Visual Narratives of History
A Close Reading into the Portrayal of World War II in the Paintings of Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and Graham Sutherland: Aptitude for Report or Tendency to Mislead.

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Abstract

The present thesis aims at providing an insight on the extent to which official British war paintings were capable of producing a pictorial record of Britain during World War Two. Through a qualitative research approach and a comprehensive analysis of selected paintings, this dissertation will point out the strengths and weaknesses of using art as a tool of reportage. The focus will be mainly centralized on three painters: Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and Graham Sutherland who signed contracts as official artists for the War Artists Advisory Committee. A comprehensive analysis will allude to both the propagandist as well as the informative task these paintings carried on.

The analysis of selected paintings will be the backbone of this dissertation. Iconology will be applied to read artworks and assess their historical value. This study will also involve a comparison between artists in terms of style, backgrounds and experiences. Similarities as well as disparities will be pointed out and their effect on the artistic output will be examined. Despite not being the focal point of this research, this comparison will highlight the reasons why some art may be referred to as a record of events and other may not. Hence, this thesis will go beyond descriptive analysis and observation into a critical framework to confirm the ambivalent aspect of official war paintings as a recording tool.

Depictions of airplanes by Nash, portraits of Royal Army Force personnel by Kennington as well as drawings of the Blitz by Sutherland will be closely examined. These works of arts, purchased by the WAAC amid World War Two, will be considered as a visual narrative of the conflict in Britain. The accuracies and inaccuracies of this latter will be traced back to the style, genre and choice of colors each painter used. The examination will answer the integral question of this dissertation: Are paintings capable of documenting history or do they often mislead due to overwhelming artistic inclinations?

Introduction

Rationale:

Art and war are brought together on rare academic occasions to highlight the role each one of them bequeaths to the other. Certainly, many factors contribute to the growing importance of Art. Governments themselves started using what came to be called War Artists, whom job was to deliver a pictorial record of what happened at the battlefield.[2] These artists worked on fixing in time and color what written depictions could not portray so masterfully. Visuals convey an illusion of accessibility for their quick effect on the beholder. Yet, they can also be as interpretable as texts. This is a bit problematic for when one states that images are interpretable it alludes to the fact that a "reader" will automatically need to acquire certain skills before he/she can read an image.

Two verbs can sum up the nuance between the different ways of looking at an image. First, the image "shows" you something. Then, the image "tells" you something. The first level does not require much effort on

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[2] This is a reference to the establishment of the War Artists Advisory Committee in 1941 in Britain by Kenneth Clark. This committee was formed to purchase official war paintings that depicted different scenes of World War II.

behalf of the spectator, while in order to decipher the second level one needs more than just looking. Peter Burke voices this problematic in his book *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, as he asks the question "can the meanings of images be translated into words?" he also alludes to the fact that "images are designed to communicate."[3] Hence, they are designed to be read and transformed into words by their viewers in order to be fully fathomed.

This dissertation will cease this growing interest in visuals and try to explore the role they might have in shaping our knowledge of history. In fact, major events tend to be associated with specific images in our minds. This strong relation between seeing and knowing is the core of this study. Hence, this work will highlight the double edginess of using Visuals, as well as assess the historical value of images. This broad idea will be narrowed down by the context of Britain in World War Two. Indeed, amid this war, a committee was put together in Britain by Kenneth Clark to assemble official War Artists who would later on form an artistic record of the war. Each of these artists signed a contract and was handed a specific topic to depict and work on reporting. The committee had multiple yet exact objectives. It aimed at keeping artists alive, maintaining public morale and producing a record of events for people to behold.[4]

This dissertation will shed light on the historical value of these visual narratives. It provides an in-depth analysis of war paintings commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee. The discussion will bring to the forefront three official War Artists: Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and Graham Sutherland in an attempt to both narrow and strengthen the examination.[5] Paintings pertaining to each of these artists will be analyzed using Panofsky's Iconology.[6] The analysis will uncover the utility as well as the pitfalls of using Fine Art more specifically paintings to document the war. It will identify the aptitude some paintings had in covering certain aspects of the war and how it managed to condense dramatic war scenery in one work of art. This point backs up the singularity the use of art to report war possesses. Furthermore, this paper will not shy away from laying bare the inconveniencies of such use. It will point out how over-interpretation on behalf of the artists might damage the reporting credibility.

Paintings of Nash, Kennington and Sutherland will be analyzed separately yet in connection to each other. A comparison highlighting the similarities and differences underlining these artists' handling of war topics will be maintained throughout the paintings' analysis. The comparative edge will help uncover the peculiarities of each experience and how this latter affected their war reporting task. The time span of this topic will be the years between 1939 and 1945. This is the period underlining the formation of the War Artists Advisory Committee and the purchasing of Nash, Kennington and Sutherland's works. However, a special focus will be put on the period between 1940-41, as it was the time during which major war events took place in Britain such as the beginning of the Blitz and the Battle of Britain. These two episodes are of a paramount importance in the historical significance of World War Two to Britons. The Battle of Britain announced an unprecedented aerial campaign over the English Channel between the RAF and the Luftwaffe from July to October 1940. It ended with British Victory. The Blitz, however, marked the beginning of tragic German air raids on London as well as the crucial involvement of the Home Front in the war. It lasted nine months from September 1940 to May 1941 and resulted in the death of 43.000 British Civilians.[7] Hence, paintings portraying these aspects of the war, directly or indirectly, will be put to study.

To properly examine these works, an introduction to each artist must be made available. The analysis will not focus only on the work of art but on its creator as well. It will explore how each of Nash, Kennington and Sutherland were affected by what they were depicting and how they reacted to it artistically. This is one of Panofsky's techniques in reading visual art. His Iconology deems the artist as important in the analysis process as the work itself.

It also focuses on the culture, time and overall context in which a work of art was produced. All these factors will be taken into consideration while examining World War II official paintings. Indeed, the academic unorthodoxy of this topic lies in this very unprecedented use of Panofsky's Iconology to interpret war paint.

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[3] Burke, Peter. *Eye Witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.35.

[4] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp.9-23.

[5] Paul Nash (1889-1946) a British surrealist painter and War Artist during both World Wars, Eric Kennington (1888-1960) an English sculptor, painter and official War Artist during both World Wars, Graham Sutherland (1903-1980) English painter and designer who worked as an official artist in the Second World War.

[6] Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) a German art historian who contributed much to the study of Iconography.

[7] Information retrieved from the BBC History website < http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_blitz >

This topic will examine World War II from a cultural lens. It explores how the government used culture not only to pin down the history of the war in the nation's memory but also to maintain public morale. This double-edged use of art by the government will be studied closely. This dissertation distances itself relatively from the politics of the war and sheds light on the British life, culture and conditions that produced this War Art. It represents the conflict from a different vantage point, that of art. Hence, it replaces the reading of textual documents with the reading of images. Thus, this work slips from the hands of pure history to that of cultural studies. The examination of official war painting accentuates the importance of reading visuals and their contribution to shaping history. Stuart Hall claims that "reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language."[8] The War Artists Advisory Committee selected works of art in an attempt to tell the reality of the war. Yet, this visual narrative needs to be put down in language so it can be decoded and examined. Through textual interpretation of Nash, Kennington and Sutherland's paintings this dissertation will aim at drawing the line between their aptitude for report and tendency to mislead.

Aims and Objectives:

The main objective behind this dissertation is to explore a new approaching of World War II paintings. It goes beyond examining history's effect on art, into examining art's effect on history. Hence, this dissertation contributes to the existing historiography by exploring how World War II official paintings might affect the readings of war history. Following this thread of thoughts, this study will break away from conventional relying on textual documents to gain knowledge. It will aim at authenticating art as a possible means of documenting historical facts. This will go hand in hand with pointing out the pitfalls of such means as well. Hence, it will set up and defend two hypotheses: Paintings can create a visual document of history Vs paintings cannot be trusted with documenting history. Defending each of these hypotheses will be based on an exhaustive reading of Nash, Kennington and Sutherland's work. This reading is innovative in comparison to previous examination of war paintings for its use of Iconology. This method will expose meanings that other historians did not consider in their study of war paintings. Erwin Panofsky, the founder of Iconological analysis, argues that:

[a] work of art is not always created exclusively for the purpose of being enjoyed, or, to use a more scholarly expression, of being experienced aesthetically. …But a work of art always has aesthetic significance (not to be confused with aesthetic value): whether or not it serves some practical purpose, and whether it is good or bad, it demands to be experienced aesthetically.[9]

Hence, in this paper, works of art will be analyzed in terms of colors, shapes and artistic styles not only as historical depictions. The aesthetic value will be used to determine the hidden layers of symbolism and allegories. Iconology joins the aesthetic with the practical which will facilitate the evaluation of the paintings' historical significance. Additionally, assessing the historical value of the works under study will require an investigation of each artist's style and character. Hence, painters will be discussed in relation to their function during the war as well as in comparison to each other. This discussion will render their works more telling and thus richer in terms of conclusions that could be drawn from them. Thus, applying Panofsky's method on war paintings of World War Two is innovative and will facilitate the assessment of these works as historical evidence. Iconology will dive beyond face-value characteristics and interpret paintings in relation to history and social context as well as other artworks of the same period.

Sources

The collection of works purchased by the War Artists Advisory Committee represents a great opportunity for historians who want to examine official war paintings. Hence, a reasonable, yet not abundant, amount of literature has been written on World War II art. Regardless of how visually rich publications such as Brian Foss's *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain* or Barbara McCloskey's *Artists of World War II* are in their illustrations and survey of

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[8] Stuart Hall (1932-2014) Cultural Theorist quoted by Hearns-Branaman, Jesse Owen. *Journalism and the Philosophy of Truth: Beyond Objectivity and Balance*. New York: Routledge, 2016, p.84.

[9] Panofsky, Erwin. *The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline*, 1940. retrieved from < http://blog.escdotdot.com/2006/03/30/erwin-panofsky-1892%E2%80%931968%E2%80%94selected-quotations-part-2/>.

paintings, they remain weak in terms of evaluation.[10] This applies to almost every book written on British paintings of World War Two as they tend to introduce a descriptive analysis of which painter did what painting. Such analysis does not carry out an evaluating function towards the works of art under study. This dissertation, however, will make use of the existing historiography on War Art to perform an assessment of the historical value of these works when it comes to documenting events. Thus, paintings are integral to the formation of this dissertation as primary sources. They serve as the core of this work for they are the very reason the discussion of War Art is even possible. The selection of paintings has been narrowed by the earlier selection of painters. Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and Graham Sutherland will be studied through their works and deductions will be educed from a thorough analysis of both style and matter. Paintings available at the War Imperial Museums website will be selected according to the topic depicted. The WAAC accorded every painter a specific subject to work on; in this dissertation, the paintings will be selected in a manner through which they form a relatively continuous visual narrative of the war.[11] Then, the accuracy of this narrative will be assessed.

The analysis of the primary sources will be enhanced by the readings and methods provided by the secondary sources. The latter will include books as well as academic articles. A foundational source that has helped inspire the topic of this dissertation is Peter Burke's *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Burke's book disclosed the important interconnection of Fine Arts and historical documentation. Moreover, secondary sources such as the publications of both Brian Foss and Jonathan Black represent a great assistance to this study. As mentioned before, these books are rich in illustrations and provide decent information on different aspects of War Art without engaging in an evaluative assessment of the paintings' historical function. In his book, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain*, Brian Foss lays forward a collection of the most famous official war paintings. The book accommodates a superabundance of artistic works crafted by acclaimed painters. It also knuckles down on the role of the War Artists' Advisory Committee that was established at the outbreak of hostilities by the Ministry of Information as well as the audience reaction to exhibitions. Per contra, Jonathan Black's book *The Face of Courage, Portraiture and the Second World War* is more specific in its analysis for it sheds light on portraits of soldiers sketched by Eric Kennington.[12] This book facilitates the selecting process as it brings together a collection of Kennigton's war portraits with the context of each and every one of them. Joining these two-precedent works is Barbara McCloskey with her book *Artists of World War II* which represents a comprehensive survey of all artistic production during the war years. This book is connected to the above-mentioned works in the sense that it depicts the different experiences of different artists and offers the reader a chance to compare and contrast all of them giving him/her a chance to examine the various artistic styles.

Yet, this dissertation will be in need of more than just a decent selection of the material, but also a comprehensive "schooling" on how to properly read paintings. One of the most prominent names to consult in the realm of visuals is Erwin Panofsky. Indeed, this German art historian has set the first bricks in the building of the academic study of Iconography. Many, if not all, of his works represent an overwhelming influence on the study of Iconography and Iconology. *Meaning in the Visual Arts* is one of these titles deemed fundamental to any study or research involving visuals such as paintings.[13] Panofsky offers a detailed introduction to the study of art and a guiding technique into deciphering works. His methods in analyzing paintings will be put to use in this dissertation in order to completely fathom the meaning and value of the selected artworks and thus be able to asses them. This project will build on all of the above-mentioned works to introduce a new way of reading and assessing World War II depiction in artistic works.

It will use the secondary sources as a launching point in order to dive further and present a different assessment of war paintings. The evaluation provided by this research will cover the existing historiographical gap regarding the interpretation of World War II art as an official historical record of the conflict.

Methodology:

This paper is qualitative based methodology, largely focusing on pictorial analysis. The primary material is collected from sources such as the Imperial War Museums and the Tate Museum official websites. The paintings are carefully chosen in such a way as to explain the multi-directional relation between history and art. Works of Nash,

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[10] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007. McCloskey, Barbara. *Artists of World War II*, London: Greenwood Press, 2005.

[11] Ibid. pp.18-27.

[12] Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011.

[13] Panofsky, Erwin. *Meaning in the Visual Art*. London: Penguin, 1993.

Kennington and Sutherland will be observed, analysed and assessed. These steps will be assured using Panofsky's analysis of visual data. This method will follow a three-level interpretation; the first level is pre-Iconographic description, the second is Iconographical analysis and the third is Iconological examination. This Panofskian reading of paintings will rely much on the historical context of Britain during World War II. Hence, it will facilitate the evaluation of war paintings as authentic documentation tools. A comparative edge will be put to use as well. Yet, it does not represent the core of this dissertation. In the discussion of artworks, each painter will be examined as to other painters. Hence, Nash, Kennington and Sutherland will be occasionally compared to each other in terms of their experiences, styles and output. The comparison will help understand their work as part of the Panofskian analysis which also demands that a work of art be compared to other contemporary works if possible.

Outline

This dissertation will follow a three-chapter partition. The first chapter will cover both historical and methodological background. The former will introduce the conditions and reasons why art was brought forward as an official tool of reportage. It will also familiarize the reader with the War Artists Advisory Committee and its mechanism for it will often be referred to throughout this examination. The methodological background is also necessary at this early stage as it will explain Erwin Panofsky's Iconology and how it is used to interpret art. This methodology will be applied on the primary sources selected in this study.

The Second chapter is entitled What Art Reveals and is divided into five subparts. The first section will tackle the question of propaganda and censorship and how they have been used in both World Wars. This part will mainly focus on these concepts in relation to art and how this latter has been put to use to serve the former. The second section will zoom in on the use of official art and cultural propaganda in the Second World War paving the way for the focus on Nash and Kennington's work in the next section. Both the third and fourth parts of the second chapter will be dedicated to the examination of Nash and Kennington's paintings respectively. A selection of artworks will be analysed and studied using Iconology. A final section will synthesise the findings as well as the contribution of art in forming a visual narrative of World War II.

Chapter three, titled What Art Conceals, will point out art's aptitude to mislead. Hence, it diverges from the ideas of the previous chapter and focuses on accentuating the weaknesses specific war paintings have when it comes to documentation. To defend this claim, a focus will be shed on the work of Graham Sutherland as opposed to that of Nash and Kennington. The chapter is divided into four subparts. The first will shed light on the use of Neo-Romanticism by official War Artists during their work for the WAAC. It will accord more attention to Sutherland's use of this genre paving the way for the second part where his contribution to War Official Art is studied closely. This section will discuss this artist's style and the conditions surrounding his work with the WAAC. It will also point out the differences that characterized his paintings and shaped the particularities of his experience in comparison to Nash and Kennington. The third part will be devoted to an in-depth analysis of different paintings of Sutherland's Devastation series using Panofsky's Iconology. This will facilitate the fourth and final part of this chapter which assesses Sutherland's commemoration of World War II and rationalize the reasons his art conceals more than it reveals.This work's conclusion will encompass a rundown through the main points put forward in the afore discussion. This summary will be conjoined with a personal discussion of the main findings generated out of the research.

Chapter One

Iconology and Official Art of World War Two: Theoretical and Historical Background

> "You might as well ask an artist to explain his art, or ask a poet to explain his poem. It defeats the purpose. The meaning is only clear thorough the search."
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> **Rick Riordan**

Theoretical Background:

The Origins of Iconology:

The meaning of texts cannot be discerned without in-depth analysis and thorough interpretation of its genre and style. A reader must employ a number of tools in order to decipher the linguistics and figures of speech used by writers. The process of analysing textual documents is common since one is educated to read and interpret words.

Counter to what many might think, this practice is not exclusive to texts but may also be applied to images. When viewing an image, one is quickly affected by its visible features, yet this does not mean that the meaning of the image is fully fathomed. The discipline of art history has proven that images deserve to be read and bewared through the use of methods such as Iconology.[14]

The necessity of reading visual sources had become more and more confirmed throughout history. Paintings have been used as a guide into other civilisations especially old ones pertaining to times where texts were not available. For instance, in 1070, the Norman conquest of England by the army of William the Conqueror was reproduced on a piece of cloth that acquainted the fine points of the battle.[15] Sylvette Lemangnen, the curator of the tapestry, said describing this piece:

The Bayeux tapestry is one of the supreme achievements of the Norman Romanesque.... Its survival almost intact over nine centuries is little short of miraculous ... Its exceptional length, the harmony and freshness of its colours, its exquisite workmanship, and the genius of its guiding spirit combine to make it endlessly fascinating.[16]

In addition, professor and medievalist David Douglas (1898-1982) accentuated that the Bayeux Tapestry is "a primary source for the history of England" and it "deserves to be studied alongside the accounts in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and in Williams of Poitiers."[17] Thus, this artistic creation acts the part of a historical reporting device providing details about a major event that could not be recorded otherwise. This important employment of visual art stands in need of a close reading. Thereupon, historians such as Erwin Panofsky and Peter Burke have devoted their careers to carefully reading visuals and assigning them the function of storing events. The utilization of images by historians is not an innovative manoeuvre; it goes back to ancient times. In fact, Francis Haskell, in his book *History and its Images* calls attention to the paintings in the Roman catacombs.[18] The fine works discovered included sculptures, gold glass medallions and paintings. The immensity of art found in the catacombs made it a treasure trove for many historians who used it to study early Christian culture.[19] Thusly, regardless of both time and locality paintings have been globally important throughout antiquities. The carved caves of Ancient Egypt and burial niches of the Roman Catacombs are all segments of history where visual expression carried more weight than any other form of depiction. Consequently, the founding of a theory has gradually become fundamental to the analysis of paintings and their connection to history.

This gap was eventually filled by art historian Aby Warburg who devoted his studies to the developing of a cultural history where images are as indispensable as texts.[20] He contributed in setting up a discipline in which history is not only extracted from words but also from images that can sometimes be more articulate and demonstrative than texts. The progress of his study brought into existence Iconology which is still both applied and criticized by many of Warburg's followers. In fact, he fashioned a method of interpretation that dissects the components of visual arts and uncovers the different social and cultural backgrounds that could be found in a single piece of art.[21] According to this, a painting can encompass more than one unblended layer of hidden meanings that are open to interpretation. Warburg fashioned a critical Iconology to reveal the different depths an image can grasp with all its contradictions, tensions and possible realism.[22] Even though images are an "attempt to surprise life in movement" as the Brazilian sociologist-historian Gilberto Freyre puts it, their content is anything but indisputable.[23] Warburg did not conceive of art only as a tool of duplicating reality but also one that could interpret that very same reality.

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[14] Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

[15] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.10.

[16] Sylvette Lemagnen, *La Tapisserie de Bayeux: œuvre d'art et document historique* [The Bayeux Tapestry] (annotated edition) (First ed.). Woodbridge, United Kingdom: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, p.272.

[17] Quoted by Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.10.

[18] Francis Haskell, English Art Historian, Haskell, Francis. *History and its images: art and the interpretation of the past.* New Haven: Yale U Press, 1995, pp.123-138.

[19] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.10.

[20] Aby Warburg (1866-1929) was a German Art Historian and Cultural Theorist.

[21] Gombrich, E.H. *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

[22] Hatt, Micheal, Charlotte Klonk. *Art history: A Critical Introduction to its Methods.* New York and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, p.98.

[23] Gilberto Freyre is quoted by Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.12.

Hence, he was among the firsts to initiate a cultural history grounded on images the same way it can be grounded on textual evidence.[24] This technique of investigating images, affirms that there can be more than one interpretation. As much as texts, images have a language.

Reading paintings uncovers the discrepancies that can exist between authentic reality and aforethought one. This latter happens when a painter is pointedly composing a replica of the real subject. Under such conditions, certain items are magnified others are narrowed. Reality is never thoroughly reproduced. A reader, thus, ought to be aware of this nuance in order to know the real subject matter of the work. As any other form of art, painting is an imitation of reality; it has its appearance but fails to be a bald reproduction. This idea echoes Plato's theory of Mimesis, where he accentuates that art is by nature mimetic. The object is first found in reality, and then it becomes an idea in the artist's mind which he/she tries to imitate until it is eventually embodied in an artistic replication that echoes the way the artist conceived it. Thus, the final product is twice removed from reality.[25] So how is it going to be judged? What are the risks of any representation turning into a misrepresentation? It is agreed upon, that art takes its material from reality but does it keep it real? These questions are highly relevant when one comes to talk about art in terms of historical accuracy. Accordingly, the answer to these inquiries can only be conveyed by reading the painting and interpreting the subject matter its creator had in mind when creating it.

The "here and now" historian has to adapt him/herself to the "then" historian who could not have arranged his work for a future reading. The reader needs to be flexible; the creator on the other hand has no obligation whatsoever once his work is done. This prudent process of contextualizing and interpreting the work of art constitutes the essence of Iconography and Iconology. These two methods in art history were first introduced in Warburg's 1893 printed dissertation on Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Spring* which comprehended an analysis of these paintings through establishing a frame of reference and thus placing the work of art within a broader context and widening the possibilities of interpreting it.[26] Later on, a thin line will be drawn between Iconology and Iconography highlighting the nuanced nature of both concepts. The term Iconography was introduced in the early nineteenth century. However, the Iconographical studies saw the light earlier in the 16th century. They were demonstrated when symbols from literature were collected in catalogues and translated into pictorial terms so artists could use them.[27]

The most famous of these hand-books is Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* published in 1593.[28] Artists made use of this book to see abstract notions such as virtues, vices and passions take form. An allegorical illustration was allocated to each and every concept. To make the allegory a perfect fit to the quality it illustrates, Ripa made use of specific colours, figures and shapes that perfectly exemplify the essence of that word. Added to that, he explained the literary reasons or references why each choice was made in his allegorical representations.[29] At this point, the connection between paintings and Iconology is made lucid. The latter is crucial for the understanding of the former. Indeed, Iconologists do not simply look at paintings but render it their mission to read them. This is a point both art historians and artists might agree upon. For instance, the French artist Nicola Poussin (1594-1665) wrote a guideline on one of his paintings saying: "read the story and the painting" (Lisez l'histoire et le tableau).[30] Works of art tell stories that are carefully put together by their makers. A reader should know what genre of story he/she is reading, is it a cautionary tale, a fable or an allegorical story made of symbols that need to be deciphered? This is one of the reasons why Iconology sheds light on the intellectual aspect of paintings, the aspect where there is little room for realism and much more for symbolism, philosophy and theology for those who know how to read. Iconology did not remain static. In the 1930s, it became more associated with a strike back against the classic analysis of paintings that restricted itself to the composition of the drawing. Such focus excluded many other substantial factors both cultural and social that could define the subject matter of the work.

