that this thought experiment provides us with an example of a ruin that looks unfit but lacks expressive qualities.

In a nutshell, their argument is this:

[R]uins, when they do in fact look unfit, are not an exception to the rule that looking dysfunctional is an aesthetic flaw. This flaw is obscured, however, by their expressiveness, which is sufficiently diverting and pervasive to drive all awareness of it from our minds.²⁵¹

I think this account is deficient and provides a good foil for my own. First, let us address C&P’s example of the modern Grecian ruins. The modern Grecian ruins could still express many of the qualities that C&P mention: the relentlessness of Mother Nature, the transience of life, etc. What these ruins would not possess is a quality of genuineness *if* we thought the island ruins were as

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 165.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 166.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 166.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 166.

old as classical ruins. Ruins of antiquity express certain qualities, while the “new ruins” express others. Although the two may be (shallowly) perceptually identical, our knowledge of their age informs our perception and interpretation.

In Macaulay’s account, new ruins do not evoke the same associations as the old ruins. They are “stark,” and “bare,” in their vegetationless nakedness, and stink of fire and mortality.²⁵² A freshly bombed building might contain too many painful associations for one to immediately find it beautiful. But this does not mean it is an improper object of aesthetic appreciation. On a business trip, I saw the ruins of the twin towers a few months after 9-11. I did not think, “If only I had come a month or two earlier, I could have viewed these building in all their glory.” I looked at where the towers once stood and allowed myself to be flooded with associations that came to mind: the towers’ *past* magnificence, the scale of the recent tragedy, the ugly reality of war. I remembered what the towers looked like (through imaginative reconstruction), I marveled at the lack of rubble on the ground (i.e., appreciated a ruin “in the present tense”) and I thought about my own mortality (i.e., thought about the future through the lens of *memento mori*). Finally, I thought about the enormity of the situation, and the puniness of individual human lives (i.e., trains of thought associated with the sublime). For all these reasons I do not agree with C&P that “new” ruins lack expressiveness.²⁵³

Further, there are serious problems with C&P’s account of the ontology of ruins. Besides the passage of time, there can be forces at play in creating an architectural ruin that C&P’s

²⁵²I have quoted Macaulay on new ruins previously, but I will remind the reader of it here: “New ruins have not yet acquired the weathered patina of age, the true rust of the barons’ wars, not yet put on their ivy, nor equipped themselves with the appropriate bestiary of lizards, bats, screech-owls, serpents, speckled toads and little foxes which, as has been so frequently observed by ruin-explorers, hold high revel in the precincts of old ruins...But new ruins are for a time stark and bare, vegetationless and creatureless; blackened and torn, they smell of fire and mortality.” (Macaulay, 453).

²⁵³ There have also been a number of more recent book on new ruins, including Tim Edensor’s *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetic and Materiality* (2005).

account does not allow for. Natural disaster (such as an earthquake) is one such force and (as we have seen in the case of the twin towers) violent aggression is another. What seems common to all of these origins of decay is that they signal the start of disuse or a change in use-value. More interestingly, in contemporary (or “new”) ruins, we can easily trace the origin of this disuse to a culture’s decision not to invest in repairing or reconstructing the structure; the ruins of Detroit serve as a good example here. Detroit, in filing for bankruptcy, declared that it did not have the money to reconstruct or repurpose some of its most beautiful buildings (which consequently became ruins).

In the case of Detroit, the decision was in a sense made for them. In other cases the decision not to repair or reconstruct an architectural structure (thus creating a ruin) often manifests cultural attitudes about what buildings are or are not valuable symbols of that culture. Hitler’s bunker (“*Führerbunker*”) is an important (former) example of a contemporary ruin. This bunker system, consisting of multi-level tunnels, has been allowed to decay and was made inaccessible to the public.²⁵⁴ The German government encouraged vegetation to encompass the outside of these tunnel systems, leaving them unmarked and hard to find. It was a conscious decision on behalf of the German government to allow the *Führerbunker* to decay and become ruined. They were concerned about the possibility of the bunker being turned into a neo-Nazi shrine. More importantly, allowing the bunker structure to ruinate seems to symbolize the German government’s desire to allow the horrific events of WWII to be absorbed by time. Thus, the “function” of the bunker is no longer that of a bunker; the bunker has been transformed into a symbol of the Government’s breaking with the past.

C&P view the aesthetic appreciation of ruins predominantly through the aesthetic lens of architectural appreciation. But, as I argued in chapter two, while related to their architectural

²⁵⁴ It has since been cemented over and completely closed down.

cousins, ruins are ontologically distinct from them. Once a building becomes a ruin, its function changes – including its proper function. A building’s function is to house people (for work, for living, etc.), while a ruin’s “function,” I believe, is to afford us compelling and instructive aesthetic experiences. Considered in light of this distinction, Carlson and Parson’s conception of proper function seems too narrow; they do not acknowledge that once a building becomes a ruin, its ontological status has changed, which in turn changes its function. In addition to the potential counterexample of ruins, C&P offer high heels as a possible counter-example to functional beauty. If the proper function of shoes were to aid in walking, then surely high heels would look unfit and therefore ugly. C&P respond to this objection by stating that when people attend to high heels they are looking at a subset of features: color, shape, line – so one isn’t attending to functional beauty at all. Like their discussion of ruins, I think this account is lacking. I believe their biological account of fitness feature selection blinds them to the obvious answer in this case: women who buy very high-heeled shoes are not expecting the shoes to perform what C&P calls their “proper function.” Rather, women who buy these shoes see their proper function of them as fashion accessories. When I (rarely) wear heels, I expect them to (1) make me taller, so that I can look my taller colleagues straight in the eye; (2) elongate my legs in an attractive manner; and (3) look good with the outfit I am wearing. Nothing in my stated goals revolves around covering my feet or aiding in walking. This leads me to believe that in some cases there could be more than one proper function, and people might select objects based on a set of such functions. When a building decays and becomes a ruin, it changes ontological categories and this ontological shift also changes the structure’s proper function. Ruins might have a range of functions (e.g., aesthetic, historical) and we might select them based on these functions. And, as

previously discussed, ruins are embedded in their environments (as hybrid objects) so that the elements that make up a ruin are importantly different from their architectural cousins as well.

In working with C&P's account I would say that ruins' "fitness" has to do with their features (e.g., age value, landscape values, their hybridity, etc.) and these features (which I enumerated earlier) elicit a certain pleasing aesthetic response. Well functioning ruins would be those that afford people the sort of aesthetic response I have described. In chapter two I provided a potential definition of ruins, one that asserts that they are separate ontological entities from their architectural cousins. Perhaps, then, the "proper function" of a ruin is to entice the viewer into the sort of aesthetic experience I have described. If this is the case, then some ruins would do a better job than others at eliciting the sort of responses I have described. We could tie this account to ruin tourism: those ruins that are selected time and again to be visited are those that perform their function well.²⁵⁵

The notion of fitness is also discussed by Linda Patrik in her article "The Aesthetic Experience of Ruins."²⁵⁶ Her argument is set against the standard interpretation of ruination, associated with Roman Ingarden, which states that ruination decreases aesthetic value. What she labels "the standard interpretation of ruins" assumes that any process of decay or deterioration that departs from the author's original intention is of negative aesthetic value. Patrik argues, *contra* Ingarden, that the ruination of buildings (and artworks) creates new aesthetic properties that are aesthetically positive. According to Patrik, the process of ruination introduces new properties into the work, properties that often have to do with the visual relationship between the work and its environment (e.g., encrustation, staining, etc.). Ruination takes the artwork away from its author; it no longer looks like the artist's original creation. I take Patrik's account to be

²⁵⁵ Likewise, once a ruin has turned into a heap of rubble, unrecognizable from its architectural cousin, it has become a new ontological unity: a ghost building (*following* Bicknell).

²⁵⁶ Patrik, "The Aesthetic Experience of Ruins."

in line with my own. In ruination, the building ceases to be a building and becomes something different. Its proper function changes and its visual (and other) properties change.

Patrik doesn't explain why we take pleasure in the "unfitness" of the object, but she does point to several things we should be attentive to when appreciating ruins. First, in order to appreciate a ruin *qua* ruin, you must recognize the damage, not overlook it. This point, *contra* C&P (and in line with my account), states that we do not bracket the damage in a ruin in order to attend to the non-ruined properties.²⁵⁷ Second, Patrik notes that the pleasure of ruins seems to arise out of an odd mixture of horror at the devastation undergone and respect for the endurance exhibited. I believe that this combination of horror and respect links the experience of beauty in ruins with canonical notions of the sublime I discussed previously. While C&P address the close tie between ruin appreciation and the picturesque, they do not foreground sublimity.

4.6.2 *Other Criticisms*

There are a few other criticisms of my account I would like to address. These criticisms were raised by Alex Neill in 2014 (during a panel presentation on the aesthetics of ruins at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting). The first criticism is that what I have presented should not be considered an account of ruin appreciation, but rather a family of ways of responding to ruins. I believe that pluralist accounts often receive this type of criticism and often don't find it troubling. If what I have presented is a "family" of accounts or responses, then I do not see the problem as long as this family is well described and understood. And I believe this family is well described and understood under OBA, given the definition I have provided of ruins. Pluralism will never be popular among certain philosophers; it's not bold or

²⁵⁷ Additionally, she states that in attending to the damage of the ruin, one must recognize the difference between the joy of destruction (e.g., a child's joy in smashing a sand castle) and the pleasure that attends to the pleasing appearance of decay.

flashy enough. But, however we approach the hybrid, disparate objects that are deemed ruins, pluralism just seems to ring true.

Neil's second criticism is that my account is a version of romanticism manqué. He asks: "might it be the case that rather than developing an *alternative* to a Romantic account of the central features and significance of aesthetic engagement with ruins...[she is] starting to spell out what would *constitute* a Romantic account of the matter, to detail some of the essential elements of such an account?"²⁵⁸ Neill quotes my remark that "ruins are ephemerality writ large" as falling in line with Romantic accounts of ruin appreciation. To the extent that *memento mori* and the experience of the sublime are concepts that the Romantics embrace, my account might properly be considered romantic. But it is much more. It endorses some of the insights romantic theorists and artists advance; but it also draws upon classical and more contemporary views.

Neill's third criticism is that, to the extent that my view is romantic, it is too thin a romanticism and one that wrongly downplays the present. He suggests that I deepen my account by looking at Romantic artists, such as Turner, Piranesi, and Doré. He points in particular to Turner's *Tintern Abby* as a work of art that also exhibits the artist's skill as an architectural draughtsman. *Tintern Abby*, Neill claims, shows that the Romantic artists, while they often go off on flights of fancy spurred on by the romantic notion of ruins, also are firmly rooted in the reality of the present. But this criticism seriously mistakes the way in which my theory grounds appreciative judgment in the present while taking cognizance of both past and future. It is true that in my discussion of ruins' tripartite temporal nature, I accused the romantic account of distinctively looking forward, and to that extent, paying inadequate attention to ruins "in the present tense."

²⁵⁸ Neill, "Comments on Elizabeth Scarbrough's 'Unplanned Beauty.'"

If attention to ruins in the present tense precludes reflective reference to what the structure used to look like or what it will look like in the future, it will often be inadequate to its object. But it also refers to looking at the formal elements of the ruin on the ground: how the stone nicely outlines that semi-circle of moss, how the hillock is perfectly framed by the church's old walls. This is not appreciating ruins as ruined architectural curiosities (as draughtsman do). Looking at ruins in the present tense is looking at what remains in ways that do not reference the past or future.

Memento mori is an implied reference to the future as it translates to, "Remember that you die." It does not focus predominantly on the present but – as I have argued – does address the tripartite nature of ruins. And what of the sublime? The sublime evokes our limited capacities for reason, as they fit into the rational order of the world. I suppose we could restrict the sublime to the present tense only, but this seems to defeat the purpose. The experience of the sublime is the experience of eternity in time. When a ruin elicits a feeling of the sublime, I might think about the immensity of nature and how all of man's artifacts will someday be consumed. This is a reference to the future; these thoughts are occasioned by (and consequent to) the experience of the sublime, but are not the experience itself. When experiencing the sublime I might struggle with the notion of the infinite – time and space being too large for one person to comprehend – but this too makes reference to experience within and through time. As I stated before, the reason the sublime and *memento mori* are prominent elements in the appreciation of ruins is that they call up ruins' tripartite nature, referring to the past, present, and the future, not just the present.

Additionally, there is a distinction between engaging with a ruin *qua* ruin (the experience of the ruin *in situ*) and the way ruins have been represented and used in fine art and poetry. Just as there is a distinction between the experience of a beautiful vista and the way the beautiful

vista is represented in a picturesque landscape painting, I believe there is an important difference between romantic ruin appreciation and the appreciation of romantic ruin-art. In *Tintern Abby*, Turner expressively interprets the ruin before him. And while he pays wonderful attention to detail, his is an artist's rendering of a ruin; and that is not the same as the present-tense appreciation of a ruin. I have repeatedly asserted that the aesthetic appreciation of ruins is different from the aesthetic appreciation of paintings or photographs of ruins. These objects certainly share certain features. Much artwork has been made with ruins as its subject precisely because ruins elicit complex emotional and cognitive responses. Talented artists, such as Turner, are able to capture some of the beauty of ruins to elicit in the viewers of their works some of the same responses that viewers of the ruins themselves might have had. However, painting and photographs are two-dimensional art forms, both intentionally created for an audience. Such works provoke questions about artistic intent, framing, color choice, etc. that we don't have when appreciating a ruin. In this sense, ruin appreciation is more akin to nature appreciation.²⁵⁹ As we do with nature, we walk through ruins, smell the damp moss, touch the weathered stone. Proprioception is absent in two-dimensional artworks, but is highly relevant to engaging with ruins in the present tense. While there is, as I have argued, an important difference between ruin appreciation and the appreciation of fine art whose topic is ruins, no one will deny that the one can inform the other. In *The Decay of Lying* Oscar Wilde states that while there may have been fogs in London for centuries, no one noticed them until Art invented them.²⁶⁰ We must allow that our knowledge of iconic art informs our appreciation of its subjects.

²⁵⁹ That is why I spent a considerable amount of time in chapter three discussing accounts of the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

²⁶⁰ Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, 33. Wilde says, "There may have been fogs for centuries in London. I dare say there were. But no one saw them, and so we do not know anything about them. They did not exist till Art had invented them. Now, it must be admitted, fogs are carried to excess."

This is a good moment to clarify the difference between a romantic account of ruin appreciation and the picturesque. Many of the examples Neill used are standardly thought of as picturesque: Turner's *Tintern Abbey* is one such example. It is conventional to think of the picturesque as simply the mode of thought that forces the experience of nature to resemble that of landscape painting. When looking at the historical literature from the eighteenth century we find that there were myriad and conflicting definitions of the picturesque (as discussed in my last chapter). To be sure, the picturesque was most thoroughly discussed in reference to landscape painting and landscape design, but Tim Costelloe has shown that the paradox of the picturesque is that its pleasure does not come from nature, but only from nature reconstructed.²⁶¹ So whereas I think the picturesque is man reconstructing nature, ruin appreciation should focus on the ways that nature deconstructs the man-made. With the picturesque we take pleasure in the ways man tames the wildness of nature; with ruin appreciation we revel in the unexpected beauty of nature changes the man-made.

I should add that Neill's suggestion rules out possible modes of engagement that I would like to keep active in my pluralist model. While I do not think that imaginative reconstruction should be the predominant mode of aesthetic engagement with ruins (to the exclusion of other modes), I do think it should be allowed. The non-conceptualist account of ruin appreciation either denies or downplays the ways knowledge can change our aesthetic appreciation of ruins. My pluralist account allows for historical information to inform the aesthetic experience. The archaeologist and historian can help us appreciate ruins in deeper, more complex ways, just as the art historian may influence our aesthetic appreciation of art. Everything in its proper place, including cognitivist models of aesthetic appreciation. *Memento mori* and the sublime are not the whole story.

