Francesco Del Sole
Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Salento, Lecce

MONSTRUM AND IMPERIAL POWER: THE ARCHETYPE OF THE COLOSSUS

Abstract

Monumental art contributes to the affirmation of the totalitarian regime. Starting from this basis, this essay investigates the processes through which the people, freed from the dictator, try to eliminate the traces left by him on the territory. First of all, the demolition of a monument, which has the value of destroying the memory linked to it. When the process of damnatio memoriae is not imposed, the value of a monument as a historical document can be reversed. It can be made to become an anti-monument itself; the site of memory ends up being a warning to promote a negative memory of what has been. In order to avoid destroying all traces of the defeated regime, another effective means of making the monument lose its value is to decontextualize it, to break its connection with the territory. This is the moment when architecture transforms from a politically-hegemonic medium to a means of criticizing political misdeeds. To better focus on the topics covered, attention will be paid to some particular contexts: North Korea, post-socialist western Europe and the memory strategies adopted after the attack on the World Trade Centre (USA).

Keywords: dictatorship, public monument, memory, anti-monument, decontextualization

https://www.doi.org/10.17234/9789533792170.28

INTRODUCTION

The dictator translates his vision of the world into an architectural model, and shapes the territory with monuments that bear witness to his power.[1] The monument is usually a large-sized object; it belongs to public space, occupying a specific place; it is made of durable materials; it is intended to commemorate an event or a person important to the community in which it is placed. The word "monument" derives from the Latin *monere*, referring to the sense of remembering, pointing out, admonishing and exhorting. It is the fulcrum of a space that becomes a site of memory, positioned so as to be a direct source of history, voluntarily produced by society to transmit a message to posterity, according to a process of direct intentionality of memory.[2] The public monument must be analysed in relation to its environment, not only in its sculptural component, but also in the space built around it, through which it takes on its specific meaning.

Architecture, writes Sudjic, "feeds the ego in predisposed subjects. They become more and more dependent on it to the point that architecture becomes

1 For more on this topic, see Reinhart Koselleck, "I monumenti: materia per una memoria collettiva?" [Monuments: Matter for a Collective Memory?], *Discipline filosofiche*, no. 13, issue 2 (2003): 9–33; Nicola Ruggieri, "Identità della struttura del monumento. Temi per un dibattito" [Identity of the Structure of the Monument. Themes for a Debate], *Territorio*, no. 85 (2018): 148–153.

2 Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* [Places of Memory] (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Georges Kantin and Gilles Manceron, *Les Echos de la mémoire* [Echoes of Memory] (Paris: Edition Le Monde, 1991).

an end in itself, attracting fanatics and inducing them to build more and more, on an ever larger scale."[3] In a dictatorial regime where a convincing state choreography of ceremonies, greetings, protocols, uniforms and flags is becoming increasingly important for the construction of national identity, architecture is also fundamental.[4] It can be considered a veritable language with which messages are conveyed, a sort of military uniform, a powerful tool to signal loyalty and aspirations, to keep one's supporters together and relegate one's enemies to a corner. The public monument is therefore not limited to being ornamental; it is considered a symbol of an entire era, the wealth of a national community, and one of the most resilient fibers of totalitarian power. What characterises it from an architectural point of view is the philosophy of the great, made up of imposing projects, some defined as "megalomaniac architecture."[5] This colossal character of architecture is accompanied by a perspective of equally immense duration. This quest for eternity is expressed above all in the choice of durable materials such as stone, especially marble or granite. In this way the greatness of the regime is projected to posterity, just as the empires of antiquity did, and the public gaze is always drawn to architectural enterprises. In Nazi Germany, Hitler and his architects came to design the buildings of the Third Reich also according to their future decay, following the so-called theory of ruins proposed by Speer himself. According to this "theory", the dictatorial monument was to be erected not only in a stylistically classical style, but also with materials that would ensure its ruinous decay. Even centuries and millennia after their construction, the monuments of the Reich – in the form of ruin, not rubble – should have kept intact a sense of the greatness and austerity of the society that had built them.[6] When Hitler laid the foundation stone of his Kongresshalle, echoing Speer, he said that "even if the voice of National Socialism were to be reduced to silence, these vestiges will still arouse wonder."[7] The monument must in essence become "miraculous", it must aim at eternity despite its probable destruction due to time. As the dictator gains security, the most striking manifestation of his ego becomes the construction of a colossus in his own image and likeness, so that the figure of the leader becomes the only glue linking the glorious past to the mythical present. In this way the dictator tries to convince the citizens that their own leader is a true father of the homeland, capable, like the statue in the centre of a large square, of holding all the people close to him, looking to the future, from the top of a pedestal.

