Monsters that remember: Tracing the story of the Workers' Monument in Tophane, İstanbul

Meltem Ahıska

Abstract

This article focuses on a particular monument in Tophane, the Workers' Monument, which has been subjected to destructions ever since the time it was put in place in 1973 and which still stands in the same place as a crippled and unidentifiable body. Many people have referred to it as a "monster." The term "monster" points to unacceptable forms of life, cast aside as "abnormal," and can be of use in tracing how certain memories are crushed or abandoned and become aberrant. Thus, I argue that the story of the destruction of the Workers' Monument cannot be read independently of the performative command of the state, best observed in erecting Atatürk monuments all over the country as visual embodiments of power and furthermore securing and protecting them against destruction by the force of law. Monuments contribute to the closure of the past as a dead body. However, they also forge a regime of memory and desire that serves power. I dwell on the issue of monuments in Turkey in that interstice between life and death, that is, in their "monstrosity," so as to reflect on what remains *unrepresentable* within the complex history—in other words, to reflect on the problem of power, history, and memory/counter-memory.

Keywords: *Monument, monster, representation, memory, counter-memory*

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Hope is a memory that desires.
—Balzac

What could Balzac, the great novelist of the nineteenth century, have meant when he said that "hope is a memory that desires"? Interestingly, both Roland Barthes and David Harvey, who wrote at different times on very different subjects, refer to the above quote by Balzac in order to emphasize a distinct critical attitude to the present. Barthes' concept of the pleasure of writing feeds on *a memory that desires*, because for him an influential piece of writing is nothing but an unfinished or lost one, since one could not have written it herself/himself, and one always needs to re-write, thus re-find it. Writing is a desire to re-write, says Barthes.[1] In a very different vein, David Harvey quotes Balzac to argue that we need a "space of hope" that is nourished by memories, but only activated by a certain desire to change the present.[2] Despite the differences of their subject-matter, both authors share the concern of seeking hope in the desire to change the incomplete or destroyed present. The present can neither be taken as a fixed point of arrival from the past, nor merely as a point of transition to the future. Walter Benjamin had already pointed to the potential of memory for changing the content of the *present* in connection to the past and argued that "what science has 'determined' remembrance can modify. Such remembrance [*Eingedenken*] can complete what is incomplete (happiness) and make incomplete what is complete (suffering)."[3] The desire to re-write or re-build a space of hope runs against the dominant power imperative in our societies to celebrate and consume the *present*, as if it were a wrapped-up commodity with a capacity to deliver us smoothly to the future.

Monuments, as typical landmarks of "modern national society" have been part of this power imperative. Monuments have been erected with a claim to embody the will to remember; yet, paradoxically, they have mostly served to reify the present as a fulfilled moment of arrival, canceling the need to re-find and remember the past in the present. In other words, they contribute to the closure of the past as a dead body. As Harvey has noted, "the authorities want to corral memory into a monument; they wish to memorialize and monumentalize in some way or other.

1 Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 132.

2 Stephen Pender, "An Interview with David Harvey," *Studies in Social Justice* 1, no. 1 (2007): 21.

3 Walter Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 471.

They don't want it to be alive, they want it to be dead."[4] However, monuments do not just kill memory, they also forge a regime of memory and desire that serves power. The monumental seduction, for Foucault, represents "the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us."[5] The monuments are dead but alive, or "undead" like vampires, seducing people to play a lethal game with power. "The monument is essentially repressive. It is the seat of an institution (the church, the state, the university). Any space that is organized around the monument is colonized and oppressed. The great monuments have been raised to glorify conquerors and the powerful."[6] They usually ask for more blood for keeping alive the spirit of the imagined community, which they claim to represent.

I argue in this article that monuments lead a life of their own in between life and death. One needs to question their "life" and the desire that derives from that within the frame of power in both its productive and destructive capacities. I take up the issue of monuments in Turkey in that interstice between life and death—or in other words, in their "monstrosity." The depiction of monstrosity with regard to monuments in Turkey not only resonates with the terms of a current public debate on monuments, which I will elaborate on later in the article, but also invites a new discussion on memory/counter-memory. The term "monster" points to unacceptable forms of life, cast aside as "abnormal," and can be of use in tracing how certain memories are crushed or abandoned and become aberrant. I contend that remembering cannot be understood as a process of invoking the past in its entirety; instead, it should be studied through its destruction, hence through the fragmented traces in the present. This is important not just to introduce plurality into the field of memories, but also to notice the workings of both constructive and destructive dynamics of power in the process. As Andreas Huyssen has argued, "[t]he clashing and ever more fragmented memory politics of specific social and ethnic groups raises the question whether forms of collective consensual memory are even still possible today, and, if not, whether and in what form social and cultural cohesion can be guaranteed without them."[7] If the consensual memory that monuments "nor-

4 Pender, "An Interview with David Harvey," 21.

5 Michel Foucault, "Preface," in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), xiii.

6 Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno, foreword by Neil Smith (Mineapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 21.

7 Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 17.

mally" assume is so problematic today in contested and fractured political histories of nation-states such as Turkey, the "monstrous" may reveal the counter-memories of destruction against the oppressing imperative of official history.

In order to discuss monstrosity, power and memory, I will focus on a particular monument in Tophane, the Workers' Monument, which has been subjected to destructions ever since the time it was put in place in 1973 and which still stands in the same place as a crippled and unidentifiable body. I will argue that the story of the destruction of the Workers' Monument cannot be read independently of the performative command of the state, best observed in erecting Atatürk monuments all over the country as visual embodiments of power and furthermore securing and protecting them against destruction by the force of law.

Visits to Tophane in search of the culprits of violence and destruction

The fragments of memory can be found in particular sites. Yet, the relationship of memory to locality is highly complex. If, as Arjun Appadurai has reminded, locality is always a historical context that is relational and contextual and does not directly refer to the site *per se*, then one has to *produce* the locality. I find Appadurai's emphasis on the production of locality especially insightful: The "task of producing locality (as a structure of feeling, a property of social life and an ideology of situated community) is increasingly a struggle."[8] Then the researcher also shares a responsibility within that struggle, which would mean that she has to re-visit the locality several times, each visit with a different scale in mind, yet each embracing the same persistent question about the forces of production and destruction. This could be a way for tracing the historical and social palimpsest of memories. Therefore, I suggest to take the reader to several visits to Tophane, to the site of the Workers' Monument, in order to contextualize the process of its destruction and to trace the monstrous memories it may embody.

At this point, I should note that Tophane is an old district very close to what is considered the cultural center of İstanbul. Tophane has a long history: From a dock area in the Ottoman times, over an early example of a "free industrial zone" in the first years of the Turkish Republic with an automobile assembly factory of the Ford Motor Company,[9] to forced changes in its ethnic make-up through displacements and migrations,

8 Arjun Appadurai, "The Production of Locality," in *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed. Richard Fardon (London: Routledge, 1995), 213.

9 Researched and analyzed in Aslı Odman's continuing PhD thesis, The Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, Boğaziçi University.

it is now an area of art venues, including the İstanbul Modern Art Museum. The dock warehouses (*antrepo*) on the shore of Tophane are silent witnesses to these changes. They once hosted maritime trade, then an industrial complex, now contemporary art and international cultural events, such as the İstanbul Biennial. The social impact of the not yet realized and highly debated Galataport project in the same region, which is envisaged to extend over an area of 100,000 square meters and to contain a series of luxury hotels, restaurants and shops around a port for international cruise ships, is yet to be seen. In this process, we see an intermingling of capitalist and nationalist impetuses that could be interpreted simultaneously on the local, national and global scales. For example, Pelin Tan's comments are interesting in that they show how the recent changes in Tophane are informed by larger-scale dynamics; she has diagnosed the change in the "locality" through her own observations interpreted in the light of a critique of neo-liberalism: "The change began when the 'rather ordinary' little house of the *muhtar* [municipal officer responsible for and elected by the neighborhood] was converted into an Ottoman-style wooden house. The whole process was finalized within a few weeks. The structure is now shining in the middle of the Tophane Park, fulfilling the desire for the revitalization of 'pure' Turkish identity."[10] Yet, as Tan has noted, this re-invention of an Ottoman neighborhood amidst the gentrification of the area "would naturally be experienced as completely asynchronous by residents" of Tophane.[11]

The existing population of Tophane at the moment mostly consists of migrants with Arabic origin from Eastern parts of Turkey, who practically replaced the non-Muslim minorities—Armenians, Greeks, and Jews—who were forced out of İstanbul through hostile nationalist campaigns culminating in the violent events of September 6-7, 1955.[12] There are also Kurdish and Roma people living as minorities in the district; they are subject to discrimination by the majority of the residents in the locality. Therefore, the majority of "the people" in Tophane are already complicit with the hegemonic practices and discourses of the state; furthermore, they are known to have "strong" ties with extreme

10 Pelin Tan, "The Closing in of an İstanbul Neighbourhood," in *Sarai Reader 07: Frontiers*, eds. Monica Narula, et al. (Delhi: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2007), 487.

11 Ibid., 487.

12 For a historical account of these incidents, see Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006). For an article that interprets the attacks against the exhibition titled "Incidents of September 6-7 on their Fiftieth Anniversary" at *Karşı Sanat Çalışmaları*, İstanbul, 2005, see also Balca Ergener, "On the Exhibition 'Incidents of September 6-7 on their Fiftieth Anniversary' and the Attack on the Exhibition," *Red Thread*, no. 1 (2009), http://www.red-thread.org/en/article.asp?a=25.

right-wing parties, such as the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (MHP, Nationalist Movement Party) and the *Büyük Birlik Partisi* (BBP, Great Unity Party), as well as with the pro-Islamic *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP, Justice and Development Party) in power and the municipality represented by the AKP in İstanbul, through the existence of political and religious organizations in the district. Yet, "the people" in Tophane also constitute a social group that is underprivileged and highly vulnerable in the face of the recent transformations. As I have noted above, Tophane is undergoing a rapid process of change, renovation, and re-building—the newly founded art galleries being one of its apparent symptoms. The recent and proposed transformations in line with the gentrification process in İstanbul threaten most members of the existing population in Tophane with displacement.

