Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of History and Philosophy

"History. Civilization. Culture" School of Doctoral Studies

Political Myths and Symbols in Monumental Art in Central and South-Eastern Europe

1880-1918

PhD thesis

Abstract

Scientific coordinator:

PhD. Univ. Professor Sorin **Mitu**

PhD student:

Teodora **Bonțeanu**

Cluj-Napoca

2010

"Es gibt nichts auf der Welt, was so unsichtbar wäre wie Denkmäler"

Robert Musil, "Denkmale" in

Robert Musil*, Nachlass zu Lebzeiten*, Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962, p. 63.

"What writing does for the literate, a picture does for the illiterate looking at it"

Pope Gregory I the Great (590-604), *apud* Miriam Gill, "The Role of Images in Monastic
Education: the Evidence from Wall Painting in Late Medieval Engalnd", in George Ferzoco,
Carolyn Muessig (edd.), *Medieval Monastic Education,* Leicester University Press, 2000, p. 117

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The present paper represents the result of 3 years of research in the field of history offered by the "History. Civilization. Culture" School of Doctoral Studies of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca under the scientific coordination of PhD University Professor Teodor Pavel. According to the latest trends in contemporary historiography, this PhD thesis outruns the frames of classical history or art history works in an attempt to state the background and re-evaluate the architectural, sculptural and pictorial patrimony in East and Central European space. The creation of political mythologies and their symbolic expression in this space make their appearance around 1880 under the influence of similar phenomena from Western Europe, only to evolve in specific manners in each of the investigated political areas. A methodological innovation in the present paper is represented by the inclusion of the aesthetic expressions from the Romanian Kingdom and their interpretation within the political context of the epoch in an analytical and comparative approach that has not been tackled so far by the Romanian historiography. The frames drawn by the ample art history syntheses that were focused only on those creations that illustrate innovative aesthetic approach, most of them dedicated to the private sphere, are to be overcome in this paper due to the specific traits of the public space: it was controlled by the intellectual and political elites and used intentionally for the conveyance of a message. As a space of communication, the public space and its aesthetic components draw the coordinates of a special category of art that is different by those creations dedicated to private locations. These differences can be noted in size, style, composition and last but not least in the symbolical message included, a message dictated by the paymaster, imposed on the artist and destined to the great public audience.

The approach of a complex theme as the political mythology and symbolism in Central and Eastern Europe from 1880 to Word War I requires, in the context of contemporary historiography, the blending of the new working methods specific to cultural anthropology,

history of mentalities, sociology with the re-evaluation of the "classical" working methods specific to art history. Due to this reason, the departing points of the present PhD thesis will be the identification of the sources, the clarification of the methodological approach, the taxonomy and defining of the key terms used.

An artistic perspective on modern nationalisms definitely brings new interpretations of the cultural manifestations of the Central and East European peoples who were, at the end of the 19th century, in an "identity defining campaign". Visual arts (like architecture, sculpture and painting) were used for various political purposes and art ultimately served as an additional means of expressing political demands. Monumental art thus represents an unprecedented and yet unpublished historical source, indispensable to the demarche of reconstructing a past political reality. The perspective brought by this specific historical source does not only intend to recuperate the quantity or quality of public artistic production; the image of the monument is used as a piece of the collective imaginary's message, a symbolical expression of an ideological reality. It is hence needed to set a reading grid of the monument's image as well as a definition of the term itself.

The root of the word "monument" is the Latin word "monere" meaning to pay attention, to draw attention, to remember and also to advise, to urge, to counsel. All these senses are found in the function of the monument along its evolution in time. Thus, the definition of the public monument used in the present paper will be: public sculpture, large painting or building belonging to the state's institutions created for the commemoration of a character or a past event and for the rendering of an educative, historical and political idea. The existence of the public monument is linked to complex ideological and practical factors: ideologically, an intellectual and political elite was needed in order to coherently formulate the theoretical base of the political ideology; this was possible after the configuration of history as a science in the 19th century and the reinterpretation of historical past as grounds for present political actions. Practically, an able and willing group with financial resources was required, artists needed to have the required skills, funding of the monuments to be built had to be assured. Also the local administrative institutions were responsible for allotting a space for the future monument in the public space with the condition that public order and safety will not be affected by its message.

