3 Emotions

3.1 Feeling history. An introduction

'Feeling history instead of reading it'. With this slogan, the BZ tabloid newspaper commented in August 2012 on the new panorama installation by artist Yadegar Asisi at Checkpoint Charlie.[1] The Austrian-German artist and architect is renowned for his 360-degree panoramas, which are currently among the largest in the world. In September 2012, he opened *DIE MAUER – das Asisi Panorama zum geteilten Berlin* ('THE WALL – the Asisi panorama of divided Berlin') at the former Berlin border crossing of Checkpoint Charlie. Covering an area of 900 square metres and with interior dimensions of 15 meters in height and 60 meters in circumference, the artist, who grew up in Saxony, presents a fictional day in the western part of the city in November 1980. The panorama is not so much about conveying history as about experiencing it. Today's visitors can immerse themselves in the all-round panorama, which promises to take them back in time, giving them the chance to relive and empathize with the things West Berliners might have seen, experienced and felt in the divided city in 1980.

The experience of history is an emotional one

Asisi's panorama foregrounds curiosity, pleasure, excitement and fun, that is, an emotional experience of history[2] that is achieved by imitating historical perspectives. Visitors stand on a four-metre-high platform, creating the illusion that they are looking from Sebastianstraße in the West Berlin district of Kreuzberg over the Wall and into the centre of East Berlin. They see the graffiti-covered Wall, and in front of it the countercultural life in the squats clustered along it. Further, the raised platform provides a view over the Wall to the border installations, such as the brightly illuminated 'death strip' and the watchtowers with their armed border guards. Behind them, the grey facades of buildings can be seen against a cloud-covered sky.

1 Hans-Werner Marquardt: 'Geschichte fühlen statt lesen', in: BZ, 10 August 2012, https://www.bz-berlin.de/artikel-archiv/geschichte-fuehlen-statt-lesen, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

2 It thus ties in with the nineteenth-century panorama as a popular form of depicting history. See Bernhard Comment: *Das Panorama. Die Geschichte einer vergessenen Kunstform*, Berlin 2000. Molly C. Briggs et al (eds.): Panoramic and Immersive Media Studies Yearbook, vol. 1, Berlin 2025.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111460727-003

The visual focal point is the television tower, which clearly marks the direction of the viewer's gaze from west to east. Visitors can choose whether to walk along the base of the wall and see nothing but the graffiti or take the elevated position on the platform. Both perspectives are designed to be as realistic as possible in order to facilitate an 'authentic' experience (see Chapter 1). This allows today's visitors to grasp just how privileged their perspective is, just as it was for West Berliners. People who lived in the eastern part of the city are not visible and, by the same token, could not see over the Wall themselves. This perspective is withheld from today's audience.

When history becomes a tourist attraction

The Wall panorama, together with the private Checkpoint Charlie Museum and the BlackBox Cold War exhibition (run by the Berliner Forum für Geschichte und Gegenwart, that is, the Berlin Forum for History and Contemporary Issues) form a dense ensemble of historical representations, in a variety of formats, on Berlin's Friedrichsstraße. The site has a particularly historic feel thanks to a US Army observation booth in the middle of the street, in front of which – bolstering the sense of authenticity – sandbags are stacked up and men pose in what looks like original uniforms. For a tip, they pose for photographs with tourists. The visibility of the site as a key historical location is also enhanced through a seemingly authentic warning sign, which indicates in the languages of the Allies and in German that the 'American sector' ends here.

With this density of experiences on offer, Checkpoint Charlie is the go-to tourist site for visitors wishing to gain a sense of what Berlin might have felt like during the era of the Wall. Yet in the political magazine *Cicero*, journalist Ernst Elitz commented aptly in summer 2018:

> Today, Checkpoint Charlie is a fairground with all the charm of an inner-city rubbish dump [. . .]. Shell game players rip off tourists, while actors made up as GIs pose for photographs with excited visitors in front of a mock control post. A shudder in front of the Wall is *de rigueur* on the tourist trail.[3]

What all this reveals is that the experience of history relies on emotional engagement in two respects. First, the staging aims to arouse curiosity and interest among visitors. Second, the intention is to

3 Ernst Elitz: 'Touristenhölle mitten in Berlin', in: *Cicero*, 9 August 2018, https://www.cicero.de/kultur/Checkpoint-Charlie-Berlin-Tourismus-BlackBox-Kalter-Krieg, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

convey historical emotions such as trepidation and fear (historical shudders) in the face of the border installations.

Emotions make the historical experience appealing

The Wall panorama epitomises a key trend in contemporary public history. The past seems particularly fascinating, attractive and therefore profitable when it is presented as an experience (see Chapter 4) or an event, one no longer limited to cognition but also addressing emotions. In line with this, the historical representation must not only appeal to the mind but must be experienced with all the senses, pulling at the heart-strings. This example clearly shows the crucial and dual significance attributed to emotional experience in the encounter with history. First, emotions are the subject of the presentation. In this instance, the focus is on the emotions of West Berliners in the shadow of the Wall on a November day in 1980. Second, history is supposed to be felt, that is, the experience on offer should stir up visitors' emotions, arouse their curiosity, invite their empathy and entertain them.

Emotions, to cite our key supposition, are an analytical category well-suited to capturing the specific performative character of historical representations (see Chapter 10). But what are emotions, let alone historical emotions? Where exactly do they fit within the process of historical communication? What are the strategies and practices of emotionalisation and how do they shape or alter today's representations of history? In the following, we will first clarify what emotions are, before going on to show that there exist quite different approaches to emotions and history, making their role in public history and their analysis an intricate and complex affair.