My first visit to Tophane, the site to which we will return at different moments in the article, is motivated by a recent incident. On September 21, 2010, when five newly founded, neighboring art galleries in Tophane jointly organized a *Tophane Artwalk* (a name advertised in English) for a simultaneous opening of art shows in the galleries, there was a violent assault against a group of people who came to the openings. A group of men, allegedly from the neighborhood, armed with iron sticks and pepper gas, fiercely attacked the men and women who were enjoying their drinks and chatting with each other in front of the galleries. Several persons were severely wounded, while others fled in horror. The incident triggered a major debate in Turkish cultural and political circles. While the police was obviously indifferent to the assault and no serious legal action was taken against the aggressors—in other words, the incident was apparently hushed by the authorities[13]—there was a heated debate among various intellectuals, and they were highly divided in their reactions.[14] It was as if all that was at stake were interpreting

13 The artists and gallery owners made a declaration after the event, claiming that this was a pre-planned and organized attack and not just a spontaneous fight with the local residents and insisted that the perpetrators be found. They also pointed out the passivity of the police during the attacks. Seven persons were taken in custody after the incident, but were soon released. The İstanbul Governor Hüseyin Avni Mutlu, on the other hand, attempted to present the incident in his press release as a simple feud between the local residents and the art crowd, due to the latter blocking the pavements during the so-called *Artwalk* ("Saldırıya Uğrayan Sanatçılar: Organize İşler," *Radikal Online*, September 22, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1020231&Date=22.09.2010&CategoryID=77). The Tophane news website, which claims to be the voice of the neighborhood, had a very aggressive tone against the galleries and their crowd, accusing them of introducing moral deterioration to the neighborhood (Tophane Haber, www.tophanehaber.com).

14 The incident immediately triggered various reactions from intellectuals, and there were heated debates in the media. For a comprehensive and critical evaluation of these debates, see Tuncay Birkan, "Tophane Saldırısı Sonrası: Mutenalaştırma 'Tahlilleri'," *Birikim Güncel* (2010), http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=667&makale=Tophane%20Sald%FDr%FDs%FD%20Sonras%FD:%20

the possible motives of the locals leading to the aggression, but not finding and penalizing the actual aggressors.[15] The Islamist and conservative intellectuals argued that the reaction of "the people" from the district of Tophane against the art audience was of a moral and religious nature, since those artsy fellows were drinking and enjoying themselves out in the street and especially since most women were dressed in miniskirts and outfits with low cuts, going against the religious and moral sensitivities of the locals.[16] Many left-leaning intellectuals, on the other hand, thought that this was a necessary, even revolutionary reaction of "the people" against the gentrification of the district, aided by the upper-class world of art galleries, the gentrification which displaces or impoverishes the lower strata;[17] other, still leftist, but so-called secularist or *laique* intellectuals claimed that the conservative "people" of Tophane were to be blamed, since they had no taste for art and no tolerance for secularism, multi-culturalism, and modern life-styles.[18]

Although it is not possible to go into the details of the incident and all the different positions in its aftermath, I find the debate highly significant for revealing how "the people" in the district were taken as a whole and ascribed certain qualities, either negative or positive, without much need for further specific inquiry. This reminds one of Yael Navaro-Yashin's analysis of the discourse of "civil society" imagined as the site of "the culture of the people" after the 1980s in Turkey, producing a reified

Mutenala%FEt%FDrma%20%22Tahlilleri%22; Süreyyya Evren, "Tophane Saldırısının Ardından Belirlenen Resmi Açıklamanın Bir Reddi," *Birikim Güncel* (2010), http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=669&makale=Tophane%20Sald%FDr%FDs%FD%20Ard%FDndan%20Belirlenen%20Resmi%20A%E7%FDklaman%FDn%20Bir%20Reddi.

15 Tuncay Birkan made the very important point that the "analyses" immediately after the incident, especially from the "left camp" which saw this incident as a reaction of the local residents to the capitalist gentrification in the district, instead of inquiring about the specifics of a possible organized fascist attack (which had its antecedents in the district), could be read as a symptom of the anti-intellectualism and self-hatred of the leftists. Birkan, "Tophane Saldırısı Sonrası."

16 "Drinking" and "mini-skirts" were repeated themes that surfaced in several news items about the incident. Yasin Aktay has provided a wider context, arguing that the new "life-styles" that are being imported to the district go against the "family life" established in this "neighborhood": Yasin Aktay, "Tophane'de 'Mahalleye Baskı'," *Yeni Şafak*, September 25, 2010, http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/?t=25.09.2010&y=YasinAktay.

17 The most extreme interpretation in this vein came from Ferhat Kentel who has argued that the attack against the galleries in Tophane had a class base, which opposed the intruding gentrification and alienating capitalist relations into the locality; therefore, one should consider this reaction as an attempt of "protection" or even "resistance" by the locals: Ferhat Kentel, "Ferhat Kentel ile Tophane Olayı Üzerine," *marksist.org* (2010), http://www.marksist.org/dosyalar/2076-ferhat-kentel-ile-tophane-olayi-uzerine.

18 The novelist Ahmet Ümit has best exemplified this attitude in an interview, calling the attack a "barbarism" that goes against the spirit of İstanbul, against modernization, against art, against multi-culturalism and tolerance: "Çarpıcı Tophane Açıklaması," *Hürriyet*, October 2, 2010, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kultur-sanat/haber/15921290.asp.

construction of "the people." Her research has revealed how this construction has been enabled by Islamist politics through a discourse of society against the secularist elites and the state, and how it was soon adopted by the so-called secularist elites evoking a similar construct in a competing way.[19] I would furthermore argue that the way in which "the people" have been instrumentalized in the above discussion is symptomatic of a certain crisis of representation: while the locals do not have many opportunities to vocalize their problems and demands, let alone their memories of the transformations in the district, their motivations are over-interpreted according to differing political ideologies.

I contend that neither theories of gentrification, nor easy assumptions about either the conservatism or the resistance of "the people" of Tophane can be explanatory on their own. Although there is a misleading *myth* of a unified neighborhood, as has been critically noted by the social geographer Jean-François Pérouse,[20] the district is quite heterogeneous in terms of its population and has a long, layered and complex history, with which one has to engage before generating any interpretation of the recent attacks against the art galleries. But my aim here is not to add yet another interpretation to the existing ones regarding the above incident. Instead, I would like to make a detour, tracing the story of a forlorn object—the broken Workers' Monument—in the same district, not very far from the site of the incident, in order to problematize the *representations* of the "locality" and "the people" that are produced today, so as to reflect on what remains *unrepresentable* within the complex history—in other words, to reflect on the problem of power, history, and memory/counter-memory.

The invisibility and visibility of the Workers' Monument

Years ago, when I was a politically active university student at the end of the 1970s, it was of great concern to us leftists that the Workers' Monument in Tophane had been attacked by fascists, a term that we used for those organized groups that were extremely violent against leftist organizations and people and seemingly against anything that represented socialism, such as the statue of a worker holding a sledgehammer.[21] I must say that we did not really know much about the history of the

19 Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

20 Unpublished round table discussion on the Tophane incident, organized by *Red Thread* e-journal, Depo, 4 December 2010. See also Jean-Francois Pérouse, *İstanbul'la Yüzleşme Denemeleri: Çeperler, Hareketlilik ve Kentsel Bellek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011).

21 The photograph of the original statue taken before its destruction represents a particular monumental style resembling the Soviet workers cult in the 1930s.

monument, why and by whom it was built, but we took it as a symbol of our socialist struggle. And we grieved its destruction in that framework, without actually knowing who, and with what motives, was responsible for its destruction. That was before the 1980 military coup, an important rupture in the social, political, and economic history of Turkey.[22] Much later, in the 2000s, whenever I mentioned the broken Workers' Monument in my social memory course in the Department of Sociology at Boğaziçi University, as a memory trace that keeps returning to me, none of my students were aware of its existence. Then, I also began to have doubts whether it still existed, or even whether it had existed at all. Although it is placed right at the center of the Tophane Park facing a very busy central avenue and although one passes the park quite frequently, the broken monument had apparently grown invisible over time. I always thought I should look for it, but then, whenever passing by, always forgot to check if it was there. It was as if one avoided such a sight, as something disturbing, something alien, yet so much imbued with the memories of a past time.

The Austrian novelist Robert Musil has written that "there is nothing as invisible in the world as a monument."[23] Here Musil is referring to a pacifying closure brought by the monumental. However, in the case of the broken Workers' Monument, the monument became invisible not because of a closure, but because of an open wound, which, when "normalized," can also be pacifying for a different reason. When discussing the selectivity of remembering as always informed by the present context, Freud has argued that forgetting shields against unwanted and shocking registers of memories. In Turkey, the memories of the 1980 military coup and the political struggles that were crushed by its violence are still far from having been worked through, and the traumas still have debilitating effects on society. Yet, I should add that the present is never perfectly closed in a traumatic case, as the present also bears the potential to unexpectedly bring back unwanted memories as the return of the repressed.

The Workers' Monument did return indeed. I will now dwell on how the broken monument has just recently become visible once again. Two incidents had an impact.

22 The military coup in 1980 was one of the most significant events in Turkey's history and has set a harsh rupture point, leading to radical changes in the texture of society under the surveillance of a violent military dictatorship. Political organizations and parties were banned; thousands of people were arrested, tortured and killed; many went into exile; many disappeared. At the same time, the economy was liberalized, prioritizing the market as the new motor and mirror of society and producing new discourses about desirable ways of life. See Nurdan Gürbilek, *The New Cultural Climate of Turkey: Living in a Shop Window* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

23 Cited in Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 32.

Muzaffer Ertoran, "İşçi," 1973. Designed as a postcard for "7th Man" performance realized by *Hafriyat, Yeni Sinemacılar, HaZaVuZu*, İstanbul, 2010.

