

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of International Studies

**Remembering Communist-era Czechoslovakia:
A Museum's Role in Facilitating
History, Identities, and Memory Communities**

Master's thesis

Author: Rose Joy Smith

Study programme: IMESS

Supervisor: PhDr. Kateřina Králová, PhD.

Year of the defence: 2019

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on
the 28th of July 2019

Rose Joy Smith

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rose Joy Smith", is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

References

SMITH, Rose Joy E. *Remembering Communist-era Czechoslovakia: A Museum's role in facilitating History, Identities, and Memory Communities*. Praha, 2019. 79 pages. Master's thesis (Mgr.). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of International Studies. Department of Department of Russian and East European Studies. Supervisor PhDr. Kateřina Králová, PhD.

Length of the thesis: 21164 words

Abstract

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, post-Communist states had to interpret and portray their past in the context of post-Cold War politics. In the Czech Republic, reflections on the memory of communism have gone through peculiar waves that travel between indifference to anti-regime. The Museum of Communism serves as the only social institution that deals with such memory exclusively. Its goal is to create a simple and objective account of communism. However, with museums reinventing themselves as performative spaces that aim to empower their visitors, engage them emotionally and provide them an opportunity to (re)live a past they have not experienced first-hand, this thesis aims to identify what group identities the museum promotes, how it gives substance to them, and what kind of memory community it adheres to and fosters. Drawing on the rich literature on both memory studies and museum studies, this thesis examines the museum through lens of critical discourse analysis. It argues that the Museum of Communism's portrayal of the past maintains and participates in the pan-European discourse of the Czech Republic as a western nation kidnapped by the East and its victimhood status is defined by the global holocaust discourse.

Abstrakt

Po pádu berlínské zdi musely postkomunistické státy interpretovat a vykreslit svou minulost v kontextu politiky po studené válce. Reflexe vzpomínání na komunistickou éru prochází různými vlnami od lhostejnosti až po protirežimní nálady. Muzeum komunismu slouží jako jediná společenská instituce, která se zabývá výhradně tímto vzpomínáním. Jeho záměrem je vytvořit jednoduchý objektivní pohled na dobu komunismu. Muzea se nicméně nově orientují jako performativní místa, jejichž účelem je zasáhnout jejich návštěvníky, zaujmout je po emocionální stránce a poskytnout jim možnost (znovu) prožít minulost, kterou sami nezažili. S ohledem na to si klade tato práce za cíl identifikovat, kterou skupinu identit toto muzeum představuje, jak jim dává obsah a k jakému druhu paměťové komunity line a kterou zhmotňuje. Tato práce vychází z široké literatury zabývající se jak paměťovými, tak i muzeálními studii a zkoumá muzeum kritickou diskurzivní analýzou. Dochází k závěru, že obraz minulosti, který předkládá Muzeum komunismu, je v souladu s panevropským diskurzem České republiky jako západní země unesené Východem, jejíž status oběti je definován globálním diskurzem holokaustu.

Keywords

Czech Republic, Communism, history, collective memory, memory studies, museum studies

Klíčová slova

Česká republika, komunismus, historie, kolektivní paměť, paměťová studia, muzeální studia

Title

Remembering Communist-era Czechoslovakia: A museum's role in facilitating history, identities, and memory communities

Název práce

Vzpomínání na komunistickou éru v Československu: Role muzea ve zprostředkování historie, identit a paměťových společenství

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my parents for giving me the opportunity to pursue further studies and for supporting me throughout the education. I would also like to thank my thesis advisers, Dr. Richard Mole and PhDr. Kateřina Králová, as well as PhDr. Jiří Vykoukal, for guiding the direction of my thesis throughout the two years of my study program. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Elena Soler for her continued encouragement to explore opportunities within the academe. I would also like to thank the faculty of University College London School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies as well as the faculty of Charles University for inspiring me to come up with my topic for providing me the necessary tools and skills to finish my dissertation through both the theoretical and methodological classes I took. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my colleagues and peers who have supported me throughout writing my dissertation.

Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	7
<i>Introduction</i>	8
Memory Studies	13
Museum Studies	16
Museums of Communism	20
Museum of Communism in Prague	22
<i>1. Description: Textual Analysis</i>	25
1.1. Czechoslovakia: The Kidnapped West	27
1.2. Communists: The Heinous Totalitarian Occupier	38
1.3. Nazis: The Perpetrator when Convenient	46
<i>2. Interpretation: Processing Analysis</i>	50
2.1. Visual and Audio	53
2.2. Cinema	57
2.3. Personal Testimonies	58
<i>3. Explanation: Social Analysis</i>	65
<i>Conclusion</i>	71
<i>Summary</i>	75
<i>List of References</i>	76

Introduction

The events of 1989 drastically changed the status quo of global affairs. In Europe, post-Communist states had to interpret and portray their historical experience in the context of post-Cold War politics. Those that aspired to become members of the European Union had to deliberately position themselves as Western nations that were kidnapped by the East as well as formulate their memory of Communism in accordance to European norms, values, and historical consciousness in reference to the global Holocaust discourse.¹ Thus, the memory of Communism became a tool for strategic nation (re)building as they adhered to the pan-European narrative. It served as an instrument of national self-promotion to achieve both internal and external political aims. While there is still no post-Communist country today that has a consensus on definitively closing the so-called file of their Communist past, the Czech Republic – even twenty years after the fall of the Berlin wall – has particularly reflected on communism in peculiar waves as it goes back and forth between indifference to extreme anti-Communist regime with a desire to identify and marginalize the culprits of the past.²

A number of efforts in the Czech Republic have been made in order to reflect on their Communist past. The law proposed in 2001 to create an institute, which is explicitly modelled after Germany's Gaus Institute and Poland's Institute for National Remembrance (IPN), to document the Communist regime, was so hotly debated that the Parliament failed to reach an agreement. Thus, it never came into being. However, in 2003, the law on Edvard

¹ Máté Zombory, "The birth of the memory of Communism: memorial museums," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 6 (2017): 1028, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1339680>.

² Michal Kopeček and Matěj Spurný, "The History and Memory of Communism in the Czech Republic," Heinrich Böll Stiftung Prague, last modified July 14, 2019, <https://cz.boell.org/en/2014/03/24/history-and-memory-communism-czech-republic>.

Beneš's deserts for the foundation of the Czechoslovak in the Chamber of Deputies was unanimously passed.³ The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, which serves as the central institution for reflecting on the past, was founded in 2007. Nevertheless, aside from the Institute of Totalitarian Regime and the Prague Institute of Contemporary History (which are both academic institutions), there is only one social institution that exclusively addresses the Communist past of the Czech Republic. This is the privately-owned Museum of Communism.

This thesis is a case study on the memory of Communism in Czechoslovakia. More specifically, it looks at how such memory is portrayed in the Museum of Communism in Prague. It aims to contribute to the growing field of post-Communist memory as well as new fields of academic inquiry that focus on the rise of new museums. It aims to identify and map out the societal role of museums and its power to influence how the past as well as the present and the future is understood.⁴ Drawing on ideas from other areas of the academia including the use of culture as soft power in building and cementing public expressions of national identity, one of its assumptions include the role museums have in the political process of state formation as well the creation of a public.⁵ In this light, this thesis investigates what kind of memory community the Museum of Communism in Prague adheres to and fosters by looking at the group identities it endorses as well as the way in which they give substance to these identities.

³ Kopeček, "The History and Memory of Communism in the Czech Republic."

⁴ Rhiannon Mason, Alistair Robinson and Emma Coffield, *Museum and Gallery Studies: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2018) 21.

⁵ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 6.

This thesis uses Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as its methodology as it sees the entire exhibition as a text. It does so because the entire museum is based on the Czech-born documentary maker Jan Kaplan's tragedy documentary film depicting Czech Republic's Communist past. The documentary begins with the utopian dream of Communism followed by the reality of life under such regime and ending with a party-controlled state through censorship, imprisonment, and surveillance. His documentary has three parts, namely "Dream", "Reality," and "Nightmare." Therefore, it looks at the museum in a way that it tells one general narrative of the Communist Czechoslovakia. The use of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as its methodology ties perfectly with the aim of the thesis because it is able to draw out the memory the text aims to encourage, specifically the memory communities it adheres to and fosters as this method of analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in relations of power. Since the analysis sees language as a form of social practice and all social practices are tied to specific historical contexts, it is also identifying the means by which existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served.⁶

Therefore, based on Fairclough's three dimensional analysis, the thesis examines the text itself (description), the process by which it is produced and received by the visitors (interpretation), and the socio-historical conditions that control it (explanation).⁷ Fairclough categorizes these three analyses as textual, processing, and social respectively. Not only does it focus on the selection of signifiers, their location within the text, or their sequencing but it also requires the researcher to recognize the historical determination of these choices and understand that these selections are tied to the conditions of the possibility of such

⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁷ Hilary Janks, "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no. 3 (2006): 329, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630970180302>.

expression.⁸ Throughout the analysis, it looks at how the text is positioned, whose interests are served or negated by such positioning, as well as the consequences of it.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that the Museum of Communism maintains and participates in the pan-European discourse of the Czech Republic as a Western nation kidnapped by the East and its victimhood status is defined by the global Holocaust discourse. In proving so, the thesis looks into what and how identities are represented in the museum and what memory community they adhere to and foster based on their textual, medial, and socio-historical representation. In order to achieve these aims, the thesis is divided into three chapters. Each chapter corresponds to each dimension of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis with the aim to address the goals of the thesis. The first chapter is a textual analysis of the museum's textual narrative. This analysis aims to define what group identities the museum endorses. The second chapter is a processing analysis of the media used to produce these identities, which includes an inquiry on how such medium is received by the visitors. The last part is the social analysis, which links the text to the socio-historical conditions that influence the kind(s) of memory community the museum's exhibit fosters and adheres to.

⁸ Janks, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 329.

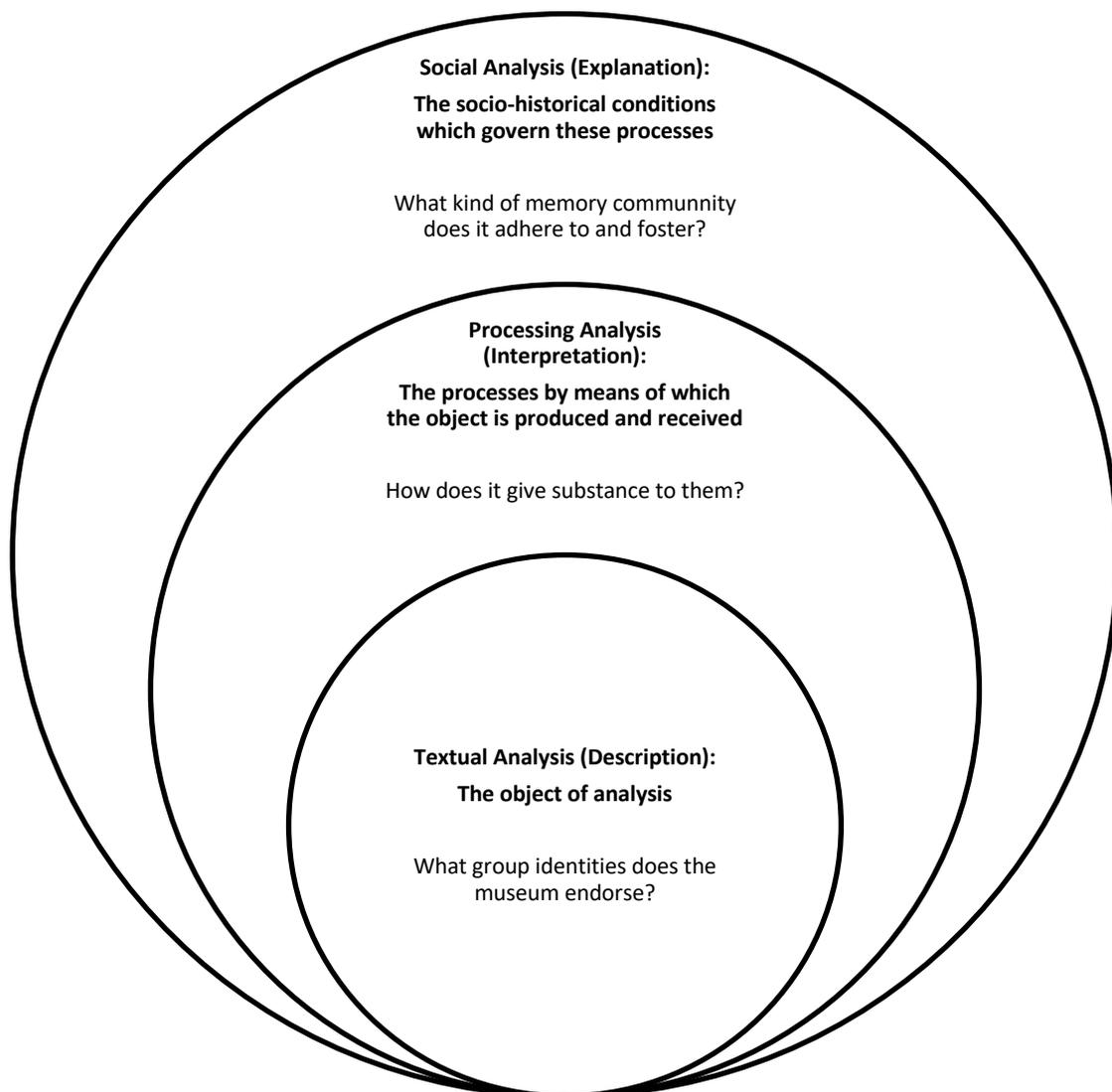


Figure 1 Thesis questions with its corresponding methodological dimension based on Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework

Prior to proceeding with the theoretical and contextual background necessary to engage with this research, it is important to discuss the scope and limitation of this study. As a foreign student in the Czech Republic, the researcher's limitations must be taken into consideration. The researcher's language skills in Czech are limited. This means that the theoretical and region-specific texts cited and referred to are limited to those in English. Furthermore, the textual analysis of the museum's narrative is only limited to the English translation provided by the museum. As a foreigner, her understanding of the Czech socio-political landscape

may not be as deep as those that have lived in the Czech Republic all their lives and grew up hearing stories about the past.

