

“POST-SOCIALIST”
IDENTITIES AND THEIR REPRESENTATIONS:
MONUMENTS AND MUSEUMS IN BULGARIA
AND ROMANIA AFTER 1989*

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The current article focuses on the transformations occurring with monuments and museums in Bulgaria and Romania after 1989. Here are outlined their different approaches to the representation of the socialist period and the diverse ways of restructuring collective identities during the times of ‘transition.’

Key words: monument, museum, post-socialism, transition, history, identities.

The last two decades witnessed a significant rise in the research literature on monuments and museums as historical visualizations, bringing to scholarly discussion a range of issues about their role in shaping collective identities.¹ At the background of previous visions about monuments and museums as sites of political manifestation, initiatives were taken up to interpret them as contested sites of remembrance, and as focal points in identity formation. Whereas previously considered as primary examples about unifying visions and monologic representations, monuments and museums already stirred insights about the representational distance, and the politics of view, about the battles of interpretations, and the constant

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¹ See for example Alexander, E. P., *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Walnut Creek, California: Alta Mira, 1996; Crane, S. A., ed., *Museums and Memory*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000; Crane, S. A., “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” In: Carbonell, B. M., *Museum Studies. An Anthropology of Contexts*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 318–334; Fabre, D., ed., *Domestiquer l’histoire: Ethnologie des monuments historiques*. Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2000; Karp, I., S. D. Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991; Karp, I., C. M. Kreamer, and S. D. Lavine, eds., *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992; Kavanagh, G., “Making Histories, Making Memories.” In: Kavanagh, G., ed., *Making Histories in Museums*. London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999, 1–14; Macdonald, S., ed., *The Politics of Display. Museums, Science, Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998; Michalski, S., *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage 1870–1997*. Reaktion Books, 1998; Pearce, S. M., ed., *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994; Verdery, K., *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999; Young, J., *The Texture of Memory*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993.

flux of meanings. In the perspective of the dynamic, globalizing and constantly changing world of today, these modes of history narration are increasingly regarded as being no longer merely instances of 'representing' and 'sustaining' memory, but rather as 'fluid grounds' where the relationships between memory and forgetting, continuity and change are put on display.

All these new issues and currents in the scholarly literature on representing history in visual terms were especially well outlined in the context of the political changes of 1989 in Eastern Europe,² where the difficulties to 'adjust' the previous monuments and museums into a new political environment posed them in an interesting position as moveable, changeable, and constantly changing objects of historical narration. The challenges to find the adequate place and attitude to the forms inherited from the socialist epoch, the need to substitute them by new visual means and to pose them in different interpretative angles, the search for convincing narratives to ground historical representation³ – all these marked the peculiarities of the post-socialist transition with regards to these forms, as well as outlined a fruitful perspective of approaching the political changes namely through the fate of these historical visualizations. Holding a high resource of specificity for each of the post-socialist countries, such an issue opens also a broad comparative dimension, to the extent that there was hardly an East European country of the former socialist bloc that did not go through public debates about the fate of the former ideological representations, and of monuments and museums in particular. Taken up as an immediate reaction to the inherited symbols of the previous epoch, the issue preserved its generally high pertinence throughout the entire post-1989 period, erupting episodically in debates around sites related to the socialist period, as the bronze soldier monument in Tallinn, the Terror museum in Budapest, the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or the museum of GDR in Berlin. Cases of the kind not merely explicate the significance of such representations for local, regional and

² The literature on the changes of 1989 and the period of transition in Eastern Europe is extensive and cannot be encompassed here. For general reviews of the main issues from political, social, and cultural aspects of the changes, see especially Berger, P., "Observations on the Transition in East-Central Europe." In: Kovács, J., ed., *Transition to Capitalism? The Communist Legacy in Eastern Europe*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994, 293–98; Beyme, K. von, *Transition to Democracy in Eastern Europe*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996; Dahrendorf, R., *After 1989: Morals, Revolution and Civil Society*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1997; Kennedy, M., ed., *Envisioning Eastern Europe: Post-communist Cultural Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994; Ramet, S., "Eastern Europe's Painful Transition." *Current History* 95 (599), 1996, 97–102. For a broad comparative contextualization of East European transition, see King, C., "Post-Post Communism: Transition Comparison and The End of Eastern Europe," *World Politics*, No. 53, 2001, 34–78; Linz, J., A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; Miller, W. L., S. White, P. Heywood, *Values and Political Change in Post-Communist Europe*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998; Tismăneanu, V., *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998.

³ On the theoretical implications of such epistemological procedure see Ankersmith, F. R., *Historical Representation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001.

national communities, but – in a wider perspective, the outlined symbolic resource that they bear to the post-socialist societies in Eastern Europe in general.

Yet, the issue of the transformations occurring with monuments and museums as historical visualizations does not have only 'spatial' parameters and geographic relevance, but also a temporal specificity – to the extent that the approaches and policies about monuments and museums varied over the last two decades, triggering different resonance throughout the years. Most generally, in the first decade after 1989, many of the socialist monuments in these countries were destroyed, reshaped, and substituted by new symbolic representations, and only in isolated cases (as in Hungary), special exhibition spaces were created to host the dismantled compositions. Very often, initiatives for such visual substitutions were surrounded by public debates and organized protests to facilitate or prevent dismantlement of previous representations. With regards to museums about socialist and party history – exhibitions of the kind were expediently dropped and boxed up, and proposed for rearrangement in new historical sequences and emphases. Albeit causing less intensive public energies than the changes in monumental appearance, the difficulties that history museums of the socialist period faced were comparable, especially in light of the choice of new figures and events that would fill in the emptied museum spaces. The new attention to realms of history that were veiled in silence during the socialist times; the uncovered testimonies about terror, repression, and opposition against the totalitarian rule; the revived interest in personalities and events that had suffered neglect until 1989 posed a demand for representation in national and regional museums, as well as in monuments of the post-socialist period. During the second decade after the changes, mainly the establishing of novel foci of representation was the focus of the public debates around such sites. In the steps of the already dissolved previous narratives, there emerged the palpable need to construe new narratives about the nations' pasts – ones that would show detachment from the previous communist versions, but would also seek paths not to crosscut entirely the post-war decades. Lastly, the continuing changes around such sites of public memory were additionally complicated by the increasing distance to the socialist years and by the problematic scope of the 'transition period,' especially after the joining of the European Union, which many of these countries already accomplished.