²⁶¹ Costelloe, *The Sublime*, chap. 4.

4.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have presented my account of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins. In doing this I built upon my previously introduced definition of ‘a ruin’ in order by developing an ontology-based aesthetics account, showing that the ontological status of an object is essential for determining what model of aesthetic appreciation it is contextually appropriate to employ. I called this view Ontology Based Aesthetics (OBA). Appreciating a ruin *qua* ruin depends on us cognizing it as a ruin. I then considered what I believe is the most salient feature of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins: the fact that ruins are in the process of decay (a process that involves both natural and artifactual elements). My account foregrounds that, when engaging with ruins, we must see them as objects that have a foot in three different times: the past, present, and the future. Finally, I argued that, due to their hybrid nature, and due to this tripartite temporality, a *pluralist* account of aesthetic appreciation is in order. I situated my account within the existing literature and considered some objections.

In the next two chapters I will use what we have learned from this chapter and apply it to cases of ruin appreciation. I will also detail how this account of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins might prescribe certain (defeasible) ethical obligations toward the display and ‘preservation’ (i.e., stabilization) of these objects.

Chapter 5. APPLICATION TO OLD RUINS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In what follows, I show how the account I presented in chapters one through four has implications for the preservation and display of ruins. I have argued that ruins, as objects of immovable material culture, demand special considerations for their preservation and display. The framework I propose makes it possible to preserve what is special about the aesthetic experiences ruins elicit. I will show how OBAP (Ontology Based Aesthetic Pluralism) discussed in the last chapter) can guide us in our preservation practices. My account will seem counter-intuitive to some. In my view, in order to preserve the special aesthetic value ruins have, we must allow them to decay. I will argue that while some preservation (in the form of ruin stabilization) is appropriate, much more intervention (in the form of reconstruction) is generally inappropriate.

5.2 BANNERMAN CASTLE

5.2.1 *Introduction*

The Bannerman Castle Trust is the steward of all structures on Pollepel Island, including the castle, the armory, and the former Bannerman residence. In my first chapter, I focused on the armory and castle (the two can be seen from the same viewshed). However, all three structures are interesting test cases for applying my account. Bannerman Castle and Armory, in particular, provide good case studies for several reasons: because they show how architectural ruins are tied to landscape values; because they show how ruins have important historical ties to their surroundings (in this case, the Hudson Valley); because many believe Bannerman Castle and

Armory are more beautiful in their ruined form than in the height of their architectural form; and because the Trust is not advocating for the total restoration or reconstruction of the Castle and Armory.

Ruin reconstructions (such as *Frauenkirche*), repurposed ruins (such as the National Seminary), and conserved ruins are products of distinct processes that yield distinct ontological objects. To speak to this point, the Bannerman Castle Trust's website (<http://www.bannermancastle.org>) pleads: HELP STABILIZE BANNERMAN CASTLE!²⁶² The use of the term "stabilization" is important for our current discussion as it indicates that the Trust is not interested in reconstructing the Armory or Castle. One reason for this may be purely pragmatic. Given the partial tower collapse of 2009, it would be prohibitively expensive to rebuild the Castle or Armory. However, even before the 2009 collapse, the Bannerman Castle Trust had no plan to rebuild or restore the Armory. As I observed in chapter one, the Trust has always wanted to preserve the special aesthetic value of the Armory, and to do this they had a desire to keep it in its ruined form.

There are, however, plans to reconstruct the personal residence on the island and repurposed as a welcome center. The Trust first stabilized the Bannerman residence as a ruin, and then discussed rehabilitation plans.²⁶³ The goal of the early ruin stabilization was to make the structure "more stable and protected from the elements."²⁶⁴ For the Bannerman Castle Trust, stabilization meant the following: adding wooden beams to support the roof, adding wooden beams to support the floor, adding wooden reinforcement structures in the subbasement to help stabilize the floor, adding a temporary wooden floor around the structure to make it safer to walk around, and cleaning up debris from the past restoration attempts.

²⁶² <http://www.bannermancastle.org>, accessed February 4, 2014

²⁶³ <http://www.bannermancastle.org/bannerman-residence-stabilization.html>), accessed February 4, 2014.

²⁶⁴ <http://www.bannermancastle.org/bannerman-residence-stabilization.html>, accessed February 4, 2014.

After several major collapses, in January of 2014, the Bannerman Castle Trust decided to stabilize the tower to prevent further decay. The Trust reports “Tiny Houses, Inc. of Putnam Valley has placed scaffolding around the Tower walls and have installed several braces to reinforce the walls to prevent further deterioration of the structure.”²⁶⁵ However, as I will discuss later in this chapter, I believe that if the goal of this “stabilization” was to fully arrest decay, the Trust (inadvertently or not) has turned the tower-ruin into something else. By arresting decay, the *castle-cum-ruin* became a different ontological object.

The work being done to the residence, tower (castle), and armory (arsenal) provide us with a model for what ruin conservation might look like. I prefer the term “stabilization” to the term ruin “conservation” because it emphasizes the goal of making the ruin safe to visit, not that of arresting decay. The Bannerman Castle Trust’s decision to reconstruct the residence after the *residence-cum-ruin* had been stabilized is relevant to my thesis. Ruin stabilization has the benefit of allowing future generations to make decisions about turning a ruin into a reconstruction, or, in the case of the Bannerman family residence, a repurposed reconstruction.²⁶⁶

5.2.2 OBA (*Ontology Based Aesthetics*)

For now, I will focus my comments to the arsenal on Bannerman’s Island, leaving aside the residence and the tower. In thinking about how to apply my account of ruin appreciation to the Bannerman arsenal we may first ask about questions of ontology. Is the arsenal a ruin? A reconstruction? A replica? In its current status, I believe the Bannerman arsenal is and has remained a ruin. As I previously argued, *a ruin is the remains of a large-scale human-built physical structure*. This accurately describes the arsenal. The arsenal also conforms to the other

²⁶⁵ <http://www.bannermancastle.org/news.html>, accessed February 4, 2014.

²⁶⁶ I consider the residence a repurposed reconstruction simply because the residence is being reconstructed (using non-original material) for a purpose different from its original use-value (i.e., it will be used as a welcome center and not as a residence).

facets of my definition: (1) it incorporates an architectural element designed to last for a significant period of time, as the arsenal was built to hold Bannerman's booty; (2) the arsenal is in the process of decay, as the recent structural collapse would suggest; (3) the arsenal obviously shows its age-value through the encroachment of nature – in the weathered quality of the stone, the crumbling of the mortar material, and in the encroachment of both the Hudson river on the structure and trees and roots and such on the arsenal; it also shows its age-value through its altered use-value as it is no longer used (and is no longer suitable as) an arsenal; and (4) the arsenal is an object of aesthetic delectation (it is now part of a public park, a potential historical curiosity). While the arsenal-ruin resembles its previous incarnation as an arsenal, it is a new unauthored unity.

What does the definition of a ruin tell us about the display and preservation of a ruin? First, as I mentioned in chapter two, if we care about the aesthetic integrity of an object, then we have good reasons to “preserve” this integrity. To preserve the aesthetic integrity of a ruin then, counter-intuitively perhaps, one must allow it to decay. So the first concrete recommendations I have to offer for ruin preservation and display is never to fully arrest decay.

Here I would like to advocate for ruin stabilization as an ethical form of preservation and display of the Bannerman arsenal. The first step in this direction is to identify the options, of which I have already mentioned a few. First, there is reconstruction, where the arsenal would be integrally restored to look as it did right after its original construction was completed. Second, there is repurposing a reconstruction where the arsenal would be reconstructed and then used for something other than its original use-value. The Bannerman residence reestablished as a visitor's center is such an example. Third, there is anastylosis, where the arsenal would be reassembled with what original material remained of the arsenal. The reconstruction undertaken with

anastylosis is minimal, compared to a full-scale reconstruction. And finally there are various other forms of ruin “conservation.”

5.2.3 *Ruin Conservation*

What would ruin conservation look like? In my view, to conserve a ruin, one must keep a ruin a ruin. As previously stated, this rules out arresting decay entirely. But, should we arrest decay at all? Does the ruin have to be kept as found? Should we arrest the decay a bit while still preserving the ruin’s authenticity? How much can be changed? How much of the natural surrounding environment can be changed to preserve the ruin? Should streams be diverted? Should uprooting vines be removed?

One option conservationists have discussed is preserving the ruin “as found.” This approach was common in the early twentieth century in the United Kingdom, but it is now quite rare.²⁶⁷ One positive aspect of the approach is that it maintains the ecology of the site. However, arresting decay and preserving the ruin “as found” is arbitrary. Again, arresting decay goes against preserving the special sort of object a ruin is (i.e. an object in the process of decay), and for this reason should be ruled out as a form of ruin stabilization or ruin conservation. Preserving a ruin in a particular time slice, whether that slice is immediately after the building was erected or whether it is after mother nature has started to reclaim some of the artifactual elements is treating the ruin as a static object, which it is not.

Another option for ruin conservation employed by archaeologists is planned or deliberate ruination. This approach was adopted during the mid-twentieth century in some cases where there was not enough public or financial support for other forms of ruin stabilization. One plan was to record as much as possible (e.g., the archaeological evidence), and then speed up decay

²⁶⁷ White, “Interpretation of Display of Ruins and Sites,” 252.

by, for instance, removing a ruin's roofs and other relatively perishable materials. Items of monetary or great historical value would be removed and placed in museums or other such repositories.

As previously mentioned, Germany's *Führerbunker* was subjected to planned ruination for political reasons; the German government did not restore the site to preserve the historical value because the government did not want to valorize the atrocities of the past. In allowing the site to ruinate, they made a strong political statement. In 2006 the government sealed the underground tunnels and added minimal signage to the area. The intentional ruination and minimal signage discourage neo-Nazi visitors or valorization of Hitler and his followers. Unsurprisingly the TripAdvisor ratings for the *Führerbunker* are quite low – which the German government very well may see as a victory. One reviewer states: “At the end of the day, it's just a carpark - with one sign.”²⁶⁸

A community might also choose deliberate ruination because it has more reason to preserve a delicate ecosystem than it has to preserve the artifactual elements of a ruin. One can imagine cases where preserving the current ecosystem would speed up the decay of the artifactual. Because of the importance of flora and fauna on the ruin site, planned ruination has been called “verdant ruination.”²⁶⁹

A more moderate option, and one that I advocate, is managed decline. We slow down the decay. Perhaps we divert a stream, or buttress a collapsing wall to prevent further collapse, but we do so acknowledging that this effort is designed to slow down, not arrest, the decay to extend (but not indefinitely) the life of the ruin. This option gives archaeologists time to record important historical data and make the ruin safe to study and appreciate aesthetically. An

²⁶⁸ http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g187323-d1651173-Reviews-Fuhrerbunker-Berlin.html, accessed June 12, 2015.

²⁶⁹ White, “Interpretation of Display of Ruins and Sites,” 254.

example of such ruination stabilization is Witley Court in Worcestershire, in the United Kingdom. The manor house caught fire in 1937, and was deliberately ruined in the 1960s. After the estate was sold to the English Heritage in 1972, the government kept the manor house as a ruin, making sure it was safe to visit, but doing little else to arrest its decay.²⁷⁰

In what follows I consider two articles on this topic. While neither of these articles is written by or for philosophers, they help situate my (proposed) ruin stabilization within a body of contextual current literature. The first, “Architectural Heritage: The Paradox of Its Current State of Risk” is by Bonnie Burnham, President of the World Monument Fund; the second, “The Reconstruction of Ruins: Principles and Practice,” is by Nicholas Stanley-Price, former director of ICCROM (International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property).

Burnham cites several important values in “Ethics of Heritage Conservation”²⁷¹ that should be maximized in heritage conservation. They are:

1. *Authenticity* – The preservation of what is original.
2. *Integrity* – The preservation of the entire object, artifact, or site.
3. *Appropriate Use* – Presentation in a fashion that supports and does not detract from cultural significance.
4. *Continuity of function* – Preservation whenever possible of the uses for which a structure was intended.
5. *Sustainability* – Self-sufficient community use within its original context.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. In recent years two fountains on the site have been restored and the main manor house has been stabilized for visitors. To see what tours the English Heritage offer: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/witley-court-and-gardens/plan-your-visit/>

²⁷¹ Burnham, Bonnie. “Architectural Heritage: The Paradox of Its Current State of Risk” in *International Journal of Cultural Property*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1998.

Though Burnham is writing from a conservationist perspective, I believe her list is helpful as a starting point for architectural ruins. I will discuss these five values in turn.

I agree with Burnham that authenticity is tied to original material, but my proposal (as discussed in chapter two) is to consider authenticity in terms of conceptual integrity (Burnham's second value). While the ruin lover does not try to protect the integrity of the architectural structure, she will try to protect the conceptual integrity of the object by keeping the ruin as ruin (i.e., in the process of decay). She might also seek to preserve landscape integrity. In the United States, private owners can petition for their structure to be listed as a National Historical Landmark. If a site is listed on the National Historic Landmark registry, the owner may petition to prevent neighboring developments. For example, the Bannerman Trust could seek to prevent a Wal-Mart from being built within a certain distance of the castle. This power relates to Burnham's third value, appropriate use. With a ruin, the appropriate use of the site is to elicit the important types of aesthetic experiences I discussed in the last chapter. A ruin is an important aesthetic elicitor of *memento mori* and the sublime; but if a Wal-Mart were within the viewshed of the ruin, that aesthetic experience very well might be compromised or altogether negated. Likewise, if we place a plastic portable toilet on the site, it could increase accessibility to the site but take away from the "appropriate use" and thus detract from the beauty of the site.

Burnham's fourth and fifth values, continuity of function and sustainability, focus on the preservation of the architectural function. Under my account, once a culture has deemed an object a ruin, the original intent of the architectural structure is no longer of utmost importance. We no longer care to maximally preserve the use for which the structure was intended.²⁷² In the case of the (ruined) Bannerman arsenal, we are no longer interested in maintaining the

²⁷² I can imagine a case where a ruined church is still used as a church. Even so, I think the point still holds: when we hold religious services in a ruin, we do so because the ruin is provocative and provides something more than a traditional church structure provides.

structure as a repository of weaponry. Therefore, we are not interested in resurrecting or reconstructing various walls to keep weapons safe and dry. Likewise, we are not interested in the sustainability of the structure within its *original context*. While we might want various communities to have access to the site (and therefore make sure that the area is accessible by foot by clearing paths, etc.), we are not trying to teach a community how to “keep up” the arsenal *qua* arsenal. More specifically, Burnham’s focus on sustainability is aimed at helping communities manage cultural tourism. Other questions we might want to consider include how and what kind of lighting will be needed for people to safely walk around the site. Will a light post be an out-of-place eyesore or can it blend into the landscape? What about signage? National Parks (NPS) use brown signage to avoid standing out too much. And in some cases security (and flood lights) will be needed to prevent vandalism.