Memory Studies

This thesis draws on the richness of the literature on memory studies. As opposed to the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, when authors have approached the problem of historical memory as an extension of natural sciences of memory in biology, some scholars have begun to recognize the social dimension of memory as it is seen essentially as a social rather than an individual phenomenon.⁹ With the rise of nationalism and nation states in the late nineteenth century, the interest in a nation's past was propagated to an unprecedented extent. Whether this past is invented as Eric Hobsbawm theorized¹⁰ or imagined as Benedict Anderson conceptualized¹¹, the political and social dimensions of memory have materialized in the general workings of a nation. Examples of such are the new national calendars that nations have built in order to remember their shared and common past. Eventually, Maurice Halbwach coined the term "collective memory"¹² in 1925 and give it its theoretical weight allowing various models on the politics of memory to emerge.

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs is known for developing the concept of collective memory. His idea of collective memory has been influenced by various scholars that came before him, particularly French-Jewish philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson and

⁹ Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).

¹² Maurice Halbwach, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

French sociologist Emile Durkheim. Bergson focused his thinking on the indivisible continuity of durational time and drawing the distinction between the past and the present. He claims in his work, *Matter and Memory*, claims that the difference we make between the past and the present is “relative to the expanse of the field that our attention to life can embrace”¹³. By problematising the idea of memory as a form of duration, he faces the issue of defining the past and the present separately. By defining memory as both the conservation and accumulation of the past and the present, his discussion moves towards the recognition of consciousness as both memory and the anticipation of the future. On the other hand, Durkheim focused on how societies maintain their coherence and integrity, in which an era in which social and religious traditions are no longer assumed. He views society as an intellectual as well as moral framework unique to a particular group. While he does not explicitly discuss memory per se, he observed how every society exhibits and requires a sense of continuity with its past.

This thesis maintains Henri Bergson’s assertion of remembering as an active engagement that is fluid and changing as well as from Émile Durkheim’s sociological framing of memory, which defines it as being both acquired from and structured by society. With Bergson and Durkheim being two great influences in Halbwach’s work, this thesis supports Halbwach’s assertion that social frameworks are necessary for an individual to remember in any coherent and persistent fashion.¹⁴ Halbwach cites the example of how it is impossible to be absolutely certain whether a childhood memory is from an original moment or a compilation of stories about it. Even our individual memories take place both within social contexts and cues such as our social identities and with social materials such as languages

¹³ Bergson, Henri-Louis. *Matter and Memory* Bergson, Henri-Louis, *Matter and Memory* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1896) 151.

¹⁴ Halbwach, *On Collective Memory*.

and symbols. Moreover, remembering is also influenced by what and how we recall, which is stimulated, shaped, and materially fed by our social environment.¹⁵

Looking into a more specific context of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism, Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer have observed four strong trends in the post-Soviet bloc that wrestled with issues on memory. First, they saw that some countries leaned towards intensive reconciliation, in which they settled a past made up of violent acts and inimical relations peacefully. By using a set of relations between former oppressors and victims, their process of reconciliation includes acts of crime confession, requests for pardon, and official consent to pardon. Second, they noticed how others reactivated conflicted memory. Memory-related representations are used politically either to stigmatize or discredit a political opponent or open so-called historic cases in the hope of changing the verdict. Third, they observed that other countries have utilized *memory policies* to mobilize groups such as the electorate of a given party or coalition. Those who govern often yield to the temptation of the past to govern the present in modern societies by forging concepts of *history policy* to justify state actions. Fourth, they spotted that *memory games* are shifted beyond the national in an attempt to combine various post-Communist international norms and the normative conditionality developed by the EU and the Council of Europe. As the end of the Cold War radically changed the way EU authorities handled history and redefined the economy of constraints and resources available to them in this area, policies were implemented aimed at rendering explicit or bolstering a supposed *European identity*.¹⁶

¹⁵ Olick, *The Collective Memory Reader*.

¹⁶ Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer, 'Introduction', in *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Museum Studies

The role of museums has changed through time. Its origins find itself in the Renaissance period in Europe as “[r]oyal and aristocratic ‘cabinets of curiosity’, ‘Wunderkammern’ and ‘Kunstammern’ of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries”. Its purpose was to showcase the owner’s knowledge and wealth as well as to inspire and amaze its visitors by the rare and novel objects from European explorers visiting foreign lands. In eighteenth century Europe, museums were opened to the public as the British Museum granted free admission to “all studious and curious persons”, which “primarily referred to “scholars and ‘gentlemen’”. It was in the nineteenth century that public access to museums were seen in various European countries beginning with the French Revolution’s transformation of the King’s private collection in the Louvre into a public museum belonging to the French people. France has “set a precedent that new museums across Europe could and should be open to all citizens of the nation state”. Within the context of the revolutions that overthrew old elites and the relatively recent invention of free education through schooling in Europe, museums were seen as institutions of education as well as “control and management of the population at times of potential crisis”.¹⁷

Museums were also used by governments to showcase the uniqueness and wealth of their nation especially during the age of nationalism and empire in Europe. Unlike today, various social classes in Europe in the beginning of the nineteenth century “lived such radically different lives that it was not a given that they would have readily identified with each other as all being part of one nation”¹⁸. European museums have evolved context of the rise of

¹⁷ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 22-25.

¹⁸ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 26.

nationalist movements as well as the nation-wide nation-formation process including ideas around national folk culture. Thus, the museum took on an instrumental role in the politics of identity of the modern nation-state by organizing knowledge, educating the public as well as civilizing citizens to be self-regulating and proud of their national heritage. In the nineteenth century, they helped stabilize what Anderson calls “imagined communities” by connecting individuals through shared knowledge, self-perception, rules, values, as well as a memory of their common past. Moreover, with the growth of the middle-class in many countries, people are “keen to consume cultural tourism”¹⁹ as “museums and galleries are more visited than ever”²⁰. As social institutions, they offer a particular memory and narrative patterns and archetypes of how individuals can and should remember.

In 1946, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was created to represent the global museum community. In its earlier years, it concerned itself with the structure, geographical representation and activities of the organisation. It particularly worked on increasing professionalism and consistency. It held four decisive conferences in 1977, 1980, 1983 and 1986, which finalised a policy on museums in the service of society and of its development as well as adopted a Code of Ethics. In recent times, it developed a practical handbook on running a museum designed for professionals. It also continues to develop activities that deal with the protection of cultural heritage.²¹ ICOM defines museums as “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible

¹⁹ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 11.

²⁰ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 10.

²¹ “History of ICOM,” International Council of Museums, accessed May 29, 2019, <https://icom.museum/en/about-us/history-of-icom/>.

heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment”.²²

Through time, museums have been faulted of terrorizing and decontextualizing living traditions, separating people from their past, and propagating hegemonic national narratives. Recently, they have taken on the role as a cure for social exclusion and discrimination by promising to offer democratic and inclusive approaches to difficult pasts. Addressing the radical transformation of museums, ICOM recognised the need for creating a new definition of museums. In order to create a new definition, the council invited members and other interested parties to draft a new and more current definition of museums. Very recently, during its 129 session in Paris in July 2019, the Executive Board of ICOM has selected a new definition of museums, which will be subject to a vote in September 2019 during its Extraordinary General Assembly in Kyoto, Japan. The alternative museum definition goes,

“Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people.

Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.”²³

²²

²³ “ICOM announces the alternative museum definition that will be subject to a vote,” International Council of Museums, accessed July 27, 2019, <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/>.

Following this alternative definition, the postmodern shift from “history” as the authoritative master discourse on the past to the paradigm of memory can be observed. This movement has brought about “memory museum”. Memory museums define themselves “as spaces of memory, exemplifying the shift from a perceived authoritative master discourse on the past to the paradigm of memory which supposedly allows for a wider range of stories about the past – a claim which needs to be critically interrogated”.²⁴ This new focus, coupled with the reinvention of exhibition spaces as performative ones utilizes modes of representation that are more familiar from the theatre, the cinema, or literature, have given birth to the possibility of visitors to (re)live a past they have not experienced first-hand.

They do so by preserving the collective memory of a generation of first-hand witnesses, channelling public debates, and regenerating urban and rural areas. This concentration on everyday life, personal stories, individual biographies present diversified memories that enable visitors to access a more intimate part of a time they have not experienced themselves. As museums become more experiential, they allow visitors to acquire what are called “vicarious memories”²⁵. Museums not only mediate memories of past generations to the present but also supply them with what Landsberg calls “prosthetic memories” that aims to result to active political engagement.

²⁴ Silke Arnold-de Simine, “Memory Museum and Museum Text: Intermediality in Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum and W.G. Sebald’s Austerlitz,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 1 (2012): 16. doi:10.1177/0263276411423034.

²⁵ Vicarious memories are memories that one experienced or felt by empathy with or imaginary participation in the life of another person.

Museums of Communism

Museums, including heritage sites, have been avenues for post-Communist states to explore and come into terms with their difficult history since the past. Mălina Ciocea and Alexandru Cărlan observes two directions in which museums of Communism in particular have done so. On one hand, some museums of Communism assume the mission to provide the truth by taking on an ideological role and claiming a certain epistemological authority.²⁶ While this approach encourages feelings of national identity amongst native visitors, this unity over a particular memory of the past – often encouraged by notions of victimhood – must be an accepted shared emotional response that is projected across time between generations.²⁷ Otherwise, this orientation poses a danger of alienating and colliding with the younger generation's expectations, those of whom do not hold the same issues of guilt and responsibility as the older ones. On the other hand, other museums of Communism go to the other side of the spectrum as they take on an affectionate and even entertaining engagement with the past favouring a decidedly deliberative stance, where the visitor freely negotiates the meaning of history throughout the museum experience. However, this approach on museums of Communism risks losing any common understanding of history and trivializing the experiences of those who lived it. Moreover, if there is little or no public consensus about the past, it could result to the fragmentation of society.

Moreover, Máté Zombory writes about the claim of uniqueness in Communism. He claims that the first wave of memorial museums was started by anti-Communist sub-state political

²⁶ Mălina Ciocea and Alexandru Cărlan, "Prosthetic Memory and Post-Memory: Cultural Encounters with the Past in Designing a Museum", *Revista Română de Comunicare Și Relații Publice / Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* 2, no. 7 (2015): 10, <https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcp.2015.2.4>.

²⁷ David Borek, Tomáš Carba, and Alexandr Koráb, *Legacy* (Prague: The Museum of Communism).

activists, political diaspora, and domestic dissidents. He also claimed that they directly referenced to the Holocaust from the beginning claiming that it provided path to follow to make their suffering internationally recognized. However, Zombory claims that the unique historical experience of Communism still remained to be the message. He cites an example in Romania where, “the main political intention of anti-Communist circles was to get the ‘Red Holocaust’ acknowledged internationally in order to legitimately condemn Communism as even more criminal than Nazism”. Considering the chronology of the Nazi occupation and the Communist occupation, such reasoning can be justified. Zombory cites journalist, Roxana Iordache, who argued,

“If the entire world today condemns Nazism to the point of continuing the search for those who served it, it is impossible to explain why the same thing is not being undertaken in regard to Communism. [...] Nevertheless, the survivors of Hitler’s camps who were later thrown into Communist prisons, claim that these were much harsher.”

However, Zombory claims that the debate on Communist suffering lost its confrontational nature and exceptionalism as the debate on suffering was Europeanized through the representational canon of the European Union in the 1990s as it had to adjust to the prevailing norms of historical memory and reconciliation. Rather than presenting the unique history of political violence under the Soviet repression, it was put into the common framework with the Holocaust, which has been institutionalized as the constitutive European experience. As a result, the uniqueness of these two memories was lost and asserting such would be equated with the refusal of the importance cultivating Holocaust memory making it highly illegitimate.²⁸

²⁸ Máté Zombory, “The birth of the memory of Communism,”1039.

Museum of Communism in Prague

The public's reception of the museum, particularly during its opening, has been quite controversial. A local historian described the museum as “a damned pseudo-capitalist venture” claiming that “no Czech would ever visit it”²⁹. Prior to its recent relocation, it used to operate above a McDonalds and next to a Casino along Na Příkopě street. These details were greatly emphasized by the fact that one of its founders, Glenn Spicker, is an American entrepreneur who was known for his bagel business in the Czech Republic. While Spicker did know that the museum’s visitors would mainly consist of tourists, his reasoning was different stating that “Czechs are not that excited to talk about their past”³⁰. He said that the museum was established “to remind [the younger generation] of what the old life was like”³¹ before the fall of the Berlin Wall. He claims that “[t]he younger generation has not been told the whole story by their parents because everyone’s too busy living a new life”³². While the museum’s goal is to create a “simple, objective, and historical” account of Communism in the Czech Republic, locals have expressed scepticism about whether the younger generation would actually understand the experiences of those who went through the communist system as well as whether the museum could actually provide an objective take on such history due to the involvement of those who lived it had with the Communist system itself.³³

From what used to be a cramped and inconspicuous exhibit of 100 artefacts collected from bookshops, antique stores, and garage sales during the 1990s, the museum has relocated

²⁹ Jelena Kopanja, “Seeing Red: Over a Czech Museum,” *Jewish Exponent*, August 12, 2010, 22.