3 Deyan Sudjic, *Architettura e potere. Come i ricchi e i potenti hanno dato forma al mondo* [Architecture and Power. How the Rich and Powerful Have Shaped the World] (Bari: Laterza, 2012), 24.

4 Gian Piero Piretto, *Memorie di pietra. I monumenti delle dittature* [Memories of Stone. Monuments of Dictatorships] (Milan: Cortina, 2014).

5 Ibid., 117–136.

6 See Jonathan Petropoulos, *Artists Under Hitler: Collaboration and Survival in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2003).

7 Sudjic, *Architettura e potere*, 52–53.

The decision to erect a Colossus – whose archetype is the statue dedicated to Helios in Rhodes, so remote as to belong to the famous canon of the seven Wonders of the ancient world – is therefore a powerful evocation of the past, one of the most effective and "prodigious" ways of imposing one's desire for magnificence on the world; on the other hand it is also one of the most effective means of reconnecting with the figurative history of this ancient archetype, which has never been forgotten despite its short life.[8] Reading the ancient sources that describe it, the Colossus of Rhodes is still a Wonder, despite its collapse. And this is precisely the aim that the dictator pursues in the creation of his myth: to remain impressed in collective memory despite his fall.

THE MONUMENTALISATION OF THE TERRITORY

What seems to be a discourse linked to the dictatorships of the last century is more topical than ever.[9] Over time, in many states, institutions have arisen that have the task of planning the monumentalisation of the territory, the process through which a series of sites of memory worthy of transmitting the collective past is established, mostly linked to characters or events that have marked the community and through which the people can be reflected in an ideal that underscores the conviction of living in a society "on the road to a future of happiness and prosperity, based on cohesion, the independence of external aid and contributions, on the ancestral bond with the national territory."[10] It is worth mentioning, in this regard, the Institute of Cultural Monuments founded in 1965 in Albania and the University of Fine Arts founded in the 1940s in North Korea, a place dedicated to researching the best way to combine the new principles of socialist realism with the traditional techniques and particular aesthetics of East-Asian art.[11] Mansudae Art Studio, the artistic centre of Pyongyang and thus the most important in North Korea, derives from this institution. Mansudae Art Studio occupies an area of 120 thousand square meters and employs about four thousand people, including about a thousand artists trained in the best art academies in the country. Its workforce attracts international collectors and is in great demand abroad by institutions, museums and governments who commission public works (statues, monuments, buildings) and buy them at prices that insiders consider relatively cheap.

The foundation of the North Korean nation is the celebration of the Idea Juche. This particular philosophical-political conception maintains that man

8 Marcello Fagiolo, "Le Meraviglie e il meraviglioso" [Wonders and the Wonderful], *Psicon. Rivista internazionale di architettura*, no. 7, issue 3 (1976): 3–9; Francesco Del Sole, *Viaggio nella Meraviglia – descrivere, immaginare, ri-costruire* [Travel in the Wonder – Describe, Imagine, Re-build] (Galatina: Congedo, 2019); Peter Clayton, Martin Price, *Seven Wonders of the World* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989).

9 Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art* (London: Overlook Duckworth, 1990).

10 Piretto, *Memorie di pietra*, 210.

11 Alzo David West, "North Korean aesthetic theory: Aesthetics, beauty and man", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, no. 47, issue 1 (2013): 104–110.

