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## Ancient Artistic Motifs on Italian Memorials from the Unity to the Aftermath of World War I

In the decades following the unification of the Kingdom of Italy, achieved in 1861 with the proclamation of Vittorio Emanuele II as the king of the new State, the Italian peninsula became covered with many commemorative monuments. They were devoted, first of all, to honour the men who played a leading role in the struggle for independence, but also to remember the places of the major war events<sup>1</sup>.

Several memorials were later erected in commemoration of other facts and casualties, as during the unsuccessful colonial attempts in Africa, but above all, World War I gave the opportunity to raise nationwide an enormous amount of monuments to the soldiers fallen in action. After the dreadful conflict, each Italian municipality, both great and small, was forced by law to honour its casualties by means of a monument or a memorial tablet, where the names of the fighters fallen for their country were engraved. A conflict which by then had turned into a mass war inevitably required a joint tribute to the memory of all the dead soldiers in a way that never before had reached such a general psychological effect, even certified by the contemporary press [36, pp. 631–643]. A survey organized by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, on the occasion of the World War I centenary, revealed a total of over 12.000 monuments to the Italian casualties in the first world conflict, immediately erected in the post-war period and then, for the most part, during the fascist rule<sup>2</sup>.

A great part of these commemorative monuments, both in the general subject and in the particular ornaments, shows a general influence of classical art, especially of the Roman antiquity. Single typological patterns and iconographies were properly refashioned, to fit these new celebratory contexts and to strengthen their meaning, and became an important distinguishing component of them. The war memorials, anywhere in Italy, received obelisks, columns, altars, and statues following or echoing classical models. The ancient artistic legacy was perceived as a real common heritage for the new Italy, able to lavish an impressive fund of iconographies

<sup>1</sup> See [17 (with beautiful illustrations of the post-Risorgimento monuments that will be mentioned here); 21; 35; 37 (a useful survey, but not very reliable in its archaeological references); 44 (with a convenient list of the inauguration dates in chronological sequence: note 4 at pp. 295–296)].

<sup>2</sup> The cards of the registered monuments are online (in Italian): Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali. Available at: <http://www.catalogo.beniculturali.it>. Monuments catalogues are accessible on different web sites as well: Beni Culturali Online (<https://www.beniculturalionline.it>); Monumenti Italiani della Grande Guerra (<http://www.monumentigrandeguerra.it/index.aspx>); Pietre della memoria (<https://www.pietredellamemoria.it>). All accessed 25 January 2021.

that appeared particularly suitable to transmit the actual values that had to be extolled and left for posterity, much more than the symbology of Christian and medieval origin [19, pp. 87–89].

Although a constant use of recurring figures and formulas can be noticed, yet the single creations show a notable variety in the actual employment of those elements, because a certain freedom was given to the imagination and sensitivity of the authors of the monuments, but always within the coeval cultural debate about the revival of the past [2]. On the present occasion I would like to propose a synthesis, necessarily restricted, of the principal tendencies we can notice in the use of ancient motifs in these works, on the basis of a selection of significant cases.

The ossuaries can be considered the typical memorials of the wars of independence, built next to the places of the fought battles, to a great extent on the initiative of associations of veterans and local committees. They already made use of classical iconographies, but only to a certain extent, because other influences were possibly acting on the architectural typology of these creations, which mostly imposed themselves with decision on the surrounding landscape. For instance the motif of a tower of medieval memory could be resumed, a particularly impressive example of which is represented by the memorial of S. Martino della Battaglia (1893<sup>3</sup> [21, pp. 120–123; 44, p. 295]). This motif was sometimes enriched with elements drawn from the Christian tradition, like the prothyrooms with an arch and a lunette in the bottom part of the Custoza ossuary (1879 [21, pp. 123–125; 23; 37, p. 29]), which also incorporates and refashions the obelisk motif, destined to a big success even afterwards, as we will see (Ill. 29).