³⁰ Kopanja, “Seeing Red,” 22.

³¹ Katka Krosnar, “A Tribute to Barren Shops; Visitors to Prague can now relive the communist era, secret-police interrogations and all,” *Newsweek*, February 11, 2002, 61.

³² Krosnar, “A Tribute to Barren Shops,” 61.

³³ Krosnar, “A Tribute to Barren Shops,” 61.

years after its opening to a substantially bigger building near Náměstí Republiky, which makes its presence known in Prague's urban landscape. It has expanded its exhibit to include new forms of media such as videos of personal accounts of those who lived during the period and even further developed its textual narrative. Certain artefacts on loan from the Department of Documentation and History of the Prison Services of the Czech Republic, while a great amount of photographic material from the Archive of the Czech News Agency, the Security Services Archive, the Archive of the Association of Forced Military Camp Laborers, and the personal collections of leading Czech photographers have further enriched the museum's exhibit.

While the museum's founder has admitted that it is tourist-centred³⁴, the museum is on its second year of hosting an annual competition for secondary school and grammar school students under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. The competition, which is called *Generace 00*, invites the students to come up with 9 exhibition panels on their country's Communist past based the competition's annual theme³⁵ with the goal to motivate young people to reflect upon the history of their own country. Aside from providing a teacher training program, which includes a tour of the exhibition, the competition's website also has a list of recommended literature to help the students conceptualize their project. The winning team, together with two of their teachers, receives a three-day trip to Berlin inclusive of travel expenses, accommodation, and pocket money to see the Berlin Wall and visit the Berlin GDR Museum.

³⁴ Kopanja, "Seeing Red," 22.

³⁵ The theme last year was "síla moci" (the power of power), while the theme this year is "totalitní stát" (totalitarian state).

Moreover, the museum also sells a book entitled, “Legacy,” which serves as an accompaniment to the museum visit. It is written by one of the exhibition’s curators, Alexandr Koráb, and one of the writers of the museum’s texts, Tomáš Carba. Conceived by co-founder, Jana Kappelerova (now Čepičková), Legacy is for those who “might want to take away a book to read later when they have more time for historical reflection than can be fully afforded during a visit to a museum itself”. The book’s foreword, which is written by co-founder Glenn Spicker, provides insights about the thoughts behind the vision of the Museum. It acknowledges that “a certain amount of revisionism would be expected after almost 15 years of hindsight”. It claims to maintain “the intrinsic Czech sensibility of being able to laugh at themselves and to forgive, at least in writing” through words that are “informative and objective in a humble, self-reflective sense”. Moreover, he makes it clear that the book is not for scholars nor for educated or older Czechs who have already taken the Communist history to heart but rather it is for tourists who deserve to learn about the history of the Czech nation as both of museum and the book offers an introduction to life under Communism.³⁶

³⁶ Borek, *Legacy*, 9.

1. Description: Textual Analysis

Reinhart Koselleck, in his book, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, quotes Epictetus claim that it is not the deeds that shock humanity but rather the words that describe them.³⁷ In a museum's case, the textual narration does not only shape the spatial elements in the museum but also invites the visitors to travel through time as it makes sense of the past by following a temporal and causal order, framing it from a certain angle, and condensing what is a complex process into metaphors and symbols.³⁸ By using linguistic concepts and tools in analysing the textual narrative of the museum, this thesis accomplishes its first aim, which is to distinguish what identities it endorses.

In this chapter, this thesis looks at the linguistic strategies were employed in constructing the museum's overall textual narrative to support such identities. It is important to look into word choices because “[w]ords convey the imprint of society and of value judgments in particular – they convey connoted (implicit) as well as denoted (explicit) meanings”³⁹. For example, instead using the word “propaganda”, one can use “press briefings” to convey a more neutral idea compared to the former, to which a more deceptive idea is attached. The same goes for the use of “reporting restrictions” instead of “censorship” or “neutralize” instead of “kill”. The use of particular words to communicate a message frames “the story in direct and unavoidable ways”⁴⁰. Moreover, it has an important sway on how certain identities are viewed. As people possess a range of identities, roles, and characteristics, the

³⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, *Future Past Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 75.

³⁸ Astrid Erll, “Re-writing as re-visioning Modes of representing the ‘Indian Mutiny’ in British novels, 1857 to 2000”, *European Journal of English Studies* 10, no. 2: 165, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570600753485>.

³⁹ John Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 47.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 48.

manner in which a social actor is named identifies the group or groups that they are associated, the relationship between the namer and the named, as well as the social situation in which it is being produced.

Referred to by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) as *referential strategies*, the choice of how to describe a social actor serves either psychological, social, or political purposes to project meaning and social values onto the referent as well as to establish coherent relations with the way that other social actors within the text are referred to and represented.⁴¹ This relates to Teun van Dijk's conceptual tool called *the ideological square*, which determines what referential strategy is chosen. This tool implies that the way of perceiving and representing the world is through a positive self-presentation, and a negative other-presentation. This is done by emphasizing (or foregrounding) the other's negative characteristics and de-emphasizing (or backgrounding) their positive ones, and vice versa for the self's case.⁴²

By applying both the referential strategies as well as the ideological square, certain words are used to suggest a particular image of a social actor. For example, in a news article that reports incidents of sexual violence, the journalist uses words like "school girl", "mother of three," "daughter," to suggest the innocence of a woman victim while using words like "fiend", "beast", or "maniac" to suggest that the male attacker is to blame. However, if the news article decides to put fault on the woman and writes that she provoked the attack, she would be described as "a Lolita," "busty" or "a divorcee".⁴³

⁴¹ Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 50.

⁴² Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 51.

⁴³ Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 51.

Aside from referential strategies, predicational strategies represent more directly the values and characteristics of social actors. Through attributes (through adjectives, appositions, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, conjunctive clauses, infinitive clauses and participial clauses or groups), predicates or predicative nouns/adjectives/pronouns, collocations or explicit comparisons, similes, metaphors, and other rhetorical figures and by more or less implicit allusions, evocations and presuppositions/implications, they assign qualities to the subject.

1.1. Czechoslovakia: The Kidnapped West

The textual narrative of the museum portrays Czechoslovakia as a kidnapped West. First, it establishes that the Czechoslovak nation is intrinsically democratic and capitalistic. By doing so, it ascertains that communism is politically, economically, and socially foreign to Czechoslovakia. Aside from highlighting its democratic nature, the text also focuses on Czechoslovakia's lack of sovereignty even after the Munich Agreement because of the strong political manoeuvrings of Moscow. This highlights that fact that Czechoslovakia was subjugated by the Communist regime, which means that the country itself was not Communist. It highlights the damages that the Communist system inflicted on Czechoslovakia specifically the socio-economic policies the regime "imposed". Discontent and mistrust are also shown prevalently throughout the museum's text.

However, before discussing these reasons that support this thesis' claim, it is important to note that nationalistic aspect of the museum's exhibit. The textual narrative of the first panel on the birth of Czechoslovakia introduces the Czechoslovak nation to the museum's visitors. This has a crucial role in setting the tone of the museum's narrative because one can

immediately see that the museum does not only build an image of Communism but more importantly that of Czechoslovakia as a nation. Nationalistic undertones are present throughout the text of the museum. An example would be how the text continues to boast the talent of Czechoslovak health specialists in spite of working in what is painted as a rotten Communist health care system. It also named various Czech doctors and scientists such as elite pediatrician Josef Svejcar, chemist Antonin Holy, and scientist Otto Wichterle. To sight another example, the text mentions internationally acclaimed Milan Kundera and Pavel Kohout, who are both from Czechoslovakia but emigrated out of Czechoslovakia due to the annihilation of artistic freedom.

Supporting the thesis' claim, the text of the museum emphasizes the democratic nature of the Czechoslovak nation throughout the exhibit. More importantly, it begins with this claim. The text of the very first panel begins with a quote on democracy by T.G. Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia. The quote goes, "So it would seem we already have democracy; now we just need some democrats." The claim of Czechoslovakia's democracy is quite clear from the quote itself. The text emphasized how the Czechoslovak government prior to the Communist takeover was not coercive as one million men "volunteered"⁴⁴ five days after the government ordered the full mobilization of its military against the Nazis. To further support this, the textual narration draws a close relationship between Czechoslovakia and the United States. The text reads that "there is [...] no question that assistance from Woodrow Wilson and the USA was instrumental" for its independence from the Austrian Archduchy. The textual narrative also highlights how the United States was part of the joint effort of liberating Czechoslovakia from the Nazis as the text of the museum claims that the

⁴⁴ Wall text, 04, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

“Americans could have reached Prague sooner than the Russians; however, they had to stop their advance at a predetermined line of contact near Plzen”.⁴⁵ By highlighting the important role of the United States in the birth of the Czechoslovak nation, it associates the United States’ reputation with that of Czechoslovakia. In particular, it highlights one of the international relation theories that democratic nations help other democratic nations. This further reinforces the idea of Czechoslovakia as democratic in nature.

As the text brings Czechoslovakia closer to the United States, democracy and capitalism, it also distances itself from Communism. It does so by highlighting Communism as an inorganic and foreign element. The arrangement of the museum’s first two panels, which affects the chronological order of the museum’s textual narration already distances Communism from Czechoslovakia. By putting the panel on the fathers of Communism after the first panel on the birth of Czechoslovakia despite its chronological inconsistency⁴⁶, it reinforces the idea that Communism was established inorganically in Czechoslovakia *after* its birth and as a result of “the poor living and working conditions of the workers”⁴⁷. Moreover, out of the 14 sentences in the text of the panel that talks about the fathers of Communism, only one was about Czechoslovakia. This sentence was about Klement Gottwald, who would eventually become the first Communist President of the nation.

On the other hand, it is also important to note the word choices to describe democracy in Czechoslovakia. The third panel on the 1930s describes democracy as a more organic element through the use of the word “bloomed”⁴⁸, as it described how Czechoslovak

⁴⁵ Wall text, 01, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁴⁶ The tenets of Communism was formulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848 while Czechoslovakia’s independence was established in 1918.

⁴⁷ Wall text, 01, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁴⁸ Wall text, 03, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

democracy was during the First Czechoslovak Republic. Moreover, Czechoslovakia is described in the text as “the last bastion of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe” setting up the popularity of the Communist Party as a result of the Great Depression.

To further reinforce the idea of Communism as a foreign entity, the Czechoslovak nation’s sovereignty was never fully established after the Munich Agreement. The Munich Agreement, also referred to by Czechs as the “Munich Betrayal”, was narrated to result to the loss of Czechoslovak sovereignty. The agreement is described as a decision “about the Czechs, without the Czechs”⁴⁹. Moreover, the textual narration places the blame on what they called the naïve and incompetent Czech bourgeoisie – non-representative of the nation as a whole – for the victory of the Communists in Czechoslovakia. Although Gottwald was named Prime Minister, the texts in the Museum made it clear that “key decisions would be taken only with [the] approval from Moscow”. This view was explicitly stated: “Even though the Communists became the strongest party in the country after the war, they still did not control everything.”⁵⁰

Moreover, the Czechoslovak Communists are not depicted as autonomous themselves. While the text writes that it was the Czechoslovak Communists that carried out the collectivization campaign through violence and blackmail, it still highlighted the fact that they “took inspiration from Stalin’s collectivization campaign of the 1920s and 1930s”⁵¹. Aside from the collectivization campaign, various repressive apparatuses used by the Communists in Czechoslovakia were clearly described to have come from the methods of the Soviets – and sometimes, even likened them with that of the Nazis. To even further drive

⁴⁹ Wall text, 04, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵⁰ Wall text, 08, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵¹ Wall text, 14, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

this point across, the museum's text on propaganda put the word "our" in quotation in the sentence: "The media described the West as an enemy of "our" system, and any news about it was generally negative, focusing on problems such as strikes, protests, and environmental disasters..." By doing so, the museum clearly does not recognize Czechoslovakia as Communist in any way despite the Communist rule. Therefore, Communism is described as a rather foreign and simply generated by circumstance.

The textual narration of the events in August 1968 highlighted further the inorganic element of the Communist. In response to the Prague Spring during the golden sixties, when Czechoslovakia "began to democratize and grow closer to the West"⁵², the troops that arrived in Prague were "occupiers". Continuing this tactic of othering, the lack of sovereignty of Czechoslovakia was again highlighted when the text described how "Moscow installed new leaders"⁵³ in 1968. These new leaders are described to have returned the regime into a hard-line Communist dictatorship that did not allow any kind of criticism. The text highlights that the new leaders are loyal to the soviets by stating that "[t]he new leader of the party, Gustav Husák, immediately began executing the wishes of his Soviet comrades, just as Moscow expected of him"⁵⁴. The text states that "[t]he series of measures the new leaders of the Communist Party had implemented changed society so much that such mass demonstrations would not be repeated again until November 1989, 20 long years later"⁵⁵. The regime installed by Moscow in 1968 is strongly portrayed as a foreign entity in Czechoslovakia reinforcing the nonautonomy of even the Czechoslovak Communists since their loyalties do not lie with Czechoslovakia.

