Letter to the Editor Times Literary Supplement Published 20 November 2020

Simon Jenkins, ‘Monumental Success’, Nov 6 2020

Simon Jenkins’ scepticism regarding the cult of super-ruins and those who would ‘confine the past to stones and dust’ reminds me of a review I wrote for *The Independent* of the inaugural exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, in 1993. It consisted of 13 lumps of eroded sandstone that had once been standing figure sculptures on an Augustinian Priory and York Minster. Almost nothing recognisable remained. I pondered the question ‘When is a ruin a ruin, and when is a ruin rubble?’

I concluded that to get anything out of the exhibition at all, ‘you need to be a fragment fetishist of the first order’. Or Henry Moore. For it is romantic modernism that exalts the time- and tide-beaten. Moore collected weathered stones and driftwood, believing they had a primordial purity and energy. In Moore's own sculpture, bodies are broken, heads and limbs elided, or reduced to knobs.

One of my editors - I think it was Sabine Durrant - came up with a perfectly brilliant headline: RUBBLE WITHOUT A CAUSE.