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[24] Dictionary of Art Historians - Aby Warburg. Retrieved from <https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/warburga.htm>.

[25] Gebauer, Gunter, Christopher Wulf, and Don Reneau. Mimesis: Culture - art - society. California: University of California Press, 1996, pp.38-40.

[26] Johnson, Christopher. "Mnemosyne Meanderings through Aby Warburg's Atlas", retrieved form < http://warburg.library.cornell.edu/about/aby-warburg >

[27] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY : Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. pp.34-5.

[28] Ripa, Cesare. *Iconologia*. Torino: Einaudi, 2012.

[29] Ripa,Cesare, and Edward A. Maser. *Baroque and rococo pictorial imagery: the 1758-60 Hertel edition of Ripa's 'Iconologia' with 200 engraved illustrations*. New York: Dover, 1991.

[30] The painting in question is Nicolas Poussin's Israelites gathering manna. Siguret, Françoise « lisez l'histoire et le tableau » Études françaises, 1978. pp.21-46.

Hence, a painting is neither a mere replica nor a bare work of the artist's imagination. It is neither solely about the aesthetic aspect nor only about the subject matter. It is neither entirely artistic nor exclusively cultural. It is bits and pieces that need to be put together like a giant puzzle that could only be worked out once Iconology is used.

Erwin Panofsky: Resurrecting Iconography:

The most influential iconographers included of course Aby Warburg along with Fritz Saxl, Edgar Wind and Erwin Panofsky.[31] They were situated in Hamburg during the years prior to Hitler's rise to power. However, after 1933 many of them departed to England except for Panofsky who migrated to the United States. Subsequently, the doctrine of Iconography was spreading to wherever country these art historians carried it.[32] Erwin Panofsky was and still is the most prominent of the above mentioned iconographers. He was a Warburg Institute art historian and an upholder of Iconography in The United States. Panofsky's concern was not the mere identification of the subject matter within the painting but also the use of this latter to denude a symbolic web of meanings that could lead to better understandings of the work of art.[33] Thus, Panofsky strongly believed in the permanent existence of a deeper meaning that requires a deeper reading. However, this focus on the symbolic aspect of art brought him many critics as it will be explained later on.[34]

For Erwin Panofsky, paintings offered a sensation of a direct communion with a past that would have been otherwise only unemotionally portrayed through texts. This opportunity of narrowing the distance of time, offers not only a clue about the exact situation depicted but also knowledge on the cultural background in which this work of art was created in the first place. Thus, Panofsky sees the painting but does not withhold himself of crossing the limits of its frame in contemplation of revealing more data. In point of fact, Panofsky establishes a clear and indispensable link between art and culture which puts the process of interpretation on the map. The introduction to his book *Studies in Iconology* provides an accurate guideline to the process he uses to reach the final reading of an image.

It is important to crack down the method through which Panofsky interprets paintings to understand how it will be applied later on in this research. There are three meanings that need to be extracted one by one when beholding a painting. First is "the primary or the natural subject matter", it starts with identifying simple forms and then considering the available "expressional qualities". This stage is what Panfosky calls the "pre-Iconographical description". The second level of interpretation is the "Iconographical analysis" which takes interest in the conventional meaning of paintings. It is the act of recognition that an observer goes through when for example seeing a painting with a large group of men seated at a dinner table in a very specific arrangement. Defining this painting as The Last Supper is part of its conventional meaning which is conveyed through the symbols and motifs that carry this second bearing to the beholder. Last of all, is the intrinsic meaning also known as Iconological representation. It diverges from Iconography for it no longer takes interest in the painting itself but rather in "those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion."[35] At this level, paintings offer clues and evidence that are highly useful for historians.

The Difference between Iconography and Iconology:

Iconography or Iconology? The line between the two terms has always been blurred for iconographers scarcely ever agreed upon one single definition that could be accorded to each one. Panofsky for instance characterized Iconography as the study of the subject matter within a painting. By this definition, the practice of Iconography is restricted to the material developed in the visual art. It does not search for meaning outside what we see. Iconology, per contra, works with that very same subject matter to acquire a broader understanding of the culture inside which the work of art was produced.[36] This can be described as a vision rather than a definition of these terms. In fact, previous analysis of paintings made by iconographers would be labelled Iconological by Panofsky since it runs counter to his perspective of what Iconography should entail.

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[31] Fritz Saxl (1890-1945), art historian, Courtauld Institure professor and librarian. He took care of moving the Warburg library to London after Aby Warburg's illness. Edgar Wind (1900-1971), German-born British Art Historian, he specialized in the Iconology of the Renaissance.

[32] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.34.

[33] Erwin Panofsky - Dictionary of Art Historians. < https://dictionaryofarthistorians.org/panofskye.htm>

[34] This point will be discussed further in section 4: "Reviewing Panofsky"

[35] Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology Humanistic Themes in the Art of Renaissance.* New York: Harper & Row, 1967, pp.3-12.

[36] Taylor, Paul. "Iconology and Iconography", 2014. Retrieved from < http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/>

The confusion seems to be a permanent one, yet the distinction is fundamental for Iconology is a tool that can be applied on texts analysis while Iconography is only associated with visuals.

Etymologically speaking both terms are derivatives of the Greek word (εἰκών = /eː.kɔ́ːn/) which means image. Thusly, even in etymology the two terms have much in common. Yet, while Iconography is a combination of the two words image and writing (γράφω (gráphō) = to write), Iconology combines image with (λόγος (lógos) = reason, thought).[37] Consequently, the appellations have been used interchangeably by many due to the strong linguistic commonalities they share. The different definitions given to Iconography and Iconology by historians such as Ripa, Panofsky and Creighton Gilbert are all partially relevant and acceptable. But when applying them, one needs to stick only to one in order to avoid confusion or contradictions.[38] Ripa considered Iconology as the description or analysis of the symbols constituting allegories in an image. Later on in 1952, Gilbert claimed that Iconology is not the study of a painting but rather the result of that study.[39] The nuanced definitions blurred the limits and functions of this term. A distinction made by G. H. Hoogewerff offers clarification on this issue:

Iconography amounts to a description of the works of art and a systematic division according to the subject matter represented. Its approach is descriptive, but when applying detailed observations, it becomes analytical. […] Iconology, on the other hand, consists of the investigation and explanation of the meaning of the representations. Its purpose is to explain as much as possible its meaning and essence. […] It does not decipher: it analyzes. Its method is truly synoptical and exegetical.[40]

Reviewing Iconology:

The "Panofeskian" method was often criticized for taking too seriously what may be a mere product of the historians' speculations and not of the artist's intentions. Panofsky gives priority to the idea that a painter is consciously using the symbols the beholder observed. However, what one understands from a painting can run counter to what the artist had in mind when painting it.[41] The relation between the interpretation and the maker's mind is not a solid one. Despite not solving the confusion, Erwin Panofsky addresses the possibility that symbols are "unknown to the artist himself and may even emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express."[42] Hence, there is always a probability that an artist is consciously employing specific symbols and also a probability he/she used them haphazardly. Panofsky acknowledged the confusion but never did he offer a solution to solve such discrepancy, which is why his method was accused of being too speculative. His approach faced the risk of being too abstract, too concrete or too hypothetical.[43]

Moreover, Erwin Panofsky's focal point was the meaning of the work within the culture where and when it was produced. He was disinterested in the social context for his aim was to figure out "HIS" meaning of the painting as the one and only understanding without considering what it might have represented to a different viewer or what the artist him/herself might have seen differently in it. Peter Burke points out in *Eye witnessing* that Panofsky's goal was "to discover "the" meaning of the image without asking the question for whom?"[44] Another weakness characterizing the Panofskian method is the focus on allegorical works of art or considering all paintings as allegories. This emphasis on emblems turned Iconography into a rather rigid theory that could only be applied on specific genres while it should not. It must be made flexible in order to become adjustable to various types of images. Indeed, it would be thought-provoking to see what Iconography could bring to light in surrealist paintings.

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[37] Encyclopedia.com. Retrieved from < http://www.encyclopedia.com/>

[38] Creighton Gilbert (1924-2011), Italian Art Historian.

[39] "Iconology and Iconography." New Catholic Encyclopedia. Encyclopedia.com, Retrieved from <
http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3407705539/Iconology-and-Iconography.html>

[40] German Art Historian G.H Hoogewerff, "Ikonographie en Ikonologie", Gravenhage 1950.

[41] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, pp.40-1.

[42] Murray, Chris. *Key Writers on Art: : The Twentieth Century.* London: Routledge, 2003, p.196.

[43] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.40.

[44] Ibid.

For instance, Salvador Dali's work frequently represented stream of consciousness where there are no explicit associations between the representation, reality and the intended meaning.[45] In 1948, he painted The Elephants (Spanish; Los elefantes) [see Appendix1] which depicted elephants in a complete surrealist way.[46] In this painting the animals had unrealistically long, thin legs which give the illusion that they are flying rather than walking. On their backs, they carried massive obelisks which enhance the idea of their strength as they can carry themselves as well as the obelisks on their backs on such thin legs. Yet, on closer inspection it is clearly seen that the obelisks are not attached to the animals but are rather floating in space. In this painting, the natural meets the surrealist in such a way that the final product contradicts the laws of space and weight that we know. Salvador Dali described his work as following: I am painting pictures which make me die for joy, I am creating with an absolute naturalness, without the slightest aesthetic concern, I am making things that inspire me with a profound emotion and I am trying to paint them honestly.[47]

Hence, in this art for art's sake artwork there is no pure reality, yet an Iconographical reading is possible so that the symbols the artist's unconscious has put together can be detected and explained. To perform this function, the Panofskian method needs to discard the certainty that images are always illustrating exact ideas. Added to that, Iconology must grant form the same attention as content because only then can it read modernist and surrealist paintings where forms are of a paramount importance. To sum up, this method of reading visuals should not be exclusive to one painting in a world where art is witnessing an ongoing development. Historians must be willing not only to use Iconology but also to stretch its rules and go beyond the conventional use. It must be adapted to new ways of examination that may involve psychoanalysis for example. In fact, using Freudian Theory to analyse surrealist paintings might be one way of adapting Panofsky to the modern age.[48]

This very same modern age is an era that witnessed one of the world's most violent and censorious conflicts: World War II. The modern forms of brute force brought about by this global war were depicted in art and exhibited in galleries. For the first time, people were witnessing a war where major battles were fought in the skies and not on the land. They were witnessing what will be later known as the Blitz.[49] Hence, the power of visuals was being upheld as one of the most important tools of recording the happenings of World War Two. Britain, one of the Allied powers during both World Wars, created the War Artists Advisory Committee within the Ministry of Information with the aim of putting together a comprehensive artistic documentation of Britain as it fought this conflict.

Historical Background:

The Role of Art and Artists in Wartime:

The War Artists Advisory Committee: How?

To paint war or to fight it? According to Kenneth Clark both tasks were interconnected.[50] As the British troops exchanged blows with the enemy, the artists painted and poetized what would later immortalize World War Two as the largest and bloodiest conflict fought on earth so far. The works collected and displayed at the National Gallery were obtained from the War Artists Advisory Committee. To this day, they epitomize the magnitude of the experience both civilians and military have undergone during World War II. These paintings exhibit the national spirit of that time as well as the modern warfare Britain was part of. Artists not only depicted the needs and concerns of the daily British life during the total war but also adjusted the memory of the conflict for the coming generations to see.

The project of the War Artists Advisory Committee was put to work in 1939 under the guidance of Kenneth Clark who filled the position of Director of the National Gallery at that time and was held as one of the most prominent figures in the British art circles.

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[45] Salvador Domingo Felipe Jacinto Dali (1904-1989), known as Salvador Dali is a famous Spanish surrealist painter.

[46] "MOST POPULAR PAINTINGS." Elephants, 1948 by Salvador Dali. Retrieved from <

http://www.dalipaintings.net/elephants.jsp >

[47] Shanes, Eric. *The life and masterworks of Salvador Dalí*. New York: Parkstone International, 2010, p.25.

[48] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.169.

[49] "BBC - History: World War Two." BBC News. BBC, retrieved from < http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/>

[50] Kenneth McKenize Clark (1903-1983) is a British author, museum director and Art Historian. In 1939, he became the Chairman of the War Artists Advisory Committee.

The WAAC was founded inside the Ministry of Information and had as an objective the composition, "through commissions and purchases", of a comprehensive artistic documentary of the history of Britain throughout the war.[51] Clark wanted to assemble an artistic survey that could magnify the enlightened cultural values of Britain and simultaneously devalue the Nazis' forced culture.[52] In addition, the people of Britain were familiarized with the war manoeuvre for they have just dusted their houses of the ashes of World War One. Hence, the government had to upgrade its scheme so it can address people's intelligence. The British were then accustomed to different paradigms of propaganda and censorship.[53]

Thus, Kenneth Clark felt the need to avoid any previous forms of explicit morale rising tactics since now he is addressing a much changed audience. The WAAC, then, had to develop a strategy that could appeal and have an impact on the British people. The committee's meeting was regularly held once a month at the National Gallery and involved members from other governmental departments, as well as associates from London art schools such as Kenneth Clark himself. It also consisted of representatives from the Royal Academy, the Armed Forces and the ministries of Production, Supply and War Transport.[54] Together, they carried out their mission by engaging artists on either full or short-term contracts. The committee offered exclusive privileges to the appointed official War Artists such as access to restricted locations and rationed materials. Artists were given commissions in different areas including overseas, however most of the works were on the British Home Front. Altogether, thirty-six artists were signed to full-time employment, while around hundred others were issued short-term contracts which differed from the former in terms of money, assigned subjects and the amount of work expected from each group.

The committee also purchased works from other amateur as well as professional artists which made it as part of the final collection.[55] Among artists on full-time contracts are; John and Paul Nash, Graham Sutherland and Eric Kennington. Short-term contracts went to painters like Henry Moor, Gilbert Spencer and Mona Moor.[56] Remarkably, among the list of artists whose work was acquired by the WAAC, few were women. This gender gap marked a noticeable absence when it came to works by women artists. Brian Foss asserts that:

"Women fell victim to an ideological trap in which their relation to the war effort was defined less in terms of full citizenship than of what were sweepingly assumed to be their restricted interests and capabilities."[57] Thusly, even when they were issued short-term contracts, women were not assigned the same subjects as men. They were not deemed capable of working on the same issues as their fellow men did. For instance, Two-thirds of the art acquired from female artists was in majority portraits of other women.[58] Moreover, when it comes to full-time War Artists only one was a woman and that is Evelyn Dunbar.[59] Eventually and after six years the WAAC included some 6000 items created by more than 400 artists varying from highly acclaimed artists to unknown ones. Relatively, fifty-seven percent of the committee's works were composed by the full-time artists and thirteen percent were fulfilled through short-term contracts. The rest was the outcome of purchase as well as accepted gifts.[60] Once the war was settled the committee's assignment was accomplished and the art it assembled dispersed to British museums and other governmental departments.

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[51] "The Secret Purpose Of The War Artists Advisory Committee." Imperial War Museums. N.p., 14 May 2015. Retrieved from < http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-secret-purpose-of-the-war-artists-advisory-committee >

[52] Tolsen, Roger. "A common cause: Britain's War Artists Scheme." Canadian War Museum: Canada's national museum of military history. Retrieved from
<http://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/artwar/essays/britain_war_artists_scheme_e.shtml >

[53] Monger, David. "Press/Journalism (Great Britain and Ireland)" University of Canterbury, 2014.

[54] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.9.

[55] Thomas, Ronan. "Blitz by Brushstroke." Westminster's War Artists | Blitz by Brushstroke | War Artists | West End at War, retrieved from <http://www.westendatwar.org.uk/page/blitz_by_brushstroke?path=0p4p >

[56] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp.196-202.

[57] Ibid, p.30.

[58] Ibid, pp.30-1.

[59] Evelyn Dunbar (1906-1960) was a British artist known for her work in the WAAC and her portrayal of women during WWII.

[60] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.31.

The War Artists Advisory Committee: Why?

Beyond the aim of recording war, Sir Kenneth had another burden to cast aside. In this period of crisis, art and artists were in state of cataclysm, for people were troubled by the war so much so that they could not be spared the time to visit galleries or appreciate art as a whole. As many galleries sealed their doors, art schools either abdicated an important number of their teachers or went out of business altogether. As if Britain woke up in the face of hostilities to find itself "artless". Gilbert Spencer, a teacher at the Royal College of art described this aesthetic defeat as a one of "many of Hitler's bloodless victories."[61] Vera Brittain stated in her book *England's Hour*, where she presented a day to day reports of the daily life in Britain during the war, that "[They] could make a long list of the civilised forms of employment connected with amusement, travel, music, art, journalism and the stage, which have been slaughtered by the grim in exorability of war."[62] The chain reaction to this discourteous omission of art from the British life is that in July 1941 only three art institutions were giving regular classes. Additionally, paper rationing, introduced in April 1940, made things worse for those who were working as cartoonists.[63] Hence, artists were faced by reduced opportunities in almost all domains; never would they have expected the war to be the one and only thing that will come to their rescue.

The hard conditions art faced amid World War II simply meant that there would be no artistic depictions of the war at hand which would hamper any chances of producing a unifying image of the country through it. Such an image would have a strong impact on people's opinion and would contribute to the propaganda effort. Hence, War Art should not be confused with any other form of artistic expression. Painters and paintings of World War II were labelled official for they enjoyed a government patronage and had to answer to the MOI. The committee wanted to save artists and hire them to uplift public morale. Kenneth Clark stepped into the breach with the WAAC and aimed at establishing the possibility of using art, as Brian Foss states it:

"[T]o articulate national values and beliefs when they were most needed, and established a framework of state support for the visual arts."[64] One important illustration that could summarise this entire situation or shift is Joe Lee's sketch "First It Was War Reporters Now It's Official Artists" [see Appendix2].This shift in tools of reportage was the subject of firm debate from critics. The idea of assigning painters the duty of documenting what newsreels and cameras could easily capture was frequently cast out as pointless. Clark admitted years after the war unfolded that by bringing into being the WAAC he was not assuming that "[They] should secure … [sic] a record of the war that could not be better achieved by photography" his aim however was to "simply keep artists at work on any pretext, and, as far as possible to prevent them from being killed."[65] Furthermore, Clark marked a contrariety between photography and paintings in terms of the way the final product would be received. While a photographer would capture reality in a mechanic fashion, a painter will be more emotionally involved and consequently his work will be not only historical but also human. The English writer, artist, broadcaster and art critic Eric Newton agreed with Clark's contemplation as he wrote: "[T]he camera cannot interpret, and a war so epic in its scope by land, sea and air […] requires interpreting as well as recording."[66] Henceforth, many agreed on the fact that paintings were suitable recording agents even in the age of camera. Thus, the WAAC rushed to the rescue of aimless artists in order to assign them to do what they do best.

Kenneth Clark's aspirations may have gone a dose beyond the obligation of looking after jobless artists, for when looking at the artwork collected by WAAC it is credible to say that this agency worked on raising public morale and promoting a national conception of the British way of life during the war. In point of fact, the way paintings, approved by WAAC, approached the war adds up to the hypothesis that saving artists from a jobless life was not the sole concern of Kenneth Clark. He envisaged a rendition of the kingdom that ought to be passed on to every British man and woman. The government wanted the people of Britain to steadily feel prevailed, powerful and proud.

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[61] Gilbert Spencer quoted by Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.10.

[62] Brittain, Vera. *England's Hour,* London: Continuum, 2005, p.84.

[63] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain, 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp.10-11.

[64] Ibid. p.1.

[65] Clark, Kenneth. *The other half: a Self-Portrait*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986, p.22.

[66] Newton, Eric. *Art for everybody*. London: The British Council, 1943, p.15.

Even in times of crisis there was a myth of unity that had to be upheld and painters were there to draw the characteristics of this union for beholders to contemplate. Such a claim will be argued in later parts of this dissertation where painters' task as propagandists is examined.

From War to Art: The Process of Making Counterparts out of Opposites: "Theirs but to Do and Die":

In 1854, Lord Tennyson Alfred committed to memory the events in the Battle of Balaclava by writing his poem "The Charge of The Light Brigade."[67] It chronicled the soldiers' bravery, perseverance and willingness to follow directives, irrespective as to whether this latter were justifiable or not. One of the remarkable verses in this poem is:
"Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die."[68]

In these lines, Lord Tennyson Alfred describes the soldiers' duty towards their nation and the strength of their commitment. Despite the years separating the Crimean War from World War II, Tennyson's poem remains accurate when it comes to describing soldiers on the battlefield. The Second World War unleashed new forms of brutality that have never been encountered before. On September the 7th of 1940, London's night was flashed with heavy bombing and the city streets were deserted as people moved to live in shelters. The British capital was metamorphosed into a place where death and destruction are part of the daily struggle. Soldiers endured these hardships with open hearts for they have looked at the face of war before.[69] The same is unlikely to be said about artists who were summoned to define the most defining conflict of the twentieth century. They were called forth to avail their adroitness and talents in picturing a war where there are scarcely ever displays of beauty, yet uncounted displays of force. Could one accord to them what Tennyson once accorded to soldiers? Can artists be the ones not to reason why, the ones only to paint and die?

Creating Art in the Blitz:

At first, The WAAC suspected artists' aptitude to deliver a faithful rendering of the events. The committee's members, including Kenneth Clark, questioned the possibility that painters could have a grip on the war scene with all its destructiveness and intensity. Brian Foss describes this double bind saying that "War Artists also – by definitions-faced the task of coming to terms with the unaccustomed nature and reality of violence."[70] The situation was rather delicate; artists could draw inspiration from the war but the by-product of their creativity was not certainly to the purpose. When conjoining art and war, it is commonplace to receive different depictions of an event for artists' inspirations could take distinct forms. Yet, picturing World War Two did not necessarily result in faithful renderings of reality. For instance, in one interview Graham Sutherland describes the way he approached the war as following:

I use what I see in front of me but I realized also that the imagination changes these things […] almost automatically. The whole point of art is that the thing should be changed from what you see, at the same time keeping [it] like the original but something different. In other words, incorporating the original but becoming something quite different […] reveal[ing] another character perhaps to make the original more real.[71]

Artists never encountered anything remotely like World War Two in terms of technological progress. They had to educe inspiration from scenes of devastation and turn them into art. Despite all these speculations and uncertainties, Kenneth Clark believed in the power art held in hopeless times. He maintained that painters were the only ones capable of depicting not only the displays of the war but also the sensation they carried. In 1944, Clark claimed that "an artist can see new combinations of shapes and colors […] which will probably convey the feel of the war far more vividly than a photographic record would do."[72] Accordingly, He believed that artists inconsiderate of how different their perceptions might seem, are capable of turning war into War Art.