As the public monument owes its existence to a specific and intended order, its message extents beyond the explanations of an iconographical analysis. A reading grid of the monument

only based on its constituent elements would diminish the analysis to a simple range of artistic observations; this is why it is needed to extend the demarche to the monument's surrounding environment in order to restore its whole significance and to incorporate it is the history of political imaginary. Thus, the studied images gain a double statute: works of art and testimonial documents. Iconographical analysis specific to art history will only allow a quantity and quality assessment of the monuments, without a research of their symbolical meanings; this will be achieved with the help of iconology, through the study of the characteristic attributes of various characters or events and their artistic interpretation.

In order to identify the public monuments, most of them intentionally destroyed in the political events after World War I or later, by accident, a selection of the sources was made, with the intention to discover those images that will bring forth the attitude and role played by public art in the investigated time period. This is why the main types of illustration sources are represented by the picture postcards of the epoch, traced in art albums, monographs of cities and towns, tourist guides, postcard collections of the libraries, catalogues of theme exhibitions organized by the National History Museums from Berlin, Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Bucharest or Paris. Last but not least these images were identified online, in the virtual galleries and libraries of art museums, national libraries, online encyclopedias, monograph sites or non-governmental organizations.

The first and most important factor in the existence of the public monument is the paymaster, the one who funds its building and sets its theme and message. These ideas and requirements are transposed in real shape by the artist but his freedom of creation is confined by exact requests. The last and most important factor of the reading grid of a public monument is the audience. Through its public nature, the monument appeals without difference to all social categories – this aspect dictates that the message should be as clearly expressed as possible in a simple and accessible manner.

The reply of the audience towards the paymaster is the most important aspect of the reading grid of the public monuments as it shows whether the message was accepted or rejected. This feedback proves to which extent the commemorative or pedagogical intention of the monument was fulfilled and which are the sensitive areas of the public's imaginary. The submitted analysis triangle – paymaster/artist/audience – has the mission of attaining all aspects

linked to the life of public monuments and of reconstructing through images a coherent political universe that was already proven by other historical sources.

Political mythology and symbolism play an essential part in asserting political ideologies of the 19th century. The definition of the political myth, as was formulated by the historian Lucian Boia, determines its characteristics and aim: "an imaginary construction meant to bring out the essence of cosmic and social phenomena in a close relation with the community's fundamental values in the aim of assuring its cohesion"[1]. The modern epoch brought changes in the content of founding myths and the most important change was the increased value of native ethnic roots. The simple, popular roots are more valuable then the noble descent. This shift in values is linked to the new scientific and national phase of the historical discourse, which left behind the initial dimension of the fabulous and marvelous founding myth. All founding myths have the same function, to certify an initial and continuous reality, a "pre-existence" and "predestination". They offer an absolute and definitive explanation that will be the base of the community's beliefs and symbolic warrant of their values; they also structure the beliefs and mobilize the community's actions. That is why the founding myths have contributed in a decisive manner to the genesis of national identities in modern Europe.

In plastic language, a symbol is defined as a sign, object, phenomenon invested with the special ability of rendering ideas, concepts, ideological innuendos more complex than their simple representation, according to a generally accepted code belonging to a generally closed groups or communities. A symbol is "an object endowed by people with a meaning, a value or significance"[2]. Thus, it is a human invention, born in the process of assigning a meaning to an object. The political symbol is relevant for the exertion of political authority and administration of social conflict; as they are simultaneously cultural elements and objects with individual meaning, the political symbols offer a link between the individual and social order. A taxonomy of political symbols[3] will prove itself extremely useful for the suggested investigation in the Central and East European space:

- Symbols of political community: national flag, national anthem, heraldic symbols

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[1] Lucian Boia, *Istorie şi mit în conştiinţa românească,* Ed. Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 57.
[2] Charles D. Elder, Roger W. Cobb, *The Political Use of Symbols,* Ed. Longman Inc., New York and London, 1983, p. 29.
[3] Ibidem, p. 36

- Symbols of norms, structures and roles: "king" or "emperor" symbolized by the crown, military rank by command attributes, etc.
- Symbols of situations: - authority institutions: Parliament, Royal Court;
  - non-governmental political actors: national poet;
  - political ideas: "democracy", "national freedom", "Latinity".

