

Exhibiting Negative Feelings: Writing a History of Emotions in German History Museums

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Abstract

This article moves beyond recent work on visitor emotions to ask: How are the emotions of past eras (and more particularly of twentieth-century Germany) historicized in history exhibitions? How can the academic field of the history of emotions – which, in Germany, has been galvanized by the study of National Socialism and its legacies – make the transition from the written investigations of historical scholarship to the multi-modal displays of public history? These questions are of particular relevance to German exhibitions about communist East Germany and its collapse because emotions are understood to be a key field of contestation in this recent period of German history. Using exhibitions about East Germany as source material, the article considers how academic disciplines and the institution of the museum constitute emotions as discursive objects.

Key words: East Germany / German Unification / National Socialism / Emotions

Introduction

A growing body of scholarly work investigates how museums elicit emotional responses from their visitors and what ends this might serve. While this essay pursues a different avenue of enquiry, asking what museums have to say about emotions that were felt in the past, the topics are clearly interlinked and a brief outline of earlier work is provided first. In a second section I consider how the history of emotions and the study of objects and emotions might meet in the museum. What emerges from both these sections is that, within the field of German Studies, National Socialism is central to scholarship on historical emotions.

As I am involved in a longer-term investigation of museums of National Socialism, however, this article instead draws its examples from exhibitions about communist East Germany (the GDR), about the *Wende* or historical turnabout of 1989, and about the process of German unification which began with the GDR's formal accession to democratic Germany in 1990. Studies undertaken by Patricia Hogwood, amongst others, have shown that emotions – in particular negative feelings of disappointment and reduced self-worth – have played a significant social and political role in the period following the collapse of East German communism (Hogwood 2011). The analysis in the main body of the article considers how pre- and post-*Wende* emotions are made knowable by the names attached to them and how museum exhibitions address or avoid negative emotions.

Visitor Emotions

Sandra Dudley couples 'emotion' with 'sense' to investigate the visitor's embodied engagements with museum objects and proposes that, far from simply apprehending an object as one half of an 'object-information package', visitors also interact with objects sensually and emotionally (Dudley 2010: 3-5, 8-12). A study by Silke Arnold-de Simine broadens the focus to audio-visual technologies and performance, and considers how these newer media can invite visitors to inhabit the lives of people from the past, 'to identify with other people's pain, adopt their memories, empathize with their suffering, re-enact and work through their traumas' (Arnold-de

Simine 2013: 1). Although Arnold-de Simine's argument centres on vicarious experience, rather than specifically on emotion, she, too, invokes the emotional component of visitor responses at the museum, including distress, vulnerability, and terror.

While Dudley's edited volume does not address German museums and Arnold-de Simine's monograph examines German museums in international comparison, there is also a body of research that more specifically addresses the emotional effects elicited by exhibitions about Nazi crimes. Aleida Assmann and Juliane Brauer (2011) argue that the emotions felt by visitors at former concentration camp sites (typically grief, disgust, and anger) are not provoked only once the visit begins. Rather, visitors bring such emotions with them, having already engaged with the Holocaust (73, 87). This pre-mediation may prompt younger German visitors to seek voyeuristic pleasure at sites of Holocaust memory (88-9). Other teenagers, while responding more conventionally to a camp visit, seek external validation of their conventional emotions through social media (92-3). For a critical view of the emotional effects of memorial-site pedagogy see also Heyl 2013.

Emotional shock is widely understood to have been the primary effect of the photographs displayed in the controversial *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht (Crimes of the Wehrmacht)* exhibition in the 1990s, and Cornelia Brink notes that many army veterans responded defensively, fearing to lose a sympathetic version of their own biography (Brink 2011: 108-12). Brink cautions that further work is needed to establish the social meanings of feelings expressed in the 1990s, not least because of the relatively recent social currency of the German emotion 'Betroffenheit', a kind of moral shock or disquiet commonly professed in response to the Nazi past. It is identified by Pampel (2007: 101) as a key response in visitors to former concentration camps and is discussed critically by Niven (2002: 186-7). The difficulty of translating 'Betroffenheit' adequately into English highlights an issue to which I return below: that emotions are in part linguistically constructed, whether in public discourse or scholarship.

Notwithstanding this last point of contact, the present article takes a different tack from the work outlined above. Instead of asking what emotional responses might be elicited by a museum visit, it asks how museums reflect on the role that emotions have played in history and memory, specifically in the context of the demise of the GDR. It is not, therefore, based on an analysis of visitor surveys or visitor books, but on the stated and implied aims and effects of exhibitions, as expressed in exhibition display, exhibition texts, and catalogue texts. To adopt this methodology is not to lose sight of the fact that those emotions felt within living memory may be brought to the museum by visitors, even as the museum is telling visitors how these same emotions are to be understood historically. There are still living witnesses to the Nazi era and Holocaust, and their aftermath, and, in greater numbers, to East German communism and the unification of East and West Germany. Besides, it is well understood that the inter-generational transmission of feelings about the past keeps feelings alive beyond the first generation (see, for instance, Reiter 2006). Thus, even those mid- and late-twentieth-century emotions that have been historicized in academic research may still be being felt by the public at large, in some cases keenly. The discussion of German emotions relating to either of the two twentieth-century dictatorships therefore constitutes a form of social dialogue in which museums can, at least in the most idealistic scenario, provide a space for emotions to be transformed into (self-)knowledge.