3.2 Emotion, affect and feeling. An attempt at classification

Emotions between universalism and constructivism

Philosophers were already pondering human emotions more than two millennia ago. Aristotle, for example, gave one of the best-known and earliest definitions of the phenomena. They

> are those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgements and which are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, pity, fear, and other such things and their opposites.[4]

This definition is the starting point for emotion research, as it encompasses both a universal perspective on emotions and the element of their mutability or transformation.

Affects are universal physical reactions

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, as academic disciplines and methods became established and split into various branches, two opposing ideas about human emotions gained traction. These continue to typify specific disciplinary approaches to human feelings today. One is the older, and more discursively influential, universalist notion of human feelings that transcend time and culture. The other is a cultural constructivist perspective on emotions. The universalist view, championed chiefly by neuroscientists, posits that humans possess a set of basic emotions that has remained unchanged over thousands of years and functions independently of culture. These scientists try to fathom human emotions primarily by looking at brain activity. Representatives of the neurosciences often prefer the term 'affects' over that of 'emotions', the underlying idea being that the former is 'purely physical, pre-linguistic, and unconsciously emotional'.[5]

Emotions change over the course of history

However, scholars in the humanities argue otherwise, asserting that, rather than anthropological constants, human feelings are culture- and era-specific. In contrast to the assumption of unmediated physical affects, this perspective posits the existence of conscious feelings and assumes that that these are incorporated into both verbal and non-verbal representations. The latter are the sources that need to be analysed in order to trace past feelings and their transformations.

Recent research on emotions in the humanities has attempted to break free from the traditional dichotomies of nature vs. culture and thus universalism vs. social constructivism.[6] Over the last two decades, while searching for an operationalisable synthesis crosscutting the humanities and life sciences, historians in particular have

4 Aristotle: *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, translated by George A. Kennedy, New York 1991, 121.

5 Jan Plamper: *Geschichte und Gefühl. Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte*, Munich 2012, 22.

6 Ibid., 16 f.

spawned approaches that promise to help shed light on the questions alluded to above about emotions and emotionalisation in public history.[7] In line with these proposals, the term 'emotion' will be used below as a 'meta-concept', with 'emotion' and 'feeling' being used synonymously. Meanwhile, we intentionally omit the term 'affect': by positing a pre-linguistic unconscious, it stands opposed to the above-mentioned synthesis.[8]

Fear is a bodily reaction and a cultural practice

Emotions are a key dimension of experience and cognition; this is an insight shared across disciplines. However, inquiring into the form, manifestation and representation of people's emotions in past times requires a substantially different approach to that of the natural and life sciences. Unlike neuroscientists, historians cannot look inside the heads of their research subjects and visualise brain activity using imaging techniques. Historians instead turn to historically transmitted representations of the emotions of those who lived during a given period of investigation, that is, sources that can be used to reconstruct past feelings. But it is not only the epistemological methods that differ fundamentally, but also the questions guiding research into human emotions in history. While neuroscience, for example, has examined the affect of fear in the amygdala of the human brain as a result of chemical reactions, historians are interested in the words and practices used to express fear in specific cultures and times, in how the representations of the emotion of fear changed and how the feeling of fear was translated into impactful actions.[9] Yet even if emotions are conceptualised through the lens of cultural constructivism, it would be a mistake to imagine them as disembodied. The following section thus proposes a definition of emotion that adheres to the idea of a transdisciplinary synthesis while foregrounding emotions' historicity.

7 Plamper: *Geschichte und Gefühl*; Rob Boddice: *History of Emotion*, Manchester 2018.

8 In line with the proposal put forward in Plamper: *Geschichte und Gefühl*, 22.

9 Frank Biess: *Republik der Angst. Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, Hamburg 2019.

3.3 Emotions and history. A three-step analysis

A theory of emotions in the field of public history requires an analytical distinction at three levels.

Emotions are historical objects

First, we are dealing with the past emotions of historical actors. Historians' theorising in this regard has been conducted within the branch of research established internationally over the last ten to fifteen years under the rubric of the *history of emotions.* Here emotions are the objects of historical investigation. Researchers have, for example, delved into fear,[10] anger,[11] humiliation[12] and laughter[13] in history. The academic study of emotions has, therefore, been pursued at the object level.

Subjective emotions in the encounter with history

Second, in the concrete situations in which history is communicated and received, a role is always played by the feelings of those involved, such as the exhibition organisers, the museum educators and the visitors. These emotions are situated at the subject level of those who partake in mediation practices in whatever role. Subjective emotions of this kind are increasingly being addressed in theory-building within history didactics, for example by scrutinising the emotional reactions of pupils in processes of historical learning.

Emotionalisation in the mediation of history

Third, it is vital to probe the concrete forms of emotional appeal in the various formats of historical representation. This we seek to capture under the rubric of emotionalisation. Here we need to focus more closely on the mediation setting. What do narratives about the emotions of historical actors look like? Which media, language and practices are used to present these historical emotions? How does this relate to the desired emotional reaction of the recipients? Against this backdrop, what are the techniques and manifestations of emotionalisation?

The analysis of emotions at the object and subject levels must initially be pursued separately. But at the third level of emotionalisa-

10 Bettina Hitzer: *Krebs fühlen. Eine Emotionsgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 2020.

11 Imke Rajamani: *Angry Young Men. Masculinity, Citizenship and Virtuous Emotions in Popular Indian Cinema*, Berlin 2016.

12 Ute Frevert: *Die Politik der Demütigung. Schauplätze von Macht und Ohnmacht*, Frankfurt a.M. 2017.

13 Martina Kessel: *Gewalt und Gelächter. 'Deutschsein' 1914–1945*, Stuttgart 2019.

tion, this distinction cannot always be clearly maintained, and this is precisely the problem we discuss below.