In “The Reconstruction of Ruins: Principles and Practice,” Nicholas Stanley-Price provides arguments against the reconstruction of ruins (i.e., in favor of allowing structures to ruin). His arguments turn on seven factors:

1. *The evocative value of a ruined building*
The evocative value of a ruined building should be considered when thinking about reconstruction or invasive conservation. [I argue that ruins function as important *memento mori* and this function should be preserved and that this should be a guiding principle of the proper display of ruins.]
2. *The difficulty (impossibility?) of achieving authenticity*
Authenticity is Burnham’s first value, and Stanley-Price’s second. While Burnham has a narrow definition of authenticity (i.e., the preservation of original materials), Stanley-Price’s conception of authenticity is both broader and more amorphous. [I argue that to reconstruct is always to destroy some measure of authenticity. To preserve authenticity one must leave the object more or less alone – unless one needs to clean up past botched restoration attempts. I have argued that when we reconstruct a building, we create an ontologically distinct object – one that is neither the architectural building nor the ruin.]
3. *The ethical issue of conveying erroneous information*

When ruins are reconstructed, they provide a false face to their witnesses. They lie about their age value and ability to stand the test of time. [I agree with Stanley-Price here and will add that, as Nelson Goodman claims, fakes of this sort can undermine our knowledge about the external world.²⁷³]

4. *The destruction of original evidence*

Stanley-Price believes that in reconstructing a ruin we run the risk of destroying important archaeological evidence. [I agree and will add that we should preserve a ruin as a source of archaeological evidence for future generations. Often the best way to preserve this evidence is to leave it *in situ*.]

5. *The disruption of landscape values*

A ruin exists *in situ* and as such has an important relationship to its surrounding landscape. [As I have previously shown, a ruin is in a dialectical relationship with the landscape around it.]

6. *Distorted site interpretation*

[By distorted site interpretation, I believe Stanley-Price means the destruction of the cultural landscape. This value is often tied to landscape values, but need not be. Examples of distorted site interpretation would include inaccurate signage or inappropriate reconstruction (e.g., presenting a reconstruction as a ruin proper).]

7. *Cost*

Finally, reconstruction projects are quite expensive. Not all communities will have the funds. [The city of Detroit is an example where many public structures are in decay and perhaps many in the community would like to repair or reconstruct these buildings but the city does not have the funds. In this case, and in many other, managed decline or ruin stabilization is a cheaper and aesthetically valuable alternative.]

We can surmise from this list (and my commentary on it) that the conservation of a ruin should not include reconstruction, and may even rule out anastylosis if it involves moving a lot of original material.

²⁷³ Goodman, *Languages of Art*, “Art and Authenticity.” Goodman makes this point in his discussion of the famous Vermeer forger van Meegeren. Every time a van Meegeren was added to the corpus of pictures and accepted as Vermeer, the criteria for acceptance (of an “authentic” Vermeer) were modified. This error made it nearly impossible to tell real (Vermeer) from fake (van Meegeren). If we had knowledge of accurate criteria, then distinguishing the two might be an easy task (or easier at least). Goodman’s general conclusion is that “the aesthetic properties of a picture include not only those found by looking at it but also those that determine how it is to be looked at.” (Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 111–112.)

5.2.4 *Concrete Recommendations*

I am pleased that the Bannerman Castle Trust has realized the aesthetic impact ruins can have on people and I applaud many of the efforts it has taken to date. First, the Trust has done a good job of engaging the community. It has a variety of tours including those aimed at artists. By involving tourists (and many “local” tourists), the Trust has educated people about the history of the island and its structures, and has enlivened people’s imagination.²⁷⁴ Additionally I applaud the Trust’s efforts to stabilize the castle and arsenal without reconstruction. It has used volunteers to clear bramble to make walking paths. It has added minimal aids for walking, including some (but not many) wooden handrails, and they are very clear to tourists about the physical demands of walking around the island. Some might disagree with me, but the island is not fully accessible to those with disabilities. To make the island accessible to those who use wheelchairs would not only be prohibitively expensive; it would comprise the aesthetic of the island and its ruins. Visitors must climb 72 steps to access the structures. Eliminating these steps would require constructing an elaborate contraption that would likely be seen as a scar on the landscape. When I visited the island with a mobility-impaired travel companion, she stayed at the bottom of the steps and ate a picnic while listening to a lecture about the history of the island. Weighing disparate values (such as site accessibility and landscape values) will be difficult; decisions will need to be made regarding the relative importance of accessibility and aesthetic values.²⁷⁵

I also applaud the efforts the Trust has taken to rehabilitate the Bannerman residence’s garden. It hired a garden historian to research the current plants, look at archival pictures, and

²⁷⁴ In my section on Detroit (in this chapter) I will discuss the connection between ruins and tourism. This discussion will foreground the necessity of including descendant and local populations in decisions about their cultural heritage.

²⁷⁵ This issue of accessibility will rear its head again when I discuss the Temple of Dendur.

plant new foliage in line with the original intentions of the garden. As a result of these efforts, the Island has become a resting stop for the illusive monarch butterfly.²⁷⁶

However, I worry about the Trust's long-term goals for stabilization. In light of my aesthetic account of appreciation, I would prefer the Trust keep at least one of the structures as a ruin. Because there are multiple structures on the island, this should not be unduly difficult. In cases where uniqueness is not as important an issue (and consequently, historical value – which often correlated with uniqueness), there might be more of a case to allow a structure to ruinate. While I acknowledge that uniqueness is a slippery concept, so is historical importance; what is important to one might not be important to another. These desiderata will need to be discussed within the community. But I still believe it is reasonable for a community to decide to preserve structures they find importantly historical, and perhaps allow less important structures to ruinate. Among the Bannerman structures, the best candidate for continued ruination is the arsenal. As previously stated, the residence is being rehabilitated as well as stabilized for reasons essential to the viability of its aesthetic appreciation, i.e., its accessibility. Moreover, the Trust has decided to repurpose the residence into a visitor's center. The tower is also being stabilized, which stabilization may ultimately exceed UNESCO prescriptions of anastylosis and become more akin to reconstruction. The tower, which is falling down, could continue to ruinate, but massive intervention might render it a reconstruction. The arsenal, on the other hand, is not yet subject to a plan that would prevent its continued ruination.

If the Trust decides to reconstruct the tower, it should be honest and clear about the level of work put into the structure. Where walls have been stabilized or non-original materials have been added, visitor information should explicitly say so. Clear and explicit signage in

²⁷⁶ An ancillary but interesting issue is whether or not gardens can be ruins. I'm inclined to say they can be, but not importantly so since they do not as clearly evoke some of the most powerful aesthetic experiences that architectural ruins can.

reconstructions—signage which documents what the structure looked like at different points—is crucial for accurate site interpretation. Some reconstructions are better than others; and some reconstructions serve different purposes. The purpose of any reconstruction should be explained to visitors. The Trust can easily accomplish this guidance with respect to the tower because its history has been documented, and we know what it once looked like.

My concrete recommendation for the Bannerman arsenal is to provide for ruin stabilization via managed decline. Managing the decline might include diverting water, buttressing some of the falling walls using materials that are obviously not original, clearing paths around the structure for better viewing (this has already been done), or sectioning off high collapse areas so visitors can safely visit the site. I also suggest that the Trust label any prior reconstruction to clearly show what has been altered, what materials are original to the structure, and what non-original materials have been added. While my recommendations are in line with UNESCO prescriptions for anastylosis, they are stricter because I am arguing against any reconstruction, even reconstruction using original materials.

5.2.5 *Conclusions*

In sum, I have presented reasons to believe that there are good aesthetic reasons to allow ruins to continue to ruinate rather than preserve or reconstruct them. In keeping ruins as ruins, I have advocated for a specific form of ruin stabilization, namely managed decline. I have argued against quickening decay, keeping ruins as found, and arresting decay completely. I believe managed decline is our best option to preserve what is uniquely compelling about ruins, it is the position that follows from ontology based aesthetic pluralism. In the next section I will discuss why keeping ruins *in situ* is so important.

5.3 MỸ SƠN

5.3.1 *Introduction*

In this section I will be discussing the Mỹ Sơn archaeological complex and explaining why I believe it is so important to keep ruins *in situ*. As noted at several points throughout this dissertation, the tension between aesthetic value and historic value is inescapable; while a ruin might elicit powerful aesthetic experiences, allowing something to decay has the unfortunate side effect of losing important historical data. Conversely, when an historic site is “in ruins,” choosing to preserve the historic value risks losing some age value (which figures prominently in the aesthetic value of ruins). Whether a community ought to weigh age value or historic value more heavily is not something that can be resolved in an *a priori* manner. Rather, it is a question that ruin enthusiasts and restorers must grapple with continuously. While historic value and aesthetic value are often at odds, one thing archaeologists and aestheticists can agree upon is a desire to keep the ruin *in situ*.

5.3.2 *Keeping Mỹ Sơn In Situ*

In chapter one, I discussed temple G1 at Mỹ Sơn and labeled it a reconstruction. G1 was severely ruined, with most of its walls in serious collapse. A team of scientists used a 3-D reconstruction of the temple to determine which nearby stones were once a part of the temple walls.²⁷⁷ The scientists then placed the stones in their original location. This process complied with UNESCO prescriptions for anastylosis. However, depending on the degree of confidence with which stones were selected to be placed, it seems to me more accurate to say that the process lies somewhere between reconstruction and restoration. How much guesswork is permissible in reconstructing a

²⁷⁷ Barazzetti et al., “Photogrammetric Reconstruction of the Mỹ Sơn ‘G1’ Temple in Vietnam.”

ruin? What amount of potential error should be acceptable? At what point do we draw the line? In general, the proper aim of a restoration of a Champa kalan would be to preserve authenticity while also displaying the kalan to best resemble what it looked like at the height of its architectural form. This is, in fact, the balance preservers of cultural property have struck. Tourists get to visit these sites and see a kalan that closely resemble those from the ninth century, while being assured of the authenticity (of the original materials) of the objects presented.

Those responsible for the preservation of Mỹ Sơn are torn between preserving the historical value of the kalan and preserving the aesthetic value it holds as a ruin. One objection to my ruin-stabilization proposal might be that by allowing this important ninth century site to ruin, I will allow it to disappear along with any data it might provide. As an item of historic value, we might want to preserve the kalan by, for example, removing it and cataloguing it in a museum. Indeed, an argument could be made to preserve the object by whatever means necessary, even if that means removing it from the region.²⁷⁸ In support of such an argument, it might be pointed out that this region has experienced a fair amount of political turmoil. In fact, a US air raid destroyed a major kalan on the site during the Vietnam War. As I mentioned in my first chapter, bomb craters can be seen throughout the site. While I agree that there may be extenuating circumstances that justify the removal of architectural structures (such as possible destruction due to war), I have argued that keeping Mỹ Sơn *in situ* is the right thing to do, both ethically and aesthetically.

²⁷⁸ Later in the chapter I will discuss when such extreme moves might be necessary or appropriate (e.g., The Temple of Dendur).

One line of support for this conclusion is provided in Sanchita Balachandran's "Object Lessons: The Politics of Preservation and Museum Building in Western China in the Early Twentieth Century."²⁷⁹ Balachandran argues:

Although preservation supposes the protection of an original, authentic artifact, the application of preservation principles always marks or changes the original object. When a site is dismantled for the purposes of preservation, both the removed fragments and the site are physically and symbolically transformed.²⁸⁰

The desire to take apart and "save" the artifact from the ravages of time is the desire to treat the ruin like an authored work of art. It is, I believe, to apply modern Western museological values inappropriately. When we take an object out of its environment, we change the object and consequently change the way we engage with it. As Balachandran says, the object (the ruin in this case) is obviously transformed physically: if we were to remove a frieze from the kalan or the kalan from the site, we would have to carve up and potentially destroy the objects.

But further, and perhaps more importantly, we symbolically transform the object from ruin – an object in the process of decay and inextricably wedded to its environment – into a sculpture. Allen Carlson warns us against such a transgression when it comes to the aesthetic appreciation of nature.²⁸¹ When we remove driftwood from the shores of the beach and place it on our mantle, we remove an object from its natural environment and treat it like a "readymade." While there can be value in looking at objects in this light, it cuts off certain types of appreciation that might produce richer aesthetic experiences.²⁸² When we remove the kalan from its *in situ* home, we create a different sort of aesthetic object, one that represents our culture's choices as well as the originating culture's choices. The ninth century kalan morphs from a ruin-

²⁷⁹ Balachandran, "Object Lessons."

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁸¹ I discussed this in more depth in my chapter three.

²⁸² As discussed in my second and third chapters, treating a natural object (or a ruin) as a sculpture precludes appreciation of its context within nature and within its cultural landscape.

in-process to a contemporary sculpture-like kalan, reflecting the museological, economic, political, and commercial choices and practices of the 2010s (not to mention imposing a tradition of colonial/imperial appropriation of cultural treasures). This new object is a hybrid that no longer solely represents Việt Nam's Buddhist and Hindu tradition, but also represents the hands of Western collectors and museological practices.²⁸³

If the desire were to preserve a particular frieze (such as was the case with the Parthenon friezes removed by Lord Elgin), castings of the friezes would produce faithful reproductions that could be referred to later after damage occurred. The desire to keep a viewshed stuck in a moment in time should be tempered by other considerations. These include, but are not limited to: the aesthetic integrity of the object, archaeological concerns (not wanting to destroy valuable data), and respect for descendant and local communities. Again, Balachandran discussing sites where immovable material culture was removed for "preservation" purposes:

[H]ow can sites recover from their losses? More importantly, how can nations that assume these sites as symbols of a national, collective cultural identity recover? What, if anything, do institutions holding such hybrid, entangled objects from these sites owe [the local and descendant communities]?²⁸⁴

The ruin is damaged when immovable cultural material is removed. However, the damage doesn't end there. There is damage done to the local and descendant population when items are removed from under their care. As I mentioned earlier, there might be cases where aesthetic integrity is a value that should be sacrificed in order to preserve other values. My point is only that aesthetic integrity should be weighed heavily.

In at least one case where a ruin was destroyed and partially relocated to a museum it seems fair to say that the *right* decision. This is the case of the Temple of Dendur, relocated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Temple of Dendur was once a ruin sitting on the western

²⁸³ Balachandran, 13

²⁸⁴ Balachandran, 23 [bracket my addition]

bank of the Nile It was threatened, along with many other smaller temples in the region, by the construction of the great Aswan Dam. Many critics accuse the Egyptian government of selling off the temple to the highest bidder and, journalists of the day dubbed the move “the Dendur Derby.”²⁸⁵ In a surprising eruption of insight, museum administrators, conservationists, and curators recognized that moving the temple destroyed its aesthetic unity and realized that moving it would cause an ontological shift in the object – it would turn into a sort of sculpture.



Figure 5.1 Temple of Dendur, wikicommons

Before I address the question of why, all things considered, moving the Temple of Dendur was the right thing to do, I want to point out that there *are* sculptures that are made to

²⁸⁵ <https://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/198003/a.temple.at.the.met.htm>, accessed February 5, 2015. The United States gave \$16 million to preserve the temple. In this gift was (potentially) an implicit agreement that the temple would end up in an American museum.

play off of or respond to their environment, some site-specific, some not.²⁸⁶ For example, Richard Serra's famous sculpture "Tilted Arc" was created specifically for its location (i.e., the Foley Federal Plaza). When the sculpture was removed eight years after it was installed, the artist appealed the decision stating that dismantling the sculpture was tantamount to destroying it. As a site-specific installation, he maintained, it could not exist except in the location it was designed for.²⁸⁷ Other sculptures are considered *site-responsive* rather than site-specific. Serra's "Tilted Arc" was site-specific, it could only exist in the Foley Federal Plaza; but Serra could have made a sculpture designed for any large plaza. If Serra made this artwork, let's call it "Disruptive Arc," then it could be moved from plaza to plaza without destroying its aesthetic integrity.