First, on the night of March 15, 2010, the artist collective *Hafriyat*[24] organized an art event that aimed to secretly "steal" the Workers' Monument, just to create awareness about its presence and to make the monument visible. The artist group said that,

> in this project, which may be regarded as a "memoir-memory" initiative aiming to raise awareness of collective memories, *Hafriyat* group builds its approach upon a temporary displacement of the *Worker* statue in collaboration with the Yeni Sinemacılar and HaZaVuZu

24 *Hafriyat*, meaning "excavation" in Turkish, is the name of a group of artists who defend autonomous principles in art production. They refuse to engage in conventional art practices and instead emphasize collective work that deals with the excavation of cultures and memories in the modern city for creating new spaces of life. They opened their own venue in Karaköy in 2007, which hosted many politically spectacular exhibitions before closing down in 2010.

art groups. The project derives from the discreet removal of the statue and the recording and documentation of responses from the public and state institutions, as well as all forms of related publications, news, documents and information. And of course, in this open-ended project, the invisibility of the *Worker* statue is used to make the issue visible in all its contexts.[25]

However, while the project was being executed and recorded at the same time that night, "the people" of Tophane, as it was reported in the media,[26] noticing that there was some activity around the monument, stopped the artists and claimed back their broken monument. This is a very interesting claim that I will discuss below. Nevertheless, albeit a "failure," the art event enjoyed media coverage, bringing back to us the image of the broken monument.[27]

The second incident that contributed to the visibility of the Workers' Monument is more recent and has also introduced the term "monster" in relation to monuments. In January of 2011, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Tayyip Erdoğan, visited Kars, a city on the Turkish-Armenian border, and when he saw the tallest "civil" monument of Turkey (approximately 30 meters high), the Humanity Monument, under construction there, he called it *ucube*, literally meaning "monster." The monument, sponsored by the previous mayor of Kars,[28] is designed by the sculptor Mehmet Aksoy,[29] with the declared purpose of sending messages of

25 Murat Akagündüz, "Statue of a Worker: Seventh Man," in *Tactics of Invisibility*, eds. Gudrun Ankele, Emre Baykal, and Daniela Zyman (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung, 2011), 177.

26 Many newspapers covered the art event, publishing the image of the broken monument and making statements such as "The art event failed. The *Hafriyat* group planned a good 'action' in order to attract attention to forgotten and destroyed statues. The worker statue in Tophane was going to be stolen one night. However, it turned out that the residents somehow wanted to lay a claim to their statue": "Sanat Aksiyonu Akim Kaldı," *Radikal*, March 24, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalHaberDetayV3&Date=24.03.2010&ArticleID=987344. See also Banu Güven, "İşçi Heykelinin Çilesi," *Radikal*, April 3, 2010, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&Date=3.4.2010&ArticleID=989572&CategoryID=41.

27 *Hafriyat*'s video work, which tells of the process of the art event and which is named *Seventh Man* (after John Berger and Jean Mohr's book John Berger and Jean Mohr, *A Seventh Man* [London: Writers & Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1982]) was shown as part of the art exhibition *Tactics of Invisibility*, co-curated by Emre Baykal and Daniela Zyman, in Vienna, Berlin and İstanbul in 2010-2011. Although the art video *Seventh Man* aims to reveal and discuss the issues around the Workers' Monument, it does not really reflect on the "reaction" of "the people" in Tophane during the art event.

28 The previous mayor, Naif Alibeyoğlu, was a member of the AKP, but due to conflicts with the party resigned in 2008 and transferred to the opposition party, the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP, Republican People's Party).

29 Mehmet Aksoy is an established sculptor in Turkey, also known for the controversies around his artwork. His statue *Periler Ülkesi*, which was placed in the Altınpark in Ankara, was removed in 1994 by decision of the Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek of the AKP, with insulting words such as "I spit on such art." Aksoy took the case to court and won, after which the statue was re-erected in the same spot.

friendship to the Armenians across the border. Actually, it is so tall that it can be seen from Armenia, the artist has claimed.[30] However, the Prime Minister was quite straightforward in disclosing his dislike and consequently advising that the "monster" be demolished.[31] The term "monster" quickly circulated in different circles and triggered yet another debate on the question of monuments in Turkey.[32] Interestingly, soon thereafter, the term "monster" was associated with the Workers' Monument in Tophane. In the media there were articles arguing that in Turkey most statues and monuments suffer from vandalism, carried out either by the people or by the state itself, and that the Workers' Monument in Tophane should be remembered as a typical example.[33] In fact, these articles pointed to the broken Workers' Monument as a "monster." Now, so many years after its construction and the long process of its destruction, the media has urged the public to take notice of the tragic story of the "monster" in Tophane.

How did this monument turn into a monster, and what does it signify? How does it relate to other monuments that have turned into mon-

See Mehmet Aksoy's book of interviews: Aydın Engin, *Heykel Oburu: Mehmet Aksoy Kitabı* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009).

30 The former mayor of Kars wanted a monument that could be seen from Armenia. The sculptor Mehmet Aksoy emphasized in his interviews with national and international media that this monument symbolizes peace and not enmity, as do monuments of genocide. He criticized Erdoğan's insulting words and insisted that he had a contract with the municipality; therefore, the monument could not be demolished. He also filed a lawsuit to cancel the decision. The issue raised a big debate in society. Many people signed petitions against the decision. A public meeting was held in the Beşiktaş Akatlar Kültür Merkezi to discuss the issue of the "monster statue," and the painter Bedri Baykam, who was publicly speaking against the demolition of the monument, was stabbed by an audience member as he walked to his car after the meeting. Later, a group of intellectuals and artists went to Kars to protest the decision to demolish the sculpture ("İnsanlık Anıtı İçin Toplandılar," *Cumhuriyet*, April 23, 2011, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=236894).

31 After Erdoğan's declaration, there were also debates within the government, and while the Minister of Foreign Affairs supported the Prime Minister's verdict, the Minister of Culture attempted to give another interpretation, according to which the word "monster" had not been used for the statue, but for the neighboring shantytowns; he also suggested that the monument would not be demolished. However, Prime Minister Erdoğan affirmed that he had used the word "monster" for the monument, re-emphasizing that it was very ugly and that such an artwork could not be accepted to stand so close to the old Islamic monuments of Kars, such as the Seyyid Hasan al-Harakani Shrine and Mosque (Enis Berberoğlu, "Başbakan 'Ucube'de Israrlı?," *DHA*, January 13, 2011, http://www.dha.com.tr/haberdetay.asp?tarih=24.09.2011&Newsid=135380&Categoryid=3).

32 Oğuz Erten, "Türkiye Heykellerinin Bahtsız Tarihi," *Radikal*, January 12, 2011, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetayV3&Date=12.1.2011&ArticleID=1036106&CategoryID=41; Emre Aköz, "Ucube Heykellerle Dolu Bu Memleket," *Sabah*, January 14, 2011, http://www.sabah.com.tr/Yazarlar/akoz/2011/01/14/ucube_heykellerle_dolu_bu_memleket; Yılmaz Ergüvenç, "Heykel Alerjisi," kenthaber, http://www.kenthaber.com/Haber/Genel/Kose/yilmaz-erguvenc/heykel-alerjisi-/e2e30e87-3dc5-4cbf-b5b8-0531cbefedea.

33 Kanat Atkaya, "Tophane'deki Ucube ve Kader Ortakları," *Hürriyet*, January 11, 2011, http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=16731818&yazarid=25; Erdal Ceyhan, "Heykeller Ucubedir, İçine Tükürülür, Yıkılır," in Milliyet Blog (2011), http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/Heykeller_ucubedir__icine_tukurulur_ve_yikilir/Blog/?BlogNo=284155.

The broken Workers' Monument, Tophane, 2011. Photo: Balca Ergener.

sters? And specifically what does it say about "the people" of Tophane, as suspects of many violent incidents including the recent attack against the art galleries, when they claim back the monster as their own monument? This seems to be a curious case, and at the same time a horror story.

Monsters, monuments, and power

Georges Canguilheim has argued that "what is contrary to life is not death but monstrosity"; according to him, "monstrosity is the inability to recognize a living being as living."[34] Similarly, the French philosopher Pierre Ancet has claimed that, although it is a liminal concept like death, monstrosity is different from death. Death imposes a necessary external limit, while the monster threatens from the inside. Thus, Ancet has de-

34 Cited in Pierre Ancet, *Ucube Bedenlerin Fenomenolojisi*, trans. Ersel Topraktepe (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 18.

fined monstrosity as a *problematic field of humanity*, rather than simply being the form of the Other.[35] It cannot be simply defined as an "alterity" that is projected away from the self; instead, monsters evoke a painful interrogation about both the Other and the Self.[36]

The meaning of the monster in popular usage is not independent from its disturbing connotations. Ancet has cited Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire who as a zoologist in the nineteenth century specialized in the classification of anomalies and deviances from the "normal" structure in living beings. He created the concept of "teratology" (the science of monsters) and claimed that, "for the people, the monster is something whose appearance always leads to astonishment and that always disturbs."[37] Ancet has furthermore argued that the mentioned disturbance implies that the subject who looks and classifies the anomaly is rather central to the definition of the monster: the monster does not exist apart from the very judgment of difference. In Braidotti's words, "the monstrous other is both liminal and structurally central to our perception of *normal* human subjectivity."[38]

The critical discourse on monsters emphasizes the *normativity* that weighs on the labeling of a living being as a monster, as a way of refusing to recognize another form of being, which seems alien yet threateningly familiar. The monsters have an excess that makes them both too visible, yet at the same time invisible: "Just as too much light creates a blind spot at the center of the field of vision, the excess that characterizes monstrosity could lead to an invisibility *behind* the visible."[39] Therefore, has argued Ancet, the monster does not refer to a particular object, but to a highly subjective experience. It tells us more about the subject than about the object. Similarly, Margrit Shildrick has noted that "the monsters that engage us most, that command intricate explanation, are those which are closest to us, those which display some aspect of our own form, and speak both literally and metaphorically, a human language."[40]

Until now we have referred to organic "monsters" that are born from a human being, but cannot be accepted as human. In fact, the first denigrating utterance of the word *ucube* by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan

35 Ibid., 21.

36 Ibid., 2.

37 Ibid., 24.

38 Rosi Braidotti, "Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubts: On Teratology and Embodied Differences," in *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*, eds. Nina Lykke and Rosi Braidotti (London: Zed Press, 1996), 144, emphasis mine.

