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1

New states and old statues: Ireland's monuments in an international context

Kathleen James-Chakraborty

The erection of monuments pre-dates the emergence of the modern nation state. Nonetheless, the vogue for commemoration was closely associated with nationalism until the emergence in the 1980s of counter-monuments. And yet the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 and subsequently of the Republic of Ireland in 1949 was marked more by the erasure of existing monuments than the creation of new ones. The consequences of regime change should be distinguished from the shift in public opinion that has more recently led to the removal of Confederate monuments in the United States. More fruitful comparisons between Ireland and situations elsewhere may be made with two phases in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany – its establishment in 1949 and its enlargement in 1990 – as well as with developments in India and Ghana, which achieved independence respectively in 1947 and 1957. Monuments were extremely important to Germans and Ghanaians, but less so to Indians. The reasons for these differences include the artistic tastes of these places at particular times but also the degree to which individual societies understood commemorative architecture and sculpture as integral to nationhood. The bombast of Wilhelmine and Nazi German nationalism, and the murderous character of the Third Reich, prompted West Germans to beat a quick retreat from monumentality and initially to displace much of the responsibility for expressing national identity to first churches and then museums. Reunification challenged Germans, however, to imagine new kinds of monument that were not necessarily celebratory, as well as to decide how to address the continued presence of images of Karl Marx. In India, traces of colonialism sparked relatively little debate until recently, although diverse alternatives to colonial architecture quickly flourished. The same tensions between adopting modernism as a badge of progress and resurrecting pre-colonial symbolism that signaled the revival of a storied past characterized the situation in



Figure 1.1. Robert Mills, *Washington Monument*, 1928, Baltimore, USA.

Ghana, but in Accra commemorative strategies associated elsewhere with imperialism also continue to have a place.

It is not the point of this essay to map out an entire history of commemorative monuments, including both architecture and sculpture. Their history in Europe significantly pre-dates the French Revolution, which was marked both by iconoclasm towards existing monuments and by creative thinking about how to mark regime change. Victims included the statues of Bourbon monarchs at the centers of *places royales*, as well as the biblical kings affixed in medieval times to the façade of Notre Dame in Paris.[1]

Nonetheless, a great spate of monument building followed in the wake of independence movements in the Americas and the unification

[1] This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 10109419) and was written while I was an Ailsa Mellon Bruce Senior Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.
Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019).

of Italy and Germany in Europe. The Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel and the Arc de Triomphe, both conceived during the reign of Napoleon – although the second was completed only in 1836 – are representative of the ambition of nineteenth-century nation states to create symbols that were independent of the figure of a single ruler.[2] In the United States memorials honoring George Washington were from the beginning as much architectural as figural. A classical column more than 50m high and topped by a statue of Washington was completed in 1829 in Baltimore, the city whose Battle Monument of 1825, designed by Maximilian Godefroy, kicked off public monument building in the United States (Fig. 1.1).[3] This was designed by Robert Mills, whose later obelisk in Washington, D.C., was upon its completion in 1884 briefly the tallest structure in the world.[4] Meanwhile, statues of Simón Bolívar were erected across South America as well as in many other cities in the world.[5] The unification of Italy in 1861 and Germany a decade later kicked off waves of monument building in both countries. Designed by Giuseppe Sacconi, the King Victor Emmanuel II Monument in Rome was begun in 1885 and finally completed half a century later. Equally bombastic, if less centrally located, are the memorials Bruno Schmitz designed in the 1890s to Emperor William I. These can be found in Koblenz, Porta Westfalica, and Kyffhäuser.[6]

The major memorials erected in Dublin between the beginning of the eighteenth century and the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 varied greatly in scale and in the political messages they were intended to convey. Initially they signaled support for the British crown. The earliest major secular monument was an equestrian statue of William III by Grinling Gibbons erected in Dublin in 1701, a year before the Protestant king's death and only 12 years after he had defeated his Catholic father-in-law at the Battle of the Boyne. Following the Act of Union in 1800, which resulted in the dissolution of the Irish parliament, in front of which the monument stood, the British

[2] The Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel was designed by Percier and Fontaine and completed in 1808; the Arc de Triomphe de L'Étoile was designed by Jean Chalgrin.

