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***Quid pro quo:*
Assessing the Value of Berlin's Thälmann Monument**

The Thälmann Monument, conceived by the artist Lev Kerbel and erected in East Berlin's district of Prenzlauer Berg in 1986, was one of the only major political monuments in Berlin that the SED constituted as a special gift to the people of Berlin. Its dedication took on a highly theatrical character in which the SED staged the act of gift giving, suggesting that its intended memorial functions went beyond those of commemoration, education, and veneration; rather, the monument demands a more nuanced examination of the social relationships surrounding the dedicatory ritual. Rather than judge monuments according to a template of artistic, historical, or ethical criteria, this chapter explores how artistic objects accrue social value and provoke public attention and defence.

During the Austro-Italo-French war of 1859, Karl Marx wrote a series of articles comparing the political events on the European stage to a theatrical performance. In particular, he turned Prussia's self-proclaimed portrayal as a mediator between warring nations into a comedy in three acts. The first act exposed Prussia's perverse tricks performed in an effort to appear powerful. The second act revealed, in Marx's words, the 'hollowness', 'illusion' and 'misty image' of Prussia's rhetoric, designed to euphemistically hide its 'secret thoughts' and self-interests. In the third act, Marx showed how Prussia sought recognition for its role as a powerful leader. According to Marx, Prussia deliberately staged an image of good social relations through its diplomatic strategies and mistook an image of an anticipated triumph for actual victory. Prussia was engaged, according to Marx, in an act of *quid pro quo*.¹

Marx adhered to the French definition of the Latin phrase meaning the confusion of one thing with another, or a misunderstanding or mistaken substitution (*quiproquo*), a phrase often used in connection with theatre performance. A more traditional definition of *quid pro quo* describes an attitude of reciprocity in a social arrangement; it is a conditional negotiation between two parties, based on the expectation that the other will repay a given favour. The threat of retaliation exists should one party violate the social contract, leaving open the possibility that some form of retribution will take place if proper repayment

fails to materialise.² *Quid pro quo* is in many ways similar to the giving of a gift, for these social exchanges benefit and reinforce the social order while requiring a return that upholds that order.

In 1986, the SED party presented the Thälmann monument as a gift to the people of Berlin.³ Gift giving was a thoroughly common practice in the GDR, but the Thälmann monument represents one of the only major political monuments in Berlin endowed so heavily with the character of a gift by the government.⁴ This special feature signals that the monument's intended functions went beyond those of commemoration, education, and veneration, and thus demand a more nuanced examination of the social relationships surrounding the monument. This essay approaches the cultural history of the Thälmann monument through the optic of *quid pro quo*, conceived both as a confused, erroneous act and a social arrangement of expected reciprocity.⁵ Placing the Thälmann monument within the context of a greater social exchange shifts the focus away from the value judgments of the early 1990s, when the political monuments of East Germany became victims of endless critique and were threatened with destruction.⁶ Rather than judge the monuments according to a template of criteria that determine their artistic, historical, or ethical value, or lack thereof, this essay considers their value based on the responses produced in relation to them.⁷ It argues that the Thälmann monument gained social value precisely because of the attention it demanded both before and after 1989.

An Image of Victory

In 1981, at the Tenth Party Congress and after thirty-two years in the planning process, the SED confirmed arrangements for the erection of a monument honouring the German antifascist Ernst Thälmann, a prominent communist leader in Berlin between 1925 and 1933 who was killed by the Nazis in 1944. In the 1979-81 version of the planned project, the Politburo envisaged the monument as a frontispiece to a building complex called the Ernst-Thälmann-Park in Berlin's district of Prenzlauer Berg. The planned community was to consist of 1,336 newly constructed apartments over twenty-six hectares of land with grocery stores, shops, restaurants and entertainment, institutional facilities for education, culture and sports, a museum dedicated to Thälmann,⁸ and a renovated train station renamed, to the annoyance of many commuters, the S-Bahnhof 'Ernst-Thälmann-Park'.⁹ Soon to

open in the Park was a planetarium, 'das Zeiss-Großplanetarium Ernst-Thälmann-Park', a grand theatre exhibiting the technological and scientific progress of the GDR in astronomy.¹⁰ By all accounts, its makers portrayed the Ernst-Thälmann-Park as a microcosm of an advanced socialist society where the Thälmann monument, a 'symbol of antifascism',¹¹ would serve as the gateway entrance into this progressive socialist community. The image would show, as Honecker imagined, how 'die Thälmannsche Garde, seinem Vermächtnis getreu, unser Volk in die sozialistische Gegenwart und die kommunistische Zukunft führt.'¹²