39 Ancet, *Ucube Bedenlerin Fenomenolojisi*, 31.

40 Margrit Shildrick, "This Body Which Is Not One: Dealing with Differences," *Body & Society* 5, no. 2-3 (1999): 81.

was back in 2008, in order to characterize the Roma neighborhood in Sulukule, İstanbul, as a monster, before he used the same word again for the Humanity Monument in Kars in 2011. The Prime Minister was then reported to say: "We will get rid of the monster," pointing to the existing conditions of life of the Roma people in the Sulukule district. These words are significant in that they reveal how racist discrimination turns the local people who have been living in Sulukule for about a millennium into monstrous objects that should be discarded during the "contemporary" transformation of the city.[41] But what happens when the term "monster" is used for a monument, an artifact—that is, not for a living being? It is noteworthy that the boundaries between the living and the non-living are blurred here. This is exactly how Ancet has utilized the concept of the "fantastic" in relation to organic monsters. He has argued that in the perception of a monster, there is confusion with regard to categorization in terms of differentiating "human art" from the "natural." The natural is mostly likened to an artifact, as if it was artificially created by human art. The monster as a living being, such as the Roma people in the above example, is turned into an object and not regarded as human. Ancet has named it a *"natural-artifice."*[42] However, in the case of monuments, I contend that it must be just the opposite. The same failure of categorization holds, but this time the monument is treated as a living being, and not as a product of human art. Could we call this *artificial-natural?*

In a short story about the Workers' Monument in Tophane, probably written in the late 1970s,[43] the author Refik Yoksulabakan has narrated the destruction of the monument in such a way as to evoke the *artificial-natural.* The story constructs a fantasy of revenge, in which first the broken hands (holding the sledgehammer) of the Workers' Monument and then the entire destroyed body walk away from its place to haunt the

41 In the opening ceremony of the Akaretler Sıraevleri in Beşiktaş, İstanbul, a series of historical buildings which constitutes one of the first examples of community housing in the Ottoman Empire and which have been recently renovated to be turned into luxury shops and hotels, Prime Minister Erdoğan gave a speech about the importance of the ongoing transformation in the city. During his speech he also mentioned Sulukule, characterizing its present condition as a monster and emphasizing the need for its transformation by getting rid of that monster: "Erdoğan: Sulukule'yi Ucube Halden Kurtaracağız," ntvmsnbc, http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/439760.asp. The Sulukule project was implemented in the following years, by demolishing the area's historical buildings that were in bad condition and aiming to build new apartment buildings, as well as the first six-star hotel of İstanbul in their place. In this process of so-called renovation, not only the archeologically very rich and historical district of Sulukule near the ancient city walls is being destroyed, but also the Roma people, who have been living there for about a millennium and who, with their distinct culture and music, are forced to leave.

42 Ancet, *Ucube Bedenlerin Fenomenolojisi*, 97.

43 I found the story on the web; its publication date is not mentioned, but the story seems to belong to the 1970s in terms of its symbolism of the worker: Refik Yoksulabakan, "İşçinin Elleri," e-kutuphane.egitimsen.org.tr/pdf/1131.pdf.

"monument-breakers" (*anıtkıranlar*), as the author calls them, and claim the workers' rights back in a nightmarish setting. The blood dripping from the monument as it walks away implies that this is not just a work of art, but also a living body. And is it not this conception of the *artificial-natural* that has played a role in the destruction of monuments, as we have witnessed in many parts of the world, especially during the collapse of the former "communist" regimes?[44] The surviving monuments now live as monsters in the memory parks of many cities.[45] Svetlena Boym has noted that

> the violence against monuments at the end of the Soviet Union paradoxically revealed that the art of monumental propaganda, dreamed up by Lenin in the first years of the revolution, clearly had succeeded in one thing: *blurring the relationship between actual agents of power and their monumental incarnations.* If the perpetrators of the crimes were never punished, at least their monuments would be.[46]

Boym has regarded that the monuments were symbols of power and as such became scapegoats onto which anxieties and anger were projected:

> Symbolic violence gives instant gratification—the intoxication of revenge; yet there was more to that monumental catharsis. This was the only collective attempt on the part of the Soviet citizens to change the official public sphere without intervention from above, by using direct action, not private irony, jokes or doublespeak.[47]

Boym is right to point to the symbolic incarnations of power in monuments and interpreting their destruction by the people as a way of re-claiming the public sphere. Yet, there is another crucial dimension about power here. I would say, in the light of the above reflection on the concept of the monster, that monuments are not just *symbols* of power. Although their meanings are produced within a regime of representation, they also function beyond and above representation. They com-

44 Among the stories of destruction of monuments in the world, the blasting of two ancient Buddha statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, by the Taliban in March of 2001, with the aim of erasing the remains of non-Muslim culture, was a case that attracted great attention in Turkey.

45 Svetlena Boym has written about the statue park in Moscow: *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001). I personally visited the statue park in Budapest, which brings together statues and monuments from different eras of the country's past; what unites them in the same space seems to be that they are no longer wanted in the city center.

46 Ibid., 89, emphasis mine.

47 Ibid., 89.

memorate the memorable and embody the *myths of beginnings*, as Arthur Danto has said.[48] They are there to immortalize a mythical memory that constructs an imagined community through an intricate play with life and death, and by blurring this boundary. Monuments deny death by giving life to the dead, but they also deny life since they are nothing but stones. Monuments petrify life in a way that buries the living, according to Nietzsche's disdainful remarks against the monumental.[49] In that sense, they are the *artificial-natural* or, in other words, always already non-organic monsters.

Reflecting on the always already monstrous character of monuments, I do not suggest discarding the question of monuments altogether. On the contrary, the ongoing political debates in different parts of the world regarding how monuments should be built reveal a lot about the relationship between power and memory. I would say what is at stake in these debates, such as in the controversial cases of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC,[50] the Berlin Holocaust Memorial,[51] the *Parque*

48 Arthur C. Danto, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *The Nation*, August 31, 1985, 152.

49 Foucault has embraced Nietzsche's concept of genealogy to criticize the power discourse of monumental history and to evoke a different conception of historical knowledge and counter-memory: "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

50 The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, designed by the young Chinese-American artist Maya Ying Lin, stirred a great debate right after its completion in 1982. The black color and the V-shaped, horizontal design of the memorial were heavily criticized, and the artist was accused of not really understanding the conventions of patriotic commemoration due to her marginal position as Chinese-American woman. According to Maria Sturken, this memorial "functions in opposition to the codes of remembrance evidenced on the Washington Mall. Virtually all the national memorials and monuments in Washington are made of white stone and constructed to be seen from a distance. In contrast, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial cuts into the sloping earth: it is not visible until one is almost upon it; if approached from behind, it seems to disappear into the landscape. Although the polished black granite wall of the memorial reflect the Washington Monument and face the Lincoln Memorial, they are not visible from the base of either structure. The black stone creates a reflective surface, one that echoes the reflecting pool of the Lincoln Memorial, and allows the viewers to participate in the memorial; seeing their own image reflected in the names, they are implicated in the listing of the dead. The etched surface of the memorial has a tactile quality, and viewers are compelled to touch the names and make rubbings of them": "The Wall, the Screen and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," in *Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 1998), 164.

51 The Berlin Holocaust Memorial was designed by the US architect Peter Eisenman and opened to the public in 2005. It consists of 2,711 massive rectangular stones on a sloping stretch of land (19,000 m²) between East and West Berlin. There are no plaques or inscriptions, or religious symbols at this memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe. Each stone is unique in its size and resembles a tombstone or a coffin. The designer aimed to re-create the sense of loss and disorientation that the Jews felt during the Holocaust, as one walks in a labyrinth of pathways between the massive stones. Although the meaning of the memorial is produced interactively with the visitors, the stones are coated by a special solution that protects them against graffiti. The memorial was controversial from the start, and the controversy continued after the opening. There have been many critics who found the memorial too abstract and criticized it for not providing historical information about the Holocaust.

de la Memoria in Buenos Aires,[52] or regarding the various examples of counter-monuments in Germany,[53] is exactly about how the monument relates to the dead and the living. All these controversial cases have raised debates about how the commemoration of the dead should find life in the present. Will the monument replicate the general patriarchal canons embodied in the state and reproduce *the* memory as an eternal dead body, or will it open a space for expressing the differences and various temporalities of lived experiences? Will the monument fix the present as it is and create complacency, or will it convey a sense of *elsewhere*?[54] These are critical political questions that lie at the heart of how to remember.

52 The *Parque de la Memoria* is Argentina's first state-funded monument dedicated to the estimated 30,000 *desaparecidos* ("disappeared") who were victims of state terrorism in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. The park's web site describes the memorial as "a gash, an open wound in a grassy hill." The park covers about 14 ha and is located along the Rio de la Plata, a river into which hundreds of victims of the military junta were thrown from planes. The decision to construct a memory park was made in 1998, and new artworks are being added to the park to this day. There are different sculptures and monuments within the park, including the Monument to the Victims of State Terror, which bears walls on which the name plaques of the disappeared are continuously added as the documentation of the state terror expands. Huyssen has said that the project of the memory park has become contentious even among the opponents of the regime who worry that the park project may become just "another figure for forgetting" and that "it may take away from the active political struggle still being waged by the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo" (Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 100). Yet, Huyssen has emphasized the creativity of the project in the way in which it references other legacies in the world: "We are remembering students and workers, women and men, ordinary people who had a social vision at odds with that of the ruling elites, the church, and the military, a vision shared by many young people across the globe at that time, but that led to imprisonment, torture, rape, and death only in a few countries of the world. Thus the memory park in Buenos Aires is more than a national monument. It is also part of the global legacy of 1968, together with the mass shooting of students in Mexico City and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, perhaps its darkest and most tragic part" (ibid., 104-105).

