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Dealing with a Dictatorial past:

Fascist Monuments and Conflicting Memory in Contemporary Italy

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This chapter examines the reception of Fascist monuments in contemporary Italy as an expression of how the country has dealt with its troubled dictatorial past. The variety of cultural heritage left by the regime is a distinctive feature of any Italian city and is today both a symbolic and a physical witness of the invasiveness of the totalitarian regime. Taking the period from the 2010, with increasing public debate about how to deal with divisive and conflicting remains, this chapter looks at two emblematic case-studies that can aid our understanding of Fascist monument culture in contemporary Italy. The first considers a monument erected in 2012 as a memorial to the infamous murderer Rodolfo Graziani, the Fascist Marshall known as ‘the butcher’ for his efficacy in the conquest of Ethiopia. Built in Graziani’s resting place of Affile, the monument, which in 2017 was suggested to be demolished by orders of the national courts, shows how part of society still views Fascism as ‘positive’. The second examines how the city of Bolzano has dealt with a Fascist frieze on the Palace of Financial Offices representing Mussolini on horseback, and how the monument has been ‘disempowered’ through the addition in 2017 of an installation by the artists Arnold Holzkecht and Michele Bernardi. These two monuments, conceived in different times and for different purposes, illustrate the variety of political reasons that can inform monument building. The differing responses to these monuments reflect similar attitudes seen trans-