[3] J. Jefferson Miller, II, 'The Designs for the Washington Monument in Baltimore,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 23 (1964), pp. 19–68.

[4] For an examination of it in the context of later monuments erected on the Mall, see Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: U California P, 2009).

[5] Miguel Angel Centeno, 'War and Memories: Symbols of State Nationalism in Latin America,' *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 66 (1999), pp. 75–105.

[6] Johanna Yeats, *Bruno Schmitz (1858–1916): Reformarchitekt zwischen Historismus und beginnender Moderne* (Norderstadt: PubliQation, 2020).

victory in the Napoleonic wars was marked by the erection in 1809 of Nelson's Pillar on what was then Sackville Street and is now O'Connell Street, and the Wellington Monument, completed in Phoenix Park in 1861. Topping out at over 40m and 60m respectively, these were ambitious landmarks, although the length of time it took to complete the Wellington Monument suggests a certain lack of enthusiasm for one of the city's most celebrated native sons. The figures of those who aspired for political autonomy eventually joined Nelson as first John Henry Foley's (1818–1874) imposing memorial to Daniel O'Connell and then Augustus Saint-Gaudens' statue of Charles Stuart Parnell were placed on the city's broadest thoroughfare in 1882 and 1911 respectively. Foley depicted O'Connell, 'The Great Liberator', who was neither a king nor a military figure, standing rather than astride a horse and surrounded by the panoply of allegorical figures characteristic of the most ambitious commemorative sculpture of its day. Saint-Gaudens showed Parnell with his arm extended, as if delivering an oration, with the appropriate level of dignity conveyed architecturally by the truncated obelisk behind him. Meanwhile, John Hughes's larger than life-size figure of Queen Victoria was placed in 1908 in front of Leinster House and thus between what are now the National Library and the National Museum. The queen sat in state atop a plinth that, while less elaborate than O'Connell's perch, was certainly imposing.[7]

The Easter Rebellion of 1916, the war for independence that preceded the establishment of the Free State, and the civil war that followed it saw significant damage to the built fabric of the new capital's center.[8] O'Connell Street, the Customs House, and the Four Courts were all rebuilt across the course of the 1920s. While O'Connell Street was reconstructed in the modern classicism in vogue across Britain and its empire since the early twentieth century, James Gandon's two late eighteenth-century Neoclassical masterpieces were respectfully restored. The centre of government shifted from Dublin Castle, the site of British rule, to Leinster House, which since 1815 had been the site of the Royal Dublin Society and now became the seat of the Oireachtas, the new parliament.[9] Continuity prevailed, however, when the president

[7] Paula Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture: Native Genius Reaffirmed* (New Haven, CT, & London: Yale UP, 2010). See also Paula Murphy, 'Destruction and Loss,' in Paula Murphy, ed., *Art and Architecture of Ireland: Sculpture 1600–2000*, 3 (New Haven, CT, & London: Yale UP, 2014), pp. 429–32.

[8] Lisa Godson & Joanna Brück, eds, *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising* (Liverpool: LUP, 2015).

[9] Myles Campbell & William Derham, eds, *Making Majesty: The Throne Room a Dublin Castle, a Cultural History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2017).

moved into the former Viceregal Lodge, which was rechristened Áras an Uachtaráin. No major monuments were erected to those executed following the Rising, those killed in the War of Independence, or any of the political leaders of the rest of the twentieth century. The Irish National War Memorial Gardens in Dublin's Islandbridge easily eclipses in grandeur and dignity the commemoration of those who supported independence. Designed by Edwin Lutyens and completed on the eve of World War II, the Gardens honor the Irish who lost their lives fighting for the British in World War I (Fig. 1.2).