53 James Young has discussed very interesting artworks designed by German artists and sculptors such as Jochen and Esther Gerz, Norbert Radermacher, and Horst Hoheisel, which deal with the memories of the Holocaust in a way very different from conventional memorials and monuments. Young has pointed to these as counter-monuments because these artists, "instead of searing memory into public consciousness, they fear, conventional memorials seal memory off from awareness altogether. For these artists, such an evasion would be the ultimate abuse of art, whose primary function to their minds is to jar viewers from complacency, to challenge and denaturalize the viewers' assumptions." Among other examples, I find Jochen and Esther Gerz's work especially challenging. They designed what they call the *Gegen-Denkmal* (counter-monument) in Harburg, "a somewhat dingy suburb of Hamburg," populated by a mix of "Turkish guest-workers and blue-collar German families." "Unveiled in 1986, this twelve-meter-high, one-meter-square pillar is made of hollow aluminum, plated with a thin layer of soft, dark lead. A temporary inscription near its base reads—and thereby creates constituencies in—German, French, English, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Turkish: 'We invite the citizens of Harburg, and visitors to the town, to add their names here to ours. In doing so, we commit ourselves to remain vigilant. As more and more names cover this 12 meter tall lead column, it will gradually be lowered into the ground. One day it will have disappeared completely, and the site of the Harburg monument against fascism will be empty. In the end, it is only we ourselves who can rise up against injustice'": *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 30.

54 Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 22.

I would argue that the concept of *artificial-natural* may be illuminating for understanding how the modern state commands or attempts to command memory. Here it is not so much the *ideology* of the state or the *representation* of the state that I am dwelling on, but the *performative command* of the state that is legitimated by and gives legitimacy to disregarding and even destroying the forms of living for the sake of a closure of a dead body of norms—in other words, to petrify the living memory so as to keep the state, as a non-living body, alive. The power embodied by the modern state turns *life* into a political question of government, as is well known from Foucault's analysis of *governmentality* and *bio-power*.[55] The government of life is intricately related to the critical question of dividing people into who must live and who must die, which Foucault explicates with regard to state racism.[56] However, Michel-Rolph Trouillot has reminded that the state cannot be reduced to government:

> ...though linked to a number of apparatuses not all of which may be governmental, the state is not an apparatus but a set of processes... its materiality resides much less in institutions than in the reworking of processes and relations of power so as to create new spaces for the deployment of power.[57]

Then, as Navaro-Yashin has shown in her study of the faces of the state in Turkey,[58] the state is not solely an empirical category;[59] it cannot be recognized *as such*, but only through its effects on society.[60] I would

55 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990); Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Allesandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003).

56 Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*. Achille Mbembe has criticized Foucault for merely focusing on Europe and offered the concept of *necropolitics* to point to the limits of bio-power particularly in the colony where the state of exception reigns. *Necropolitics* is a term to "account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead": "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003).

57 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind," *Current Anthropology* 42, no. 1 (2001): 127.

58 Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*.

59 Navaro-Yashin has said that "instead of looking for the state in tangible social institutions or stately persona, the sites of everyday life, where people attempt to produce meaning for themselves appropriating the political, ought to be studied as a central domain for the production and reproduction of the state": *Faces of the State*, 135.

60 Timothy Mitchell, writing on state effects, has argued that "mundane material practices take on the appearance of an abstract, non-material form": "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *State/Cul-*

furthermore claim that these effects, while on the one hand giving a class-based order to life in the capitalist society by deploying material resources as well as language, knowledge and affects in a particular way, also feed on death. In other words, the state also enacts the capacity (and delegates the capacity) to destroy particular forms of life through social processes either before or beyond the law, thus transforming death into a mystical and mysterious source of life for the continuity of power.[61] Therefore, it is not only the ordinariness of the state that we must take notice of,[62] but also its mysterious *spell*. It must be this spell of death that the state constructs and propagates through various means, including monuments, to which Foucault has referred when mentioning fascism in connection to monumental seduction: loving power and desiring "the very thing that dominates and exploits us."[63] When one embraces the logic of the *performative command* of the state, paradoxically death, even one's own, can become desirable.

Simonetta Falasca Zamponi has analyzed the master narratives of history/memory in Fascist Italy by emphasizing the mythical appropriation of the past as a "sacred" tradition nourished by violence. Mussolini had said: "We must act, move, fight, and if it is necessary die... It is blood that moves history's wheel." Zamponi has commented on these words by arguing that "violence was sacred, and sacred were those who promoted it."[64] In Zamponi's words, "fascism imposed an artificial, auratic tradition that, through recourse to aesthetic politics, and by appealing to history as its cultural legitimator, crushed the modern individual and presented Mussolini's regime as the authentic and true expression of the Italian 'community.'"[65] Although one needs to differentiate between totalitarian and so-called democratic regimes, and even between different

ture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 77. Trouillot has formulated four distinct, yet related state effects: *an isolation effect, an identification effect, a legibility effect* and *a spatialization* effect: "The Anthropology of the State," 126. On the other hand, Fernando Coronil's analysis of the Venezuelan state as "magical" has shown that state effects are always historically constructed, mainly in connection with the regulation of economy and class structure, thus pointing to the necessity of a historical ethnography of power: *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). In this vein, the Marxist critique of capital as the dominance of dead labor over living labor can be related to the dead body of the state.

61 Svetlena Boym has cited Dostoevsky's thought-provoking phrase: "Mystery and authority" should be seen as clues to power: *The Future of Nostalgia*, 99.

62 Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 135.

63 Foucault, "Preface," xiii.

64 Simonetta Falasca Zamponi, "Of Storytellers and Master Narratives: Modernity, Memory, and History in Fascist Italy," in *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 53.

65 Ibid., 68.

cases of fascist rule in modern history, the power of nationalist modern states share some common characteristics in the way in which they appropriate the past in order to create an artificial "aura" of the state which feeds on violence and death to nourish a particular community.[66]

The auratic tradition of Atatürk monuments and the *artificial-natural*

Drawing on the previous section, I argue that the contemporary discussion about Turkey's monuments that turn into monsters cannot be separated from the field of the state practice of erecting Atatürk monuments all over the country since the late 1920s. As Navaro-Yashin has argued, "statues of Atatürk, *though dead stone, have a life* for those who revere them."[67] For Navaro-Yashin, "the Turkish state materializes in peoples' (semi)consciousness in the figure of the person (man) of Atatürk in the objectified form of statue, bust, portrait, or badge."[68] I suggest that one can locate the history of the Workers' Monument in Tophane exactly in this magical and mysterious, yet highly contested terrain.

The building of Atatürk monuments as a way of visualizing and immortalizing the new Turkish state started when Atatürk himself was still alive. Aylin Tekiner in her comprehensive study about Atatürk monuments has considered the construction of an Atatürk cult starting in the late 1920s as a key feature of Turkish nationalism. The image of Atatürk was sacralized and eternalized through various representations, including monuments. Although Atatürk[69] contributed to the building of the cult by attributing to himself certain unique characteristics (which later were replicated in the ideological texts of Kemalism),[70] and although he was in direct contact with the sculptors who created his first monumental representations and although he even made interven-

66 The monopoly of violence that the modern state holds in Weberian terms can also be thought of in this respect. The state uses violence not for reasonable ends, but to assert its opaque truth. As Jean-Luc Nancy has argued, "Violence does not serve a truth: it wants instead to be itself the truth. In place of the established order, about which it wants to know nothing, violence substitutes not another order, but itself (and its own pure disorder). Violence—that is, its blows—is or makes truth": *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 17.

67 Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State*, 198, emphasis mine.

68 Ibid. Esra Özyürek has also discussed Atatürk monuments in relation to the production of state effects: *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 95.

69 By taking the surname Atatürk, meaning Father-Turk, Mustafa Kemal already designated himself as the procreator of the Turkish nation.

70 In a long speech he gave in 1927, known as *Nutuk*, Atatürk produced the constitutive narrative of the nation, in which he positioned himself with attributes such as the savior, protector, constructor, educator, mentor, guardian, leader, and father of the nation: Taha Parla, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları-1: Atatürk'ün Nutuk'u* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1994), 167-168.

tions concerning the content of representations,[71] it is noteworthy that Atatürk never personally attended the inauguration ceremonies of his own statues and monuments. Tekiner has interpreted this as a strategy of distancing his person from the monumental representations so that they will replace him and proliferate the "sacred" images of the regime.[72] Atatürk must have been aware that monuments lead a life of their own, but it is not known whether he was ever uneasy about the fact that the concrete twins of his own body were already a distorted copy—a monster.

Erecting statues was a novelty for the new Turkish regime. The Ottomans did not approve of statues due to what is interpreted as an Islamic prohibition of figurative visual representations of living beings.[73] However, the prohibition is a debated issue in Islam;[74] furthermore, it is not particular to Islam, as there is also a biblical commandment that forbids the making of representative images. Jean-Luc Nancy's analysis of why a "fabricated god" was forbidden in the Jewish as well as in various Chris-

71 Atatürk posed as a model for foreign artists such as Krippell and Canonica and suggested several figures to be included in the monuments. For example, for the Taksim Republic Monument, he demanded that the images of General Vorosilov of the Soviet Red Army and of the Ukrainian General Frunze be included, since they had shown their support for the new Turkish Republic through their visits to Turkey: Aylin Tekiner, *Atatürk Heykelleri: Kült, Estetik, Siyaset* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010), 98.

72 Ibid., 98-99.

73 Tekiner has given a detailed account of how in the nineteenth century figurative sculpture, including a few statues, entered Ottoman society, yet created conflicts due to the Islamic ban on figurative visual representations. Especially three-dimensional statues were banned because they were considered coming closest to icons, as their shadows fall on the ground. Thus, while paintings and photographs eventually found their way into Ottoman society in the nineteenth century, commissioning a statue, as a representation with a shadow, remained highly problematic until the founding of the new Turkish Republic: Ibid., 32.

