PREFACE

THIS BOOK is about the reciprocal relationship between memory and urban space. In the pages that follow, I not only examine how memory shapes the evolution of the city's architecture and monuments but also analyze how the overall form of the urban landscape physically represents memories of the city's past. I have explored these important theoretical issues not for their own sake, but within a specific historical context, that of postwar Germany. The present book is thus about German memory and German cities. Both are currently undergoing important changes—a fact that lends this study a particularly high degree of topicality and, I hope, enables it to contribute to a deeper understanding of Germany's mental and physical landscapes. In reflecting upon these matters, I have sought to clarify the general in the particular, focusing the book upon a single city—Munich. The analysis that follows is thus an in-depth historical account of Munich's struggle to come to terms with its Nazi past. But, as will become clear below, it also represents a more personal struggle to acquire a more critical manner of seeing.

I first visited Munich as a college student during the summer of 1988. On my initial early evening walk through the city's historic center, or *Altstadt,* I was duly impressed, as are most first-time tourists, with the its grand, floodlit buildings: the white, neobaroque Justizpalast looming above the kinetic mosaic of speeding automobiles, dancing fountains, and neon-clad commercial buildings of the Karlsplatz, the soaring, twin onion domes of the gothic Frauenkirche, and the monumental, ochre-colored facade of the baroque Theatinerkirche. I confess to having been particularly impressed by the much maligned, overscaled, neo-Gothic Neues Rathaus, or new city hall, at the Marienplatz, whose bewildering array of allegorical and historical statuary depicting former monarchs, Bavarian lions, and grotesque mythic beasts (in particular, a small dragon crawling up the building's southwest corner) seized my eye

and enticed my imagination. Compared to other German cities I had seen, Munich seemed to possess a unique aesthetic charm and allure. I concluded that a visit of three days could not possibly satisfy my curiosity about the city, and I resolved to return.

In the early fall of the fateful year 1989, I did return to Munich, this time for an extended period of study at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. Ironically, however, although I had come to study Germany's past, I arrived at a time when public attention was directed nearly exclusively towards its present and future. In a sense, I had come to the wrong city. I had been lured by the Munich of a divided Germany, a city whose cultural riches had established it more than a generation before as the Federal Republic's *heimliche Hauptstadt,* or "secret capital." The collapse of the wall in November, however, removed Munich from the national spotlight and once more cast it in the shadow of its longtime rival, the nation's true capital, Berlin. This was a period generally unsuited to arouse much interest in Munich or its past.

Yet, it was precisely Munich's past that began to interest me. During my year there, I came to know Munich through long weekend walks through its various streets, parks, and neighborhoods. But my knowledge of the city, I gradually recognized, was superficial and incomplete. While in Germany, I visited such cities as Berlin and Dresden and witnessed firsthand the many ruins left by the Second World War. Seeing such fragmented edifices as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, the Oranienburgerstrasse synagogue, and the Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin or the collapsed remnants of the Frauenkirche and the burnt-out shell of the Wettin monarchy's Residenzschloss in Dresden on a frigid, overcast winter day had a powerful impact and gave me the feeling of having been transported back in time—almost to the day of these buildings' destruction. I came to realize, in turn, that Munich represented its past architecturally in a far different manner. I knew that Munich too had been heavily damaged in the war, but I had seen few comparable ruins in the city; however, I did not comprehend the extent to which Munich had been destroyed until one day, during a visit to a local bookstore, I glanced through several books of photographs of the city before and after the war. With some surprise I realized that much of the historic architecture I had admired was not historic at all. The tower of the gothic Altes Rathaus, or old city hall across the way on the Marienplatz, for example, was not, in fact, "old" (as I had been led to believe by the plaque upon the city hall that read, "built in 1470 by Jörg Ganghofer") but had been destroyed by bombs and built entirely anew in 1975. Many other buildings that I assumed had withstood the savage forces of the war had likewise been carefully reconstructed. This experience fundamentally altered my way of seeing. While I had previously viewed the city from a purely aesthetic, generally ahistorical perspective, I now began to regard it more critically.

In the years that followed, I attempted to make sense of my time in Munich by merging it with my larger interests in the German collective memory of the Third Reich and the Second World War. It occurred to me that by examining the interplay

between memory and the city I could gain new insights into how the Germans had attempted to come to terms with their Nazi past after 1945—the process called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Could it be, I wondered, that the way Munich was rebuilt after the fall of the Third Reich and the end of World War II reflected the local citizenry's memories of these traumatic episodes in the city's history? Examining Munich's reconstruction as an expression of coming to terms with the past provided an initial avenue of inquiry, but I soon decided that a comprehensive examination of the city's entire urban development over the postwar era would provide the most comprehensive answer to my questions about postwar German memory.

When I returned to Munich in the summer of 1992 and then again for the academic year, 1993–94, I examined more than just its reconstructed historic architecture. I was now interested in studying its new postwar buildings, its Nazi-era architectural legacy, and its numerous monuments. The present study has thus moved well beyond its initial inspiration and attempts to investigate the city in its totality. By analyzing how Munich's architecture and monuments were erected, demolished, restored, relocated, hidden, and exposed in the postwar period, I have tried to provide a new perspective on the construction and evolution of local collective memory. I have concluded that the relationship between memory and the city is highly interdependent, and I have come to understand that conflicting memories of the past have not only shaped, but have also been visually represented by, the city's urban form.

In the final analysis, however, there are no easy answers to the question of what the city of Munich as a whole reveals about postwar German memory of the Third Reich. For all historians, this period of German history is fraught with numerous interpretive and ethical challenges. Over the course of research and writing, I too have faced such challenges in weighing and interpreting the evidence. I have had to reconcile conflicting feelings and balance my empathetic inclinations towards the inhabitants of a city whose urban form I greatly admire with the need for a critical assessment of the problematic means through which that very form has evolved. While it has not been an easy task, I have sought to strike a balance between these two perspectives and to write an urban history of postwar German memory that contributes to a deeper understanding of one of Germany's most important cities.