As a sanctioning instrument in the hand of social groups with various ideological trends, the symbol takes over the political aspects and exposes them in the public space; it becomes a tool of symbolical power expressed by a political group, sometimes even the cause of "symbolic violence"[4] when ideologically opposed groups confront themselves in the dispute of public decorative space.

In the act of creating historical myths, two aspects are of the utmost importance: the attitude of the political elite *vis-à-vis* the historical character or moment chosen to be represented in public space and its action towards the propagation of the symbol to the core of the social strata[5]. The first factor grew in importance once history became a science over the 19th century; the founding myths were "dressed up" by historians in scientific truths and myths became a deformation of "historized" present linked to a "politized" past[6]. The second factor, of propagation, was assumed by the paymasters through textbooks, political speeches, literature and also through artists: painters, architects and sculptors. For them, the real reason of rendering historical themes was not the recreation of truth but of a dreamt of/imagined/ideal past. The attention paid to details and authenticity was the artists' means of catching the viewers and transforming them in unmediated contemporaries of the historical scent transposed in the present time. By canceling the temporary distance between the subject's and the viewer's times, the artists frame a history that speaks to the nation and serves its present and future ideals. The past rendered by artists' works is marked by a remembering ideal with the aim of treasuring and revigorating the collective's memory. Thus an invention takes place, a "game with memory"[7] and traditions, fueled by the artists', historains' and politicians' romantic ardor towards the past.

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[4] Simona Nicoară, *Mitologiile revoluţiei paşoptiste româneşti. Istorie şi imaginar*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p. 64.
[5] Mihaela Luminiţa Murgescu, "Trecutul între cunoaştere şi cultul eroilor patriei. Figura lui Mihai Viteazul în manualele şcolare de istorie (1831-1994)", in Lucian Boia, *Mituri istorice româneşti,* Ed. Universităţii Bucureşti, Bucureşti, 1995, p. 44.
[6] Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 189.
[7] Andi Mihalache, *Inside the heritage Idea:Facts, Heroes and Commemorations in the Twentieth Century,* in "Studia Universitatis "Babeş-Bolyai" Historia", vol. 50, nr. 1, Iunie 2005, p. 118.

The geographical space covered by the present analysis of political mythology and symbolism expands over Central and South-Eastern Europe, more precisely over the conglomerate of nations included in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and also over the newly created independent national state, the Romanian Kingdom. The choice of the two administrative entities was motivated firstly by the major distinction in the self-perception of statehood: the Romanian state gained its independence in 1881 and represented a triumph of national identity while the Austro-Hungarian Empire accredited the idea of state identity that allowed "the combination of political loyalty towards the Habsburgs and a cultural loyalty towards another language and tradition"[8]. The major difference in statehood, that permitted opposed formulas of ethic/national identities and public artistic expressions, allows in the present analysis a comparative approach of political public monuments generated by the two states and the emphasis of public aesthetic expression in the Romanian space.

In choosing the time span 1880-1918 for the investigation of political myths and symbols was determined by the concurrence, in Austro-Hungarian and Romanian areas, of the flourishing and apogee phase of national political ideology and its manifestation in public art. The appearance of these monuments related to national identity was rooted in the political romantism that extended over all European countries starting with the end of the 18th century. The expression of political myths, derived from the romantic ardor of rediscovering the past in artistic form, took firstly the shape of historical painting; this genre was present all over the world, not just in Europe, after 1848. The national hero has its forerunner too in the romantic hero, typified by courage, moral strength and noble ideals. The "Statuomania"[9] that characterized Parisian public art after 1870[10] is part of the same phenomenon of expressing political ideas (not only nationalistic but also liberal, democratic, revolutionary, anticlerical) in public art. In the German space we encounter the same fervor in building monuments dedicated to the nation's past[11]. The last two decades of the 19th century represent also the theoretical and practical debut of national architectural styles.