Nevertheless, monumental architectures of a not really ancient shape could be occasionally embellished with figurative hints of classical origin, Roman above all, as in the memorial of Magenta (1872 [21, pp. 117–118; 37, p. 29]), also celebrating the fundamental contribution of the French army to the Second War of Independence (Fig. 1). Here the theme of the tower returns, even though with a quadrangular plan, as if it was a sort of widened obelisk. But, high on every side of the shaft, a row of “Roman” laurel wreath is carved; below, a large relief panel, each time repeated, shows a heap of weapons and other war tools, supporting four flags and an eagle with



Fig. 1. Giovanni Brocca. Memorial of Magenta (Milan), detail. 1872. Photo by S. Rambaldi

<sup>3</sup> The dates mentioned from now on refer to the inauguration year of the monuments.

outspread wings, in the middle of a wreath of leaves. This eagle reintroduces a famous Roman image of imperial age, much exploited also in subsequent times, as we will see<sup>4</sup>.

The ossuary of the Montebello battle, fought in 1859 during the Second War of Independence, already shows elements frequent in many later commemorative works of the Great War: above a sort of a small temple with a Doricising pronaos, a drum of column stands, with the statue of personified Italy on top, holding a flag (1882, but completed later [44, p. 294]).

The obelisk is an architectural shape often employed for the Italian monuments, maybe because it is easy and not too expensive to realize. Obviously of Egyptian origin, not classical, it had been already used by the Romans, beginning from Augustus, when many obelisks started to be transferred from Egypt to Rome, where they are still visible in the piazzas of the Capital. The modern use in Rome of such an isolated element for commemorative purpose is attested by the memorial erected to honour the five hundred Italian soldiers fallen at Dogali in Ethiopia, dedicated at the same year of the battle (1887 [7, pp. 137, 142]). Originally this obelisk, later moved to another place, was standing in the square of the old railway station, therefore in a significative urban space. Its collocation in an important spot was in accordance with a well known tradition in Rome and already resumed elsewhere for a post-unitary commemorative initiative, as in the case of Palermo in Piazza Indipendenza (1866 [37, p. 26]), one of the first monumental obelisks (Fig. 2), and then in the memorial to the Five Days (*Cinque Giornate*) of Milan, in association with a substantial sculptural decoration around its base (1895)<sup>5</sup>. But, in the specific case of Dogali, the obelisk typology might have been chosen because such a motif, of "African" origin, seemed the best way to remember the tragic events occurred just in Africa. Perhaps for the same reason it was decided to use a really ancient obelisk, unlike the new obelisks that will later be found in the monuments of the Great War.

In these last ones, furthermore, by perpetuating a tendency already active in the post-Risorgimento monuments, the traditional shape of the obelisk can appear slightly varied, as we can see for example in the squat specimen of Agrigento, in Sicily (1923). In the most monumental cases, especially frequent above all in big cities, we can observe the combination of several ar-



Fig. 2. Giovanni Battista Filippo Basile. Monument of Piazza Indipendenza in Palermo. 1866. Photo by S. Rambaldi

<sup>4</sup> It is a relief panel set into a wall in the entrance portico of the Basilica of the Holy Apostles in Rome, on which see [33, pp. 569–571].

<sup>5</sup> See [6; 22; 37, pp. 26–28; more in general about the post-unitary obelisks: 44, pp. 289–291].

chitectural and sculptural elements. This is clear, again in Sicily, in the imposing memorial of Piazza Vittorio Veneto in Palermo (Ill. 30). The obelisk stands on a wide base decorated with bronze statues and reliefs, in the middle of a colonnaded exedra that was later added (1931). In this monument, in its first installation inaugurated in 1910 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Italian Unity, on top of the obelisk we can notice an allegorical figure frequently used later in the commemorative works of World War I: the winged Victory, often represented, like in this case, while handing a wreath<sup>6</sup>.

The Victory is a very strong symbol, whose effectiveness had already been tested also in the post-Risorgimento age, when that allegory might be set on top of a high column, as in the memorial erected in Naples in honour of the victims of 1848 revolt, one of the first examples of such an arrangement (1865 [44, p. 291]). However, the motif had already had a success even in some notable nineteenth-century monuments beyond the Alps, celebrating contemporary military victories, like the famous Berlin *Siegessäule* (1873 [1]). The after-war Italian artists, and probably also the authorities commissioning their works, must have been aware of these precedents, among which it is to remember the repeated use of the winged Victory in the Vittoriano, the bombastic memorial in Rome dedicated to King Vittorio Emanuele II (1911), later chosen for the tomb of the Italian Unknown Soldier (1921)<sup>7</sup>. Anyway, the classical origin of this motif is beyond argument, because it can be observed in many ancient monuments, for instance in several Roman historical reliefs, where a Victory crowning the triumphant emperor is represented<sup>8</sup>.