Dramatically shaken by the political changes, over the entire period after 1989 monuments and museums were undergoing incessant transformation (in form, content, policies of representation, public evaluation, etc.) and were indicators of important processes in collective identities in the post-socialist period. The current paper is guided by the intention to address namely this issue – about the meaning and scope of 'post-socialism' and 'post-socialist identities'⁴ from the perspective of

⁴ About possibilities offered by historical and anthropological approaches to studying post-socialism, see Hann, C. M., ed., *Postsocialism. Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, London, New York: Routledge 2002; Pine F., S. Bridger, eds. *Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*. London: Routledge, 66–79; Verdery, K., *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton

the transformed and transforming representations in monuments and museums after 1989. The goal of the paper is – by a closer look at the changes in these historical visualizations in Bulgaria and Romania,⁵ to reflect on the reformed notions about the recent past and to analyze the strategies to narrate in a ‘post-socialist mode’ as inseparable from the processes of political and historical identification after 1989. Dwelling upon several representative examples of monuments and museums in the two countries,⁶ the paper will outline their different approaches to the representation of the socialist period and their specific ways of restructuring collective identities during the times of ‘transition.’ Aside from posing in comparison the two countries with regards to their monument and museum policies, the paper will also provide a possibility to view from a different perspective the interrelation between political transformation, historical representation, and identity politics.

The different recourse to the recent past between the two countries was well outlined in the very frames of reference to the totalitarian period. Unlike Romania, who took revolutionary events against the socialist rule in 1989 as launching points in developing a discourse of opposition, in Bulgaria such a firm memory ground was not at an immediate avail. The complicated situation around the overturning of Zhivkov’s rule and the bothering suppositions about limited expressions of dissident activities in the socialist times put the primary attempts in ‘remembering otherwise’⁷ on problematic grounds. These disturbing considerations were paralleled, however, with the triggering of the demonological paradigm and the general

University Press, 1996. Note that in them, as well as already in the first publications on the end of the socialist period, the emphasis in understanding post-socialism is on its inherent rootedness in identity transformations. See for example Verdery, K., “Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the ‘Transition,’” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Representations of Europe: Transforming State, Society, and Identity (Aug., 1991), 419–439.

⁵ The research on the current topic was initiated in 2005 as part of the individual project “Visualizations of the Past in Transition: Monuments and Museums after 1989 in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.” carried out with the support of the Center for Advanced Study in Sofia, and presented already in two publications: Vukov, N., “Protean Memories. ‘Permanent’ Visualizations: Monuments and Museums in Post-Communist Eastern Europe” – In: Vösu, E., K. Kuutma, and E. Kõresaar, eds., *Memory from Trans-Disciplinary Perspectives: Agency, Practices, and Mediations*. Tartu, 2008 (forthcoming); Vukov, N., “Visualizations of the Past in Transition: Museum Representations in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria after 1989,” – In: Giordano, C., A. Kiossev, P. Kabakchieva, eds., *Roles, Identities and Hybrids: Multiple Institutional Cultures in Southeast Europe within the Context of European Unification*. Freiburg: Lit-Verlag, Freiburger Sozialanthropologische Studien, 2008 (forthcoming). The comparative exploration of monuments and museums in Romania and Bulgaria continued within the project “Southeast European Identities: Transformations and Perspective,” carried out in collaboration between the Institute of Folklore (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), and the Institute of Southeast European Studies (Romanian Academy of Sciences).

⁶ Whereas for the monumental objects, the major foci of attention will be those with an emphasized “commemorative value” (i.e. those that signify places of public commemoration of individuals that were outlined as ‘special’ during the socialist period, or that gained such a status after 1989), with respect to museum, the major focus of analysis will be the changes that occurred with museums of ‘modern history’ and museum forms directly related to the representation of the recent past.

⁷ Greenblatt, S., et al., “Introduction” to Greenblatt, S., et al., eds., “Identifying Histories: Eastern Europe before and after 1989” (Special Issue), *Representations* 49 (1995), p. 9.

disclaim of the socialist period at the wave of disclosures about its crimes. Already in the first months after 1989, newspapers, billboards, loudspeakers, etc. were revealing information about the terror of the regime, about the trials of the People's court, murdered opponents of the regime, the appalling face of the Stalinization and de-Stalinization. Terrifying data appeared about the conditions in the labor camps where political opponents and random people were sent (some of these camps continued its existence well after their closing in other countries of the region); about the rigor of the nationalization program in the first decade of the regime and its long-lasting harm on Bulgarian agriculture; about the previously hailed industrialization and its damages both on economy and the environment.⁸ All this 'newly revealed' data not merely played the role of shaping the political opinions against the communist party and its political successors, but also of charting the major trajectories of approaching the recent past in the post-socialist period, and of posing new parameters of its remembering.

Some of the major debates about remembering the period in Bulgaria ran, however, around the existing monuments of the socialist past, whose treatment occupied a central place in the public discussions for at least a decade after the changes. The reasons for the centrality of the monumental topic were various, but probably the major one was rooted in the dominant place that monuments had as ideological emblems in socialist Bulgaria. Almost all the various types (to the Soviet army, to socialist leaders, to antifascist resistance, and the partisan struggle, etc.) were widely represented and kept on being raised until late 1980s, leaving almost no town or village without such commemorative expressions. Foci of special attention by the party throughout the entire socialist period, monuments occupied the most prominent sites of city topographies and were the core of the major political ceremonies for about four decades.⁹ The first years after 1989 witnessed a sharp reevaluation of these sites, manifested by a wave of monuments that were toppled down following public protests and demonstrations – most immediately to the ideology's founders and prominent party leaders (Marx, Lenin, Blagoev, Dimitrov, etc.) With the major exception of the mausoleum of Dimitrov in Sofia, almost all monuments to such figures were destroyed within the first two years after the end of the regime and only their pedestals remained to remind about the

⁸ For a historiographic reflection of these topics, see esp. Boncheva, E., *Bulgarskiyat Gulag. Svideteli* [The Bulgarian Gulag. Witnesses], Sofia, 1991; Deyanova, L., *Ochertaniata na malchanieto: Travmatichni mesta na kolektivnata pamet* [Contours of Silence: Traumatic Sites of Collective Memory], Sofia, 1999; Migevev, V., *Kolektivizatsiyata na bulgarskoto selo (1948–1958)* [The Collectivization of the Bulgarian Village (1948–1958)], Sofia, 1995; Migevev, V., *Problemi na agrarnoto razvitiye na Bulgaria (1944–1960)* [Problems of the Agrarian Development in Bulgaria (1944–1960)], Sofia, 1998; Mikhailovska, E., *Pamet i prekhod* [Memory and Transition], Sofia, 1999; Todorov, T., ed., *Au nom de peuple. Témoignes sur les camps communistes*. Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 1992; Todorov, T., ed., *Voices from the Gulag: Life and Death in Communist Bulgaria*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999; Tsvetkov, J., *Sydyt na opozitsionnite lideri* [The Trial of Opposition Leaders], Sofia, 1991.