The History of Emotions and the Study of Objects and Emotions

As head of the Centre for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin, Ute Frevert has been instrumental in establishing and promoting the discipline in Germany. She justifies the investigation of emotions by historians on the grounds that emotions are both 'geschichtsmächtig' and 'geschichtsträchtig', that is, they both 'make' history, as catalysts for historical change, and they are themselves historical, changing over time (Frevert 2009: 202). While Frevert's research centre has a largely European focus, Jan Plamper's recent introduction to the history of emotions stresses the role played by anthropology and ethnology in showing that non-European cultures often organise, or even experience, emotions differently. Of relevance here are Plamper's observations on the way in which language is constitutive of emotions, not only in the sense that a culture with no use for

a particular emotion will have no word for it in its language (Plamper 2015: 97), but also in the sense that language distills and delineates discrete emotions, making them susceptible to study but at the cost of complexity (see particularly Plamper's critique of Paul Ekman's methods: 158).

Returning to the German case, a longer analysis than is possible here would seek to clarify the relationship between the history of emotions and its close cousin, the history of mentalities, which is used to study the values and moral choices of majority Germans under National Socialism (see for instance Neitzel and Welzer 2011, which uses transcripts of bugged conversations between German POWs to reconstruct attitudes towards violence and degrees of willingness to kill (9-10)). Scholars have also acknowledged that contemporary memory culture in Germany has a significant emotional component (e.g. Brockhaus 2012), which has expressed itself in tensions between how groups of Germans feel about the National Socialist past and how it is presented publicly as national history (Fuchs and Cosgrove 2006). Any attempt at a history of emotions in this context therefore involves two processes: a historicization of the emotions experienced at the original historical moment (optimism, terror, etc.) and a historicization of emotions experienced after the fact, as memory and legacy (sorrow, resentment, intergenerational conflict, traumatic flashback, and, in more recent decades, *Betroffenheit*). If the examples of emotions seem contradictory (optimism/terror; sorrow/resentment) this is precisely because in German memory, particularly of the Nazi era but also of the GDR, positionality is key: what the suffering victim felt is not what a member of the relatively protected majority felt.

Like most branches of academic historiography, the history of emotions works largely with archival documents and produces text as outputs. It is therefore possible to scan the information texts in a history museum for input from this field. The fact that many of the examples from the exhibition space offered below are textual should not be read as a methodological simplification – a reduction of history museums to their texts. Rather, it is politically and socially significant that German history museums have verbalized the emotional fallout from the *Wende*.

Nonetheless, work on the relationship between objects and emotions, which is being carried out largely within museum studies and material culture studies, forms another important basis for the current study. Though most work is undertaken in the pre-twentieth century era and only a minority of scholars are interested in the transfer of the 'felt' thing to the museum, in the field of German memory studies some interesting thinking about objects as conduits for emotions has taken place in the context of exhibitions about Nazi theft of Jewish property (in particular *Raub und Restitution. Kulturgut aus jüdischem Besitz von 1933 bis heute*, organized jointly by the Jüdisches Museum Berlin and the Jüdisches Museum der Stadt Frankfurt am Main (2008); and *Recollecting. Raub und Restitution* at MAK, Vienna (2008-09). The catalogue contributions to these exhibitions stress the complex emotions that attend the return or non-return of stolen objects to surviving descendants of their original owners. Rather than dealing exclusively with Jewish emotion, the two exhibitions took seriously non-Jewish, majority emotions and specifically the emotional responses to the de-accession, by art museums, of well-loved artworks: in Germany, of Ludwig Kirchner's *Berliner Straßenszene* and in Austria of Gustav Klimt's *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (for a fuller analysis see Paver 2012).

One indication that the sub-discipline of the history of emotions is beginning to make the leap from the academy to the museum is that Frevert was involved in two exhibition projects that opened in 2015. First, the Centre for the History of Emotions advised on the exhibition *Der gefühlte Krieg. Emotionen im Ersten Weltkrieg (Feeling War: Emotions in the First World War)* at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Berlin. While the exhibition catalogue (Museum Europäischer Kulturen 2014) provided an academic framework, isolating and analyzing the emotions experienced by a generation of Germans in the First World War, the essays did not address the ways in which emotions are encoded in, and experienced through, objects, whether these have been manufactured specifically to facilitate the communication of emotion or appropriated to this task. Insights into these processes emerged implicitly from objects on display in the exhibition space: postcards and greetings cards sent between soldiers and their 'sweethearts'; nails sold as a charity tokens for the war effort and banged ritually into pieces of wood; and talismans against injury and death. Together, these demonstrate that objects might serve differently as conduits for emotions in different eras.

Frevert also contributed an essay on emotions to the catalogue of the new NS-Dokumentationszentrum München (Frevert 2015). However, as the museum director confirmed

in discussion with me in 2014, the exhibition display itself follows a traditional historiographic approach with an emphasis on political choices and consequences and no history of emotions. Like several similar 'documentation centres', the Munich museum lacks objects (using text and image only). However, even in the many museums dealing with National Socialism in Germany that make generous use of display objects, it is generally the case that there is great faith in objects to convey the emotional experience of their original owners, but no reflection on how objects encode, or are invested with, emotion.

