

## Five Essays on Bulgarian Museums and Communism

The fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe marked the beginning of the so-called transition period, which was smoother for some countries and troubled for others. In all cases, however, it was a period of revision and establishment of new social, political and environmental values, challenging and difficult to accept for the generation that lived for 45 years under those regimes. A period of complete denial of 45 years of existence was followed by nostalgia and finally by the acceptance that, whether we like it or not, communism forms part of our history and part of us all and cannot be just wiped without traces.

This book explores a three-way relationship: between Bulgarian museums, communism in its Bulgarian variation and Bulgarian society. It looks at how the regime influenced the development of the museum system but most importantly it looks at how communist museums influenced the audiences. The development and changes in the perception of museum visitors, their understanding and reactions are explored through their relationship with museums. The link between the past, the present and the future of both museums and society is established by examining visitors' approach towards museums and the way history was and is represented in them.

**Gabriela Petkova-Campbell** completed an MA course in French Studies at Sofia University in 1994 and undertook a second MA course in Museum Studies at Newcastle University in 2001. She was then offered a doctoral candidacy at the same University, where she has further developed her Masters research interests into PhD research with an accent on comparative museology. She was awarded her PhD in 2007 and has since published a monograph and several academic papers discussing and comparing various museological models in different European countries. Currently she is living and working between Paris and Sofia where she continues her research on the uses and misuses of history in museums in Southeast Europe.

Photograph: The park of the Museum of Socialist Art in Sofia, Bulgaria (author's personal archive).

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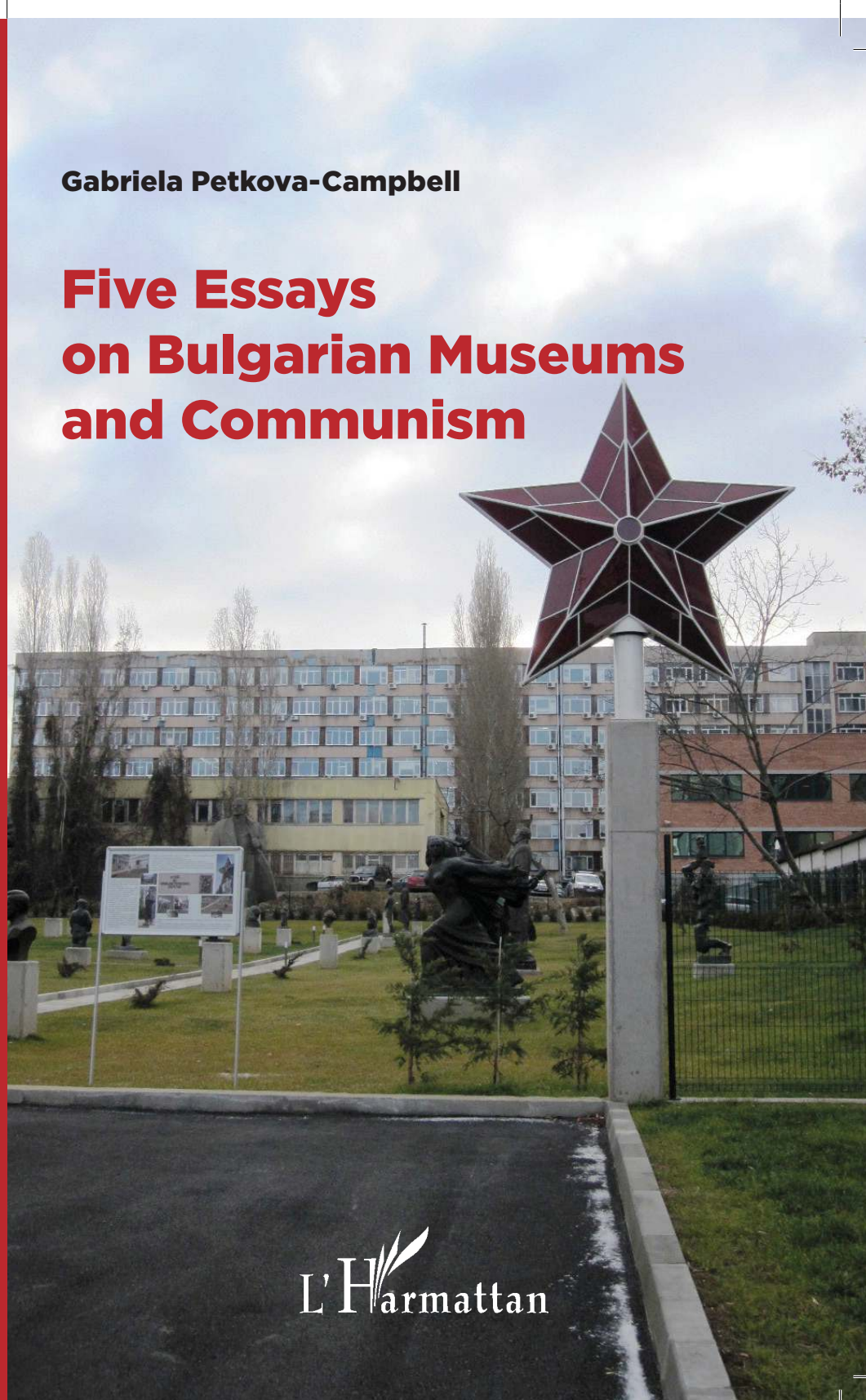


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