Fig. 1. Tower of the Idea Juche, Pyongyang, North Korea, 1982, Wikimedia Commons, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Juche_Tower_at_night?uselang=it#/media/File:Tower_of_Juche_Idea_-_panoramio.jpg.

must be completely self-sufficient and the author of his own destiny. The monumental complex created to best express this political ideology is the Tower of the Idea Juche, which constitutes the physical centre of the entire urban layout of Pyongyang and the gravitational centre around which the entire nation revolves (**fig. 1**). It is currently the tallest stone tower in the world, with a red torch on top that, lit at night, has the task of conveying the message of the Juche to the rest of the planet. It was built with this very purpose in mind: to make the People's Republic of Korea a global example of resistance against the bipolar logic formed after World War II, a clear example of a political movement that managed to free itself from a foreign colonial occupier.

Since the 1970s, the Mansudae Art Studio has been working on the construction of large works commissioned by foreign countries, especially among African countries. While, on a political level, North Korea has on several occasions supported various African liberation movements fighting against colonialism, on a cultural level the Mansudae has offered nascent national governments a visual language in a socialist-realist style that has appealed to local leaders. It may seem strange that an African government tells its own story of freedom by borrowing North Korean visual language, which has become synonymous with repression elsewhere, especially in the liberal-capitalist West. The roots of this phenomenon are to be found in their mutual history of anti-imperialist struggle; this monumental style symbolically represents the victory of all those governments and movements that opposed colonialist logic, obtaining the possibility of creating an autonomous state.[12] Dozens of monuments and large architectural complexes created by the Mansudae Art Studio in Angola, Senegal, Namibia, Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo can be identified. This phenomenon of the monumentalisation

12 Ted Hyunhak Yoon, *Decoding Dictatorial Statues* (Milan: Onomatopee editore, 2019), 194–203.

Fig. 2. Mansudae Art Studio, *Great Monument of Pyongyang*, Pyongyang, North Korea (1972–2011), Wikimedia Commons, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_monumento_Mansudae#/media/File:Mansudae-Monument-Bow-2014.jpg.

of territory does not seem to have subsided, so much so that the African Renaissance Monument near Dakar was only completed in 2010.

The most important Colossus of the Mansudae Art Studio remains the so-called Great Monument of Pyongyang, the glaring example of the sacredness with which sites of memory can be invested (**fig. 2**). It is a monumental complex of maximum devotion to the two North Korean leaders, Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il: two bronze simulacra, each twenty metres high, arranged one next to the other; one stretches an arm towards the future, while the other accompanies it with its gaze. The statue of Kim Jong-Il was added to that of Kim Il-Sung only in 2012, thus guaranteeing that the cult was directed to the father-son dyad as a sign of continuity over time. No less important is the space chosen and shaped to contain the monument. To reach it, it is necessary to climb a small hill, an ascending path that opens into a square. As you walk along it, you immediately realise that you are not looking at a simple monument. In fact, there is a precise ethical-behavioral code to follow during the visit. It is not possible to turn one's back on the two statues, and each visitor must place flowers at the foot of the statues as a sign of respect; the square itself is designed to allow those who intend to take photographs to retreat a few steps so that the shot catches both giants full-length, taking care not to cut off their heads or feet. The process of the monumentalisation of territory, as witnessed by this last example, makes the site of memory a real sacred place.

THE HEADS ROLL

The monumental complex, although anchored to a memory of the past, also projects towards the future. This is the paradox of the *hypomnemata*, those places (or objects) born as devices to preserve memory outside of human

Fig. 3. Crowd gathered after knocking down the statue of Stalin during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, Budapest, Hungary, 1956, Ti-press, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://www.rsi.ch/rete-due/programmi/cultura/geronimo/Storia/Ungheria-60-anni-dopo-8043670.html.

consciousness. They constitute a material memory of things, offering them as a treasure accumulated for re-reading and subsequent meditation.[13] If, on the one hand, the monument is the most appropriate means to fix an ideal and make the nation recognize itself in it, on the other hand, it is precisely when society chooses to entrust a memory to an external support that it can be forgotten. This is the process of *damnatio memoriae*, known since Antiquity, which assures that any memory of the people affected by this fate is erased. With each overthrow of a dictatorial government, the first gesture that the rebels make is to behead and then demolish the statues, as well as destroying the monuments and crumbling the emblems and insignia of the defeated regime. This phenomenon has been defined by some historians as "revolutionary vandalism".[14] The violence of these gestures makes one understand the strong symbolic power of dictatorial monuments, capable of igniting popular anger after the fall of the leader. Both at the moment of their construction and at the moment of their destruction, monuments are essential words in the cultural language of a community, the one that establishes and communicates to the world the principles that underlie its own hard-won identity, paying a high price for wars and rebellions. It is therefore not difficult to understand why the people of Budapest, during the Hungarian uprising in 1956, risked their lives to demolish the gigantic effigy of Stalin erected in the city centre (**fig. 3**). The

13 James E. Young, "Memory, Counter-memory, and the End of the Monument", *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 9 (1999): 1–10.