74 Köksal Çiftçi, who has written on the problem of painting and sculpture in monotheistic religions, claims that there is only one verse of the Koran that can be interpreted in that way, but when examined more closely one can see that the verse only prohibits idolatry and not painting and sculpture as art. Çiftçi also examines the hadith of the Prophet Mohammad in that framework and comes to the conclusion that the prohibition does not exist in the religious sources, but only in practice, historically starting from the Abbasid Empire in 750: *Tektanrılı Dinlerde Resim ve Heykel Sorunu* (İstanbul: Bulut, 2008). Ahmad Mohammad Issa has similarly argued based on a close examination of Islamic sources that the prohibition does not derive either from the Koran or the hadith: *Painting in Islam: Between Prohibition and Aversion* (İstanbul: Waqf for Research on Islamic History Art and Culture, 1996). According to Jean-Luc Nancy, although there is a prohibition of representation in the Islamic tradition, "it should be pointed out that the commandment as such does not figure in the Koran but has been extrapolated out of it through interpretation": *The Ground of the Image*, 30. It is interesting to see how popular Islamic authorities interpret the prohibition today. According to a popular Turkish Islamic website, the prohibition concerns only humans and animals, which are considered living beings with souls, while trees, mountains and other organic or non-organic things in the world are left out of the scope of the Islamic ban on figurative representation. Particularly, a representation is prohibited to have a shadow on the ground, as a living being does. The website deems that photographs are acceptable since they are not to be seen as representation, but as a direct physical emulation of an object: *Sorularla İslamiyet*, http://www.sorularlaislamiyet.com/.

tian traditions is of interest for reflecting on the monstrous character of monuments in modern times:

> ...the commandment forbids the making "of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth," that is, of anything at all. Above all, however, it forbids the making of *sculpted* images (the insistence on sculpture and on sculpting is striking, in all the texts related to the biblical corpus as well as those in the Talmudic and Hassidic traditions). The commandment therefore concerns the production of forms that are solid, whole, and autonomous, as a statue is, and that are thus destined for use as an idol. The question here concerns idolatry and not the image as such or "representation." *The idol is a fabricated god,* not the representation of one, and the contemptible and false character of its divinity derives from the fact that it is fabricated... What is condemned, therefore, is not that which is an "image of" but rather that *which asserts its presence only through itself, a pure presence in a certain sense, a massive presence that amounts to its being-there: the idol does not move, does not see, does not speak... and the idolater, facing the idol, also does not see and does not understand... Thus the idol is not condemned as imitation or copy, but rather in terms of its full and heavy presence,* a presence of or within an immanence where nothing opens (eye, ear, or mouth) and from which nothing departs or withdraws (thought or word at the back of a throat or in the depths of a gaze).[75]

In the light of the above analysis, it is striking that the forbidden idol in religious tradition as the *fabricated god* can gain a legitimate ground, with modern states opting for the position of the fabricated god. I would say that the fabrication involves both "reason" and "affect." If "modernity" is the realm of the former, nationalism with its religious overtones fuels the latter. The state poses itself as an artifact,[76] with idols that, in Nancy's words, do not move, do not see, do not speak; in other words, the state is a non-living body. However, the state also mystically blows life into the artifact, appropriating the nation as an organic construct, with metaphors of community and family. Thus it eternalizes its being, by invoking the *artificial-natural* and commanding the idolater to have faith in

75 Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, 30-31, emphases mine.

76 Margaret Sommers has interestingly argued that the "modern" state has been categorized as "artificial" in a binary relation to the naturalized existence of society predating the state, as assumed in liberal theories: "The Privatization of Citizenship: How to Unthink a Knowledge Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, eds. Victoria E. Bonell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

the dead idol, *as if* it were alive. It is not surprising, then, when the Turkish state decided to erect Atatürk monuments as a way of propagating and personifying the ideals of the new regime, it made references both to "Western civilization" and nationalism, to both *reason* and *unreason*, at the same time in order to confront the disturbing problem of idolatry that derives from the traditional ban on figurative representations of living beings in Ottoman society.

On the one hand, erecting statues was justified by references to progress, as Atatürk and others formulated in various speeches and texts.[77] In this respect, Atatürk monuments were the symbols of progress and civilization.[78] On the other hand, Atatürk was shown as a semi-god,[79] due to the growing cult of Atatürk, which contributed to his monuments being regarded as equally sacred. However, in Atatürk monuments the constitutive source of the sacred was both outside and inside, both "rational" and "irrational." In this curious combination of secular progress and sacredness, the performative command of the state has been shaped and put into practice in a way that evokes the formula of the *artificial-natural*, as one of the early ideologues in Turkey said: "The dead rule the living. This is an undeniable fact in the lives of every nation. But great events or great men cannot be considered dead. The nations build monuments in their name in order to keep them alive. They make them immortal through artworks."[80]

77 For example, Atatürk said: "Our nation which is enlightened and religious will develop sculpture to the highest level, which is one of the beneficiaries of progress, and every part of our country will proclaim the memories of our ancestors, and of our children who will live in the future, with beautiful statues" (Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, ed. Nimet Unan, vol. 2 [Ankara: Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitütüsü Yayınları, 1959], 66-67). Tekiner has added that, although Atatürk mentioned ancestors as subjects for statues, during his lifetime there were no monuments erected other than those of Atatürk, except for the Unknown Soldier Monument (*Meçhul Asker Anıtı*, 1925) and the Martyr Kubilay Monument (*Şehit Kubilay Anıtı*, 1932).

78 The first Atatürk monument in 1926 set the architectural and symbolic blueprint for later monuments. It is noteworthy that in this monument Atatürk faces Anatolia with his right fist raised towards Europe, representing the position of the new Turkish Republic between Turkish culture and Western civilization, the East and the West. I have written on the boundary management of East and West in Turkey under the concept of Occidentalism: *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010).

79 Atatürk was often referred to as a divine being, sometimes compared to a prophet in many ideological and literary texts. The religious imagery employed to describe his persona points to the appropriation of religion for nationalistic ends, as Yael Navaro-Yashin has discussed to refute the binary of religion/secularism in Turkish nationalism: *Faces of the State*. Esra Özyürek has cited the words of Nezihe Araz, a devoted Kemalist writer, to discuss the godly power of Atatürk: "For the first generation of the republic, Atatürk was not a human but almost a god from Olympus. He was an abstract concept, a godly power that could make the impossible possible and perform miracles. Even if people saw him on the roads of Ankara, in his car, in the National Assembly, and sometimes in schools, sport arenas, horse races, they actually could not perceive him": *Nostalgia for the Modern*, 109.

80 Cited in Tekiner, *Atatürk Heykelleri*, 58.

From the first Atatürk monument in 1926,[81] to this day, there are certain recurring themes that reveal the "fantastic" (in the way in which Ancet has defined it) aspects of state power. All these themes are related to a particular performance of power, as I have discussed above; yet, at the same time, contestation, opposition, or absurdity surround them.

One such theme is *foreignness*, reminding of Nancy's depiction of the foreign god in connection to the idol.[82] The first Atatürk monuments were designed by invited foreign artists, either German or Italian, who not only introduced the know-how and technology of sculpture, but also, in that particular historical context, the features of a fascist aesthetics to Turkey. The foreignness of the artists soon led to the worry among the national elites that "they" could not really know and understand "our" national leader, hence "our" national values. For example, the Taksim Atatürk Monument (1928) by Canonica, an Italian artist, even inspired a poem by Mithat Cemal Kuntay,[83] expressing feelings of resentment. The poem is interesting in conveying the ambiguity of the living and dead aspects of the monument. It says: "Of course you, as everybody else, know who He is/But you cannot give voice to Him, He is ours/Is it possible to represent Him with these hands?/Anyway... tell me what is the material you used, stone or iron?"[84]

On the other hand, the entry of new and inexperienced Turkish sculptors into the field produced concerns about technical perfection.[85] There was a constant anxiety whether monuments looked like Atatürk, coupled with other anxieties in what positions or outfits to represent him.[86] *The problem of resemblance* triggered many debates about Atatürk

81 The first Atatürk monument was built by Heinrich Krippel and placed in Sarayburnu, İstanbul. It is interesting that İstanbul was chosen as the site for the first Atatürk monument, because in early national history Ankara as the newly built capital city of the Republic was opposed to İstanbul as a place that symbolized the old decadent regime. Tekiner has interpreted this as part of symbolic warfare against the opponents of the new regime in İstanbul: Tekiner, *Atatürk Heykelleri*, 70-71. It can also be interpreted as a way of re-possessing İstanbul and re-claiming the monumentality of the Sublime Port of the Ottoman Empire.

82 Nancy has noted that the word *elila* is one word used for "idol" in the Book of Exodus, which designates a "'small divinity, false god,' again 'foreign god'": *The Ground of the Image*, 145 n. 110.

83 Mithat Cemal Kuntay was a writer who lived in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods and is known for his rhetorical nationalist poems. His only novel, *Üç İstanbul*, was adapted for a TV series in 1983.

84 "Elbette bilirsin O'nu herkes gibi kimdir,/Lakin O'nu sen anlatamazsın O, bizimdir./Bilmem ki bu ellerle O temsil edilir mi?/Her neyse... Nedir malzemen taş mı, demir mi?": Cited in Tekiner, *Atatürk Heykelleri*, 103. The famous poet Ahmet Haşim also criticized the first Atatürk monument: "What more can be said about this pile of bronze?" Cited in ibid., 73.

85 The first Turkish sculptor who created an Atatürk Monument was Kenan Yontunç who personally worked with Atatürk as a model. However, his statues of Atatürk were criticized for being non-proportional and showing him older and weaker: Ibid., 114.