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[67] Alfred, Tennyson. "The Charge of the Light Brigade",1854. The Battle of Balaclava took place during the Crimean war,
[68] Ibid.
[69] "BBC - History - The Blitz (pictures, video, facts & news)." BBC News, retrieved from <
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_blitz >
[70] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, p.124.
[71] Visiononcomms. YouTube. YouTube, 30 Nov. 2014. retrieved from < https://www.youtube.com /watch?v=HBrsEQsgpME
[72] Parts of Kenneth Clark's interview were retrieved from the BBC War Art Documentary: The Art of War, found at <
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtAMOeexPgE >

However, many of the paintings produced during the conflict carried a certain sense of detachment from the actual war. Despite being aesthetically majestic, these paintings portrayed daily activities more than crucial military actions. It is true that both aspects of the war are important yet the committee's purpose was to report events that could utterly change the course of the conflict. Paintings like Keith Vaughan's *A Chat Before Lights Out* [see Appendix3], Evelyn Dunbar's *Land Army Girls Going to Bed* [see Appendix4] along with countless portraits, accounted for a small aspect of the war that showed soldiers and military officials engaged in daily routines rather than bloody fights.[73] This depiction of cyclic life was a distinguishing point in the WAAC collection, yet it recorded one aspect of the international conflict in a selective manner that echoes censorship techniques. However, this was probably not part of a censoring operation since the Ministry of Information itself was not satisfied with these depictions. In fact, it threatened to stop financing the WAAC for this latter was not fulfilling its central goal due to "a substantial portion of the grant […] being expended on records of unwarlike character."[74]

But when reasoning through this entire context, artists' assignment was burdensome. They were not outlanders picturing the ruins of a foreign city; in fact, some of these artists had their own houses destroyed by the Blitz.[75] In World War One, the fight separated the Home Front from the Front Line. However, in the Second World War; no one could escape the attack as the war came down to people's doorsteps. It was both abrupt and brute, for civilian's life was under the risk of unpredicted bombing. On its first night, the Blitz killed nearly 2,000.[76] Yet, in paintings of this subject there were hardly ever any depiction of casualties.[77]

This absence of a feature that was sadly becoming a part of the daily life in London was rather bizarre but it echoed artist's restless state of mind. The war was too painful a task to draw, artists however tried to see their way around it. Painters like Louis Duffy were consenting to paint casualties. Nonetheless, the only reaction one has when looking at his *Aftermath* painting [see Appendix5], which detailed the bombardment of the Civil Defence at Leamington Spa, is pure confusion.[78] In fact, the bodies on this painting looked almost intact. They did not resemble war casualties, but rather regular men, with their suits on, who somehow were caught sleeping peacefully on the ground. Duffy did not only alter reality, but also polished it to the point of grotesque. Henry Moore, on the other hand, has dealt with casualties amid the Great War.[79] In fact, he was gassed during the trench warfare and witnessed how soldiers had to sleep a step from their dead fellows on no men's land. This experience might have helped him in depicting the daily struggle in the shelters amid the Blitz. Indeed, the shelter drawings [see Appendix6] transmit a very concrete sensation of claustrophobia that could only be portrayed by someone who went down there and saw it first hand which was what Moore did before every drawing [see Appendix7].[80] This claustrophobic feel is overwhelming in his paintings and is very reminiscent of life in the trenches. Thusly, artists may have handled the war subject differently, but for all the experience was rather overpowering. The years between 1939 and 1945 have proven that art, regardless of its form, was able to seek life in the utmost demoralized areas. Just as soldiers, art went to fight its own battle. The war affected the face of art while this latter affected the face of history. Paintings were used as a tool of reportage by the WAAC to shape the public's memory of World War Two and to commemorate this event historically.

A Brief Introduction into the Works of Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash and Eric Kennington:
Graham Sutherland (1903-1980):

At the outbreak of hostilities, Graham Vivian Sutherland was tasked by Kenneth Clark to record the dynamics of industry.

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[73] Vaughan, John Keith. *A Chat Before Lights Out,* 1942. Imperial War Museums. Dunabr, Evelyn Mary. *Land Army Girls Going to Bed,* 1943. Imperial War Museums.

[74] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.125.

[75] Ibid.p.126.

[76] "BBC - History - The Blitz (pictures, video, facts & news)." BBC News, retrieved from <
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_blitz >

[77] Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas.* Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015, pp59-78.

[78] Duffy, Louis. *Aftermath*, 1940. Laing Art Gallery.

[79] Henry Spencer Moore (1898-1986) was an Anglo-Irish sculptor and Artist.

[80] Jill Craigie's film *Out of the Chaos,* 1943. Henry Moore was seen sketching people in the shelters before going home and finalising his work.

The right man was summoned to carry out the right mission for Sutherland himself asserted that "[he has] always been absolutely astonished at the curious primitiveness of heavy machine industry."[81] Eventually, he was commissioned to areas where he was not forced to deal with the overtly blood-spattered scenes, a reality that Sutherland was not comfortable with. Besides, the painter was talented enough to draw a metaphor of the war effort from industry itself. A technique of displacement was applied by Sutherland, to project human loss into buildings and landscapes. Sutherland, like most artists, sketched the scenes straight away and then went back to his studio and worked up a more detailed drawing. This provided him with more time to add a human appeal to the *mise-en- scène*. However, in 1940 Sutherland was appointed to draw the subject of the Blitz. He worked on a series of paintings under one title: Devastation. This series is well-known for the peculiarity in which the subject of the Blitz was depicted. During his job as a War Artist Sutherland painted coal mines, bombed buildings and churches, always maintaining a vivid depiction of devastation and tragedy. He preferred abstract forms and implicit story telling rather than explicit one. This may be one of the reasons why his Devastation series is open to different interpretations. The British painter did not paint any specific casualties, his images tried to speak for all war victims through strong metaphor. Indeed, the Devastation series he created between 1940-1 portrayed the apocalyptic atmosphere that invaded London after the Blitz in a gloomy aura [see Appendix8]. The surreal mood delineated in Sutherland's panorama of urban ruination stands as an artistic certification that the creator's imagination can indeed add more vividness to reality. But does that works for or against accuracy?

Paul Nash (1889-1946):

Sharing a love for Blake's poetry and a guilty passion for flight, the paintings Paul Nash drew were, in all respects, *distingué* from the rest of the artworks produced during the war.[82] Unlike Sutherland, he was familiarized with picturing conflicts since the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. Back then, he was only twenty-five, a young man with great talents living his roaring twenties in a world maddened by war. Nash was a nature lover and a poetry admirer; it is but natural for such a soul to abhor the mass destruction and annihilation the war rationalized. His outrage was depicted in his work where he painted the impact of the battles on nature and trees in particular. He described himself as "no longer an artist, [but] a messenger to those who want the war to go on forever [sic] and may it burns their lousy souls."[83]

Nash was commissioned by the WAAC in early 1940. He was well-known with the Air Ministry and carried his mission as a War Artist from his home in oxford.[84] Contrary to his pessimistic depictions of World War One, Nash turned to poetic symbolism in his late paintings for reasons that will be explored in the next chapter where his paintings will be closely examined. While other War Artists were painting shattered building, heroic soldiers and Home Front combats, Nash was commissioned to violate the enemy instead of depicting the weaknesses brought upon his own fellow British men and women. For instance, *Totes Meer* [see Appendix9], one of his well-known works, was based on sketches Nash drew while in the Metal and Produce Recovery Unit at Cowley. By some means, the painter managed to draw inspiration from the debris of both German and British crashed aircraft. The final painting was entitled "Totes Meer" which is German for Dead Sea. It was Nash's way of pointing finger at the upcoming defeat of the Nazis. Paul Nash was one of the most prominent painters of World War II; he might have been the most affected of them all by the conflict for his sensibility and outrage at the dehumanizing factor that swarmed over Great Britain. His work as an official War Artist during the First World War prepared him personally and artistically to paint the Second one.

Eric Kennington (1888-1960):

In November 1939, The War Artists Advisory Committee approached Kennington to become an official War Portraitist. In fact, by the time the Second World War unfolded, Eric Kennington had already secured a decent artistic reputation for himself. Just like Paul Nash, he was becoming an official War Artist for the second time after the Great War.

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[81] Visiononcomms, YouTube., 30 Nov. 2014. Retrieved from < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBrsEQsgpME >
[82] Paul Nash admired airplanes and considered them the real engines of the war but could not become a pilot himself because of his asthma condition.
[83] Quoted by Cadman Bell, Rowanna. "Doubt and Duty: Paul Nash (1889-1947), soldier and War Artist." Retrieved from <http://armingallsides.on-the-record.org.uk/>
[84] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War and Identity in Britain 1939-1945.* London: Yale University Press 2007, p.200.

His contract entailed that he would be expected to produce "pastel or charcoal portraits and for each one he would be paid 25 guineas."[85] Kennington accepted the position and his work was restricted to painting portraits of sailors and airmen. When other commissioned artists painted the feel of the war, Kennington painted its face. Sir Kenneth Clark explained the reasons why he selected him as War Portraitist, saying that it was not only "by reason of his merit as an artist but also because it was thought that his style of drawing readily lent itself to reproduction in the form of picture postcards."[86]

Kennington's portraits gave prominence to his sitters' nobility and heroism. To highlight those features, he needed to spend three hours per sitter which he considered as enough time to compose portraits as expressive as his. Kennington even wrote to Kenneth Clark to convey his desire "to pay permanent homage to the leaders and men who [will] pull us through this war in various monuments which must mean something to the people."[87] Accordingly, he strongly believed in the power of individuals and how portraits could bear an implicit sense of unity for it reflects how the British people were conducting the same war but from different angles and positions. Indeed, Kennington's draughtsmanship was admired by many other artists including Paul Nash and Henry Moore. Art critic Herbert Ganville-Fell wrote describing his work:

[His] harsh iron technique has a force admirably suited to conveying unflinching and dauntless resolution in the faces of his seamen and soldiers. I know of no other artist who can so convincingly depict the salt of the earth, and evoke palpably, in a portrait, the very essence and savour of courage.[88]

Kennington tried to bring people in the Home Front face to face with the fighters. He humanized war figures and contributed in reassuring people about their destiny. Hence, in his portraiture the war was documented in people's features and propaganda was manifested through them as well. Portraits of airmen introduced by Kennington while he worked under the Air Ministry channeled notions of unity and resistance to the viewers. Through these feelings, the public would sense the compulsory need for union. Indeed, Eric Kennington worked on convincing his receptor that history can indeed be incorporated in individuals and in order to see the bigger picture sometimes one needs to decipher the pixels. In order to form a comprehensive view of the war's face, Kennington worked on civilians too and depicted the sacrifices of different individuals in the British society.

The Second World War was denominated the "Good War."[89] This appellation was due to the fact that by the end of the conflict the Allied forces succeeded in defeating Hitler's regime and protecting the world from further hideous racial crimes. However, it could also be called the Good War for it is beautifully anchored in our mind through the artworks commissioned and purchased by the WAAC. Artists have put up an artistic documentation of the war that shaped its memory for different generations to come. This tremendous engagement they signed up for calls for revisions and second readings. To what extent did their art remain faithful to the events of the war? Kenneth Clark assigned artists because they could convey the abstract aspects of the conflict. They could portray pain, loss and fear more than anyone else. But is history made of concrete facts or abstract feelings? Additionally, the fact that war paintings were produced under the watchful eye of the government renders the question of propaganda a central one. Is it possible for propaganda and documentation to co-exist in the same work of art? Hence, this dissertation will further examine how history could be channeled through paintings by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of such a tool.

Chapter Two Paintings of World War II: What Art Reveals

"At one side of the palette there is white, at the other black; and neither is ever used neat."

Winston Churchill

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[85] Retrieved from < https://mydailyartdisplay.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/eric-henri-kennington-part-1-the-second-world-war-artist/ >

[86] WAAC minutes. 30 November 1939, IWM, London.

[87] Quoted by Black, Jonathan. The *Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and The Second World War.* London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011, p.20.

[88] Found at < https://mydailyartdisplay.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/eric-henri-kennington-part-1-the-second-world-war-artist/ >

[89] The Second World War was named the Good War by the American Historian Terkel, Studs. *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II.* New York: MJF, 2007.

The paintings purchased by the War Artists Advisory Committee during the Second World War represent an opportunity to investigate the use of art during this conflict. Yet, it must be pointed out that paintings were an already established form of both propaganda and reportage during the Great War. This chapter will go back on the role painters undertook during that time. To do so, a brief inspection into the different forms propaganda took amid both World Wars will be provided. This will pave the way to an analysis of art's task as part of the mechanism of propaganda and explore how the British Government created a practical connection between these two concepts. Hence, this part will tackle artists' task as propagandists as well as their reaction to overt propaganda during the Great War.

This chapter will also follow the artistic shift painters such as Paul Nash and Eric Kennington went through between World War One and Two as they were employed again as War Artists. It will examine the circumstances and purposes of the WAAC's choice to use art again to report the war and uplift public morale. This experience will be analysed with a cross-examination of works pertaining to Nash and Kennington. The study will be made as part of this chapter's plan to shed light on what art reveals on World War II. Nash's *Totes Meer* and *Battle of Britain* will be examined through the use of Iconology to uncover their true essence and associations with the bigger context of the war.[90] Iconology will offer an original reading of the selected material since it was not approached before through this method. Panofsky's three levels of Iconological analysis will uncover three layers of meanings in Nash and Kennington's works and hence administer a more in-depth interpretation.

The choice of these two paintings was made due to their historical significance as artistic records of an important aspect of the conflict i.e. aircraft. Hence, Nash's work will be assessed as a tool of reportage along with a number of Kennington's portraits. The works in which Royal Army Force personnel were depicted are the focus of this chapter. The reason behind this choice is to defend the idea that Kenningotn's work complemented Nash's. The former painted the airmen behind the wheels while the latter painted the machinery they flew. Hence, together they brought the people face to face with this aspect of the conflict. The analysis of their paintings will help assess the importance of their contribution to the formation of a visual narrative of the Second World War. This chapter will present a different reading of the primary sources and an evaluation of their historical value in forming a narrative of the conflict.

The Art for Politics:

Painters as Recorders Vs Painters as Propagandists:

A Brief Look at Propaganda during the Great War:

The outbreak of hostilities in 1914 testified to the creation of what came to be known as the Home Front. Never before had the government conceived of people's caliber to the war force. World War One was qualified as a total war which implied that every individual who claimed allegiance to the nation was authoritative of its victory. The government, then, assumed the need to persuade its people that this war, calamitous as it might be, is primordial to their well-being and dignity. Thus, people's consent to go to war was of a paramount importance. The government needed to convert Britons into soldiers to-be and there were few ways to carry out such an intendment.[91]

Under these conditions, official propaganda was brought forth as the sole weapon to win public support and incite the people to back the policies they, if using reason, would have rejected. Indeed, propaganda was a compelling weapon which stood in need of numerous conditions in order to be executed fruitfully. Deception, falsehood and censorship were all parts of a strong mechanism that World War One installed. The British Government monitored a systematic campaign of official propaganda to win public support and ensure that the war will be fought evenly on both sides. The campaign made use of a vast variety of media from readable material to visual one.[92] However, the focus will be mainly shed on the employment of visuals for it is there where the aptitude of propaganda truly lies. What the eye catches has a major impact on the person for the effect of the visuals is quick, straightforward and often does not require a beyond-the-first-level understanding.

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[90] Nash, Paul. *Totes Meer*, 1940-1, Tate Gallery Britain. *Battle of Britain*, 1941, The Imperial War Museums, London.

[91] Monger, David. "Propaganda at Home." Retrieved from < http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/propaganda_at_home_great_britain_and_ireland >

[92] Ibid.

Propaganda begun as exclusively literary, however the Great War was a total battle, thus the government could no longer afford to address solely the elite and deny the existence of a majority who is despite being uneducated, is extremely central to the war force.[93] The British Government had a backbreaking task to accomplish; how to talk people into a prolonged war in which they are most likely to die?

Official propaganda was extensional and had one and only target; demonize the Germans until the British feel the necessity to fight them to their downfall. In his book, *Falsehood in War-Time*, Arthur Ponsonby claims that "[m]an it has been said is not "a veridical animal" but his habit of lying is not nearly as extraordinary as his amazing readiness to believe."[94] Stories as the assassination of Edith Cavell and the sinking of the Lusitania fed on sentiments that already existed within the Britons' psyche.[95] Thus, the authorities were sewing hatred in minds that were predisposed to hate and believed every single word without bothering to inquire the evidence at hand. Therefore, the use of posters and sketches was very much efficient. The visuals merely triggered what is already within the people. They did not have to read or interpret the things they saw because they knew the Germans were the enemy/ the other who needs to be exterminated at all prices.

World War One was undoubtedly the host to an advanced exploitation of propaganda techniques and people were not in a good position to tell lies from truths. Historian Philippe Kinghtley states that "more deliberate lies were told than in any other period of history, and the whole apparatus of the state went into action to suppress the truth."[96] Posters were printed excessively with vibrant designs and lucid messages. The poor and young men who were striving to find a justification to their existence found their ultimate purpose in these visuals.[97] Enlisting in the army accorded men from poor communities; shelter, food and the approbation of everyone including the king himself. These three components were seldom found in their previous dull lives. The posters portrayed the British people as indispensable for the country; they aggrandised men's sense of masculinity and patriotism and women's sense of sacrifice and devotion.[98] Thus, not yielding to the visuals' temptation implied the nullification of these praiseworthy characteristics and embracing cowardice. The graphic art of propaganda succeeded in making the common viewer stop, behold and answer back the calling. But once the first six months of the war passed by without the war ending and the men who enlisted were constantly rushing to meet their death, certain posters had to be questioned.

Art and its Relation to Propaganda during the Great War:

An official War Artist-scheme became possible only after artists who themselves were enrolled in the armed force on the Western Front, such Nash and Kennington, displayed their paintings. The works of these artists, who experienced war from the inside, appeared as the manifestation of the things they witnessed. For instance, *The Kensingtons at Laventie* [see Appendix10] precipitated the decisive formation of an official British War Artist Scheme by Charles Masterman who was head of the British War Propaganda Bureau at the time.[99] The above mentioned painting by Eric Kennington was accoladed after its artistry and "stately presentation of human endurance of the quiet heroism of the rank and file" representing the military fight "in all its squalor and glory."[100]

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[93] Reeves, Nicholas. "Film Propaganda and its Audience: The Example of Britain's Official Films during the First World War." Journal of Contemporary History 18.3 (1983): 463-94.

[94] Ponsoby, Arthur. *Falsehood in War-Time*. London: Bradford & Dickens, 1942. p.13.

[95] Alfen, Van Peter. "The Meaning of a Memory: The Case of Edith Cavell and the Lusitania in Post-World I Belgium." American Numismatic Society Magazine. 7 June 2013. Retrieved from < https://web.archive.org/web/20130607045402/http://ansmagazine.com:80/Spring06/Cavell >

[96] Quoted by Jewell, John, "How Propaganda Pressed Home the World War I lies". 20 September. 2013. Retrieved from<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/how-propaganda-pressed-home-world-6068239>

[97] Ibid

[98] Welch, David. "Propaganda for Patriotism and Nationalism." The British Library, 9 Dec. 2013. Retrieved from < https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/patriotism-and-nationalism>

[99] Harries, Meirion, and Susie Harries. *The War Artists: British official War Art of the twentieth century.* London: Michael Joseph, 1983, p.3. Kennington, Eric. *The Kensingtons at Laventie*. 1915. Imperial War Museums, London.

[100] Quoted by Black, Jonathan. National Army Museum. Retrieved from < http://www.nam.ac.uk/whats-on/lunchtime-lectures/video-archive/portraits-bombs-eric-kennington-second-world-war>

Thus, the government had to look on the power of persuasion that visuals are endowed with first hand, before it was convinced of the necessity of supporting War Art. In fact, this was a win-win situation. The type of arrangements governments are often fond of. The first scheme was put to action in July 1916 by the Wellington House.[101]

As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the aim of prioritizing art in wartime was always double edged. Official War Artists were appointed not only to record the battle but also to make sure the public remains faithful to the war effort. Muirhead Bone was appointed Britain's first official War Artist in May 1916 in an unexceptional yet well calculated act by the government.[102] Painters were appointed mostly to draw portraits of military leaders in the first months and were not allowed to depict other more relevant and realistic aspects of the war which in fact deepened the public's estrangement from what really took place on the battlefield.[103] Posters, on the other hand, had a more specified purpose as a powerful recruiting system that carried simple messages to simple minds who contributed greatly to the war effort. They were also used to persuade women to send their men enlisting and replace them in different positions. But this operation of justifying an unjustifiable war could not prevail against the alarm of the trench war and the death toll that four years of fighting have cost the British. Propaganda succeeded in building up an army from scratch and in rallying people's fundamental support. Yet, once the war was over the public opinion had already shifted in a complete way.

People's sentiment diversified in the 1920s and 1930s and propaganda was reviewed as deceitful.[104] Posters were reduced to signs of deception. However, this does not deny the existence of realistic depictions produced by official War Artists. This latter illustrated the truth of war in an indirect manner. In fact, Sue Malvern describes official war paintings of World War One "by younger more progressive artists [as] the best received because it was judged the most authentic. Such work put a new emphasis on the pity of war and human suffering."[105] This point proves the existence of a documenting aspect in War Art that depicted the truth. Paintings like Nash's *Spring in the Trenches* [see Appendix11] showed the resilience and patience of soldiers along with the ugliness of the war. Hence, it preformed both propagandist and documentary purposes.[106]

War Artists as Reporting Agents:

The concreteness of industrial warfare has helped raise a sort of backlash against propaganda. Many artists were on the scenes of the war as soldiers themselves. They came through the distress of the trenches and breathed the German gas attacks. Hence, artists looked at the war's real face away from political slogans and hollow promises. Their reaction generated art forms that were honest and true to the essence of the calamity.[107] At the beginning of the war, painters could easily perform the two objectives they were commissioned for; documenting the war effort and raising morale by advocating national culture. But as the fight evolved and death conquered most of the men on the battlefield, one of these two tasks had to be eliminated. Artists, if authentic, could no longer talk people into joining the war effort only to sit sketching them as they received the enemy's bullets later on.

Paul Nash was one of the Great War's official artists who chose to define the reality of Britain under the conflict. In his painting, *We are Making a New World* [see Appendix12] Nash met the war planners with sarcasm.[108] His painting had no depiction of any human figures.

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[101] David Lloyd George set up a British Propaganda Bureau in August 1914. He then appointed Charles Masterman as the head of this bureau that was commonly known as the Wellington House.

[102] Muirhead Bone (1876-1953) was a Scottish artist who was appointed the first Official War Artist during the Great War. Retrieved from < http://www.wcl.govt.nz/blog/index.php/2015/09/17/the-art-of-war-the-first-world-war-in-paintings-photographs-posters-and-cartoons/ >

[103] Ibid

[104] Monger, David. "Propaganda at Home (Great Britain and Ireland)." Retrieved from
< http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/propaganda_at_home_great_britain_and_ireland >

[105] Malvern, Sue. "Art in 1914-1918." Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 2016. Retrieved from < http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/art >

[106] Nash, Paul. *Spring in the Trenchs*, Ridge Wood, 1917, Imperial War Museums, London.

[107] Headsetoptions. "News Blog @ Wellington City Libraries." The art of war: the First World War in paintings, photographs, posters and cartoons » News Blog.. Retrieved from < http://www.wcl.govt.nz/blog/index.php/2015/09/17/the-art-of-war-the-first-world-war-in-paintings-photographs-posters-and-cartoons/ >

[108] Nash, Paul. *We are Making a New World*. 1918. Imperial War Museum, London.