14 The historians of the French Revolution, and before them already Abbot Grégoire, a member of the National Convention, called tle phenomenon "revolutionary vandalism". See Luciano Canfora, "Abbattere statue: i vandali delle Rivoluzioni" [Tearing Down Statues: the Vandals of the Revolutions], *Corriere della Sera*, August 29, 2011, accessed December 11, 2023, https://www.corriere.it/cultura/11_agosto_29/canfora-abbattere-statue-vandali-rivoluzioni_acac0db0-d22a-11e0-a205-8c1e98b416f7.shtml.

demolition was a response to the dictator's idolatrous power, so that running to strike it under sniper fire had an exorcistic value against its enduring presence.

The pages of history are full of similar cases, with sometimes gruesome details, and transmit the same message every time: a community finally free from a regime has the primary need to free its territory from the symbols of a dictatorship. Among the many statues demolished, just to give a few examples that retrace the history of the last century, we can recall the big bronze head of Mussolini crushed between two presses in Bologna, by popular initiative, in the euphoria of July 25, 1943; the giant bronze statue of Enver Hoxha, dictator of communist Albania, demolished in the central square of Tirana by a huge crowd in 1991; the bronze statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad pulled down with the winch of an American tank in 2003; the equestrian statue of the dictator Francisco Franco in Santander at the end of 2008, and the recent cases in 2011 when, on the one hand in Syria, rebels in Damascus set fire to the statue of former President Assad, and on the other in Libya, rebels who entered Gaddafi's residence beheaded the statue of the Rais. In most cases, in tearing down the statues, the people attack the colossus to besmirch the image of the dictator, with a gesture as liberating as it is irrational, replicating the treatment given to enemy prisoners in wars.

An exemplary case, described in a fascinating way by Leonor Faber-Jonker, is the destruction in 1961 of the monument dedicated to Stalin in a street in Berlin.[15] As is very often the case in such circumstances, the government decided to eliminate the statue at night, without warning, almost as if to give the citizens the impression of living in a different space, no longer occupied by the shadows of the past. In this case, the order was precise: it was not only necessary to demolish the statue, each part had to be destroyed. The workers set to work, but one of them, a certain Gerhard Wolf, after having taken the statue to a warehouse with his colleagues to proceed with the destruction, decided to cut off an ear and take it away before completing the destruction of the monument, just as it was customary to do in battle with enemies, whose nose or ears were cut off (when their whole head was not torn off) to preserve a macabre war trophy. In that German worker the same desire for revenge as that of the soldiers could have been triggered and the removal of Stalin's ear had caused the dictator, who had the reputation of being a giant who "saw everything" and "heard everything", to finally disappear. As the author tells us, this heirloom had a long fortune, and a copy of it is still kept today in a small bar near the place where the statue of Stalin once stood.

ANTI-MONUMENTALITY

When the process of *damnatio memoriae* is not imposed, the value of a monument as a document can be reversed. It can be made to become an anti-monument; the site of memory ends up in this case achieving a result

15 Hyunhak Yoon, *Decoding Dictatorial Statues,* 97–115.

diametrically opposed to the purpose for which it was conceived, promoting a negative memory of what it was.[16] This is precisely the concept of anti-monumentality, a reversal of the same elements that characterise the dictatorial monument (language, marked verticality, eternity of the message), which enunciates, with the same expressive power as the original monumental complex, the trials of all those who have been oppressed by such regimes.