This did not mean that there was a dearth of statues and other monuments erected in Dublin in the century that followed independence. Any visitor to the city's major public spaces, including O'Connell Street, College Green, Dublin Castle, St Stephen's Green, and Merrion Square, will come upon a wide range of sculptures honoring political and cultural figures, including the impressive Wolfe Tone monument at one corner of St Stephen's Green (the lingering traces of imperialism are visible by contrast in the Fusiliers' Arch, commemorating the Irish dead who fought on the British side in the Boer War, which marks the other corner of the Green) and the rather louche polychrome figure of Oscar Wilde at one edge of Merrion Square.[10] But not one of them was intended to or has become the focus of commemoration of independence. Indeed, both at home and abroad, more Irish commemorative activity has focused on the experience of the famine than the achievement of statehood.[11]

A combination of artistic and political factors undoubtedly contributed to the lack of physical markers of statehood. Meaningful monuments were certainly erected in Europe in the 1920s, with Lutyens's cenotaph in London being an excellent example. Nonetheless, grandiose schemes of the kind built in Italy and Germany following unification were generally associated in the interwar period and its aftermath with undemocratic regimes. By the middle of the century, moreover, figural art increasingly seemed outmoded. After World War II, for instance, the provision of infrastructure, including schools, other civic buildings, and even highways, largely replaced commemorative statuary in the United States.[12] Thus the lack of meaningful memorials

[10] Wolfe Tone, originally installed in 1967, was sculpted by Edward Delaney, who repaired it following a 1971 bombing. Oscar Wilde is the work of Danny Osborne and dates to 1997.

[11] Emily Mark-FitzGerald, *Commemorating the Irish Famine: Memory and the Monument* (Liverpool: LUP, 2013).

[12] Andrew Shanken, 'Planning Memory: The Rise of Living Memorials during World War II,' *Art Bulletin* (March 2002), pp. 130–47.



Figure 1.2. Edwin Lutyens, Irish National War Memorial Gardens, 1932–39, Dublin, with Wellington Monument visible in the background.

to Irish Independence and the processes that generated it may be attributed in part to the weakening faith within democracies in such forms of commemoration. Determination to move beyond the civil war, the lack of prominent sculptors clamoring for commissions, and the country's relative poverty may also have been contributing factors. The Dublin housing estates designed by Herbert Simms in the 1930s and 1940s offered more palpable proof of the benefits of independence, while enormous new Catholic churches in Dublin's suburbs testified to the primacy of the church rather than the state in many daily lives.[13]

Instead of new construction, the most prominent physical expression of Irish Independence consisted of the erasure of the most prominent commemorative symbols of British rule. Buildings survived and were adapted to new uses, but monuments were vulnerable. The cherished figures of O'Connell and Parnell continue to mark the two ends of O'Connell Street, where they have been joined by other political figures,

[13] Ellen Rowley, *Housing, Architecture and the Edge Condition: Dublin is Building, 1935–1975* (London: Routledge, 2018).

most notably labour leader Jim Larkin.[14] But across the country statuary that honored the British monarchy and those allied with it was for half a century subjected to violence that, while not sanctioned by the state, arguably occurred in part because the government had not created a meaningful site that marked the achievement of independence. The figure of William III, which had long served as a focus of anti-British vandalism, was finally hauled down after an explosion in 1928; Nelson met the same fate in 1966.[15] In 1948, the same year that the Oireachtas passed the Republic of Ireland Act severing the country's last tie to the British monarchy, Victoria was taken down from her perch in front of Leinster House; she has since found a new home in Sydney, Australia (her husband, Prince Albert, however, continues to stand alongside the National Museum of Natural History).[16]

The typically furtive destruction of monuments emblematic of British rule in Ireland differs greatly from the current bout of monument demolition in the United States. In the US the decision to remove monuments has been the product of sustained public discussion, much of which was triggered by the killing in 2015 in Charleston, South Carolina, of Black churchgoers by a man who had posed with a Confederate flag, and subsequent murders, including most notably that of George Floyd in 2020. Although monument removal remains controversial in the US, it has occurred almost only when mandated by democratically elected city, county, and state governments following considerable public consultation.[17] In Ireland, by contrast, statues – Victoria being the exception – were usually blown up by people who, because their acts were officially illegal, remained largely anonymous, making the degree of public support for their actions difficult to judge. Moreover, in most cases in the United States, as was the case in Ireland with Victoria, the actual statues have not been destroyed, although in many cases their plinths have. Most are currently in storage; while few museums currently want to display them, it is possible that some will end up in cemeteries.[18] The statuary that once towered over

[14] By Oisín Kelly, this statue dates to 1979.

[15] For more examples of destruction in Ireland see Murphy, 'Destruction and Loss,' pp. 429–32; and Murphy, *Nineteenth-Century Irish Sculpture*.