It converted the human loss into polluted landscapes with no hope of resurrection. As one beholds this painting it resembles a space that witnessed man's last fight on earth, a fight he obviously lost for he is not there to celebrate it. The caption Nash joined his work with: "we are making a new world" accentuated the futility of the war and echoed the deceitful slogans propagandist posters reproduced. In his essay "War Pictures by British Artists", Eric Newton honoured the role of War Artists and accorded them the nobility of being war messengers rather than reporters.[109] He claimed artists to be the ones who will "hand on to future generations the tension and excitement, the weariness and laughter, the speed and power of [the] war."[110]

Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and many others have imposed themselves as War Artists due to their aptitude to transform the nihilism of the war into aesthetic forms in which realism and modernism blend. Away from propaganda, artists like Nash and Kennington created War Art that stood witness to the truth of what happened in the years between 1914 and 1919. Their paintings, like war communiqués transmitted news about the development of the war effort. The difference being communiqués were short and dry, paintings, on the other hand, were burdened with the emotional distress and the raw hideousness of the ways war changed things. The paintings that portrayed the face of the war for what it was were well received when exhibited.

Even though, works like *The Kensingtons at Laventie* and *We Are Making a New World* did not put any emphasis on polishing the facts of the battle, they were probably tolerated more than other forms of record-keeping considering the fact that they were faithful to the surrounding conditions two years later into the war. *The Times* considered the reality depicted in War Art to be "a nightmare of insistent reality, untrue but actual, something that certainly happens but to which our reason will not consent."[111]

What War Art Reveals:

Cultural Propaganda in the Second World War:

Propaganda is logically associated with conformism. It arises with the purpose of manipulating people into having faith in one thing and agreeing to never disagree. Hence, a choice of words such as cultural propaganda might sound inconsistent. Culture thrives on diversity and emanates from notions of liberation and freedom while propaganda is entailed by governments and blindly consumed by people. As previously mentioned in chapter one, the War Artist Advisory Committee was established inside the Ministry of Information as a more structured method to collect Fine Art. However, tension was the heavy characteristic underlining the liaison between the two. The MOI doubted the committee's competence when it came to propaganda and was not compelled to back it financially. The committee, on the other hand, was no less than fervent to disassociate itself from the MOI plain patterns of propaganda.[112] Kenneth Clark in particular did not approve of the objectification of art as a propaganda instrument and refused such labelling.[113] It must not escape one's memory that propaganda at this point had a very poor reputation in the aftermath of the Great War. Accordingly, authentic artists would not wish to become part of that reputation.

Clark wrote in October 1939 that "there are certain things in life so serious that only a poet can tell the truth about them."[114] Hence, to him art was synonymous with truth and the committee was there to answer one purpose; that of recording the war and promoting the nation's identity. Following Clark's thread of thoughts, propaganda would solely represent a means of jeopardizing artists' creativity and aesthetic sensibility towards what they see, it tended, according to him, "to coarsen [the artist's] style."[115] Yet, compromises happened and Kenneth Clark had one precondition through which he condoned the use of art for propaganda purposes. The arrangement entailed that the works purchased as propaganda had to be "of sufficient importance in them as artistic war records."[116]

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[109] Eric Newton; see Chapter One p.20

[110] "War Artists at Sea." Royal Museums Greenwich | UNESCO World Heritage Site In London. N.p., 13 Nov. 2015.Retrieved from < http://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/behind-the-scenes/blog/war-artists-sea >

[111] Ibid.

[112] Searle, Rebecca. "War Artists' Advisory Committee, Aviation and the Nation during the Second World War" University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts, Issue 08, spring 2009, pp.7-8.

[113] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 157-58.

[114] McCloskey, Barbara. *Artists of World War II*. London: Greenwood Press, 2005. p.72.

[115] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp. 157-158.

[116] Ibid.

Thusly, the committee allowed it as long as it did not cloud the primal function the WAAC was established for in the first place. Paradoxically, when considering the reasons art was summoned, it is clear that propaganda needed art to reach people and art needed a purpose to survive the war. The tension between the two sides does not nullify the mutual dependency. The MOI could no longer afford overt and sometimes too straightforward propaganda. In fact, government officials were conscious of public hostility to anything that reminded them of First World War propaganda and all its falsehood. Art and art making, on the other hand, were associated with creativity and freedom, both symbols that could not coexist with fascist values. Britain was promoting its image as the country where art was germinating and thriving since 1933 when cultural elites fled Germany for Great Britain.[117]

Hence, art was maintained as an odd to liberation rather than restriction, to expression rather than silence. In 1938, Cyril Connolly affirmed that "there are no artists in Fascist countries."[118] This state of mind was so overwhelming that the Ministry of Information made a statement in 1939, creating a middle road between their objectives and the WAAC's aspirations.

It entailed that "in no circumstances shall we […] fasten our writers in the Procrustean frame of propaganda."[119] This statement represented the first step towards the endorsement of art as a device of cultural propaganda through which the identity of the country could be mirrored. The redefinition of these pre-established notions blurred the lines between culture and propaganda to the point where a distinction is no longer required as long as truth is maintained. Director General Frank Pick in September argued that culture and propaganda are related as long as "propaganda is good."[120]

Thus, propaganda became part and parcel of the committee's project as long as it did not insult people's intelligence but rather helped them keep record of the war as well as helped Britain rally support on an international level. Art exhibitions were put together not only in Britain but also in the United States to carry out the function of promoting Britain's identity and resistance within and without its own borders.[121] However, this blurred function that encompassed smart propaganda as well as solid documentation at the same time might have been confusing for artists. The painter was not only required to create art that could help in documenting events but also produce an aesthetically appropriate rendition of the latter. The different ways in which Nash, Kennington and Sutherland handled this tricky task will be explored in this dissertation.

Painting the War anew:

In times of war, art could join senses and sensibilities, it depicted not only facts but also small moments through which emotions spurred. John Kean has pointed that "The War Artists have the same relationship to the war photographer as the poet does to the journalist."[122] Both the poet and the journalist can tell a fact but only one of them can spell it out fully. The notion of truth that Kenneth Clark promoted was relative. A record of the war did not have to abide by the media's rules of see, edit and tell. Clark wanted to introduce representative art with which the audience could identify.[123] Much of the works composed under the WAAC called forth a depiction of a resistive country. This aspect was accentuated, chiefly, by official War Artists who were contracted midst the Great War. This serves as an opportunity to scrutinize the shift in style that some artists underwent. Experience has helped them to review priorities, is it more important to paint suffering or to depict the endurance of the British people? Painters like Paul Nash and Eric Kennington were working as official War Artists for the second time and such a factor could be seen in their work. Indeed, the style and manner of approaching subjects can be traced back to the artists' own

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[117] Cook, William. "German Refugees transformed British Cultural life – but at a Price." The Spectator, October. 2015.

[118] Connolly, Cyril (1903-1974) was an English Literary critic and a writer. Quoted by Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945.* London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.157.

[119] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945.* London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.158.

[120] Frank Pick (1878 – 1941) accepted the position of Director General of the Ministry of Information in August 1940.A quote from his handwritten note on Col. Norman Scorgie's memorandum, 27 September 1940 (IWM: GP/46/B)

[121] The art collected by the War Artists Advisory Committee was exhibited in national galleries as well as galleries in the allied countries.

[122] Lewis, Caroline. "War Artists- World War Two on Canvas and Paper" Culture 24, retrieved from < http://www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/military-history/world-war-two/tra27960 >

[123] The use of the adjective « reasonable » here rather than realistic is made deliberately to underline that the works produced under the WAAC were not a reproduction of reality but rather a reasonable depiction of a war that could define Britain and frame its identity and future.

experience with the war. Painters, who were familiar with the nature of the job they undertook under the WAAC such as Nash and Kennington, knew the importance of accuracy. Hence, they did not rely much on abstraction as will be shown and examined in the next part.

Paul Nash during the Second World War, the Shift in Style:

From Nature to Trenches, from Trenches to Aircraft:

By the time the Second World War begun, Paul Nash was an already established War Artist. The Great War changed Nash massively and at the same time created a sort of challenge he had to rise to. The painter who once went into the war as a romantic symbolist was now traumatized by the experience of the trenches. He wanted to paint something that truly expressed or materialized the experience of the war. Nash was a landscape artist to whom nature and especially trees mattered much. Thus, he hated to see the effect war had on nature and the sort of destruction it brought. This might be one of the reasons why Nash converted from drawing actual landscapes into drawing psychological ones. He turned to composing spaces that demonstrated how the war really felt from the inside.

Nash painted not only the looks of the conflict but also its heart in an attempt to "rob the war of the last shred of glory [,] the last shine of glamour" the same way it robbed nature of its shine.[124] Starting March 1940, Nash worked as a War Artist with the Air Ministry under appointment from the WAAC.[125] He had a vivid passion towards airplanes and aircraft and aspired to becoming a pilot himself but his health never allowed him to fulfil such a dream. Considering this, one might think that his employment with the Air Ministry was flawless. Yet, it was filled with tensions between him and Air Commodore Harald Peake who had little taste for Nash's character and depiction of certain subjects.[126] Nash considered airplanes as the real protagonists of the war.[127] In fact, his depictions of aircraft were and still are considered a great reference when studying the Second World War. The next section will provide an Iconological analysis of Nash's *Totes Meer*. The choice of this painting is made deliberately to accentuate the painter's ability to be a propagandist and a reporting agent at the same time. It was chosen for its ability to communicate accessible information through strong symbolism. In fact, Brian Foss argues in his book *War Paint* that "art could resort to metaphors and similes to make contemporary events more comprehensible. Wartime discourse […] gloried in metaphors."[128] This accentuates the possibility of using allegorical works to condense the immensity of the war in an understandable manner. The analysis of Nash's *Totes Meer* will defend this argument.

***Totes Meer*, the Foreseeing of a Defeat:**

To analyse *Totes Meer* [see Appendix9], Panofsky's Iconological method will be followed. On a pre-Iconographic level, the visible material exposed in this image will be stated. The painting displays piles of twisted metal that do not form anything recognisable at first. Yet, upon looking more attentively, one can detect wrecked wings and airplane wheels in the *mise-en-scène*. The landscape gives an impression of profound darkness but at the same time an almost full moon is lightening up the setting. On the left side foreground of the painting, Nash placed a visible pile of sand that resembled beach sand. This peculiar element does not appear to be a genuine part of this landscape but was rather added by the painter. This element partially explains the paintings' title "Totes Meer" which is German for dead sea. The title strikes one as unfamiliar and maybe even inappropriate, for the painting is done by a British painter whose country is in war against the German. Yet, he decides to use their language. In fact, this very detail is one aspect of Nash's smart employing of propaganda. He borrowed words from the enemy's tongue only to use them in attacking him back. However, this purpose can only be made clear through an Iconographic and Iconological analysis of the components of this work.

On an Iconographic level, the image communicates turbulent emotions. It bears a great resemblance to a regular sea image; however, this one has wrecked aircrafts substituting waves. This graveyard of destroyed airplanes joined with the dark colours used in the background of the painting, conveys the idea of defeat and hopelessness. A

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[124] Stansky, Peter, William Abrahams Miller. *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War.* California: Stanford University Press, 1994, p.18.

[125] Ibid.p.21.

[126] Harald Peake was the Air Ministry representative on the War Artists' advisory Committee. He disliked Nash's demanding behavior and also did not appreciate the fact that Nash depicted the wreckage of airplanes more than fighting airplanes.

[127] Paul Nash wrote in Vogue,1942 "I first became interested in the war pictorially when I realised the machines were the real protagonists"

[128] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945.* London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.135.

certain ghostly aura is overwhelmingly present in the image. The gloomy spirit of the painter can be detected in the use of both dark shades and distorted shapes. At first glance, the ill-fate of everyone who goes into the war is the only information communicated throughout this painting. However, Nash puts forward a wing bearing the German markings. The title of the painting, hence, turns it into a clear attack against Germans. *Totes Meer* is clearly pointing at the foreseeable defeat of Germany. It foreshadows the destiny of all German aircraft who will soon be heading towards this dead sea. Nash relies on details to lay bare the purpose behind his painting, so the viewer must grant attention to every corner of the image. On an Iconological level, this artwork must be placed within the time and place when and where it was depicted. Painted in 1940, *Totes Meer* was commissioned not long before *Battle of Britain*.[129] The scene gives the illusion of a moving setting.

These wrecked airplanes seem to be struggling to stay on the surface yet end up swallowed by the sea. The idea that war swallows its own children is almost inevitable. Whether victorious or not, everyone comes out defeated in one way or the other once the war is over. This idea is strengthened if *Totes Meer* is associated with Nash's pervious works such as *We are Making a New World*. His hatred towards the war and its destruction could not have vanished now and can still be detected in his style and use of symbolism. However, the artistic maturity Nash developed is shown through his ability to attain propaganda purposes and at the same time point fingers at the war's ugliness. He assures Britons about the upcoming demise of the enemy and their new victory. Yet, the painter maintains that this victory pertains to Britain and not to the war for this latter is the epitome of darkness, destruction and ugliness.

The propagandist aspect is strong in this painting. It does not only attack the German morale but also boost the British confidence. It shows that the air age is not a threat to the island for the sea will protect it. In fact, aerial attacks represented a strong menace to the British who had for long considered themselves as immune against outsiders' attacks until airplanes brought the enemy home. In his painting, Paul Nash minimizes this threat and aggrandizes the defeat of the other, the German. It is also possible to state that Nash acquired a new skill in his painting of *Totes Meer* which is sarcasm. Indeed, the use of a German title to his work echoes Nash's sarcastic attitude towards the enemy's belief in victory. It also reveals how the painter is now able to relatively distance himself from his work for only then can he use sarcasm. In the Great War, Nash was deeply hurt by the events and this pain was communicated in the heavy nature of his work. Yet, in this depiction he seems to be less involved personally and more implicated artistically. He knows the nature of war and despises it, yet remains faithful to his job as War Artist. This faithfulness is also visible through Nash's use of strong yet accessible symbolism, so his message can be delivered. Despite being not too straightforward, *Totes Meer* provides the viewers with everything they need to decipher its meaning. The title, use of colours and German markings on the plane are all details that render the painting easier to understand and hence accessible to viewers.

Despite belonging each to a different war both *Totes Meer* and *We Are Making a New World* had a great impact and were considered one of the finest English works of art pertaining to wartime.[130] Nash had his mark on these works; hence it is easy to tell that they belong to the same painter even when they are considered separately. Yet, it is also easy to tell that this artist has changed or evolved through the years. In *We Are Making a New World*, Nash's soul was crushed by the horrors of the war and the damage it brought on nature. The emotions on his painting were emanating from his personal outrage upon seeing the sort of ruination the war forced into his world. The depicted landscape represents a psychological setting that communicates the artist's emotional state and his vision of what the war stands for. Years after that, Nash witnessed a stage of maturation in style that allowed him to see through the damage and create art that did not stop at the here and now but foretold the future. While the former painting mocked the hope of a new world, the latter enhanced the idea of hope. In fact, *Totes Meer* can be read as a victory declaration when seen from a British point of view and a warning about an upcoming defeat when seen from a German one. Thus, the First World War did change Paul Nash and by the time the Second World War begun his style altered. Paintings such as *We are Making a New World* simply transferred the bleak horror of the war; it did not require a second reading to know that Nash was not optimist about the war and counted on advertising that pessimism. However, *Totes Meer* communicates a victorious note that requires a second reading so its meaning can be elucidated.

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[129] "BBC - History - Art in War: Exploring a Painting." BBC News. BBC. Retrieved from <
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/wars_conflict/art/act_art.shtml >
[130] Stansky, Peter, and William Miller Abrahams. *London's burning: life, death and art in the Second World War*. London: Constable, 1996, p.25.

Despite all of the mentioned above, the Air Ministry was not pleased with Paul Nash's work. He wrote in 1945 that the Air Ministry made him sense that painting "a picture of the wreck of an enemy machine on the ground was rather like shooting a sitting bird."[131] Hence, the Ministry saw no embodiment of bravery and national heroism in the depiction of fallen airplanes instead of flying ones. Air Commodore Peake did not consider Nash's depictions as accurate portrayals of what the air age looked like. Yet, it is important to note down that Peake is not an artist and this may be one of the reasons why he expected Nash to reproduce the reality of the war as it was. Nash, per contra, saw that the war is not just the action but also its aftermath. He was interested in the climax as much as in the denouement.

Regardless of whether Nash's paintings during his work under the Air Ministry were an actual reproduction of reality or not, he captured a remarkable likeness to the gist of the aerial aspect of the Second World War. Aviation at that time challenged the national space and imposed a threat on the island's isolation. It also challenged Nash's conception of landscapes and imposed new spaces on his paintings; however, he eventually mastered them. This mastery might be traced back to Nash's familiarity with airplanes and the world of aviation. His insight helped him draw this aspect of the fight in a photographically aesthetic manner. In fact, the moment Nash makes a direct contact with the subject he is painting, he masters it. During the Great War for example, he painted sagacious portrayals of the horrors of the battle after experiencing war in the trenches. Likewise, as he knew enough about aviation himself during the Second World War, his brush could easily see its way through it. Not long after he painted *Totes Meer*, Nash worked on the *Battle of Britain*. This painting represented a different style and take on events on Nash's behalf. He moved away from painting static landscapes to working on battles in motions. The peculiarity and accuracy of *Battle of Britain* is the reason this work is to be analysed in the next part.

Battle of Britain, Depicting the Aerial Combat in Motion:

While *Totes Meer* depicted the aftermath of conflicts, Nash's The *Battle of Britain* [see Appendix13] truly simulated the climax of an aerial battle.[132] Indeed, the summer of 1940 marked a significant turning point in the history of the Second World War. Months before that, France was defeated by the German forces after six weeks of mobile operations. It quitted the war and was obliged to sign an armistice. Hence, Britain was the last still-standing ally fighting against the Nazis. The man of the hour then, Sir Winston Churchill used his finest weapon to galvanize the people: his grandiloquence. On the 18th of June, he delivered his famous speech in the House of Commons, where he announced the forthcoming of what he denominated as the Battle of Britain. He proclaimed: "The battle of France is over. I expect the battle of Britain is about to begin."[133] Churchill precluded the choice of negotiations, concession and any other feeble alternative that kept Britain from being up in arms over the protection of its territory against the Germans' foray. The days following this speech introduced one of the most peerless battles in the history of wars. Indeed, the Battle of Britain was the first fight led exclusively by the Air Force and happening off land. The Royal Air Force defended British soil from mid July up till the end of October 1940.[134] It was not just victory for the British but also a lesson in resilience, sacrifice and aircraft. Nash's painting masterfully delivers those notions. In *Eye witnessing*, Peter Burke describes some painters as historians and "[t]he history they usually represented was national history, driven by nationalism."[135] This can be applied to describe Nash who was inspired by his country's thrive for victory to paint records such as *Battle of Britain*. A Panofskian analysis of this work will demonstrate its meaning and purpose.

On the primary/pre-Iconographic level, what one sees in this painting is an ongoing military fight. Most importantly, the idea of Britain as an island separated from the rest of the continent is magnified in this image. The planes and the barrage balloons appear to be rising from the land to meet the enemy up in the air. The action takes place over the English Channel. The image follows the battle step by step from the rising action to the climax until reaching the denouement which is here the defeat of the enemy.

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[131] Ibid. p.22.

[132] Nash, Paul. *Battle of Britain*, 1941, The Imperial War Museum, London.

[133] Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill (1874-1965) was the British Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. Retrieved from < http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1940-the-finest-hour/122-their-finest-hour >

[134] "Introduction to the Phases of the Battle of Britain." RAF Museum. Retrieved from < http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/history-of-the-battle-of-britain/introduction-to-the-phases-of-the-battle-of-britain.aspx >

[135] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. p.158.

An entire battle is summarised in this immense painting. Nash did not forget to include both sides of the attack in his work and this is why the details are of a paramount importance. Indeed, looking closely, the enemy's attacking force can be seen as it approaches the battle stage. It looks organised and well-prepared until it reaches the English Channel and right before it draws near to Britain it goes into swirls of smoke that foretells a systematic defeat. On the left side of the painting, the Allied Forces seem to be going upward as if they are celebrating their victory by creating beautiful shapes in the sky. On the right side, enemy's planes are falling into the sea. They are swallowed up by the English Channel which can be seen as a one of Britain's defences.

The pre-Iconographic analysis of this painting is longer than the previous one for Nash has filled *Battle of Britain* with specificities and technicalities that need to be identified. The choice of painting a detail-oriented work of great scale such as this one is part of Nash's attempt to paint a pictorial record of the event.

On a secondary/Iconographic level, this depiction represents a celebration of the British victory in the Battle of Britain. Nash condenses the action of the event into one painting where he included every side of the conflict. The English Channel can be seen at the centre of the image. It isolates England, rendering it more unique with its own culture, power and unity. One can see how everything starts from the land and then engages in a battle in the sky. The painter points out at Britain's strategic geographical location and the strength of its aerial defence. White smokes represent the RAF while black ones represent the enemy's Luftwaffe as it falls down in defeat. The former is placed in the foreground of the painting while the latter remains in the background. The British forces are the protagonists of this work, they seem to both outnumber and outdo the enemy. It can also be said that Nash wanted to accentuate the skills of the RAF. The white trails their planes left behind are in all directions in contrast to the small black trail caused by an already destructed one German plane. Containing all these British glorifying elements, this work is propagandist *par excellence*. However, the propaganda carried out by this image does not invalidate the accuracy of its artistic rendering of events. Nash employed his landscape painting skills to document the Battle of Britain creating a visual narrative. Such a narrative is not only a footnote in the historiography of this episode of the war but can also be used as a vivid depiction of this battle.

On an intrinsic level, Nash seems to have chosen a different style in this painting. It looks lighter than his other war work. Indeed, in *Battle of Britain* Nash chose brighter colours which differ from the warm and dark ones he used to apply in paintings such as *Totes Meer*. Yet, the fallen plane in the background of *Battle of Britain* does call to mind this latter. Paul Nash seems to be creating a series of events throughout his paintings. Nash carried out two of the WAAC objectives. He represented the subjects he was asked to paint in a documentary fashion and also met the committee's propagandist needs. This sort of equation was not easily fulfilled by other War Artists. In both *Battle of Britain* and *Totes Meer*, Nash did not perform any sort of explicit propaganda. It was part and parcel of his artistic output but was not aggressively thrown in the face of the viewer. He aimed at painting an accurate summary of the conflict while highlighting the myth of the island and the strength of its willingness.

Eric Kennington: Shaping the War's Façade:

Kennington's Portraiture under Short-Term Contracts:

In November 1939, Eric Kennington was approached by the War Artists Advisory Committee for the second time. After the great impact *The Kensingtons at Laventie* had, his preference by the committee to resume work as official War Artist seems to be a well-justified one. From November 1939 to May 1940, Kennington worked on short-term contracts under the WAAC. In December 1939, he started working on eight portraits.[136] The first one was a portrait of Field Marshal Sir Edmund Ironside.[137] A photograph [see Appendix14] of Kennington while he was painting this latter shows an acute resemblance between the man sitting and the man on Kennington's developing work.[138] Nonetheless, this comparability is not pure and simple. This is one of the reasons why portraits might necessitate

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[136] Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War.* London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011. pp.21-2. The eight portraits were for Field Marshal Sir Edmund Ironside (January 1940) , Edward Frederick Lindley Wood (January 1940) , Sir Alfred Dudley Pickman Roger Pound (February 1940) , Leading Seaman A.L. Vearncombe (March 1940) , Captain F.S.Bell (April 1940) , Stoker A.Martin (April 1940), Leading Seaman Dove (April 1940) and Able Seaman Povey (May 1940).

[137] Field Marshal Sir Edmund Ironside (1880-1959) was a senior officer of the British Army. During the Second World War, he served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

[138] The photograph is available in Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War.* London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011. p.22.

second readings more than regular paintings. They carry the features of those who experienced the war first hand. Hence, sometimes it requires a second look at the subject's eyes in order to analyse what they truly convey.