Many cases with a winged Victory could be remembered; one of the most impressive is the Beacon of Victory on the hills of Turin, erected to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the end of the Great War (1928 [41]). Sometimes this allegorical figure is shown only as a simulacrum, in the form of a small statue in the hands of an infantryman, e.g. in the memorial of Casalecchio di Reno (1925), near Bologna (Fig. 3). Perhaps this particular iconographic choice drew its inspiration from the Roma Goddess, carved by Angelo Zanelli in the middle of the already mentioned Vittoriano<sup>9</sup>. The large image of Zanelli, reposing with some adaptations the classical model of *Athena Parthenos*, is precisely carrying a small *Nike* in her hand, as already did the renowned chryselephantine statue by Phidias, even though not in such an ostentatious manner as the Casalecchio infantryman shows it. Admittedly, the scheme of a soldier carrying a *Nike* appears in other memorials of that age and it is hard to ascertain where its first occurrence within this ambit was<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The Victory is the work of the sculptor Mario Rutelli [26]. About the Palermo monument see besides [3, pp. 338–339; 4, pp. 302–304; 8; 11; 34].

<sup>7</sup> About the theme of the Victory and its use in the Vittoriano (afterwards known as Altare della Patria as well), see [50], which underlines the model value there and elsewhere exerted from some ancient images, like a Pompeian small bronze of the National Archaeological Museum of Naples [25, p. 882, no. 384]. More in general on the Vittoriano, see [10; 35, pp. 83–127; 47]. About the symbolic value attributed to the images of Victory after the Italian Unification, see besides [9, pp. 104–111].

<sup>8</sup> The most complete examination of the iconography of Victory in the Roman artistic production is [27].

<sup>9</sup> Exactly under the Roma Goddess the body of the Unknown Soldier was buried [35, pp. 123–124].

<sup>10</sup> The motif of the infantryman with a *Nike* was already so known and appreciated, that it had been depicted on a series of stamps in 1921: [14, fig. on p. 83].



Fig. 3. Francesca Barbanti Brodano Fioroni. Monument of Casalecchio di Reno (Bologna). 1925. Photo by S. Rambaldi

The eagle, another ancient symbol of victory, also appears ubiquitously. In the Roman world, the bird sacred to Jupiter was also associated with the emperor, who held a power on earth like Jupiter in heavens. With the winged Victory, the eagle shares an early post-Risorgimento use, as in Verona, on the column of St Lucia erected in 1882 to celebrate an important battle of the First War of Independence [37, pp. 29–31], and abroad, beyond the Alps, upon other nineteenth-century monuments, for instance the *Kriegerdenkmal* of Hannover (1884), today destroyed [30, pp. 50–51].

The symbol of the eagle also offers the possibility to be handled in different ways; often it is on the top of a memorial, almost to suggest the idea that the bird is about to fly off, an idea stressed by the structural verticalism of a large part of the monuments. A favourite scheme, so many times attested, is the eagle with outspread wings in the middle of a wreath, repeating the image of imperial age already re-used at Magenta (above mentioned); finally, the symbol will become the icon of the L. U. C. E. institution, the agency of cinema propaganda of the fascist government [31].

In the actual forms each time adopted, the World War I memorials, on which I shall now concentrate, so followed trend lines that had already been traced since the post-unitary celebrative works. This tendency continued, without substantial variations, in the transition from the liberal government to the fascist regime, which dramatically intensified the idea of righteousness of war and the nationalistic spirit. The fascist government also exerted a stronger control on the local initiatives and, especially in the 1930s, promoted a return on a large scale to the practice of monumental ossuaries [12; 36, pp. 632–633; 48, pp. 598–642; 49]. With regard to particular historical and geographical situations, however, some different connotations appear in a few territories, as the region of Trento and the Aosta Valley, where the expression of the mourning for the fallen soldiers remained prevailing [2, pp. 516–519; 29].