[16] Micheál Ó Riain, 'Queen Victoria and Her Reign at Leinster House,' *Dublin Historical Record*, 52 (1999), pp. 75–86.

[17] See Karen E. Cox, *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the On-Going Fight for Racial Justice* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 2021). In Europe, however, the situation has been different. Note in particular the toppling of the statue of Edward Colson in Bristol, England, in 2020. See Mark Lander, 'In an English City, Early Benefactor is Now "a Toxic Brand",' *New York Times*, 14 June 2020.

[18] This was recommended by several of the African American participants in an online

Richmond's Monument Avenue is probably moving to the city's Black History Museum and Cultural Center.[19] Only in Charlottesville have plans been made to melt down a statue of Robert E. Lee in order to make a new artwork that will be commissioned by Jefferson School African American Heritage Center.[20]

The relation to power is also different. If most of those who worked to erase the traces of empire in Irish public spaces operated covertly, they undoubtedly nonetheless felt that they were acting on behalf of what they understood to be a formerly oppressed majority. The situation is quite different in the United States, where Blacks and Native Americans are staking a new claim to public space in a country, if not necessarily in individual communities, in which they are minorities. While the majority, which includes Asians and Latinx as well as whites, needs to support these efforts for them to be successful, they represent an obvious shift away from white hegemony. And the focus of these efforts has been on men of high rank who were once venerated as heroes rather than on the foot soldiers who fought under their command. Statues of Confederate generals have been removed at a faster pace than those of anonymous privates. Controversy is most likely to swirl around the latter when they stand in public space in states that did not secede from the Union.[21] Meanwhile, while Black Lives Matter has targeted memorials to those who seceded from the United States in hope of preserving slavery, monuments to Christopher Columbus, often originally a focus of Italian American pride, have also been removed because of the violence he unleashed upon the continent's original inhabitants.[22]

event entitled 'Removal of Confederate Monuments from Public Space,' held on 15 July 2020 and sponsored by the Society of Architectural Historians.

19 Livia Gershom, 'Richmond's Robert E. Lee Statue is Headed to a Black History Museum,' *Smithsonian Magazine*, 5 January 1922 [https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/richmond-confederate-monuments-headed-to-black-history-museum-180979319/], accessed 4 February 2022.

20 Eduardo Medina, 'Charlottesville's Statue of Robert E. Lee Will Be Melted Down,' *New York Times*, 7 December 2021. It was sculpted by Henry Shrady and Leo Lentilli and erected in 1924.

21 The case of the Talbot Boys in Easton, Maryland, is particularly important in this regard. It featured prominently in Sherrilyn A. Ilfill, *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2007). See also Bennett Leckrone, 'Talbot County Council Votes to Remove Confederate Talbot Boys Statue from Courthouse Lawn,' *Maryland Matters*, 14 September 2021, and 'Save the Talbot Boys Statue' [http://talbotboysstatue.squarespace.com], accessed 4 February 2022.

22 Christine Hauser, 'Christopher Columbus Statues Removed 2 Chicago Parks,' *New York Times*, 24 July 2020. These efforts are occurring elsewhere in the Americas as

The many recent cases of monument removal in the United States demonstrate that figural sculpture in particular – and commemoration in general – continue to matter. This has not always been the case. In the 1950s and 1960s, when the Civil Rights movement focused on eliminating segregation and changing the laws that supported it, statuary was seldom an issue. The success of Maya Lin's entirely abstract Vietnam War Memorial, dedicated in 1982, which renewed the sense that memorials could still be effective, has more recently, however, been largely superseded by the revival, especially in the wake of 9/11, of belief in the potency of representations of the human form.[23] Symbolic targets matter enormously to a movement that attempts to counteract actual violence against Black bodies rather than focusing on challenging the legal abstractions that once restricted their movement.[24]

The salient differences between the demolition of monuments in Ireland and in the United States suggest that other examples may offer more substantial insights into the role of erasure in relation to commemoration. While German examples have dominated many scholarly discussions of memory over the last several decades, consideration of India and Ghana, two other countries in the forefront of achieving independence from Britain, also casts welcome light on the distinctiveness of the Irish situation.[25]

The laissez-faire attitude that the Irish government has taken since Independence towards most traces of the imperial past contrasts with the official anti-Nazification efforts that took place in both East and West Germany after World War II. Few recent erasures of the physical traces of the immediate past have been more systematic than that sponsored by the four powers who occupied Germany in 1945. The Third Reich placed an unusual – but by no means unprecedented – emphasis on architecture and public spectacle. This symbolism proved an easy target, although the buildings to which it had been affixed

well. See Johnny Diaz, 'Mexico City to Replace Columbus Statue with Indigenous Woman Monument,' *New York Times*, 7 September 2021.