For the project, the SED commissioned the Soviet sculptor Lev Kerbel, who collaborated with Erhard Giesske, the director-general of building projects, and a team of architects and urban planners.¹³ It was apparently Honecker's decision to hire a Soviet artist rather than adhere to the initial plan, which recommended employing a GDR sculptor from the Verband Bildender Künstler. East German artists and intellectuals responded in an uproar when the news was made public on 3 March 1982 in *Neues Deutschland*.¹⁴ One critic expressed his disapproval of the selection of a Soviet artist in a letter to the SED's regional management, only to be reprimanded immediately for his outspoken criticism of the leadership.¹⁵ By inviting a Soviet sculptor to create a national monument honouring a German antifascist, Honecker was implying the nation's debt to the Soviet Union. This reliance on a Soviet model was curiously anachronistic by 1986 in that Gorbachev's emerging reforms, which had resonated sufficiently with the SED regime, became perceived as a threat to Honecker's political model. As a gesture of diplomacy, the act of commissioning a Soviet artist for a state monument would provide, at the very least, an appearance of good relations.

Creating the perfect scenic view of the planned Thälmann monument required the eradication of old structures in its immediate vicinity. The Central Committee, spurred by Kerbel, ordered the destruction of three gasometers listed under monument protection as Berlin's oldest gasworks in the district of Prenzlauer Berg.¹⁶ Unanticipated by the leadership, almost 200 East Berliners protested their destruction on the grounds that the gasworks were historical monuments worthy of preservation. In light of the opposition, the SED defended its destruction of the gasworks by conveying its good intentions on behalf of the people's well-being: the leadership was

concerned, it explained, with the pollution generated by these nineteenth-century gasometers.¹⁷

The protest did not prevent the bronze Thälmann statue from obtaining its allocated view and space, and it still stands today *in situ*. The statue represents a portrait bust of the German communist leader from Hamburg shown with his characteristic bald head, thick neck, worker's shirt, and raised fist symbolising the gesture of the Red Front. The colossal head gazes resolutely toward the centre of Berlin while framed from behind by the flag of the Spartacist League of the German Revolution, the top of the flagpole displaying the hammer and sickle. Both the artist and leadership created visual effects that would persuade the viewer of the monument's striking presence. Using the sky as the monument's background, the artist exploited an ancient visual trick that strengthens an illusion of monumentality.¹⁸ The importance of the monument's perpetual visibility was made evident by the installation of an internal heating mechanism inside the nose of the bronze head.¹⁹ The heated nose prevented snow from jeopardising one's sight of the face during the winter months.

A significant component of the monument's visual presentation results from the bronze pedestal and two-step platform of red Ukrainian granite. Larger than life-size, the pedestal dwarfs and excludes the viewer through the distance it demands. What the platform lacked in grandeur, it gained in symbolic value: the granite was proclaimed a gift from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the GDR. More accurately, the GDR's council of ministers had in fact specifically asked for a supply of granite from the Soviet Union for the Thälmann statue because the GDR did not have the resources, a request that complicates its sincere designation as a gift. The granite was supplied to them a month later.²⁰

Bronze was the preferred material for monuments in the GDR because of the material's prestige and permanence, but while the durability of bronze appeared near infinite, the state's material supplies were not. Decades before the actual construction of Berlin's Thälmann monument, the state secretary of material supplies in the GDR suggested to the political elite that metals be collected wherever possible, gathering them from everyday items in order to obtain enough bronze for the construction of the monument. Wood, he suggested, could be used instead of metal for household objects such as doorframes.²¹ The Thälmann monument's fifty tonnes of bronze –

rising well above the horizon at a height of thirteen metres and a width of sixteen metres – poses the question of the costs required for this generous gift to the people. The regime had always placed superior value on this particular state image, yet they apparently did so at the expense of the more day-to-day household items that quickly lagged in quality. Regardless of the costs, the dimensions of the monument remained of the utmost importance to its makers, who believed its size should be symbolically equivalent to the magnitude of the represented hero's greatness.²²

Viewers' criticism of the Thälmann monument's appearance, both before and after 1990, primarily addressed its physical proportions. The kind of 'megalomania' that the Thälmann monument exhibited was exactly what the East German sculptor Fritz Cremer had been arguing against for thirty years.²³ 'Hättetet ühr's nich ne Nummer grösser?' mocked a graffiti artist in 1991 in writing inscribed on the monument's stone steps.²⁴ To many, the image exaggerated and distorted what seemed a shallow signifier. It is 'plaktiv', 'abartig', said one viewer.²⁵ Others characterised it as a grossly enlarged badge, a pin-on button advertising a political slogan, a giant stamp.²⁶