⁵² Wall text, 54, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵³ Wall text, 55, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵⁴ Wall text, 60, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵⁵ Wall text, 60, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

The text on the limitations the Communists established on traveling outside the country further paints the picture of a helpless nation trapped by a foreign power. The text states that the state borders were kept on the closest watch, particularly those that were shared with West Germany and Austria.⁵⁶ The emphasis on the borders with these two countries gives the impression that these borders were most prone to crossing. The text calls the barbed-wire electric fencing of 3000- to 6000-volt shocks as the Iron Curtain in this true form and a symbol of Communism.⁵⁷ This iron curtain is pronounced by the text as “Czechoslovakia’s isolation from the outside world” referring to it as “a fundamental part in the Communist regime’s system of repression”⁵⁸. To emphasize the degree of importance it had to the Communist government, the text added the percentage of Czechoslovakia’s area it covered, which is 1.5 percent. However, the text still emphasized the effort that Czechoslovaks put to travel to the limited list of country that they can in order to watch films directed by Czech-American Milos Forman and Federico Fellini or to bask in the atmosphere of concerts by Western rock groups, such as Queen, who played in Budapest in 1986. This subtly reminds the visitors of the museum of the rather Western inclinations of the Czechoslovak people.

Aside from political incompatibilities, the text also highlighted the economic mismatch of Communism and the Czechoslovak nation. The exhibit begins by boasting the industrial advancement and the capitalistic inclinations of Czechoslovakia, particularly those of the Czech lands. The text mentions Czechlands’ industrial giants such as Škoda Works in Plzen. Using the same tactics when describing Czechoslovakia’s democratic nature, it describes Škoda Works as the European version of the American company, General Motors. The text

⁵⁶ Wall text, 45, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵⁷ Wall text, 45, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁵⁸ Wall text, 23, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

also mentions other manufacturers and factories such as Laurin & Klement in Mladá Boleslav, Tatra in Moravia, Praga in Prague and the Bata brothers in Zlín providing the museum's visitors proof of the Czechland's industrial and capitalistic prowess. While the text of the museum features such similarity with the West in terms of capitalistic inclinations, it also highlights the incompatibility of Communism with the pre-Communism Czechoslovak system. The seventh panel of the exhibition on nationalization, which comes after the panel on the Communist's rise to power, narrates how the Communists totally eliminated the private business sector in Czechoslovakia starting with those that had 150 to 500 employees since the Communists were trying to cultivate a society of "Homo Communism"⁵⁹. This "new socialist man" is painted to be one "owned about the same amount of things as his fellow citizens, loved Communism and Comrade Stalin, and hated capitalism and the USA"⁶⁰.

Moreover, the text emphasizes the economic damages the Communist rule inflicted on Czechoslovakia starting from its exclusion from the Marshall Plan and the implementation of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON). Czechoslovakia's exclusion from the Marshall Plan, which was aimed at combatting hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos in 22 European countries, was attributed to Stalin's rejection and prohibition of nations under the Soviet sphere of influence. In the Marshall Plan's place, the Communists established the COMECON. Its goal was to become an economically self-sufficient and politically united space. However, unlike the Marshall Plan, it was described as more of a political tool to wield power in the Soviet's satellite states. Through the ideological principle of equality, the text emphasized that Czechoslovakia, as an advanced country, "had to foot

⁵⁹ Wall text, 12, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁶⁰ Wall text, 12, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

the bill for other countries at the expense of the quality of life of their own citizens”⁶¹. Moreover, the text showed that Czechoslovakia’s relations with the West was hampered through the state-run organizations known as the Foreign Trade Enterprise, which served as the gatekeepers of international trade. On an individual level, the text highlighted that one of the goals of the economic reform of 1953 was to peg the crown to the ruble instead of the dollar via the International Monetary Fund as it used to be.

The text also emphasizes the socio-political adjustments the Communist regime made to the social fabric of Czechoslovakia, which reinforces the incompatibility of Communism with Czechoslovakia. On the panel of the Auxiliary Technical Battalions (PTPs), which is a military unit of politically unreliable soldiers and recruits, the text emphasizes that the assignment of people to the battalion was based on “political reasons”. These political reasons were listed in the text as “sons of businessmen and prosperous farmers, politicians from non-Communist parties, people persecuted after February 1948, students expelled from university, priests, and pastors, as well as criminals, the illiterate and Roma”⁶².

Throughout the museum’s textual narrative, the Czechoslovaks’ discontent with the Communist government is portrayed prevalently. One technique it employs is including sarcastic jokes the people made about the Communist regime throughout the exhibit. On the topic about the Stalin monument, the text highlights that the “[p]eople were not overly fond of this monument and jokingly referred to it as the ‘line for meat’”. In the panel on the COMECON, the textual narrative included jokes that the Czechs came up with regarding it. One joke goes, “Do you know what COMECON stands for? ‘Let’s rejoice, let’s be merry,

⁶¹ Wall text, 11, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁶² Wall text, 46, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

we don't have shit, so let's share.”⁶³ The Czechoslovaks also had a term that reflected their discontent with the prefabricated tower blocks that were built to solve the housing shortage produced by industrialization. The text states that the Czechoslovaks began to “sarcastically, but nonetheless accurately,”⁶⁴ call such buildings as “rabbit hutches”.⁶⁵ The text also mentions the jokes that were made referring to the Public Security Auxiliary Guard (PS VB), which was composed of citizens who volunteered to actively assist security forces in their free time and kept a watchful eye on the people. The acronym, as they loosely translated, was signified “An Idiot Standing Next to a Fool”. By including these jokes, it becomes clear that the museum reinforces Czechoslovakia's distance from, discontent with, and incompatibility with the Communist ideology.

Aside from the sarcastic jokes made by the Czechoslovaks, emigration is discussed throughout the exhibit as proof of the Czechoslovak's discontent with the Communist rule. The motives of emigration, as mentioned by the text, “was the disapproval of the political situation in the country”⁶⁶. To highlight the degree of emigration during the Communist reign in Czechoslovakia, the text claims that about 200,000 Czechoslovak citizens fled the country between 1948 and 1989. These emigrations are described to have occurred in two waves with the first being within three years after February 1948 and the second being the Soviet military invasion from 1968 to 1969. Those that were unsuccessful were stated to have been captured and set to prison, shot while trying to escape or killed by electric fences. These examples paint a picture of the desperation of the Czechoslovak people from escaping Communism. One panel was particularly devoted to the tales of escape of the Czechoslovak

⁶³ Wall text, 11, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁶⁴ By adding “nonetheless accurately”, the museum claims to share the same opinion.

⁶⁵ Wall text, 19, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁶⁶ Wall text, 34, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

people from Communism. The tales included extremely desperate attempts to flee from Communist rule varying between fathers strapping their sons to their backs and flying over the border to Austria in a paraglider to people digging underground and swimming across the border.

Accompanying discontent, the textual narrative of the museum also highlighted the lack of trust the Czechoslovak people on the Communist regime. This was prevalent in the narrative after what the museum calls Soviet occupation in 1968, particularly in the reaction of the Czechoslovaks during the 1971 announcement that the regime would be establishing “real socialism”. The text states:

“Czechoslovakian citizens were expected to be overjoyed with socialism and Communism were expected to be overjoyed with the realities of the regime. It was clear to see that socialism certainly did not mean prosperity.”⁶⁷

The panel on dissidents solidifies the textual connotations of the Czechoslovak’s lack of trust on the regime and its inclination towards democracy and the West. It mentions Voice of America and Radio Free Europe as “other sources of free information”⁶⁸ aside from samizdat literature⁶⁹. It also adds: “For decades, hundreds of thousands of people tuned in to Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, infuriating Communist propagandists.”⁷⁰ While the text does not claim whether these were Czechoslovaks or not, it strengthens the text’s assertion the Czechoslovak people are not Communists despite its ruling regime.

⁶⁷ Wall text, 62, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁶⁸ Wall text, 63, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁶⁹ Samizdat is a form of dissident activity of production and reproduction by hand and distributing from reader to reader literature banned by the state, especially in the Eastern Bloc.

⁷⁰ Wall text, 63, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

To further play into the narrative of non-sovereign and discontent of the Czechoslovaks with the Communist regime, the narrative towards the end of the exhibit focuses on the apolitical effects. The literary device of metaphors is employed when the text states that while “colour broadcasts began in 1973”, “the entire nation was still watching in black and white”.⁷¹ The text seems to imply that in spite of the golden sixties and the colourful flare of democracy, the Czechoslovak nation still finds itself living in conditions of normalization. These characteristics of normalization, which are enumerated right after the comment on the black and white television, “include inflexibility, routine, monotony, the total stagnation of cultural, social, economic and scientific life, and the absolute negation of politics”⁷². Such conditions have led to death as the text on the imposition of Stalinist culture even claims that due to the annihilation of free artistic expression, some writers and poets died in a state of depression.

The textual narration on Czechoslovakia’s democratic nature, which is the root of the nation’s distance from, discontent with, and incompatibility with the Communist ideology, comes full circle in the last panel. While the two panels before they talk about the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Velvet Revolution, the last panel talks about Vaclav Havel and reminds the museum’s visitors of the real Czechoslovakia. The first sentence of the text in the panel states that “Vaclav Havel, the first post-Communist President of Czechoslovakia and symbol of the Velvet Revolution, grew up in a family that instilled the democratic ideals of the First Republic in him.”⁷³ This sentence reminds the visitors of the democratic values of the Czechoslovakia. Havel is described to be a dissident that openly criticized the regime and was punished by the regime for it. However, the text states that “the Communists did not

⁷¹ Wall text, 62, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁷² Wall text, 62, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁷³ Wall text, 63, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

break him”⁷⁴. The text describes him to be “one of the greatest figures in the global fight for freedom and human rights” claiming that importance extends beyond the former Eastern Bloc.⁷⁵

1.2. Communists: The Heinous Totalitarian Occupier

This thesis claims that the Communists are portrayed as a heinous totalitarian occupier, which plays an important role when defining the Czechoslovak’s victimhood status through the global Holocaust discourse. By using various linguistic techniques, the text highlights the repressive methods of the Communists, emphasizes the absolutist nature of the regime, as well as distances the Communists from the Czechoslovak nation. Aside from highlighting the repressive and totalitarian practices of the Communists towards the Czechoslovak people, the text also explicitly draws similarities between the Communists and the Nazis. By doing so, the Communist-era in Czechoslovakia is seen in a similar light as the Holocaust, which in turn legitimizes the country’s victimhood status.

It is important to recall from the previous section of this thesis that the text has made it clear from the beginning that Communism is inorganic in Czechoslovakia. Following this line of logic, visitors of the museum can further infer that Communists could not be Czechoslovaks themselves. The text has also described the Communists as such depicting their rule to be similar to an occupation, most especially after the Prague Spring. The Communists’ rise to power provides a starting point to depict an illegitimate regime. The narration of such event is described with very heavy negative connotations utilizing words such as “demands”,

⁷⁴ Wall text, 67, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁷⁵ Wall text, 67, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

“control”, “under pressure”, “systematic campaign”, “agitation”, “intimidation”, “hegemony”, and “manipulation”.⁷⁶ Moreover, the text also highlighted the very close relationship the Communists had with the Soviets. The text wrote that while Benes left for London after the Munich Agreement, Klement Gottwald “emigrated to Moscow, where he lived with his family in Hotel Luxor until 1945”⁷⁷. The power the Soviets had over the Communists appears regularly throughout the general textual narration of the museum.

The separation of the Communists from the Czechoslovak people is created by describing them as two separate entities. A subtle version of this technique can be seen when talking about the economic policies they implemented that were detrimental to the Czechoslovak economy. The nationalization process of the Communists was described to be synonymous to “legalized theft” as Czechoslovak companies were confiscated with little to no compensation. When talking about the currency reform of 1953, the text quotes Western press, which “rightfully”⁷⁸ referred to it as a ‘great swindle’.⁷⁹ The currency reform was brought up again in the panel on people’s militias where it was described as a robbery of a substantial part of the citizen’s savings. Collectivization is described as “one symbol of the depravity of the Communist regime”⁸⁰ as it is claimed to often involve violence and blackmail. Because the actions of theft, swindling, and robbery require two separate actors, namely the perpetrator and the victim, the Communists, who are the perpetrators, are linguistically portrayed as separate from the Czechoslovak nation, who are the victims.

⁷⁶ Wall text, 06, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁷⁷ Wall text, 04, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁷⁸ This word was used in the text connoting value judgment.

⁷⁹ Wall text, 13, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸⁰ Wall text, 14, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

Moreover, the panel on health care does not only highlight the hypocrisy of the Communists themselves in adhering to the ideology of equality but also quite bluntly presents the separation between the Communists and the Czechoslovak people. The text begins with a description of *Sanopz*, “a state hospital intended only for high-ranking Communist officials and their family members” that “featured state-of-the-art medical equipment and was closed to ordinary people”⁸¹. The rest of the health care system was described to be “riddled with corruption, clientelism, and overall disrespect for human life”⁸². To drive the point across, the text provided statistics on health before, during, and after Communist rule with sarcastic undertones of the hazardous effects of Communism:

“In 1989, the average Czechoslovak lived 71.4 years, whereas the average American lived 75.2 years, the average Austrian 75.5, and the average Dutchman 76.9. Just as today cigarette packs warn us that smoking causes serious damage to our health, back then spending time in a Communist country could also seriously damage your health. After the fall of Communism in Czechoslovakia, the average lifespan quickly increased by about five years.”⁸³

The text shows not only the separation of the Communists and the Czechoslovaks but also the detrimental effects it had.