[23] Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago, IL: U Chicago P, 2010).

[24] Of course, the Civil Rights movement also included a great deal of violence against Black bodies. See Courtney R. Baker, *Looking at Images of African American Suffering and Death* (Urbana: U Illinois P, 2015), pp. 94–108.

[25] The scholarship on Germany is too substantial to review here in detail. Salient examples include Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 2003); and James E. Young's two books, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven, CT, & London: Yale UP, 1993) and *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT, & London: Yale UP, 2002).

were almost always left in place if they had survived the bombs and machine guns of the invaders.[26] A defeated populace, focused in the early postwar years on basic survival and later on economic growth, mounted few objections. Although commemorating fascism's many victims did not become a priority in the Federal Republic until after reunification in 1990, the partial preservation of traces of wartime destruction in West Germany provided survivors there with a way of acknowledging their own suffering as well as their aspirations for a better future.[27] The very different and quite prominent commemorative approach taken by the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) may have helped spur the new level of public recognition accorded physical commemoration in the Federal Republic after 1990.

Initially in the Federal Republic, as in Ireland, church construction provided a degree of institutional stability and emotional succour that a nascent state could not yet offer. As West German society became more secular, by the 1980s museums gradually replaced churches as the vessels of memory; only in the 1980s did state-sponsored commemoration begin to provide innovative ways of marking. Both settings, but particularly churches, provided in many cases physical markers of German loss. At a time when so much of Germany's urban fabric had been destroyed, retaining the ruins of Romanesque and Gothic revival churches (actual medieval buildings were usually restored) was a way of acknowledging open wounds, even as these were paired with modern infill that offered the promise of renewal (Fig. 1.3).[28] The postwar equation in West Germany of modern art and architecture with anti-Nazism left officials in any case with few tools to shape an emphatically civic memorial culture realized in bricks and mortar, rather than respectful concerts featuring the music of good Germans such as Bach and Beethoven. The forms to express such loss appeared to be lacking, especially considering how effective Hitler and his supporters had been in co-opting the built environment to their cause. The absence of large-scale public commemoration of the Holocaust and other war-inflicted deaths does not mean that they were forgotten or ignored, however, even if West Germans, particularly before the 'economic miracle' of the 1950s, often emphasized their own suffering

[26] Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Munich and Memory: Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (Berkeley: U California P, 2000).

[27] Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Modernism as Memory: Building Identity in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2018).

[28] Kai Kappel, *Memento 1945? Kirchenbau aus Kriegsruinen und Trümmersteinen in den Westzonen und in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2007).



Figure 1.3. Franz Schwechten, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, 1895, Berlin, Germany, with addition by Egon Eierman, 1963.

over that they had imposed on others.[29] Only with the emergence in the 1980s of counter-monuments that honored victims rather than perpetrators did this begin to change. Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's deliberately self-effacing Monument against Fascism, installed in the Hamburg suburb of Harburg in 1986, began this shift, but it was adopted at the federal rather than the local level only following reunification.