The post-1989 visual descriptions of the Thälmann monument emphasise, in particular, its theatrical character. The waving flag behind the bronze head and the space around the monument are formed according to baroque architectural principles.²⁷ Four diagonal paths run from the square outward in different, but symmetrical directions, creating a decidedly open and dynamic, ornamental form. The way in which the flag behind Thälmann's head functions as a theatrical backdrop struck some as too pompous, stripping the monument of any proper moral or aesthetic value.²⁸ The grotesque, the alien, and the absurdly pretentious came to characterise the Thälmann portrait bust, the bald head comically referred to as the 'Monsterschädel'.²⁹ In the eyes of many Berliners, before and after 1990, what the image was pretending to be seemed thoroughly incongruous with what it actually was.

Averting one's gaze became a regular practice among viewers when confronted with heavily ideological imagery before 1989.³⁰ This was especially the case for the Thälmann monument, which seemed to demand to be honoured in a way that appeared dangerously close to the act of worshipping a divinity. Indeed, in the 1990s, the monument was publicly referred to as the 'Thälmann-Altar'.³¹ Viewers often

compared the rectangular block pedestal to a sarcophagus or an altar due to its table-like shape, a comparison further facilitated by the space guiding the viewer up to the pedestal.³² The physical space situated the monument as if it were a 'temple', even invoking an 'apsidal' space.³³ It suggested, provocatively, that the viewer obey the image as a 'gewaltigen Motivbild'.³⁴ To these viewers, the Thälmann monument was an idol, a false image of the sacred, which begs the questions: Was the monument a false image of an icon or an image of a false icon? Was the perception of Ernst Thälmann as a hero the real error?

The Myth of Ernst Thälmann

The modified historical representation of Ernst Thälmann that emerged among German scholars in the early 1990s caused the Thälmann monument to be perceived as intolerable for yet another reason: it did not do justice to the historical *in*-significance of its subject.³⁵ Ernst Thälmann was a former dockworker from Hamburg, known during his lifetime as a simple man with narrow-minded views. In 1927, the German communist politician Clara Zetkin described Thälmann as unschooled in theory, uninformed, and under the delusion that he was Germany's Lenin. In 1950, Ruth Fischer, a Jewish communist leader in Berlin in the 1920s, also remembered Thälmann as uneducated, describing his difficulty with Marxist terminology and foreign words.³⁶ The straightforward, though disconnected messages in his speeches from the late 1920s and early 1930s appealed primarily to the emotions, demonstrating his penchant for addressing the masses by direct and affective means. His potential for mass appeal, combined with his uncritical support for Stalin, led Stalin to appoint him leader of the KPD despite Thälmann's unpopularity among German communists.³⁷ After the Reichstag Fire Decree in 1933, which banned the KPD, Thälmann spent the final eleven years of his life imprisoned, until he was transferred to Buchenwald and shot by the SS in 1944.

Post-unification scholarship has stressed the ways in which the SED thoroughly mythologised Ernst Thälmann in order to maintain the image of a hero. Omitted from official GDR accounts, for example, was the fact that while at Buchenwald Thälmann had hoped to be favoured by the communist Kapos, who regularly and secretly replaced communist prisoners with non-communists on the execution

list. In return, the communists helped the SS carry out the torture and execution.³⁸ Thälmann's correspondence with Stalin from prison and his pleas for release, knowing Stalin's Nazi connections, were deliberately excluded from historical records in the GDR.³⁹ It was an open secret before his death that communist and socialist leaders saw Thälmann as more valuable as a victim dying for the antifascist cause than a survivor living in exile in Moscow.