The GDR Case: *Alltag*, Objects, and Emotions in Museums of Communist East Germany

By and large, the points made above in relation to National Socialism (Germany's test case for all memory matters) apply equally to the communist GDR. This includes the necessity of thinking of a history of emotions as having two mutually constitutive layers: history as experienced emotionally and history as remembered emotionally. For whatever was felt during the GDR has since been filtered through the emotions involved in the socially painful post-*Wende* restructuring of the former East; at the same time, the memories of former East Germans are shaped and delimited by what they felt during the GDR. This means, amongst other things, that what former East Germans have felt about – or through – objects since 1990 is defined by what they felt about objects during the GDR. As several scholars (notably Betts 2000) have shown, material culture played as central a role in GDR ideology as it did in its eventual demise. Anthropologist Daphne Berdahl draws an arc from the peculiar social functions of East German things to post-*Wende* emotional engagement with material culture. Based on fieldwork evidence, she argues that, with the fall of communism, former factory workers from the GDR lost an emotional and bodily investment in objects, as encapsulated in the slogan 'Meine Hand für mein Produkt' ('My hand for my product'), which she witnesses being revived in the late 1990s, and as expressed in the words of an informant: 'I can't tell you how painful it was for me to see the products of my labour simply dismissed after the *Wende*' (Berdahl 1999: 198). Berdahl advances this as one reason why nostalgia for East German goods, or a desire for new goods that reflect the East German past, should not be dismissed as shallow consumerism or 'mere nostalgia' since these impulses emerge from a now defunct 'identity as producers' (199).

Berdahl also sees practices of *Ostalgie* as reflecting and constituting 'identity transformations in a period of intense social discord' (207). Perhaps because it promises to provide a grasp on slippery processes of change, 'identity', and not 'emotion', has been the main conceptual tool for analyzing post-*Wende* experience. This helps explain why Frevert's research centre currently lists only one GDR-related project. The assumption has been that, in the wake of the historical 'turn' of 1989/90, Germanness had to be 'reconfigured', 'rethought', 'refashioned', or 'recast' (Jaraus 1997: passim, 10, 12, 22) and even 'relocated' in the sense of finding a place, discursively, between East and West (Stevenson and Theobald 2000). In 1997, Konrad H. Jaraus worried about the inflationary use of the term 'identity' in this context, while simultaneously attempting to hone its analytical usefulness (Jaraus 1997: 2-3). It continued to prove its worth into the new millennium (for instance Grix and Cooke 2002, in which identity is a key word).

Nevertheless, 'identity' overlaps with 'emotions' in so far as the particular identity shocks faced by former East Germans induced feelings of vulnerability and a loss of self-worth (Hogwood 2011: 150). Emotions therefore run close to the surface in many analyses of post-GDR experience that ostensibly have a different focus. A study by Paul Cooke (2005) may use postcolonial studies as its main tool for analysing the eastern German minority, but it speaks of feelings of resentment (viii, 32-3), dissatisfaction (3, 6, 8, 178, 195), anxiety (147), alienation (27, 110), and marginalization (11, 53, 192-3), as well as feelings of being misrepresented (15, 28, 61), ignored (112, 144, 153) and devalued (50, 112), all of which negativity, according to a central proposition, has led to attitudes of defiance (esp. Chapter 3). Cooke's examples (which are taken from a range of cultural fields other than the museum) suggest a compounding effect, whereby negative feelings voiced in the mid-1990s meet with indifference from the State and from the western majority, thus generating further negativity

(an idea to which I return presently).

Work by Hogwood, a political scientist, underpins these arguments with statistical data (polls showing a clear, if diminishing, happiness gap between former East and West Germans) while also demonstrating how academic methodologies may be obliged to simplify the messy complexity of emotions. Her work focuses on statistical measures of 'happiness', not because Political Science uses blunter instruments than other disciplines, but rather because, as she explains, citizens' well-being plays a key role in governance, allowing governments to measure allegiance to the system and control its stability (Hogwood 2011: 148). Though the poll data cited evidently works with more detailed emotional categories than the umbrella terms 'happiness' and 'discontent' – Hogwood mentions 'anomie (feelings of loneliness, joylessness, powerlessness, alienation and lack of direction)' (150) – nevertheless happiness indices arguably exclude the processes of temporal layering noted above in connection with Berdahl's and Cooke's work.