The widespread distribution of the initiatives led to a major distinction of the monumental outcomes, in connection not only with aesthetic motivations, exemplified by the more variegated role assigned to the figurative constituents, particularly the sculptural ones, but also with the new social requirements matured in the aftermath of World War I. We must never forget that the monuments, first of all, were directed to remember the casualties of the municipalities where they were raised, generally in a position of significant urban prominence or habitual attendance at least, and therefore having a great visibility. This strong bond with the local situation, in addition to the list of the residents dead in war and certain expressions used in the epigraphs<sup>11</sup>, could be further stressed by means of the insertion, into the monuments, of classical motifs inspired by the antiquities of the same territory, in a more or less accurate manner.

In the memorial at the Sicilian small town of Alcamo, indeed, we can notice an allusion to the regional archaeological situation, through the three Doric columns in each side evidently referring back to the temple architecture of Greek age, of which so many examples are still attested in the island (1929). However the artist wanted to represent here an almost abstract idea of the Doric order, maybe on the suggestion of the contemporary architectural Rationalism, because the rather stiff columns, without the *entasis* and too close to one another, are not the precise reproduction of any known Sicilian specimen.

The columns reappear in other monuments to the Sicilian casualties<sup>12</sup>, where the specific architectural motif is each time relived in different ways. At Milazzo (1926), for instance, they follow the tradition of the rostral columns, which began in ancient times with the exemplar dedicated in Rome to celebrate the important naval victory over the Carthaginian fleet, during the First Punic War in 260 BC, just off the coast of Milazzo [16]. The two columns of the memorial are therefore an interesting homage paid to the local historical situation. In addition to

<sup>11</sup> About the formulas in the inscriptions, see [36, pp. 635–637].

<sup>12</sup> A brief and general synthesis of the memorials to the Sicilian fallen soldiers, with an illustration of a series of examples, is [45]. See besides [3].

a statue of a naked warrior between them, they are enriched with Ionic capitals inspired by the Italic version of the type<sup>13</sup>, with volutes on all four sides, and topped by two bronze Victories bringing wreaths, with rigidly symmetric wings.

In the case of more elaborate monuments, like the ones having the form of proper buildings, the explicit will of recalling the archaeological situation of the place can be expressed into more macroscopic shapes. Far from the Sicily of the monuments just considered, an especially considerable example is the so-called Temple of Victory in Milan (1928), designed by a team of architects with Giovanni Muzio at the head<sup>14</sup>. The access propylaeum to the rectangular enclosure resumes the row of Roman columns re-used in front of the façade of the not distant church of S. Lorenzo Maggiore [15]. The ancient quotation is anyway not literally taken, through not only the addition of the war symbols carved on the side pillars, but also the choice of “updating” the column shafts by leaving them smooth. This is in observance of the prevalent aesthetics in the classicistic creations of the architecture contemporary with the memorial, in which the columns not fluted are absolutely prevailing. It is interesting, besides, the shape of the temple in the court: the octagonal plan surely repeats the polygonal tambour of the same church of S. Lorenzo; but, in my opinion, the memory of a celebrated monument of Roman age, even though not Italic, was added to this suggestion as well. I am referring to the so-called Tower of the Winds of the Roman Agora in Athens [52], the similarity of which cannot escape: due not only to the similarly octagonal plan, but also, and above all, to the winged beings carved in relief on top of each side. The figures that, in the Athenian model, are the personifications of the winds who had given their names to the building, here have been transformed into winged allegories of various kinds, but the iconographic relationship is clear<sup>15</sup>.

There are also specimens of ancient sculptures, even famous, which were replicated exactly like the originals, primarily because, in certain cases, they had assumed an important symbolic value for some sites. A typical example is the memorial erected on the Tonale Pass (1936), a border zone where, during World War I, the Italian army had harshly fought against the Austro-Hungarian troops. On a structure apparently similar to a military blockhouse, and containing an ossuary, a column trunk is standing, decorated with a band of festoons and infantry helmets and, on the top, a faithful replica of the so-called Victory of Brescia (Fig. 4). This is a bronze statue of Julio-Claudian age known with this name because it was found in that city<sup>16</sup>. The choice of this particular image is not only due to the fact that the Tonale Pass is in the province of Brescia. After the Italian unification that statue had been poetically celebrated by Giosue Carducci, a poet widely known and appreciated in the Italy of that period. Carducci, in an ode to the Victory of Brescia, had expressed his hope to see one day that very image on the

<sup>13</sup> About the Ionic-Italic type of the capital, see [5].