Relating this back to the Temple of Dendur, we observe that, during the Dendur Derby, museum administrators realized that moving the temple would result in *some* destruction of its aesthetic integrity. Their proposals show that they tried to treat the Temple like a site-responsive artwork. Boston's museum of Fine Art submitted plans to re-erect the temple on the Charles River; the Smithsonian proposed to re-erect the Temple on the banks of the Potomac, the idea being (one must assume) that the Temple would retain more aesthetic integrity if placed next to a river because it had originally been erected on such a site. However it was decided that the temple's sandstone was too delicate to be placed outdoors in either Boston's or Washington DC's climates. New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art won the bidding with a plan to place the temple in a glass structure – providing the environment of Central Park as background.

There were many critics of the proposal to bring the Temple of Dendur to the United States. Osbert Lancaster, English art critic and cartoonist, famously once said that moving

²⁸⁶ Some of these environment-dependent sculptures are kinetic (e.g., the Organin Zadir, or Soundgarden, both discussed in chapter two). Some of these are static, but are site specific.

²⁸⁷ Bresler, "Serra v. USA and Its Aftermath: Mandate for Moral Rights in America?"

Rameses' temple (at Abu Simbel) would turn the temple into “a slice of cheese on a dish.

Without its context Abu Simbel is worth nothing. It would look ridiculous.” Abu Simbel was left outdoors and remained in Egypt (unlike Dendur). Architect Kevin Roche, the person in charge of displaying Dendur didn't want to turn Dendur into “Disneyland,” placing the temple besides a fake river, and at first he wanted to treat the temple as a work of art, placing it in a museum, devoid of environmental context. However, just placing the temple on a pedestal would be treating this former ruin as a sort of readymade sculpture. “We decided it was better to give some sense of the original setting and the approach to the temple,” explains Roche. “After all, its origins are so tied to the Nile. So we built a wharf and landing, based on early sketches. Then we placed a reflecting pool before it, and a sloping wall of different stone behind it, suggesting the Nile and the cliffs of the original setting.”²⁸⁸ The glass of the walls of the Sackler Wing (where the temple is displayed) was specially made to evoke the light of Nubia. In face of losing the temple, moving it was the right decision, but several facts had to be present on the ground:

1. While the decision was divisive, the temple was a gift of the Egyptian government (who, had the legal right to give the Temple away and set the terms of relocation).
2. If the temple had not been moved, it would have been flooded by the construction of the dam.
3. Instead of treating the temple like a freestanding sculpture, the Metropolitan Museum treated the temple as a site-responsive object.²⁸⁹

I argue that when the temple was moved, it changed its ontological status. The Met tried to retain as much aesthetic integrity as possible in devising the space to house the temple. The Met also didn't try to erase the mark of time (and decay) on the temple. Nineteenth century graffiti (if you

²⁸⁸ <https://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/198003/a.temple.at.t>, This article appeared on pages 30-38 of the May/June 1980 print edition of *Saudi Aramco World*. By William H. Rockett.

²⁸⁹ A similar treatment was given to the Temple of Debod in Madrid's central Parque de la Montana. While it is slightly jarring to see an Egyptian temple in the middle of downtown Madrid, the Temple itself is set with a reflecting pool, jetting out into the sky. For a picture of the Temple of Debod, look here: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Templo_de_Debod.JPG

can call them that) can be found carved into the temple; one prominent graffito reads: “L. Politi 1819.” Criticism might be levied against the Met, perhaps, for the inelegantly installed wheelchair ramp that (arguably) disrupts the intended aesthetic effect.²⁹⁰ But it is significant here that permission was given to move the object, and that people recognized that by moving the object its ontological status changed.

One might ask: What’s so wrong with changing an object from a ruin to a sculpture? Again, the aesthetic integrity argument makes it plain that value is lost in this shift of ontology. Archaeologists also would believe that, without careful attention to cataloguing all the data, information can be lost when disrupting material culture. Assuming we don’t lose any data, is there anything wrong with changing the ontological status of the object from a ruin to a sculpture? As I have previously argued, I do believe we lose something of aesthetic importance when changing a ruin into a sculpture. Once again, I reiterate that to appreciate the ruin *qua* ruin, it must remain *in situ*. What is lost when a ruin is turned into a sculpture is the relation the ruin has to its landscape, its relationship to its cultural landscape, the important dialectical exchange between the natural and artifactual (which is essential to keep the ruin *qua* ruin), the ways an *in situ* ruin can evoke the sublime and picturesque, and more.

We have just discussed the problems with taking a ruin out of its context (thereby changing its ontological status and undercutting its status as a ruin). But UNESCO and the Vietnamese government have no interest in moving Mỹ Sơn, although (as previously mentioned) many heads of sculptures have been moved and/or stolen since the site was rediscovered. Recognizing damage and decay helps put the passage of time in the foreground of our minds when engaging aesthetically with ruins. This is especially true with ancient ruins where the

²⁹⁰ For an image of the wheelchair ramp, look here: <http://serpentinemagazine.com/2014/12/wheelchair-lift/>

desire to re-imagine what the structure once looked like is strong. This imaginative reconstruction is one type of ruin appreciation, but, as I argued in the previous chapters, is not the most important type of appreciation. We can walk around one kalan and imagine who used to live near and worship at the site. Were the people happy? What forced them from their homes? This is how we engage with ruins in the past tense.

But it is just as important to engage with what's currently on the ground – not backward looking, nor forward looking. Look at the way the moss has encroached upon the stone, the way the wall has fallen, the smoothness of worn stone, etc. There are important aesthetic experiences to have in the present tense. In the present, without thinking about the future or the past, we can have an important and meaningful multisensory engagement with what is there on the ground. Ruins can be felt, smelled, even tasted. Looking at the now moment of a ruin, we can also employ the mode of the picturesque, looking at the ruin as a part of a picturesque landscape. This is still looking at ruins in the present tense. Again, this is but one type of appreciation and, as I have previously argued, a type of appreciation that should not take precedence over others. Contemplating the future of Mỹ Sơn, we can imagine the kalans decay even further. We can imagine the landscape envelop them in such a way that they become a mere trace, or a ghost. And finally, in recognizing this tripartite nature of ruins: imagining the past, engaging with the present, and projecting their death in the future, is constitutive of the aesthetic experience distinctive of ruins: those of *memento mori* and the sublime. Knowing that civilizations once worshiped in this center, and that in the future only rubble will remain can help spur the important sorts of aesthetic experiences on the person engaging with the ruin.

5.3.3 *Recommendations for M̃y S̃on*

My concrete recommendations for M̃y S̃on are (not surprisingly) similar to those I made regarding Bannerman Castle. Just like many ruin sites, there is not just one structure in question. Bannerman Island had the arsenal (Castle), the Tower, and the residence house. M̃y S̃on has 17 structures in 14 architectural groupings. My first recommendation is to identify which of these structures the community would deem ruins. They should also determine if, in their plans for the future, any of the structures will be reconstructed, or repurposed.

Since receiving UNESCO World Heritage status, M̃y S̃on is bound by the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments, which states that, “all reconstruction work should...be ruled out *a priori*.” Thus, M̃y S̃on may not reconstruct any of the kalans if they wish to continue to receive money from UNESCO. Further, the Venice Charter proclaims,

“Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and this use be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form.”

Thus, there is a distinction made between reconstruction and restoration. Under this guidance, the aim of a reconstruction of a Champa kalan would be to create something that resembled the ruin’s architectural cousin – to show visitors what a ninth century kalan looked like right after its initial construction finished. Reconstruction, therefore, would be partially made of “authentic” (i.e., ninth century) material, and partially made of modern materials. The “authenticity,” if we may call it that, would lie in its resemblance to the architectural marvel that it once was.

There is value in reconstructions, especially if one wants to continue preserve use-value. For example, recently the Loew’s Theater Corporation completed at \$95 million renovation of the Kings Theater in Brooklyn, New York. The original theater was completed between 1929 and 1930 and fell into ruin in the 1970s. In the renovation (or what I will call reconstruction), the

goal of the developer was to mimic the appearance of the 1929 theater using updated materials. Original materials were used if they could be found (such as original glass chandeliers), but new versions were made to replace items that no longer existed.²⁹¹ The ceiling was regilded, and modern toilet facilities installed. New seats, modeled after the old ones, were installed. The theater is a true beauty.

If the Kings Theater had been restored according to UNESCO prescriptions (in contrast to reconstructed), the dust and dirt would have been removed, and items that had fallen down would have been put back in their original location. For example, if a chunk of stained glass had been found on the ground, the glass could be placed in its original context, and—if it had been scarred—it should be made clear that the glass had been altered. No new toilets would be allowed. (However, toilet facilities on a nearby lot would be permissible). And no new seating would be installed. If the fabric of some upholstered seats had torn, tears could be sewn up only if the patchwork was made explicit and visible to the naked eye. Needless to say, this version of the Kings Theater would not nearly be as comfortable or pleasant a place to watch a movie or performance in as was the original. But it would, in a sense, be more authentic since it showed the mark of time on its presence, and contained a majority of original materials. However it would not be nearly as functional as a theater. Communities need to weigh the benefits of each approach, and I believe the state of New York made the right call to reconstruct, rather than restore, this historic theater.²⁹² The goal of New York was only partially aesthetic. The state had

²⁹¹ Photos of the theater restoration may be found here: http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2010/02/03/nyregion/0203LOWESTHEATER_index.html. Photos of the theater in its current incarnation may be found here: <http://www.kingstheatre.com/multimedia/photos/current-renovations>

²⁹² It is another questions whether or not the \$95 million could have been put to better use. At that price tag, each theater seat costs \$32,000. Many in New York are objecting to that price tag, saying that that money would have been better spent on basic social services. More than half of the \$95 million for the renovation came from taxpayer dollars. This is exacerbated by the fact that Kings Theater is in a solidly

to weigh the different factors: the evocative capacity of the theater-cum-ruin, the authenticity of the theater-cum ruins (with all of its original materials), the use-value of the space as a theater, the historic value of the space, the educational value of the space (i.e., allowing people to see what a theater of that time would look like), and more. These decisions, as I have previously argued, cannot be made *a priori*, and will involve difficult discussions and decisions.

Since there are many structures at Mý Son Archaeological complex, I would argue that at least one of the structures ought to be left in ruins. It is possible to reconstruct one kalan (as was done with G1) to provide tourists with a glimpse into what the ninth century kalans once looked like. Reconstructions using anastylosis help preserve historic value, and, as I mentioned in my introduction to this section, historic value must be weighed against aesthetic value. But in cases where we have multiple structures, a solution seems ready-made: different processes can be put in places (e.g., reconstructions, ruin stabilization, replicas, etc.) to serve different purposes.

In this dissertation I have presented an extended argument for the aesthetic value of ruined structures. Eight hours to the south west of Mý Son is the Angkor Wat Archaeological Complex, which provides us with an illustrative example of the aesthetic value of ruined structures. Of all the structures housed at the Angkor Wat Archaeological Complex, Ta Prohm is the most photographed; is also a structure that has had little intervention, using only ruin stabilization (as I have described).



Fig 5.2 Ta Phrom, photo by author

Some readers might recognize this ruin as the “Tomb Raider” temple, featured in the movie (and video game) of the same name. The structure is not the most complete structure in the archaeological complex; nor is it the most historically significant. Rather, it is the structure that has been most uprooted by the banyan trees. It is here we clearly see nature overtaking the work of (ancient) mankind. The walls of the ruin are in the process of turning into rubble. Unlike many other structures at the Angkor Wat Archaeological Complex, this ruin has been allowed to ruinate in part because of its evocative aesthetic qualities.



Fig 5.3 Ta Phrom sign detail, photo by author

Signs warn you that the ruin is unstable and must be approached with care. Ta Prohm exemplifies Ginsberg’s statement that “Ruins would be ruined by restoration.”²⁹³ Similarly, M̃y Son as a much younger World Heritage site has not had as much world attention and money poured into it. The custodians of M̃y Son are just starting the rehabilitation of some of the structures on the grounds. M̃y Son is at a crossroads, having just spent money to reconstruct G1. I hope they invest some time into “preserving” some of the ruins on site. Ruin stabilization might require investing in water drainage systems, but would be less costly than the G1 reconstruction. Whatever the custodians of M̃y Son choose, they should not allow their cultural heritage to move away from the site – a lesson they learned when earlier archaeologists made off with some of the site’s more spectacular sculptures. Whether we want to preserve the historic value of M̃y Son or

²⁹³ Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins*, 298.

showcase the aesthetic power of Mỹ Sơn's ruins, the prescription to leave the structures *in situ* is the same.

Chapter 6. APPLICATION TO NEW RUINS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this final section I will discuss the two “new” ruins presented in my first chapter. Here we will see a contrast between Detroit’s ruin porn tourism practices and Seattle’s Gas Works Park ruin appreciation, one being an example of best practices (i.e., Gas Works Park), and the other being problematic in various ways (i.e., Detroit’s ruin tourism).

6.2 MICHIGAN CENTRAL TRAIN STATION

6.2.1 *Introduction*

Michigan Central Train station is a non-controversial example of a ruin, and is one of many such ruins in Detroit. These modern, industrial, or ruins of the American “rustbelt,” are the subject of contemporary “ruin porn” now ubiquitous on the internet. Both professional and amateur photographers have flocked to Detroit to take pictures of these ruins. Subsequently, unofficial ruin tours, which provide opportunities for photographs, have become increasingly popular.²⁹⁴ In an article for the *New York Times Magazine*, Mark Binelli describes one of these tours:

One afternoon at the ruins of the 3.5-million-square-foot Packard Plant, I ran into a family from Paris. The daughter said she read about the building in *Lonely Planet*; her father had a camcorder hanging around his neck. Another time, while conducting my own tour for a guest, a group of German college students drove up. When queried as to the appeal of Detroit, one of them gleefully exclaimed, “I came to see the end of the world!”²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ The link between ruin appreciation and tourism is not accidental. The eighteenth century’s interest in ruins was triggered by the new practice of the “Grand Tour.” Those noblemen with enough money to tour Greece and Italy returned with stories of beautiful ruins.

²⁹⁵ Binelli, “How Detroit Became the World Capital of Staring at Abandoned Old Buildings.”

Jesse Welter, a 42-year-old Detroit native, has been making a living by taking people inside these decrepit structures. His “urban exploration” tours are illegal (since tourists are encouraged to trespass), but popular. However, many Detroiters are uncomfortable with these burgeoning, ruin tour businesses. “The decay is not cool, not arty-farty,” Jean Vortkamp, a community activist and onetime mayoral candidate, told the *LA Times*. “I see the lady with bags and three layers of clothes on, and then I see a group of white young people climb out of their dad’s cars with cameras that are worth so much.”²⁹⁶ Many Detroiters see the tours as exploitative, hence the moniker “ruin porn.” The tours have only increased since Detroit filed for bankruptcy. In a city where forty-four percent of the inhabitants live below the poverty line, ruin tours seem to offer a lucrative business opportunity. Why, then, do so many of the city’s inhabitants cry “foul”?

The question is whether Detroit ruin tours constitute a form of morally permissible cultural tourism or a form of exploitation. In the previous section I argued that modern ruins and ancient ruins have more in common than is often thought. Here I will show how modern ruin tourism faces some pitfalls that ancient ruin tourism does not. In what follows I will first describe Detroit ruin tours. I will then consider whether exploitation is the right concept to use in discussing modern ruin tours. In light of that discussion, I will address the common criticisms leveled by local Detroiters against these tours. Finally, I will present some recommendations for means of modern ruin tours to avoid these worries.

²⁹⁶ Semuels, “Detroit’s Abandoned Buildings Draw Tourists instead of Developers.”