The text focused on the exploitation the Communist did, particularly their policies that affected people’s health and the environment. The text on the iron and steel industry highlights the incapability and inefficiency of the Communist government, which claims that it has “irreversible impact on human health and the environment”. It begins with the description of Karl Marx’s economic theories as outdated, which Stalin still adapted in spite

⁸¹ Wall text, 21, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸² Wall text, 21, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸³ Wall text, 21, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

of their unfavourable circumstances. The textual narrative emphasizes the hazardous effects of the Communist's focus on mining and heavy industry on the Czechoslovak people. The panel on the iron and steel industry paints the image of local pre-schoolers in the Slovakian town of Sered' suffering from conjunctivitis and inner ear infections because of a dangerous slag heap⁸⁴ that contained toxic nickel residue. It also emphasizes how the Czechs and the Slovaks are still recovering from the failed effects of the Communist industrial experiment until today.

The Communists' use of violence to reach their goals is also prevalent throughout the textual narrative of the museum. Strikes and riots that resulted from various economic reforms were also described as violently suppressed throughout the textual narrative. The text describes the participation in May Day, which is International Worker's Day to be "compulsory" stating that "non-participation was punished".⁸⁵ In the panel on the police, the text provides a description of who the Czechoslovak Communists are. It states that "the best candidate for joining the police were Party members dedicated to the idea of Communism and those who did not mind harassing people just for having long hair"⁸⁶. The panel on the political trials listed and described the two interrogation procedures, namely physical and psychological (included use of drugs such as scopolamine), stating that these methods resulted to people admitting to practically anything.⁸⁷ The text writes that the presumption of innocence did not exist.⁸⁸ Moreover, the death penalty is described to have been used by the Communists as a weapon that "drove fear into the hearts of the general population" as "Czechoslovakia put the highest number of people to death in the Eastern bloc".⁸⁹

⁸⁴ A slag heap is a hill or area of refuse from a mine or industrial site.

⁸⁵ Wall text, 27, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸⁶ Wall text, 28, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸⁷ Wall text, 41, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸⁸ Wall text, 42, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁸⁹ Wall text, 42, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

In the panel on Communist propaganda, the text has made the totalitarian character of the Communists clear to the visitors. Propaganda, just like the Communists' power, was inescapable. The phrases used to describe it include "found everywhere", "used all means possible, and even some that were unimaginable", and "started already in school".⁹⁰ The text identifies without a doubt that the Communists depended on raising future generations of socialist men and women for their success. The text describes the Communists' deep involvement in the education by stating that "[t]he Communist dictatorship interwove itself into all levels of the education system"⁹¹. The text claims that the Spartakiad⁹² featured a certain ideological subtext as a metaphor for a perfectly controlled society. The text describes the culture and arts in the hands of Communists as "could be downright absurd," giving examples of a fairy tale movie that addressed royalty as "Comrade King" and "Comrade Princess".

Prevalent in the museum's text is also the Communist's propaganda of demonizing their capitalist enemy and playing up the East-West rivalry, in which even elite sports were used as propaganda tools adhering to the Capitalism and Communism rivalry. The text made it clear that also literary works such as fairy tale movies were not an exception. Examples presented in the text of famous Czech fairy tale movies include the 1952 film, *The Proud Princess*:

"In it, the land of kind King Miroslav represents a 'true' kingdom, where people never idle, not even for a minute, and all the while sing songs with lyrics such as

⁹⁰ Wall text, 17, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹¹ Wall text, 52, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹² The Spartakiad is a mass gymnastics events, designed to celebrate the Red Army's liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945.

“Nothing grows to the heavens! Whatever obstacles get in our work’s way, chopped down without mercy shall they be.” Meanwhile, the opposing Midnight Kingdom represents corrupt capitalism; here people work their hands to the bone and are not allowing to sing.”⁹³

The word “true” is in quotation marks in the museum’s text suggesting its false nature to the visitors. Moreover, the text states that the preparation of schoolchildren for a possible nuclear conflict with the West was an important part of Communist education by making them participate in marching drills wearing raincoats and gas masks. The text has subtle tones suggesting absurdity from the Communists’ side when it describes how they saw the West as “a twisted imperialist enemy that would not hesitate to drop atomic bombs on schools and hospitals, spread fatal disease, contaminate the air, and poison drinking water supplies”⁹⁴.

This image of the Communists as a heinous totalitarian occupier crystalized in the last leg of the exhibition. After all, based on Kaplan’s documentary, this section is referred to “the nightmare”. In the panel entitled, “The Repressive Apparatus,” it states that the “Communist regimes did not just simply commit crimes against individuals” but also “turned mass crimes into a system of rule”⁹⁵. By writing the text as such, it provides undertones of the Holocaust discourse. The text continues with a description of the Communist regime as it reads:

“Repression reached its zenith in the period immediately after the Communists came to power (1948-1953). The Communists could not afford anyone or anything getting in the way of their plans. The repressive machinery of the Communist system, driven

⁹³ Wall text, 26, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹⁴ Wall text, 30, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹⁵ Wall text, 36, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

by an unquenchable thirst for power, used its brute force to smash anyone who had a different opinion. A wave of violence and terror overcame society.”⁹⁶

The text continues to describe the five basic pillars on which the Communist regime stood upon, which are the National Security Corps (SNB), the Justice System, the Army, the Border Guards, and the People’s Militias (LM). Each pillar painted a picture of how power was exploited to reach the goal of the Communist government. These include “removing about 10 percent of ‘politically inconvenient’ judges” to rewarding border guards for shooting anyone on sight with a vacation and a watch for their efforts.⁹⁷ Another example are the planned political trials, which were described by the text to be a result of the “sophisticated repressive apparatus and the concentration of power in the hands of the Communists”⁹⁸.

The degree of control and surveillance by the Secret Police (StB) as described by the text included “physically monitoring individuals and buildings (mainly hotels and foreign embassies)”, “telephone tapping and bugging rooms, “covert filming and photographing,” and many more.⁹⁹ These tactics were repeated three times in the panel on the Communists’ operations, particularly that of the Secret Police (StB), possibly to get the message across effectively to the visitors. The first time is to list down the ways in which the Secret Police (StB) conducted its monitoring. The second time is to emphasize that the grand scale of the Communist regime’s intelligence gathering was unmatched in the world and did not require legal authorization. The third time is to specifically mention the technology they used and the code name for each monitoring operation.¹⁰⁰ The Secret Police (StB) also faked Nazi

⁹⁶ Wall text, 36, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹⁷ Wall text, 36, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹⁸ Wall text, 41, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

⁹⁹ Wall text, 39, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁰⁰ Wall text, 39, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

documents to reveal the Nazi connections of contemporary West German politicians. By narrating the story behind Operation Neptune, the textual narrative solidifies the manipulative nature of the Communist regime. The Public Security Auxiliary Guard (PS VB) is described by the text to have “served as a network of snitches and secret police informants”¹⁰¹. The text states that the “Communists began to tighten their grip on power” by eradicating volunteer associations.

The exhibit also included panels on the labour camps drawing strong parallels with the iconic events of the Holocaust discourse. One panel is on the Jachymov Mines. It describes the “inhumane conditions” the prisoners of the labour camps.¹⁰² These prisoners are described by the text to be “men fit for elimination” (*mukls*). The conditions that were described include inhaling radioactive dust deep into their lungs because of the inaccessibility to masks as well as “physical and psychological torture, where fear, terror and death reigned”¹⁰³. Such word and description choices really seals the deal on the evils of Communism, drawing parallels with the events of the Holocaust.

While the text depicts the Communists as heinous and totalitarian in character, they also emphasize how the Communist regime, being such, made paupers out of Czechoslovakian citizens and eroded their morality. The text states that due to the currency reforms of the Communist regime, cash lost roughly 80 percent of its value creating fertile grounds for illegal dealings and corruption to blossom. Referencing George Orwell’s statement from his novel, *Animal Farm*, the text states:

¹⁰¹ Wall text, 28, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁰² Wall text, 48, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁰³ Wall text, 48, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

“The grey economy blossomed, and thus in a society where everyone was supposed to be equal, some people emerged as more equal than others.”¹⁰⁴

It continues with a quote that was widely spoken in the late 1980s that goes, “He who doesn’t steal robs from his family.”¹⁰⁵ The text mentions one of the tactics of the Secret Police (StB), which is to employ a massive number of civilians as informants forcing them to choose the state over their family due to blackmail. According to Czech political analyst and writer Jiri Pehe, “[n]inety-nine percent of the population were involved with the system and have a bad conscience that they were forced to collaborate”.¹⁰⁶ However, given that the text emphasizes that a regime as insidious as that of the Communists, it made it clear that it was the Communists that made the Czechoslovak people do things they would otherwise not do.

Given all these examples, the text presents the Communists as foreigners that ruled the non-sovereign Czechoslovakia that resorted to insidious authoritarian means to subjugate the people and reach their aims. The distancing from the Communists allows for the separation between the nation and the regime, which are portrayed as the victims and perpetrators respectively. These portrayals of the Communists are critical in following the global Holocaust discourse and legitimizing the Czechoslovak’s victimhood status through it.

1.3. Nazis: The Perpetrator when Convenient

The text employs various ways to maintain the perpetrator status of the Communists, most especially in the beginning of the textual narrative where two perpetrators are both present.

¹⁰⁴ Wall text, 22, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁰⁵ Wall text, 22, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁰⁶ Krosnar, “A Tribute to Barren Shops,” 61.

One is the Nazis and the other is the Communists. The portrayal of the Nazis and the word choices used vary on the position it plays vis-à-vis the Communists.

In the beginning of the museum's narrative prior to the Communist takeover, particularly when it talks about how the Communists helped liberate Czechoslovakia, the word "Nazi" is only used once referring to "the assassination of Nazi Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich"¹⁰⁷. Instead, the text uses "Hitler". According to the museum text, Hitler was to whom Czechoslovakian territory was handed over¹⁰⁸. He acquired Czechoslovakia's borderland fortifications¹⁰⁹. He attended the Munich Conferences with other representatives, who were not personally named and referred to according to their states. Aside from Heydrich, another SS officer was mentioned, K. H. Frank, whose execution by the Communist was included in the textual narrative.

Aside from using the persona of Hitler, the text also uses the word "German" (or "Germans" or "Germany") nonexclusively. In the first panels of the museum, which talks about the events leading to the Munich Agreement, "German" is used as a word for both the perpetrators and the victims. While it was the German state that received the borderland regions of Czechoslovakia and the German army that occupied Czechoslovakia, it was also the ethnic Germans that "were mercilessly expelled from Czechoslovakia to the devastated Germany"¹¹⁰. While it was the Germans that wiped off Czech villages Lidice and Lazaky off the map and implemented a hard-line racial policy of Germanization, it was also the ethnic

¹⁰⁷ Wall text, 05, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁰⁸ Wall text, 03, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic. The text states: "Up until the signing of the Munich Agreement in 1938, when large swathes of Czechoslovak territory were handed over to Hitler without a fight, a government managed to build about one-fifth of the planned fortifications at a cost of roughly 200 billion crowns at today's value."

¹⁰⁹ The text states: "Hitler acquired Czechoslovakia's borderland fortifications and a large part of its economic base, all without a fight."

¹¹⁰ Wall text, 05, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

Czech Germans that immediately became second-class citizens and were horribly treated by being forced to wear white armbands to their docked pay checks to being brutalized and killed in the name of collective guilt. This ambiguous use of the word creates a confusion on the kind of identity attached to the word “Germans”. On one hand, it refers to the German state, Hitler, and the Nazis as it is first used to describe the state where Hitler became Chancellor. On the other, it is used to describe ethnic Czech Germans or German civilians that were victims after the war. By choosing to use the word “German” (or “Germans” or “Germany”) instead of Nazis, the textual narrative of the museum mixes the values and characteristics of the word Germans, which tends to soften the blow of assigning the identity of culprit on the Germans. This softened blow supports the general narrative of the museum, in which the Communists are the perpetrators.

The term Nazi is used later in the textual narration in order to draw similarities with the Communists. The text claims that the structure of the people’s militias corresponded with that of the Nazi SA, the assault division of the Nazi Party. The People’s Militia, previously named as Workers’ Militia, is described to have been established during the Communist takeover in 1948 to originally protect industrial plants that had been nationalized from their legal owners, as well as to strike fear into the hearts of the political opposition and the middle class. The text states that the people’s militia were under the direct control of the Communist party and were used throughout their reign without any hesitation. The text also claims that the Secret Police “used methods perfected by Gestapo interrogators to reveal the enemy”¹¹¹. The panel on the labour camps continued to follow the same rhetoric. While the text claims that “labour camps were founded, following the model of Soviet camps”, it states that “life

¹¹¹ Wall text, 37, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

in them was similar to that in Germany concentration camps, with the only exception being that the gas chamber did not await inmates.