The re-creation of Thälmann as a national hero after 1949 required his insertion into a national legacy. The earliest artistic competitions for a Thälmann monument in Berlin, sketched out in 1949-50, show the agenda clearly: Thälmann was to be directly linked with the identity of the nation through the establishment of a secular religion that would emphasise the nation's ideology. Thälmann, 'Germany's immortal son', had given his life so that the German Democratic Republic could be born.⁴⁰ The Thälmann icon continued and strengthened with time so that, by 1988, a children's biography of Thälmann, relying heavily on quotes by Honecker, spoke at length of Thälmann's afterlife and how his spirit lived on in the GDR.⁴¹ In general, the myths often aimed to transform him into a secular and figurative Christ figure through concepts such as persecution, martyrdom, and resurrection.⁴²

Based on the idea that Thälmann sacrificed his life for the love of his country and the faith in his beliefs, he was enshrined by the SED and especially by Erich Honecker. During his leadership, Honecker saw himself as akin to the mythological figure of Thälmann, often seeking ways to display their faces together as parallel personas. In schools, Honecker's portrait hung next to Thälmann's.⁴³ During parades and other festivities, Honecker would often mimic the gesture of Thälmann with his clenched fist. At the site of the Thälmann monument in Prenzlauer Berg, this pairing was enacted in the erection of two block-like bronze stelai, each two metres tall on their pedestals on either side of the monument. The stele to the viewer's right contained a lofty Thälmann quotation while the stele on the left held a self-citation by Honecker.⁴⁴ This substitution of images suggests that the Thälmann monument was perhaps also Honecker's image of himself. Indeed, at the time, many viewers interpreted the monument precisely as Honecker's self-portrait in Thälmann's image.⁴⁵ Thälmann, one might say, was the body politic; he was the figure of power, the immortal ruler and embodiment of the nation. Honecker,

on the other hand, was the body natural, the mortal ruler striving for the power that a representation might possess. Like many Honecker-related memorials in East Berlin, the stelai in front of the Thälmann monument were removed from public view in 1990.⁴⁶

Every aspect in the creation of the Thälmann monument was meticulously planned in an attempt to create an authentic image that would help legitimise the anti-fascist state. It was erected in the capital of the GDR in what the SED preferably conceived as a traditional worker's district. Made by the best Soviet artist of monumental art, with the best materials, it depicted a true German worker – Thälmann was often referred to as 'ein echter Proletarier'⁴⁷ – and antifascist hero dying for the cause of the state. The production of the monument took into consideration the suitable reverence of this figure through its monumentality, the grand pedestal with its tribune, the arrangement of the space around it, and its insistent visibility as a centrepiece of pride in the urban landscape. In an effort to guarantee the perfection of this image, the theatre production crew of the Berlin Staatsoper built a stand-in, prop cut-out (*Phantombild*) of the monument before its final erection.⁴⁸ Before the unveiling, the life-size model was placed on the site as a form of dress rehearsal so that Honecker could imagine what it would look like. While the Thälmann monument apparently served to strengthen and reconfirm Honecker's own right to rule, in his search for power via a representation he had essentially fabricated a fictional viewer in his mind. This viewer was a simulacrum or, in the words of Louis Marin, a 'mannequin-addressee', a viewer intended to be 'perfectly and absolutely subjugated'.⁴⁹ Many East Berliners perceived the intended imaginary viewer precisely as such. This group of viewers could neither partake in this designated role, nor embrace Honecker's much-anticipated ceremonial inauguration of the Thälmann monument, including the presentation of the gift to the people of East Berlin.

Staging the Gift

According to *Neues Deutschland*, more than 100,000 people witnessed the ceremonial inauguration of the monument at the Ernst-Thälmann-Park on 15 April 1986.⁵⁰ The presence and rank of the guests gathered were impressive, including an assembly of leaders that counted among them the country's four most powerful men: Erich Honecker, chairman of the Council of State, general secretary and

head of the SED; Willi Stoph, the chairman of the Council of Ministers, head of the government and member of the SED Politburo; Horst Sindermann, president of the People's Chamber and member of the Politburo; and Egon Krenz, Honecker's crown prince.⁵¹ Also present were Lev Kerbel and Ernst Thälmann's daughter, Irmgard Gabel-Thälmann, both serving as sources of authenticity for the soon-to-be-unveiled image.⁵² Linking the monument's inauguration with powerful leaders and, moreover, aligning it with the quinquennial Party Congress – the supreme organ and forum of the SED, this time leading to Honecker's re-election – was perfectly constructed in an effort to convey a political, national, and historical event of unusual proportions.

The veil covering the Thälmann monument above the tribune compelled the anticipation of a spectacle. As a sight not yet attained, the value of the wrapped gift seemed to increase for the receivers because of their desire to behold it, a sense further aided by the always-present suggestion of a monument's latent aura. In an attempt to guarantee the connotations embedded in the monument – an endeavour that almost always fails – the unveiling occurred only after its intended meanings had been imparted by all speakers.