86 Although Atatürk presented himself to society not as a military commander, but as a civil leader in

monuments: Governments canceled some projects before they were erected; others were removed; still others, with "erotic figures" such as nude males, were "emasculated"; or the monuments were "exiled" to other, less visible parts of the country since there was a concern that they did not represent the leader correctly.[87] One of the most interesting examples of this kind clearly demonstrates that Atatürk monuments were treated as *artificial-natural* entities. In Afyon, an Atatürk monument created by a non-professional sculptor and placed in front of the district governorate building in 1980 was highly disproportionate, with an enormous head and short legs. After 25 years, the "monstrous" statue was noticed by some "experts" who advised that it should be removed. However, since an Atatürk monument could not be destroyed according to custom and law, the only legitimate way to demolish it was to bury it under ground without giving it any harm.[88]

The third theme is the *instrumentalization* of Atatürk monuments for the sake of power. Atatürk monuments were regarded as sacred in rhetoric, yet over time they were reproduced with apparent pragmatic interests only to signify and secure power. Despite the political conflicts regarding the heritage of Atatürk, each political party that came to power proclaimed its presence by erecting further Atatürk monuments.[89] This

Western dress after the foundation of the Republic, the majority of his early monuments show him in military uniform, and in several he is riding a horse: Ibid., 75. However, there were also other aesthetic attempts to idealize his persona. In the 1935 monument in front of the Kayseri Textile Factory, Atatürk is presented naked with the idealized muscular body of a worker turning a wheel. In the Afyon Victory Monument (1936), he was also represented naked, emphasizing the fierce and disciplined body of the leader. The codes of representation—such as the body gestures, the outfits and the symbolic accessories to be included in the monuments—have continued to be a matter of debate in Turkey. Particularly the problem of resemblance led to controversies as in the case of the smiling Atatürk monument in Sincan in 1998: Ibid.

87 There are many examples of controversial Atatürk monuments in Turkish history. For example, the Atatürk monument in Samsun (1982) was removed in the same year in which it was erected, by

was the idea of Vedat Nedim Tör, one of the oldest surviving Kemalist cultural elites from the first years of the republic and, interestingly, an apostate communist.[101] His idea was to build a Workers' Monument dedicated to the Turkish workers who were being sent to Germany since 1961, their number having reached 865,000 already in 1973. The monument was to be placed just across from the Public Labor Employment Office, which functioned as the German Liaison Office in Tophane and which had an infamous reputation for the humiliating medical examinations of the worker candidates by German doctors.[102] The artist Muzaffer Ertoran, based in the Academy of Fine Arts, located also very close to Tophane, had already worked on a model of a workers' statue, and so he was commissioned for the work. Soon after the monument was erected, the first attacks began. First the fingers, then the sledgehammer, then the arm was broken; the face was covered with tar, and finally the face was completely destroyed. The artist repaired the monument several times, but the attacks were insistent, and after a while it was left to stand in that crippled way to be further worn down by environmental conditions. The artist Muzaffer Ertoran has said in an interview: "I fixed it a few times. But now, I've let it go. For years, they have been breaking a piece off it every day. Yet, it's still not all consumed. When a machine comes and rips it off the ground, I will say: 'Oh, finally, it's been depleted.'"[103] It is as if the statue could neither live, nor completely die. Ertoran's words obviously remind one of threatening monstrosity in between the living and the non-living.

the first "non-monumental" statues in the history of public art in Turkey: "Statue of a Worker," 172. I agree that for many of these works the description may hold true, yet I think the Workers' Monument is monumental both in its style and in its intended meaning: it is within a certain convention of representing workers, very similar to the style of socialist realism starting in the 1930s in "communist" countries, and with the deliberate monumental aim to commemorate the workers being sent to Germany. Therefore, I prefer to call it the Workers' Monument rather than "Worker Statue," as Akagündüz refers to it.

101 Vedat Nedim Tör was a member of the illegal Turkish Communist Party and also temporarily acted as the head of the Turkish Worker and Peasant Socialist Party (*Türkiye İşçi Çiftçi Sosyalist Fırkası*) in the 1920s. After leaving the party, he purportedly submitted all party documents to the government and testified against the communists in the infamous Communist Arrests in 1927, for which his former comrades blamed him as traitor. Later, Vedat Nedim Tör worked in different government organizations, including the radio. He wrote books and published journals. He also served as a cultural consultant for Yapı Kredi Bank and then for Akbank before his death in 1985.

102 John Berger and Jean Mohr's book *A Seventh Man* (1982) gives a very important account of the workers sent from Turkey to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, with striking photographs of workers being subjected to humiliating procedures. There are now suggestions that the Public Labor Employment Office building should be converted into an Immigration Museum and that the Workers' Monument should be repaired: Doğan Hızlan, "Göç Müzesi Kurulmalıdır," *Hürriyet*, December 4, 2007, http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/ShowNew.aspx?id=7806599.

103 Cited in Akagündüz, "Statue of a Worker," 177.

We must note that out of the twenty statues and monuments built in 1973, only eight survive today,[104] since others also had their share of destruction by "the people," or since they were removed or destroyed by local authorities for different reasons. At this point, I find it important to re-emphasize the connection between the obsessively erected Atatürk monuments in Turkey under the protection of the law that criminalizes their destruction and the many cases of destruction of "civil" statues and monuments in public space, mostly regarded as permissible. These are two faces of the same coin, of the productive and destructive capacities of power that I have discussed above. Akin to theories that refuse to treat the state and society as two independent entities,[105] I would say that the interdependent official/civil binary structured within the performative command of the state produces the ground for deciding which monuments are allowed to survive and which are left to perish.

Some would see the problem of monuments in Turkey merely as an aesthetic question.[106] It is indeed an aesthetic question, if we do not take aesthetics as separate from politics. Rancière has argued that the relational character of politics and aesthetics concerns the reconfiguration of a different regime of perception and signification, a new "distribution of the sensible" and "political subjectivation."[107] For Rancière, the process of political subjectivation consists in "the action of uncounted capacities that crack open the unity of the given and the obviousness of the visible, in order to sketch a new topography of the visible."[108] Rancière's

104 "Naked" in Gülhane Park, "Figure" in Harbiye, "Abstract Statue" in Bebek Park, "Solidarity" in Fındıklı Park, "Echo" in Gümüşsuyu Park, "Abstract Statue" in Gülhane Park, and "Spring" are the surviving statues, and one may add to them the "Worker" in Tophane Park, although severely damaged, and "Beautiful İstanbul" which has been moved from one place to another over the years: Tekiner, *Atatürk Heykelleri*, 182.

105 Trouillot, citing the significance of Gramsci and Poulantzas's elaborate conceptualizations of the state, has said: "One cannot theorize the state and then theorize society or vice versa. Rather, state and society are bound by the historical bloc which takes the form of the specific social contract of—and, thus, the hegemony deployed in—a particular social formation": "The Anthropology of the State," 127. Navaro-Yashin has particularly dwelt on the false binary of the state and society in Turkey to provide an ethnography of the Turkish state through different moments of its materialization in society: *Faces of the State*.

106 Emre Aköz, a well-known columnist writing on the issue of the "monstrous" Humanity Monument, has complained that there are very many monstrous statues in this country, including Atatürk monuments; he does not want to see them around and instead personally prefers the statues of Giacometti, Brancusi, and Henry Moore. Aköz, "Ucube Heykellerle Dolu." Mümtaz'er Türköne has similarly proposed that Atatürk monuments are "monstrous" and regarded the problem as an aesthetic one: "It is true that our culture and tradition keep us away from sculpture. But this distance cannot be an excuse for the lack of aesthetics of the statues interspersed throughout this country." Cited in "Türköne 'Ucube'yi Bakın Nereye Taşıdı?," *GAZETE5*, January 14, 2011, http://www.gazete5.com/haber/mumtazer-turkone-ataturk-heykelleri-ucube-yazisi-14-ocak-2011-75631.htm.

107 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009).

108 Ibid., 49.

emphasis on a different regime of perception is closely connected to the question of monsters, if, as Ancet has said, the subject who looks and classifies the anomaly is rather central to the definition of the monster. Then it is highly problematic that many opinion leaders in Turkey reproduce the hegemonic normative aesthetic and political judgments to assess the question of monuments that turn into monsters. For example, many would say that the actual and potential vandalizing of monuments is a symptom of "underdevelopment" or "lack of modernity," blaming the state for indifference against art and/or the people for being uncivilized and under the influence of Islamic traditions. Even Murat Akagündüz from the *Hafriyat* group, which attempted to make the Workers' Monument visible, has pointed to a "skewed process of modernization."[109] In a different vein, Uğur Tanyeli has argued that neither Islamic values nor an aesthetic problem related to "untalented sculptors" can explain the "problem" of statues and monuments. For him, the problem is the persistence of a "traditional" conception of the public sphere in Turkey; public only signifies belonging to the state, and only statues that are deemed sacred to the state are made visible in and for the public.[110] While Tanyeli's problematization of the public sphere in relation to the state is meaningful, his reference to a *lack* of a "bourgeois public sphere" (in Habermasian terms) in Turkey cannot avoid replicating the problematic normative judgment about (Western) modernity and its others. When looked at from the vestige point of the *norm*, the other cannot but seem monstrous. Thus, instead of replicating normativity and consequently re-producing monstrosity, I have emphasized the need to historically trace the destructive and productive capacities of state power and argued that the monuments that turn into monsters are to be seen as symptoms of the performative command of the state that displaces or destroys the memories and capacities of lived experience, particularly those that belong to what is homogeneously referred to as "the people." This is a political and aesthetic question at the same time.

So far, we have been speaking of monsters. But they also speak; they are not mute. They speak in their own ways, which is mostly threatening

109 Akagündüz, "Statue of a Worker," 172. Akagündüz has said: "Despite the scope of the dramatic relationship social perception forms with contemporary art and its object, it may be argued that the evolution of the perception of sculpture from Islamic thought—where the statue is regarded as idolatrous, as the shadow it casts on the ground is considered as figuration—to monumental statues is a step forward towards modernization. Yet at the same time, the fact that attacks on civil sculptures continue to be regarded as natural casts a rather telling light on the direction of this step forward in a skewed process of modernization."

