

The Monument of Panteleymon

The monument of Panteleymon (see appendix) is a local memorial depicting a persian cat. Sculpted by Bogdan Mazur and erected in 1998, the bronze feline sits on a rock in a park, opposite the Golden Gate, in the center of Kiev, Ukraine. The statue is a monument to Pantyusha, a cat who belonged to the owner of Osteria Pantagruel, a restaurant in Ukraine's capital. Adored by those who visited the restaurant, Pantyusha became a beloved local figure. One day a fire broke out in the restaurant, and Pantyusha sadly lost his life. Those who knew Pantyusha were so saddened and affected by his death, that funds were raised and subsequently the monument was created (Клименко, 2003). The monument sits near the restaurant which still exists today. It seems significant that the depiction of Pantyusha feels particularly animated, as though capturing him mid-motion. This is likely a purposeful decision to keep the spirit and memory of Pantyusha alive. The statue of Pantyusha looks over his back, this is perhaps to represent his spirit looking back at those who loved and cared for him as he moves on into his afterlife.

It is interesting to note that the monument is not named directly after the cat. Saint Panteleymon is a religious figure, considered to be one of the holy unmercenary healers (Doyle, 2000). The monument was perhaps so called in reference to this saint, for the statue was intended to help heal the owners of the restaurant and others who suffered a loss at the death of Pantyusha. Alternatively, the alliteration of both names could suggest it was the owner who named Pantyusha after the saint. One can only

conjecture as to the precise meaning behind the name, however, regardless of the precise history, it certainly seems fitting that it be named after a historic healer. Cats, and indeed pets in general, are commonly considered to be great healers, and the monument was intended to heal and console those affected by the tragedy. It also seems significant that the monument elects not to include an inscription. This perhaps reveals that the monument was originally intended for the local community, who already knew Pantyusha and his story, for whom an inscription was unnecessary. Alternatively, perhaps the sculptor or the owners wanted the statue to speak for itself.

The monument is a local one, originally intended to comfort those grieving and keep the memory of Pantyusha alive. It has since become a popular tourist attraction. Cat lovers around the world flock to the monument when visiting Kiev to take photos and rub the cat's head and tail, both of which have consequently adopted a noticeable shine. Whilst it can be considered a positive thing that those outside of the local community have come to learn Pantyusha's story, his rising popularity also comes with a downside. The monument originally also featured an accompanying small bird, which was repeatedly removed and taken by tourists who wanted to keep a souvenir (Useful Travel Articles, 2021). Consequently, Pantyusha's bronze likeness now stands alone. This brings into question how visitors to the monument interpret it. What was undoubtedly originally a symbol of personal, happy memories and a source of comfort for those who suffered a loss, has to others become a quirky spot to take selfies. The particular tourists who took the bird displayed a lack of respect towards the monument, which highlights changing attitudes and interpretations of it.

The audience of the monument is not the only thing to have changed overtime. What was once merely a monument to a local tale has adopted a much bigger significance. Monuments could be described as a physical form of a collective memory, however, a monument's meaning may shift as current events and attitudes cause people to reinterpret national and cultural heritage (Svendsen and Campbell, 2010). The war in Ukraine that broke out at the beginning of 2022 has devastated the nation, with the people of Ukraine fighting to preserve their land and national identity. In the context of the war, Pantyusha's story may seem insignificant, but it is representative of exactly what the Ukrainian people are fighting to preserve- their rich history and individual stories, their values and identity. The monument today also represents life in Ukraine before the war.

Ukraine is a nation which has faced much hardship and tragedy. In the wider context of war, the death of a pet could be deemed insignificant. However, Pantyusha's life was not insignificant, and in fact his death affected those around him so deeply that a statue was created to commemorate him. Monuments are a symbol of a collective memory, the collective nature of this memorial is even present in how it came to be, with funds being donated by multiple individuals who were affected by a significant event. All monuments and memorials depict something significant and important, and represent a deep impact, and the monument of Panteleymon is no exception. In a country which has experienced great national grief, the monument of Panteleymon represents a wholesome gentleness. It represents the values of the Ukrainian people, who feel a

deep love and honor for their people and their animals, their history and their home. The monument of Panteleymon has come to represent more than Pantyusha the cat and the effect he had on people's lives; the story of Ukraine as a nation continues to unfold, and as that story continues to be written, the meaning we can take from this particular monument will continue to evolve.

References

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Appendix of Images



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cat_Panteleimon_Monument_%28Kyiv%](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Cat_Panteleimon_Monument_%28Kyiv%29)

[29](#) [Accessed 03/12/2022]