Meanwhile, in the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union's sponsorship of Socialist Realism validated the continuation of a tradition of commemoration combining architecture and figural sculpture that stretched back to the eighteenth century. The Soviets erected memorials

[29] Paul Jaskot, *The Nazi Perpetrator: Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2012).

in the centre of Berlin to their victorious troops; Soviet support for the reunification of Germany in 1990 was predicated upon a commitment that they remain and be treated with respect. Already in 1958 East Germany dedicated a towering memorial featuring statuary by Fritz Cremer and visible at a great distance to the victims of fascism in Buchenwald, the site of a former Nazi concentration camp, that easily eclipsed in scale anything realized in the Federal Republic (Fig. 1.4).[30] But it was only later, after the eclipse of Socialist Realism in East German architecture, that massive monuments to the German forefather of all communism – Karl Marx – began to populate East German cityscapes. Except in Dresden, where a relatively modest statue was erected already in 1953, less than a year after Stalin's death, these served to some degree as an antidote to the disavowal of Stalin by Khrushchev, while also sanctioning the shift in architecture to the International Style by ensuring that the resulting streetscapes remained recognizably Communist. Interestingly, the most imposing of these all lay outside Berlin: it was to the south, in Saxony, that in the 1970s towering busts of the bearded figure became, in Chemnitz (renamed Karl Marx Stadt in 1953) and in Leipzig (its largest city), the most visible symbols of the supposedly specifically German character of the East German state.[31] And, despite considerable discussion following reunification, these emblems of a regime now discredited in many eyes remain in place, even as the most prominent government buildings erected by the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin were all demolished.[32] Although only the retention of the Soviet war memorials was mandated from the outset, the presence of this physically prominent commemorative tradition undoubtedly helped spur the resurgence of physical commemoration in post-unification Berlin, especially in the cases such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, designed by Peter Eisenman and dedicated in 2005, where it has been sponsored

[30] Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999).

[31] Claudia Büttner, *Geschichte der Kunst am Bau in Deutschland* (Berlin: Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, 2011), pp. 39–41; and 'Karl-Marx-Monument' [https://www.chemnitz.de/chemnitz/en/city-of-chemnitz/history/discover-history/karl-marx-monument.html], accessed 10 February 2022. The Dresden statue was by Otto Rost. The Chemnitz statue, dedicated in 1971, is the work of Lev Kerbel, while its Leipzig counterpart, which dates to 1974, was a collaboration between Frank Ruddigkeit, Klaus Schwabe, and Rolf Kuhrt.

[32] The Palace of the Republic is the most notorious loss, but the former Foreign Ministry was also demolished. See, among many others, Claire Colomb, *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989* (London: Routledge, 2011); Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 2006); and Karen Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2005).



Figure 1.4. *National Buchenwald Memorial*, 1958, Buchenwald, Germany. Sculpture by Fritz Cremer.

by the federal government, rather than arising, as did the arguably more effective Topography of Terror (Ursula Wilms and Heinz Hallman, 2010) and Stolperstein (Gunter Demnig, begun 1992), from grassroots initiatives.[33]

Independence presents a slightly different situation than the kind of regime change that occurred repeatedly in Germany across the course of the twentieth century. While the process of achieving it through Dominion status was gradual in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and to some degree South Africa, Ireland's determined break with British rule more closely anticipated the independence India and Pakistan received in 1947, followed by Ghana, which became a dominion in 1957 and declared itself a republic in 1960. None of these momentous events was marked, however, by the violence against existing monuments that occurred in Ireland, although only in Ghana were new commemorative landscapes quickly created.

Indian independence was marked by violence against real rather than stone and bronze bodies.[34] In Ireland, partition, while far from welcomed outside the Unionist community in the North, did not result in the large-scale exchanges of population, much less the massacres that occurred along the new border that severed the Punjab. Having spent their hostility on the ethnic cleansing of their neighbors, Indians dedicated less energy to erasing physical traces of the former British presence. The Indian government occupied the new capital the Raj had erected in New Delhi without discernable hesitation. In Calcutta, the original colonial capital, the Victoria Memorial, designed by William Emerson and completed in 1921, remains a cherished symbol of the city as well as a popular public park. Meanwhile, although the construction of a new modernist city in Chandigarh as a replacement for Lahore garnered the most attention, buildings such as the Vidhana Soudha, housing the state legislature of Karnataka in Bangalore, demonstrated the Indo-Saracenic fusion of motifs from indigenous pre-colonial architecture with nineteenth-century European planning principles.[35]

Hindu popular devotion, even more than that of faithful Catholics, focuses on figural statuary. While, for pious Catholics, these are

[33] Kathleen James-Chakraborty, 'A Whisper Rather than a Shout: Ursula Wilm and Heinz Hallmann's *Topography of Terror*,' in Deborah Ascher Barnstone & Elizabeth Otto, eds, *Art and Resistance in Germany* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018), pp. 173–89; and Hans Hesse, *Stolpersteine: Idee. Künstler. Geschichte. Wirkung* (Essen: Klartext, 2017).