Following the initial address, Achim Piehler, the production leader for the housing and building project, gave his speech while still wearing his hard hat and work clothes. He represented not only the workers who had constructed the Ernst-Thälmann-Park but the audience as well, a majority of whom consisted of members of the Freie Deutsche Jugend who had worked on the project. In his speech, Piehler addressed Erich Honecker directly, informing him that every aspect of the project had been successfully completed. He promised Honecker that they would continue to contribute to greater tasks for the peace and progress of the GDR. By wearing his uniform, Piehler was marking his identity, and through his emphasis on hard work, responsibility, and loyalty in his speech, he solidified in language what that identity entailed.

The final presenter, Erich Honecker, spoke of the conceptual innovation of the assignment. Its ideology was in agreement, said Honecker, with 'den Zielen, für die Ernst Thälmann gekämpft, gearbeitet und gelitten hat, für die er sein Leben gab.'⁵³ In a gesture suggesting both paternal nurture and moral discipline, Honecker cautioned the audience that while much had been achieved to improve

conditions in the GDR, it would not suffice to be content with the accomplishments thus far. In this moment, Honecker conceptually merged the monument with its governing principles, the most important of which was the bond of the social contract: the gift required perseverance in labour and loyalty in return, reciprocal acts which would be rewarded with future success.

The unveiling of the Thälmann monument, 15 April 1986



Invariably, speeches serve as a means to connect guest and audience by establishing a relationship between them, one that turns the honouring of a guest into an act of receiving: the guest *gives* his or her presence to the audience. The speeches at inaugural ceremonies in the GDR were thoroughly standardised, and those of Piehler and Honecker were no different with the exception of one detail: the emphasis in both on the value of the SED's gift to the people. Piehler's speech demonstrates that gifts were being exchanged in both directions, with the reciprocated gift consisting of the workers' past efforts and promised future loyalty and labour. At the conclusion of his speech, Piehler gave Honecker a gift – a document outlining the construction of the Ernst-Thälmann-Park that symbolically represented their efforts exerted for the project. Accompanied by the sound of applause, Piehler placed the gift in the hands of Honecker, the monument's main patron.

The giving of a gift to the people allowed Honecker, acting as the primary donor, to establish a degree of social order and seize control, for if the anticipation of a *quid pro quo* enactment is not fulfilled, a threat of revenge keeps the self-interests of the donor intact. This enactment of rigid order also exists within the Thälmann ceremony, for the inauguration of monuments in the GDR were fully planned and controlled; they were 'closed worlds'.⁵⁴ Official state events in the GDR functioned like a mirror; the city and the state represented themselves to themselves. The event held up a mirror to the social order but reflected only selective parts, which it intensified and euphemised in the staging of the event.⁵⁵ While intentions, interests, and the actual results are never quite so pure or controllable, the 'public transcript', that is, the official and staged version of the dealings between a leadership and its subordinates, functions here as the self-portrait of a leadership as they would like to be seen.⁵⁶

After unveiling the Thälmann monument, Honecker and the guests walked through the Ernst-Thälmann-Park while residents in the Park, according to *Neues Deutschland*, 'waved from their windows'.⁵⁷ Readers undoubtedly recognised this portrayal of self-adulation precisely as such, for it was, in fact, forbidden for citizens to stand on balconies or by open windows when Erich Honecker was on a visit. The people waving from their windows were staged participants.⁵⁸ The public transcript of the inaugural ceremony for the Thälmann monument provided, then, the necessary appearance of complete

consensus precisely because the leadership doubted its existence. The ban on open windows, for example, implied their fears of dissidence, for activities above their heads could effectively invite anonymous and unauthorised gestures.

The day-to-day practices surrounding the Thälmann monument further served the maintenance of social order through education and discipline in that those present naturally conformed to the hierarchy of relations prescribed by the space and monument. New members to the Pionierorganisation 'Ernst Thälmann', vowed to love their country and were accepted into the youth group under the sign of the Thälmann monument.⁵⁹ The space around the monument was well suited for the regulation of rituals because the two-step pedestal of the monument served essentially as a tribune at which the spectators would necessarily have to look up in a gesture of reverence. The square's spaciousness, while clearly made for the gatherings of crowds, still centres all visual attention on the sculpture as the square's primary occupant. It does so at the expense of an audience who become participants, willingly or not, in a show led by the monument.⁶⁰