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[8] Jaques Le Rider, *Europa centrală sau paradoxul fragilităţii,* Ed. Polirom, Iaşi, 2001, p. 36.
[9] Sergiusz Micalski, "Democratic "Statuomania" in Paris" in Idem, *Public Monuments. Art in Political Bondage 1870-1997,* Ed. Reaktion Books Ltd., London, 1998, p. 13-55.
[10] In Paris alone over 150 statues are built from 1870 to 1914 dedicated to historical characters and "great men"; from 1815 to 1870 only 26 public monuments were erected in the French capital,see June Hargrove, "Les statues de Paris" în Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire,* Vol. III, Ed. Gallimard, Paris, 1986, p. 256.
[11] Sergiusz Micalski, "Bismark and the Lure of Teutonic Granite" in op. cit., p. 56-76.

Starting with 1880 and as far as 1918 – monuments being unveiled even during World War I – we are dealing with a confrontation in the public space between two ideologically opposed programmes: an official one, created on purpose by the state's representatives, intentionally propagated to all social strata and aiming to ensure a state loyalty; the other programme, unofficial and not sustained by the state, represents the response of the ethnic and/or national groups and an indirect expression of their ideological standings. Although it was not created as a consequence of a theoretical programme, but more as an instinctive defense reaction of the regional ethnic, ideological or social specific conditions, the second programme was uneven in its expression, symbolic subtlety and geographic distribution. As the ideological expression of a political elite and sustained by the expenses of wealthy citizens, the political monuments will only be erected in those towns or cities where all the required factors existed – one must not forget that the main element in the building of these monuments were the city halls who allotted the necessary public space. Consequently, the reality reconstructed by monumental art only reflects a fragment of the epoch's political status; thus, when monuments lack from the public space it is not a sign of a group's non-involvement in political life. The monuments from both categories will undergo an ideological transformation after World War I: those whose message served the purpose of the new political realities will survive; the others will be intentionally destroyed.

The very complex politic situation in the k.u.k. Monarchy based on its multi-ethnic character and geographic span imposed on the officials to draw generally valid imaginary coordinates, required in order to keep social discipline and internal cohesion. After 1867 the political context that shadowed the claims of nationalities in Cisleithania forced the imperial court to adjust public feelings according to the new reality. The new subjects from Transleithania (only *de jure,* as *de facto* they were under Habsburg administration since the end of the 17th century) represented a new field where dynastic loyalty could be implemented. But local situations in both parts of the Empire did not always match the imperial court's vision. Additionally to the ethic fragmentation the Monarchy was also politically divided (conservatives/liberals, Catholics/protestants) thus bringing modifications to the over-national loyalty programme of the Habsburgs, mostly drifting towards the assertion of national regional ideals. In these conditions a special category of monuments is born around 1880, which

apparently embraced over-national patriotism but actually contained symbols of regional national demands.

The Romanian Kingdom at its turn tried to build a sanctioned public discourse based on local traditions. Romanian ideology encountered its first obstacle in the monarch's provenience; the fact that Carol I was of German descent made his acceptance by the public difficult. For some, the king remained till the end "the Prussian" [12]. The hardships of his validation in the first reigning decades (1866-1881) were overcome after the conquest of the country's independence following the Romanian-Russian-Ottoman war 1877-1878 and proclaiming of the Kingdom in 1881. Carol I understood the symbolic force of art and used it in order to disseminate the myth of the "Founding King".