Sir Edmund's Ironside portrait bears a confident contemplation that the real man did not have when sitting before Kennington. This is the little space of freedom that allows the painter to edit likely in favour of his sitter or purpose. Eric Kennington romanticized his subjects for he was self-conscious of the propagandist role of his War Art.[139]

In *Eye witnessing*, Peter Burke discusses the significance of portraits by arguing that the "postures and gestures of the sitters and the accessories or objects represented in their vicinity follow a pattern and are often loaded with symbolic meaning. In that sense, a portrait is a symbolic form."[140] Following this thread of thoughts, Kennington's portraits of officials and airmen are not mere reflections of the sitters but rather a specific representation of them. Hence, the features, outfit and details surrounding subjects must be read and analysed for it is there where the true meaning of the painting lies. This brings to mind the previous Iconological analysis of Nash's work where details and artistic choices had to be interpreted. Hence, if portraits are not the mirror of their sitters then it is possible to apply Iconology on them in order to read the different layers of meaning they hide. Kennington's portraiture has to be examined not only in relation to the sitters but also to the artist, historical contexts and circumstances in which it was produced.

Kennington's experience with the WAAC resembles in more than one aspect that of Nash. They both introduced influential work as official War Artists during the Great War and were both soldiers at the front line. Moreover, Nash and Kennington started their artistic assignment in the Second World War with short-term contracts and later acquired a full-time appointment with the WAAC. This might have given both artists an opportunity to develop their skills and figure out different ways of tackling war subjects. The outcome of their long-term involvement with War Art is however different. While Nash remained faithful to his landscape painting and did not undergo any drastic changes in style, Kennington shifted from painting war scenery to mainly painting portraits. His short-term contract with the committee has begun with the production of pastel portraits. Then, he became a full time artist with the Air Ministry which is another commonality he shares with Nash. Despite tackling different topics, they both worked on the same theme portraying aircraft and airmen as the protagonists of the war. The pastel portraits Kennington has produced under his short-term contracts were well-received mostly. He mastered the art of portraiture and could easily apply it to help the war effort. In fact, the audience marvelled at Kennington's portraits at the National Gallery which is the reason why the WAAC needed him more than he needed it. Kennington's portraiture could communicate courage to the public. In August 1940, the committee's secretary Edmund Montgomery O' Rourke Dickey wrote to Kenneth Clark describing the impact Kennington's work had on the public:

The best of [Kennington's] portraits of sailors in the exhibition at the National Gallery have, in the eyes of the public, a nobility not shared by any other work that's on display at the National Gallery. These portraits typify the fighting man who's going to win the war for us.[141]

Kennington's Work under the Air Ministry: Painting the Face of the Combat: Painting the Few:

In the same way Nash employed his landscapes, Kennington believed in the utility of his portraiture despite painting other subjects before. While working under the Air Ministry, he worshiped the individual effort and believed in the necessity of painting the men behind victory each on his own. Throughout the portraits of airmen he produced, he seemed determined to underline the heroism and toughness of his sitters. The historical events of the summer and fall of 1940 have emphasized the necessity to carve the faces behind the Royal Army Force in the national memory. When Germany invaded France in 1940, the British felt weaker and more isolated than before. This time their isolation was not a privilege but a vulnerability that left them companionless against the enemy, carrying the burden of the allies on their own.

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[139] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007. p.199.

[140] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. p.25.

[141] Edward Montgomery O'Rourke Dickey (1894-1977) was employed a secretary of the War Artists Advisory Committee during the Second World War. Retrieved from < http://www.nam.ac.uk/whats-on/lunchtime-lectures/video-archive/portraits-bombs-eric-kennington-second-world-war >

On 20th of August 1940, Winston Churchill described the efforts made by the RAF during the Battle of Britain in the following words "never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."[142] The "few" spoken of by Churchill were the subjects to Kennington's portraiture under the Air Ministry. At this stage of the war, the British demanded reassurance especially after the fall of France and the ongoing Blitz. The same way Winston Churchill convinced people's ears in the ability of the "few" to bring victory, Eric Kennington aimed at convincing their eyes. He painted the men of the RAF showing the British that they still have what it takes to win the war. It can be said that the work of Nash and Kennington completed each other when it came to portraying the Battle of Britain. While Nash portrayed the war in motion as a whole, Kennington zoomed in to paint the individuals behind the airplanes.

Nash's work reassured people of the upcoming victory by illustrating the strength of the British air power. He relied on symbolism in his work while Kennington's message was more direct. The portraiture introduced by this latter represented a strong form of propaganda. In fact, when going through different portraits at a quick pace, one cannot help but notice the similar expressions all faces shared. They had solid features that communicated an unshakable eagerness towards the war effort. The men depicted did not seem happy which might have been unrealistic if they were. Contrary to that, they carried expressions of worry and distress which reflected the truth of their experiences during the war. The fatigue that underlined some of the faces made viewers more sympathetic on a psychological level and therefore more willing to encourage a war when they see the brave people fighting it meticulously, in their names. In order to perceive these portraits accordingly, one has to become familiarized with the historical context of Britain amid World War II and the hardships leading to the Battle of Britain. This help understanding the reasons Kennington's sitters were glorified.

Kennington drew portraits of the RAF personnel at the time when the Battle of Britain was at its zenith. Hence, the indebtedness the painter felt towards his subjects was shared by the wide public as well. In fact, Kennington offered the people the privilege of looking at the face of their, otherwise unreachable, heroes. In 1940, the significance of airmen was prioritized in people's consciousness. Kennington understood Briton's need for a figure. Indeed, during periods of crisis, people tend to seek a heroic figure who has the ability to rescue them. While Nash's work depicted and glorified the victory, Kennington predicted it by painting portraits of the heroes who will assure it.

Painting Britain's Finest Hour:

In 1940, Kennington worked on numerous portraits of pilots and Royal Army Force personnel. Two depictions of the RAF cadre, created in the final months of the Battle of Britain, are sorted out to examine. The first is of *Flight Sergeant John Hannah* [see Appendix15] and the second portrays *Squadron Leader Philip Robert* [see Appendix16].[143] These two portraits are selected for they are synchronously simple and intricate. They communicate mastery on behalf of the painter and bravery on behalf of the sitter. This does not imply that other portraits do not, but these works display a mysterious aura of dauntlessness without breaking through as non-realistic. In fact, they bear the characteristics of Photorealism even though this style of portraiture was not introduced until the 1960s.[144] This feature can be detected in the way sitters look and the position they are depicted in. The viewer might be tricked into thinking that Kennington relied on photographs to paint his work for its precision and accuracy. The portraits in question do not look staged. This is highlighted by the lack of accessories and minimalist nature of the setting. In fact, sitters are the sole focus of the work. This realistic depiction marks Kennington's break away from sophisticated forms of symbolism that were used by Nash and Sutherland. The portraitist had very humble material through which he could transfer his message. Even though these portraits seem utterly realistic, they are open to analysis and interpretation. Peter Burke argues that:

"[P]ainted portrait is an artistic genre that, like other genres, is composed according to a system of conventions [...]. The postures and gestures of the sitters and the accessories or objects represented in their vicinity

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[142] "Speeches Archives." The International Churchill Society. Retrieved from <
http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/113-the-few >
[143] Kennington, Eric. *Flight Sergeant John Hannah VC.* 1940, Imperial War Museums,London. *Squadron Leader Philip Robert 'teddy' Beare*. 1940, Royal Army Force Museum, London.
[144] Photorealism is an art genre that started in 1960 in the United States of America, it is characterized by a heavy reliance on photography to paint accurate reproductions.

follow a pattern and are often loaded with symbolic meaning."[145] Following Burke's logic, portraits require analysis and are not mere reproduction of reality. Hence, this part will examine Kennington's works following Panofsky's methodology.

On a pre-Iconographical level, what is seen in this painting is Flight Sergeant John Hannah looking undeniably calm with crossed hands and an innocent face. Despite being drawn in black and white, the painting perfectly expressed Hannah's brave spirit and serious character. This aspect is accentuated through the uniform the sergeant is wearing in the portrait. It sheds light on the man in terms of his duty towards the country. The features of the sitter are very well detailed and accurate which renders the painting acutely realistic. This realism introduced by Kennington has further purposes.

On an Iconographical level, the style and visible components of this painting must be analysed further. The choice of basic black and white instead of bright colours and different shades conveys that the painter does not need the latter to highlight his sitters' qualities. He works instead on the posture and eyes in order to illustrate the bravery and serious-mindedness of the sergeant. As Burke argues, the posture of the sitters is seldom chosen haphazardly. Hence, the fact that Kennington chose to paint Sergeant John Hannah in this specific posture is highly telling. The contemplative look in his eyes and the position of his hand cast him as someone who is thinking about the next tactic he needs to execute. It looks as if Kennington caught his sitter in the middle of his work instead of painting him in a staged setting. These attempts to naturalize the sitter and cast him in an image with which the viewer could identify are an important factor in this portrait. Kennington introduces viewers to an airman who is just like them. While Nash demonises and belittles the enemy in paintings such as *Totes Meer*, Kennington tries to humanise the British hero. Hence, he is providing the British people with the figure they thrive to cling to.

On an Iconological level, one needs to consider the historical and cultural context as well as the circumstances and reasons behind this painting. Most of the sitters Kennington painted were awarded for their bravery and had recorded stories to uphold their awards. In September 1940, Flight Sergeant John Hannah was bestowed the Victoria Cross for not abandoning his aircraft after it had been damaged during a raid and ultimately saving the pilot despite having every justifiable reason to leave the aircraft since it was in flames. In his medal it was cited that he showed "courage, coolness and devotion to duty of the highest order."[146] Hannah's portrait faithfully portrays these characteristics. This painting was finished off in October, whereas in September of that same year John Hannah's face and hands were severely burned. His injuries handicapped him and resulted in his discharging from the RAF.[147] Yet, Kennington omitted all of these unfortunate details in his painting, portraying Hannah in his uniform and glory. This censoring fashion is a reasonable tactic when it comes to portraits. Indeed, one of the foundational reasons behind this genre is the commemoration of something good. Hence, it can be assuredly said that Eric Kennington romanticized his subjects displaying the finest version of them. He sketched an immortal facet to his sitters for no one would ever desire to be commemorated at his weakness rather than his splendour. However, this propagandist feature was not preformed explicitly due to the "reality effect" of portraits. This term was used by Roland Barthes to describe the sensation evoked by photographs.[148]

Kennington's portrait is filled with realism so much so that it bares the characteristics of a photograph. This aspect offers the illusion of objectivity. If the painting is a reproduction of reality than there is less room for subjectivity and more room for documentary painting. Hence, Kennington cloaks his propagandist work with a realistic veneer. This reading of his work leads to the deduction that unlike his colleague Paul Nash, Kennington might have been more interested in propaganda than in accuracy. However, this claim cannot be completely valid due to the different subjects these two artists handled. Kennington's portraits share a minimalist feature; the sitters are painted with no background decoration.

They are the one and only subject matter, thus the painter tries to condense all purposes in one space. Despite this, Kennington was able to bring together accuracy and propaganda and produce a visual document of the men who fought the aerial battles.

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[145] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. p.25.

[146] Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011, pp.38-9.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Barthes, Roland. *The Rustle of Language*. Trans. Richard Howard. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. pp141-48

The portrait of Squadron Leader Philip Robert Beare DFC is very similar to the previous one, yet an Iconological analysis will uncover dissimilarities. On a pre-Iconographical level, this portrait is executed in darker shades instead of the basic black and white used in Sergeant John Hannah's depiction. Kennington depicted his sitter in a profile portrait masking the majority of his facial characteristics. However, a great focus is shed on the man's visible features. It leaves the viewer imagining the rest of his face. The sitter is depicted in his full uniform and looks ready to fly. This portrait accords less space to the sitter's body, unlike Sergeant Hannah's depiction where his hands and upper body were visible. In this profile, Kennington concentrates on the features and uniform of his sitter.

On an Iconographic level, Kennington's account of Beare is more sophisticated than that of John Hannah. The dark shades used in this portrait cast Beare as a mysterious personality. It gives the impression that the painting is a poster for a war movie rather than a portrait of an actual Squadron Leader. It does not show much of the squadron leader's face yet reveals enough to convince the viewer of his bravery and readiness to fly. Beare shares the eye piercing look that most of Kennington's sitters have. The painter seems to have spent more time working on this portrait than on the previous one. The details of the outfit are accentuated more than the man wearing them which reflects the true interest of this painting. In fact, Kennington's purpose is to highlight this man's character as a Squadron Leader not as Philip Robert. The job matters more than the man and it is the focus of the portrait.

On an Iconological level, it is important to examine the background of the depicted Squadron Leader in order to further understand his portrait. Beare joined the RAF in 1935 and undertook the job of dropping leaflets over enemy territory. In August 1940, he was awarded the Distinguishing Flying Cross.[149] His task of dropping leaflets is ironically interesting as he was at the same time performing propaganda and being subject of one. Yet, the propagandist aspect in this painting is different than in the previous work. First, the posture is different. While Sergeant John Hannah was depicted in a life-like posture, Squadron Leader Beare looks as if he was sitting for this portrait. The theatricality is strong in this work as well as the propagandist aspect. The sitter looks strong, resilient and determined. These are notions that Kennington probably wanted to transmit to the viewer. The colours and the play on the lighting give this painting an aesthetic superiority over the portrait of the Sergeant that was rather humbly executed in terms of colours and techniques. The first portrait had a realistic aura that served the purpose of documentation. This one tends to be more artistic which might be Kennington's way of reminding the viewer of his talent.

In fact, art history professor, Shearer West, argues in her book *Portraiture* that this genre was commonly considered as a "mechanical exercise, rather than fine art" by other artists.[150] Kennington may have wanted to keep both qualities for it helped him to wittily fulfil his task under the War Artists Advisory Committee. He wanted to produce artistic and realistic depiction of the war heroes that could be both considered as propaganda and war record. Moreover, the airmen depicted by Eric Kennington look calm and compelling in contrast to the chaotic atmosphere of the war. This impression is the kind of reassurance the British people were looking for at that time. It can be described as one form of political art where political figures are aggrandised and displayed at their best so the rest of the population would stand behind them. However, the way Kennington camouflaged his sitters' flaws attracted some criticism towards his way. In the *Sunday Times*, Eric Newton wrote that Eric Kennington "goes on and on with his over-life-size portraits of supermen. They are strident things whose assertiveness almost hurts the eyes." Yet, he also adds that Kennington's sitters "do look like men who are going to win the war. Some are positively frightening. Dropped as leaflets over enemy country, I can imagine them being as effective as bomb."[151] Hence, Kennington's work was highly controversial for it visibly exaggerated his subjects' qualities yet at the same time it did so masterfully and powerfully.

It contributed greatly to recording the courage, bravery and patriotism of Britain via the faces of its men. Kennington's portraiture filled a gap left behind by other media channels for no other reporting agent could draw the features of the war the way Kennington pinned them down in the British memory in pastel.

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[149] Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011, pp.39-41.

[150] West, Shearer. *Portraiture (Oxford History of Art)*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. p.14.

[151] "Eric Henri Kennington, Part 2 – the Second World War Artist." My daily art display. N.p., 26 Sept. 2015. Retrieved from < https://mydailyartdisplay.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/eric-henri-kennington-part-2-the-second-world-war-artist/ >

Painting Home in the People's War:

In his book, *The British Army and the People's War*, Jeremy Crang asserts that World War II was described as the People's war "partly to signify the mass participation of the population in the war effort, but also the hope that the war would have radicalising effects on British society."[152] Indeed, the Home Front acquired a unique importance during the Second World War, which challenged all pre-established British social values. At the outbreak of hostilities, Britain relinquished individualism and embraced notions of unity. The new formed entity overcame divisions of class, gender and everything that constructed individualistic culture.[153] Thus, the Home Front was part and parcel of the conflict which implies that it must be included in any candid record of the war. Paul Nash's work lacked this dimension. However, this cannot be blamed on him for he was required to work on aerial subjects by the WAAC. Nonetheless, the fact that Kennington embodied this angle in his record of the war gives him a certain credit. In fact, He did not limit his brush to painting pilots, wing commanders and flying officers. He painted the bravery of the people on the Home Front as well. The efforts of the common men and women on the other side of the war line who executed small yet significant tasks were the subject of Kennington's series of posters entitled *Seeing It Through* in 1944.[154] This series focused on the role of the employees of the London Passenger Transport Board and their quick-wittedness during the Blitz. Each portrait had a short poem that told a heroic anecdote inscribed below it by A.P Herbert.[155] The series was published in April 1944 to raise the people's morale in a People's War. These portraits displayed the kind of heroism that was close to the British daily life. The public could see that the smallest of actions could affect the war effort and that the government recognized and appreciated their contribution. Six subjects were introduced to Kennington by the London Passenger Transport Board Publicity Committee and this time the selection included female employees as well.

Mrs Mary Morgan [see Appendix17] was one of the female sitters. She was a bus conductress who protected two children from a bomb blast using her own body as a shield during a raid on London.[156] Despite her heroic deed, Mary Morgan was portrayed as an ordinary working woman in her portrait and did not appear as if she knew she was sitting for one.[157] In fact, she was depicted in motion as she was doing her every day job. Hence, Kennington did not display his sitters in the *Seeing It Through* series the same way he displayed his fighting men. He made sure the employees of the LPTB kept the look of ordinary people who despite their habitual aspect could perform valiant actions. Similarly to Kennington's work on airmen, these portraits had a photographic aspect. They appear as if they were taken in the middle of action which rendered them more authentic. Describing Kennington's work, poet Laurence Binyon said "Mr Kennington has a genius for reality. He has not only the gift of exact and faithful record, but the power of giving expression to the latent vehemence."[158] Kennington, therefore, aimed at recording the qualities of the men and women who pushed the war effort forward. He depicted the face of the war at its peak. Comparable to Nash, Kennington created a balance between propaganda and credibility. Yet, through his portraits the latter had a more inclusive approach towards his sitters. He pictured the war in a comprehensive manner.

Paul Nash and Eric Kennington's Commemoration of World War II, Aptitude for Report:

Nash and Kennington's experience in war painting is very reminiscent of Burke's notion of the historian painter.[159] Indeed, the analysis of their works demonstrates art's potential to record events. If the painter is to perform the job of the historian through his art, he/she needs to produce an artistic record that is accessible to the public. In fact, if a historian is unable to tell history in recognizable terms then the design of his job is simply not fulfilled.

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[152] Crang, Jeremy.A. *The British Army and the People's War, 1939-1945*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000. p.2.

[153] Harris, Jose. "War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War." Contemporary European History 1.01 (1992): 17-35.

[154] Harris, Jose. "War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front during the Second World War." Contemporary European History 1.01 (1992): 126-9

[155] Sir Alan Patrick Herbert (1890-1971) was an English novelist and playwright. He was Kennington's old friend as well.

[156] "Eric Henri Kennington, Part 2 – the Second World War Artist." My daily art display. N.p., 26 Sept. 2015. Retrieved from < https://mydailyartdisplay.wordpress.com/2015/09/26/eric-henri-kennington-part-2-the-second-world-war-artist/ >

[157] Kennington, Eric. *Seeing It Through* 1940. The poster of Mrs M.J. Morgan a bus conductor.

[158] Portraits Like Bombs: Eric Kennington and the Second World War | Video Archive. < http://www.nam.ac.uk/whats-on/lunchtime-lectures/video-archive/portraits-bombs-eric-kennington-second-world-war >

[159] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008.

Nash and Kennington's work was exhibited to the large public, along with the war collection, in the National Gallery. Hence, the paintings in question were not part of a private exhibition or meant to an exclusive audience of artists. On the contrary, they addressed the common British man and woman who wanted to see pictures of the war and feel represented by them. Paintings such as *Totes Meer* are still displayed and discussed by modern day historians such as Peter Stansky and William Miller Abrahams. In their book, *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War*, they assert that "water-colours by Nash of wrecked aircraft were shown in the National Gallery and were very well received."[160] Hence, the War Artists Advisory Committee purchased representative works, i.e. works that painted the actual war and not the abstract feelings it might have generated in the artists' psyche. Nash and Kenningotn's art fell under this category. Paul Nash's paintings recorded events of the conflict as well as introduced symbolic propaganda that was accessible. Eric Kennington bestowed a facial record of the people who fought the war both at Home and at the War Front. In his study of Kennington's portraits, British historian Jonathan Black maintains that the latter "developed a form of 'romantic' or 'visionary' realism that purposefully offered a depiction of sitters in their positive light."[161] This fusion between realism and imagination may be what rendered Kennington's work more acceptable. It served propagandist purposes without clouding the important realist side of his sitters, such as their courage and devotion. He gave the audience what they probably needed at that time.

Such contributions would not be relevant only to the public who visited the exhibitions then, but also to the here and now historians, researchers and people who are curious about the history of Britain during World War II. Hence, these paintings have major historical significance. In his article, "Artists as Historians*"*, American Art Critic Clarence Cook argues that:

[T]he pictures we paint, the statues we carve, the buildings, private and public, in which we house our pictures and statues, will remorselessly explain us to coming generations.[162]This idea underlines the need for representative art that can be used as historical evidence. In fact, this was the foundational reason behind the WAAC who aimed at recording the war. Clark wanted to crack down the barricade separating the people from Fine Arts.[163] The governmental patronage paintings received amid the Second World War imposed them as a vital component of the British identity and spirit. This crossroad that joined government, art and galleries could only meet its purpose if society was introduced to the arts that once pertained to the elite. In fact, War Art was addressing the people to convince them in the necessity of the battle and allow them to see the insides of the Second World War. Thus, Kenneth Clark believed in the need to encourage people of all backgrounds to access the galleries and see art. It was, hence, necessary to purchase paintings with which people could identify. The task of the painter and that of the government were complementary, none could be achieved without the other. Paintings created by Paul Nash and Eric Kennington must have been of great interest to the large public whose life at home has been invaded by the Blitz. Hence, the war theme was the topic everyone was curious about and art could put people face to face with what happened in the sky and who made it happen. Eric Newton in 1941 claimed that this bond created between art and viewers is "generated only by [the] passionate experience" of the war that both sides were witnessing.[164]

Kennington and Nash offered the people the chance to experience what otherwise would have been only delivered through textual documents. Works such as *Battle of Britain* as well as portraits of airmen, who were considered war heroes by Winston Churchill himself, gave the people access to a visual record of events. Clarence Cook claims that "the art of our time is […] largely occupied in recording the human life and the landscape of out-of-the-way places at home and abroad." [165] This human life and landscape were out-of-the- way, if not for Nash and Kennington who brought them to people. These artists' paintings answered questions such as; who is fighting for us? Is this war fought for the good reasons? What happens in the aerial battles that we cannot see? It must not be forgotten that this war was not the kind of battles peoples were used to.

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[160] Stansky, Peter, William Miller Abrahams. *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War*. Stanford University Press; New edition edition, May 1994, p.25.

[161] Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington, Portraiture and the Second World War*. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011, p.12.

[162] Cook, Clarence. "Artists as Historians", The Quarterly Illustrator 3.9 (1895): 97-103.

[163] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp.172-84.

[164] Eric Newton, 'War Pictures', Sunday Times, 18 May 1941.

[165] Cook, Clarence. "Artists as Historians", *The Quarterly Illustrator, Vol. 3, No. 9* (Jan. - Mar., 1895), pp. 97-103.