Throughout the text of the museum, the Nazis become perpetrators only when it is convenient. Ideologically, these two perpetrators are the Nazis and the Communists. Nationally, they are the Germans and the Soviets. While not all Nazis are Germans and not all Germans are Nazis just as how not all Communists are Soviets and not all Soviets are Communists, the use of different kinds and levels of identification, its consistencies, and its parallelisms shape the narrative of the Museum's portrayal of the memory of Communism. Due to the stigma attached to the word "Nazi", the text in the beginning does not use the term in order to minimize their perpetrator status, most especially since the Communists – yet in the text referred to as the Red Army – liberated Czechoslovakia. The textual narrative even mixes their identity with the Germans who suffered after the war in order to further decrease such status. However, in the latter part of the exhibit, the word Nazi is used in order to draw similarities with the Communist regime. Therefore, the Nazis in the textual account of the museum only has perpetrator status when it suits the grand narrative of the museum.

2. Interpretation: Processing Analysis

A fundamental factor in shaping what we remember and how we remember it is influenced by the medium used for remembrance, because different methods create different relationships to the past because the way in which memory is transported shapes the very structure and form of it. In this thesis' case, the museum is the main medium used for remembrance. A museum, as a social institution, already sets the tone of its portrayal of history. Museums "often enjoy high status and trust compared to other forms"¹¹² of media. In Western European cultures, the past that museums embody are considered "official, institutional, collective, formal, public and tangible"¹¹³. Today, developments in the role and purpose of museums since the sixteenth century have gone well beyond "a physical space, as a 'container for its 'contents'"¹¹⁴ so much so that even its neutrality has also been seriously challenged. In the context of post-Communist states, their historical experience have challenged historical truths that museums are expected to provide. In Romania, for example, "museums were challenged to reinvent themselves" after the fall of Communism in Romania "to renounce the blasé museum and become antidote museums".¹¹⁵

Such sentiments have been addressed through new museology. With the unprecedented circulation of images and narratives about the past produced by mass cultural technologies, a new form of public memory emerged at the turn of the last century.¹¹⁶ The memories of those who lived in the past have become the arbiter of historical credibility. As a result,

¹¹² Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 43.

¹¹³ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 43.

¹¹⁴ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 18.

¹¹⁵ Ciocea, "Prosthetic Memory and Post-Memory," 7.

¹¹⁶ Alison Landsberg, "Memory Empathy", *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 2 (2009): 221-222, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608227>.

museums have adopted new presentations of history as they probe the limits of their epistemological structures and representational paradigms. Through these museums, those who were not able to express their opinions publicly, had the opportunity to speak up. Instead of predominantly housing collections¹¹⁷, they became places of recollection, not so much driven by objects but by narratives and performances. Thus, the postmodern shift from “history” as the authoritative master discourse on the past to the paradigm of memory brought about memory museum.

This thesis considers that Museum of Communism to be a “memory museum” because of the different media it uses to convey from everyday objects to personal testimonies of those who lived the past. Embodying the role of contemporary museums, the museum plays the role of “a storyteller engaged into a stimulating dialogue with its public”¹¹⁸. The concentration on individualized experiences through story-telling of their everyday lives present diversified memories that enable visitors to relate to these individuals and access a time they have not experienced themselves. Its interactive element goes beyond a museum’s educational framework by engaging the visitors emotionally and experientially.

Thus, the reinvention of exhibition spaces as performative ones utilizes modes of representation that are more familiar from the theatre, the cinema, or literature as highly visualized multimedia-based narratives are produced to draw visitors into an imaginative encounter with the past. This strategic application of theatrics allows visitors to live a past they have not experienced first-hand. Therefore, museums have become experiential. As a

¹¹⁷ It must be noted that aside from the fact that histories of atrocities are usually object-poor due to the conditions faced by those who lived it, objects on display now serve the function as material anchors and proofs of historical events.

¹¹⁸ Alexandra Zbucea and Loredana, “Painting Shades of Gray: How to Communicate the History of Communism in Museums”, *Revista Română de Comunicare și Relații Publice* 17, no. 2 (2015): 21, <https://doi.org/http://10.21018/rjcp.2015.2.14>.

result, visitors acquire what are called “vicarious memories”¹¹⁹. Landsberg calls this transfer of historical experience as prosthetic memories. In the case of a museum, one does not only learn about the past but also takes a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event allowing them to transform their subjectivity, politics, and ethical engagements.¹²⁰

Within the Museum of Communism, various mediums are used for remembrance. Aside from the textual narrative on the panel walls, the museum’s exhibit is composed of 67 panels divided into the three parts of Kaplan’s documentary, short videos of personal testimonials of those who lived during the era, a cinema showing Josef Císařovský’s documentary film, ‘A Time of Shame, Silence, and Hope,’ as well as archival and photographic material from the Archive of the Czech News Agency, the Security Services Archive, the Archive of the Association of Forced Military Camp Laborers, and leading Czech photographers. It also includes mock-ups of a child’s bedroom with a radio playing the song, *Holky Z Naši Školky* by Stanislav Hložek and Petr Kotvald, an interrogation room, a school classroom, and a shop worker’s workshop. It is also important to note that in the area of the mock up on the interrogation room, sounds of dogs barking, men speaking in hushed voices, a telephone ringing, footsteps, and panting can be heard. All of these elements reinforce the identities that the general narrative of the museum promote as it plays shapes the experience of the museum visit.

As Patrick Hutton points out, the changing modes of communication has its corresponding historical perspectives on memory. He claims that orality reiterates living memory, while manuscript literacy recovers lost wisdom. He observes that print literacy reconstructs a

¹¹⁹ Vicarious memories are memories that one experienced or felt by empathy with or imaginary participation in the life of another person.

¹²⁰ Landsberg, “Memory Empathy”, 222.

distinct past, while media literacy deconstructs the forms with which past images are composed and marks the high degree of self-reflexivity of memory.¹²¹ This chapter aims to look at the process in which the museum's narrative is produced and received by the visitors. The different media used to communicate the memory of Communism is divided into three categories: (1) visual and audio, (2) cinema, and (3) personal testimonies.

2.1. Visual and Audio

It is important to recall that the museum is divided into three parts based on Kaplan's documentary. The "Dream" part of the museum begins with the birth of Czechoslovakia until the Victorious February of 1969, while the "Reality" part shows the various aspects of the era such as nationalization, propaganda, and the secret police. The "Nightmare" part tackles the political trials, labour camps, until the Velvet Revolution. The three parts of the museum based on Kaplan's documentary, are distinguished based on the colour of their panel, which are white, red, and black. By setting up this general distinction, the colours visually alerts the visitors in which section they are.

The "Dream" section of the exhibit begins with a huge photo on the panel wall and a smaller photo hanging on the wall as well as a map of the Czechoslovak state. In bigger letters than the panel's text right under the map, a text reads, "Emperor Maria Teresa once proclaimed that without the Czech lands all that would be left of the empire would be the poor Austrian Archduchy." A bust of Masaryk can also be found right beside the panel on Communism.

¹²¹ Olick, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 6.

These visual additions to the text support the national narrative that sets the tone for the whole exhibit, which is that Czechoslovakia is intrinsically democratic and industrialized.

Above the panel on the “Fathers of Communism” is a huge golden of a hammer and a sickle, while below it is photos of Lenin, Marx, and Engels. A makeshift bookshelf is also on display with books and head sculptors of Marx, Lenin and Gottwald. The inclusion of Gottwald aligns the identity of Gottwald with that of the Communists and distances it from Czechoslovaks. This association further crystalized when a poster with heads of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Gottwald, alluding to the generational progression of Communism, hangs on one of the panels of the second section of the museum, which is “Reality.”

Supporting the claim that the Nazis are portrayed as perpetrators when it is convenient, photos on the Nazis’ occupation in Czechoslovakia do not show any violence except for photos of bunkers and a huge map is drawn on the panel on the Munich Agreement that shows the concealed line of fortification on September 30, 1938. While the slideshow on the panel on the division and liberation of Prague still refers to the Nazis as Germans, it refers to the Soviet troops as the “Russian Army”. The text on the slideshow writes, “Russian Army liberates Prague”¹²². This goes to show that the impression they want to convey is that the Russians, not the Communists, liberated Prague.

While the transition from the “Dream” section to the “Reality” section is marked by the shift from a white to a glaring red background of the panel on the Soviet Union, the text of the panel on the Victorious February, the last panel in the “Dream”, is red as if preparing the

¹²² Slideshow, 05, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

visitor to enter “Reality”. Although the backdrop of the panels after the “Soviet Union” returns to white, the text is now mainly red.

The “Reality” panels had artefacts from the Communist-era from a telephone booth to motorcycles to sporting equipment showcasing several everyday objects and moments of the lives of those who lived in this time. A form of “secondary witnessing” is fostered as these objects “inspire feelings of closeness, intimacy and empathy in visitors”.¹²³ An example of such is the exhibit’s mock-up of a child’s bedroom. The setting, which is a bedroom, is the most intimate part of the home. To create an authentic feel, the room is arranged in such a way that it looks like the child simply went down for dinner. A book lays on the bed. An open notebook is on a desk. On top of it are a calculator, a pen, and eyeglasses. A math book is open and on a book stand. His clothes are hanging on the chair. Some sporting equipment is on the floor leaning on the wall. More importantly, the exhibit does not only stimulate visually but audibly as well. One of the more popular songs of cultural mass consumption of the time, *Holky Z Naší Školky*, is played from a radio the bedroom. The mock-up provides a rather intimate and partial view of what coming of age was like during Communism.

Various other objects that people encountered everyday are also displayed in the exhibition. The exhibit includes posters with Communist slogans used by the Communists during that time. For the non-Czech speaking visitor, the text on the posters were translated to English. On the panel on vacation, copies of travel documents are on display reflecting the bureaucratic procedure implemented by the Communists for traveling. The exhibit also had sporting equipment that showed what types of sports the people at that time played. The

¹²³ Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 41.

exhibit also had a real telephone booth from that time, which brings a piece of the urban landscape of the past to the present. These visual and audio portrayals of everyday life in Czechoslovakia recreate the past experience for the visitors.

The beginning of the “Nightmare” is marked with the black background of the panel on the Cold War. Unlike the other areas of the museum, which is characterized by its high ceiling of the museum that makes use of natural light creating a well-lighted and roomy space, the visitor goes through a dimmed area which is filled with the sounds of a telephone ringing, panting, typing on a type writer, and dogs barking. The space is also cramped as the ceiling is lower than the rest of the sections of the museum with 18 panels about the repressive apparatuses used by the Communist regime crammed into this section. The first panel includes a gas mask, a chemical suit, and boots as if preparing the visitor to feel claustrophobic. The section of this exhibit includes barbed wires, a slide show of photographs of political prisoners, as well as tools used for executions. A mock-up of an interrogation room is portrayed vertically on the wall as if it mimics the top down approach taken by the Communist regime. The mock-up of a classroom follows the way out of the cramped space. The classroom exhibit included a shelf with a gas mask visualizing the fear the Communists fostered in the Czechoslovak people during the Cold War. This part of the exhibit creates an audio-visual representation of the Communist regime’s totalitarian nature.

After the various panels on the different repressive apparatuses of the Communist regime, the exhibit continues to the well-lit, spacious, and airy open space the visitors were welcomed to in the first part of the exhibit. The last few panels are on topics that gradually led to democracy such as those on a rather optimistic take on the Prague Spring, Goulash Communism, perestroika, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Velvet Revolution. These walls

were white with black text, similar to the first part of the museum, signalling the visitors to infer that Czechoslovakia is going back to its normal state.

2.2. Cinema

Moving images, with the development of technology, has become a common feature in museum exhibitions. This is not alien to the Museum of Communism in Prague. Aside from audio and visual exhibits throughout the museum, every 20 minutes, the documentary film by Josef Císařovský, *A Time of Shame, Silence and Hope*. It is played in the makeshift cinema of the museum. The cinema is located in the second half of the last part of the exhibit, “Nightmare”, which deals with the public’s resistance against the Communist regime and movement towards democracy. The film’s content and placement within the museum buttresses the general narrative it presents, particularly the discontent of the Czechoslovak public with the ruling regime.

Covering the period of 1969 to 1989, it focuses on the steadily growing defiance of the Czechoslovak public. The film is from the point of view through police camera optics, which was from the State Security Archive, which creates a rather authentic feel about the film. Parts of the film include close ups on the faces of the Czechoslovak people. Their faces of distraught are seen clearly by the museum’s visitor. It seems as through the visitors are witnessing the chaos in the streets first hand as it shows police violence as well as a distraught and uneasy public. It is also important to note that the music used also elicits certain emotions from the visitors in particular sections of the film.

2.3. Personal Testimonies

The museum has monitor screens that show people retelling their personal experiences during and personal reflections on Communism in Czechoslovakia. As testimonials are defined as stories of oppression with the aim to reveal injustices, the usage of such a medium in itself already assumes that injustice has been done. Such practice of providing personal testimonials has been prevalent for Holocaust survivors as “[t]he past dozen years have seen a burst of Holocaust testimonials - both in written and oral form - in great part due to survivors' reaching the end of their lives and feeling a sense of obligation to record these histories”.¹²⁴ This similarity already draws on the global Holocaust discourse. Moreover, the “personal voice” that is generated by a first-person narration serves as a typical form of experiential literary remembering as it addresses the audience in an intimate way typical of face-to-face communication.¹²⁵

In the Museum of Communism, some screens have couches in front of them inviting to sit down as they read the subtitles of the personal accounts of these individuals. While their voices are not projected in the speaker, telephones are provided beside the screen for visitors to listen in Czech. The presentation takes a format of story-telling, in which each individual simply recounts their experiences during Communism. Landsberg's idea of prosthetic memory together with Marianne Hirsch's concept of post-memory serve as important frameworks in understanding how the retelling of these individual experiences can be transmitted as memories of museum's visitors. Wearing casual clothes, they are sitting down

¹²⁴ Diane L. Wolf., “Holocaust Testimony: Producing post-memories, post Identities,” in *Sociology confronts the Holocaust : memories and identities in Jewish diasporas*, ed. Judith M. Gerson and Diane L. Wolf. Durham (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 177.