Making publicity to national heroes through artistic means in public space had a powerful impact around 1900 as it was the most efficient way of addressing to the unevenly educated crowds. The politicians as well as cultural and public institutions took upon themselves to dissipate the main characters of the nation's mythology by using history and art for national propaganda. Some artists tried to establish an artistic national language too and their attempts are more visible in the national architectural styles and less noticeable in the public sculptures. The "national" architectural styles were accepted by the administrative institutions; hence numerous schools, city halls, museums and other public edifices were built according to the local style.

Monumental art at the end of the 19th century was tributary to urban development and political stability. The national ideology became in the same time a matter of state, as it looked to assure the loyalty of its subjects and the society's cohesion and stability. Art became a powerful tool for the state next to education and religion causing the citizens' emotional cohesion around national symbols.

As the methodology used in the present thesis derives from various disciplines, it is necessary to define and demarcate the concepts on which the analysis of monumental art is based.

The **representation** is one of the key concepts of the present analysis as a monument is first of all a transposition of an idea in physical form through artistic means. This term, initially used by social sciences, draw the historians' attentions as soon as it became a base concept in the

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[12] Carmen Tănăsoiu, *Iconografia regelui Carol I. De la realitate la mit*, Ed. Amarcord, Timişoara, 1999, p. 11.

history of mentality[13].   In the present context, the object of representation, respectively the artistic product, directly derives from the social imaginary as a negotiation and reconsideration of historic values. The artistic image represents a communication and representation event disseminated from the paymaster towards the audience. The definition of "representation" is closely related to **imaginary:** "the imaginary's domain is made of all representation that exceed the limit drawn by experience's observations and the deductive chain authorized by them"[14]. And one of the imaginary's sources, in Lucian Boia's taxonomy, is the universe of images: "a subtle but all too real report links architecture to ideologies, to social and politic imaginary, to a certain vision of the world...The statues complete the information through a more actual line: the characters and figurative symbols, the manner of representation, also what is missing from the picture encompass a remarkable introduction in political, historical and cultural mythology"[15].

Another concept closely related to artistic representations in public space is **collective memory**, a term linked to its direct antonym, **remembering,** and also the phenomenon of *lieux de mémoire*. According to the definition[16], **memory/remembering** are fundamental operations of human culture, intrinsic to both individuals and communities; they can only function selectively and are mutually influenced. The interrelation of memory and remembering echoes in the process named " discovery of nations" from before World War I in the form of *lieux de mémoire* and a patriotic imagined geography. The terms: **communicative, collective and cultural memory** were introduced in the works of historian Jan Assmann[17]; they focus mainly on the politic character of collective memory that at its turn generates commemorative rituals and acts. A tangible expression of these acts and rituals is *lieux de mémoire***,** a term created and defined by the French historian Pierre Nora[18]. For Nora, the memory of a generation is not just related to individual psychology but also compacted in common places, centers of collective attending that allow individuals to closely connect. A special aspect lacks from this initial study of the French historian: the *lieux de mémoire* investigated in the present paper belong not to one,

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[13]See Roger Chartier, *Le monde comme représentation,* în "Annales E.S.C.", 6, nov-dec. 1989, p. 1505-1525. Also see Toader Nicoară, *Clio în orizontul mileniului trei,* Ed. Accent, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 194-201.
[14] Evelyne Patlagean, *Histoire de l'immaginaire,* în Jaques Le Goff (ed.), "La Nouvelle Histoire", Ed. Retz, Paris, 1978, p. 249.
[15] Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului,* p.48.
[16] Jakob Tanner, "Erinerung/Vergessen", in Stefan Jordan (ed.), *Lexicon Geschichtswissenschaft. Hundert Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart, 2002, p.77.
[17] Jan Assmann, John Czaplicka, *Collective memory and cultural identity,* in "New German Critique", nr. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, 1995, p.127.
[18] Pierre Nora, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, in "Representations", 26, 1989, p. 7-24.

but to more ethnic groups who are in a reclaiming competition. As imaginary "boundary stones" in the collective mentality, the public monuments demarcate an imagined territory where a unitary collective memory exists; this territory does often not overlap the existent administrative units.