[34] Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition* (New Haven, CT, & London: Yale UP, 2008).

[35] See Peter Scriver & Amit Srivastava, *India: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion, 2016), for this building, which was completed in 1956 and designed by B.R. Manickam, who was a civil engineer rather than a professional architect.

representations of holy figures that deserve to be treated with respect, Hindus believe that the deity can, through appropriate rituals, be brought to reside within them, and that seeing and being seen by the deity as embodied in such figures can bring its blessings.[36] This concept of *darshan* was also adopted by the Mughals and other Islamic courts. In Indian culture this amplified the importance that almost all those who claim to rule by divine right place on the body of the ruler.[37] In the 1950s figural sculptures erected around the country by Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury, some of which have been illustrated on banknotes and stamps, paid homage to the ordinary Indians who joined the struggle for freedom.[38] More recently, statues of exemplary leaders, including those from the distant past, such as Shivaji, prominent freedom fighters such as Mahatma Gandhi, and more recent provincial chief ministers of particular states, such as Mayawati, have been erected in cities across the country (Fig. 1.5). In some cases, such as the statue of Shivaji at the Gate of India in Mumbai, these replaced the figures of British kings, but in India relics of the Raj were seldom subject to the degree of violence meted out in Ireland.[39] Post-colonial statuary, however, has been vandalized by the political opponents of those whose heroes they represent.[40] Only, however, since Narendra Modi became prime minister in 2014, has erasing the physical traces of Nehruvian modernism joined the demolition of Muslim temples in importance for those committed to a vision of India as an exclusively Hindu state. Designed by Bimal Patel and begun in 2019, his government's Central Vista project, which includes the provision of a new parliament building, will transform New Delhi's government quarter.[41] Ironically, these 'western-inspired'

[36] Diana Eck, 'Darshan of the Image,' *India International Centre Quarterly*, 13 (1986), pp. 43–53.

[37] Gülru Necipoglu, 'Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces,' *Ars Orientalis*, 23 (1993), pp. 303–42.

[38] 'Public Art: Sculptures by Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury Capture Key Moments in Indian History,' *The Heritage Lab* [https://www.theheritagelab.in/sculptures-deviprasad-roy-chowdhury-indian-history/], accessed 11 February 2022.

[39] 'How This Statue of Shivaji at the Gateway of India Replaced a "black horse",' *The Heritage Lab* [https://www.theheritagelab.in/shivaji-statue/], accessed 11 February 2022. The statue by George Wade dates to 1961 and replaced a figure of George V.

[40] Shoumojit Banerjee, 'Shivaji Statue Vandalism: Shiv Sena, NCP Hit Out at Modi, Shah,' *The Hindu*, 19 December 2021.

[41] For the Indian government's presentation of this see 'Transformation of the Central Vista Avenue: A World Class Public Space and Icon of India,' *Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India* [https://centralvista.gov.in/central-vista-avenue.php], accessed 11 February 2022. Sohani C, 'Statue Politics: How India Quietly Removed Colonists from Their Pedestals,' *This Week in Asia*, 5 July 2020 [https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/lifestyle-culture/article/3091791/

buildings, commissioned and constructed by Indians, some of which were once lauded as symbols of Indian independence, are now far more vulnerable than colonial-era architecture that makes use of motifs appropriated from buildings commissioned by Islamic rulers and their courts.[42]

In Ghana, on the other hand, the creation of Black Star Square (also known as Independence Square) provided exactly the kind of commemorative post-colonial space lacking in Ireland and India (Fig. 1.6).[43] Completed by the local Public Works Department in 1961 in time for a visit from Queen Elizabeth II, it displaced a racecourse and cricket grounds and thus embodied local empowerment. The midpoint of the enormous public space is marked, as one traverses the boulevard just to its north, by a triumphal gate. Inscribed 'A.D. 1957' and 'Freedom and Justice', it is topped with black stars, the country's unifying symbol, one facing in each of four directions. This recreation of European monumental architecture is balanced on the opposite side of the vast plaza by the much larger and resolutely modernist Independence Arch, beyond which lies the open sea of the Gulf of Guinea. This is flanked on each side by a concrete grandstand; three more of these define both the east and west edges of the space. These three sides of the square appear to fulfill the equation of modern architecture with political emancipation, although the presence elsewhere in the country, particularly in Kumasi, of International Style buildings designed by Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew when what was then the Gold Coast was still a British colony calls such an easy comparison into question.[44] Modernism appears to have served Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first prime minister, particularly well, not so much for providing alternative to the British colonial precedent but for its effectiveness in displacing pre-colonial patterns of leadership represented above all by the Ashanti king.[45]