ENVER-NEVER

Like figurative representations, inscribed monumental words have also taken on a profound meaning in the ethics of dictatorial regimes. In ten days, Sheme Filja, together with local villagers, painted the name "Enver" on the side of Mount Shpirag in Albania in 1968, in homage to the then communist dictator Enver Hoxha. The hundred metre-high letters still dominated the landscape above Berat, the oldest city in the country, when Hoxha died in 1985 and communism collapsed in 1990. In 1994, Albania's first democratically elected government deployed the army to remove the name of Hoxha from the mountain. Shortly afterwards, Armando Lulaj, a young artist, exchanged the first two letters of the word, transforming the word "Enver" into "Never" (**fig. 4**). The simple exchange of the first two letters radically changed the sense and impact of the place, constituting a genuine anti-monument. Replacing a proper name with an adverb does not mean hiding it, but evoking it, while at the same time making us reflect on the injunction "Never again", which appears as a refusal, a warning, and a denial of the tyrannical past, but also of an overly corrupt present.

Fig. 4. Sheme Filja, *"Enver" and "Never" painted on the Mount Shpirag*, Albania, 1968–1997, Albania Travel: An Introduction to the Land of Eagles, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://whywaittoseetheworld.com/albania-travel/.

16 Piretto, *Memorie di pietra*, 17–33.

PROJECTS FOR THE GROUND ZERO MEMORIAL, NEW YORK

The Giant who fell on September 11, 2001, under attack by Islamic terrorists was not a dictator, but the entire nation of the United States of America.[17] The offensive, which immediately entered the history books, had as its objective the beating financial heart of American capitalism, the World Trade Center. As well as being among the most important economic centres in the world, the Twin Towers were the symbol of the era that had coined the term skyscraper, propelling that "war for supremacy in height" that began in the mid-nineteenth century and still lasts today. The so-called "towers of progress" therefore had a deeply symbolic meaning, representing the economic and technological miracle, the "great architectural icon of developing capitalism."[18]

Immediately after the fall of the towers, many projects for the reconstruction of the site were spontaneously proposed by both young architects and large design studios. The result was an international competition of proposals, from which winning projects were chosen to build two fundamental elements in the Ground Zero area: the Tower and the Memorial. If, on the one hand, the idea of rising to the sky again with a new tower highlights all the strength of an America intent on recovering from a tragedy, on the other hand, the will of an entire nation to remember what happened emerges, giving a name to the victims and proposing a monument that is a warning to the whole world. Numerous designers took part in the competition for the Memorial, many of whom proposed a veritable anti-monument, an architectural project highlighting the catastrophe that had occurred, overturning the founding architectural value of the World Trade Center of the 1970s: verticality. One of these was the fascinating project by the Dutch architect Van der Erve, who proposed two twin wells in the same place as the demolished towers, 110 stories deep, mirror images of the previous building. The memorial, in this case, would be located at the base of these wells, where the visitor raises his eyes and admires the sky; we should also remember Nicholson's project, with the site of the original towers occupied by labyrinths and a well 150 metres deep, inspired by the model of St. Patrick's well in Orvieto. Even more symbolic was Mockbee's choice to place a commemorative chapel 911 feet underground, a figure that recalls the date of the attacks. The representation of America in the wake of that tragic watershed, based on the bivalent spirit that combines the desire to rise again with the need for remembrance, was summed up in Solomon's proposal, in which two steel and glass towers rise higher than the original ones, intimately connected to two memorials, under the foundations, which reach a depth of 110 floors, the same height as the collapsed towers.

The example of Ground Zero shows how anti-monumentality is a choice that goes far beyond the dictatorial sphere and affects every community that wants

17 Suzanna Stephens, *Immaginare Ground Zero. Progetti e proposte per l'area del World Trade Center* [Imagine Ground Zero. Projects and Proposals for the World Trade Center Area] (Milan: Rizzoli. 2004).

18 Paolo Melis, "Architettura e revival del cristallo nella città contemporanea da Joseph Paxton a Kevin Roche" [Architecture and Crystal Revival in the Contemporary City from Joseph Paxton to Kevin Roche], *Psicon. Rivista internazionale di architettura*, no. 6, issue III (1976): 89.