6.2.2 *Detroit Ruin Tours*

Detroit ruin tours primarily serve as opportunities for tourists to take photographs, rather than to learn about the history and current conditions of Detroit.²⁹⁷ These photographs have certain features in common. In one of the most famous articles on the Detroit ruin porn movement, “Detroitism,” John Patrick Leary describes the key features of Detroit’s ruin porn as:

the exuberant connoisseurship of dereliction; the unembarrassed rejoicing at the ‘excitement’ of it all, hastily balanced by the liberal posturing of the sympathy for a ‘man-made Katrina;’ and most importantly, the absence of people other than... ‘street zombies.’ The city is a shell, and so are the people who occasionally stumble into the photographer’s viewfinder.²⁹⁸

Leary's contemporary version of *ruinlust* differs from its eighteenth century namesake in that many in the residents of the city are resentful of the gazers.

²⁹⁷Perhaps part of the reason these tours serve as opportunities for photographs more than opportunities for education is 1) a lack of signage along the tour; 2) the history is so new that people don’t feel the need for a history lesson.

²⁹⁸ Leary, “Detroitism.”

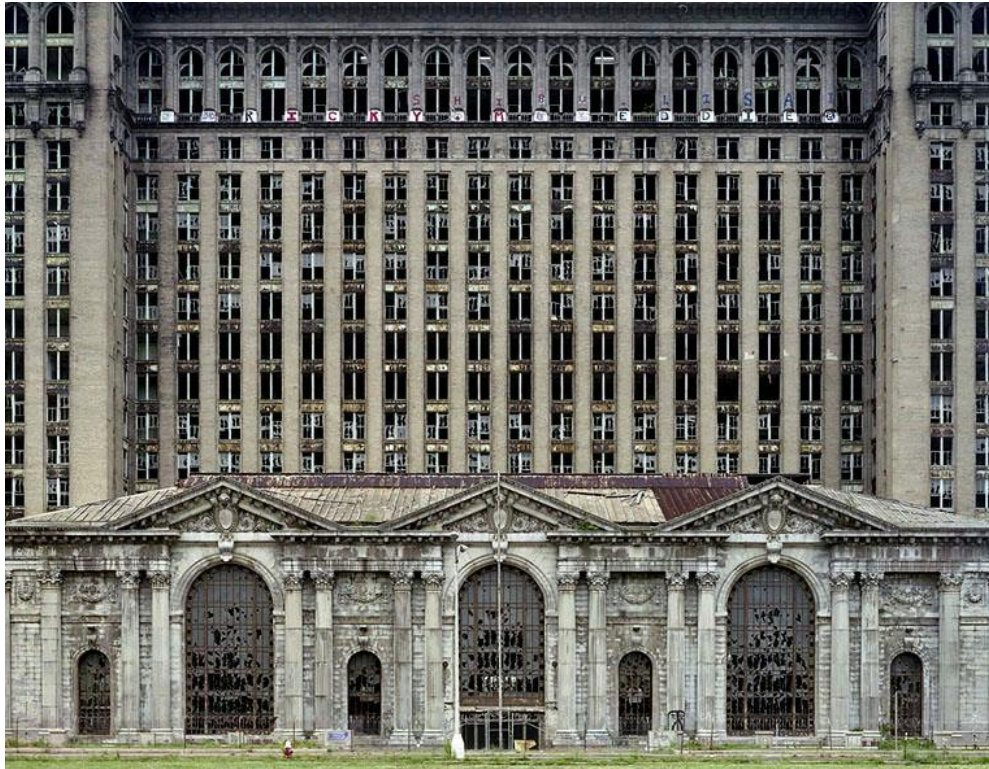


Figure 6.1. Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *Michigan Central Train Station*. 2010

If you take one of Jesse Welter’s Detroit ruin tours, you will leave at 7 a.m. to avoid both police and native Detroit ruin-porn naysayers. His \$45 tour will last around three hours, during which you’ll visit some of Detroit’s most famous ruins: The Packard Automotive Plant, the Michigan Central Train Station, and the East Grand Boulevard Methodist Church.²⁹⁹ His tours can be booked via his Facebook page³⁰⁰, and are billed as photographic.³⁰¹ He also runs photographic workshops under the company name Motor City Photo Workshops (MCPW).

²⁹⁹ Newkirk, “Urban Exploration Tours Bringing Drove of Tourists to Detroit Ruins | Roadtrippers - Maps Built for Travelers.”

³⁰⁰ “Parker Creative Photography - Royal Oak, MI - Photographic Services & Equipment, Photographer | Facebook.” (<https://www.facebook.com/ParkerCreativePhotography>)

³⁰¹ His company is now named Parker Creative Photography: Photographic Services.

MCPW's motto is "Beautifying Blight."³⁰² Welter will also take you to the ruin of St. Agnes's church, where you might see scrawled on the church wall: "Go Home Jesse ... We HATE you and your tour bus."

Some Detroiters think Welter is exploiting the city's ruins for monetary gain; others disagree. Bryan Verhelle, a blogger on *Guernica*, says, "By the way, I hear Greece is complaining that tourists are flocking to the Acropolis." *Lonely Planet*³⁰³ and other guides have benefited from ruin porn, why shouldn't individuals?

6.2.3 *Ruth Sample and Exploitation*

Ruth Sample asserts that exploitation is a failure to respect the inherent value in a person or thing.³⁰⁴ This lack of respect amounts to degradation. If exploitation is the failure to respect, then exploitation can occur even when all parties are better off (all things considered).³⁰⁵ According to Sample, there are three ways we may be involved in degradation:

1. We can fail to respect a person by neglecting what is necessary for that person's well-being or flourishing;
2. We can fail to respect by taking advantage of an injustice done to him; and
3. We can fail to respect by commoditizing an aspect of that person's being that ought not be commoditized.³⁰⁶

³⁰²"Motor City Photography Workshops | Beautifying Blight with MCPW."

(<http://motorcityphotoworkshops.com/MCPW/beautifying-blight-with-mcpw/>)

³⁰³ Although *Lonely Planet* has since removed information about ruin tours from its website, its 2011 guide lists such tours.

³⁰⁴ While Sample does not explicitly claim her account is Kantian, I believe that it is (implicitly).

³⁰⁵ The type of respect Sample writes of reflects Stephen Darwall's concept of "moral recognition respect" (not appraisal respect), where a member of the moral community is owed such respect by virtue of being the sort of creature who is part of the moral community. See Darwall, "Two Kids of Respect."

³⁰⁶ Sample, *Exploitation; What It Is and Why It's Wrong*, 57.

On this account, exploitation is not so much a failure to advance the morally worthy aims of others (an imperfect duty for Kant), but exploitation consists in a failure to treat others as ends in themselves (a perfect duty). What is exploited, according to Sample, is a vulnerability or a need to survive or flourish. She states:

Thus Exploitation as Degradation is connected to vulnerability because vulnerability is typically (if not always) at the root of exploitation. When we exploit others, we make use of their genuine need for the sake of advantage in ways that fail to respect them.³⁰⁷

“Necessities for well-being” could be spelled out in a number of productive ways: as Rawls’s primary goods,³⁰⁸ as Nussbaum’s requisites for human flourishing,³⁰⁹ or as Sen’s prerequisites for freedom.³¹⁰ By giving money to a poverty tour instead of to a charity aimed at alleviation of poverty (or charities designed to increase political representation of the poor, etc.) we seem to be exhibiting a lack of concern for what is needed for people in these communities to flourish.³¹¹

Sample’s second form of exploitation involves taking advantage of injustices that leave people in need of these basic goods. Thus, one way in which we exploit others is by abusing their

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 75.

³⁰⁸ Rawls’ primary goods are things that “every rational man is presumed to want.” These include “social” primary goods such as rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income and wealth, not the least of which is the social basis of self-respect. They also include “natural” primary goods such as health and vigor, intelligence and imagination. (Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 62.)

³⁰⁹ Nussbaum’s “capabilities approach” in which she defines capabilities as the “basic powers of choice that make a moral claim for opportunities to be realized and to flourish.” Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). A list of Nussbaumian capabilities are: life (to have a normal life span); bodily integrity; sense, imagination, thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; interaction with other species; play; and political and material control over one’s environment. (Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*, 41–42.)

³¹⁰ Amartya Sen believes freedom is instrumental to and constitutive of a good life. He lists different sorts of freedoms that are necessary for this good life, including: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparencies of government, and protective security. His account focuses on the political realm (as do Nussbaum’s and Rawls’).

³¹¹ The worry here is that if all that is required to get rid of exploitation is money, we could still be engaged in poverty tourism and voyeurism as long as the funds provided went to a worthy cause. I think even if the funds went to a cause that aimed to help people in poverty to flourish, worries about voyeuristic exploitation remain.

vulnerability, and therefore treating them disrespectfully. Poor people are especially vulnerable in ruin tourism because they lack the social and political capital to dissent from this arrangement.

Sample sees her third form of exploitation, inappropriate commodification, as the most controversial. Inappropriate commodification is “at the heart of many claims of exploitation. Some transactions seem to fail to respect the value inherent in a person because they ask that person to trade something that, it seems, he ought not to trade.”³¹² The notion of inappropriate commodification could be applied to making something beautiful (or fun) that ought not be made beautiful (or fun). In the case of poverty tourism we could inappropriately find delight witnessing the struggles of others (e.g., “Isn’t it quaint that she walks all that way for water?”). Or we could make something beautiful that ought not be made beautiful (e.g., “I got a really beautiful photo of that child with the distended belly in that orphanage.”).³¹³ Tourism in poor areas can be seen to ask locals to trade their self-respect and privacy for a (possible) financial benefit.³¹⁴

³¹² Sample, *Exploitation; What It Is and Why It’s Wrong*, 57.

³¹³ It is a commonplace of artistic theory (Ruskin’s, for example) that anything can be made beautiful by seeing it one way rather than another. However, many aestheticians still believe that there are more and less compassionate ways to portray your subject. While Dianne Arbus photographs people who have atypical bodies or clothing, her photographs are often considered beautiful because of the humility and beauty she imparts in her portraits. She illuminates the beauty often overlooked in marginalized people, rather than exploiting the foibles of the ugly.

³¹⁴ One may ask if there is voyeurism in all tours, whether slum or not. Is it morally problematic for us to gawk at people walking to work while on a city tour of Washington DC? I think worries of exploitative voyeurism could still hold. For example, my friend owned a brownstone in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington DC that just happened to be on a popular walking tour. Every morning he was faced with onlookers peering through his kitchen window to find him eating his morning cereal. In this situation something has gone awry. By buying this house my friend did not agree to give up his privacy. He is an injured third party in this situation, and the tourists are doing something morally inappropriate by peering into a private citizen’s house (in fact UNESCO has discussed this very issue in their “Hoi An Protocol,” which states that tours must respect the privacy of those living and working inside historic buildings.) However, I think most of us can see that the exploitation occurring in this situation is not as traumatic as in the poverty tour case. Why? Perhaps it is because my friend had a choice to move, and therefore isn’t as vulnerable as those who don’t have the choice. Exploitation, I believe, exists along a continuum; it comes in degrees.

We can extrapolate from Sample's account and say that tours run by "natives" which return profit to local communities are *not* inherently exploitative if the person organizing the tour is doing everything in his or her power to respect and promote the flourishing of others.³¹⁵ However, such a policy would seem to conflict with Sample's third type of exploitation: commodifying an aspect of a person's being that ought not be commodified. Let me explain. The example Sample gives is the case of an African-American waiter at a country club who puts up with being called "boy" and other racist insults from his customers. If the waiter truly needs the job, Sample believes this to be a case of exploitation. If the country club is paying the waiter four times the market rate and "exploiting" his greed, however, it is a different case. According to Sample, if greed is a vulnerability, this may be exploitation. If greed is not a vulnerability, the consequences of greed probably should not be regarded as exploitation. Not only is this an odd claim, I believe this solution is at odds with Sample's third kind of exploitation. If the exploiters are treating as a fungible good something that ought not be fungible, then no amount of money can compensate for the disrespect. If the country club is treating someone's respect for his or her racial identity as a fungible good and it should not be treated as such, the greed of the victim is not morally salient.

6.2.4 *Ethical Criticism of Ruin Tours*

Comments criticizing photographs of Detroit's ruin tours on the basis of exploitation are ubiquitous in the blogosphere. But one obvious question to ask is: who, exactly, is being

³¹⁵ This interpretation follows from an example Sample uses in her book. She states that the factory owner, if he makes little profit and is doing the best he can by his workers, is not exploiting them if he pays them low wages. He is trying to contribute to their flourishing. However, if the factory owner makes a huge profit and is neglectful of how his stingy wages affect the flourishing of his employees, then he is exploiting them (Sample, *Exploitation*, 89).

exploited? The subject of ruin porn (both the photographs and the tours) are not persons but buildings. Surely the buildings are not being exploited! Perhaps the objects of exploitation are the Detroiters no longer able to afford their homes, the Detroiters who have moved from middle-class to lower class, or the Detroiters who suffer by living amongst dilapidated structures. One could argue that photographs of derelict buildings serve as a window into the poverty, oppression, and disenfranchisement of Detroit's residents. As the criticism goes, these people should be allowed to suffer in private, without others aestheticizing their grief.³¹⁶



Figure 6.2. Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre, *United Artists Theater*. 2010

³¹⁶ We aestheticize grief in other context, including funeral photographs, musical requiems, and lavish memorial services. The difference, I believe, is that requiems and memorial services are being done out of respect for the grieving whereas “ruin porn” is not made out of respect for the inhabitants of the city.

But, on this interpretation, the very people supposedly being exploited in Detroit ruin tour and photographs are absent; they are, in fact, *noticeably* absent from the photographs. As Leary correctly observes, one of the central features of ruin porn is “the absence of people other than... ‘street zombies.’”³¹⁷ Not only are the purportedly exploited *not* portrayed in ruin porn, neither are their artifacts (e.g., their houses or belongings). The subject of these tours and photographs are train stations, automotive plants, and arts centers, not single- or multi-family residences. Don Hammond writes,

Comparatively little ‘ruin porn’ focuses on the vast amounts of now-decrepit single-family wood frame homes that were erected quickly and cheaply in the early decades of the last century to house the throngs of manufacturing workers in Detroit. Neighborhood after neighborhood in Detroit is filled with these buildings, but they have far less romance about them because they were never remarkable structures in the first place. **They’re not ruined icons of a once-golden era.**³¹⁸

In Detroit, the most photographed ruined buildings are the United Artist Theater (See Fig. 6.2) and the Michigan Central Train Station (See Figs. 6.1 and 6.3). Both are buildings that were well constructed, and beautiful in their prime. Again, Hammond:

There is a crucial point that should be acknowledged in all of this, and it has to do with the fundamental architectural qualities of the once-grand and now crumbling buildings that form the real heart of Detroit’s ‘ruin porn.’ I suspect that what makes these contemporary images interesting to most people is that they show structures that were designed and built with a level of craft and materials that are more or less unthinkable today.³¹⁹

It is this push and pull between the grand and the decaying that I believe is visually arresting.

This is why images of the Beaux Arts train station are more prevalent than images of decaying,

³¹⁷ Leary, “Detroitism.”

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

shoddily made, mid-century single-family houses, of which Detroit has thousands. This is also why ruin tours focus on grand, large structures rather than single-family homes.

Though the force of the voyeurism criticism is greater when the photographic safari's subject is a person, it is nonetheless reasonable to suppose that ruin porn viewers over-distance themselves from the circumstances portrayed in their tour. There is a type of “otherizing” in all forms of *ruinlust* because we are often looking at the remains of lost or fallen civilizations. This otherizing is magnified when we look at the ruins of our own civilization because we distance something that should be quite close to us (because, in one sense, it *is*). The fact that the images rarely have people in them is yet another way the photographers distance the audience from the moral issue at hand. And while the otherizing criticism seems most true of viewing carefully-cropped ruin photographs, it is also true of ruin tours. On Welter’s guided tours, tourists avoid interacting with Detroiters, and thus receive a carefully “cropped” tour of Detroit.