3.3.1 Object level: Emotions as objects of historical representation

The 'August experience' and the relevance of emotions to action

The prelude to a history of emotions was provided as early as 1941 by French historian Lucien Febvre, who stated that emotions are 'contagious' and therefore relevant to action: 'They imply interpersonal relations and collective behaviours'.[14] The past provides plenty of examples of this, such as the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. The German newspapers were brimming with reports on the emotional mélange of relieved tension, festive euphoria and anxious concern. One reporter from Freiburg, for example, wrote:

> It is truth, the cold, cruel truth, a liberating message redeeming us from the torment of terrible uncertainty: the Emperor has spoken. But while on Saturday the rewarding enthusiasm found expression in songs of jubilation, now the most solemn of silences spreads over the thousands who will soon be flocking together. A silence, however, under which a volcano of emotions simmers and boils. A sombre seriousness of iron determination has etched itself onto the faces of men.[15]

Contemporary propaganda made a point of cultivating the narrative of the infectious enthusiasm that had supposedly gripped the German populace. Examples include the production of iconographic photographs of cheering crowds and so-called 'sound pictures' (*Hörbilder*), the preservation on wax cylinders of the seemingly spontaneous singing of nationalist songs; these could then be played long after the first deaths at the front had been reported. Historians later probed how emotions shaped people's actions and examined the contagious potential of emotions at the outbreak of war. Christopher Clark described how, for the most part, the peoples of Europe 'sleepwalked' into the conflict, eagerly anticipating events, euphoric that the explosive tension could finally be released through the dec-

14 Lucien Febvre: 'Sensibilität und Geschichte. Zugänge zum Gefühlsleben früherer Epochen', in: Lucien Febvre: *Das Gewissen des Historikers*, Frankfurt a.M. 1990, 91–108, here 93.

15 H. K.: 'Die Stimmung in Freiburg', in: *Freiburger Zeitung*, 1 August 1914, 3.

laration of war.[16] Jeffrey Verhey, meanwhile, has shown that the enthusiasm was nowhere near as widespread as the propaganda tried to suggest.[17] This is evidenced by diary entries from the time. In October 1914, an unknown soldier describes his departure for the front, noting that he had made his way to the railway station amid cheers and shouts of hurrah. But once on the train, the prevailing mood changed:

> Now we were sitting at the carriage windows. Jokes flew back and forth, and the mood was more than exuberant. Two minutes to go before departure. Suddenly, the mood becomes serious and more serious still. Slowly, the enormous train starts to move; I don't know, we all felt so strange. Did we sense what awaited us all?[18]

Whether jubilation or anxiety, the sources on the 'August experience' (*Augusterlebnis*) are full of descriptions of emotions that make it abundantly clear that the history of August 1914 can be written as one of conflicting emotions.[19]

A concept of emotion for historians

The more recent German-language history of emotions began almost fifteen years ago with the observation that feelings, as Ute Frevert states, are 'historically powerful' (*geschichtsmächtig*), justifying actions and driving historical processes. Emotions are also 'history-laden (*geschichtsträchtig*) [. . .]. They not only make history, they also have a history. Rather than anthropological constants, they change with respect to expression, object and evaluation'.[20] This means that although emotional experience is something that substantively connects people across time and cultures, the meaning of emotions, as well as the interpretation of emotional behaviour and

16 Christopher Clark: *Die Schlafwandler. Wie Europa in den Ersten Weltkrieg zog*, Munich 2015.

17 Jeffrey Verhey: *Der 'Geist von 1914' und die Erfindung der Volksgemeinschaft*, Hamburg 2000.

18 *Aus dem Kriegstagebuch unseres Jungen*, Berlin 1919, 8, available online at https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN73859301X&PHYSID=PHYS_0003, last accessed 15 January 2021.

19 See also Daniel Morat: 'Cheers, Songs, and Marching Sounds: Acoustic Mobilization and Collective Affects at the Beginning of World War I', in: Daniel Morat (ed.): *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th- and 20th-Century Europe,* New York and Oxford 2014, 177–200.

20 Ute Frevert: 'Was haben Gefühle in der Geschichte zu suchen?', in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 35/2 (2009), 183–209, here 202.

the rules governing the showing and hiding of emotions, are subject to change. Emotions and their expression are variable; they are learnt, moulded and 'managed'.[21]

Getting to grips with this mutability, getting to the bottom of the rules of emotional behaviour: these are the goals of a history of emotions and for this we need an operational concept of emotions, along with corresponding methods.

Emotions are physical

This mutability is a key feature of the historical concept of emotion. A second characteristic locates emotions in the human body. However, unlike in the natural sciences, from this perspective the body too is regarded as the outcome of historical processes and as subject to change. According to historian Sarah Ahmed, emotions are the 'impressions' that encounters with the world leave on our bodies. These impressions alter the body time and again.[22] Emotions thus inscribe themselves into the body and are bound to the body. This is because people can use their bodies to communicate emotions, to make them visible and audible, while at the same time emotional experience is stored in the body. Happy people move in a freer and more carefree manner, while anxious people have something literally 'breathing down their necks' and anger often makes people's 'blood boil'. Emotions, then, are something we 'do'; they are practices of the self, as Monique Scheer underlines. She thus expands her concept of emotions to include 'the dimension of action':

> I want [. . .] to emphasise that feeling is closely interwoven with expression, with bodily activations and movements. Instead of making a strict distinction between inner feeling and outer expression, we should scrutinize how the outer and inner constitute each other.[23]

A definition within the discipline of history

Emotions, then, may be defined as culturally and structurally learned, and as internalised but also negotiated through social practices. The central actor and medium when it comes to the inscription of emotions,

21 Arlie Russell Hochschild: 'Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure', in: *The American Journal of Sociology* 85/3 (1979), 551–575, here 573.