The public monument finds itself in a direct and symbolical relationship with the national goals of various ethnic groups. Thus, a question must be raised: are all public monuments **national monuments**? In order to identify this distinct category, Thomas Nipperdey defines its purpose: to transform national identity in a visible and permanent symbol[19]. Biljana Menkovic brings as addition to this definition, considering monuments as means of visualization of political power in public space[20]. The second definition can be applied on those artistic products that were ordered and paid by the state, whose aim was pedagogical or to appraise a leader; in the same time this definition leaves outside those monuments commissioned by cultural associations or other groups whose message was opposed to the state's official policy. By combining the 2 definitions above, one can come to the conclusion that the monument has an ideological load when it appeals to specific national symbols and they are made permanent in public space through artistic representation.

Public sphere is another often used term is the present investigation of the nationalism-public art relationship; it was first put in theory by Jürgen Habermas in 1962. In his opinion, the public sphere becomes the representation place of bourgeoisie's criticism starting with the 18th century, a place where the public opinion acted as limitation to power[21]. Habermas' critics, reunited in the collective work edited by Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, extend the actors of the public sphere from bourgeoisie to other social strata as well, all sustaining a generally critical relationship with the official policy of the state. Another interpretation with special focus on Austro-Hungarian Empire was undertaken by Julia Kristeva in *Nations without Nationalism*. She claims that the concept of public sphere cannot be applied to the Dual Monarchy as it is based on the equation defined by a single economical system and a political hegemony that confreres a specific vision of bourgeoisie; Kristeva advances the term

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[19] Thomas Nipperdey, *Nationalidee und Nationaldenkmal in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert*, in "Historische Zeitschrift", 206, nr. 3, p. 532-533.

[20] Biljana Menkovic, *Politische Gedankkultur. Denkmäler – die Visualisierung politischer Macht im öffentlichen Raum,* Ed. Braumüller, Vienna, 1999, p. 1.

[21] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, Ed. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.136.

public space coordinated by national consciousness, a place where subjects (citizens) [22] and superiors (City Hall, Parliament, Emperor) negotiate directly. This vision over the space where monumental art expresses itself allows us to understand the diversity and complexity of national symbols present.

A new interpretation of public space is brought by *Public Space and Democracy* edited by Marcel Hénaf and Tracy B. Strong in 2001. In the volume's introduction, *The Conditions of Public Space: Vision, Speech, and Theatricality,* the authors stress on the theatrical, stenographic quality of the public space, as a scene where political ideologies are put into play, where ceremonies, national holidays and commemorations of the 19th century express their "pathos" [23]. The public space, over the control of the state's institutions and with a wide audience, legitimates the political message and becomes a scene of the time's ideology.

A special trait of the public space is to be mentioned: it only includes the secular commemoration places and it intentionatelly ignores the religious remembering places, such as churches and cemeteries. The exit of commemorative monuments from ecclesiastic space to the lay, urban area is a phenomenon that took place in all European countries by the end of the 19th century as the state took over the civic education – public commemoration outgrows the limitations of commemorated's individuality, it extends over their social, cultural, political actions and thus the individual becomes the symbol of an idea[24]. The same phenomenon is present in architecture, where the rediscovery of the Gothic style does no longer signify the celebration of the religious space but the traits of cultural and political values of a nation's "Golden Age". This is why the sepulchral sculpture from cemeteries, religious architecture of private buildings or paintings dedicated to private spaces will not be investigated in the present paper as the only focus will be on those monuments that represent a propaganda mechanism with a political symbolic load, accessible to all audiences, no matter of their religious orientation.

Another theoretical mark of the present thesis is the term of **invented tradition,** defined in the volume edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger: *The Invention of Tradition.* The

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[22] Julia Kristeva, *Nations without nationalism*, Ed. Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 13.

[23] Marcel Hénaf, Tracy B. Strong (edd.), *Public Space and Democracy,* Ed. University of Minesota Press, Mineapolis. London, 2001, p. 25. Also a series of articles dedicated to the relationship politics-public space in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire in Maria Bucur, Nancy Wingfield, (edd.), *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*, Ed. Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, Indiana, 2001.