¹²⁵ Erll, “Re-writing as re-visioning,” 166.

in front of the camera projecting a sense of comfort despite being filmed. As they tell their story, they look straight at the camera as if talking to the museum visitors themselves sitting in front of the screen. Each individual talk about the personal events of their lives with the backdrop of what was happening in Communist Czechoslovakia. As they present the relationship between the public and the individual, they bridge the generational gap between themselves and the museum visitors as these personal stories would be accessible for museum visitors, who presumably have not lived in Communist-era Czechoslovakia, when remembering such time. Such an experience could be similar to stories of the past people hear during family dinners from their grandparents.

In order to create connections between the individuals and the museum visitor, one of the common themes in their personal stories is mentioning family. By talking about their familial relationships, it invites the visitors to see them as fellow human beings. By drawing similarities between the storyteller and the museum visitor, it fosters a connection between them. Josef Klimeš, an assistant sculptor of the Stalin Monument, says that he had just gotten married when plans of building the Stalin Monument were made public. Monika Arkai, a political refugee, says that he was with her grandmother and grandfather “on vacation in Western Bohemia, in a small house by the reserve in a garden, nearby the town” when the Soviets occupied Czechoslovakia in 1968. He says:

“I woke up early and didn’t understand what was happening because grandfather was crying and listening to the strangely crackling radio. Then we got up and went down to look at the garden. Tanks passed by us on the road. I was very scared and wanted

to be in town, because there were people there. We were totally alone. That was August 1968.”¹²⁶

Karel Hviždala, a refugee at that time, recalled how his wife had just finished her degree and his son just finished first grade claiming that now he could read Czech words in the dictionary”.¹²⁷ By mentioning their wives, children, or grandparents, it makes their narrative accessible to the visitors who also share the same relations as them.

Another way of drawing similarity between the individuals and the museum visitors is their “description of many details of everyday life”, which turns the *effet de réel* into an *effet de mémoire*.¹²⁸ Klimeš claims that after he got married, they needed money and “soon discovered the monument could be a source of income”¹²⁹. He claims that the monument was “something new under the sun” as “[n]othing similar had ever been done in the past”.¹³⁰ This little comment makes his experience as mundane as simply looking for a job. Arkai recalls a time on the 14th of July where they went to her Dad’s cottage and celebrated the birthday of two of his friends. She recalls that her father always “roasted a ram in summer”.¹³¹ She says, “perhaps fifty people would meet there” as their garden was full. She recalls how “it was such a terribly great time” as “people who had totally different opinions and stood where else on the political spectrum [...] had heated arguments over wine until the morning [but still remained friends nonetheless”.¹³² Such a party that Arkai talks about presents something museum visitors can relate to as they could see themselves in that party as well.

¹²⁶ Video Testimony of Monika Arkai, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹²⁷ Video Testimony of Karel Hviždala, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹²⁸ Erll, “Re-writing as re-visioning,” 166.

¹²⁹ Video Testimony of Josef Klimeš, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹³⁰ Video Testimony of Josef Klimeš, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹³¹ Video Testimony of Monika Arkai, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹³² Video Testimony of Monika Arkai, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

Michael Wellner Pospíšil, a refugee at the time of Communist-era Czechoslovakia, recounts his stories of taking the opportunity to bring forbidden literature with him whenever he came to Prague. Having been living in France legally, he could visit his parents and native country after accomplishing all the bureaucratic requirements. He provides various anecdotes, similar to those told during gatherings with friends or families, of various tricks he had to distract the custom officers and cops, who were walking around with automatic rifles and barking dogs. One of his anecdotes goes,

“One of the most fun ones was that – at the time pornography was of course prohibited – I always brought some photography magazines. They certainly weren’t pornographic, but there was often a picture of a naked beauty on the first few pages. I left it casually on the backseat. The cops with those guns came, saw a naked woman in the magazines, and since it was pornography, they’d snatch it from me. I tried to explain to them that it was art and so on, just to keep talking. And then, I said, ‘Well, keep it if you think it’s pornography. You’re probably right. You certainly understand it better than me.’ That was one way that worked perfectly.”

These funny anecdotes set a familiar atmosphere that mimics a situation in which a family member recounts his experience in the past.

After establishing a connection with the visitors, it is interesting to see how their narrative of Communism is portrayed. Klimeš claims that building the Stalin Monument was “a wonderful opportunity for sculptors to acquaint themselves with it and sort of learn new tricks, how it’s done, even though those in question also thought it up as they were going along”.¹³³ Here, in his last phrase, just like the textual narration of the museum, he distances

¹³³ Video Testimony of Josef Klimeš, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

himself from the Communist regime by referring to them as “they”. Moreover, he also presents the apolitical society that Czechoslovakia had at that time. He says, “At the time, it was some kind of government resolution, so no one could really be bothered by it. No one cared. It was kind of fun.”¹³⁴ He also presented an individualized view of how the Czechoslovaks were in the dark with the plans of the regime as he described his involvement in the building of the monument. He says,

“For example, I worked on Michurin’s knee. Well, it was one block. Two and a half by three meters. I had no idea what I was cutting. Just some kind of contoured mass. It was just a bit of a bend, and then there was another block. But someone else was working on that one.”¹³⁵

Meanwhile, Arkai talks about how Communism “had a great effect on [her]”¹³⁶ having witnessed, what she described as the “Russian occupation”¹³⁷ of 1968. The repressive nature of the Communist regime is highlighted when she narrates how her dad, who worked as a foreign correspondent for Czech Radio in Washington was “prematurely recalled and fired from the radio because he refused to sign [...] that he agreed with the arrival of the [Soviet] troops”.¹³⁸ She continues that from that time, “he worked, like his other friends, in subpar positions” particularly as a boiler operator. Moreover, she also talked about it was almost normal for her family that her Dad as a dissident was often locked up for 24 or 48 hours.

Jirí Stransky, a political prisoner at that time, presents an individual’s discontent with the system. He recalls that as a boy, he loved Picasso but when Picasso won the International Stalin Peace Prize, he did not anymore. Moreover, he also sheds light on his experience as a

¹³⁴ Video Testimony of Josef Klimeš, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹³⁵ Video Testimony of Josef Klimeš, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹³⁶ Video Testimony of Monika Arkai, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹³⁷ This is often referred to as the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia.

¹³⁸ Video Testimony of Monika Arkai, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

political prisoner as he talked about his reflections being in jail. He recalls a fundamental idea that Honza Zahradníček told him:

“There are only a few ways to accept prison. As fate – that it happened and to wait where it comes from, or to imagine that it’s not real and that things will end somehow, or that it’s some kind of bad dream that I’ll wake up from or – and Honza Zahradníček always stopped and said, ‘Or you’ll decide that it actually is your life and that you have to somehow come to grips with it.’ There is no point in saying you’ll go home, where you’ll have a guilty conscious for snitching, and so on and so on.”¹³⁹

At the end of his sentence, he presents an individual’s dilemma of snitching in order to be set free by the regime providing a glimpse of the prison system during that time.

After developing some sort of connection with the museum visitors, their reflections on their experiences have more weight to the visitors. Karel Hvíždala, a refugee at that time, reflects on why people emigrated from the Czech Republic. He says, “There are many reasons for it. One of them, clearly is the experience from 1967, 1968, and that taste of freedom.”¹⁴⁰ He continues by talking about how the repressive regime’s censorship has reached his psyche. He says, “Afterwards, I started to keep a journal and I quickly discovered how you can’t stop from censoring yourself - how everything around me is censored.” He also says that getting out of Czechoslovakia at that time mean that “[he] would be able to see the world and live like a normal person, unbowed.” After reflecting on how living in the Communist system has changed the way he lived his life, he says, “They did that to us. I will always hold it against them – this horrible distortion.”

¹³⁹ Video Testimony of Jirí Stránský, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁴⁰ Video Testimony of Karel Hvíždala, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

“You don’t feel it the same way I do. For me, it was the living present. For you, it’s just the past you’ve heard about,” Klimeš says in his testimonial.¹⁴¹ While the act of hearing about the past from someone who lived it as he looks straight at the camera and into the museum visitor may not be the same as actually living it, the action itself already transmits the memory as to seem to constitute memories in their own right even if it is in the form of “secondary witnessing” since “the exhibition not only provides a historical overview but also tells the stories of individuals”.¹⁴² These narratives shift the macro lens in which the textual narrative is presented to a micro lens, in which museum visitors could see how these historical events play out in the individual lives of the Czechoslovak people. This transfer of memory mimics what Hirsch calls the familial gaze, which she claims can “go beyond kinship and establish an intimate social group in the visual field that is based on affiliations”¹⁴³.

¹⁴¹ Video Testimony of Josef Klimeš, Museum of Communism, Prague, Czech Republic.

¹⁴² Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 41.

¹⁴³ Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, 41.

3. Explanation: Social Analysis

As pointed out by Alison Landsberg, “with memory comes a sense of obligation and responsibility: remembering is a moral injunction”¹⁴⁴. While the idea of museums as public educators and catalysts of social reform still stands until today, their aim has now evolved to empower their visitors, engage them emotionally, and entertain them as well as seek to open up spaces of contestation in which controversial viewpoints can be voiced. These emotional responses are significant in the formation and experience of social and political events because they construct and negotiate political discourses and form unity and division as “the driver of a sense of belonging – a key element that binds communities together, for with belonging comes ‘attraction, identification, and cohesion’”¹⁴⁵. As mentioned earlier, one of its assumptions include the role museums have in the political process of state formation as well the creation of a public.¹⁴⁶ An apparatus such as the memory of Communism portrayed in a medium of a museum – in Agamben’s words – “always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they ... produce their subject’.¹⁴⁷

This chapter on social analysis merits from the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the thesis. The recognition of the social dimension of memory studies have allowed researches to identify and map out the various political and social dimensions of memory, particularly in identity formation. Bergson’s assertion of remembering as an active engagement recognizes the importance of understanding the current socio-political context

¹⁴⁴ Alison Landsberg, “Response,” *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 11, no. 4 (2007): 628, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520701652194>.

¹⁴⁵ Sheila Watson, “The legacy of communism: difficult histories, emotions and contested narratives,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 7 (2018): 782.

¹⁴⁶ Mason, *Museum and Gallery Studies*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Agamben, Giorgio, *What is an apparatus?* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 11.

of the memory, while Durkheim's sociological framing of memory have brought about the limitations on memory based on one's social context. This means that a memory is bound to adhere to and foster a certain kind of society, which in this thesis is called a memory community. Therefore, based on these theories and concepts, the findings of the two previous chapters, which are the identities formed by the museum and the kind of media used to endorse such identity formation. Departing from the shared assumption with the methodology employed in this thesis, the social practices of people are tied to specific socio-historical contexts. As it draws out the memory, which the text aims to stimulate, it looks at these socio-historical contexts to identify the memory communities it adheres to and fosters. This method of analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in social relations.

Before looking at the memory community the museum fosters, it is important to look at the memory community it adheres to. This thesis claims that the memory community the Museum of Communism adheres to is that still of the post-Cold War context in which Czechoslovakia positioned themselves as Western nations to justify their membership in the European Union. By presenting the Czechoslovak nation as intrinsically democratic, it provides the visitors to see that they adhere to European norms and values promoted by the European Union. Its continued emphasis on its industrial prowess aligns its development with that of Western European states. Its distancing of the Czechoslovak people from the Communist regime as well as claims to non-sovereignty rids any form of association with Communism in its national identity. It also adheres to the European's global Holocaust discourse of victimhood status, which promotes a certain historical consciousness that aims to prevent the perpetuation of violent and traumatic histories. Beyond the exhibit, this promotion of historical consciousness can also be seen in the museum's *Generace 00* project with schoolchildren.

Even the existence of the museum itself as a “memory museum” adheres to the stipulations of the EU resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, which states that “the memories of Europe’s tragic past must be kept alive in order to honour the victims, condemn the perpetrators and lay the foundations for reconciliation based on truth and remembrance”.¹⁴⁸ The resolution stipulates that “historians agree that fully objective interpretations of historical facts are not possible and objective historical narratives do not exist” and “no political body or political party has a monopoly on interpreting history and such bodies and parties cannot claim to be objective”.¹⁴⁹ It also responds to the branding of the Communists as perpetrators, which is stipulated in the resolution.

The choices of language in the museum also indicates what memory communities it adheres to. The language of the museum is Czech and English. Each textual narrative has its corresponding English translation. It is important to note that the unofficial language of European politics is English. This is based on the data from the 2008 – 2012 debates of the European parliament obtained by the Guardian.¹⁵⁰ It is also one of the three languages that have a higher status for procedural languages in the European Commission. The other two are French and German. Aside from the EU, using the English language, also adheres to the global audience of the museum.

¹⁴⁸ This quote is based on the Joint Motion for a Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, assessed on 28 June 2019, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P6-RC-2009-0165&language=EN>.