<sup>14</sup> See [48, pp. 601–605, describing also the opening ceremony and quoting the references to the contemporary press; 2, p. 509].

<sup>15</sup> The winged beings of Milan remind also certain Victories which sometimes appear in other monuments to the Italian casualties. However the conjunction between architectural shape on the one hand and position and nature of the decorative motifs on the other hand makes the Tower of the Winds a very plausible source of inspiration.

<sup>16</sup> About the famous bronze statue, see at least [28; 42, pp. 5–34] and [27, pp. 122–126] on the statuary type. About the Tonale monument, see [24, pp. 358–359].



Fig. 4. Pietro Del Fabro. Memorial of the Tonale Pass (Brescia), detail of the statue by Timoteo Bortolotti. 1936. Photo by S. Rambaldi

Alpine territories that had to be still conquered, to complete the unification of Italy<sup>17</sup>. Therefore the inclusion of that effigy into the Tonale monument represented the accomplishment of the hope that the poet had expressed in his time<sup>18</sup>.

A far different case of employment of ancient sculptural models is the memorial of Macerata, in the region of Marche (1932 [43]). On the top of a flight of steps, behind an altar the ornamentation of which ends above with a military helmet, an imposing colonnaded exedra spreads out, with a curvilinear course. Among the brick columns of Tuscan order, standing on high plinths adorned with clypei, the reproductions of five celebrated statues are displayed. The prototypes of the three central ones are ancient (from left to right: the *Apoxyomenos* by Lysippus, the so-called Mattei Amazon and the *Discophoros* by Polyklitus), while the two lateral statues are the replicas of two modern works, the *Boxers* by Antonio Canova<sup>19</sup>. All these sculptures have no particular connections with the Macerata situation, least of all with the events of the Great War. Their presence here was only caused by the fact that the monumental

exedra is also the large entrance to the Victory Stadium at the back, the function of which was clearly emphasized with those famous images of athletes and warriors properly chosen. The presence of the altar, instead, can do nothing but resume, here as elsewhere, a motif that had already known an early use in the post-Risorgimento years, even isolated and in a sumptuous shape, as the example of Mentana can attest (1877 [18, pp. 367–368; 37, p. 29]).

But the big repertory of the ancient sculpture could also be exploited for the accomplishment of works in which the celebration of the *virtus* seems to have left the larger room to the expression of sorrow, although it is a minority trend in comparison with the exaltation of military bravery, chiefly after the advent of the fascist regime. In the same Marche region, the dimension of the grief about the fate of the soldiers dead in fight appears particularly stressed in the memorial of Fabriano (1926), where, for the sorrowful mother figure on the right, was taken up the statuary type known to the classical archaeologists as the “*Pudicitia*-type”<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> See [9, pp. 110–111]. The poetic work (*Alla Vittoria. Tra le rovine del tempio di Vespasiano in Brescia*) dates back to 1877 (*Odi Barbare*, book 1).

<sup>18</sup> The image of the Victory of Brescia as well as became popular thanks to an important philatelic issue in 1921 [32, pp. 238–240, fig. 8].

<sup>19</sup> Taken for granted the bibliography about the three ancient statues, for the two Canovian *Boxers* (*Creugas* and *Damoxenos*) I restrict myself to quote [39, pp. 318–319, nos. 94a–b (G. Pavanello)].

<sup>20</sup> See [36, pp. 633, 640]. About the ancient type: [51].



Very often the mourning for the fallen soldiers could be alluded to, only by means of the figure of a warrior death-stricken or in tears for the dead comrades-in-arms, like at Montichiari (1922), for instance. There, however, the figure of the famous Capitoline she-wolf was added to the frontal side of the high base of the statue: this image will become a fierce icon of the warmongering fascist government, accessed to the power just in the same year of the inauguration of the Montichiari memorial [38].