22 Sara Ahmed: 'Collective Feelings: Or, the Impression Left by Others', in: *Theory, Culture & Society* 21/2 (2004), 25–42, here 30.

23 Monique Scheer: 'Emotionspraktiken. Wie man über das Tun an die Gefühle herankommt', in: Matthias Beitl and Ingo Schneider (eds.): *Emotional Turn?! Europäisch ethnologische Zugänge zu Gefühlen & Gefühlswelten*, Vienna 2016, 15–36, here 16.

but also for acting them out, communicating and expressing them, is therefore the body. According to the concepts at large in the anthropology of the body, the latter is a product of both biological and cultural factors, a conceptual union of body, mind and society.[24]

This definition captures the mutability of emotions and situates their efficacy at the threshold of, and in the interaction between, the individual 'inside' and the social 'outside'. What this means for the history of a specific emotion can be illustrated through the example of homesickness.

Homesickness as a deadly 'Swiss disease'

Initially, homesickness was not considered an emotion at all, but a medical condition. Between the seventeenth and late nineteenth centuries, homesickness was a medically well-defined, fatal illness.[25] This phenomenon was first described in 1688 by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, who investigated the condition of many terminally ill Swiss soldiers abroad. The history of homesickness thus began as a history of the so-called 'Swiss disease'.[26] The symptoms of the illness were 'constant sadness, frequent sighs, constant thoughts of home, restless sleep, loss of strength, poor appetite, anguish, fever, weakness and emaciation'.[27] Homesickness, it was believed, would inevitably lead to death unless those affected were sent back to their homeland. This homesickness was a longing for that which had been left behind: home, the Alps, family or farm.

Homesickness as an adaptive problem

The medical discourse on homesickness as a fatal illness did not change until the middle of the nineteenth century. Industrialisation required people to be more mobile as they left their home area on trains, steamships and horse-drawn carts. Homesickness began to assume the form of an obstructive and disruptive factor in this process of increasing mobility, one that had to be overcome as a temporary adaptive problem. Accordingly, homesickness was described in the medical literature of the later nineteenth century using terms such as pain of separation, sadness, loneliness and melancholy.

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24 Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margret M. Lock: 'The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology', in: *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, New Series 1/1 (1987), 6–41, here 6.

25 Simon Bunke: *Heimweh. Studien zur Kultur- und Literaturgeschichte einer tödlichen Krankheit*, Freiburg 2009, 25 f.

26 Ibid., 35.

27 Ibid., 83.

Homesickness had become more akin to a symptom of a depressive mood or an emotion than an illness.

Homesickness as a pedagogical challenge

Around 1900, homesickness as an emotion-based adaptive problem was essentially attributed to those considered immature (by which the dominant discourse meant 'common', uneducated people), but above all to children and adolescents. This transformation of homesickness from illness to adaptation-related emotion can be neatly traced in the homesickness discourse at large in the educational literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[28] Around 1900, heroine Heidi in Johanna Spyri's world-famous children's book was still seriously ill; she suffered from pathological homesickness, much like the Swiss mercenaries of the seventeenth century. Only her return to the Swiss Alps saved her from inevitable death. After the turn of the century, children's sorrow and their consuming longing for a forsaken homeland and parental home turned into an educational challenge. In contrast to Heidi, the children of the early twentieth century were no longer incurably ill, but merely immature. It was the task of parents and educators to guide them as they struggled with emotional adjustment problems, to help them overcome these challenges and thus mature. In 1913, for example, the *Lexikon der Pädagogik* described the overwhelming feeling of homesickness as entirely natural and advised forbearance: 'It is important to practise patience and show a great deal of love'.[29] At the same time, the pedagogical discourse focussed on preventing homesickness through appropriate upbringing. 'Strength of character' (*Charakterstärke*), 'morality' (*Sittlichkeit*) and 'reason' (*Vernunft*) were seen as sensible antidotes and were assigned to parents as clear-cut child-rearing goals.

In the decades that followed, the perception that homesickness was a sign of low self-esteem and that it afflicted only overly sensitive, weak children gained growing traction. As a result, children's literature abounded with girls suffering from homesickness, whereas boys were more inclined towards wanderlust and were driven by their desire for adventure. Mothers were, therefore, advised not

28 Juliane Brauer: 'Heidi's Homesickness', in: Ute Frevert et al. (eds.): *Learning How to Feel: Children's Literature and Emotional Socialization, 1870–1970*, Oxford 2014, 209–227.

29 S. P. Widmann: 'Heimweh', in: Otto Willmann and Ernst M. Roloff (eds.): *Lexikon der Pädagogik*, vol. 2, Freiburg 1913, 703–705, here 703.

to overly indulge their children, as maturity could develop chiefly through inner strength.

Nostalgic homesickness in the post-war period

This homesickness discourse underwent significant changes in Germany after the Second World War in light of the millions of refugees and displaced persons. Homesickness, as the yearning for a lost homeland and era, became a publicly displayable and permissible emotion, and not just for children. This nostalgic homesickness was in fact a fundamental and widespread sentiment in West Germany in the 1950s. It is no coincidence that the hit song 'Heimweh' ('Homesickness') by Freddy Quinn topped the German hit parade for 21 weeks in 1956 – a record to this day.

Homesickness as critique of modernity

In the 1960s and 1970s, homesickness declined in importance in West German public discourse. It made a comeback around 1980, this time in the guise of a 'legitimate' modernity-critical sentiment in an era characterised as postmodernity, as the 'tapering off of progress-centred modernity'.[30] The feeling of homesickness revalidated the desire for, and right to, roots and a sense of security. Homesickness was not only permissible; after a period in the middle of the century in which many had lost, fled or been expelled from their homeland, homesickness was deemed necessary for personal maturation, an element crucial to finding one's bearings in an increasingly mobile and globalising world.