Working closer to the subject under discussion, Sara Jones (2015) has analyzed museums of the history of communist oppression, asking how successfully they integrate into their exhibition narratives the topic of everyday life or 'Alltag' (often seen as the flipside of oppression). One of Jones's case studies is the long-term exhibition *GrenzErfahrungen. Alltag der deutschen Teilung (Border Experiences. Everyday Life in Divided Germany)*, created by the state-run Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn (hereafter House of History) and displayed in the so-called Tränenpalast (Palace of Tears) in Berlin. The GDR regime built this annexe to Friedrichstrasse Station to process travellers in transit between East and West; the 'tears' of its popular nickname were shed by people saying their farewells to loved ones living on the other side of the Wall, whom they could meet only with the sanction of the GDR regime, under highly regulated circumstances. Though emotion is not the topic of Jones's article, one of her criticisms of the Tränenpalast exhibition is that it engages only with positive emotions while repressing negative ones. In line with my comments above that this emotional history has to be read from a standpoint after the *Wende*, she is not suggesting that the museum suppresses communist-era anxieties (the 'tears' of divided Germans, which, supporting as they do the narrative of communist oppression, are much on show) but rather post-communist anxieties: 'the exhibition promotes an affirmative history of East and West Germans joining forces [...] but does not open up space for discussion of the successes and disappointments of unification' (126). A witness testimony in the exhibition, though not cited by Jones, corroborates her view that a large number of former East Germans who experienced the 'problems' and 'disappointments' of unification are given no opportunity to voice their felt experiences in the exhibition. Manfred Probst tells of returning to Saxony to recover his parents' farm, abandoned when they fled westwards in 1960. Our sympathies are likely to be with Probst because we are told that the contents of the farmhouse had in the meantime disappeared, presumably requisitioned or looted by neighbours, who returned a single spoon to him (which now arouses pathos in the display case). Yet behind such post-*Wende* repossessions, however legitimate, lay a whole hinterland of eastern resentment at what was perceived as a widespread appropriation of eastern assets by westerners, while easterners bore the brunt of economic restructuring (this anger is expressed in Dahn 1994 and analyzed in Paver 2004). Whether or not Probst encountered such resentment personally (in the accompanying video interview he speaks only of 'Freude auf beiden Seiten' or 'joy on both sides'), the Tränenpalast exhibition has no interest in setting his experience in that emotional context.

Given that *Alltag* is invoked not just by Jones but by every other scholar working on museums of GDR history, it may help to define more clearly the intersection between emotions and everyday life ('Alltag'). Though neutral in other contexts, *Alltag* is much contested in connection with the GDR. It was often invoked by those museum-makers, mostly amateur, who amassed large quantities of material culture from the former GDR. Unlike the exhibitions set up at Stasi headquarters and prisons, their museums (which Irene Lazda (2010: 203) groups together as 'the Alltag museums') represented how the majority of East Germans – those who were neither members of the privileged elite nor dissidents – experienced the GDR in the course of their lives.

Alarmed by what it saw as uncritical nostalgia in these museums, the German state responded in an unusual way, namely linguistically: it took firm possession of the word 'Alltag' by defining it for the purposes of museum work. This it did in 2008, in the revised version

of its 'Federal Memorial Framework' (the Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes). According to this very singular document, intended to regulate the award of central funding to memory institutions of national importance, the value of *Alltag* to history museums was that it could be used to fight *against* uncritical nostalgia for the East (that is, against the very ideas hitherto associated with the word 'Alltag') by showing how every aspect of everyday life was regulated by the ruling SED party. To clinch its ownership of the term, the German state has put 'Alltag' into the name of two new long-term museum exhibitions in Berlin: *Grenzerfahrungen. Alltag der deutschen Teilung*, mentioned above, and *Alltag in der DDR or Everyday Life in the GDR*, which I address below. Though the field of discourse surrounding *Alltag* is thus broader than a history of emotions, *Alltag* takes on its emotional charge partly due to resentment, post-1990, that the united German state did not take this area of GDR life seriously (for instance, Zündorf 2012: 84-5). On the face of it, addressing that resentment by belatedly taking *Alltag* seriously, yet defining it as fundamentally dominated by dictatorship is not the obvious way to win the hearts and minds of the former East German minority, but the situation is more complex than it appears.

Criticizing state museums policy on GDR history has become something of a scholarly routine. Berdahl condemns the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum in Leipzig, the main state-run museum in the former East outside Berlin, for what she sees as its unrelenting 'emphasis on repression and resistance, a narrative described by museum directors and employees as "the Concept"' and which has the effect, according to a tour guide, that 'many visitors from the east cannot find themselves here' (Berdahl 2008: 350, 353; cf. Cooke 2005: 45). Lazda criticizes the 'one-sided', 'government-sponsored' exhibitions at the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum and the Deutsches Historisches Museum while praising amateur museums of the GDR for 'their challenge to official histories of the GDR' (203-06). Both Silke Arnold-de Simine (2011: 100-01) and Justinian Jampol (2012: 211-12) criticize the watering down of recommendations from the so-called Sabrow Report of 2006, which recommended that the state take GDR *Alltag* more seriously at its memorials and which an incoming conservative government chose not to act on. Jampol argues that by focusing its funding on memorial projects that stress the repressive and corrupt nature of the GDR regime, the German state has created a funding climate in which there is little incentive for museums to preserve certain examples of East German material culture (Jampol 2012: 212). Though Arnold-de Simine is robustly critical of the display strategies of the private *Alltag* museums she sees them as existing in clear contrast to 'state-funded remembrance projects, most of which focus on the regime's control of its borders and the activities of the SED and the Stasi' (103). Irmgard Zündorf reinforces this idea of a binary division, viewing *Alltagmuseen* as the 'Gegenpol' (opposite pole) to state-run museums, which focus on repression and the regime (2012: 90).

Some of the criticisms levelled at national history museums are certainly valid and the 2008 revision of the Federal Memorial Framework does little to mitigate the impression of a state intent on controlling how GDR history is understood. Nevertheless, these views are in need of some nuancing and updating. Jones's article has started this process by arguing that the spirit of Sabrow's recommendations about *Alltag* have to some degree been put into practice. Zündorf also acknowledges this, though unlike Jones (and unusually within the field) she criticizes the state-run museums for not following through on their self-imposed mission to show the repressive nature of *Alltag* (93-4).