In addition to the winged Victory examined before in several cases, another specific ancient individuality often attested in the memorials is Minerva, whose features are typically employed to allude to the personified Italy. The iconography of the goddess of war is by her nature a strong symbol of the *virtus* manifested by the soldiers in battle, and as such she can be sufficient even by herself to decorate a commemorative work. Not infrequently we can find her statuary representations isolated on a base, quite similar to the countless monuments, standing in the squares and gardens of every town in the world to honour important personalities of the local community as well as of the nation: among the many examples, I remember in the region Marche, the cases of Ascoli Piceno (1927) and Fano (1931), which, beyond the different stylistic suggestions due to the artists' sensitivity, follow the ancient iconography of *Athena/Minerva* dressed in a peplum and armed with her unflinching circular shield (Ill. 31).

The goddess often appears not by herself, but in connection with one or more soldiers. At Monteroni d'Arbia, in the province of Siena (1923), the bombastic bust of Minerva, wearing a helmet with a big crest (the *lophòs* of Greek tradition), is standing on a base in the shape of a high altar, in front of which a naked warrior with a small statue of Victory is carved in relief. The soldier is a more tangible symbol of the warlike bravery implied in the divine image.

Sometimes proper statuary groups can be observed, as in the beautiful monument with a fountain in Pordenone (1929). Its epigraph reveals that, like in many other cases, the commemoration of the casualties was subsequently extended to include also the soldiers died during the World War II. The sculptor Aurelio Minguzzi represented Italy, with the usual features of Minerva, in the act of raising her large shield to protect two naked warriors, one supporting the other [20, p. 260].

Also in other representations of heroic warriors, apart from the examples of possible revivals or reworkings of precise classical iconographic schemes, the reference to the antiquity can be strengthened by the means of the addition of some specific objects, above all weapons. That is what happens, for instance, in the memorial on the St Giusto hill in Trieste (1935), a city where the Great War, as the epigraph on the base states, has been a "war of liberation", because, at the outbreak of the conflict, its territory was still included in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the excited cast-iron group of naked soldiers carrying a dying companion on his shield (remembering the celebrated Borghese Deposition by Raphael), the sculptor Attilio Selva inserted two more hoplitic shields, a helmet of Corinthian type, and a very classical Ionic capital under the foot of one of the figures<sup>21</sup>.

The evocative power of the weapons is so strong in itself that these can be shown even independently from their users. We have already seen in some cases the use of an isolated helmet as

<sup>21</sup> In a preliminary sketch of his work, Selva had noted down: "As the Spartan heroes, we went back on our shields" (cited in [48, pp. 627–628]). About the Triestine memorial, see also [13, pp. 350–351; 20, pp. 265–266 (with the bibliography about his author in note 50 at p. 305)].



Fig. 5. Memorial tablet of Castelrotto (Bolzano), detail. Photo by S. Rambaldi

a decorative motif, but we can add other episodes, as the war trophies appearing at the two ends of the exedra at Lanciano (1926). At the middle the monument shows a sort of modern *Pietà*, made up by a figure in the shape of Minerva which again represents the *Patria* (the Country, as it is specified in the Latin epigraph below), supporting a dead warrior and waving a victory wreath at the same time. In the symmetric trophies carved on the sides of the corner endings of the exedra, instead, there is the motif of a cuirass with a helmet and shields, as it is known in reliefs of Roman age, and even in the round<sup>22</sup>.

Otherwise, we can find the motif of a heap of weapons, as in the cusp of a memorial tablet with the names of the casualties at the small municipality of Castelrotto on the Dolomites Mountains (Fig. 5). An iconography already known to the Pergamene art and afterwards re-utilized by the Romans (as it is demonstrated, among the many examples, by the huge base of the Trajan Column)<sup>23</sup>, was revitalized in this very simple monument with the weapons and equipment of the infantrymen of the Great War: the Adrian helmet, the rifle, the saddlebag, the cartridge boxes, and the gas mask.

As it has also happened in many other circumstances in the artistic production of modern age, an ancient motif is not always quoted to the letter, but often it is refashioned and adapted to the new aims. This perennial evolution is a confirmation of its vitality.

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<sup>22</sup> Consider, for instance, the renowned “Trophies of Marius” on the Capitoline Hill [46].

<sup>23</sup> In general on this theme see [40].