This leads to another criticism. These tours generally neither help the poor nor address the systems that created the poverty. People are inclined to purchase equipment to take pictures of the ruins, but not to give money to help local Detroiters.³²⁰ *Vice* magazine stated this criticism more bluntly: “you can’t toss a chunk of Fordite without hitting some schmuck with a camera worth more than your house.”³²¹ Obviously, self-guided tours (using guidebooks such as *Lonely Planet*) add nothing to the economy besides the ancillary benefits of having visitors in your city (e.g., hotel bookings, dining out, etc.).

The pre-existing guided ruin tours also distance the tourist from the site, which is especially morally problematic when the site is a part of the tourist's own contemporary society. As Leary states, “this is not Rome or Greece, vanished civilizations; these ruins are our own, and

³²⁰ This isn’t unique to Detroit. Many tourist invest in expensive photographic equipment yet are unwilling to help local populations.

³²¹ Morton, “Something, Something, Something, Detroit | VICE | United States.”

the society they indict is ours as well. As a purely aesthetic object, even with the best intentions, ruin photography cannot help but exploit a city's misery."³²² With ancient sites, such as Pompeii, we cannot help but distance ourselves because we see them as culturally connected to ancient civilizations. Photographs of modern ruins from tours depict our own civilization, which we have a present stake in and power over. When the ruin / photograph portrays an ancient civilization, we view the photograph as part of a historical record of poverty, war or decline. But ruin tours / photographs of contemporary society seem to underscore the moral problem at hand. While historicity may lessen the moral dimension of such *ruinlust*, there is the added moral element of being a member of the society or civilization responsible for the ruination and exploitation. According to Andrew Sargus Klein on *Splicetoday*: "Poverty, systemic failures of government—and any sense of progress—all of this is overshadowed by the photogenic qualities of a good slant of sunlight cutting through the lobby of an abandoned public library."³²³ Tourists, by their very nature, are outsiders. There will always be a tension between tourists and natives. But there are better and worse tours, better and worse attitudes that tourists can have toward the cities they tour.

A related concern is that contemporary ruin tours misrepresent the people of the region to the outside world. The best-known book of Detroit ruin porn is *The Ruins of Detroit*, by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre. In an interview with *The Observer*, Meffre states:

As Europeans, we were looking with an outsider's eye, which made downtown Detroit seem even more strange and dramatic. We are not used to seeing empty buildings left intact. In the Vanity ballroom alone, we saw four giant art deco chandeliers, beautiful objects, each one unique. It was almost unbelievable that they would still be there. It is as if America has no sense of its own architectural history and culture.³²⁴

³²² Leary, "Detroitism."

³²³ Klein, "Poverty Is So Photogenic | SPLICETODAY.com."

³²⁴ O'Hagen, "Detroit in Ruins: The Photographs of Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre | Feature | Art and Design | The Guardian."

Meffre reinforces the worry of misrepresentation by suggesting that the tourists and artists who visit Detroit believe the locals are too stupid to understand their own cultural heritage, too boorish to appreciate the value these building have. Meffre remains the cultural outsider, viewing Detroit and Detroiters with an arrogant, disrespectful attitude.

Many critics of ruin tours and the resultant ruin porn believe these tours, like poverty tours, siphon money from organizations that would help the region. They claim that when people value Detroit for ruin porn, they see all of Detroit as a ruin, and therefore see the city as beyond hope – a waste of resources. According to Matthew Newton,

What's problematic about [Detroit ruin tourism] is that it does little but gawk at the city and people in distress. In other words, it actually contributes to the problem by fueling the notion that Detroit (and depressed cities like it) are beyond help. The glut of disaster porn photography currently cycling on the Internet has outsiders convinced Detroit is a post-apocalyptic wasteland, devoid of hope or humanity.³²⁵

I agree that when we call Detroit a ruin, we are saying that Detroit is beyond help. Some have said this attitude is racially motivated; others say that Detroit just fell prey to deindustrialization, mismanagement, globalization, and the like. Willy Staley captures the latter notion with precision: “Now, after six decades of hucksterish boosterism – stadiums, casinos, Renaissance Centers! – Detroit has finally decided that it will have no massive reboot. The city is packing it in by tearing down thousands of vestiges of its old self, its gangrenous appendages that need to be amputated. It has finally come to terms with what it has become.”³²⁶ In other words, in lacking the desire to reboot, people accuse Detroit of allowing itself to decay. Consequently, the city is being seen as one big ruin. Leary, in “Detroitism,” calls this the metonymic use of ruin porn. The photographs, these critics suppose, stand in for Detroit, and do so poorly. I think this

³²⁵ Rosenberg, “Motown or Ghostown? Ruin Porn In Detroit - The Wire.”

³²⁶ Staley, “What’s Really Pornographic?”

criticism applies more to ruin photographs than to ruin tours, although the criticism gets leveled against both. Even if the tours are carefully constructed so that the tourists see little else of Detroit and Detroiters, they are still in the city and will (even if inadvertently) encounter bustling businesses, restaurants, museums, and artist communities (such as the Heidelberg Project³²⁷).

We can apply the theories of exploitation I discussed earlier to Detroit ruin tourism. These tours, and the tourists who take them, often treat people (or perhaps even the buildings) with less respect than they deserve. Sample discusses Joseph Raz's account of value, which claims three stages of proper engagement with value:

1. Have appropriate intentional states with respect to something of value;
2. Avoid destroying and/or try to preserve the valuable thing;
3. Fully engage only by appreciating and responding to its value.³²⁸

Raz's "engagement with value" theory clearly applies to people, but also applies to works of art. Raz asserts that people are the ultimate sources of value, being the only things that are ends-in-themselves. However, he also claims works of art have value; they command our respect because engaging with art is important for beings like us. In the case of Detroit ruin tourism, we may have obligations to engage with Detroiters, treating them with due respect, but we might have obligations to the buildings as well. Raz's strong claim is that we must avoid destroying items of value (and perhaps we have obligations to preserve them). We can fully engage with these buildings only after we understand their value. As the tours stand now, the buildings are presented as objects of photographic curiosity—decontextualized from art historical narrative, or

³²⁷ Staley, "What's Really Pornographic?"

³²⁸ Raz, *Value, Respect, and Attachment (The Seeley Lectures)*, 161–164.

any meaningful narrative about Detroit's decline.³²⁹ Perhaps in order to respect the buildings we must see them as part of an historical narrative and refrain from damaging them further.

6.2.5 *Some Suggestions for Modern Ruin Tours*

As seen in the previous section, ruin tours face many of the same criticisms as poverty tours. They also share the same benefits. First, ruin tours spur entrepreneurial business. Right now many tourists are using guidebooks to visit the ruins without a guide. This presents opportunities for the unemployed in Detroit to start legal photographic tours. Second, these tours might lead to ancillary benefits. For example, neighborhood restaurants might benefit from increased foot traffic. Detroit, however, lacks a pre-existing tourist infrastructure.³³⁰ Not many Americans travel to Detroit solely to spend time on a river cruise, or to visit a casino. Yet thousands are visiting Detroit to take pictures of urban decay. Ruin tours could be an attraction that would draw people to Detroit. Third, the tours can help outsiders see that Detroit, in its entirety, is not a ruin. As with poorism, how outsiders viewing the "slums" and people living therein solely through narratives of distress fails to tell the whole story. For example, in the *Vice Magazine* article, "Something, Something, Something, Detroit: Lazy Journalist Loves Pictures of Abandoned Stuff," Thomas Morton discusses how carefully framed and cropped most of these images are. Under one photo of a field, he writes the following caption, "Climbing a hillock for a better view of the grassy wastes surrounding Jane Cooper Elementary School. If you move the camera just a few inches to the left you'll get a bustling, well-maintained food-packaging plant in frame, so be

³²⁹ This is also true of books consisting of Detroit ruin porn. For example Meffre and Marchand's *The Ruins of Detroit* is a photographic coffee table book. The photos are accompanied by a brief essay by Thomas J. Sugrue who cites capitalism and the decline of the auto industry as the cause of Detroit's decline.

³³⁰ Very few Americans see Detroit as a tourist destination. However, the Heidelberg Project claims to receive 275,000 discrete visitors a year. <http://www.heidelberg.org>

careful to crop that shit out.”³³¹ In another example, Morton tells us that Michigan Central station is across the street from Detroit’s most popular BBQ joint. (See Fig. 6.3) A socially responsible tour could help counteract the metonymic use of the ruin porn photographs. Tours might make people re-evaluate the city, and perhaps could re-frame some of the racist narratives about Detroit’s decline.



Figure 6.3. A thriving coffee shop a block away from the Michigan Central Train Station, photo by Jay Cunningham, coffeed.com

Ruin porn is not presently counteracting the narrative that Detroit is beyond repair. By focusing on tourism, Detroiters could help to rewrite that narrative. When Detroiters object to ruin porn, I think they are mainly objecting to outsiders believing that Detroit as a whole is a ruin. Leary correctly points out the metonymic use of ruin porn, and Detroiters rightly object to the metonym.³³² Detroit ruin tours face serious ethical worries about exploitation. While some of

³³¹ Morton, “Something, Something, Something, Detroit | VICE | United States.”

³³² Leary, “Detroitism.”

these worries are mitigated by the fact that in ruin tours the tourists engage with buildings, not people, people nonetheless feel exploited when their neighborhoods are the subject of ruin tours.

In light of our worries about exploitation, how might we retool Detroit ruin tours? When it comes to ethical tourism, we do not have to start from scratch. The Cape Town Declaration (2002), defines responsible tourism as having the following features:

1. Minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
2. Generates greater economic benefits for local people, enhances the well-being of host communities, and improves working conditions and access to the industry;
3. Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
4. Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
5. Provides more enjoyable experiences for tourist through more meaningful connections with local residents, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social, and environmental issues;
6. Provides access for physically challenged people; and
7. Is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourist and host, and builds local pride and confidence.³³³

This detailed list contains features that vary widely in terms of the ease with which they can be implemented in ruin tourism. Consider, for example, feature one, which requires that responsible tourism have positive economic and social impact. While Detroit ruin tourism has some positive economic impacts, it has not produced positive social impacts. To produce these impacts, we would need to change the voyeuristic nature of the current tours. We might, for example, hire local Detroiters from different backgrounds to act as tour guides. This change would also help satisfy other features of the Cape Town Declaration. Local guides could transport tourists to the ruins, contextualizing the neighborhood and buildings along the way. Locals could talk not only about the art historical traditions to which these buildings belonged, but also about the reasons for economic decline. The resultant job opportunities for Detroiters would go toward satisfying

³³³ <http://www.responsibletourismpartnership.org/CapeTown.html>

the second requirement (creating economic benefits for local people) and the third (involving local people in decisions that affect their lives). By contextualizing ruined buildings in the right way, Detroiters can show pride in their cultural heritage and start to rewrite the narrative of their city, fighting against the metonymic use of Detroit ruin porn and addressing feature seven (engendering respect between tourist and host and building local pride).

Raz believes that while we ultimately owe people respect, we should also show respect to works of art, or in this case, works of architecture. To respect these buildings, we must understand them and, at a minimum, not destroy them. Currently, the Detroit ruin tours do not meet either requisite. However, if tours were guided by informed Detroiters, tourists would have a better chance of understanding the buildings and their value; it would help them to understand why they shouldn't trespass and degrade the buildings any further.³³⁴

Involving local people in Detroit ruin tourism will be a difficult task. The first step is trust building. Having community members teach tourists about their cultural heritage could help locals' sense of power, thus counteracting the past exploitation. In Sample's sense, it could help provide the basis for self-respect needed for human flourishing. It would also put the power in the hands of locals to write appropriate narratives about their lives that get uptake in a wider community. Carole Hay has argued that oppressed people have an obligation to fight this oppression. She grounds this duty by asserting that oppression can undermine our rational natures. In order to protect our rationality (which is, for Kant, our very humanity) we must rise

³³⁴ Elsewhere I have argued that communities should have the option to label such structures ruins. A ruin only remains so if it is left to decay. I think Detroiters should decide whether to allow local structures to ruinate, and whether to allow photographic tours of such places. Of course, ruin stabilization (shoring up the structures just enough to make them approachable with endangering human life) would be necessary for such tours to exist.

up against oppression—either externally or internally.³³⁵ This would be an external way for those in Detroit to resist their disenfranchisement.

And how might we apply this account to ruin porn photographs? I have three interrelated suggestions. First, the vehicles of photographic ruin porn (coffee table books, blogs, websites and the like) should do a better job of framing the photographs within a larger narrative of Detroit's decline. While the two prominent coffee table books on Detroit ruin porn have essays introducing the photographs, the essays present a really simplistic narrative and more framing could be done. Second, there is no reason that collections of the photographs should not include some photos of people, the city, and the ruins relations to the people and the city. These images would present much needed counter-narratives and are visually arresting in their own right. Third, we should emphasize the difference between artistic photographs and photojournalism. It would be unethical of photojournalists to Photoshop out people from photos of the ruins, but it seems well within artistic license. If we emphasize that the photos are artworks and not photojournalism (even if the pictures look the same), this might combat the metonymic use of the images.³³⁶

6.2.6 *Conclusions*

In general it seems our worries can be mitigated based on how the tours are run. Locals should have a chance to represent themselves and help create narratives about Detroit. Ruin tours should be operated and run by local Detroiters, who could fight against the metonymic use of Detroit ruin porn. Profits from these tours could be used to assist Detroiters. Donating a percentage of

³³⁵ Hay, "The Obligation to Resist Oppression."

³³⁶ While photojournalism can be artistic, and even some photojournalism is art (e.g., Margaret Bourke-White, Walker Evans, and others) of art and photojournalism are slightly different. Photojournalism's implicit or explicit goal is to reveal some truth about the subject being photographed, while art need not adhere to that goal.

proceeds to preservation of historic buildings and job training seems like not only a smart move but ethically desirable. Finally, tour companies and operators should be concerned to address worries about voyeurism. If these worries are adequately addressed on the front end, Detroiters might be happier about the resultant photographs and tours.

6.3 GAS WORKS PARK

6.3.1 *Introduction*

In this section I revisit Gas Works Park in Seattle, Washington. I believe Gas Works Park is an example in which the aesthetic potential of a modern ruin has been actualized. In what follows I will answer the three questions that I asked of Gas Works Park in the first chapter of the dissertation: “what makes this ruin a ruin?”; “what makes this ruin aesthetically appealing?”; and “what obligations do we have in light of this ruin’s status as an aesthetically valuable object?”

Gas Works Park is an anomalous example in that a ruin was preserved (e.g., stabilized) even though the fact that many in the community wanted it torn down. During the planning stages of the park, the majority of Seattleites wanted to move past a cultural landscape of logging, quarries, and fishing – seeing the remnants of these industries as blights on their environmental landscape. In 1962, right before the World’s Fair, the *Seattle Times* wrote: “With all the rush to beautify our city before the Century 21 Exposition...a large black eyesore has been overlooked: The abandoned gas works...stands out – a huge blot on an otherwise interesting and beautiful waterway.”³³⁷ The gas works was seen as a reminder of the pollution that plagued Lake Union, and the locals preferred a park that would paper over this fact. Richard Haag, a visionary urban landscape designer, led the charge to save the ruined gas works for a park. While many in Seattle desired to wipe the slate clean, removing the gas works structures, Haag used the industrial ruin as the starting point. He valued postindustrial landscapes and did not want to erase the history of the land. While I hold Gas Works park to be a great example of where the aesthetic potential of a ruin (as stabilized) appears, there is tension in my use of the example: if the local community wanted to demolish the gas work, and I advocate that local

³³⁷ Way, *The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag: From Modern Space to Urban Ecological Design*, 150.

communities should have a say in what structures are deemed ruins, how can I consider this structure a ruin? How does it fit with the socially constructed definition I offered in chapter two?