⁹ See Vukov, N., "Grad i memorialni prostranstva: po materiali ot Plovdiv" [City and Memorial Spaces: on Materials from Plovdiv], *Bulgarski folklor*, № 1, 2007, 46–55.

former ideological signs. While some of them were merely dismantled and sent for reuse, others turned into a focus of initiatives to reshape. Thus, for example, in 1991 the municipality council in General Toshevo decided to dismantle the 3.5 ton monument to Lenin. Out of fear that they might be stolen, the municipality hosted the monument remains and in 2000 approved a project for their reshaping into a sculpture of a white swallow as a “symbol of hope”¹⁰ (see Photo 1). In a similar fashion, the huge monument to Lenin in Sofia was dismantled in 1991, but the special nature of the square welcomed projects for a new statue, and in 2000 there was inaugurated a symbolic figure of St. Sophia.

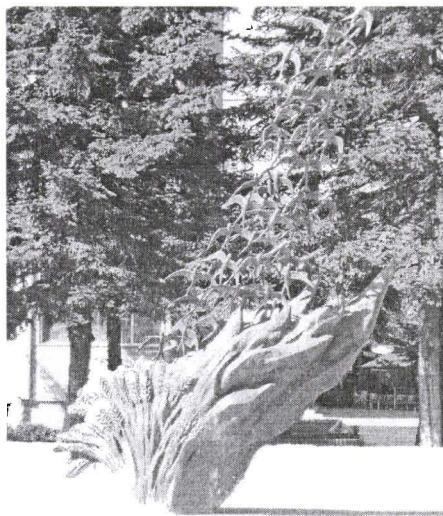


Photo 1: Sculpture group of swallows as a symbol of hope, built at the place of the former monument to Lenin, General Toshevo (Photo: N. Vukov, 2008).

In other occasions, especially those related to figures of the socialist movement in Bulgaria, there occurred ‘temporary displacements’ followed later by a reinstallation of the previous monuments. Such was the case with the monument to Blagoev in Blagoevgrad. It was dismantled in 1992, but in 1996, the Municipal Council of the town voted for the returning of the monument back to its previous place, to preserve in such a way the ‘synchrony’ between the name of the town and the monumental representation of its patron.¹¹ Similar was the case with the town bearing the name of the prominent leader of Bulgarian Communist Party, G. Dimitrov. In 1992 in the central square of the town of Dimitrovgrad, the monument to

¹⁰ See Bjuletin BTA “Vatreshna informatsia” [“Internal Information” of the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency] (BVT), 13.09.2000.

¹¹ See *Trud*, 134, 18.05.96; *Duma*, 116, 17.05.96.

Dimitrov was dismantled and together with its pedestal was removed to the park “Maritsa.”¹² In 1997, the monument was reinstalled – as if out of ‘fears’ that the town might lose its identity without its emblematic founder. In a comparable way, the monument of G. Dimitrov in Pavel banya was dismantled in 1993 and after being removed to the municipality basement was reinstalled in 1996 (see Photo 2).¹³ In Shumen, Dimitrov’s monument in front of the High Military School for artillery and air defence “P. Volov” was replaced by a rocket,¹⁴ while in Kurdjali, proposals were made to replace Dimitrov’s sculptured figure with a monument to the Medieval Bulgarian King Simeon the Great.¹⁵



Photo 2: The destroyed and then reinstalled monument of Georgi Dimitrov, Pavel Banya (Photo: N. Vukov, 2008).

Aside from the monuments to those most emblematic figures of the socialist rule, many of the monuments and memorial sites dedicated to the partisan and antifascist movement also suffered assaults after 1989. The memory of these people had been shaped in a particular way by the socialist regime and had been used as a significant legitimization pillar for its ideological discourse. The post-1989 period faced a real difficulty of how to interpret their death and how to treat the monuments to those who had been thought as “antifascists.” Their self-sacrifice was not easy to bracket and any attempt to clear their memorial sites from

¹² See *BVI*, 21, 21.01.92.

¹³ See *Trud*, 133, 17.05.96.

¹⁴ See *Duma*, 107, 11.05.93; *BVI*, 186, 5.07.93.

¹⁵ See *Duma*, 244, 17.10.95; *BVI*, 92, 1.04.96.

ideological associations had the shading of a desecration act and of claiming validity to the ideas these people fought against. The public debates on the legitimacy of commemorating those dead were frequently outstripped by private initiatives of assault or symbolic desecration of their memorial signs. Already in the first years after 1989, the majority of these monuments and memorial signs were covered with paint, had their red stars smashed, 'acquired' denigrating inscriptions, or were partially broken. Attempts were made to clear some of the desecrated signs, but they were desecrated again, prompting thus that little consensus could be expected to appear on this issue. Among the monuments of this type that attracted the most rigorous contestations, were for example, the memorial ensemble to the 1923 September uprising in Montana, the brotherly mounds in Pleven and Plovdiv, the memorial to the "Anton Ivanov" partisan troop near Batak, etc. While in some towns, the assaults on monuments swept around the whole urban landscape, in others, the memory of the city preserved moments of 'ritual' destruction of separate monuments. The ideas for the possible dismantlement and replacement did not concern only the most representative and huge monuments of the totalitarian epoch, but generally included all signs and memorial plaques that were a legacy of before. The various acts of desecration put at stake the existence of the memorial signs, insisted on their preservation or destruction, and required a response on behalf of municipal authorities. The presence of the monument, the standing of the memorial plaque testifies about a certain municipal policy and generally prompts about the political affiliation of the local government and about the sustenance of a particular attitude to the legacy of the recent past.