Social discourses change emotional rules

This digression on homesickness discourses over a period of 300 years shows that there was and is no universal feeling of homesickness. Moreover, homesickness started out as an illness, evolved into a feeling of loss and longing in the course of the nineteenth century and then became a sentiment critical of modernity in the last third of the twentieth century. This history makes it plain that emotions are constantly changing through an interplay with medical, educational and philosophical discourses and in response to historical events. We can generalise this finding. Emotions are culturally and historically mutable; they are subject to continual negotiation and must be adapted to a given set of rules governing emotion and to a given community. Our excursus on homesickness underscores how a specific emotion changed over the course of several centuries, how societal ideas and discourses evolved and how these laid down what people were and were not allowed to feel, how a particular emotion could or

30 Martin Sabrow: *Die Zeit der Zeitgeschichte*, Göttingen 2012, 13.

could not be expressed in public and which emotions should be overcome and why.

However, this example also shows that emotions, as a mode of human perception of the world and a mode of human action, are an integral part of history. This means they are always present in historical representations. It stands to reason that they must play a major role in the encounter with history as well.

3.3.2 Subject level: Emotions in the encounter with history

Emotions are always present in the mediation of history

One key institutional framework for encounters with history is school history lessons. To date, then, theories on emotions in relation to people's engagement with history have been developed within the field of history didactics, though very little empirical research has been conducted on this topic. In recent years, the impetus for this theorising has come, first, from the historical study of emotions. Second, researchers have shown a pronounced interest in emotions in teaching and learning contexts.

In light of this, the following reflections on subjective emotions in encounters with history build on ideas developed within history didactics, which are mostly informed by research on history teaching in schools. At the end of this chapter, we will adapt these ideas more specifically to the questions and requirements of public history.

Activating and inhibiting emotions are forms of emotional management

Emotions are always present when people engage with history, regardless of the institutional framework.[31] Traditionally, historical representations aim to impart knowledge and provide orientation. To accomplish this, they should be able to arouse curiosity, be as engaging as possible, generate interest and, ideally, inspire enthusiasm for historical topics. However, emotions do not have a clearly definable, systematic place in the encounter with history limitable to this level of representation and activation. All those involved in the encounter with history bring their emotions into it. Thus, each individual changes the atmosphere of the classroom, exhibition or memorial site and influences the process of historical appropriation. In these con-

31 For a recent empirical study on emotions at memorial sites, see: Matthias Wider: *'Man muss es gesehen haben, um es zu verstehen'. Zur Wirkung von historischen Orten auf Schülerinnen und Schüler*, Hamburg 2018.

texts, the handling of emotions can be subdivided, first, into the conscious activation of positively connotated emotional states such as interest, curiosity or empathy. Second, emotions that are considered troubling, such as boredom or rejection, are studiously inhibited by the history makers, whereas pupils who are compelled to engage with history may deliberately activate negative emotions. Whether activation or inhibition, both are forms of emotion management.

Wilhelm Dilthey and emotions as a method of knowledge acquisition

The realisation that emotions play a role in the engagement with the past and in the production of history is far from new. Wilhelm Dilthey, one of the founding fathers of the modern humanities, characterised the form of understanding proper to that field, in contrast to natural scientific explanation, as the 're-feeling of [or: empathising with] others' states of mind' (*Nachfühlen fremder Seelenzustände*).[32] Dilthey thus attributed an epistemological significance to emotions in the process of understanding. This approach can, therefore, be described as an 'emotion-based method' (*Gefühlsmethode*).[33] Dilthey worked with the idea of a fundamental similarity between the person who understands and the one being understood, which makes it possible to 'put oneself in others' shoes' (*Hineinversetzen*) and 'replicate' (*Nachbilden*) others' feelings and thus to relive their experiences.

Fascination with, and fear of, emotions in history lessons of the past

Despite this emphatically humanities-oriented, hermeneutic, 'emotion-based method', emotions were virtually banned from history lessons for many decades. The explanation for this lies in the history of the subject itself as taught in schools. According to didactician Bodo von Borries, with their 'conventional objectives', history lessons in the Wilhelmine Empire openly pursued 'affirmative-legitimatory, indeed manipulative-indoctrinating' intentions. 'Cognitive learning processes (understanding)' had become 'no more than a vehicle for the emo-

32 Wilhelm Dilthey: 'Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik', in: Wilhelm Dilthey: *Die geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens. Erste Hälfte: Abhandlung zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften* (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5), Göttingen 1961 (1900), 317–338, here 317.

33 Daniel Morat: 'Verstehen als Gefühlsmethode. Zu Wilhelm Diltheys hermeneutischer Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften', in: Uffa Jensen and Daniel Morat (eds.): *Rationalisierungen des Gefühls. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft und Emotionen 1880–1930*, Munich 2008, 101–117, here 103.

tional (enthusiasm and love)', particularly with regard to the nation.[34] Due to this legacy, which had an impact beyond the Nazi era, emotions were seen as particularly problematic for history lessons. This culminated in a notable surge of rationality in the discourse of history didactics in the 1970s. The fear of the incalculable effects of emotions resulted in the dominance of cognitive learning principles and objectives over an approach that addressed emotions as well,[35] ultimately leading to calls for the 'cultivation of affect'.[36]

Rediscovering emotions in the history class

In the early 1990s, an initial attempt was made to reintegrate emotions into the learning process in the form of a history didactics conference on emotions in the classroom.[37] The motivation to organise an event of this kind arose from the insight that emotions had for many years been neglected in historico-political education. Although the conference was intended to mark a turning point, it initially had only a limited impact on historical didactic concepts, let alone curricula. It was only due to the *emotional turn* in historical scholarship that emotions found their way back into debates on historical learning, especially learning in non-school settings.[38]