GDR and Post-Wende Emotions in Exhibition Practice

Emotional responses to the GDR and *Wende* offer a useful lens through which to take a fresh look at museums of GDR history because despite the impression conveyed in much scholarship, Germany's national, state-run museums certainly do acknowledge the emotional fallout from the collapse of communism, if somewhat unevenly and sometimes within a questionable frame. In what follows, three such exhibitions are addressed briefly, with the aim of drawing out some relevant issues, before two more – a temporary exhibition at the Deutsches Historisches Museum and a permanent exhibition at another Berlin museum – are subjected to a fuller analysis.

At the major museum of post-1945 history, the House of History in Bonn, which tells a comprehensive political and social history of the GDR and its collapse, the top-level information

board on post-1990 restructuring ('Aufbau Ost') speaks of the feelings of disorientation among East Germans: 'Viele fühlen sich fremd im eigenen Land' ('Many people feel like foreigners in their own country'). While the rest of the board is devoted to presenting economic collapse and rebuilding as an inevitable result of the failure of the communist system, this single sentence is an indication that the subject of emotions will be reprised at the next level of information board, which happens as follows:

Schwierige Annäherung

Während sich im Westen kaum etwas ändert, erleben die Ostdeutschen tiefe Veränderungen in nahezu allen Lebensbereichen. Der Wirtschaftsaufschwung bleibt zunächst aus und erschwert die Akzeptanz des westlichen Systems.

Zwar steigt der Lebensstandard zügig an, aber der Verlust vertrauter Strukturen und die Entwertung von Weltbild und eigener Leistung bringen Verunsicherung und Enttäuschung mit sich. Viele fühlen sich als ‚Bürger zweiter Klasse‘.

Ein eigenes ostdeutsches Bewusstsein entwickelt sich. Das Gefühl, von westlichen Verhaltensmustern überrollt zu werden, bestimmt die Wahrnehmung. Enttäuschte Hoffnungen an die Einheit führen zu einer Verklärung der DDR-Vergangenheit.

Wahlerfolge der PDS, Nachfolgepartei der SED, spiegeln eine Idealisierung des Sozialismus wider.

Difficult Merger

Whilst hardly anything alters in the West, eastern Germans experience radical change in virtually every sphere of their lives. The economic upturn is slow in coming and hinders acceptance of the western system.

Although the standard of living rises swiftly, the loss of familiar structures and the devaluing of people's world view and personal merit bring insecurity and disappointment. Many feel like 'second-class citizens'.

A separate eastern German awareness develops. The dominant perception is the feeling of being steamrollered by western behaviour patterns. Disappointed hopes placed in unification lead to a romanticization of the GDR past.

Electoral success of the PDS, the SED successor party, reflects an idealized view of Socialism. [Museum's own translation]

The authors of the information board make a clear effort to feel their way into the minds of East Germans, expressing sympathy with the disorienting and disappointing experience of losing a familiar homeland and with the struggle to adapt to the ways of a new country. To be sure, these emotions are figured as a mistaken investment: history had to march forwards; the 'western system' had to come. Nonetheless, this is similar to the way in which Cooke approaches the emotions of the time in his academic study: taking them seriously while acknowledging that they were sometimes at odds with reality (Cooke 2005: 4-6). Moreover, by including westerners in the opening statement (and stressing how relatively lucky they were) the museum avoids isolating East Germans as a problematic social group.

Perhaps a more weighty objection to the House of History's approach is that the museum uses agentless grammatical structures to suggest that nobody in particular is responsible for 'devaluing' the 'personal merit' (in the original German 'the personal achievements') of East Germans. This implies that history museums have played no role in that devaluation, something I have cause to question below.

The House of History has one lower-level layer of information: short texts relating loosely to groups of nearby objects. It is at this level (where there is little room for a relativizing frame) that the museum is most empathetic. For instance, one such text reads: '**Entlassen** Die Kündigung nach langer Betriebszugehörigkeit trifft viele Ostdeutsche besonders hart. Sie fühlen sich um ihr Lebenswerk betrogen. Nicht das erhoffte Leben im Wohlstand, sondern die Sorge um den Lebensunterhalt bestimmen nun den Alltag' (**Dismissed Many East Germans were hit particularly hard by being made redundant after working for the same firm for many years. They felt as if they had been cheated of their life's work. Instead of enjoying the life of prosperity they had hoped for, they were now preoccupied with anxieties about making ends meet** [author's translation]). To an academic looking for emotions in museum narratives, finding the verb 'to feel' ('sich fühlen') is bound to seem like striking gold, but caution is called for, in German as it would be in English, because a statement of what people 'felt' can always imply that their feelings deceived them: 'they felt cheated (even though it was all in their head)'. While nothing in the House of History's texts indicates scepticism, it is of course possible that museum visitors bring a sceptical attitude with them. Ironically, then, where a museum speaks most sincerely about emotions it may leave the door open to dismissal and downplaying. However, the glass vitrine that belongs to this caption grounds the feelings in fact: it shows a certificate thanking an employee, in September 1990, for 25 years' service at a GDR company; this is juxtaposed with a letter on company notepaper from which it is clear that by then she had already known for a month that she would be made redundant at the end of the September.