[24] Maurice Agulhon, *La statuomanie et l'Histoire,* in "Ethnologie française", nr. 2/3, 1978, p. 148.

authors demonstrate that traditions were fabricated by ethnic groups in the 19th century and then dressed up in historical coat and presented as immemorial. Hobsbawm considers that "the relatively new historical invention, the nation, together with its associated phenomena: nationalism, nation-state, national symbols, history and all other (exist) due to invented traditions and are based on social engineering exercises, often intentional and always innovative"[25].

A last key concept is represented by **imagined community**, as defined by the historian Benedict Anderson[26]. The aim of this paper does not allow a deeper incursion in all the definitions of the nation discussed in the contemporary historiography – for this analysis the term of **imagined community** will be defined as ethic groups that were included in the Austro-Hungarian Empire whose geographical distribution does not overlap the administrative delimitation (as, for instance, in the case of German communities in Bohemia).

Monumental art in Austro-Hungarian Empire and Romanian Kingdom after 1880 and until World War I may therefore be defined as an artistic r**epresentation** of **political mythologies**, a **political symbol** whose sources are to be found in the **social imaginary**, determined by the action of **collective memory** over **the public space** that assumes the value of a *lieu de mémoire,* an act of **social engineering** specific to the phenomenon of **inventing traditions** by **imagined communities**.

Monumental art was used at the end of the 19th century as an additional means in constructing national identity by appealing to the historic past, culture, political options and military events. The individual is shaping his public *persona* in more symbolic states: as a citizen he contributes and adheres to the symbols of ruling structures; as a patriot he relates to the glorious act of her forerunners; as a political activist, he is involved in the debate between various ideological trends, expressing himself in the public space; last but not least, as member of an ethic group he contributes to the cult of his forefathers that gives him a special feeling of uniqueness that also helps shaping the image of the "other".

Public monumental art cannot be restrained by the interpretative sociologic limitations of the remembering phenomenon. As an intentional product of legitimating, public art was used mainly as expression of political power and state institutions. The artistic Austrian dynastic myth

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[25] Eric Hobsbawm, Terrence Ranger, (edd.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983, p. 13-14.
[26] Benedict Anderson, *Immagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Ed. Verso, London, 1991.

intended to unify the dispersed elements of local traditions, without banning them; the hegemonic Hungarian mythology of *Fin-de-siècle* tried even more, to cancel all non-Hungarian tradition. The institutions of the state selected aesthetic representative manifestations: in the Austrian case, an architectural style based on historical classicism as a symbol of balance and reason promoted by a reliable society, public sculptures illustrating the ruler and his praiseworthy ancestors, military heroes and cultural characters of Austrian descent that sanctioned the Empire's ruling court upheld by tradition, reason, military victory and superior civilization. This perception was adjusted in the Transleithan part of the Empire, keeping the ideas of historical sanctioning and cultural superiority, without praising the ruler. Symbolic power is transferred from the Emperor/King towards the "great people": politicians, writers, scientists or military heroes. The accent was placed on Hungarian ethnicity and local traditions (subordinated to the notion of *natio hungarica*) and expressed in public sculptures, paintings and also in the architectural style – this fact neutralized all other local traditions. Apparently, there is no artistic opposition movement in public space, no challenge of the state's official cultural policies as one could notice in Cisleithania where the Czech, Polish, Slovenian, Italian aesthetic responses were visible. The official magyarisation policy, extended to all levels of public life, refused other ethnic/national expressions in the public space.

The Romanian Kingdom seems to have no ethnic challenges as well – the ethnic minorities here were reduced in number. King Carol I tried to establish the myth of "Founding King" but only by appealing to his cultural, military, administrative accomplishments and drawing imaginary parallels with Romanian historical characters like Mircea cel Bătrân, Ştefan cel Mare, Mihai Viteazu, Alexandru Ioan Cuza. The success of the 1877-1878 campaign in Bulgaria against the Ottoman Empire and the trauma of war influenced the appearance of a heroes' cult – this cult was not initiated or paid by the state. Carol I was the main beneficiary of the heroes' cult, in his position of military commander and chose to make his victory public through stamps, postcards, medals, albums. The state's institutions also illustrated the national aesthetic tradition and chose the new Romanian architectural style – this option was financed by the King. As in the Hungarian Kingdom, the Romanian elites praised the "great people" in public space.

