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for his reputed use of concepts of creativity and individuality reputedly borrowed from fine art discourse, as much as it is, to give other examples, to dismiss Thelma Sullivan, Cecilia Klein or Doris Heyden fine interpretations of pre-Columbian symbolic classifications and aesthetic categories, simply because they are on the wrong side of the fence. While, I would not want to denigrate the very real service that Marcus and Myers have performed for the anthropology of art, one cannot help but sometimes regret the polemical manner in which it has been cast.

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Penny, H. Glenn. 2002. *Objects of culture: ethnology and ethnographic museums in imperial Germany*. Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press. 281 p. ISBN 0-8078-5430-1. £ 16.95.

Studies on the origins, growth and social and intellectual articulations of specific ethnographic museums are rare and Penny is to be congratulated on providing comparative case studies on the history of four such museums between 1868-1915. Penny's work does more than chart the history of Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Leipzig's ethnographic museums; it provides a useful palliative against the usual generalisations, resulting from a sole focus on the intellectual ideas behind them that see the post-Enlightenment museum as a development from curiosity to increasingly more orderly collections based on firm scientific principles and classifications. Neither does Penny ignore the political and economic arenas in which museums developed and matured or the different social groups that influenced them and sometimes drew alternative interpretations of their exhibitions than those intended by their directors and curators. The result is a complex mosaic of interweaving intellectual, social, political and economic relations that within five decades created the world's largest ethnographic collections, but failed miserably to subordinate them to the intellectual narratives they attempted to enunciate.

Penny begins by situating the origins of these museums in the rapidly growing cities of a newly founded German nation. The heirs to only scattered collections derived in Berlin and Munich from royal cabinets, or in the case

of Hamburg and Leipzig, from private collections, trading houses or learned associations, ethnography crystallised around the expansive ideals based on the fundamental unity of humanity and the attribution of cultural difference as the product of climate and environment popularised by the great Prussian scientist, Alexander von Humboldt. Adolfo Bastian, often heralded as the father of German ethnography, mediated Humboldt's science by arguing that material culture was an expression of human thought and by studying and comparing it, one could discern the nature of this psychic unity as well as trace its historical inflections or the influence of migrations and changing environments through its varied manifestations. Humboldtian universalism was therefore harnessed to an ethnographic programme notable both for its breadth and humanism. Such grand themes provided criteria through which former collections were sorted and objects re-categorised as 'ethnographic' before becoming re-institutionalised in specific museums.

The pursuit of such an ambitious programme was expensive and dependent on influential local, national and international patrons. Cities competed among themselves for influence and prestige and prided themselves on their international outlook and liberal sentiments, and ethnography was one way they could express and publicly exhibit such cultivated pretensions. Those that were slow to take up the challenge could be stung into activity by publicly made criticism by visiting scientists that was taken to reflect on the city generally. After Leipzig was criticised by the Italian Erico Hillner Giglioli, for its disorderly collection, lack of space and low scholarly standards, the City Council pledged renewed support for the museum including the purchase of the expensive and much desired Godeffroy collection. Even Munich, founded in 1868, after forty years of neglect bestowed on it by the government and public alike, with the appointment of its third director, Lucien Sherman in 1907 and his more aesthetic rearrangement mainly of its Asian collections, achieved the popularity and acclaim that had long eluded it. After establishing museums, cities competed for collections. The famous Godeffroy collection housed in Hamburg was purchased by Leipzig against stiff competition from other sources. The loss of the collection by Hamburg provoked the city council to sponsor an ambitious collecting expedition to Oceania in 1907, while the director of the Leipzig Museum attempted to get money for his own expeditions by complaining to the city council of the advances already achieved by other institutions throughout Germany.