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**Title.** Ancient Artistic Motifs on Italian Memorials from the Unity to the Aftermath of World War I

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**Abstract.** In the decades subsequent to the unification of the Kingdom of Italy, achieved in 1861 with the proclamation of Vittorio Emanuele II as the king of the new State, the Italian peninsula became covered with many commemorative monuments. These were devoted, first of all, to honour the men who played a leading role in the heroic deeds of the Risorgimento but also to remember the places where the major historical events occurred. Afterwards as well, the Italian State went on erecting memorials, in order to celebrate other facts and casualties, as it happened on the occasion of the unsuccessful colonial attempts in the African land and then, above all, after the World War I. Many of these commemorative monuments, in the choice of the subjects each time represented and of the figurative motifs adorning them, show some inspiration from the artistic repertory of the classical antiquity, and especially from the Roman world. Single typological patterns and iconographies, properly refashioned, could well fit these new celebratory contexts too and strengthen their meaning. In that, the Italian artists involved in the monuments continued a tradition dating back, in the artistic practice of the western world, to the Renaissance period at least. But, unlike many other well known aspects of the classical heritage persistence in the modern art, the analysis of forms and models derived from the antiquity and inserted in the memorials is still lacking today all the critical attention it surely deserves. The article examines a sufficient set of examples and shows up the ways and purposes by which the ancient motifs were repropounded in the modern memorials. The monuments were selected not only among those still visible in the Italian cities, including minor towns, but also among those set in the actual sites where the events happened. Apart from the specific local contexts, the revival of ancient artistic motifs always performed well the task it was destined to and contributed to diffuse the ethics the Italian State wanted to convey.

**Keywords:** ancient artistic motifs, war memorials, public commemoration, post-unitary Italy, World War I

**Название статьи.** Древние художественные мотивы в итальянских монументах периода от Объединения до последствий Первой мировой войны

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**Аннотация.** В десятилетия, следовавшие за объединением Королевства Италия, достигнутым в 1861 г. с провозглашением Витторио Эмануэле II королём нового государства, итальянский полуостров покрылся множеством мемориалов. Они были посвящены, прежде всего, чествованию людей, сыгравших ведущую роль в героических деяниях Рисорджименто, но также и памяти о местах, где произошли основные исторические события. Впоследствии итальянское государство продолжило сооружать мемориалы, чтобы отметить другие факты и жертвы, как это произошло в связи с неудачными попытками колонизации на африканской земле, а затем, прежде всего, после Первой мировой войны. Многие из этих памятников выбором представленных сюжетов и украшающих их фигуративных мотивов демонстрируют вдохновение отдельными образцами художественного репертуара классической древности, и особенно римского мира. Отдельные типологические образцы и иконография, должным образом переработанные, также могли бы соответствовать этим новым праздничным контекстам и усилить их значение. В этом итальянские художники, участвовавшие в создании памятников, продолжили традицию, восходящую в художественной практике западного мира, по крайней мере, к эпохе Возрождения. Но, в отличие от многих других хорошо известных аспектов сохранения классического наследия в современном искусстве, анализу форм и моделей, заимствованных из древности и включенных в памятники, сегодня всё ещё не хватает критического внимания, которого он, несомненно, заслуживает. Чтобы дать представление об интересе этой области исследований, будет рассмотрен достаточный ряд примеров. Это покажет способы и цели, с помощью которых древние мотивы были воспроизведены в современных памятниках. Памятники выбраны не только среди тех, которые всё ещё видны в итальянских городах, но и среди тех, которые установлены в реальных местах, где произошли события. Помимо специфических местных условий, возрождение древних художественных мотивов всегда хорошо выполняло поставленную перед ним задачу и способствовало распространению этики, которую хотело донести итальянское государство.

**Ключевые слова:** античные мотивы, военные мемориалы, публичное поминовение, постунитарная Италия, Первая мировая война



Ill. 29. Giacomo Franco. Memorial of Custoza (Verona). 1879. Photo by S. Rambaldi



Ill. 31. Gaetano Orsolini. Monument of Ascoli Piceno. 1927. Photo by S. Rambaldi



Ill. 30. Ernesto Basile. Memorial of Piazza Vittorio Veneto in Palermo, partial view. 1931. Photo by S. Rambaldi