To the best of its ability, the SED regime sought to stage the career of the Thälmann monument by inserting the image into everyday experience. The state mobilised its omnipresence in various forms of media. In an effort to promote the monument, for example, a poster competition on Thälmann was held.⁶¹ Fernsehen der DDR 1. Programm televised a chronicle about the creation of the monument and park, aired the day after its inauguration. Indeed, the preparations for Thälmann's 1986 centennial led to an 'orgy', as one writer remarks, in the legends of Thälmann, most adamantly through film and television.⁶² The propaganda films *Ernst Thälmann – Sohn seiner Klasse* and *Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse* became popular even among leftists in West Berlin and were shown in alternative West Berlin cinemas.⁶³ During May Day parades in East Berlin, participants in the streets carried images of the Thälmann monument on placards, alongside other signs showcasing the successful housing modernisation accomplished by the government and the people collectively.⁶⁴

The image of the Thälmann monument was intended not only as a city emblem facing internally toward East Germans, it was also meant to be the official face toward West Berlin. This was already part of the

plan when the Thälmann monument was inaugurated, since the SED saw the monument as part of the anticipation for the 750th anniversary of Berlin the following year.⁶⁵ The most expensive stamp issued for the 750th anniversary of Berlin disseminated an image of Berlin's Thälmann monument twice: on the face of the stamp and on the Berlin postmark, as specifically encouraged by Kerbel.⁶⁶ This intensification of the image through repetition guaranteed its migration through the everyday.⁶⁷ The mediation of the image through the circulation of the stamp constituted a way to instil in the people a claim for legitimate ownership of historical Berlin – 'Berlin, Hauptstadt der DDR'. The state presented the eastern part of the city as the authentic Berlin and, notably, turned the Thälmann monument into the exemplary representative of Berlin and the GDR's progress and national pride, as measured against that of the West.

Maintaining the value of the gift to the people of Berlin required that it be staged continuously in a rigid manner. The gift was neither freely given nor freely received, based as it was on a conditional arrangement and anticipation projected onto the people. The problem increasingly articulated was that many viewers did not necessarily recognise themselves in the mirror of society held by the leadership. The mirror image was for them a phantom. Three days before the wall fell, and merely a few weeks after Honecker had been forced to resign, the art historian Hermann Raum sent transcripts to two members of the Central Committee. He requested the immediate destruction of the Thälmann monument, 'weil es künstlerisch und politisch verlogen ist', and 'aufgrund des persönlichen Geschmacks von E. Honecker zur Aufstellung kam'.⁶⁸

Finale: Reciprocity or Retribution?

The contractual relationship of the gift exchange pervaded everyday life in the GDR. For example, the state gave gifts to the citizens by allowing access to new luxury consumer products, even though the availability of the products would be limited in time and quantity.⁶⁹ A commodity object and a public monument are, however, notably different forms of gifts. Placing the gift of a monument at the centre of attention in recurring national ceremonies and as an image so relentlessly visible at all times, Honecker's regime upheld the wish for and appearance of a social contract that confirmed and maintained a preferred hierarchical relationship. And unlike commodity objects in

the conventional sense, the gift of the monument was inalienable from the subject who gave it. Thus, the monument's permanence demanded the enforcement of Honecker's rigid social order through the act of sustaining the necessary return gift. The transaction was upheld by making a commitment but, in the case of the Thälmann monument, the contract appears to have remained in dispute.

The value ascribed to the Thälmann monument by the leadership had extended beyond the market: the monument was a 'trans-valued object'.⁷⁰ For Honecker would by no means have procured the expenses involved if he had not fully believed in the image's efficacy. The mediatory role of the gift represents, perhaps, Honecker's belief in a socialist society that presumes that giver and receiver are 'everything to one another'.⁷¹ Taking the gift at face value would require the conviction that giving one's labour served a positive function for society, that duty and homage were ultimately greater in value than what one renounced. To some East Germans, the gift gesture was indeed a valuable *quid pro quo*, grounded in a solid belief in the possibility of a successful socialist society to come. Their admiration for the icon and the battle against fascism were genuine.⁷² Some residents had fond memories of the inauguration of the monument and living in the clean and socially oriented park.⁷³ The historian Andrew Port has shown how social stability in the GDR was often made possible through the establishment of a degree of leeway or choice given to workers, resulting in an 'ongoing and increasingly refined process of give-and-take between the so-called rulers and ruled'.⁷⁴ Perhaps the Thälmann monument provides an example of a contractual arrangement that inspired loyalty from GDR citizens while they adhered to a sense of personal choice in their actions, despite their position as subjects of a dictatorship?