By the last decades of the 19th century, as ethnology began to become more professionalised and as the price of ethnographic objects steeply rose, museums

began to establish expeditions, first led by individuals who had shown particular acumen for acquiring objects, and later by professional museum ethnologists. The model for the earliest expedition was provided by Adrian Jacobsen's 1881 expedition to the Northwest Coast and Alaska, on behalf of the Berlin Museum, but was later superseded by more professionally trained leaders who were able to ensure that not only good quality objects were obtained but that they came with full documentation. In this way the value of an ethnographic object was displaced away from its intrinsic qualities, to its heuristic ability. Because of its privileged position in the nation's capital, the Berlin Museum, was able to cultivate close associations with other state agencies, not only allowing it access to the objects brought by other governmental expeditions, but permitting it to share costs and even have the right to acquire all objects procured by colonial servants. However, while national governmental support was helpful, colonialism was a mixed blessing. Reversing the arguments of writers like Stocking and Asad, Penny finds that while colonialism could provide better access to collecting areas, it also brought with it a set of rules, ordinances and laws which constrained field collecting. Furthermore, the division of the world between the European powers excluded collectors from the colonies of their rivals, and even when they were admitted, they had to be careful not to trigger embarrassing diplomatic incidents. The colonial division of the world went fundamentally against the universalist aspirations to which German ethnographic collecting aspired.

The behaviour of early collectors in the field, quite independently of their colonial constraints, is another point of interest in Penny's account. Penny argues that a double standard in treating indigenous populations was institutionalised within museum cultures. At home, ethnologists subscribed to the defence of native populations, while in the field they treated them with impunity, forcing them to succumb to anthropometric measurements and photography, taking valued objects without negotiation over whether they were saleable or acknowledging indigenous values, and ransacking burial sites for human remains. Rumours of theft, sexual indiscretions, cavalier attitudes and breaches of etiquette were tolerated by museum directors to achieve the acquisition of as many 'native' objects as possible before they became extinct. The rate of this accumulation was staggering and Penny suggests that expeditions deliberately attempted to empty areas of their material culture in order to ensure their monopoly over it. Later collections made from the same area were deemed of lesser significance, and consequently lower value, since they had been made after contact with the West, using new imported technologies brought about through prior expeditionary contact.

Perhaps Penny's most surprising contention though is that despite Bastian and his contemporaries desire to transform their museums into temples of science, far removed from the miscellanies of the cabinets of curiosities that preceded them, the pace of accumulation led to such object dense displays, that order and classification was repeatedly delayed and eschewed. The glimpses we have of the Berlin Museum are taken at specific and important civic occasions, he argues, when their holding had been laid out to uncommon perfection, and do not represent the normal state of things. Internal memorandums, letters and pleas for ever larger buildings testify that the focus on accumulation over classification, led to increasing disorder and the tendency for visitors to read the collections as marvellous curiosities. While marvel might succumb to minor edification, the overall effect led to boredom, and in the 20th century after the state gave more attention to poorer sectors of society and their need for education most museums, with the exception of Berlin, embraced these new demands, Penny suggests, to hide their incapacity to fulfil their original objective.

Penny's work is provocative not only in the challenges it makes to centrally accepted tenets on the role of museums in reproducing state ideologies and the complicity between museum anthropology and colonial regimes, but by seeming to back the view espoused by Fabian on the libidinous nature of early anthropology and indigenous market responses to anthropological demands. Most extraordinary, is the surreal image we are left of huge purpose built repositories into which material culture flowed from all parts of the world, where it failed completely to signify anything to anyone. Behind this monumental academic and public failure however, there lurks a private or internal success that Penny gives faint regard to. The widespread and unregulated accumulation of objects, sometimes resulting from the large scale cultural clearances that museums facilitated, created corpi which provided idealised prognoses of the material culture diagnostic of specific cultural groups. The accumulation of objects by museums took them out of local and international circulation and created scarcity which inflated market prices, while at the same time they were able to set and guarantee quality by reference to the index collections they had already assembled. The publication of descriptions and images, including often richly illustrated volumes such as those of Bastian, von Sydow and Retzel, that were greeted by an enthusiastic public; the circulation of diagnostic type objects to other museums; academic teaching, and the participation of curators in national and international conferences, created the material systems which they celebrated. By the very absence of order within their displays, later day analysts are unable to become distracted

by questions of representation, but are more directly led to, what Nuno Porto has acknowledged in another context, as the larger and more important question of how museums have themselves created their objects.

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