The second example is the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum in Leipzig, a museum devoted to the struggle for democracy in East Germany. Here, too, the opening overview text refers directly to the emotional fallout from unification. Both the wording of this text and the shape of the exhibition could be criticized in various ways. For instance, the exhibition arguably ends on a rather trite conciliatory note of the kind Jones criticises (Jones 2015: 126) by suggesting that East and West came together in the Dresden floods of 2013. Nonetheless, the museum demonstrates that the 1990s cannot be narrated without reference to emotions. It allows that the 1990s was a deeply unsettling time for former East Germans and defends easterners against accusations of wrongheadedness by showing that western German anxieties, too, were not always well founded: in particular, the fear that Bonn would wither away without the government or the feeling that westerners were unjustly burdened with the so-called Solidarity Tax. In 2015, the museum offered a therapeutic outlet by inviting visitors to write down their memories of their first encounter with either East or West. The slips of paper were posted in a comments box and some were pinned up for visitors to read. Given that the museum could choose which to display and which to file away, it is significant that some, evidently from east Germans, expressed negative emotions: a feeling of being judged unfairly by westerners, a feeling of being overwhelmed, and feelings of inferiority.

Thirdly, *Alltag in der DDR* opened in Berlin in 2013, the first long-term state-run exhibition to cover the whole of 'everyday life' in the GDR. Even given the requirement of the *Gedenkstättenkonzeption* that 'Alltag' be portrayed as a thoroughly politicized sphere of action, this wide remit potentially opened up space for the discussion of emotions. However, any such discussion is short-circuited by the strict timeframe of *Alltag in der DDR*, which stops at 1989. The emotional asymmetries between East and West after November 1989 and the shaping of post-*Wende* feelings about material culture by pre-*Wende* feelings about it (a felt knowledge that visitors from the former East bring to the museum) is bracketed out. That need not prevent the exhibition from discussing emotions from the era of the GDR and, indeed, some emotions are present by default because all social histories engage to a degree with how people felt; it also suits the museum to highlight dissatisfaction with life under communism. Nonetheless, emotional legacies of the GDR – arguably the key social flashpoint of the 1990s – are not explored. We are told that a woman has kept her ballet shoes as a reminder of the ballet lessons of her youth, but the feelings involved in this souvenir-keeping are not explored. Rather, the shoes are evidence that her leisure time was regulated by the state: her father's job at a state-owned company gave her access to a ballet club with a professional dance teacher recruited from the prestigious Prague Opera.

The Temporary Exhibition *Alltag Einheit* and the Permanent Exhibition at the *Erinnerungsstätte Notaufnahmelager Marienfelde*

In the space that remains, two exhibitions will be given a fuller appraisal. Given the tendency to downplay complex social emotions in the two long-term exhibitions with 'Alltag' in the title, one would be forgiven for expecting little of a temporary exhibition entitled *Alltag Einheit. Porträt einer Übergangsgesellschaft*, which analyzed the years following unification in 1990 (and was translated as *Unification: German Society in Transition*, confirming that 'Alltag' is packed with untranslatable connotations). However, this exhibition, mounted by the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) in 2015, went further than the permanent exhibitions in the House of History and the Zeitgeschichtliches Forum in dealing explicitly with the emotional fallout from German unification. While the curators describe their vision, in the catalogue, in terms of personal experience of the transition rather than 'emotion' (Deutsches Historisches Museum 2015), nevertheless both the catalogue and the exhibition openly discuss conflict, anger and fear, hope and disappointment.

For instance, resentment about the way in which property ownership claims were regulated (prioritizing the rights of former owners over present occupiers) was tackled in a section about money and property. According to a top-level information board, east Germans feared losing their houses and land when the Unification Treaty legislated that property disputes would be regulated according to the principle that 'restitution takes priority over compensation' ('Rückgabe vor Entschädigung'). The curators used a particularly egregious illustration: in the village of Kleinmachnow, on the edge of Berlin, restitution claims were filed on 1,912 of the 3,239 houses. The exhibition displays allowed locals to speak, through newspaper reports and TV documentary clips. Anxiety about a sudden loss of security was expressed in the metaphor, used by more than one interviewee, of the 'knock on the door' which they feared would announce former owners seeking restitution, while a keen sense of injustice expressed itself in the description of the putative western owners as having 'won the lottery'. The exhibition made clear that these emotions did not go unchallenged at the time: a professor interviewed on television, who had come to Kleinmachnow to observe the social transition, considered it a sign of pitiful insularity that the villagers were unable to envisage living elsewhere. The last word in the video sequence was given to a more sympathetic voice, however. The local mayor explained that villagers felt so lucky to have been able to buy a property surrounded by green in the GDR that they settled long-term; this, combined with the village's isolation, made their unwillingness to make way for western newcomers entirely understandable. A tenant threatened with eviction was also able to speak of his anxieties – in particular the hurt he felt at being treated as an 'Untermensch' by the house owner's wife – in a collage of interviews that formed the centrepiece of the exhibition and that was transcribed in excerpts in the catalogue (Deutsches Historisches Museum 2015: 62-9 (68)). The interviewee in question acknowledges the emotional complexity of such adversarial situations when he says that both he and the original owner are likely to feel a sense of injustice about the legal ruling in their case for the rest of their lives.