But what happens if we invert the presumed hierarchical relations so that, rather than think of the *quid pro quo* contract as placing the donor – the SED leadership – in a position of superiority, the donor was demonstrating, paradoxically, his desire to improve his own social position? What if one considers, instead, how gifts were often given 'upward' to cadres by subordinates in the hopes that it would widen the subordinates' social circle and raise their social rank?⁷⁵ This practice of giving upward was by no means foreign to the established social customs in the GDR. Gifts were not only given to functionaries in the upper echelons, especially in institutions such as the Stasi, but

also between party members themselves, for example at the Party Congress. If we consider the possibility that the intention behind a gift may be driven by the desire to widen one's influence through *recognition*, then this should also modify our understanding of the motivations and hierarchical relations involved in the act of giving the Thälmann monument to the people of Berlin.

To this end, Marx's use of *quid pro quo* sheds a different light on the gift gesture. As mentioned, the French definition of *quid pro quo* describes a substitution, a confusion of one thing for another, or an error in perception. Marx targeted Prussia's misguided political tactics and diplomacy, its confusion of theatrical acts and action, future promises and concrete results, imagined victory and actual success. Indeed, to many viewers, the ritual surrounding the Thälmann monument was theatre: an illusion, 'künstlerisch und politisch verlogen'. To many East Germans, the promise that was fabricated amounted to little more than a simulacral image in the GDR of the late 1980s; most East Germans had stopped taking the public transcript at face value. For this annoyed audience, the gift as a rhetorical device could be received as a gift of recognition where the SED's gesture was an attribution of agency to the audience through the acknowledgement that their loyalty was in desperately high demand. Interpreted as an error, the theatrical performance was an idolatrous practice, alien to the lifestyles and beliefs of many East Berliners.

This multi-faceted definition of *quid pro quo* encompasses, then, both the demonstration of a valuable social contract based on reciprocity and 'die geballte Faust den Machtanspruch der DDR-Oberen'.⁷⁶ These two perceptions of the events surrounding the Thälmann monument were by no means the only ones existent, as the majority of East Berliners were, in fact, thoroughly indifferent about the monument.⁷⁷ Yet the intense responses that have prevailed endow the object with cultural value. On a consistent basis in the 1980s and 90s, the Thälmann monument provoked enough affect and controversy to demand persistent attention and energy from viewers, including politicians, legislators, scholars, the news media, and the Berlin Senate. The value attributed to the monument covered, then, a full and remarkable range; it was a trans-valued object beyond market value, an unnoticed public monument, as well as an all too conspicuously worthless idol to be smashed.

Illuminating the social relations and actors given agency around the Thälmann monument allows one to reassess its cultural history, but its historical significance may be even greater. The 1984 protest in Prenzlauer Berg that involved two-hundred East Berliners demonstrating against the SED's decision to destroy three gasworks located on the site of the future Ernst-Thälmann-Park was among the first protest of its kind in East Berlin during the late SED regime.⁷⁸ While it had no lasting effect on the fate of the gasworks, the experience of striking against the authorities was new for the people and remembered as a sign of hope, as one participant recalls.⁷⁹ Without wishing to construct a teleological interpretation, it has been noted, nonetheless, that a symbolic aggression becomes a layer in memory facilitating the potential for change.⁸⁰ The disapproval of Kerbel's Thälmann monument demanded the critical attention of artists and intellectuals, and it was also this particular group of East Germans, no less, who were the primary instigators of the fall of the wall. The conclusion to draw is not that of a direct cause and effect relation; rather, the value of the social relations collected around the Thälmann monument allows one to consider it, and other GDR objects and images steeped in post-1989 controversies, within a greater social exchange, one involving state anticipations of reciprocity met with the public's possibility of retribution.

Notes

¹ Karl Marx, 'Quid Pro Quo' first published in *Das Volk*, 30 July and 6, 13 and 20 August 1859; *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol. 16: 'Marx and Engels 1858-60', New York: International Publishers, 1975-2005, p. 445.

² Ely Garfinkle, 'Quid pro Quo: The Inverse of Talion', *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 7 (1999), 245-70; Marcel Mauss, trans. W.D. Halls, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, New York: Norton, 1990; Boaz Keysar, Benjamin A. Converse, Jiunwen Wang, and Nicholas Epley, 'Reciprocity Is Not Give and Take: Asymmetric Reciprocity to Positive and Negative Acts', *Psychological Science*, 19 (December 2008), 1280-6.