The technological progress converted the conventional battlefield into a faster, bloodier and almost incalculable one.[166] Even the most decisive of battles happened in the sky and people could not witness them (The Battle of Britain). Burke states that "every picture tells a story [sic] Images have evidence to offer about the organization and the setting of events great and small."[167] Following this train of thought, Nash and Kennington were able to offer evidence about great battle and the men who lead them respectively. They produced a visual narrative of different aspects of World War II using artistic tools to appeal to the public. Indeed, these artists told a narrative of the conflict in their own way. This narrative encompassed large scale battles as well as highlighted the heroes and the antagonist of the story. The *Sunday Times* reviewed the war art exhibition as "one of the most important single events that has happened in British art for three-quarters of a century."[168] Within Britain, the exhibition aimed at provoking a sense of unity inside the country, recording the war in an interpretive way, and showing people that art is for everyone. Outside Britain, exhibition aimed at gaining the sympathy of other countries and advertising the cultural values of the British. Britain at War was the first selection of paintings to be sent abroad for an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1941. It included works of Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and Graham Sutherland. On its first day, Britain at War was visited by 3000 New Yorkers and press reviews were abounding.[169]

However, the relative success of the exhibitions held by the WAAC does not campaign for the historical accuracy of the entire collection. This chapter aimed at highlighting the amount of credibility and historical storytelling that could be located in Nash and Kennington's work through close examination. It also showed that the experience of the Great War might have helped these two painters to fill the shoes of official War Artists again. Hence, the ability to accomplish the purposes of the WAAC varied from one artist to another. This variation depended on many factors such as personal and professional background, as well as the artistic tendencies and choices made by the painter him/herself. The lines between artistic depiction and historical record were blurred to some artists who struggled with war subjects. The next chapter will dive into the experience of Graham Sutherland and his work under the WAAC. It will bring to the forefront a new reading of his paintings and contemplate the reasons why his experience, as well as its outcome, might be different than that of Nash and Kennington.

Chapter Three

Paintings of World War II: What Art Conceals.

"An event becomes such as it is interpreted. Only as it is appropriated in and through a cultural scheme does it acquire historical significance"

Marshall Sahlins*[170]*

The major task conducted by the previous chapter was that of accentuating the quandary underlining the conjointment of propaganda and official war painting. It brought forward the possibility of contemplating official War Artists both as propagandists and reporting agents by investigating some of the most prominent artworks produced under the WAAC.

Henceforth, chapter two pinpointed the angles of war that were laid forward by art and how people reacted to them once on display. It aimed at substantiating the existence of a visual narrative of the Second World War that contributes to the historical significance this conflict has in the British memory. The analysis of Paul Nash and Eric Kennington's paintings represented the core and singularity of the second chapter. This analysis was conducted using Panofsky's three levels of interpretation which I believe unfold the visible as much as the invisible aspects of the painting.[171] It reconciles the artists with both his work and the historical context in which it was produced. This reconciliation builds up a sort of synthesis that offers much more than mere descriptive interpretations.

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[166] Foss, Brian. *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.155.

[167] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.140.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.140.

[170] Marshall Sahlins b. 1930, American Anthropologist quoted by Lear, Jonathan. *Ethics in the Face if Cultural Devastation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press: 2008.

[171] The use of the word "visible" here refers to the elements present in the image and their physical manifestation, while "invisible" echoes the time and reason of the production as well as the character of its creator. All of these factors are taken into consideration in the Iconological analysis.

This chapter, however, will be providing a critical insight into works of art created by Graham Sutherland under the WAAC. It sets one's sight on disclosing how much of the WAAC work can in fact be tolerated and deemed accurate and how much is indeed disrupting the lucidity of the final narrative of the war. To achieve this purpose a selection of Sutherland's paintings will be explored and interpreted. The study of these artworks will aim at pointing out the reasons why Sutherland's depictions differed from those of Nash and Kennington as well as others. The dissimilarities breaking off Sutherland from Nash and Kennington are the reasons why the formers are tackled in chapter two while the latter is tackled in this one. Sutherland, unlike his fellow artists, did neither serve as a soldier nor as War Artist during the Great War. Hence, his experience is different from Paul Nash and Eric Kennington's and must be considered accordingly. To fully fathom the peculiarity of Sutherland's contribution to War Art, the first part of this chapter will underline his use of Neo-Romanticism and how it helped him to turn the Blitz into artistic creations. This part will also tackle how both Nash and Sutherland made use of Neo-Romanticism, yet their works are poles apart. The second part of this chapter will be devoted to the study of Sutherland's Devastation Series through the use of Panofsky's Iconology.[172] This series is partially the reason Sutherland is a well-known British War Artist. In fact, The Devastation paintings were acclaimed by the WAAC and different historians, who discussed War Art, referred to them as the best official artistic rendering of the Blitz.[173]

However, the focus of this chapter will be pointing out the shortcomings of such a statement. Iconographic analysis will examine aspects beyond the painting itself. It will dive more into the painter's style and tendencies to explain the reasons why his work might be inadequate as a war record and thus differs from Nash and Kennington's works. Therefore, this part of my work will examine Sutherland's contribution to the war's visual narrative and where do his paintings fit along with Nash and Kennington's. It will investigate the representative aspect of Sutherland's work as opposed to the artistic one while comparing and contrasting it with the other two artists under study. The analysis will go beyond existing literature by providing a new interpretation of Sutherland's paintings and assessing their credibility in respect to the purposes of the WAAC. Publications on Graham Sutherland such as Martin Hammer's *Graham Sutherland: Landscapes, War Scenes, Portraits* and Rosalind Thullier's *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas* delved into a biographical study of this modernist artist and examined the reasons why he is maintained as an influential contemporary British painter.[174] Without nullifying this consensus, this chapter will perform a more critical examination of Sutherland's War Art. Panofsky's approach will allow a new reading of the Devastation series that has not been encouraged before. This examination will illustrate how the very modernist tendencies Sutherland was praised for hindered his artistic mission as a War Artist during the Second World War.

Neo-Romanticism and War Paintings:

A Brief Introduction into Neo-Romanticism:

Official war painters such as Paul Nash, Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland have made the most of Neo-Romanticism to paint important scenery of the Second World War.[175] Each one of these artists employed this style in a different manner. However, Sutherland's use of Neo-Romanticism might be the most controvertible one in comparison to that of Nash. Before going into the details of this use, the characteristics of this genre must be defined. The Neo-Romantics expressed an artistic nostalgia to the 19th century Romantic style and its longing for nature through painting landscapes. This nostalgia was also influenced by French Cubism as well, which resulted in a genre that had diversified aspects. It puts forward individual emotions that are provoked by the threat of the war. This results in the artistic creation of an imaginative landscape that reflects what the artist feels and wants to see. At the same time, this style accommodates manifestations of modernism and abstract art.[176]

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[172] The Devastation series is a collection of paintings created by Graham Sutherland between 1940 and 1941, portraying the German bombardment on different areas of the city. The series was produced under the War Artists Advisory Committee.

[173] Such statement is made by various historians such as Stansky, Peter, William Miller Abrahams. *London's Burning: Life, Death and Art in the Second World War.* California: Stanford University Press, 1994, As well as, Foss, Brian *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007 and Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015.

[174] Hammer, Martin.Graham Sutherland: landscapes, war scenes, portraits, 1924-1950. London: Scala, 2005, Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015.

[175] Tate. "Neo-Romanticism– Art Term."Retrieved from < http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/n/Neo-Romanticism >

[176] Ibid.

These characteristics strike one as being incompatible with the fundamental purpose of the War Artists Advisory Committee who sought to introduce representational art that would contribute in building up an account of the war at home and aboard.[177] To produce a record of events artists had to draw an eyewitness account of what they saw. The imaginative characteristics of Neo-Romanticism may not go hand in hand with such purposes. Hence, this chapter will aim at working out this contradictory relation between Neo-Romanticism and artistic war records.

Graham Sutherland: The Particularities of his Use of Neo-Romanticism:

Even though many artists have made use of Neo-Romanticism as a reaction to the war and the threat of invasion, Sutherland's work stands out for more than one reason.[178] The second chapter of this dissertation evaluated Nash's work. Hence, his art will be compared to that of Sutherland since they both were Neo-Romantics and are both the subject matter of this thesis. In the first chapter, the objectives and aspirations of the War Artists Advisory Committee are put forward to underline the sort of art they wanted to exhibit. However, when looking at the collection purchased by this very same committee, it seems that some works fell short from achieving its basic purpose, which was producing a record of the war.

Despite him being one of the most celebrated War Artists of the Second World War, Sutherland's work during that period was very different from other artistic depictions on a representational level. Nash and Kennington painted subjects with which viewers could identify. With Sutherland however, this function was hard to reach. Even though painting the Blitz must have been challenging, it did represent a rich material to Sutherland that others might have envied him for. For instance, the aftermath of the bombardment left the buildings shattered in different shapes and heights.[179] The fragmented atmosphere the Blitz left behind was a host to the artist's imaginative sphere. He projected his emotions and visual poetry onto the buildings. This Neo-Romantic tendency turned the Devastation series more into a personal work rather than a national one. The painter changed an already metamorphosed reality. In fact, Sutherland revealed that he used his emotion to transform the object he beheld in a letter saying: "My interests were mainly subjective: that one's emotions when facing an object could transform that object and give it a new vitality, transcending ordinary appearances."[180] This subjectivity is undoubtedly present in other works since what triggers the artist to make art is the reaction certain scenes evoke in him/her. Withal, these reactions are monitored by other factors as well. In the case of World War II paintings, artists were working under the guidance of a committee that required them to introduce art with a story.[181] What lacks in Sutherland's paintings is indeed the story telling factor. They paint the Blitz in a Neo-Romantic fashion of twining the nature of the subject with the nature of the painter. This fusion in Sutherland's case ended up by according more attention to him than to what he painted. It seems that the Devastation series tells the story of seeing the Blitz and not of what the Blitz was truly like.

It shows the effect the bombardment scenery had on the beholder and leaves little space to a description of the happening itself as will be examined later in details. In fact, when looking at different paintings of the Blitz created by Graham Sutherland, the impression that they are introduced or meant to be exhibited to a community of painters and artists is almost inevitable. His work attempts at concretizing the feeling and truth about the Blitz, yet is not trying to put it in accessible forms for the people to see. In *Devastation: East End, Wrecked Public House* [see Appendix18], for instance, the sensation of both loss and destruction is put forward by the use of dark shades and deformed structures.[182] However, had it not been for its title, it would have been hard for the viewer to recognise the building in this painting due to the acute use of abstract forms. On an emotional level the image might be telling, but on an iconographic one it is highly challenging.

Sutherland's Contribution to War Art:

Same War, Different Experience:

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[177] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.9.

[178] Paul Nash and John Piper were both War Artists who used Neo-Romanticismin their art while working for the War Artists Advisory Committee instead of explicit depictions of war scenery.

[179] Gilbert, Adrian. "The Blitz." Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved from < https://www.britannica.com/event/the-Blitz >

[180] Finlay,Karen A. "Identifying with Nature: Graham Sutherland and Canadian Art, 1939-1955." RACAR: Revue d'Art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review,21.1/2 (1994): 43–59.

[181] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, pp.157-8.

[182] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation: East End, Wrecked Public House,* 1941.Tate Museum, London.

Each of the artists discussed in this dissertation excelled at portraying one aspect of the war. Kennington drew portraits while Nash committed his work to portraying aircraft and air battles and Sutherland was requested to paint two aspects of the war: bombed building and coal mines. However, in this dissertation the light will be mainly shed at Sutherland's work on bombed building. This choice is connected to the position the Blitz paintings occupy in relation to Nash and Kennington's work. It is also connected to this dissertation's attempt to discuss a comprehensive visual narrative of the war. Such a narrative can be traced back to the works of Nash, Kennignton and Sutherland, for they painted airplanes, airmen and air raids respectively. Combined together, their work portrays one of the Second World War most important factors; aircraft and its contribution to the war effort.

Unlike Nash and Kennington, Sutherland did not take part in the Great War neither as an artist nor as a soldier. By the time the First World War unleashed its fires, Sutherland was an eleven year old boy while Kennington and Nash were in their twenties.[183] Based on this factual observation, it is possible to say that he was not faced with the horror of both the trench and the gas war as closely as other artists did. It had been pointed out in the earlier chapter that Nash lived through the trench war which affected him deeply and tainted him with a pinch of pessimism that was reflected in works such as *We are Making a New World*. Kennington on his part was a soldier as well and created works such as *The Kensingtons at Laventie* while serving in the British Army.[184] This does not allude at any point that the war did not affect Sutherland as a boy; it must have since it happened in his country and to his family. But what this point aims at highlighting is that his experience with war painting saw the light with the Second World War when he was thirty-seven year old.[185] Thus, he was figuring out a subject his peers were already familiar with.

In the Second chapter, the shift which artists, who worked on the Great War, have gone through is studied. The examination of their artistic evolution helps understand the form their works took later in the Second World War. However, it is unlikely to talk of such an artistic maturity in Sutherland's work when it comes to war painting. What must be tackled is how he faced the grandeur of this topic when he was asked to work for the WAAC in 1940 by his friend Kenneth Clark.[186] Before his commission, Sutherland was known for his landscape painting of Pembrokeshire where he infused surrealist elements within the traditional English landscape.[187] Hence, his style was characterized by a fusion between imagination and reality, between what he saw and what he felt. Equipped with Neo-Romanticism, he continued using this style to paint the scenes of the Second World War. It seems that it helped him fathom the grandiosity of the crisis he was asked to paint. The Blitz was one of the hardest episodes of the conflict and to ask an artist to turn that destruction into art is anything but an easy task to accomplish. It must not be forgotten that Sutherland was expected to offer a pictorial record and not an artistic impression of what the war looked like to the artist. The confrontation with destruction was a hard situation for Sutherland not only as an artist but also as a British civilian.

World War II marked the fusion of the Home Front with the Fighting Front in a sense that both were exposed and both were under the threat of death. The Blitz represented the embodiment of this threat. Any artist could not have expected the unprecedented effect the bombardment had on the cities and homes of Britain. Sutherland remarks, describing his bewilderment before what he witnessed: "[…] in the East End one did think of the hurt to people and there was every evidence of it. [...] I don't really know what I expected but even a mattress that had been blown out of a house into the middle of the street looked more like a body than a mattress."[188]

Each artist had a different experience when compared to the other and thus the outcome and its accuracy is based on the subject or topic painted. It is also affected by the circumstances in which the artist bore witness to this subject and his personal reaction to it which differ from one person to another. Kennington was asked to paint portraits of his motionless sitters in their uniforms and glory while Nash directed his interest to airplanes and air battles that might have happened before him but did not have tragic fallouts overall. Sutherland, on the contrary, had to move from one city to the other and observe the extraordinary effect the German bombs had left on the buildings ordinary people once inhabited. The acute difference these experiences bear must be kept in mind along with the fact that Graham Sutherland is not the experienced War Artist Nash and Kennington are.

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[183] According to the artists' biographies.
[184] Both works are mentioned and examined in chapter one.
[185] Sutherland was born in 1903, his commission with the WAAC started in 1940.
[186] Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015, pp.59-67.
[187] Ibid. pp.29-39.
[188] Ibid. p.71.

Sutherland's art does not differ from other works in its aesthetic value. On the contrary, Sutherland's Blitz painting communicates a sense of a suffocation and utter sadness. The acute use of sombre colours in most of the Devastation series conveys the sense of entrapment inside the ugliness this happening had brought on British cityscapes. Yet, those cities are not mentioned by name or exact location. Paintings from the Devastation series such as *An East End Street* [see Appendix8] and *City Panorama of Ruin* [see Appendix19] mark this lack of precision both in the title and content where nothing familiar can be seen other than unrecognisable ruins.[189] The authenticity factor is ripped away from those paintings with the lack of geographical direction in its title. This highlights the amount of abstraction used in Sutherland's art. It communicates emotions perfectly but it seldom communicates accuracy. Such a detail might be highly tolerated by the WAAC since paintings like the ones in Sutherland's Devastation series do achieve propaganda purposes fittingly. They evoke emotions of loss and disorientation but at the same a call for unity and strength. They also contribute in the demonization of the enemy for bombing buildings somewhere in Britain that might have been inhabited by "some who".

This lack of definitiveness becomes clear when Sutherland's work is compared to other painters who were equipped with Neo-Romanticism as well, such as Paul Nash. These artists attempted at bringing together three major factors in their works. The first was their personal emotions to what is happening around them, this factor is of a paramount importance for it is due to this sensibility that they are able to create art. The second factor is propaganda, artists were commissioned by the WAAC to boost the nation's morale and keep the people moving forward. The last and final factor is accuracy; the same committee also conditioned its artists to produce pictorial records of the war. Therefore, an artist needs to be smart enough not to let any of these factors overshadow the other. For instance, in *Battle of Britain* Nash nostalgically draws his landscape and plays with the shapes and colours of airplane smokes, this is not evidently how things looked. Added to that it is unlikely that Nash has been able to witness the entire battle and must have formed a comprehensive narrative of what occurred based on hearsay. However, he maintained a somehow realistic rendering of the events that everyone could see, understand and enjoy. He glorified Britain Royal Air Force, reported its victory and reduced the German enemy to a detail in his spacious painting.[190] Hence, it can be said that Nash figured out an artistic compromise where no factor left the other in the shade. Sutherland, on the contrary, introduced new priorities to his artistic rendering of events that offered more space to the abstract over the concrete as will be shown in the next section.

The Characteristics of Sutherland's Painting:

In his painting *The City: A Fallen Lift Shaft* [see Appendix20], Sutherland depicts a bombed building with twisted girders at the centre in an identified area in London north St Paul's cathedral.[191] What strikes the beholder at first is the colour arrangement in this painting. From the left side vivid bright colours are seen. However, without any visible degradation these colours develop into an intense darkness on the other side of the painting. This moody governing of colours suggests the binary relationship of fire and dust and how the flames turned this building into dusted debris. The colours express feelings of depression and utter sadness that must have been felt by Sutherland himself while painting this image. But what does this painting express beyond the gloomy atmosphere to its beholder? It clearly embraces the emotion of the Blitz yet does not communicate the sense of panic and loss such a happening must have caused. The image is of a deathly still nature unlike Nash's earlier mentioned work. The absence of panic and human figures might not have been an issue for the WAAC who purchased this work, since the presence of these two factors would have contributed in further alarming the people and demoralizing them. But looking at this painting now and trying to elicit historical information from it about the war or the Blitz in particular is hardly possible, which puts in question its value as a pictorial record of the war.

To reach a compromise in which Sutherland communicates what he witnessed without involving harsh factors from reality, he used the technique of displacement.[192] According to this technique, the artist would project the unfathomable human loss and suffering onto the buildings he painted. In *The City: A Fallen Lift Shaft* Sutherland attempted to execute this by turning the girders into twisted human organs that are trying to rise from the ashes of the bombarded buildings. This style is one way of tackling the subject of death and loss as an artist during the war.

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[189] Sutherland, Graham. *City Panorama of Ruin,* 1941. Museum of London.

[190] The analysis of this painting can be found in chapter 2.

[191] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation 1941: The City. Fallen Lift Shaft*, 1941, Imperial War Museums.

[192] Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.41.

His use of structures and architectural damage to record the Blitz was acclaimed by the committee as well as artists such as Stephen Spender who claimed that Sutherland's paintings "of twisted girders has something in them of twisted humanity."[193] Hence, replacing the human with the inhuman to covertly depict the inhumanity of the war is artistically creative but is not visible to everyone. The absence of a portion of reality in this work is overwhelming and affects the painting's function as pictorial documentation of the war. It tells the story of how Sutherland felt upon seeing the bombed building but not the story of the subject itself. This does not necessarily mean that artists should have painted casualties overtly or reproduced bloody scenery with their brushes; on the contrary it suggests a more refined way of painting loss without transforming its face. It introduces the possibility of being inspired by death and at the same time being able to paint it justly for everyone to see.

Sutherland could not keep the recording aspect in his work and this can be blamed on the toughness of his subject. Other artists were able to produce works that were adequate historical documentations of specific war episodes; Charles Cundall is one of these artists.[194] His painting *The Withdrawal from Dunkirk* [see Appendix21] represents an almost perfect historical documentation of what took place. Historian Brian Foss describes this painting as an "extracting rendition of what really happened."[195] The same was achievable by Nash's *Battle of Britain*. Yet, a comparison between these works and that of Sutherland seems slightly unfair for as it is mentioned before, the subject of the Blitz is more personal than the other two episodes of the war. It must not be forgotten that the German bombs were targeting the Home Front and aimed at the heart of Britain.[196]

Thus, this aspect of the war is hard because the protagonists here are the British civilians not the soldiers and the artist is required to paint the suffering of innocent families that might remind him of his own loved ones. Yet, Sutherland's way of displacing the people's pain into walls and architectural structures creates a sense of aloofness from the event.[197] Art historian Karen A. Finlay describes this strategy used by Sutherland in her article "Identifying with Nature: Graham Sutherland and Canadian art, 1939-1945." She states that it is reminiscent of "the Romantic practice of twinning human nature, in its subjective elements, with nature."[198] Hence, Sutherland Neo-Romantic style projects the human suffering onto buildings to depict their agony. However, it is hard for people to identify or even recognize the subject matter of this painting if they see nothing generic in it.

It is true that judging people's reception of Sutherland's Devastation series is hard without given evidence. Nevertheless, the assessment made earlier on people's inability to connect with Sutherland's work is based on the audience's reaction upon seeing the representative side of another painter's work, Henry Moore. In his shelter drawings Moore decided to leave his human subjects with undetermined face features. This decision to paint unrecognisable faces in an all too familiar condition is possibly an attempt made by Moore to substantiate the way suffering had brought Britons together so much so that they have become one. Paintings like *Tube Shelter Perspective* [see Appendix22] describe the condition of the life in the shelters without focusing on the details but by giving a comprehensive image that is filled with different shades of grey.[199] The colours used in Moore's painting offer a gloomy observation of how life was like hiding in the shelters during the Blitz. The people depicted in this image look pale and hardly alive. At first sight, their shapes resemble lying skeletons more than living human beings.

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[193] Ibid.p.42.

[194] Cundall, Charles Ernest (1890-1971) an English painter who signed short-term contracts with the War Artists Advisory Committee during the Second World Two.

[195] Cundall, Charles, *The Withdrawal from Dunkirk,* 1940. Imperial War Museums. In this painting, Cundall depicts the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force along with the allied forces from Dunkirk after the fall of France. The evacuation operation took place across the English Channel from 26 may to 4 June 1940 in an attempt to save as many soldiers as possible before the enemy could reach them. This event was also labelled the Miracle of Dunkirk to highlight the role of little civilian ships that rushed to the rescue of the allied forces and contributed in the saving of many soldiers. Foss, Brian. *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007, p.142.

[196] "BBC - History - The Blitz (pictures, video, facts & news)." BBC News. Retrieved from < http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_blitz >

[197] This method of displacement is pointed out in Brian, Foss, *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007. p.41.

[198] A. Finlay, Karen. "Identifying with Nature: Graham Sutherland and Canadian Art, 1939-1955." revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Représentation et identités culturelles / Representation and Cultural Identity (1994): pp.43-59

[199] Moore, Henry. *Tube Shelter Perspective,* 1941. Tate Museum, London.