The examples given so far show that *Alltag Einheit*, which, like all DHM exhibitions, was rich in objects, addressed negative emotions largely by acknowledging them in written discourse (exhibition and catalogue texts and original documents or transcripts). Where objects expressed emotions these were largely positive emotions connected with the freedom to acquire Western goods and travel westwards. These included six objects from an art exhibition by the artist Peggy Meinfelder ('Meine ersten 100 Westmark' or 'My first 100 Deutschmarks') based on objects that East Germans had bought with their *Begrüßungsgeld* or Welcome Money, Deutschmarks given out by the West German state following the opening of the inner-German border. While the short captions to the objects (taken from the original art exhibition) were fairly bland, indicating at best that the interviewees had varying levels of attachment to the objects they acquired in 1989, in an interview printed in the *Alltag Einheit* catalogue, Meinfelder told of her preparatory fieldwork, which consisted of chatting with those whose objects she borrowed:

Zum Beispiel sah ich einen Nachbarn in seinem Garten arbeiten und reif über den Zaun. Er präsentierte mir ganz stolz sein Gartenradio, das keine Tasten mehr hatte. Der Ein- und Ausschalter funktionierte auch nicht mehr. Man konnte

es nur noch durch unmittelbares Einstecken in die Steckdose anbekommen. Wir krümmten uns vor Lachen. Doch dann fiel ihm noch ein, dass er sich auch eine Nagelschere gekauft hatte. Das war ein sehr besonderer Moment, uns standen die Tränen in den Augen. Wir wussten beide noch ganz genau, wie wichtig das erste Geld aus dem Westen war – doch wofür hat man es dann ausgegeben?

For instance, I saw a neighbour working in his garden and called to him over the fence. Proud as Punch, he presented his garden radio to me. It had no buttons left and the on/off switch was also broken. You could only get it to turn on by plugging it directly into the socket. We were doubled up laughing. But then he remembered that he had also bought a pair of nail scissors. That was a very strange moment, we both had tears in our eyes. We both knew exactly how important the first money from the West was – but what had it been spent on?

This short quotation is considerably more complex than the captions in the exhibition. Emotions are layered, with current feelings overriding, but not entirely obscuring, feelings from 1989: the man's pride at a sound purchase; a shared sense of the absurdity of keeping easily replaceable goods long after their functionality is reduced (and perhaps a shared sense that this habit is itself a legacy of communism); and pathos, possibly at the thought of having lived through a life-changing and world-changing moment while continuing to engage with trivial concerns. Meinfelder's account suggests various things: that separating the positive and negative emotions surrounding German unification, however pragmatically useful, is only ever a construct; that exhibition texts inevitably simplify whenever they name emotions (given that one would be hard pressed to name the emotion behind the laughter and the tears); and that it is difficult for history exhibitions to show in their static displays how objects facilitate the sharing of emotion (even though that might be happening in front of the glass cases as visitors discuss objects to which they relate).

The final example of a German history exhibition deals with escape from communism during the period of German division. The Erinnerungsstätte Notaufnahmehager Marienfelde (the Marienfelde Refugee Centre Museum) is administered through an independent foundation but has received state funding, meaning, presumably, that it is expected to comply with the spirit of the revised Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes. The Marienfelde memorial is an authentic site, having been the main refugee transit centre through which those who escaped from East to West passed on their way to new lives in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Jones sees a connection between *Grenzerfahrungen's* concentration on extraordinary experiences and its lack of interest in more average majority experiences, despite the 'everyday' of its title (Jones 2015: 129). At Marienfelde the individuals represented, some of whom risked life and limb to escape, are if anything even more extraordinary than those who tell their stories at the Tränenpalast, yet the museum is surprisingly open to an exploration of negative emotions. Even if the overarching narrative is a self-evidently positive one – escaping tyranny for freedom – the museum does not pretend that the enjoyment of freedom set in instantly, nor that refugees felt unqualified gratitude to the West for taking them in. Explicitly on information boards and implicitly in displays, the process of applying for political asylum in the West is painted as long, wearisome, and uncertain. A top-level information board reads: 'Bei vielen mischt sich Erleichterung über ihre Flucht mit traurigen Erinnerungen an den Abschied von zu Hause und Angst vor dem ungewissen Neuanfang in der Fremde' ('For many, relief at no longer being in East Germany is mixed with sadness at having left their homes behind and worry about starting again in strange surroundings' [museum's own translation, here and below]). The museum also speaks directly of the lack of understanding of these feelings by the authorities: 'Anders ist die Perspektive der Verantwortlichen im Lager: Sie haben die Aufrechterhaltung der Versorgung im Blick. Einzelschicksale geraten so manchmal im Hintergrund' ('Those in charge of the camp have a different perspective: they are focused on maintaining supplies and services, so the fates of individuals sometimes get overlooked'). This shows that the compounding of negative feelings when they are not socially validated (a feature of the 1990s east German experience, as indicated above) is not too abstract a notion for a museum to present.

In the exhibition space, the refugees' conflicted feelings are represented in a room whose central object is a ticket machine dispensing queue numbers. In lieu of vitrines, and in defiance of conventional visitor-friendly practice, the room is lined with twelve closed office doors, each representing a stage in the bureaucratic process. Since opening a door gives access to a display about that stage, the visitor is only momentarily frustrated in his or her normal viewing habits. Besides, being refused information for a few seconds during a safe leisure experience is nothing like being left in suspense as to whether one will escape a dictatorship or be obliged to return to it as a marked man or woman. Nonetheless, this is an intelligent attempt to trigger an empathetic leap of imagination. One door, though identical to all the others, opens unexpectedly onto an authentic space, the corridor that once led to the Allied vetting rooms. A caption states that refugees felt anxiety about what would await them in the room ahead. They feared endangering friends in the GDR during the interrogation, so that even today many remember this space with 'Beklemmung' (unease or apprehension).