If we look at today's historical didactic approach to emotions, we find contrasting perspectives on – and expectations of – the inclusion of emotions in the learning process. On the one hand, there are formats that focus on reproducing and empathizing with past emotions (as in the Wall panorama) or that are mindful of learners' emotional reactions (especially when it comes to conveying the history of violent events, including mass murder). On the other hand, there are concerns about these practices that intentionally target learners' feelings, precisely because they are overly reminiscent of historical

34 Bodo von Borries: 'Von gesinnungsbildenden Erlebnissen zur Kultivierung der Affekte? Über Ziele und Wirkungen von Geschichtslernen in Deutschland', in: Bernd Mütter et al. (eds.): *Emotionen und historisches Lernen. Forschung, Vermittlung, Rezeption*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994, 67–92, here 67.

35 Joachim Rohlfes: *Geschichte und ihre Didaktik*, Göttingen 2005, 165: 'While emotional learning consists in part of acting out and becoming aware of feelings, it is centred on their cognitive processing'.

36 Borries: 'Von gesinnungsbildenden Erlebnissen', 67.

37 Bernd Mütter et al. (eds.): *Emotionen und historisches Lernen. Forschung, Vermittlung, Rezeption*, Frankfurt a.M. 1994.

38 Juliane Brauer and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Geschichtsdidaktische und geschichtskulturelle Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2013.

instances of calculated emotionalisation. This makes it essential to probe in greater depth how, in encounters with history, emotions at the subject level relate to those at the object level.

The past becomes knowable through mediating agents

As fundamental as Dilthey's definition of *Verstehen* or understanding as an 'emotion-based method' is, it nevertheless points to serious constraints, especially when it comes to historical understanding in particular and thus historical education. To grasp the past, we need mediating agents that make past realities visible and understandable. The 2000-year-old foundations of a building do not tell their story on their own. They need to be marked as historically significant by means of barriers and possibly by careful reconstruction; explanatory texts or videos about everyday life in the ancient city or detailing religious rituals are required in order to place the material foundations in a historical context. The effect of these various interposing media is rooted in their ability to generate mental images of the past and endow them with a special credibility, enabling viewers to develop consistent ideas about the past. But even if 100 visitors see the same foundations and receive the same information and images, it is up to each individual to link them with their own knowledge and existing mental images – and thus forge a narrative (see Chapter 7, 'Historical Imagination').

The appropriation of history as an experience of alterity or identity

These ideas point to the individual aspect of every instance of the reception and reconstruction of the past but also to societal patterns of interpretation that determine what from the past is worth rendering visible – and which story should be told on the basis of what has been made visible. The question is how the visualisation of the past is framed. Are visitors supposed to recognise how different everyday life was in an ancient city, or should they see parallels to their own lives? By the same token, is the encounter with the past an experience of alterity or an experience of identification? This depends crucially on the nature and use of the agents of mediation. To stick with the example of the excavations, the foundations might be minimally restored and furnished with appropriate informational texts. Alternatively, modern technology makes it possible to take visitors on a journey through time using sound, video installations and perhaps even augmented reality, allowing them to 'experience history up close'.

It is impossible to reexperience historical emotions

However, as we have already seen, from the perspective of the history of emotions there is a significant objection to encountering history as an experience of identity. Reliving historical emotions is

impossible, precisely because emotions may change fundamentally over time. An approximation in the sense of analogous feelings is conceivable, but not a journey through time into the hearts and minds of people in times long past. As denizens of the present day, we do not share their 'experiential space' (*Erfahrungsraum*) or 'horizon of expectation' ('*Erwartungshorizont*'), to use Reinhart Koselleck's succinct historical categories.[39] To return to the example of homesickness: informed by our current understanding of that condition, our ability to empathise is severely constrained by our struggle to grasp that homesickness was blamed, as an illness, for the deaths of many mercenaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. How might we grasp a senior officer's decision to send his soldiers home at the first sign of homesickness?

Historical learning as an experience of alterity

There is a second, distinctly historical didactic objection to the notion of reexperiencing historical emotions. This is that historical learning is the experience of the temporally, culturally and geographically different, of the other: it is an experience of alterity. Yet the invitation to relive something, to reexperience what people thought and felt in the past, is based on the illusion of sameness, the experience of identity. When visitors to the Asisi panorama look over the Wall from an elevated standpoint, in some sense they are adopting the perspective of West Berliners in 1980. Yet their view of the grey blocks of flats in East Berlin today is accompanied to a far lesser extent by anxious questions than in the case of people in the past. Back then, the view over the Wall may have involved concern for loved ones, the hope of catching a glimpse of them, or simply the relief felt at being on the 'right' side of the Wall. Visitors today are led to believe that they can see what people saw from such observation posts back then. Superficially, this may be true, but the meanings, thoughts and feelings that underlie or accompany the act of seeing differ between past and present.

Despite such limitations associated with the 'emotion-based method' of historical understanding, Wilhelm Dilthey nevertheless left us with an important pointer when it comes to situating emotions within the teaching-learning of the humanities, namely the 'mental structure' (*seelische Struktur*) of attention, perception and memory.

39 Reinhart Koselleck: *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, 349.

If we take seriously the fact that, within our lived reality, humanities subjects depend on hermeneutic understanding, emotions must inevitably be recognised as of crucial importance in encounters with history and thus in historical learning.