¹⁴⁹ This quote is based on the Joint Motion for a Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, assessed on 28 June 2019, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P6-RC-2009-0165&language=EN>.

¹⁵⁰ Anna Codrea-Rado, “European parliament has 24 official languages, but MEPs prefer English,” the Guardian, May 21, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/datablog/2014/may/21/european-parliament-english-language-official-debates-data>.

Having established that the museum adheres to the pan-European narrative of historical consciousness, the fact that the museum itself also fosters such memory community is also in adherence to the European Union's aims, which claims that "Europe will not be united unless it is able to reach a common view of its history, recognise Communism, Nazism and fascism as a shared legacy and conduct an honest and thorough debate on all the totalitarian crimes of the past century".¹⁵¹ As the Museum of Communism paints a picture of three identities, namely the Communists, the Czechoslovaks, and the Nazis, by employing various mediums to engage its visitors with the past by transforming it into their own, they generate a sense of belonging which requires both emotional investment and identification. Thus, the Museum of Communism, just like other memory museums transform into forums for memory communities and for the communicative memory of eyewitnesses to historical events: in these spaces, significance is attributed to individual life stories beyond the purely private.

It is also important to remember the museum's project, *Generace 00*, which is quite a straightforward and explicit way to foster a memory community. As mentioned above, the goal of the museum's project is to motivate young people to reflect upon the history of their own country. The project's theme for this year is "The Totalitarian State". It describes this as a political system in which the state through its political ideology – in this case Communism – penetrates all areas of its citizen's public and private life. The project reflects the identities promoted by the museum. It has strong inclinations towards democracy. It defines the totalitarian state as an instrument of minority rule against the majority. The project's website's homepage has a quote from Pope John Paul, which goes, "History

¹⁵¹ Based on the Joint Motion for a Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P6-RC-2009-0165&language=EN>.

teaches that a democracy without values will easily turn into overt or camouflaged totalitarianism.”¹⁵² Moreover, the description of the theme for the year begins with Czech essayist and journalist Gabriel Laub’s quote, which claims that in totalitarian regimes, people come to power by intrigue and violence, while in democracies, it is by free choice. The project also mirrors the negative image the museum’s exhibit attaches to the Communist regime. It claims that the totalitarian state happens slowly and covertly and by its intolerance of other opinions. They also touch upon the propaganda employed by a totalitarian state, in which the project’s description describes as one which uses lies and half-truths to control their citizens. Moreover, they touch upon the last part of the exhibit, which maintains that power is conserved through an atmosphere of fear. The fostering of a memory community comes quite apparently through the statements it claims in the description, which employs the technique of othering. It states, “who is not with us is against us.” It provides the idea that people should not allow a totalitarian state, in this case, the regime such as that of the Communist’s, to rule the Czech Republic again. It asks the readers what comes to their mind when they hear about the theme as well as whether they think that a totalitarian state is present today. Moreover, it promotes a memory community that refuses to let totalitarian rule the state again by asking what history teaches us. These questions are to be explored by school children and their teachers.

However, the museum’s rhetoric of good intentions veils the twin dangers of commodification on the one hand and political instrumentalization on the other. In most cases, privately-funded museums need the approval of their customer rather than to challenge them beyond their comfort zone. On the other hand, state-funded museums

¹⁵² The website is only available in Czech.

perform a public role of remembrance in which they are expected to represent a broad social or at least political consensus and to produce narratives that form an integral part of national identity politics. The conflicting interests that are in play in the revitalization and redefinition of the institution of the museum include their role as not only a nation or a region's politics of identity but also a major player in the marketization of culture and history and in the regeneration of economically struggling regions through tourism. The service expected is both inclusive and innovative. It must be inclusive in the sense that it engages diverse audiences and offer opportunities for participation by showcasing their personal stories and portraying the effects of history on the individual. It must be innovative in the sense that it responds to current issues and debates through constant remodelling of their exhibitions for ethical and meaningful engagement with the society's changing perceptions of history. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that the museums today are hybrid products that negotiate commercial, political, ideological and emotional interests and investments.

Conclusion

Arguing that the portrayal of the memory of Communism in Czechoslovakia of the Museum of Communism maintains and participates in the pan-European discourse of Czechoslovakia (in the present times, the Czech Republic) as a Western nation kidnapped by the East as well as asserts the victimhood status of Czechoslovakia is defined by the global Holocaust discourse, this thesis employed the use of critical discourse analysis to provide such claim. Through the assumption language is a form of social practice and “[a]ll social practices are tried to specific historical contexts,”¹⁵³ it showed that existing relations in terms of representations in museums that are reproduced and contested serve particular interests. Therefore, the thesis examined the text itself (description), the process by which it is produced and received by the visitors (interpretation), and the socio-historical conditions that control it (explanation).¹⁵⁴ These analyses are referred to in this research as textual, processing, and social respectively.

By looking at the identities the community it endorses, this thesis claims that the museum represents Czechoslovak nation as a kidnapped West by establishing that the Czechoslovak nation is intrinsically democratic and capitalistic. By doing so, it ascertains that communism is politically, economically, and socially foreign to Czechoslovakia, which is supported by the fact that it highlights the subjugation of Czechoslovakia by the Communist regime. Moreover, depictions of discontent and distrust with the Communist regime corroborates the claim of this thesis. It also puts forward that the museum portrays the Communists as a

¹⁵³ Janks, “Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool,” 329.

¹⁵⁴ Hilary Janks, "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no. 3 (2006): 329, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630970180302>.

heinous totalitarian occupier plays an important role when defining the Czechoslovak's victimhood status through the global Holocaust discourse. As the text highlights the repressive methods of the Communists, emphasizes the absolutist nature of the regime, as well as distances the Communists from the Czechoslovak nation, it explicitly draws similarities between the Communists and the Nazis. By doing so, the Communist-era in Czechoslovakia is seen in a similar light as the Holocaust, which in turn legitimizes the country's victimhood status.

This thesis also highlights how these representations translate into the creation of memory communities by looking into the media used to portray them. By highlighting the medium used for remembrance as a fundamental factor in shaping what we remember and how we remember, this thesis traced how the museum goes beyond its education framework and moves towards the creation of the subject. The thesis identified how the reinvention of exhibition spaces as performative ones and the use of narrative modes of representation coupled with highly visualized multimedia provides the visitors an imaginative encounter with the past. While the visitors do not experience the past first-hand, they are able to acquire vicarious memories and/or prosthetic memories through secondary witnessing. This thesis played with the theoretical concepts of post-memory by Hirsch as well as prosthetic memory by Landsberg. In doing so, it was able to identify that through the experiential experience the museum provides of telling a story, such story is transmitted in a familial way that is similar to post-memory.

This transmission of memory, then, creates a second-hand memory of the past that the museum tries to re-create allowing for the visitors to participate in the memory community that the museum adheres to and fosters. While “[m]emory is not commonly imagined as a

site of possibility for progressive politics,”¹⁵⁵ the evolution of museums today slowly debunks this assumption. In the contemporary times, a museum’s success ultimately depends on “how the public connects with the previous generation and what kind of place they allow for museums in this process”¹⁵⁶. Considering the content and mode of remembrance the museum employs, the thesis finds that Museum of Communism in Prague mobilises a certain memory community. It claims that the memory community the Museum of Communism adheres to and fosters is that still of the post-Cold War context in which Czechoslovakia positioned themselves as Western nations to justify their membership in the European Union. Moreover, it is also important to include the Generace 00 project of the museum as a mechanism that fosters such a memory community as it is a transfer of memory to the youth of the Czech Republic from their own teachers.

Therefore, through the presentation of Czechoslovakia as a kidnapped West, it argues that the Czechoslovak nation is intrinsically democratic. It provides the historical background of Czechoslovakia as democratic since their independence from the Austrian Archduchy. It descriptively portrays the Czechoslovak people’s discontent and mistrust of the Communist regime. It also describes the incompatibility of the system with the socio-political fabric of the Czechoslovak nation through the various changes the Communists had to make to implement their ideology in the country. It also describes the organic return of Czechoslovakia back to democracy through the will of the people. By doing so, it claims that the Czech Republic is an intrinsically Western state. As it discusses how the Communists ruled as a foreign subjugator, it did not successfully liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazis, which they conveniently referred to as Germans, because its autonomy was

¹⁵⁵ Alison Landsberg, “Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture,” in *Memory and popular film*, eds. Mark Jancovich and Eric Schaefer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 144.

¹⁵⁶ Ciocea, “Prosthetic Memory and Post-Memory,” 10.

not given to the people. They adhere to the pan-European global Holocaust discourse of victimhood status, by drawing the similarities of the methodology used by the Communists to wield power with that of the Nazis. The methodology of using personal testimonies also provides a similar presentation of victimhood that Holocaust Museums employ. By claiming such and drawing similarities, the museum, as a Western one, adheres to the values the European Union promotes that aims to prevent the return of totalitarian regimes in Europe.

Summary

This thesis is a case study on the memory of Communism in Czechoslovakia. More specifically, the thesis looks at how such memory is portrayed in the Museum of Communism in Prague. Through the use of critical discourse analysis, it investigates what group identities the museum endorses, how it gives substance to them, and what kind of memory community it adheres to as well as fosters. This thesis argues that the Museum of Communism maintains and participates in the pan-European discourse of the Czech Republic as a Western nation kidnapped by the East and its victimhood status is defined by the global Holocaust discourse.

List of References

- Agamben, Giorgio, *What is an apparatus?* California: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Editions, 1983.
- Arnold-de Simine, Silke. "Memory Museum and Museum Text: Intermediality in Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum and W.G. Sebald's Austerlitz," *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 1 (2012): 14-35, [https://doi.org/ 10.1177/0263276411423034](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276411423034).
- Arnold-de Simine, Silke. *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Basu, Laura. "Memory dispositifs and national identities: The case of Ned Kelly," *Memory Studies* 4, no. 1: 33-41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698010382159>.
- Bergson, Henri-Louis. *Matter and Memory* Bergson, Henri-Louis, *Matter and Memory*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1896.
- Borek, David, Tomáš Carba, and Alexandr Koráb, *Legacy*. Prague: The Museum of Communism.
- Ciocea, Mălina and Alexandru Cârlan, "Prosthetic Memory and Post-Memory: Cultural Encounters with the Past in Designing a Museum", *Revista Română de Comunicare Şi Relații Publice / Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* 2, no. 7 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.21018/rjcpr.2015.2.4>.
- Codrea-Rado, Anna. "European parliament has 24 official languages, but MEPs prefer English," *Guardian*, May 21, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/datablog/2014/may/21/european-parliament-english-language-official-debates-data>.

- Erll, Astrid. "Re-writing as re-visioning Modes of representing the 'Indian Mutiny' in British novels, 1857 to 2000", *European Journal of English Studies* 10, no. 2: 163-185, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570600753485>.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Halbwach, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- International Council of Museums. "History of ICOM". Accessed May 29, 2019, <https://icom.museum/en/about-us/history-of-icom/>.
- International Council of Museums. "ICOM announces the alternative museum definition that will be subject to a vote." Accessed July 27, 2019, <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/>.
- Janks, Hilary. "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 18, no. 3 (2006): 329, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630970180302>.
- Kopanja, Jelena. "Seeing Red: Over a Czech Museum," *Jewish Exponent*, August 12, 2010.
- Kopeček, Michal and Matěj Spurný. "The History and Memory of Communism in the Czech Republic," Heinrich Böll Stiftung Prague, last modified July 14, 2019, <https://cz.boell.org/en/2014/03/24/history-and-memory-communism-czech-republic>.

- Koselleck, Reinhart, *Future Past Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Krosnar, Katka . “A Tribute to Barren Shops; Visitors to Prague can now relive the communist era, secret-police interrogations and all,” *Newsweek*, February 11, 2002.
- Landsberg, Alison. “Memory, Empathy, and the Politics of Identification”. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, no. 2 (2009): 221-229, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608227>.
- Landsberg, Alison. “Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture,” in *Memory and popular film*, eds. Mark Jancovich and Eric Schaefer, 144-161. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- Landsberg, Alison. “Response,” *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 11, no. 4 (2007): 627-629, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520701652194>.
- Mason, Rhiannon, Alistair Robinson and Emma Coffield, *Museum and Gallery Studies: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Mink, Georges and Laure Neumayer, “Introduction”, in *History, Memory and Politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Georges Mink and Laure Neumayer. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Richardson, John. *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Rusu, Iulian, Stefan Stanciugelu and Andrei Taranu, “The Communist Cultural Heritage in the Social Representation of a Post-Communist Generation,” *European Journal of Science and Technology* 9, no. 2 (2013): 1-17.

Watson, Sheila. "The legacy of communism: difficult histories, emotions and contested narratives," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 24, no. 7: 781-794.

Wolf, Diane L. "Holocaust Testimony: Producing post-memories, post Identities," in *Sociology confronts the Holocaust: memories and identities in Jewish diasporas*, ed. Judith M. Gerson and Diane L. Wolf. Durham, 152-175. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

Zbucea, Alexandra and Loredana Ivan, "Painting Shades of Gray: How to Communicate the History of Communism in Museums", *Revista Română de Comunicare și Relații Publice* 17, no. 2 (2015): 21-39, [https://doi.org/ http://10.21018/rjcpr.2015.2.14](https://doi.org/http://10.21018/rjcpr.2015.2.14).

Zombory, Máté . "The birth of the memory of Communism: memorial museums," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 6 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2017.1339680>.