In the rooms that follow, the Marienfelde exhibition continues in the same vein. A room devoted to life at the transit camp speaks of the difficulties of getting on with strangers in close and crowded quarters and of complaints about inadequate provisions. From documents found in the building's basement the curators have chosen for display a hand-written doggerel verse: in it, a refugee expresses his loneliness and anxiety at being cut off from relatives in the East, combined with hope for a future in a new community. Finally, a room explores the obstacles in the way of a smooth integration into the West. The top-level information board lists a series of emotions: 'Freude, Enttäuschung und Heimweh' ('joy, disappointment and homesickness') on the part of easterners, which are met with 'Unverständnis, Misstrauen und Angst vor Konkurrenz' ('lack of understanding, distrust, and fear of competition') on the part of westerners. Other texts explain that young refugees in the East were treated with suspicion in the Western press and were subjected to a heavy-handed re-education regime. A boy who resented such measures is one of four witnesses chosen to tell their story in the centre of this room. Another is a nurse who finds that her East German qualifications are not initially recognised and who feels belittled by Western colleagues.

By using short factual statements, the museum manages the task of pointing out the subjective limits of feelings without demeaning or undermining them. For instance, refugees disliked the queuing system with its numbered tickets because they felt that they were being treated like a number. But the museum adds that this anonymization was in part intended to protect refugees from GDR agents who had infiltrated Marienfelde. Similarly, the museum allows both that rules and regulations in the transit camp were intended to maintain order and security and also that the refugees felt like they were being 'bevormundet' (not treated as responsible adults).

The final exhibition space, a set of reconstructed dormitories, hints at why Marienfelde may have given this unusually expansive account of negative emotions in an area of history in which museum discourse is sometimes rather strained and over-controlled. On the walls, quotations from former refugees speak of their feelings. Not all are negative (a ten-year old found the transit camp 'spannend' or 'exciting'), but some are. Some quotations are from post-Unification refugees and asylum-seekers, who lived temporarily in the building adjoining the museum. A refugee from Afghanistan speaks of his gratitude at being safe; another from Syria considers the refugee centre to be only a temporary stage on his journey. However banal the individual statements, they help explain why the museum, which might simply have celebrated the triumph of democratic good over communist evil, asks today's German visitors to remember a time when Germans, too, were harassed, anxious, and not immediately grateful refugees. The sudden topicality of this approach will be self-evident. For the purposes of the present argument, however, the analogy with the *German*, post-*Wende* experience is of greater interest. Both groups of German citizens – those who escaped communism before 1989 and those who escaped it when the regime collapsed – had as good as won the lottery by escaping a dictatorship to live in a democracy, but neither group was necessarily immediately grateful and happy. This museum shows that it is possible to give a voice to that unhappiness while historicizing it within a broader, objective context. Of course, that may be easy to do when the subjects involved are the small number of East Germans who escaped westwards, rather than

the less courageous majority, but Marienfelde has nonetheless chosen to present a complex emotional picture. Along with the temporary exhibition 'Alltag der Einheit', which does speak for the East German majority, it might serve as a model for future museum displays.

Conclusion

The existence of scholarship on the relationship between (post-)GDR objects and (post-)GDR emotions might lead one to expect museums – which are uniquely placed to understand what objects do – to engage with this relationship. Possibly, this is a level of abstraction too far and on the whole the emotions of the years since 1989 are – if dealt with at all – written about in the museum. This emotional literacy is in itself a positive political statement – a public acknowledgement that for East Germans the process of integration into the West was hard and painful – but further work will be needed to understand the ways in which naming emotions also serves to channel and control them. Repeated references to 'Verunsicherung' (insecurity) and 'Enttäuschung' (disappointment), may be factually correct and corroborated by poll data and yet still have stabilizing effects, securing a narrative of a pain that had to be worked through for the good of democracy. This is the case even if we assume that museums are not generally involved in the kind of direct 'governance' studied by Hogwood, but rather occupy a place in a Gramscian civil society. Where museums include spoken or written text from historical participants, this presents a less well defined, more disruptive account of emotional responses and one may also sense a shift in the recent temporary exhibition *Alltag Einheit* from an emphasis on 'disappointment' as necessary to a revaluing of that emotional process as 'Leistung' or 'achievement' on the part of the east German minority (Deutsches Historisches Museum 2015: 5, 7).

Cooke quotes Claudia Schwartz as arguing that the film *Goodbye Lenin* succeeded in touching a nerve by showing that 'the memories of former GDR citizens can be emotional. And that they have nothing to do with an ideology, and everything to do with a lived life' (Cooke: 130). The 'lived life' is not necessarily the province of the historian of emotions, in as much as it leads one away from group or generational experience and from social conventions for emotional expression towards personal experience and individual emotional responses to it. And yet it *has* arguably been a generational experience for eastern Germans to have life experiences, whether positive or negative, ignored and devalued, which makes enshrining these life experiences in the museum more meaningful than it would be for the history of West German citizens. The fact that some museums have written emotions into their central narratives just 25 years after the fall of Communism (compared with 100 years after the First World War) indicates a clearer understanding of emotions as historical agents than state-run museums in Germany are perhaps given credit for.

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