The practice of reshaping the landscapes where the ideology's special dead were permanently located was closely related to the practice of renaming villages, towns, schools, factories, and institutions that previously bore the names of participants in the partisan and resistance movement.¹⁶ Until the mid-1990s, many of the institutions bearing the names of former "special dead" received new names. The names of the previous heroes seemed irrelevant in the post-socialist context: they did not confer appropriate information, and, superseded by names adhering to a more commercial and advertising pattern, they tended to disappear. The numerous spatial and verbal references to the activities of party activists who had worked and died in towns, could no longer have adequate positioning in the post-socialist realities – the tourist brochures stopped mentioning them as sites appealing for tourists, and (especially in larger towns) there usually came forth the memory of the ancient and medieval heritage, or such belonging to different ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions. In contrast to the previously pervasive visual representations in postcards, slogans and brochures, cities "advertise" themselves no longer through the monuments raised in the period of socialism and through their revolutionary past. The reshaping of heroes' monuments and the remodeled

¹⁶ See about this in: Vukov, N., "Memory, 'Memorable Sites,' *Lieux des mémoire.*" – *Bulgarski folklor*, № 3, 2007, 41–62.

contours of heroism and sacrifice exercised thus a strong impact on the changes of regional identities and on developing alternative models of reference to the past.

The monuments that became, however, targets of most intensive debates were those to the Soviet army, whose link with the establishment of the communist power was especially direct and whose preservation was frequently denounced as adulation to the oppressor. Public demands for their destruction and reshaping were raised, stirring some of the most important symbolic struggles around such sites in the post-1989 period. Those in Sofia and Plovdiv, which have been in the focus of ardent debates over the entire period after 1989,¹⁷ were targets of various project proposals for dismantling and substitution of new forms: a park of horror; an Orthodox church; monuments to the Christianization of Bulgaria, to the national hero Vassil Levski, to the medieval Bulgarian ruler Khan Krum, or by an Arc de Triomphe; a large bottle of Coca-Cola; an obelisk symbolizing the independence of Bulgaria; a memorial plaque for the Bulgarians killed in the Second World War, etc.¹⁸ At the backstage of such projects were initiatives for monuments' dismantlement (with peaks in 1993, 1997, 1998), which was in turn opposed by the Bulgarian Socialist Party, antifascist and veteran unions, and by a wide range of social, political, and cultural organizations. In spite of the threat of complete destruction that was faced by all the monuments of the Soviet army in Bulgaria, few of them encountered anything more than a partial dismantlement, and most of them (as in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Russe, etc.) continued to occupy representative parts of the cityscapes. After pronouncements of the Supreme Court in 1998 that municipal projects for dismantling monuments were illegal, the political contestations in these memorial areas subsided, and debates arise mostly on anniversary days, when the Bulgarian Socialist Party organizes commemorative rituals at these sites.

Aside from the memorial ensembles to the Soviet army, the monument that attracted most lively attention for an entire decade after 1989 in Bulgaria was the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov. Its fate has already received several detailed analyses in scholarly publications,¹⁹ and for that purpose here will be provided only

¹⁷ These two monuments have been discussed in larger detail in some of my publications, so I will afford here only an outline of the major aspects in their reinterpretation after 1989. See for example Vukov, N., "'Brotherly Help' Representations or 'Imperial' Legacy: Monuments to the Soviet Army in Bulgaria before and after 1989." *Ab Imperio*, vol. 1. 2006, 267–292; Voukov, N., "Death and Desecration: Monuments of the Socialist Past in Bulgaria after 1989." *Anthropology of Eastern Europe Review*, vol. 21, 2, 2003, 49–55.

¹⁸ See *1000 dni*, 76.12.02.93; *Demokratsia*, 166, 20.07.93; Buletin BTA, "Presofis "Kurier" [Bulletin Press-office "Courier" of the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency] (*BPK*), 92, 13.05.93; *BPK*, 127, 2.07.93; *Ranno Utro*, 25.05.93; *Duma*, 153, 1.07.96; *Kontinent*, 157, 7.07.96; *24 chasa*, 238, 31.08.99; *BVI*, 361, 27.12.95; *Trud*, 116, 29.04.96.

¹⁹ About the various transformations and the eventual destruction of Dimitrov's mausoleum, see Deyanova, L. "The Battles for the Mausoleums: Traumatic Places of Collective Memory." In: Coenen-Huther, J., ed., *Bulgaria at the Crossroads*. New York: Nova Svetlina Publishing House, 1997; Gradev, V., "Le Mausolée de Dimitrov," *Communications* 55, 1992, 77–88; Ivanova, R., "Vsichki jabi sa zeleni, samo nashta e chervena." Grafite varhu pametnika na savetskata armia i na Mavzoleia ["All Frogs Are Green, Only Ours Is Red." The Graffiti on the Monument of the Soviet Army and the Mausoleum]. *Bulgarska etnologia*, 1, 1995, 22–40; Mihailova, K., *Fotorazkaz za*

a brief presentation of its transformations. Immediately after the political changes after 1989, the monument turned into a target of political protests against its existence, which led in 1990 to the removal and cremation of Dimitrov's embalmed body. After the removal, the demands for the mausoleum's destruction were more overt and numerous media and parliamentary debates about the mausoleum's fate were held. Due mostly to the pressure of the socialist party in the Bulgarian parliament, the destruction of the building was cancelled several times. Unguarded both by state and party authorities, in the 1990s its walls were covered with graffiti, posters and slogans, whereas the square in front became one of the most exploited sites used for demonstrations and political meetings. Parallel to the political and artistic utilizations of the monument, numerous projects were developed for its future reshaping. Among them were suggestions to build a museum to the history of socialism in Bulgaria; to establish an exhibition place and a gallery of modern art; to host the archives of several state institutions, or create the largest disco club in the Balkans. There were also ideas to transfer and preserve the national treasury in its basement, or to turn the building into an open space for theatre performances. The incessant discussions that all these projects triggered were put to a close only in 1999, when the government of the Union of Democratic Forces organized a swift destruction of the mausoleum and opted to restore the previous arrangement of the town garden at its place. Aiming to counteract the revival of the communist ideology through its embodiments, the destruction paradoxically facilitated the extended 'life' of the building, at least to the extent that it keeps the monument in the focus of remembrance acts and scholarly research until today.