Emotions inhibit the engagement with history

However, feeling does not automatically ensure an intensive and lasting engagement with history. It may also have an inhibitive effect, as evident in the challenges faced by present-day memorial and remembrance sites. Learners go to these places and attempt to conform to the emotions expected in a given context, to 'dance according to a choreography of emotions', as memorial site educators have observed.[40] This is particularly noticeable with regard to topics in the twentieth-century history of dictatorship and violence. Concern, empathy, compassion and sorrow form part of the emotional mélange demanded by the sociopolitical commemoration and remembrance of the victims. Yet this very aspect may be quite alien to learners. They might prefer to approach these topics with curiosity, anger or perhaps even emotional detachment. In the context of emotional learning, it is important in didactic terms to allow for and accommodate these feelings, rather than expecting learners to display socially approved emotions from the outset; such expectations may be emotionally overwhelming for learners and trigger defensive reactions.

3.3.3 Emotionalisation

Emotionalisation occurs due to the blending of emotions at object and subject level

The understanding of emotions at the object and subject levels set out above highlights the differences and boundaries between these two levels. In real-world practice, however, emotions do not remain at the subject or object level and thus distinguishable from each other, as our previous comments on socially standardised feelings have already made clear. History-focused experiential products too promise visitors the chance to share in past feelings.[41] In these cases,

40 Matthias Heyl: 'Mit Überwältigendem überwältigen. Emotionen in KZ-Gedenkstätten', in: Juliane Brauer and Martin Lücke (eds.): *Emotionen, Geschichte und historisches Lernen. Geschichtsdidaktische und geschichtskulturelle Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2013, 239–260, here 247.

41 Juliane Brauer: '"Heiße Geschichte"? Emotionen und historisches Lernen in Museen und Gedenkstätten', in: Sarah Willner et al. (eds.): *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, Münster 2016, 29–44, here 29.

in which the emotions of people from earlier times are supposed to become relivable through the targeted use of media and the selection of apt narratives and behavioural prompts, we can refer to emotionalisation. What is specific to emotionalisation is that emotions at the object level are mixed with those at the subject level and can no longer be cleanly separated.

Analysing emotionalisation strategies

The task of critical public history is, first, to recognise the strategies of emotionalisation and to raise awareness of the problematic nature of attempts to generate particular emotional reactions (in the sense of reliving emotions). Second, it is important to consider where emotions can be productive and effective in the encounter with history. This requires a toolkit that enables us to describe the practices and strategies of emotionalisation as comprehensively as possible and to analyse their impact. In particular, it is crucial to examine how the observed blending of emotions at the object and subject levels comes about. The following categories can be used to this end: visualisation, narrativisation, authentication, dramatisation and personalisation.[42] Each of these individual categories can be probed in relation to emotions at the object and subject level. The goal must then be to bring out how these two levels are interconnected concretely through relevant practices.

Visualisation

With regard to the Asisi panorama, the first obvious step is to examine the vehicles of visualisation more closely. What exactly does the panorama depict, from which perspectives, and which visual means lend support to the pictorial statement? What painting and representational techniques did the artist use, what was his intention in depicting this particular view of the Wall, and what message was it supposed to convey? Further, it always makes sense to ask what cannot be seen, such as the people living in East Berlin in the Wall panorama. What does this representational perspective signify?

Narrativisation through authenticity

In the case of Asisi's historical panorama, narrativisation occurs primarily through the associated promotional efforts. The website extols the emotional experience of this 'perfect illusion'. 'Experience everyday life in the shadow of the Berlin Wall in a unique panorama', it proposes, before promising that: 'You will experience in an impressive and unique way the ordinary yet terrible nature of life in the

42 Georg Koch: *Funde und Fiktionen. Urgeschichte im deutschen und britischen Fernsehen seit den 1950er Jahren*, Göttingen 2019, 155 f.

shadow of the Wall'.[43] In addition, a room in front of the panorama narrates its creation and relates the story of Yadegar Asisi, while also displaying and commenting on numerous historical photographs of the Berlin Wall. With this information and these historical images in mind, visitors are provided with an interpretation of history with which to view the Wall panorama. Not to be neglected is the entire experiential ensemble at Checkpoint Charlie, the actors in their US Army uniforms in front of the border hut, and the signs marking the former sector border. Here, narrativization is intended to provide the historical encounter with a robust emotional underpinning. The artist himself is quite open about this, making full use of the 'perfect illusion' afforded by the panorama medium. The 'terrible nature of life in the shadow of the Wall' is meant to be empathetically relivable; visitors are supposed to head home with the feeling of having truly stood at the Wall in 1980.[44] This leaves them little opportunity for their own sense-making or for subjective feelings, which might be less influenced by the intended message of 'terrible life' than by the realisation that the countercultural Western life in the squats situated in the shadow of the Wall was far from vibrant or exciting.

The accompanying exhibition, featuring the life story of the artist, who lived in the Kreuzberg district during the relevant period and processed his own visual memories in the panorama, authenticates the latter. The photos on display substantiate the narrative presented. Further authentication is provided through identification of a specific location: visitors take in the Wall from Sebastianstraße in Berlin-Kreuzberg. The artist also depicts the countercultural life of punks in the well-known club SO 36, a fixture that still exists today.

Dramatisation through light and sound

To achieve a fitting form of dramatization, the artist opted for 'diffuse lighting',[45] which is intended to reinforce the impression of a grey November day. In the dimly lit space, visitors are completely removed from the hustle-and-bustle and street noise at Checkpoint

43 From the presentation of the panorama on the website under 'Die Mauer. Yadegar Asisi Panorama', www.die-mauer.de, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

44 'Sehenswert! // Die Mauer – Asisi Panorama Berlin', in: YouTube channel of TV.Berlin, 4 March 2016 (featuring an interview with the artist of more than ten minutes), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yndYqG4ao6w, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

45 According to his own description on the following website: https://www.asisi.de/panorama/die-mauer, last accessed: 15 January 2021.