Fig. 5. Fred Bernstein, *Twin Piers. A 9/11 Memorial in New York Harbor*, 2006, from Suzanna Stephens, *Imagine Ground Zero* (…) (Milan, 2004), 254.

to imprint a memory in public space with momentum towards the future. This is precisely the message that can be grasped in the horizontal verticality of Fred Bernstein's proposed memorial, in which the towers, instead of projecting into the sky, soar into the ocean in the form of two piers of the same dimensions. The pier, a symbol of a departure and a new journey to be made, would have all the names of the victims of September 11 engraved on it (**fig. 5**).

DECONTEXTUALISATION

The life of a monument changes when the founding ideology that generated it falls. A powerful sign can quickly lose its meaning: "Without any real value whatsoever, the signifier will end up, if anything, in the repositories of the strange wrecks that came from a deceased system."[19] To avoid destroying any trace of the defeated regime, another effective means to make the monument lose its value is to decontextualise it, breaking its link with the territory, and thereby causing it to take on a completely different meaning. This is the moment when architecture shifts from a political medium to a means of criticising political shortcomings.

GRŪTAS PARK IN LITHUANIA AND MEMENTO PARK IN BUDAPEST

Occupied by the Soviet Union, Lithuania was the perfect terrain for dense monumentalisation. The territory was sprinkled with Lenin and Stalin giants

19 On the Memento Park see Michael Jakob, "Grutas", Doppiozero, September 8, 2019, accessed October 4, 2021, https://www.doppiozero.com/rubriche/7055/201912/grutas; Mária Markos, "A Szoborpark-kapuzat vastábláján Illyés Gyula Egy mondat a zsarnokságról című verse olvasható. A szobrok között a csönd dübörög; a fájdalom, a gyász, a tehetetlenség, a szégyen, a döbbenet, a düh és a dac" [On the iron plaque of the Szoborpark capstone is a poem by Gyula Illyés entitled A Sentence about Tyranny. Among the statues, silence thunders; pain, grief, helplessness, shame, dismay, anger and defiance], Orszagut, March 5, 2020, accessed July 14, 2022, https://orszagut.com/kepzomuveszet/memento-park-112; Géza Boros, "Budapesti emlékmű-metamorfózisok 1989–2000" [Budapest Monument Metamorphoses 1989–2000], *A Budapest Negyed*, no. 32-33 (2001/2-3), accessed July 14, 2022, https://www.epa.oszk.hu/00000/00003/00025/boros.html.

to symbolise the material and symbolic occupation of the territory. Lithuanian independence, achieved on March 11, 1990, not only led to the dismantling of the Soviet monumental repertoire, but also raised the problem of rearranging the imposing objects of the past. The corpus, consisting of more than eighty monuments, was not destroyed, as some had hoped, but ended up in Grūtas, on display to visitors in the form of a large theme park (**fig. 6**). Designed and built by the entrepreneur Viliumas Malinauskas, in addition to the sculptures scattered in a kind of memory forest, the park contains a restaurant, a playground, a small museum, a mini zoo and some metonymic elements of the Gulag system. It can be said that Grūtas Park oscillates between a private collection and the site of memory, becoming the opposite of a sanctuary for the Soviet regime.

A similar fate has befallen the Hungarian Soviet monuments. After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, in 1991 it was decided to place all of the removed statues in an open-air museum near Budapest, called Memento Park. The park is a monumental space that speaks of tyranny and, simultaneously, as a site where it is permissible to speak of tyranny, it is a monument to democracy. It contains 42 statues depicting various communist leaders. Opposite the entrance is a replica of Stalin's Boots created in 2006 by Ákos Eleőd on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, during which the colossal statue of the dictator in Budapest's municipal park was knocked down from its pedestal and only its boots remained. It is difficult not to think of the much older image of a colossus that collapsed from its pedestal: the Colossus of Rhodes that Antonio Tempesta has depicted in its fallen state, with only its feet remaining on the pedestal. As Jakob writes, "the contradictions that led to the creation of this theme park are the same as the history that produced them. And the fact that a Soviet atmosphere oppresses the visitor,