The reinscribing of collective identities through the reshaping of public monuments in Bulgaria did not relate only to the heritage of the socialist times, but also to attempts for new monuments to national history figures and events, as well as to commemorative forms in memory of the communist victims. Whereas on the one hand, there was observed a process of diversifying public memory after the fall of the socialist ideology, on the other (especially after 1990s), there was a clear emphasis on figures of national history, imagined as possible means to consolidate the multiple and conflicting historical memories. Already in the first two years after the fall of the regime, demands were raised for commemorating the victims of totalitarianism in Bulgaria. The first memory resource was related to the events of the so-called *Vazroditelen protses* [Revival process] of the mid-1980s, when the communist state organized a campaign to rename forcefully the Bulgarian Muslims

novoto litse na mavzoleya [Photo Story about the New Face of the Mausoleum]. *Bulgarski folklor* XIX, № 4 (1993), pp. 104–109; Todorova, M., "The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as lieu de mémoire," – *Journal of Modern History* 78, 2006, 377–411; Voukov, N., "The Destruction of Georgi Dimitrov's Mausoleum in Sofia: The 'Incoincidence' between Memory and Its Referents," *OCTOGON – Arhitectura & Design* (Bucharest), 11 (2001), 119–125; Voukov, N., "Monuments beyond the Representations of Power: Monuments of the Socialist Past in Post-1989 Bulgaria." – In: Bartetzky, A., M. Dmitrieva, S. Troebst, eds., *Neue Staaten – neue Bilder? Visuelle Kultur im Dienst staatlicher Selbstdarstellung in Zentral- und Osteuropa seit 1918*. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2005, 211–219.

with Bulgarian names and caused their mass exodus from the country. Soon after that, memorial signs and larger monumental ensembles appeared to the dead in the communist labour camps, to the victims of repression and political persecution, as well as represented collectively the painful totalitarian experience (see Photo 3). Based on religious imagery and stressing theological aspects of martyrdom, the memorial signs to the victims of totalitarianism inserted serious ruptures in the policies of commemoration, as the choice of whom to commemorate was itself a point of debate between different sectors in the society, especially between those following communist or anti-communist persuasion. The rigid dividing lines along these two poles started to weaken only after the first post-socialist decade, and, aside the political circumstances towards such reorientation, it ran in parallel with the gradual decrease in interest to the socialist monuments' fate in the Bulgarian society. It was around that time when a new impetus of building national history monuments emerged as an expression of the attempt to close up the continuous debates around existing memorial signs and – by stretching back to Medieval or early modern times, to supply consolidating spirit to monumental representations.²⁰

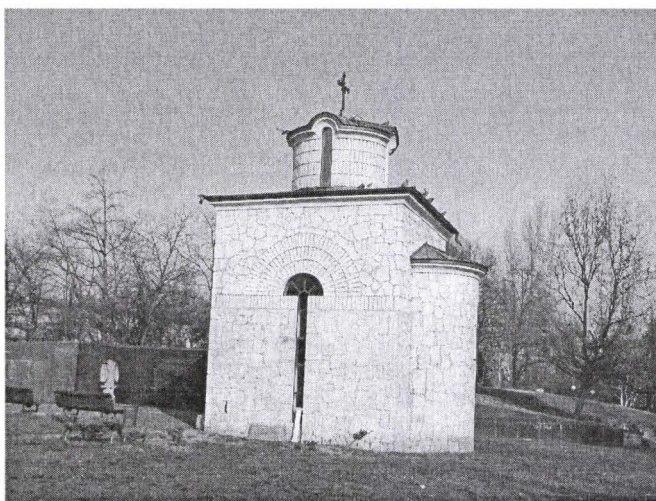


Photo 3: Monument to the victims of totalitarianism in Sofia
(Photo: N. Vukov, 2008).

In contrast to Bulgaria, the reworking of the socialist memorial landscapes and the debates about the presence of socialist monuments did not gain the resonance in Romanian public after 1989. To a great extent, this was due mostly to the more limited scale of monument building in the communist period, itself conditioned largely by the powerful presence that the First World War commemoration

²⁰ Note in this respect, for example, the wave of monuments to Vassil Levski raised in different towns of Bulgaria after 1989 – many of them appearing at the site of toppled or destroyed former monuments of socialist heroes.

played in twentieth-century Romanian history.²¹ Truly, protests and discussions against some of the remaining monuments to the Soviet army, or to special figures of the socialist regime did take place in the first years of the post-socialist transition, but they did not reach the scale that one could witness in the Bulgarian context. The startling experience of totalitarianism that Romanians had during Ceausescu's rule provided strong reasons for wanting to erase the memory of the recent past²² and there was low hesitation in the general public on whether such monuments would have the right to remain as 'reminders of the past.' Until early 1990s, most of the remaining monuments of the socialist period across the country have been toppled down and sent for reuse, hardly evoking any opposition. The few examples that were spared destruction (such as the notorious monument of the Soviet soldier in Bucharest, or memorial signs to participants in the antifascist resistance) remained disregarded or left to oblivion in isolated places and city outskirts.

Among the few exceptions of this general lack of intensive debates about former socialist monuments was the Monument to the Communist Heroes in Freedom Park (Carol Park),²³ which was a focal point of contestations about its possible destruction and building a Cathedral of National Redemption in its stead. Receiving firm support from the Romanian Patriarchate, the idea of building a church at the expense of the destruction of the big communist temple (preserving since 1963 the deadly remains of many communist dignitaries), received, however, a strong opposition among the public, which saw in these attempts an organized act of wiping out an important material reference from the communist period, together with destroying a long-existing park area around it. Despite the fact that the process of announcing and selecting project proposals for the construction was already under way and the fate of the monument seemed already decided, the public protest around the demolition of this grand memorial had its crucial say and the destruction was precluded. In the recent years, new initiatives were undertaken to renovate the monument, resulting in the improved sustenance of the grave area around it, the general improvement of the memorial's façade and interior, and of opening the access to it for the wide public. A symbolic expression of the new significance as a material sign of the recent past that this former communist symbol

²¹ For an overview of monument-building in twentieth-century Romania, see esp. Bucur, M., "Edifices of the Past. War Memorials and Heroes in Twentieth Century Romania." In: Todorova, M., ed., *Balkan Identities, Nation and Memory*. New York University Press, 2004, 158–179. For a closer look on the dynamics of commemorations and museum representations, see also Bucur, M., "Birth of a Nation. Commemorations of December 1, 1918, and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Romania." In: Bucur, M., N. M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past. The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*. Purdue University Press: West Lafayette, Indiana, 2001, 286–322.