6.3.2 *The definition of a ruin*

The tension I have mentioned can be resolved by observing that, although there was considerable social sentiment against preserving the gas works, in the end they were saved due to a community effort, led by Haag. It's not the initial social sentiment that counts, but the informed and considered social sentiment. The landscape architect had some convincing to do, but he was able to persuade enough relevant people that the ruined gas work had aesthetic value worthy of preserving. In 1962 Seattle hosted the World's Fair. City officials desired to "clean up" the urban "blight;" specifically city planners wanted to tear down the high density urban housing in favor of low-density suburban communities. A colleague of Haag's, Victor Steinbrueck, was an outspoken opponent to this idea. Having recently worked in Detroit, Steinbrueck understood the impact of "slum clearance" for urban renewal. As Thaisa Way, landscape architect and Haag biographer, stated, "Architects, artists, planners, and activists united to oppose what they saw as unnecessary destruction along with poor stewardship of public finances and resources . . . This urban-oriented movement grew out of discourses on social, political, and economic equity in conjunction with environmental and ecological arguments."³³⁸ Here Haag and Steinbrueck were able to use a combination of aesthetic arguments, environmental arguments, and urban ecological arguments to make their case. Sometimes aesthetic arguments alone are not enough to persuade the public. It took some political arguments to reframe the gas works from urban blight to potential urban oasis. Having enough people behind the project, the gas works were "saved" as a ruin. ordinary practices (such as the lack of interest in repair or reuse) show that this has been

³³⁸ Ibid., 107–108.

deemed a ruin. The gas works were not demolished and were not repurposed. The pump house (sometimes called the exhauster house) was repurposed into a play area and picnic shelter (see Fig. 6.4 below). The pipes were painted and moving parts were stilled to allow people to play in the area without being in harm's way. Thus the pump house of Gas Works Park would not be considered a ruin, as its decay was arrested and its function (or use value) is not as a ruin, but as a play and picnic area.



Fig. 6.4 Gas Works Pump House, wiki commons

The towers of the gas works do remain as ruins. Their age value is clear: they are survivors through time. In fact, as mentioned previously, they are the sole remaining American gas works from that period. I indicated in my first chapter that the gas works were a good example of a ruin that stretches the definition of architectural ruins. The gas works is an industrial ruin, something originally designed to be functional above all else. It was not designed with beauty in mind, unlike so many residential or commercial buildings. While my account has mainly focused on architectural ruins, it can easily encompass industrial ruins, such as the gas works. Further, with some modifications, the account might be extended to other objects such as shipwrecks and gardens.

If we return to the definition I presented in chapter two, it should be apparent that the gas works at Gas Works Park neatly falls under it. First, looking at common features of ruins, we can see that the gas works is partially valued for its historic properties. Haag is a landscape architect with an interest in postindustrial landscapes; he believed that keeping the gas works on the land helped others appreciate a complex cultural landscape. In leaving the gas works on the site he kept the cultural landscape intact, demonstrating that the gas works does represent a part of history central to the foundation of modern Seattle. Tied to historic value is the gas works' age-value, which is evidenced through the rust and wear on its walls. Now, the historic value and age value are tied to the aesthetic value of the site; for it now functions as place where people come to appreciate its aesthetic features and setting.

With my definition of ruins in mind, we can see that the gas works is the remains of a large-scale human-built physical structure, which incorporates architectural elements that were designed to last of a significant period of time. The gas works has been left to decay; the only alteration that has been made to the site is that a fence was subsequently built around the towers

in 1975 after two children were injured in falls. The building of a fence falls in line with my prescription of ruin stabilization, as it is not arresting the ruin's decay but merely allowing the ruin to be safely engaged with. The towers have been left to oxidize (i.e., ruinate), thus showing their age-value. Further, grass, animals, and moss have not been removed from the structure.³³⁹ So, the gas works shows their age-value in both the encroachment of nature and through its altered use-value. This process of ruination has created a new aesthetic unity.

One possible objection to the gas works being seen a ruin is that the ruin is part of Haag's landscape design. Wouldn't this be repurposing the structure? I don't think so. While the ruin is part of Haag's landscape design, he did not alter or arrest the decay of the gas works and has turned the gas works into a powerful elicitor of aesthetic experiences, including the experiences of the picturesque and the sublime.

6.3.3 *What makes the gas works aesthetically appealing?*

6.3.3.1 Picturesque

I turn first to the question of whether the gas works in Gas Works Park are picturesque. As I have pointed out, the picturesque comes in many forms. Two pioneers of the theory of the picturesque were Sir Udevale Price and Richard Payne Knight. Price, influenced by Burke's conception of the sublime, believed that the picturesque was a unique category of beauty positioned somewhere between the beautiful and the sublime. On Price's account, for the gas works to be picturesque they must possess certain objective qualities including "roughness,

³³⁹ It is, I believe, an open question whether or not we should remove graffiti from the structure. The rule of thumb for public parks has been that any offensive graffiti is removed, while other graffiti remains. This again is a decision that the community should make.

sudden variation, irregularity, intricacy and variety.”³⁴⁰ The gas works do have a rough texture, and have variation in shape and size and thus might seem irregular. So, on this theory, at least, it is plausible to hold that the gas works as picturesque. Knight believed that the picturesque demanded the invocation of trains of associations in viewers’ minds, and that these trains were especially prevalent in the minds of those who had experienced the Grand Tour. While tourists no longer go on the Grand Tours, we do have a proliferation of images of such ruins that show us what those who did go thought worthy of preservation through pictorial mementos. Anyone with an internet connection has access to images from all over the world, including images of ruins of antiquity. Yet many contemporary Americans are ignorant of the Grand Tour and its accompanying images deemed picturesque. However, the prevalence of ruin porn (discussed earlier in this chapter) shows that many people around the world see industrial ruins through the lens of the picturesque. With that I turn to the sublime.

6.3.3.2 Kantian / Burkian sublime

Of Gas Works Park, Haag once said:

“I haunted the buildings and let the spirit of the place enjoin me. I began seeing what I liked, then I liked what I saw – new eyes for old. Permanent oil slicks became plain without croppings of concrete, industrial middens were drumlins, the towers were ferro-forests and the brooding presence became the most sacred of symbols. I accepted these gifts, and decided to absolve the community’s vindictive feel toward the gas plant.”³⁴¹

In Haag’s depiction of the gas works we can see his respect for the site; the gas works, in his own words, gave him new eyes for the old. While Haag doesn’t say what the towers are symbols of, I believe the gas plants evoke something powerful that is hard to analyze, the feeling of the

³⁴⁰ Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, 133.

³⁴¹ Way, *The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag: From Modern Space to Urban Ecological Design*, 150.

sublime. For Burke, the elicitors of the sublime included: obscurity, power, privation, vastness, infinity, succession, and uniformity. Haag calls the gas works “ferro-forests” with a brooding presence; similarly Burke says the sublime comes to us “in the gloomy forest, and in the howling wilderness.”³⁴² These ferro-forests are gloomy and brooding, they do signify a certain obsession with ending, a *memento mori*, if you will. Here we see the death of the industrial landscape reborn through ruination, incorporated into a park setting. Burke speaks of ruins as being difficult to apprehend and this difficulty in itself seems to heighten the demanding effect the sublime exacts in the case of Gas Works Park.

6.3.3.3 Syncretic Model / Pluralism

It took a bit of work for the average Seattleite to see the towers as aesthetically powerful; to help them reimagine the towers Haag drew on comparisons to famous works of art. Thaisa Way said of Haag:

He compared the colors and textures of oil slicks to the works of Mark Rothko, the tower structures to the sculptures of Jean Tinguely. Slowly, the community began to consider how these ugly artifacts might be seen differently. They began to imagine not a toxic wasteland but a curated exhibit of modern sculpture and landscape. This significant reenvisioning of landscape came on the heels of reappraisal of urban renewal and the emergence of the environmental movement.³⁴³

In comparing the gas works to the paintings of Rothko and sculptures of Tinguely, Haag was able to get people to open their eyes to the beauty of the gas works. This comparison to modern art is instructive as it shows us how a hybrid or syncretic approach to beauty is not only possible but productive. We may draw upon varying information to appreciate the gas works: historical

³⁴² Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 61.

³⁴³ Way, *The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag: From Modern Space to Urban Ecological Design*, 156.

narratives, imaginative reconstruction, and comparisons to fine artworks. Just like appreciation of nature can help us appreciate art (e.g., a beautiful sunset may help us appreciate the genius of Turner's watercolors and vice versa), Haag uses appreciation of contemporary art to enliven the imaginations of the local population, to get them to transform an object from terrifying (and depressing) to sublime. And as I observed in my section on Detroit, people who are close to the history of the ruin are often those who have the hardest time completing this transformation. It is hard to approach an old object with fresh eyes. Comparisons to artworks seem to help our aesthetic appreciation in such cases.

It is important to note that Haag's urban landscape aesthetic was developed at the onset of the land art movement, made famous by such artists as Robert Smithson, and later Nancy Holt, and James Turrell.³⁴⁴ Haag criticized this movement, stating that its approach to landscape was "thin," and oblivious to the fact that landscapes are dynamic rather than static.³⁴⁵ Inspired by the burgeoning study of "ecology" Haag wanted to foreground the way landscapes (and ruins) change. The term "ecology" appeared at the end of the 1890s as a framework for the study of natural processes.³⁴⁶ Frederick Law Olmsted, historian and famous landscape architect, believed that landscape design should be "a delicate balance, a synthesis of aesthetic, environmental, and social goods."³⁴⁷ Olmsted and his philosophy of landscape design deeply influenced Haag and Gas Works Park. Haag's ingenious use of the gas work-ruin showcased his dedication to presenting landscapes as dynamic.

³⁴⁴ The land art movement didn't get its name until the late 1960s (1968 Dawn Gallery's "Earth Works" exhibition united these artists under a theme).

³⁴⁵ Way, *The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag: From Modern Space to Urban Ecological Design*, 130.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

6.3.4 *What obligations do we have in light of this ruin's status?*

The final question I raised in my first chapter and would like to answer now is: what obligations do we have in light of this ruin's status as an aesthetically valuable object? What obligation do we have to the ruined gas works? While it might be odd to insist that we have obligations to objects, it is not odd to say we have obligations to people in respect of certain objects. Specifically we may have obligations to past, and future generations to conserve their cultural heritage, and perhaps obligations to provide future generations with a full array of aesthetic experiences.³⁴⁸ By keeping the ruined gas works a ruin (through ruin stabilization) we have provided (at least close) future generations an opportunity to experience its unique beauty. Further, keeping the gas works on the land helped others appreciate the cultural landscape; by including the gas works in the park's design, Haag allowed future generations an edifying glimpse into their past.

A theme throughout this dissertation has been the claim that we ought to allow local, descendant, and affected peoples a say in their cultural property and heritage landscapes. At Gas Works Park, not much stock was placed in the Native American population's connection to this landscape. Incorporating native elements, or at the very least having a tribal council member advising the landscape design might have been the most respectful thing to do. Haag was not alone in neglecting this duty. While he was ahead of his time for the 1970s, he could still have

³⁴⁸ In debates about what we owe future generation it is commonly noted that we do not know what interests future generations will have. If we believe we need to leave the world as beautiful for them as we found it (i.e., preserving some natural landscapes such as those found at US National Parks), one could easily reply that future generations may have no interest in natural beauty, preferring urban landscape and other more artifactual beauties. To this criticism (or worry) a plausible response is that we then have to provide future generations with a wide array of goods (or beauties in this case) so that they have the opportunity to *choose* what they find most valuable. We might make a similar argument in terms of what ruins or other historical items we ought to preserve, conserve, stabilize or otherwise save for future generations. We should provide future generations with the largest possible array.

done more. In creating the landscape curriculum at the University of Washington Seattle, Haag wrote:

The objective is Competence in establishing a design of balance for the human environment. This competence:

- Recognizes the primal import of nature systems as supreme giver of form, giver of life, giver of ceremony
- Insists on an ecological approach to design – in time (history), in space (dwelling to dwelling, dwelling to street, to neighborhood, etc.) and in human/economic values
- Acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between the design specialties
- Presupposes and understanding of structural systems, tools and techniques
- Suggests a strategic attack rather than tactical
- Cuts across temporary barriers of individual “style” etc.
- **Demands an enlarged role in community affairs**
- **Is bound in compassion for the human conditions**³⁴⁹

For our purposes, the last two bullet points are most relevant. In his landscape design, Haag shows that he believes it is important to include the relevant communities. As I made clear in my section on Detroit, I too believe this is essential. Haag successfully rallied public support and was instrumental in shifting public perceptions in a positive direction toward post-industrial landscapes. For this work, and for its reclamation of polluted soil (through bioremediation), Gas Works Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.³⁵⁰

6.3.5 *Conclusions*

Maybe one of the most important lessons Gas Works Park has taught us is that modern ruin are powerful cultural artifacts, worthy of advocacy and preservation (i.e., ruin stabilization).

³⁴⁹ Way, *The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag: From Modern Space to Urban Ecological Design*, 122–123. [Bold my emphasis]

³⁵⁰ The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/gas-works-park>, accessed June 25, 2015.

Postindustrial landscapes are now prized subjects of photography (as evidenced by Detroit's ruin tours). Gas Works Park is one of the most iconic parts of Seattle. What was once seen as an eyesore is now lauded. Additionally, the case analysis of Gas Works Park suggests is that it's going to take some visionary leadership to change what's currently happening in Detroit. This change will have to come not only at a grass roots level. Given the stakeholders involved, we will have to involve some system of incentives and sanctions to build an infrastructure for tourism that doesn't just pander to the worst voyeuristic interests of outsiders.

I hope that through my discussion of modern ruins I have shown that modern ruins are more similar to ruins of antiquity than they might appear at first blush. Both modern ruins and ruins of antiquity are powerful elicitors of the sublime, exemplars of picturesque landscape, and elicitors of imaginative reconstruction which lend themselves well to pluralist accounts of aesthetic appreciation.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSIONS

In chapter one, I presented four examples of ruins, two ruins of antiquity (Mỹ Sơn and Bannerman arsenal) and two “modern” or “industrial” ruins (Gas Works Park and Michigan Central Train Station). In what followed I argued for a definition of “ruins” that encompasses ruins of antiquity as well as modern ruins (chapter two). I discussed notions of authenticity that also are not time bound, covering ancient and modern ruins (chapter two). I examined the relevant features of ruins (chapter three) and showed how these features should be foregrounded in a pluralist aesthetic appreciation (chapter four).

In engaging with a ruin, you engage with a dynamic object; every interaction may bring something different as our appreciation can unfold and change over time. The ruin, as an object in the process of decay, reminds us of this passage of time. Like us, the ruin too has a past, a present, and a future. Others (e.g., Bicknell and Judkins) have rightfully observed that imaginative reconstruction plays an interesting aesthetic role in engaging with the ruin’s past. We may take enjoyment in using the ruin as a prop to reimagine what it looked like in its architectural prime. However, as I argued in chapters three and four, this imaginative reconstruction should not be considered the sole or even primary way to engage with a ruin. We should also take into consideration the ruin’s present, engaging with the ruin in the present tense. We should also think about the ruin’s future, thus acknowledging the tripartite nature of these hybrid objects. As I argued in chapter four, acknowledging that the ruin has a foot in the past, present, and future is important for our aesthetic appreciation of these objects. This tripartite nature is manifest when we see ruins as elicitors of the sublime and as power experiences of

memento mori. All of these ways of engaging with ruins (e.g., imaginative reconstruction, as elicitors of the sublime, and as *memento mori*) can be ampliative, although they might not necessarily be compatible in the moment. I argued that we should be pluralists about aesthetic experiences and, as such, we should try to present ruins in a way that does not cut off (or privilege) one type of experience over another.