Charlie. All their attention is focussed on what is made visible: the panorama. Acoustically, too, the artist pursues dramatisation through classically inspired background music composed and arranged by himself and Eric Babak. With its slow, sustained rhythm and the predominance of low-pitched string instruments, the music is reminiscent of a requiem. It is overlaid by the strident and, in contrast to the music, loud playback of original sound recordings from the era of divided Berlin. One can, for example, hear excerpts from speeches by Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker. Interestingly, these recordings are not from 1980, which means that the illusion is not realised consistently. Nevertheless, these virtually iconic sound sources fit into the overall ensemble of the staging, as they align with the visitors' presumed historico-cultural expectations and thus convincingly embody a sense of *pastness* (see Chapter 11, 'Reception').

Personalisation

The strategy of personalisation is evident in the highly detailed depiction of people standing on a wooden platform (similar to the one on which the Panorama visitors themselves stand) to look over the Wall. One sees small children with their parents, white-haired pensioners and young people. Visitors are thus offered a number of ways of identifying with their curious counterparts of 1980.

To summarise, what we have learned is that emotions play two key roles when it comes to the promise of experience in public history. First, historical representations offer an apparently low-threshold way of accessing history by thematising the feelings of people in the past. Here, emotions can serve as objects for the presentation and communication of history. Second, recipients undergo a form of positive emotional mobilisation. The emotionalisation strategies used often blur the differences between emotions at the object level and subject level. For example, the representational strategies in the Asisi panorama aim to create an illusion that allows visitors to completely immerse themselves in a November day at the Berlin Wall in 1980, to engage with history using all their senses and thus supposedly experience it (see the info box on 'Immersion' in section 4.3). The question is what opportunities visitors have to return from this illusion to their present, to relate themselves to this experience of history, to probe for themselves what they have taken from it. In other words, what does this encounter with history mean to them?

Emotional overwhelm and the Beutelsbach consensus

This ambivalence of emotions is now the subject of numerous conferences and networking events at which public history actors openly discuss the significance of emotions, especially in encounters

with the German history of dictatorship.[46] The debate often revolves around the question of emotional overwhelm and its permissibility. While there is a great need in museums, memorial sites and other places of historical mediation to arouse interest and attention, the danger of excessive emotionalisation has been repeatedly underscored. In the context of this discussion, the Beutelsbach Consensus, now over forty years old, has come to the fore. The principles of this consensus were originally formulated in 1976 with a view to political education. Though it was regarded as a minimum consensus, the principles of controversy, pupil-orientation and the prohibition of overwhelm were intended to effectively prevent the political indoctrination of learners. Interestingly, in the context of the debate on memorial site work, the ban on overwhelming pupils gained an additional layer of significance. Originally, it meant rejecting those forms or methods of mediation that seemed likely to 'ambush pupils – by whatever means – in order to impose desirable opinions and thus impede their ability to "form an independent judgement"'.[47] These days, however, the focus is no longer on the risk of overwhelming them with arguments, but chiefly on the potential for emotional overwhelm.[48]

Boundaries between emotionalisation and emotional overwhelm

The above theorising of emotions at the object and subject levels delineates clear boundaries between emotionalisation and emotional overwhelm. Emotionalisation is the mobilisation of the recipients' subjective emotions; the emotions remain at the object and subject levels respectively, without mixing. This means that while the Asisi panorama depicts the normality of the Wall in all its terribleness, today's visitors can encounter this 'horror' with their own curiosity or scepticism, perhaps with disapproval or even anger that such a thing was possible. However, emotional overwhelm occurs when historical emotions are meant to be re-felt today, in other words, when they depart from the object level and are deployed to influence individual feelings.

46 See the special issue of *LaG Magazin* 11 (2012) published by the online portal 'Lernen aus der Geschichte': 'Emotionalität und Kontroversität'.

47 Hans-Georg Wehling: 'Konsens à la Beutelsbach?', in: Siegfried Schiele and Herbert Schneider (eds.): *Das Konsensproblem in der politischen Bildung*, Stuttgart 1977, 179–180, here 179.

48 Elena Demke: 'Emotionale Harmonisierung oder intellektuelle Provokation? Zur Darstellung von Emotionalität in Besuchervideos von Gedenkstättenbesuchen', in: *LaG-Magazin* 11 (2012): 'Sonderheft: Emotionalität und Kontroversität', 11–14, here 13; Heyl: 'Mit Überwältigendem überwältigen'.

3.4 A plea for emotions in public history

Making emotionalisation strategies transparent

On the basis of the ideas set out above, there are two key objections to emotional overwhelm. First, historical emotions cannot be re-felt, if only because they change over time. People today are aware that the Wall has not existed for thirty years and that the armed border guards can no longer pose a threat to anyone. Visitors can leave the panorama whenever they wish and immerse themselves in the hustle-and-bustle of the city at Checkpoint Charlie. The second objection stems from history didactic considerations. Encounters with the past can be identity-forming and action-orientated if they address individual memories and personal experiences of time rather than simply attempting to recreate them. This reiterates the fundamental point that engagement with history is more an experience of alterity than identity. Pasts were fundamentally different from our present, even if they are presented as familiar and similar in a given historical experience. This means that an encounter with history mediated by emotions can certainly provide meaningful stimuli, but only if the emotions remain clearly at the object level and it is still possible for people today to have and address their own, highly variable emotions (at the subject level). When it comes to public presentations of history, this suggests that strategies of emotionalisation should be transparent, with several different narratives on offer. These make it possible to terminate the dramatising visual and acoustic effects at the end of the historical experience, releasing visitors into their present with (emotional) impulses for further reflection.

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