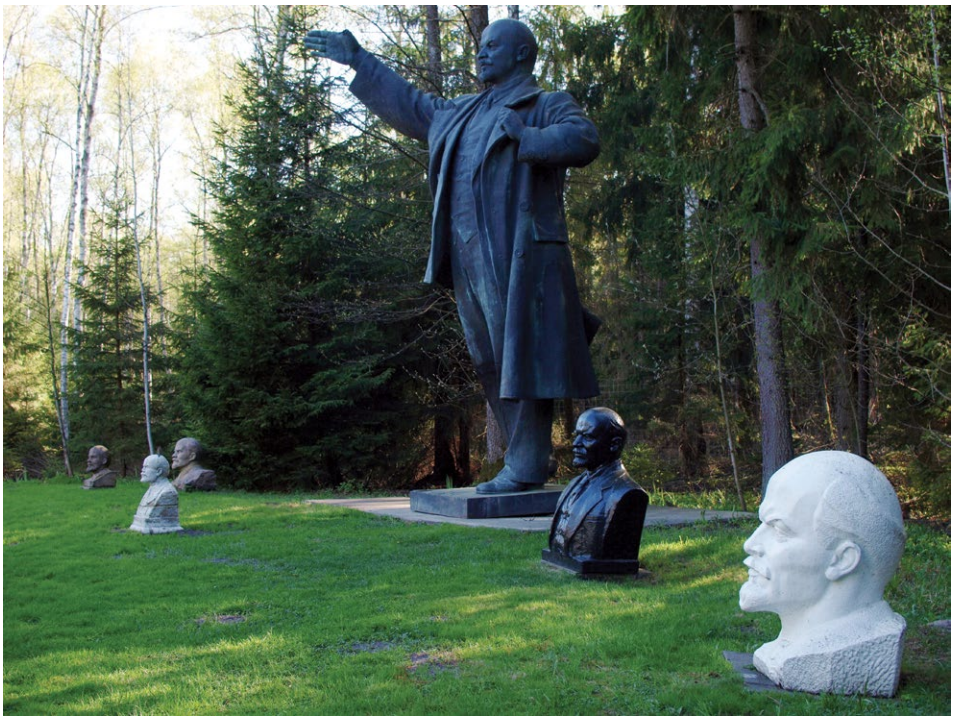

Fig. 6. Statues of Communist Dictators in Grutas Park, Grutas, Lithuania, Wikimedia Commons, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gr%C5%ABtas_Park#/media/File:Gr%C5%ABto_parkas_-_Lenin.JPG.

Fig. 7. Statues of Communist Dictators in Memento Park, Budapest, Hungary, Wikimedia Commons, accessed on October 4, 2021, https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memento_Park#/media/File:Monument_R%C3%A9publique_des_Conseils_Budapest.jpg.

even if he has just shown his tongue to Lenin or laughed at Stalin, expresses the historical spirit of an era in which totalitarian terror was the master."[20] The monumental statues of communist propaganda that once intimidated observers with their size are today only a testimony of past glory. Ironically, communism has become the thematic subject for a flourishing industry of kitsch souvenirs, bordering on and even defying good taste, which feed the very capitalism that communism had intended to fight. The ambitious idea of saving these relics from the process of *damnatio memoriae* was very effective: it is in their appearance here, uprooted and solitary, that the giants of the past suffer the most burning defeat, precisely through those monuments that were supposed to transmit to posterity the eternity of their regime (**fig.** 7).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the process of *damnatio memoriae*, which might appear as a "race to erase", is in fact a re-appropriation of history, according to what Adrastos calls *creatio memoriae*.[21] Taking advantage of the *damnatio memoriae* desired for the defeated enemy, a liberated people create new values on which to base their future. Looking back at the past, at what the public monument represented at the time it was erected, the community comes to terms with the victors who previously wrote history and seeks the best way to ensure that the public monument represents a true *hypomnemata*, a useful device to help us understand what we have been and what we should no longer be. Collective memory, which needs tangible signs and concrete actions to subvert the wounds inflicted on society, still uses precise strategies: on the one hand, the irrational impetus to destroy that which no longer represents oneself; on the other, the reasoned strategies of remembrance, which warn about what is right or wrong.

20 Jakob, "Grutas".

21 Adrastos Omissi, "Damnatio Memoriae or Creatio Memoriae? Memory Sanctions as Creative Processes in the Fourth Century AD," *The Cambridge Classical Journal*, no. 62 (2016): 170–199.