However, the in-betweenness of life and death in this image conveys a sense of immortality and valor to the subjects. Moore added stains of yellow in different corners of his painting as if he wanted to use a vivid colour to transmit that the subjects in the picture are very much alive and not as dead as they look. Moreover, the blurredness on the faces and shapes can be traced back to the artist's unwillingness to paint people's true features as they were going through hard conditions. Hence, it can be out of a respect to their suffering. This attempt however seems to have disconnected the shelters' people of what was supposed to be their story. Art critic Keith Vaughan verbalises this antipathy felt between the Shelter drawings and the people:

It is a tragedy, nevertheless understandable, that so many Londoners confronted with these drawings feel baffled and insulted. Here is a whole new underground world from which they feel themselves totally excluded, though the elements were all so familiar […] These motionless swathed figures belong to no accidental setting of time and place. Rather are they memorials to the enduringness of things, of stone and human patience and courage […] I have heard people call these drawings morbid and unreal.[200]

Following this course of thought, if the same people cannot see a building they know or a person they can sympathise with in Sutherland's Blitz painting they will probably feel excluded from their own tragedy. In works like *The city: Fallen Lift Shift* all that is visible are shattered forms and contradicted colours which are not always as telling as they are meant to be.[201] When the artist tries to escape the barefaced ugliness of war this may lead to confusion on behalf of the ordinary viewer who might not be able to see beyond the visible or understand the artists' intention. Another artist, however, will likely be able to understand Sutherland's techniques and intentions for they both convey an aesthetic allure. Yet, this was not the only audience war paintings were introduced to or meant to address. Thusly, Sutherland's painting style and his strong use of Neo-Romantic elements renders his work rather elitist than generic.

The painting of abstract forms that offer a visionary glimpse into the horrors of the Second World War and trigger nostalgia to the traditional British landscape is not by default elitist and inaccessible. For example, Nash's *Totes Meer* differs from *Battle of Britain* for it embodies a symbolic value above all. It takes its title from the enemy's language only to use it to strike him back. The scenery of this painting constitutes a valuable propagandist work that attacks the enemy and foreshadows his defeat. The geographic location of the setting is disclosed to the public and Nash claimed that his painting was based on photographs he took of the aircraft debris. Thus, despite being filled with symbolism, the painting is tied down to reality one way or the other. The elements within the landscape are recognisable to the viewer even though the surrounding of the crashed airplanes is somehow unfamiliar or unrealistic. When compared to *The City: A Fallen Lift Shaft*, *Totes Meer* is more accessible to the public for it has stronger visible linkages with the war theme. The symbolism in Nash's work is approachable however Sutherland's symbolism maybe described as too ambitious. It might leave an instant effect on the viewer but this effect is rather linked to the use of colours and disturbed shapes in the image not to the theme of the war itself. According to this, a common British viewer who stands looking at both paintings mentioned above will probably be more moved by Nash's work. This is due to the lack of representative aspect in Sutherland's work. It does not represent the human distress in a direct fashion for it relies heavily on symbolic forms, which are not always understood by viewers.

The reason behind using architecture as a surrogate conveyor of human death and agony might be owing to Sutherland's personal moral code. In fact, the artist found great difficulty in interrupting people's mourning and painting it in their presence. Brian Foss in his study of War Art alludes to the fact that "Sutherland was nervous about exciting the anger of those who had been bombed out but whose ruined homes had the potential to become interesting paintings."[202] According to Foss, this was the reason behind the lack of portrayal of domestic homes in Sutherland's Devastation series, even though the bombing of civilians is what made the Blitz as consequential as it was. But, when reading Sutherland's own words on his experience during the Blitz, he did not seem to realize the value of the scenes he chose not to paint. He describes his mission as following: The city was more exciting than anywhere else mainly because the buildings were bigger and the variety of ways in which they [sic] fell more interesting. But very soon the raids began in the East End – in the dock areas – and immediately the atmosphere became much more tragic.

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[200] Vaughan, John Keith (1912-1977) was a British painter and Art Critic quoted by Capet, Antoine. « Que nous apprennent les "artistes officiels" sur le front de l'intérieur (Home Front) dans la Grande-Bretagne en guerre, 1940-1945 ? », Revue LISA/LISA e-journal, Vol. IV – n°3 ,2006. pp.62-90.

[201] Sutherland, Graham. *The City: Fallen Lift Shaft*, 1941. Imperial War Museums.

[202] Brian, Foss, *War Paint Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-1945*. London: Yale University Press, 2007. p.42.

In the city one didn't think of the destruction of life. All the destroyed buildings were office buildings and people weren't in them at night. But in the East End one did think of the hurt to people and there was every evidence of it. (..)I don't really know what I expected.[203]

In the quote above, Sutherland comes out as someone who was in fact more interested in the shapes of bombed buildings than in the real casualties of this bombing. It seems as if this was the reason he is working on the Blitz in the first place. It must not be forgotten that Sutherland is Kenneth Clark's dear friend and used to live in his house for a long time. Hence, maybe Clark handed him the Blitz subject deliberately because Sutherland wanted to work on twisted forms. What is striking in this quote is the fact that the painter gives the impression that he is surprised by the somehow sudden emergence of human casualties. It seemed that such a factor interrupted his artistic commission. Sutherland appears confused through his own words; he is bound to choose between forms and humans, between what he loves to paint and what he was required to paint. Rosalind Thuillier asserts in her study of Graham Sutherland that the WAAC wanted to acquire "eye-witness accounts […] to avoid getting imaginative reconstructions that had been printed on the basis of hearsay evidence, which could easily lead to inaccuracies." But this "did not prevent an artist treating a subject in his own personal style, however idiosyncratic."[204] Indeed, Sutherland chose to stick to his own artistic style rather than commit himself to produce accurate renditions of the ugliness around him.

But the act of omitting people's sacrifices out of artistic sensibility seems absurd. Sutherland was not a journalist taking quick photos but a painter whose job was to chronicle the war in artistic manners that had the potential of glorifying death. This lack of dare seems to be unjustifiable. It enfeebled the artist's opportunities to introduce valuable work that would report every aspect of the Blitz and contribute in the formation of a comprehensive visual narrative of this event.

Whether it is by his choice or the choice of the committee that hired his services, Sutherland seems to have painted the Blitz from above, leaving the Blitz of the people as a footnote in his work. This is a period of history where texts are available and the artist must make sure that his art is telling something more than what is already written down. The Blitz was a great opportunity for Sutherland to paint in details the event as he witnessed it not as it affected him. In the end, what seems to be significant in his paintings is what he did not paint instead of what he painted. British historian Peter Burke asserts that "the historian needs to read between the lines, noting the small but significant details – including significant absences."[205] Indeed, the lack of human casualties should be pointed out and studied in Sutherland's work.

To explore this aspect in details two of Sutherland's Devastation paintings will be explored thoroughly using an Iconological analysis. This latter will help explore the painting and its historical significance as well. Panofsky's method was not used to analyse Sutherland's work before, hence it adds to the existing readings of this artist's work. An Iconographic/Iconological analysis will enable the analyst to explore the painting from three points of views. As if the reader has three lenses with each one revealing new inclusions to what the previous lens conveyed. The first selected painting is *Devastation, 1940: A House on the Welsh Border* [see Appendix23].[206] The choice of this painting is made in the interest of examining the way Sutherland painted domestic houses and how he handled the sensitivity of such a subject. It has been pointed out before, that domestic houses were not very popular among the depictions of the Blitz probably due to the personal and artistic challenge they imposed on the painter. Hence, it is intriguing to evaluate the accuracy and symbolism of painting domestic suffering during World War II. The second painting to be studied in the next section is *Devastation in the City: Twisted Girders against a Background of Fire* [see Appendix24].[207] This painting is marked by the use of the displacement technique discussed earlier in this chapter. Thus, it has been selected as a case study to scrutinise Sutherland's use of metallic forms and architectural structures to embody the human suffering. The work also contains a very peculiar use of colours that deserves to be studied and explored carefully.

A Close Study of Sutherland's Paintings:

Devastation, 1940: A House on the Welsh Border:

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[203] Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015, pp.59-69.

[204] Ibid.p.64.

[205] Burke, Peter. *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.188.

[206] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation, 1940: A House on the Welsh Border,* 1940.Tate Museum, London.

[207] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation in the City: Twisted Girders against a Background of Fire,* 1941. Imperial War Museums.

Through a pre-Iconographic description, the visible elements of the painting must be stated and put forward. In this work, what can be seen is a half-wrecked two-floor house. The destruction is clearly visible on the front of the house and its missing roof, yet the overall setting looks much arranged and relatively clean. The sky and the ground surrounding the house are painted in sombre colours. The house, however, is sketched in brighter ones like yellow, green and beige. The inside of the ground-floor is as dark as the outside and remains of the destructed walls and doors can be perceived.

On an Iconographical level, the visible elements of the painting must be analysed in relation to the theme depicted. This depiction represents the effect the Blitz had on a domestic house. Despite the bombing damage that happened to this building, it stands tall as to echo the sturdy condition of the British households. Sutherland applied contradicted colours in this image. The dark shades in the sky, ground and inside of the house imply a sense of destruction and loss. The yellow, beige and green brushed lines on the house's wall, however, convey a note of hope and imply the message that this house will outlive destruction. The painting is entitled "a house on the Welsh border" without further indication on the location of this house or the condition of its inhabitants in an attempt to keep it generic. The all-encompassing aspect of this house renders it evocative of every British house bombed during the Blitz. Hence, a house that resists the enemy's bombs mirrors the unity and bravery of the entire Home Front. The choice of mentioning the word "house" might be a deliberate one in an attempt to offer the public enough information so they can sympathise with the subject. Sutherland's motifs are stated forward through his play on colours and shapes in this painting. This house is destructed yet looks almost inconveniently beautiful, the roof has demolished yet the visible wall is almost intact, the outside in gloomy yet the house hosts bright yellow and orange colours.

This Neo-Romantic depiction shows an insistence on promoting hope and survival rather than death and doom. On an Iconological level, the painting needs to be perceived from a wider lens. This latter involves the circumstances in which such a work of art was produced and the nature of the artist who produced it. This intrinsic level of analysis uses the painting merely as a launching point. The reached interpretation is based on more than the work of art itself. It is based on associations with similar works, the character of Graham Sutherland and the reason for the production of this piece. As a part of the Neo-Romantic fashion, buildings were popular subjects in War Art as they reflected the essence of classic Romantic items. Sutherland found inspiration in the shattered structures. *The House on the Welsh Border* was painted as part of a series called Devastation that illustrated the effect the Blitz had on the Home Front. This description could generate false expectations, as one might watch for pictures of utter misery and loss. However, even when painting domestic houses Sutherland made sure they stood glorious in the face of the bombardment.

The condition of the house on this painting tells little about the Blitz and a lot about the significance of this building itself. It denotes the solidity of the Home Front as a whole. Sutherland used bright colours to paint the walls of this building and they strike one as being unfit to the wider context they are in. The surrounding of this little house seems to be more destructed than the house that lost its roof, yet looks inappropriately clean. The fact that this building is entirely exposed from both visible angles of the painting echoes Sutherland's well-known claustrophobic condition.[208] He paints a house with destructed walls and roof but accentuates a sense of liberation at the same time. Hence, this impression might be due to Sutherland's own loathing for enclosed spaces so much so that he cannot see the misery in this state of bareness. Moreover, in his early years Graham Sutherland tried to pursue a career in engineering.[209] He failed to do so and became an artist instead. Nevertheless, his taste for painting shapes and deformed buildings might be due to his previous taste in designing materials and structures. This tendency to design can be detected in Sutherland's authoritative transformation of the buildings he painted. The house in this work for instance is unlikely to have looked the way he painted it in real life. He probably substituted the real colours and shapes of this subject to more artistically telling ones. This need to alter the reality of things is also controlled by the needs of the committee who purchased this painting. The War Artists Advisory Committee wanted to form a pictorial record of the war but at the same time wanted a work that can perform propagandist purposes as well. Presumably, if one of these two purposes had to be disregarded it is the former. Sutherland's *House on the Welsh Border* is a manifestation of propaganda. It reveals the gloominess of the Blitz through glimpses of the surroundings of the house in the background. Then, it uses bright colours to shed light on the house and put it forward before all destruction.

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[208] Yorke, Malcolm. *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and Their Time.,* London: Tauris Parke Paperworks. 2001. p.106.
[209] Ibid.

This play on colours evokes the duality of good and evil, peace and war, protagonist and antagonist. Sutherland painted the British house as a fortified place.

When compared to other works portraying the Blitz, Sutherland's work comes off as not very factual about the tragedy it is painting. For instance, Nettie Moon's *The Spirit of London during the Blitz* [see Appendix25] was not produced in the same timing or circumstances as Sutherland's work.[210] Moon's painting was an attempt to draw the memory of the Blitz in 1979. Hence, her work was entirely based on the national and personal recollection of the event.[211] However, the final product seems more accurate and faithful to the happening than that of Sutherland which was painted based on eyewitness accounts as the rest of the WAAC purchased art.[212] Nettie's painting involves human figures, clouds of smoke and ashes, bombed buildings as well as the dome of St Paul's cathedral in the background. In this depiction, the human factor is strong as it represents different categories of the British people. In fact, more than one human subject is detected in the foreground of this painting: A mother protecting her child, an elderly man looking in rage to the destruction around him and a warden helping this latter. This kind of representational aspect is what is missing in Sutherland's work. Viewing Moon's painting will allow people to identify with the subject matter and see a possible reflection of their own experience.

The destruction is highly visible in this work and so is the glory and unity of the British nation. Thus, propaganda is not a nullifier of accuracy; they can both coexist in the same painting. Sutherland could have performed this documentary kind of painting by including representative items in his depictions of the Blitz. If Moon's painting was produced during the Second World War it would have probably been purchased by the Committee for it performs propagandist as well as documentary purposes. The St Paul's dome is a symbolism of the stamina and persistence of the British culture and history. It denotes that even though domestic houses have been destroyed, historical architectural remains intact.

All of these highly significant items were assembled in one painting in a sort of collage that brought together the spirit of the Blitz. It is true that every artist has his own style and conception of things however this comparison suggests that Sutherland could have made further attempts to approximate his work to the event of the Blitz. It also shows that omitting the human figures and displacing their tragedy into buildings is not a visible or sufficient technique. Sutherland's *House on the Welsh Border* withholds the human suffering from the viewer in a censoring fashion. It leaves him/her questioning what happened to the people who used to live in this house. But was the WAAC's art supposed to trigger questions or answer them when it decided to produce a pictorial record of the events? It must not be forgotten that art exhibitions during the war were not locations where art critics and painters would meet and discuss art. It was the art of the people.

The fact that Sutherland's purely artistic style of picturing the war was purchased by the committee, in defiance of its disharmony with this latter's foundational purposes triggers many questions.[213] Kenneth Clark had a very specific purpose for his committee. Artists who signed long-term contracts such as Eric Kennignton and Paul Nash were able to meet the committee's aspirations. Nash's work was narrative as much as descriptive; it told the story and aimed at boosting morale. Eric Kennignton who worked on portraits presented a work that was very detail-oriented. It introduced and humanised the war's fighting men and brought them down to people. Each of these artists told a different story to the public about one aspect of the war. Sutherland had the same task with a different yet more interesting topic. The Blitz lasted for months and affected almost all civilians in London.[214] Yet, those same civilians could not find their stories in Sutherland's paintings. The panic, fear and loss they suffered was displaced into buildings.

Based on this comparison between the work of these three artists and the fact that it was purchased by the same committee, it might be fair to assume that the strong friendship between Clark and Sutherland played a major role in his commission. In fact, for years Clark acted as the Sutherlands' rescuer. In 1939, the latter went through financial difficulties that left them nearly homeless; Kenneth Clark paid their debts and hosted them in his own house

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[210] Moon, Nettie. *The Spirit of London during the Blitz,* 1979, Museum of London.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas.* Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015, p.64.

[213] The War Artists Advisory Committee's purposes are discussed in the historical background.

[214] "BBC - History - The Blitz (pictures, video, facts & news)." BBC News.Retrieved from < http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_blitz >

for a good period of time.[215] Concerning this issue, Rosalind Thuillier asserts that "every letter from Sutherland to Clark throughout their lives is full with gratitude."[216] Hence, it seems that the relationship between the head of the committee and the artist working for him is a strong one and may be Sutherland's commission was just one of the so many services Kenneth offered him by courtesy of their friendship. This hypothesis is made to explain the purchasing of Sutherland's work despite its contrariness from other artistic pieces studied in this dissertation, *vis-à-vis* the purposes of the committee.

Devastation in the City: Twisted Girders against a Background Fire:

Following Panofsky's Iconological methodology that has been applied on paintings throughout this dissertation, this work will be analysed on three different levels. On a pre-Iconographic level, this painting displays a scene of what seems to be a great fire. The orange and red flames are visible in the right background of the image and all that can be seen on the left side is utter darkness. At the centre of the setting there are five construction girders standing, while held by a sixth one horizontally. The girders are twisted in different orientations probably due to the great heat caused by the fire. Their colour is that of copper but tends to turn into a yellow at different areas.

In fact, it is not clear whether this yellow-reddish colour is a reflection of the fire on the right side that seems to be so close to the girders or is the colour of the metal they are made of. Between each girder something resembling grey ashes can be detected. The painter drew these ashes in serpentine shapes.

On an Iconographic level, the scenery Sutherland depicts in his painting is of the bombardment in the city. Unlike the previous painting, no specific buildings are portrayed in this one. Instead, Sutherland concentrates his focus on girders, rendering them the protagonists of this work. The twisted lines they form at the centre of the image create a motion of agony. As one looks at the painting, he/she can almost feel that these girders are agitated and tormented by the destruction surrounding them. The implicit personification of these items symbolises the suffering of the British people under German attacks. Moreover, Sutherland's choice to project people's suffering on girders is very indicative for the latter are made of steel. It symbolises people's stiffness in the face of danger. When looking attentively, the girder's motion does not show them escaping the fire on the right but rather hastening towards it. In their motion to the red and yellow flames, the girders leave behind a very dark space where nothing can be detected. The image is highly symbolic of human suffering without a sign of a living creature in it. Yet, the depiction is open to multiple interpretations as any work of art. The girders can also be associated to animals' claws trying to attack destruction. The technique of displacement is at its peak in this work as Sutherland tries to voice the after effect of bomb damage in the city without painting any generic factors that people can detect straight away. The city surrounding these girders is not visible, no building or houses can be seen. In fact, the reference to a city in this painting is only brought forward by its title and the presence of the girders that are often found in urban spaces.

On a third and final level, the five vertical girders combine with the horizontal one in a shape that resembles that of an ark. This might be a replication of Noah's ark that will take all Britons to safety through patience and perseverance leaving behind the darkness of war and walking throughout flames. This presumption can be strengthened by Sutherland's acute interest in religion and paintings of religious themes, being a recent converted Catholic himself.[217] The association with Noah's ark accentuates the elitist aspect of this work of art. It does not address everyone but only the ones chosen to embark on this ark: likely artists. Hence, Sutherland considers art as the only saviour of the British traditional culture and life amid this war. In fact, this painting communicates, in one way or the other, the painter's hatred of ruined industrial spaces and his nostalgia for the old beautiful British landscape that characterises Neo-Romantics.[218] This artistic bitterness calls back to mind Nash's work, *We are Making a New World* where he expressed his resentment of the destruction caused by the conflict on nature. In the Second World War, Nash seemed to have transformed that bitter note into a more hopeful one. Sutherland, on the other hand, did not have enough experience to move on from the depressing atmosphere. Despite the possibility of positive symbolism, the painting remains a very bleak and harsh one on the eyes at first sight. It connotes a vision of destruction and inevitable doom. The sharpness of colours that highlights the danger surrounding the city such as red, yellow and

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[215] Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas.* Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015. pp.59-67
[216] Ibid. p.60.
[217] "Graham Sutherland." Graham Sutherland | Art and Christianity Enquiry. Retrieved from < http://acetrust.org/ecclesiart/artists/graham-sutherland >
[218] Tate. "Neo-Romanticism– Art Term." retrieved from <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/Neo-Romanticism>

black is very strong. Sutherland focused on the twisted forms of the girders the same way he focused on the destructed wall of the house in the previous painting. He seems to choose very specific details in his images and then fills those details with intense symbolism. He abstracted the shapes of his buildings and girders, adding a surrealist tone to the entire painting.

This surrealist appearance is what poses a problematic when it comes to the practicality of this painting. In fact, it reduces the public's access to it and converts the work into an almost elitist one. The nostalgic spirit Britain had during the war seems to overwhelm Sutherland. He expresses his repulsiveness from the modern city and focuses on the deformed nature war left buildings in. Yet again, this renders the work a personal piece of art rather than a commemoration of the war in the national memory. When compared to *A House on A Welsh Border*, *Twisted Girders against a Background Fire* is even more unfamiliar to the scene of the war for it excludes both civilians and domestic houses. The city is not visible on any corners of the image which deepens the sense of aloofness. It is true that a work of art is by nature personal for the artists cannot isolate themselves from their creation.

However, this dissertation is tackling official art that was produced under the government's patronage with a specific purpose. Hence, artists signing contracts for the WAAC had to create equilibrium between the personal and the historical.

Sutherland's Artistic Commemoration of World War II: Aptitude to Mislead:

The aspect of an artistic record of the war is difficult to detect in Sutherland's paintings. His Neo-Romantic style and techniques of projection renders his work artistically powerful yet historically powerless. In his book *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence,* Peter Burke states that "a particular advantage of the testimony of images is that they communicate quickly and clearly the details of a complex process."[219] Despite his focus on specific details in his Devastation series such as distorted structures, Sutherland did not clearly communicate the complex process of the Blitz. He chose indirect storytelling by substituting human agony for conflicting colours and broken architecture. This allegorical presentation of the Blitz might be regarded as an artistic way of resisting the ugliness of the Second World War. Yet, what this dissertation aims at uncovering is the historical aspect of paintings. To evaluate whether the function of documenting events is met by Sutherland's work or not, it must be perceived from two points of view: now and then.

First, what does the present viewer see in Sutherland's painting that could be of use for him/her historically? Burke argues that "images were not created, for the most part at any rate, with the future historian in mind. Their makers had their own concerns, their own messages."[220] This statement is very suitable to describe Sutherland's work. In fact, he seems to be very egocentric towards his creation that he does not try to put any explicit informative factors in his work. Thus, beholders of paintings such as *A House on a Welsh Border* or *Twisted Girders Against a Background of Fire*, who might belong to another culture and time, have to rely on their interpretive skills to determine the potential meanings of the work. It is not evident that a Middle-eastern or a North-African viewer will understand Sutherland's nostalgia to the English landscape or his Neo-Romantic tendencies. Erwin Panofsky describes this cultural barrier that might hinder the process of understanding works of art with the example of "[An] Australian bushman [who] would be unable to recognise the subject of a Last Supper; to him, it would only convey the idea of an excited dinner party."[221] Thus, a great proportion of the viewers might fail to get information out of Sutherland's art unless they run an entire research prior to visualizing the painting. So, such works do not communicate "quickly" or "clearly" the experience they are depicting the way Nash's the *Battle of Britain* or Kenningotn's portraits do. Added to that, to offer historical information to a recipient, a source should contain a relative level of straightforwardness. History must be accessible and visible especially when it is in the form of an image. A viewer who is informed about the Second World War and turns to Sutherland's art in order to visually explore the Blitz risks being lost in a web of symbolism. It requires extensive readings as it has been shown above and due to the complexity of the imagery, these readings will result in different interpretations. It is true that history is not about mere facts and there is no final reading of happenings, yet a historian needs to find a certain amount of concreteness in the historical depiction he/she is studying. When it comes to Sutherland's work, the historical value of this process remains weak in comparison to that of other sources such as official texts and photographs. Kenneth Clark chose art to record the war because he trusted

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[219] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. p.83.

[220] Ibid.

[221] Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in iconology: humanistic themes in the art of the Renaissance*. New York: Harper & Row, 1967. pp.3-16.

artists could not only replicate but also interpret what they see. Hence, they are deeply involved in their creation and have the liberty to choose the focus of their work. However, Sutherland over interpreted his scenes adapting them to his personal reaction which might lead the viewers to choose a straightforward photograph instead.