²² See Light, D., "Tourism and Romania's Communist Past: Coming to Terms with an Unwanted Heritage." In: Light, D., *Postcommunist Romania: Coming to Terms with Transition*. Palgrave, 2001, p. 67.

²³ See about it in: Cristea, G., S. Radu-Bucurenci, "Raising the Cross. Exorcising Romania's Communist Past in Museums, Memorials and Monuments," In: Apor P., O. Sarkisova, *Past for the Eyes: East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*. Central European University Press, 2007, 284–286.

gained in the new is the removal of the Monument to the Unknown Soldier, and its eternal flame – from the distant part in the memorial's area to its immediate base. With all the possible controversies that these actions may arise, the Monument to the Communist Heroes in Freedom Park appears as a rare example of preserving former communist signs as testimonies about the recent period and architectural heritage that can still have its place in the world of today.

A major role in the post-socialist monumental discourse in Romania had, however, not that much the memorial sites inherited from the socialist epoch, but the new ones that needed to be raised after 1989. Together with the public initiatives to raise memorial signs to the victims of the communist regime,²⁴ a major share in these new commemorative activities were related to the fallen in the dramatic events of 1989. While lacking the centrality of the events such as the Prague Spring or the 1956 Hungarian revolution, a large share of the post-socialist reconstruction of the past in Romania concentrated on the events related to the overthrowing of Ceausescu's regime and on commemorating the victims of the 1989 revolution. The debates about the proper nature of these events – a coup, a popular uprising, or a revolution, etc.,²⁵ were overshadowed by the need to ensure public remembrance of the dead in 1989 events and to sustain a proper interpretation about their 'martyrdom' in a heroic fight against a brutal regime. To assign an appropriate burial site and commemoration to the dead of the revolution was in the focus of public attention after the drama of the street fights appeased. Cemeteries with the bodies of those who died in the streets protests (see Photo 4) were created in all the towns where 1989 protests took place; monuments to the dead, crosses, memorial plaques and commemorative signs were raised in all the central places of the revolution. Many of the city parts that were related to the street fights were either renamed or contained explicit references to the 1989 events. In museum terms, museum displays narrating about the dramatic events appeared in the cities where organized protests took place. In the capital, the outmost place for such exhibitions were the Bucharest History Museum (with a display on the events of December 1989), and the Military History Museum, unique with its exhibition dedicated to the role of the army in the overthrow of Ceausescu's regime. Beginning with the

²⁴ As noted by G. Cristea and S. Radu-Bucurenci, between 1991 and 2004 eighty-two monuments to the victims of communist terror were built at private initiatives in Romania. See Cristea, Radu-Bucurenci, *ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁵ On the Romanian revolution in 1989 and the fall of Ceausescu, see esp. Gilberg, T., *Nationalism and Communism in Romania: The Rise and Fall of Ceausescu's Personal Dictatorship*. Boulder, 1990; Hall, R. A., "Theories of Collective Action and Revolution: Evidence from the Romanian Transition of December 1989," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, № 6 (Sep., 2000), 1069–1093; Petrescu, D., "The 1989 Revolutions in Hungary and Romania: Comparative Perspectives," *Studia Politica* (Bucharest) Vol. 3, No.1 (2003), 22–55; Ramesh, N., *Romania: The Entangled Revolution*, New York: Praeger, 1991; Roper, St. D., *Romania, The Unfinished Revolution*. Harvard Academic Press, 2000; Siani-Davies, P., *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005; Tileagă, C., "What is a 'Revolution'? : National Commemoration, Collective Memory and Managing Authenticity in the Representation of a Political Event." *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2008, 359–382.

defining symbol of the revolution – flags with the Communist emblem ripped out – the display records the soldiers who died in the fighting and includes for example the uniform worn by General Vasile Milea, who had a key role in the revolution and was allegedly shot on Ceausescu’s orders.²⁶



Photo 4: Cemetery of the Heroes of the Romanian Revolution of 1989
(Photo: N. Vukov, 2008).

The scale of the protests, the drama of the street fights, and the numerous people who lost their lives, conferred to the revolution an outlined place in the twentieth-century Romanian history, which provided a significant resource to develop a discourse of distance to the socialist past. This resource was promptly grasped in issues related to historical and cultural heritage, and was utilized in a range of initiatives to preserve and exhibit traces of the 1989 events. Already in the beginning of 1990s there were organized “guided tours of the revolution trail,” including the major sites where the events of the revolution took place: the Central Committee of the Communist Party building (with the balcony where Ceausescu gave his last speech); the square of the revolution (with the row of memorials and cross shaped monuments of those who died in the fights); the bulleted walls of the buildings in the center of the city; the University Square, again with rows of monuments and references to the scene of fighting in 1989 and 1990 (see Photo 5); the Belu cemetery (where the fallen in the revolutionary events were buried), etc. The legacy of communism and revolution (as D. Light observes), was “constructed

²⁶ Light *ibid.*: 67; Bucur 2001, *ibid.*

as part of the city's 'heritage,' at least in the eyes of foreign visitors"²⁷ and demonstrated a tourist potential that could be easily exploited in the post-socialist period.



Photo 5: Memorial Signs to the Victims of the Romanian Revolution in 1989
(Photo: N. Vukov, 2008).