110 From his presentation entitled "Statues in the Public Sphere," delivered at the symposium on statues in the İstanbul Modern Museum, 25 April 2006.

to the "normal." Their ambiguity goes against the closure of normativity as standardization, as Shildrick has said about monsters.[111] In that sense, monsters are witnesses to the catastrophe of modern history and have their own memories. Their forbidden shadows fall on the official and oppressive versions of history, making it once more contestable from within. When the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan called the Humanity Monument on the Armenian border a monster, he said: "We will not let this monster cast a shadow on our history."[112] When he said "history," he seemed to point to the historical Islamic treasures of Kars. But his words can easily be interpreted in the context of the official denial of the memories of the Armenian Genocide in Turkey.[113] Etyen Mahçupyan has made an important intervention in this respect, opposing the way in which the question of the "monstrous statue" has been discussed in the mainstream media which mainly focus on freedom of expression and public art in Turkey. Mahçupyan has rightly claimed that the government's judgment about the Humanity Monument is of specifically political, rather than of a general aesthetic concern; it should be read as a clue that the state aims to destroy the political messages of the statue about Turkish-Armenian relations.[114] Now that the gigantic Humanity Monument is being sliced into pieces to be carried away, it constitutes yet another violent moment in the national history of Turkey.[115]

111 Shildrick, "Dealing with Differences," 79.

112 Cited by Etyen Mahçupyan, "Gerçekliğin Kaypaklığı Üzerine," *Zaman*, January 26, 2011, http://www.zaman.com.tr/yazar.do?yazino=1084344.

113 Turkey officially denies that the "so-called Armenian Genocide" happened in 1915 and fiercely defends its stand both in international diplomatic relations and against critical historical statements about the issue. However, the question of the Armenian Genocide has become a much more visible, albeit highly contested, subject within Turkey in the last decade. The conference organized by Boğaziçi, Bilgi, and Sabancı Universities in September 2005 in İstanbul, entitled "Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire," was one of the first attempts to historicize the question. The Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink's assassination in 2007 was also a turning point, paving the way for further debates, exhibitions, conferences, and publications of both academic research and memoirs pertaining to the tragic events—the massacres, deportation, and exile of Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century.

114 Mahçupyan, "Gerçekliğin Kaypaklığı Üzerine." For another article commenting on the connection between the demolition of the monument and Turkish-Armenian relations, see Markar Esayan, "Özet: Aliyev İstedi, Erdoğan Yıktırdı," *Taraf*, May 1, 2011.

115 The sculptor Mehmet Aksoy claimed that it would be extremely difficult to demolish this gigantic monument and that it would take years during which possible national and international reactions should be able to stop the demolition. However, after the affirmative decision of the municipal council of Kars, the demolition plan was announced. The 300-ton monument would be sliced into 18 pieces and kept in a storehouse. The demolition started with the head of the monument being cut off on 25 April 2011, ironically one day after 24 April, which is commemorated as the day when the Armenian Genocide started in Turkey in 1915. Just before this article was to be submitted, there were news in the media that the Kars Municipality had decided to build a statue of a Kaşar Cheese and Honey (as specialties of the town) in the place of the demolished Humanity Monument, once again affirming

Conclusion: Representation and counter-memory

In the concluding part of the article, I will briefly comment on art in relation to the memory of monsters. Let us go back to Tophane, from where we started. In the art venues in Tophane, critical art now increasingly finds space. Many of the critical and political artworks aim to make visible repressed historical and contemporary issues in Turkey (such as the violations of human rights, the war against the Kurdish people, and the Armenian genocide) and to deconstruct the narratives and icons of official national history. Thus, it is not uncommon that there are also works critical of the idol of Atatürk.[116] An artwork by Extramücadele,[117] exhibited in Tophane at the Non Gallery, showed Atatürk as a fallen angel, when the violent attacks against the visiting crowd in front of the galleries occurred in September 2010. A year later, in the art space Depo, again in Tophane, the artist Vahit Tuna showed an interesting statue that created the automatic effect of an Atatürk bust in a school garden from afar, but in fact it was a bust of Anthony Hopkins,[118] playing with the anxiety of resemblance that I have mentioned above. Both works critically deal with the power effects of Atatürk monuments. The seemingly conservative and religious people of Tophane, on the other hand, have shown either outright hostility or, at best, indifference to the ex-

the euphemistic attitude that simultaneously produces and denies violence. See note 99.

116 The *Hafriyat* art collective opened an exhibition of posters in its Karaköy venue, with the title *Allah Korkusu* (The Fear of God) on November 10, 2007. Some of the posters exhibited there drew fierce reactions from the media, and consequently an official investigation was opened especially about three posters, one of them showing Atatürk with a blank face. The poster designed by Hakan Akçura was referring to the taboo of portraying the image of the Prophet Muhammad in Islam and implying the divinity ascribed to Atatürk, as well as Kemalism as a way of worshipping in Turkey. More recently, an exhibition in Beşiktaş Plaza organized by the Bimeras Culture Foundation was attacked by several members of the CHP, since it showed an icon of Atatürk in addition to icons of the three major religions in the world, again implying that the worshipping of Atatürk is a religion. Yasin Aktay has discussed the exhibit and the reactions, which have been compared to the attacks in Tophane: "Tophane ile Beşiktaş'ın Arası," *Yeni Şafak*, October 18, 2010, http://yenisafak.com.tr/Yazarlar/?t=18.10.2010&y=YasinAktay.

117 Ekstramücadele, which means "extra struggle," is the name that the artist Mehmed Erdener publicly uses when he exhibits his critical and mostly controversial artwork.

118 Esra Özyürek has discussed the taboo of portraying Atatürk, very similar to the taboo of representing the Prophet Muhammed. For this reason, it was not possible for any actor to play Atatürk in film for a long time. "But the taboo was first broken in 1981 when a movie about his life was released for his one hundredth birth anniversary. It is significant that the first actor to portray Atatürk was not Turkish but Belgian... at the end of the 1980s, Turkish actors started to play Atatürk in movies, and by the late 1990s, there were almost no limits on who might perform as Atatürk": *Nostalgia for the Modern*, 111. Vahit Tuna's work, which is part of his exhibition at Depo, entitled *Hep Seyirciyiz Zaten...* (We Are Just Spectators Anyway...) makes reference to this anxiety by evoking the figure of Anthony Hopkins, who was one of the candidates to portray Atatürk in a film in the 1990s. See Pınar Öğünç, "Bir Atatürk Büstünün Arkeolojisi," *Radikal*, January 17, 2011, http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&ArticleID=1036750.

amples of critical art in their district. However, if we re-visit the artistic intervention of the artist collective *Hafriyat*, which tried to steal the broken Workers' Monument, we are confronted with the enigma that the people re-claimed their monstrous monument. Murat Akagündüz, a *Hafriyat* member whom I interviewed, has said that this was not really the outcome that they expected. They considered possible problems with the authorities, such as the police, but not with the people. Many people from the neighborhood that night told the artists that they had lots of memories surrounding this "stone," without actually naming it. In their childhood they used to play on top of it; they grew up with it. Children still play around it, without being aware that it once was a monument. And they would not want to give it away. They embraced the object in a spiritual way, in Akagündüz's words.[119] Pelin Tan has also commented on the incident that night, saying that

> ...the residents of Tophane, who generally spend their days in the park playing football, organizing neighborhood activities, drinking coffee and tea, and selling odds and ends, suddenly became aware of the old *Worker* statue. As *Hafriyat* was trying to remove the sculpture, people sought to understand why the action was happening, and most residents responded that the sculpture (which they did not want to call by its title, as speaking of a *Worker* would imply a reference to leftist ideology) had emotional meaning for them.[120]

On the other hand, the vice-president of the municipality who was accidentally there that night was only concerned whether the artist group had official permission to remove the statue.[121]

One needs to think further about the emotional meaning that the broken Workers' Monument has for the residents of Tophane. It is obvious that it has nothing to do with the intended or publicly attributed meanings of the monument. The residents of Tophane even refrained from saying its name. This "stone" is something that belongs to them, even though it may be a monster. However, one should be wary of rushed alternative explanations. The possible meanings that the locals may be attributing to the "stone" are not actually representable within the dominant "distribution of the sensible" today. The non-representability points to a void in the locality, which the ongoing economic, social

119 Interview with Murat Akagündüz, February 2011.

120 Pelin Tan, "Possibilities of Counter-Culture: Dissemination of Localities," in *Tactics of Invisibility*, eds. Gudrun Ankele, Emre Baykal, and Daniela Zyman (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung, 2011), 149-150.

121 Interview with Murat Akagündüz, February 2011.

and cultural transformations attempt to cover up with polished facades. Nevertheless, one should not give up the struggle for interpretation as a way of producing and re-producing the locality: "In an age in which globalization produces new forms of locality that still have to find a vision of another future than that offered by neoliberalism, market ideology, and media triumphalism, memory of past hopes, after all, remains part of any imagination of another future."[122] Thus, we can dwell on possible meanings as a starting point for a different engagement with the locality. It is possible that the locals of Tophane may be embracing the "stone" for strengthening their ties with the place, especially with the fear of displacement evoked by the recent transformations in the neighborhood. They have their own discreet memories around this deformed stone body, and they probably recognize themselves in its process of destruction, as people who have been muted and who have no means of representing themselves other than in hegemonic idioms, mostly as delegated agents of violent practices of power within the performative command of the state. These, and many other questions not yet formulated, remain to be substantiated through the fractured memories and experiences of the locals.

Yet, the Workers' Monument as a monster continues to remember. It bears the memories of the artist who constructed it; of the workers who went to Germany only to be classified as second-class guest workers there; of the socialists who took the Workers' Monument as a token of their struggle, mostly forgotten and buried in the past now. It points to the violent memories of urban transformation, which displaced large segments of non-Muslim minorities from Tophane during the 1950s and now threatens to displace the once-newcomer migrants, too. It points to the memories of having to live in fear of the state which Atatürk monuments signify for many people in Turkey. It also points to the very displacement and destruction of memories. It is but a frail witness to the past under the threat of extinction. It is a symptom of its own processes of destruction, displacement and excess, which turn the remains of the Workers' Monument into a counter-monument. It is a counter-monument because it cannot in any way commemorate the past or celebrate the present. It cannot console its viewers, either about the workers' situation, or about the civilized modern status of Turkey. Instead, it troublingly points to the frailty of life and memory in the face of the power of the dead and deadening body of the state. Yet, it is also a frail source of hope if we hear Derrida, when he says: "A future

122 Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 105.

that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would be already a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow. All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous arrivant."[123]

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