For the viewer who lived in the painter's time and was directly concerned by his work i.e. the British viewer, the situation is even more complicated. Likely being an eyewitness to the event depicted in the painting him/herself, this viewer might be more critical of what is perceived. Sutherland's work might represent an emotional surrogate to the British recipient. It expresses his feelings of loss, bitterness and disdain of the war damage by proxy. Hence, on an emotional level a connection is bound to happen. However, this connection is abruptly cut by the viewer's omission from it. The record of the events is no longer honest for it prioritized emotions over accurate rendering of events. Burke states that:

Like novelists, painters represent social life by choosing individuals and small groups whom they believe to be typical of a larger whole. […] In other words, as in the case of portraits of individuals, representations of society tell us about […] the relationship between the maker of the representation and the people portrayed.[222]

Sutherland depicted generic subjects such as civilian houses and cityscapes; however, the lack of a geographic indication weakened the representative aspect of his portrayals. Abstract forms also rendered the depiction a bit unfamiliar. The absence of individuals strengthened this aspect. Contrary to that, Kennington's portraits created a relationship not only between the artist and the sitter but also between this latter and the viewers. The painter, in this case, acts as a historical intermediary between the British people and the event of the war as a whole. Hence, the absence of humans, panic and domestic items in Sutherland's paintings distanced his art from the reality it is supposed to represent, according to the contract he signed with the WAAC. Painter George Bingham asserts that fine art can "perpetuate a record of events with a clearness second only to that which springs from actual observation."[223] Yet again, such clearness is missing from Sutherland's work. This puts into question the contribution his art offers to the visual narrative of World War II. According to a famous Chinese proverb "pictures are worth ten thousand words", in a sense that they tell the story more eloquently without the need to use one letter. Hence, it is but normal for the illiterate portion of the British population, regardless of its percentage, to seek information from visual sources. But what if the paintings they are looking at do need ten thousand words in order to be fully explained and fathomed? Sutherland's Devastation series is elitist in the sense that it not only omitted ordinary people from its scenery but also created a visual barrier blocking illiterate citizens through acute use of abstract forms.

This barrier will hinder people's understanding of what the artist is displaying in his work. Hence, the literacy of the British people plays a major role in defining the historical value of these works then. The illiterate members of the public who have been persuaded to go to museums and see the war because they could not read about it, will not find Sutherland's work very helpful. In fact, listening to a radio broadcast or looking at a photograph might have been a better alternative. An illiterate viewer is likely to see more information in Nash and Kennington work than in Sutherland's. Thus, the historical documentation the work of Graham Sutherland offers remains problematic on more than one level as it has been discussed. If it does not tell a story on its own without the help of other historical sources like textual documents, Graham's Devastation series might only be historically relevant as an illustration to a historical text. Even in such a format, his work might not be very descriptive of the Blitz but more telling about the British psyche during those days. Hence, Sutherland's art is unlikely to be held as historical evidence for the lack of an informative aspect in it. It represents an artistic depiction of what the war caused to the British state of mind. He chose to paint the emotional reaction to the war when others such as Nash and Kennington chose to paint its mechanism.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that there are no false choices when it comes to artistic creation, but only different priorities. Sutherland did not commit himself to the purposes of the War Artists Advisory Committee and thus his work does not represent a valuable historical documentation. However, it offers an insight on the effect war has on the human psyche. It explores another aspect of warfare which is a very important one: the psychological warfare. His work concretizes the human suffering and transforms it into colours and shapes. Before his death, Sutherland explained his artistic tendencies as following "I think that somebody has to discover a way of making quite

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[222] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. p.124.
[223] George Caleb Bingham (1811-1879) quoted by Buke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008. p.106.

ordinary things which one perceives but does not look at, available in the form of a painting."[224] Hence, he was pursuing subjects that other painters did not shed light on. Sutherland chose to be different in an era where photography became accepted as a tool to replicate reality as it is.[225] The introduction of the photo might have encouraged Sutherland to become more innovative towards his subjects. He depicted the familiar in an unfamiliar style to make sure that art remains distinct and supreme to other forms of visual depictions. This chapter does not try to mark Sutherland's artistic creation as unreliable.

Burke asserts that "instead of describing images as reliable or unreliable" historians should be "concerned with degrees or modes of reliability and with reliability for different purposes."[226] Hence, this study evaluated the degrees of reliability in Sutherland's work. It introduced an analysis of his paintings that have been lacking in the humble amount of literature written on this artist. The critical interpretation provided in this chapter on Sutherland's Devastation series adds to the existing historiography by pointing out the pitfalls of his work under the WAAC. The peculiarity of his experience and artistic characteristics of his work are underlined to highlight the reasons his art is not as representative as that of Nash and Kennington. This chapter complements the second one by providing a different approach of depicting war in official painting. The latter uncovered painters' ability to become reporters, while the former calls attention to the difficulties and inadequacies that might become part of the War Artists' job.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the portrayal of World War II in the paintings of Paul Nash, Eric Kennington and Graham Sutherland. It assessed the historical value of the selected works in documenting major events that took place in Britain during the Second World War. This research represented an unprecedented attempt to examine the ambivalent function of art when it comes to war reporting. It complemented an already existing discussion on the War Artists Advisory Committee and the role of art during hostilities in Britain. However, it added to the existing historiography by suggesting a further analysis of paintings that would highlight the challenges and complications that come with using art as a tool of reportage. This critical handling of primary source was made possible through applying Iconology to read World War Two official War Art.

The Second World War marked one of the darkest episodes in the modern history in terms of destruction. Britain, in particular, faced many challenges and unprecedented losses in this war that required the urgent mobilization of the entire nation.[227] One of the skills that were summoned to the country's aid was art. Hence, the War Artists Advisory Committee was put to action under the Ministry of Information. The director of the National Gallery then, Kenneth Clark, headed the committee with precise objectives. By this time photography was already serving as a reporting agent, however, Clark wanted to approach the war in a rather humanistic manner. He believed that artists would not only replicate reality but also interpret it in an artistic yet accessible style. The committee transformed artists into war correspondents who also had to work on maintaining public's morale. Hence, art was a double-edged mean for the government. Paintings were exhibited in museums and people were encouraged to go and see what the war looked like.

This dissertation centred on three of the most important official War Artists of World War Two; Nash, Kennington and Sutherland. These artists were selected for their artistic influence and handling of pivotal topics during the war. They all devoted more focus to the aerial aspect which was a crucial component in the war effort. However, each one of them focused on one subject. Nash painted airplanes while Kennington focused on portraits of airmen. Their works approached victorious episodes of the war for the most part. Nash painted the *Battle of Britain* and *Totes Meer*, both of which are examined in this dissertation, while Kennington drew portraits of RAF personnel. Their selected paintings displayed the resilience of the war effort. This is the reason why they are both studied in the second chapter.

Nash relied on symbolism to channel a hopeful note concerning Britain's fate in this conflict while Kennington used a more straightforward style in expressing his support and appreciation for the war effort. In this dissertation, their works are assessed as accessible forms of coverage. Indeed, the analysis makes the most of the final

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[224] Thuillier, Rosalind. *Graham Sutherland: Life, Work and Ideas*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015. p.227.

[225] Ibid. p.225.

[226] Burke, Peter. *Eye witnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Paperbacks, 2008, p.186.

[227] "BBC - History - The Home Front (pictures, video, facts & news)." BBC News. retrieved from < http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/home_front>

work as well as the artists' own experience to show how the latter influenced the former. Both Nash and Kennington were well-established War Artists prior to World War II and this may have helped them in tackling war related topics. The comparison between artists and their output is part and parcel of this dissertation. Since British artists were all caught in the same situation, hired by the same committee and asked to perform the same task, it is but normal to compare and contrast their experiences. This helped in judging the output they composed.

The study of Kennington and Nash proves that both artists were able to introduce art that could at the same time maintain public morale and inform the public's mind on the developing events. This supports the hypothesis that art can produce a pictorial record of the war. This record must be one that is accessible, meaningful and telling. These qualifications apply to Nash and Kennington's paintings that are studied in this dissertation.

However, a thorough Iconological study of selected works from Sutherland's Devastation series lays forward a different style in portraying events. Indeed, Sutherland's inclinations towards abstract art and Neo-Romanticism hinder his artistic coverage of the Blitz. His Devastation series is examined in light of the peculiarity of his style and experience *vis-à-vis* other artists. The fact that both Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland are labelled Neo-Romantics but their output varies in terms of historic reliability is pointed out and discussed. The use of colours and abstract shapes is contemplated and analysed with reference to the artist's own background and personal life as well. This association is made to lay bare the reasons why Sutherland's work is hardly accessible by the public and embodies an artistic representation rather than an accurate rendering of events. The Blitz marked the British modern history and represented a symbol of resilience and union against enemies. Yet, Sutherland's depiction of this topic fell short of depicting an accurate memorial of this happening due to the acute use of abstract artistic forms. This choice rendered Sutherland's work less accessible than that of Nash and Kennington. It can hardly be contemplated as a document of the war for its lack of details and accuracies when it comes to the reality of how the Blitz was. Thus, this research tackles two facets of War Art. It supports the possibility of considering official war paintings as historical documents which can inform the viewer on history. But it also shows the limits of this use and brings forward the reason why some paintings do not fulfil the original task they were purchased for. The ambivalence of the WAAC's success at producing a pictorial record of the war is hence assessed. Kenneth Clark chose art to document this war because he believed in the artists' ability to create, interpret and communicate its reality. However, the output of this interpretation might have turned against the committee's own purposes. In fact, this dissertation shows that the artist's ability to recognize and acknowledge his task is the only way he could balance interpretation with documentation.

Even though, this topic is linked to a period of history that is generously studied, it sheds light on the modern and up to date aspect of visual documentation. When discussing significant events in history the human mind tends to associate the historical moment with a visual reference. The brain is unlikely to summon a textual document when one thinks about the Vietnam War, 9/11 or the World Wars. It is through visual references that we make quick contact with history. This topic considered a visual narrative of Britain during the Second World War and highlighted the paintings that depicted major events in this modern conflict. It shows the important position held by visuals in history. Even though photography was already developing and in use during the Second World War, people visited museums and contemplated art. This might be due to the interpretive aspect of paintings. Despite the fact that both are picture making forms, photography is quite restricted when it comes to scales, choice and freedom. Paintings, however, have the ability of condensing a life action into one piece of art as in Nash's the *Battle of Britain*. This life size painting is still exhibited in the Imperial War Museum and admired by many. Its subject matter could not have been captured by a photograph. The same can be said about other works dealing with the war theme such as Picasso's famous *Guernica* which has been an inspiration for Sutherland's work in the Devastation series.[228]

Paintings are exhibited in Museums and seen by many people at the same time. They are more interactive and human. The British collection of war paintings is a vivid from of commemorating World War Two in the nation's memory. These works of art are open to infinite interpretations that would introduce new readings with the ever-changing circumstances and methods as time goes by. Photographs on the other hand are sort of mechanical and stubborn when it comes to interpretations. This controversy triggers the academic possibility for a further comparative research on the different effects World War II paintings have, *vis-à-vis* World War II photographs.

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[228] Picasso, Pablo. *Guernica*. 1937, Reina Sofia National art Museum, Madrid.

Appendices

[Appendix 1] Salvador Dali, *Los Elefantes*, 1948, Private Collection.

[Appendix 2] Joe Lee, *First It Was War Reporters, Now It's Official Artists*, Evening News, 22 January 1943,

Associated Newspapers, London, Collection of the Centre for the Study of Cartoons and Caricatures, University of Kent.

[Appendix 3] Keith Vaughan, *A Chat Before Lights Out*, 1942, Imperial War Museum.

[Appendix 4] Evelyn Dunbar, *Land Army Girls Going to Bed*, 1943, Imperial War Museum.
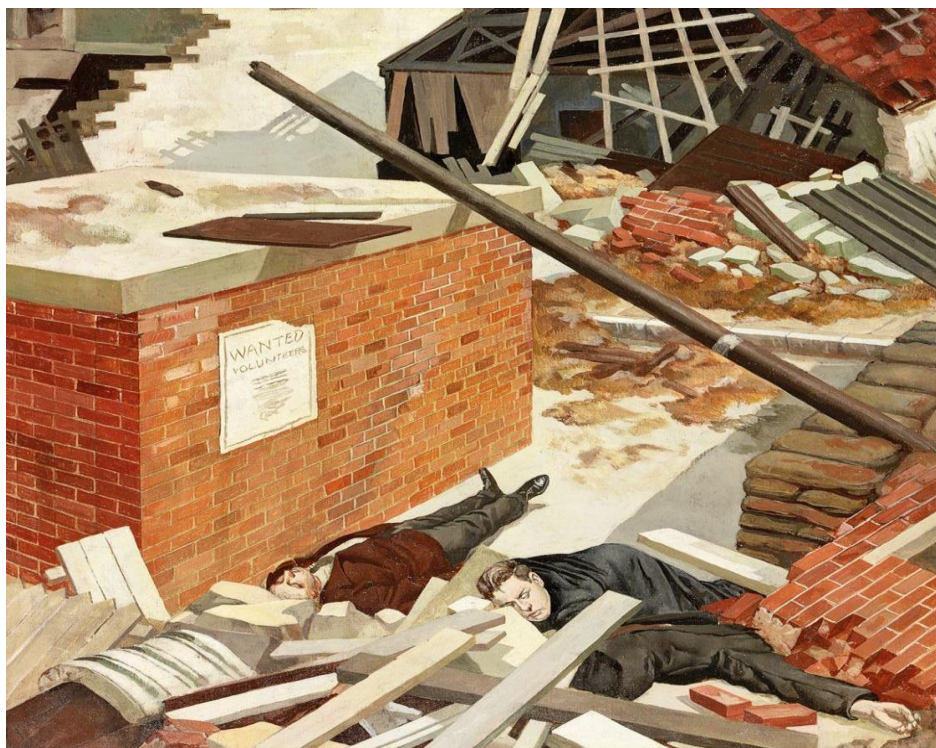
[Appendix5] Louis Duffy, *Aftermath*, 1940, Laing Art Gallery.

[Appendix6] Henry Moore, *Shelterers in the Tube,* 1941, Tate Britain.

[Appendix7] Jill Craigie's film *Out of the Chaos* (1943), Henry Moore was seen sketching people in the shelters before going home and finalising his work.

[Appendix8] Graham Sutherland, *Devastation,* 1941: An East End Street, Tate.

[Appendix9] Paul Nash, *Totes Meer*, 1940-1, Tate Gallery.

[Appendix10] Kennington, Eric. *The Kensingtons at Laventie*, 1915. Imperial War Museums, London.

[Appendix11] Nash, Paul. *Spring in the Trenchs*, Ridge Wood, 1917, Imperial War Museums, London.

[Appendix12] Nash, Paul. *We are Making a New World*, 1918. Imperial War Museum, London.

[Appendix13] Nash, Paul. *Battle of Britain*, 1941, The Imperial War Museum, London.

[Appendix14] The photograph is retrieved from Black, Jonathan. *The Face of Courage: Eric Kennington,*

Portraiture and the Second World War. London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2011. p.22.

[Appendix15] Kennington, Eric. *Flight Sergeant John Hannah VC*, 1940, Imperial War Museums, London.

[Appendix16] Kennington, Eric. Squadron Leader Philip Robert 'teddy' Beare, 1940, Royal Army Force Museum, London.

[Appendix17] Kennington, Eric. *Seeing It Through* 1940. The poster of Mrs M.J. Morgan a bus conductor.

[Appendix18] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation: East End, Wrecked Public House,* 1941.Tate Museum, London.
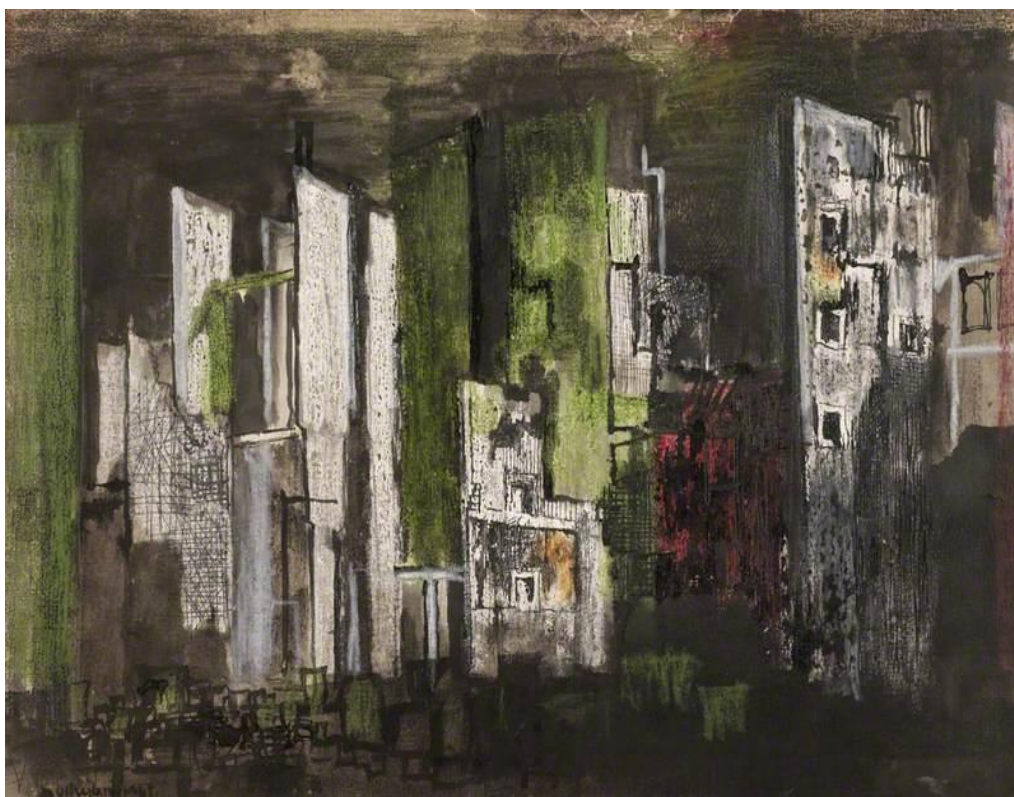
[Appendix19] Sutherland, Graham. *City Panorama of Ruin,* 1941. Museum of London.

[Appendix20] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation 1941: The City. Fallen Lift Shaft*, 1941, Imperial War Museums.

[Appendix21] Cundall, Charles, *The Withdrawal From Dunkirk,* 1940. Imperial War Museums.

[Appendix22] Moore, Henry. *Tube Shelter Perspective,* 1941. Tate Museum, London.
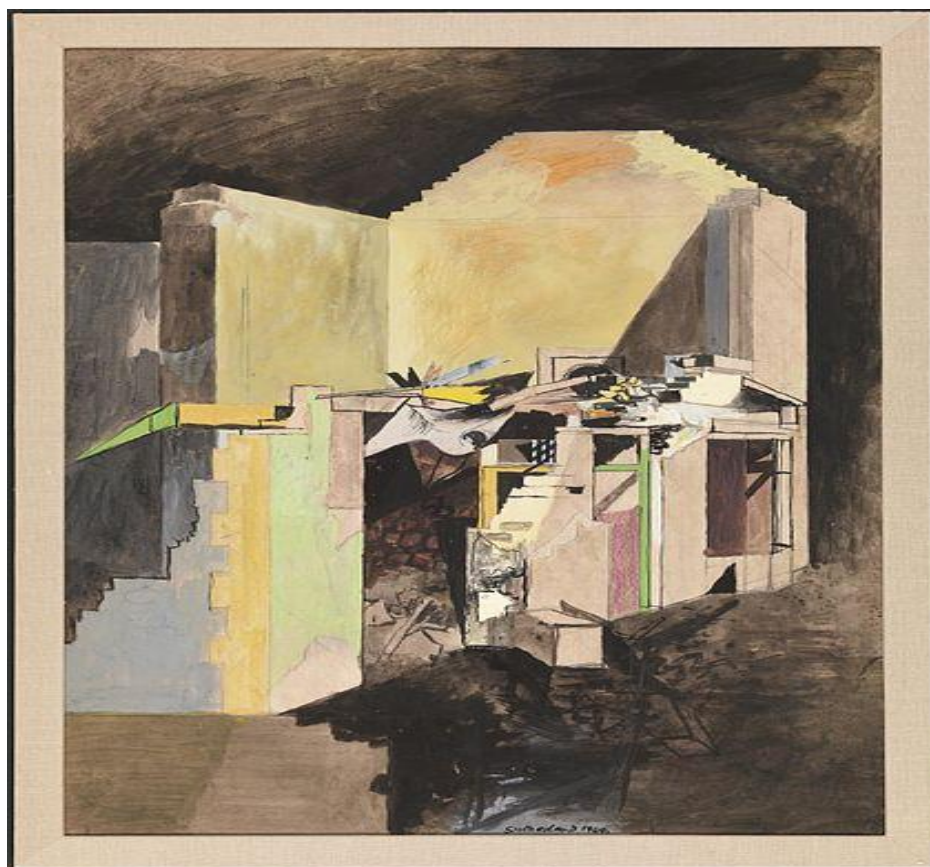
[Appendix23] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation, 1940: A House on the Welsh Border,* 1940.Tate Museum, London.
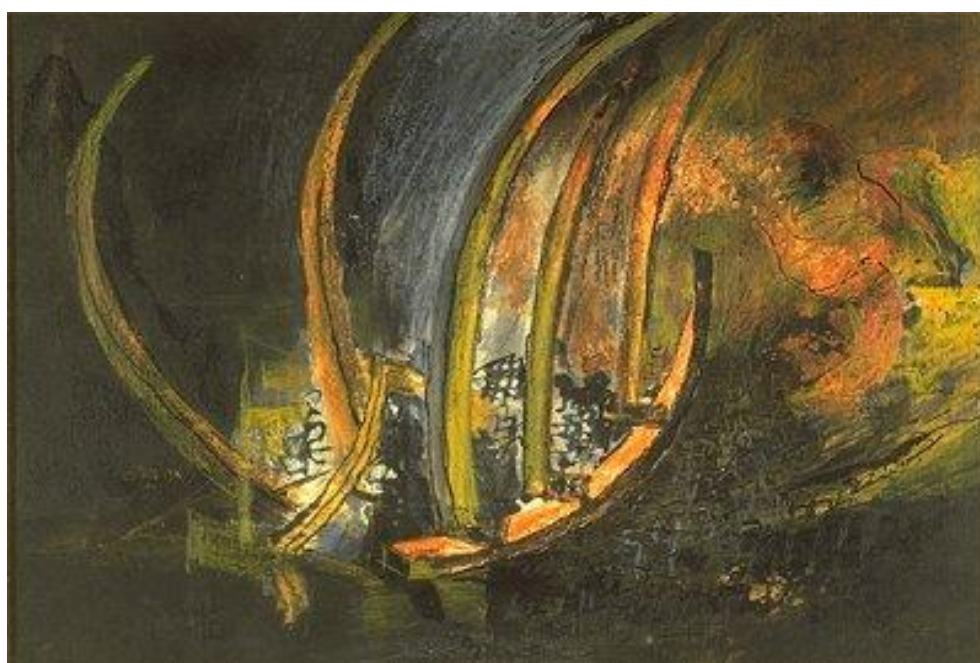
[Appendix24] Sutherland, Graham. *Devastation in the City: Twisted Girders against a Background of Fire,* 1941. Imperial War Museums.

[Appendix25] Moon, Nettie. *The Spirit of London during the Blitz*, 1979, Museum of London.

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