Although enjoying a relatively unanimous attitude among the Romanian public,²⁸ the overthrowing of Ceausescu's regime (and respectively the decades of Ceausescu's rule) is however strikingly opposed by the lack of consensus over how to come to terms with the legacy of the socialist period, how to preserve the material reminders of these times, and how to negotiate the painful memories with the historical narratives and visual references.²⁹ A wide span of positions and opinions appeared on whether to remember (or to try to forget) about those times, on how to represent the difficult times and what tools of historical justice to apply. The attitude of denial (as D. Light observes) was palpably expressed in the widespread reservation towards representing the socialist legacy in museum terms. Probably the most notable example is the one with the House of the People (the huge palace

²⁷ Light *ibid.*: 61

²⁸ See more about the "myths and realities" of the revolution in Siani-Davis *ibid.*; Tileagă *ibid.*

²⁹ On the interpretations and negotiations about the recent past in contemporary Romania, see Deletant, D., "The Past in Contemporary Romania: Some Reflections on Contemporary Romanian Historiography." *Slovo*, 1, 2, 1998, 77–91; Fischer-Galati, S. *Twentieth-century Romania*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1991; Gussi, A., *Usages du passé et démocratisation. Le rapport des partis politiques roumains à la période communiste*, Thèse doctorale à L'Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, Directeur de thèse D. Colas, Mai 2007; Hitchins, K., *Myth and Reality in Romanian Historiography*, Bucharest, 1997; Light, D., and D. Dumbraeanu, "Romanian Tourism in the Post-Communist Period." *Annals of Tourism Research* 4, 1999, 898–927; Iordachi, C., B. Trencsényi, "In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990 – 2000," *East European Politics & Societies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2003, 415–453. For a general overview of the issues related to the transitional period in Romania, see also Gallagher, T., *Romania after Ceausescu*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1994; Nelson, D. N., *Romania after Tyranny*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992; Stan, L. ed., *Romania in Transition*. Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1997.

that Ceausescu built in the last decade of his regime), used after 1994 as hosting the sessions of the national parliament and as an international conference center. One part of the building was turned into a museum, but both the reasons of sustaining the financially disruptive building (seen by many as a symbol of a period they would rather forget), and the logic of museum representation remained unaccepted by many Romanians. The mere preservation of the premises where the Ceausescu family lived in luxury and the exhibition of the riches, with which they were surrounded, did not create persuasive grounds for an engaged distance to the recent past and for the museum's existence. Similar is the case with the recently created museum in the birthplace of Ceausescu, which reconstructs the house where he was born and gives a brief history of his life and work. Together with the lack of critical detachment to the existence of such a memory site, the disapproval and rejection to this new museum is strengthened also by the fact that the entire town is turned into a place of entertainment, a mini Disneyland.

Notably, however, the elaboration of an engaged detachment to the recent past did not appear possible even for the institution that would have as a primary goal to provide an interpretation on the recent period – the National History Museum in Bucharest. Opened in 1972 on Ceausescu's initiative and reflecting his increasing nationalist stance in the 1970s and 1980s, the National History Museum was inevitably turned into a means of glorifying the leader himself. A substantial part of the museum was dedicated to the dictator's achievements and a special exhibition contained thousands of gifts given to him on his birthdays and anniversaries. Although after 1989 the museum put efforts in removing the pervasive ideological representations that suffused its halls before, for the entire period after the changes it did not succeed to create an exhibition on the socialist period in the country. The galleries dealing with the communist period and Ceausescu were closed, but the coverage of the museum stopped abruptly in the beginning of the interwar period. After it was several times closed temporarily, since 2003 all the exhibitions except those with ancient treasures have been shut for reconstruction and would remain such at least until 2009 (when it was announced that the museum would be open). The pattern of the National History Museum is generally followed by its numerous branches and the regional history museums in the country, where the previous displays of the recent past are dropped, but novel interpretations of the socialist period have rarely appeared, destining thus the post-war Romanian history into a blank slate waiting for a period to be inscribed anew.

One of the few museums in Romania which has so far essentially addressed the communist period is the "International Centre for the Study of Totalitarianism" opened in 1997 in a building in Sighetu Marmatiei which was formerly a communist prison.³⁰ The Memorial of Sighet was set up in the beginning of 1993,

³⁰ About the history and structure of this museum see esp. Cristea, G., S. Radu-Bucurenci, *ibid.*, 297–304.

when Ana Blandiana presented the project to the Council of Europe, who took it under the aegis in 1994. In 1997 the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Anti-communist Resistance – Sighet has been declared “A Monument of national interest” and one year later was nominated by the Council of Europe among the first three places meant to ward off the European memory, alongside of the Auschwitz Memorial and of the Peace Memorial in Normandy. The Museum contains 45 exhibition halls, illustrating the resistance to communism and the communist repression in Romania; Space for Meditation and Prayer; “The Convoy of the Sacrificed” – statuary group by Aurel Vlad; and the Cemetery of the Poor – a landscape monument dedicated to the memory of the prisoners who died in the Sighet prison during 1950–1955. Representing a unique collection of recordings and documentary materials about the terror of the communist regime in Romania, the museum in Sighet is, however, exclusively focused on the establishment of the totalitarian rule in 1940s and 1950s, and leaves the period of Ceausescu largely unrepresented, which in a curious way confirms the difficult and not yet established interpretative distance towards the recent past.

As a summarizing remark about the processes undergone by monuments and museums in post-socialist Romania, I would emphasize that, despite the shared revulsion towards the period of Ceausescu’s rule, the majority of museum and monumental representations of the socialist period created a position of distance exclusively through the focus of the events that led to the regime’s overthrowing. While the changes in the national and regional museums comprised a mere dropping of the previous exhibitions, the several attempts for museum narratives about the socialist times were either small and episodic, or were limited to the first years of the socialist terror and then – to the revolution of 1989. Thus, for example, one of the first attempts to create a museum of communism in Eastern Europe in general – the one located in the former Communist Party Headquarters, and currently the Peasant Museum in Bucharest³¹ – was both very small for its purposes, too compressed in the tiny room in the basement of the building, and also too didactic to attract a more thorough attention. Curiously enough, the main proponents of the Ceausescu period in Romanian museums have appeared to be the exhibitions of gifts and luxury enjoyed by Ceausescu family at the time of their rule. Notably however, the one in the basements of the National History Museum have been closed for visitors (even before the official closing of the entire museum), and the other – at the House of the People receives the objection of the Romanian public and is a target of mainly for foreign visitors. The filling up of this gap in historicizing and visualizing of the recent past is hopefully a project to expect from the years to come.