Local artistic responses in Cisleithania mirrored the centrifugal force of provincial ideologies. Under the apparent embrace of dynastic loyalty, each of the provinces' ethnic groups

sought to mark their identity coordinates based on history, folklore and political action; therefore the staging of imperial patriotism at a symbolic level was a main characteristic of these provinces. The Polish province of Galicia, for instance seemed to totally embrace the over-national ideology promoted by imperial court, praising in public space characters of the joint Austrian-Polish historical past like the king Jan Sobieski and the politicians Agenor Goluchowski and Franz Smolka. A different symbolic level is represented by the men of letters: Kornel Ujejski, Adam Mickiewicz and Alexander Fredro, all of them militants of the Polish independence and the recreation of the lost medieval Polish state. In the architectural style, the Polish are also more sensitive to ethnic stylistic trends, taking up a building guideline from the Zakopane area that would illustrate the national traits. The Czechs, although more politically involved as an opposition group, did not develop up to 1918 an architectural style based on local traditions. The local historical figures were nevertheless represented in the public statuary – "great men" of Czech past were immortalized in bronze, marble and stone.

The events of the 20th century led to the accidental or intentional disappearance of numerous public monuments built form 1880 till 1918. The statues were the first to suffer the follow ups of ideological changes, being attacked and destroyed after the end of War World I in the new context dictated by the new politic and administrative borders of the newly created states. The disparity between the symbolic message of these statues and the new politic realities were the main cause of their destruction; as a psychological reaction, the symbols of the old order underwent a process of *damnatio memoriae*, being taken out even from monographs edited after 1918. Due to practical concerns – especially financial reasons – complex monuments were transformed, being endowed with new meaning and public value; two Transylvanian examples are conclusive: in the monument of Franz Joseph from Caransebeş the statue of the emperor was replaced with the statue of the Romanian general Ioan Dragalina. A second relevant case concerns the stone obelisk of Petőfi Sándor from Tîrgu Mureş – after 1918 the bronze statue of a Romanian soldier was added and the monument's commemorative recipient became the unknown soldier. The damage caused by the bombing of cities during the Second World War led to the destruction of many other public monuments, especially buildings from the capitals of the belligerent states; during this events the statues from the František Palacký bridge from Prague were relocated in the city's suburbs. The circumstances that followed after 1945 and the new communist ideology caused a new wave of destructions, in the case of the city Lemberg/L'vov

all statues that symbolized the old Polish affiliation being removed from the public space. The urban modifications in the last 20 years also influenced the placement of public monuments and also the destination of old institutional buildings. What survived up to this day in the public space is owed mostly to chance and not to a coherent conservation and restoration programme of the public patrimony. The paintings found their places in museums, when their size and base allowed it; the mural paintings had the same fate as the building they were located in, being destroyed, or being restored and transformed in tourist attraction.

The remaining monuments seem to have had a paradoxical destiny: they were either forgotten and exist in the public space without being noticed – as Robert Musil noted "Es gibt nichts auf der Welt, was so unsichtbar wäre wie Denkmäler"[27], or were transformed in tourist attractions, emptied of all symbolic meaning and put on display as relics of an old age, or have become the icon of current politic controversy. The main attribution of a monument, that of remembering, is randomly present today , after 100 years, in the public symbols. The fell into oblivion and trivial of public monuments, as their original message was outdated and commemorative rituals stopped, transformed them into simple sites on the tourists' maps. Their aesthetic aspect seems to have remained the only point of interest and the only proof, a century later, of the technical and artistic craftsmanship of their builders.

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[27] Robert Musil*, Nachlass zu Lebzeiten*, Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 1962, p. 63.