statue-politics-how-india-quietly-removed-colonists], accessed 8 July 2022, for the statues moved in to Barrackpore from the centre of Kolkata.

42 Matt Shaw, 'Plans to Raze Louis Kahn-Designed Dormitories in India Are on Hold,' *New York Times*, 4 January 2021.

43 Manfred Herz, ed., *African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence, Ghana, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Zambia* (Zurich: Park Books, 2015), pp. 18–47.

44 Mark Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2003).

45 Janet Berry Hess, *Art and Architecture in Postcolonial Africa* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006). See also Lukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2020), p. 60.



Figure 1.5. Shivaji, 1961, Mumbai, India.

Although originally closely associated with Nkrumah, Black Star Square, which also includes monuments to the unknown soldier and those who fought for liberation, easily survived his deposition in 1966. The provision of such a place does not, however, preclude the vandalism of statuary. Nkrumah's fall from power was quite literally marked by the destruction of the statues of him that had been erected across the country, although more recently new and often larger monuments to him have been created.[46] These include a Mausoleum complex designed by Don Arthur and completed in Accra in 1992, two decades after the death of the former president.

The destruction in Ireland of colonial statuary following independence was, as these examples from Germany, India, and Ghana demonstrate, by no means unusual. Such changes to the symbolic landscape often accompany regime change. While they may be regretted

[46] Sabine Marshall, 'Targeting Statues: Monument "Vandalism" as an Expression of Sociopolitical Protest in South Africa,' *African Studies Review*, 60 (2017), pp. 203–19.



Figure 1.6. Black Star Square, Public Works Department, 1961, Accra, Ghana.

by art historians, who prize the aesthetic qualities of the cultural heritage they represent, they also offer compelling proof of how much monuments have mattered to those eager to put their political stamp on actual places. Destruction can, in this context, be as expressive as construction. Nonetheless, Ireland's literally explosive history of (de) commemoration remains distinctive. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the length of time after independence had been achieved that such violence continued to take place, with the demolition of Nelson's Pillar in 1966 being an especially belated reckoning of this kind. What is also striking about the Irish example is the lack of unifying symbols created to replace those that have disappeared. Although monument-building was not a priority of the artistic or of all political communities in the middle decades of the last century, the example of Ghana shows that meaningful national symbols could nonetheless be forged, even in the midst of much greater political instability than that characterized by post-civil war Ireland. And if India produced more conventional memorials than Germany, this may be due in part to the primacy of the figure in Hinduism, which had already deeply imprinted

pre-colonial Muslim political culture there.[47] In the Federal Republic of Germany, first hero worship of Hitler and then Socialist Realist statuary, as well as the increasing compulsion to honor victims, prompted the emergence of counter-monuments, but these are not necessarily as suited to celebrations of Irish Independence, nor does their abstraction resonate as deeply in a culture in which the veneration of figures of the saints was until recently a prominent aspect of religious devotion. But the biggest difference remains with the recent situation in the United States and everywhere else that memorials to enslavers and those who fought to preserve slavery are finally falling. The empowerment of the majority through independence and the acknowledgement of past suffering imposed by a previous regime are very different from a democratically elected government's beginning to come to terms with its complicity in the oppression of its own citizens and of others from around the world. Yet, while the challenge now appears to be to find new symbols of inclusivity, the unusual case of Ireland suggests that these may not be entirely necessary. Demolition itself may be sufficient.

[47] For a sample discussion of the image of the Muslim ruler in local court culture see Elaine Wright, ed., *Muraqq': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library* (Alexandria: Art Services International, 2008).