The difficulties of achieving museum representation of the recent past were no less intriguing in post-socialist Bulgaria, where the expedient closing after 1989

³¹ About this museum, see Cristea, G., S. Radu-Bucurenci, *ibid.*, 286–297; Mihailescu, V., “The Romanian Peasant Museum and the Authentic Man,” *Martor: The Romanian Peasant Museum Anthropology Review* 11, 2006, 15–29.

of the various museums units dedicated to the party history and the socialist construction did not lead to the elaboration of new exhibitions about the socialist times. Despite the fact that novel historical materials on the socialist period were produced, and new emphases in the public discourse of the past were developed, they did not receive a realization in a museum discourse. Even at the sites where communist repressions had taken place, museum narratives failed to accompany the memorial signs that were raised. Although voices about building museums of the Communist period were regularly raised from early 1990s on, no such permanent exhibition came into being up to now. With the exception of temporary displays focused mainly on the establishment of the communist rule (which occurred on a random basis in regional history museums), the 2007 exhibition of "I lived Socialism" (focused on everyday objects of the socialist times), and the reopened museum of Todor Zhivkov in his birthplace,³² the period after 1944 remains strikingly missing from museum premises. Its being a 'blank period' is indicatively confirmed by the National History Museum, where the representation of national history stops around 1940s, as if the period after that has not yet turned 'history,' or has not gained the value to be termed such.³³ All this not merely overlooked the four and a half decades of communist rule in the country, but turned historical events (such as the role of Bulgaria in World War II, the nature of the 'Bulgarian fascism' and of the 'anti-fascist resistance') also missing from museum representation. Grounded in the difficulties to elaborate a coherent discourse on the recent past, the principle lack of museum representations of the socialist times is indicative about the crisis of museum institution in the post-socialist period and about the problems faced by history narration when the past and the present are not in an open dialogue.³⁴

CONCLUSION

The various examples highlighted so far in the two countries demonstrate the role of monuments and museums in tracing historical continuities different from those of the socialist regime and in establishing new modes of remembrance during the post-socialist period. In the attempts to overcome the crisis of historical representation faced with the political changes after 1989, monuments and museums witnessed the elaboration of diverse techniques and strategies. The rearrangement of historical chronologies; the reevaluation and paying historical justice to personalities unrelated to the socialist regime; the eliciting of a new group of special dead; the establishing of a new discourses of authenticity and persuasion –

³² See about it in Vukov, N., "The Unmemorable and the Unforgettable: Museum Visualizations in Post-1989 Bulgaria." In: Apor P., O. Sarkisova, *Past for the Eyes: East European Representations of Communism in Cinema and Museums after 1989*. Central European University Press, 2007, 308–334.

³³ About the National History Museum in Sofia, see for example Tseckova, E., "National History Museum: Reviving the Heritage." *Evropa* 4, 2001, 52–54.

³⁴ See Vukov "The Unmemorable", p. 334.

were among the main processes that marked these sites during the transition period. Although the forms and emphases were different in the two countries, and although they had varying expressions in monumental and museum terms, the trends and processes occurring with these representations were largely shared.

The cases of dismantling and reshaping of Socialist monuments and of transforming the previous museum exhibitions played a major role in restructuring the collective identities in the two countries. The enhanced attention to preserve the traces of the 1989 revolution and to ensure a visualized remembrance of those who died in it in Romania; the wave of debates and rituals related to dismantling former socialist monuments in Bulgaria – these had enormous consequences for the identity transformations taking place in the period. The identity-shaping aspect of these visualizations found a particular expression in the psychological and social transformations that evolved with monument and museum's reshaping. The debates about public commemorations instigated collisions between political parties and groups, catalyzed opinions towards the proper terming of the socialist period, and formed positions on major issues of public importance. Joining protests around monumental sites, sticking labels and carrying slogans, debating on the proper narration on historical personalities, etc. represented a substantial component of the post-1989 political culture, as well as was a turning point in developing new patterns of civic behaviour. Thus, while previously being a part of a strategy to sustain a venerable distance towards ideologically 'sacred' figures and events, monuments and museums after 1989 turned into signifiers of the change, into sites welcoming civic involvement, and into visible expressions of the new identities embraced by the societies in transition. Yet, their transformations not only provoked individuals and groups for taking response towards the previous interpretations, but also called forth the elaboration of institutional policies on how history would be interpreted and visualized, and were thus indicative about the institutional sustenance of 'coherent' and 'negotiated' collective images of the past.

Acting to dissolve the monolithic framework inherited from the socialist period, monuments and museums signaled the wave of a multiplicity of memories (ranging from nostalgia to retribution) that insisted on a possible institutionalization. The attempts to do this, however, faced both the difficulty to incorporate the new memories in the ossified forms of the recent past, and the obstacles to establish notions of 'collective identities' beyond the diverging lines. While to establish collective visions of the past (even if through notions of martyrdom and valor) got prevented by the forking paths of individual memories, the 'unity' of representation was disrupted by the altered values applied to the past's visualization, and by the changeable nature of monumental and museum forms. Thus, being in the focus of the diversified memory paths after the fall of the totalitarian regimes in 1989, monuments and museums were the instances where the first attempts to reconsolidate collective identities around national or pre-socialist historical visions took place. The spectrum of the choices of such representations, the dynamics of precipitation

around these decisions and the narratives accompanying the new historical representations were all indicative about the political and public imagination of collective identities in the stead of the opened void. The fact that many of these projects still face uneasiness with the incorporation of the recent past, and stretch to consolidate identities by a mere neglect or avoidance of the latter, will certainly determine the development of these memory forms in the future.

Furthermore, yet another factor joined the list of those that perplexed representation – the increasing distance from a past that is still called a ‘recent’ one. While in the first post-socialist years, the need to ‘remember otherwise’ encountered a diversity of approaches for alternative recollection, with the gradual distancing from the socialist period the remembering stepped on shifting and often unpredictable grounds, turning thus the very idea of ‘remembrance’ problematic. The distinctions already followed not the cutting line of ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ evaluation of the past, but rather of the presence or lack of a shared experience in those years, of the availability or lack of memory about that period. The new generations for whom the socialist times have been nothing else but a period preceding their lives; the returned emigrants for whom the socialist reality was a terra incognita, the tourists – all they introduced new spheres of imagining and perception, added ‘new eyes’ to previously celebrated forms, and offered novel opinions of the past’s representation. Thus, beyond the dilemmas of representing and aside from the power struggles about who should carry out the public commemorations, the role of monuments and museums as sites for ‘coming to terms with the Socialist past’ appears as one of crucial importance.