In chapter five I applied the account presented in chapters two through four to old ruins, or ruins of antiquity. In discussing Bannerman Castle and Arsenal I advocated for a specific type of ruin stabilization: managed decline. I argued that managed decline best preserves what is aesthetically important about ruins. In discussing Mỹ Sơn Archaeological Complex I argued that in order to preserve a ruin, we must keep the ruin *in situ*. Further, I showed that while historic preservationists and aestheticists might disagree on what is best for a historic structure, they can both agree with keeping in the ruin *in situ*.

In chapter six, the second of my two applied chapters, I discuss the application of my account to new ruins. I first discussed the Detroit “ruin porn” phenomenon and the possibility of exploitation in Detroit ruin tours. I conclude that these unofficial tours, currently constructed, may amount to exploitation under some descriptions. I use Ruth Sample’s account of exploitation to best explain the moral badness of these tours. I offered some recommendation to make these tours less ethically problematic, including incorporating the local population in the tour giving and tour construction. Further, a percentage of the profits of these tours, I argue, should be funneled back into the community – either to benefit local populations or to combat the degradation of their cultural heritage. The other “modern” ruin I discussed was the gas works at Gas Works Park in Seattle, WA. Gas Works Park capitalizes on the aesthetic value of the ruined gas works. It shows us that postindustrial landscapes can be beautiful, and ruins in these

landscapes may evoke all of the same experiences that ruins of antiquity evoke. The gas works at Gas Works Park can evoke the experience of the sublime, and may entice us to imaginatively reconstruct the ruin. Just like ruins of antiquity, modern ruins too lend themselves to pluralist models of aesthetic appreciation.

The dissertation has focused on architectural ruins. Although the ruined gas works at Gas Works Park stretched the definition of architectural ruins to include industrial ruins, I believe my account could be stretched further. In several places in this dissertation I have mentioned the possibility of ruined gardens; there already exists literature on garden reconstruction and restoration. For example, the Bannerman Castle Trust has hired a garden historian to restore the residence's garden to reflect the plans and designs Mrs. Bannerman commissioned. Whether we consider this restoration a "replica" or a "reconstruction" in an interesting question, one that probably rests on how much of the original garden remains. Archaeologists and garden conservations have made interesting partnerships in this area and I hope my ontological work may be useful to them.³⁵¹

Another area where I think my account could be applied is to shipwrecks. One reason shipwrecks were not included in the original formulation of this account is because they also serve as tombs, which I believe complicates matters. This is also true of battlefields, which I could imagine as ruins as well. Both battlefields and shipwrecks can be seen as monuments to some, memorials to others, and as ruins. Monuments, memorials, and ruins seem like overlapping yet distinct aesthetic experiences, with ontologies that bear some family resemblance. Monuments are intentionally created objects designed to remind us of something worth honoring. Monuments don't preserve the past but exalt it. Memorials are designed to

³⁵¹ For more information about garden restoration, see <http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/garden-archaeology/garden-archaeology.htm>

evoke a shared mournful experience that may help human beings bind together.³⁵² Many visit battlefields and shipwrecks as memorial sites, to honor sacrifices made, and to grieve the dead.

Memorials, monuments, and ruins can all evoke nostalgia. Nostalgia necessarily involves imaginative construction, as it requires us to imagine the past. Memorials involve remembrance of things, people, or events. Monuments try to preserve time, taking you back to imagine a specific point in history. And while ruins can evoke nostalgia, they need not. As David Lowenthal says “The provisional and contingent nature of history is hard to accept, for it denies the perennial dream of an ordered and stabile past. We seek refuge from the uneasy present, the uncertain future, in recalling the good old days, which take on a luster heightened by nostalgia.”³⁵³ This is all to say that there are possible extensions to my account not addressed in this document. All of these I hope to explore as directions for future research.

I hope I have succeeded in convincing you that ruin contemplation is very much alive today, and that discovering ruins’ meaning and encountering their beauty is a worthwhile pursuit, a pleasure that can span a lifetime. Our peculiar aesthetic fascination began centuries ago, and I believe will continue for centuries more.

³⁵² Janowski, “Bringing Back Bamiyan’s Buddhas,” 46.

³⁵³ Lowenthal, “Age and Artifact. Dilemmas of Appreciation,” 104.

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APPENDIX A: INTERNATIONAL LAWS

In this section I present a brief outline of international laws and treaties that could be used in the protection of ruins.

1900s

- The first relevant treaties were in **1907; Hague IV, *Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Lands***, which states “institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure or destruction of, or willful damage to, institutions of this character, historic monuments, works of art and science should be made the subject of legal proceedings by the competent authorities.” (Article 56) While the focus of this law (and many subsequent laws) is on historic monuments (not ruins *per se*), I believe ruins were intended as a subset of historic monuments.
- In the same year (1907) **Hague IX’s *Convention Concerning Bombardment by Naval Forces in Time of War*** has a provision focusing on the protection of “historic monuments,” “art” and “science.”

1930s

- In **1933 the International Museum Office of the League of Nations / Roerich Pact signed a treaty on the *Protection of Artistic and Scientific Institutions and Historic Monuments***, which established the neutrality of monuments, museums, scientific, artistic, educational, and cultural institutions, and designated a flag by which they could be identified. This was signed by eighteen nations in 1935.

1940s

- In 1945 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) was first conceived. In **1954 UNESCO initiated the *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict***. It stated that “Damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever mean damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world.”³⁵⁴ This Convention set the tone that UNESCO has been criticized for, namely that world monuments “belong to all mankind.” This universalist spirit neglects the important role of descendant and local communities as stakeholders of their particular material culture.

1960s

- In **1964 the Second Congress of Architects and Specialist of Historic Buildings adopted 13 resolutions, including the International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites**, which is commonly referred to as the **Charter of Venice**. The Charter of Venice states “All reconstruction work should however be ruled out. Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts, can be permitted.” Demanding anastylosis for historic monuments preservation (i.e., no reconstruction, and minimal external materials for the reassembling of existing parts) is one step in favor of minimal invasiveness. It also acknowledges the importance of preserving age value and authenticity.
- **The World Monument Fund (WMF) was established in 1965**. As a NGO, they believe that they can uniquely advocate for preservation projects (since they claim they do not represent any national or international organization’s interests). In 1995 they started the World Monuments Watch Program, which publishes “World Monuments Watch List of the 100 Most Endangered Sites.” The WMF intends this watch list to be a call to action, not only for the international community, but a call to action for the local community as well. For example the Watch list suggested that the U.S. Department of Indian Affairs has practiced a “selective

³⁵⁴ However: Article 4(2): obligations to respect cultural property can be waived in cases where military necessity imperatively requires such a waiver.

form of history [in the sites they choose to preserve] and that its otherwise vital preservation stewardship organizations have been prone to abandon significant buildings and sites that portray aspects of history that most people would prefer not to think about – such as repression, illness, crime, and death.” (Burnham, pg. 9). U.S. sites on this list include Fort Apache, the Eastern State Penitentiary, one above ground cemetery in New Orleans, and the hospital wing on Ellis Island.

1970s

- In **1972** UNESCO held their World Heritage Convention, which led to several important developments. The first was to advocate against reconstructing buildings, stating “In relation to authenticity, the reconstruction of archaeological remains or historic buildings or districts is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only on the basis of complete and detailed documentation and to no extent on conjecture.”³⁵⁵ This again preserves age value, and exalts the virtue of authenticity. The second thing UNESCO did was to found the **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)**. ICOMOS was primarily founded to carry out the Charter of Venice.

1980s

- In 1983 the United States finally approved the legislation for UNESCO called, “**The Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act.**” This bill took eight years to get through congress but gave the authority to negotiate bilateral agreements for the restriction of trade in cultural property. The reason why this is important is that as a rich country the United States is a major player on the antiquities market. Therefore, the United States has been responsible for the looting of many international ruins and other cultural sites. By implementing this legislation, some provisions are in place to dissuade the trade in looted artifacts. Ignorance of an items provenance is no longer a legal excuse.

³⁵⁵ Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (Paris: UNESCO, revised 2005)§86

General conclusions we can draw from this section include the following:

1. There exists a great deal of international focus on cultural property and monuments, but very little on ruins in particular.
2. These international laws focus on protecting sites from being dismantled and looted, but do not provide any provisions to preserve the conceptual integrity of a ruin.
3. There is perhaps too little international focus on the role indigenous communities play in how to determine what to do with a historic site.

APPENDIX B: US LAWS

1860s

- While cultural property protections are notoriously sparse in American law, the American case law development toward the protection of cultural property starts fairly early in the country's inception. The **1863 Leiber Code**, written by Abraham Lincoln, was devised so as to not impose unnecessary suffering on the losers of the American Civil War. It states "Classical works of art, libraries, scientific collections, or precious instruments, such as astronomical telescopes, as well as hospitals, must be secured against all avoidable injury, even when they are contained in fortified places whilst besieged or bombarded." This code also recognized that conquering nations had the right to remove works of art, libraries, and scientific collections belonging to the hostile nation and that ultimate ownership would be settled by a treaty of peace.

1900s

- Besides the Leiber Code, there exists a constellation of American laws one might use in the protection of ruins. First and foremost is the **Antiquities Act of 1906**. This act, a product of Theodore Roosevelt and the AIA (Archaeological Institute of America) was designed with American ruins in mind. Roosevelt is reported to have fallen in love with Chaco Canyon and wanted measures to protect the crumbling structures. The Antiquities Act has several provisions. First, anyone found to destroy "any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument" can be fined \$500 or be imprisoned for 90 days.³⁵⁶ Second, the President of the United States can declare historic landmarks that are on lands controlled by the Government and can restrict access to these landmarks. Finally, all scientific examination of the ruins

³⁵⁶ <http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/anti1906.htm>

must be done by approved agencies. These agencies must make their findings (and the objects) accessible to the public. The language of this act preeminently focuses on ruins, and protects these objects by preventing looting, preventing excessive foot traffic, and preventing unnecessary or unskilled scientific digging.

1960s

- The United States Department of the Interior is the home to the National Register of Historic Places.³⁵⁷ As a division of the National Park Services, the National Register lists 83,000 places and offers these sites limited protection. Sites listed are more often than not on privately owned lands, and can receive tax credits as well as federal preservation grants. To list a site, one must list it first with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).³⁵⁸ Criteria for selection include age and integrity, as well as historic significance. Bannerman Castle is on the National Register of Historic Places. Further, a site may be listed as a National Historic Landmark (a subset of the list of Historic Places).³⁵⁹ Historic landmarks represent approximately 2,400 of the 83,000 Historic Places. These places are judged to have “Exceptional value of quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States.” Usually buildings cannot be relocated to be eligible, but there are exceptions. Over half of NHLs are privately owned, and private owners are under no obligation to comply with the government recommendations.³⁶⁰ Private owners can even prevent their site from being a NHL. However, many private owners do what is needed to have their property to be deemed a NHL as a way of preventing neighboring developments. NHL’s are designated with a bronze plaque, but displaying the plaque is not mandatory. NHL’s are eligible for federal grants.

³⁵⁷ http://www.nps.gov/nr/national_register_fundamentals

³⁵⁸ Or Federal Preservation office if on federally owned land, or with the Tribal Preservation office if on Tribal land.

³⁵⁹ <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/>

³⁶⁰ “Listing of private property as a National Historic Landmark or on the National Register does not prohibit under Federal law or regulations any actions which may otherwise be taken by the property owner with respect to the property. The National Park Service may recommend to owners various preservation actions, but owners are not obligated to carry out these recommendations. They are free to make whatever changes they wish if Federal funding, licensing or permits are not involved,”

(<http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/QA.htm#4>).

Many ruined structures in the Hudson River Valley are NHL's; Bannerman Castle does not hold this distinction.

- Another avenue for protection is deeming a site a “National Heritage Area”³⁶¹ (NHA). NHA's are also under the purview of the National Park Service; they are similar to NHLs but are often larger-scale and community based. Unlike NHLs, Congress designates NHAs; each NHA is governed by separate legislation pertaining to it and it alone. A landscape must have “nationally distinctive natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that, when linked together, tell a unique story about our country” for it to be deemed a NHA.³⁶² Benefits to NHAs include keeping local control of the site as well as limited technical assistance from the National Park Service. The movement to codify NHLs, NHAs and the National Registry began in 1960.

1970s

- In 1979 Congress passed the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. This act covers archaeological resources on public lands as well as on Indian lands. It protects these resources from commercialization and from looting. It does this by requiring permits to remove materials (excavate) from any protected site. One may be fined \$10,000 or up to 1 year in prison if they are found in violation of this act. If the material destroyed or looted is worth over \$500, one can be fined up to \$20,000 and 2 years in prison. This act seems like the natural extension of the aforementioned Antiquities Act of 1906; the penalties are harsher. Unlike the Antiquities Act, the language of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act does not focus preeminently on ruins. Ruins are included in the act as they fall under the “structures or portion of structures” clause.³⁶³ This act also shows the country's shifting focus from ruins to archaeological evidence.³⁶⁴

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1900s to present

³⁶¹ <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/FAQ/>

³⁶² <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/FAQ/>

³⁶³ http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/FHPL_ArchRsrcsProt.pdf

³⁶⁴ Some cities do have provisions for historic district. For instance New York City has up to a \$5,000 fine for damaging the edifice of a historic building or district. These types of laws do seem more aesthetic and less about objects of scientific data.

- Private citizens can do a lot to protect American ruins. Private trusts, such as the Bannerman Castle Trust, Inc., can work in tandem with local and federal efforts to protect such structures. Recently Senator Charles Schumer of New York has worked with the Bannerman Trust to raise money for the Castle's stabilization. On May 28th, 2010 Schumer applied for \$1 million dollars through the "Save America's Treasures" historic preservation program. The "Save America's Treasures" program is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.³⁶⁵ Formed in 1947, the trust is unique in that it is part public, part private. Truman signed legislation officially forming the trust in 1949, and since then the trust has elicited donations from both private citizens and corporations. This trust shows one of many ways in which private citizens can participate in protecting historic ruins. Further, there are community watchdog sites, where ruin-lovers can post impending demolition information and organize protests. The Hudson River Valley has such a website (<http://www.hudsonvalleyruins.org/>). They hope that the bad publicity the site affords will help protect some of these endangered sites.

I have focused on the preservation of buildings (and notice that these preservation laws focus on preservation which includes active conservation and restoration, not for allowing structures to ruin), but the architectural structure is only one part of a ruin. As I have argued ruins depend on their dialectical relationship to their landscape. Landscapes are notoriously hard to preserve yet a few landscapes have recently made it onto the WMF list, including the Cultural Landscape of Hadley, MA.

³⁶⁵ <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/save-americas-treasures/>

VITA

Elizabeth Scarbrough earned a BA in history from Oberlin College and an MA in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is a self-professed failed musician and successful film buff. During her tenure at the University of Washington she had the good fortune of having many rewarding and important jobs. She worked as a TA for the Department of Philosophy, as the instructor of record of numerous courses in ethics and aesthetics, as an RA for the Program on Values in Society, as an editorial assistant for *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, as the Soden-Trueblood Publishing Fellow at the University of Washington Press, as the Department of Philosophy's Teaching and Learning Coordinator, and as the Director of the Department of Philosophy's writing center. She is a native of the Washington DC metropolitan area, and credits the Smithsonian Institute's magnificent (free) museums with forming her early love of material culture. She credits her parents for her love of travel and ruins.