³ Dirk Schumann, 'Ernst-Thälmann-Denkmal', in: *Erhalten, Zerstören, Verändern? Denkmäler der DDR in Ost-Berlin. Eine Dokumentarische Ausstellung*, Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin and Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1990, p. 37.

⁴ On the GDR's twentieth anniversary, 7 October 1969, Walter Ulbricht gave the Fernsehturm on Berlin's Alexanderplatz to the people. Conversely, GDR citizens were frequently expected to give gifts to their city on its anniversary, as if the city were a person to be honoured. Adelheid von Saldern, 'Zusammenfassung', in: Adelheid von Saldern, ed., *Inszenierte Einigkeit: Herrschaftsrepräsentationen in DDR-Städten*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003, p. 375.

⁵ My interpretation is inspired, in part, by Jacques Derrida, trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, New York and London: Routledge, 1994.

⁶ See in particular, Eberhard Elfert, *Denk Mal Positionen zum Ernst Thälmann Denkmal*, Dokumentation zur Ausstellung vom 14. Juli - 13. August 1993 im Prenzlauer Berg Museum, Berlin: Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg, 1993; Abgeordnetenhauses von Berlin, Drucksache 12/2743, 'Kommission zum Umgang mit den politischen Denkmälern der Nachkriegszeit im ehemaligen Ost-Berlin', unpublished report, Berlin, 15 February 1993; *Erhalten, Zerstören, Verändern? Denkmäler der DDR in Ost-Berlin. Eine Dokumentarische Ausstellung*, Exhibition Catalogue, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin and Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, 1990; *kritische berichte*, 3 (1992); Bernd Kramer, ed., *Demontage ... revolutionärer oder restaurativer Bildersturm?*, Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1992. See also Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, and Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

⁷ Kristine Nielsen, 'Gestures of Iconoclasm: East Berlin's Political Monuments, From the Late German Democratic Republic to Postunified Berlin', Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 2010.

⁸ For more on this heavily ideological museum, including its history and post-1989 critical interventions, see Kulturamt Prenzlauer Berg and Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand Berlin, ed., *Mythos Antifaschismus – Ein Traditionskabinett wird kommentiert*, Berlin: Links, 1992; and Martin Schönfeld, 'Die kritische Kommentierung: Zwei Beispiele eines veränderten Umganges mit dem kulturpolitischen Erbe der DDR', in: Katharina Flügel and Wolfgang Ernst, eds, *Musealisierung der DDR? 40 Jahre als kulturhistorische Herausforderung*, Leipzig: Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, 1992.

⁹ Because the concept was so reliant on a political goal, the leadership realised that: 'Um diesen Volkspark interessant und abwechslungsreich zu gestalten, sollen Einrichtungen der Gastronomie, der Freizeitsgestaltung und des Sports mit vorgesehen werden'. Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep. 902, Nr. 4493; compare 'Ernst-Thälmann-Park städtebaulicher Lösungsvorschlag Erläuterungsbericht', Berlin, April

1981, and Letter from Konrad Naumann to Günter Mittag, 'Betr.: Information über den gegenwertigen Stand zur Umgestaltung des Gaswerkes Dimitroffstrasse zu einem Volkspark und Errichtung einer Gedenkstätte "Ernst Thälmann"', Berlin, 29 November 1978.

¹⁰ Baudirektion der Hauptstadt Berlin des Ministeriums für Bauwesen in Zusammenarbeit mit Archenhold-Sternwarte Berlin, *Zeiss-Großplanetarium Berlin Ernst-Thälmann-Park 1985 bis 1987*, Berlin: Bauakademie der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1987; Baudirektion Hauptstadt Berlin des Ministerium für Bauwesen, *Ernst-Thälmann-Park in der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin*, Berlin: Bauakademie der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1986.

¹¹ Wolfgang Spickermann and Jochen Zimmermann, '100000 bei Einweihung des Ernst-Thälmann-Denkmal in traditionsreichen Arbeiterbezirk Berlins', *Neues Deutschland*, 16 April 1986.

¹² Erich Honecker at the Tenth Party Congress of the SED, April 1981, in: *Ernst-Thälmann-Park in der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin*, p. 9.

¹³ Kerbel also partook in the creation of the gigantic Soviet war memorial in Berlin's Treptow Park (1945-9), conceived by Evgeny Vuchetich and I.B. Belopolskii, as well as the Tiergarten Soviet war memorial (1945-6). Michael Wines, 'Sculpting Soviet Giants, Watching Them Fall', *New York Times*, 14 June 2003.

¹⁴ For more on the early projects by East German sculptors such as Ruthild Hahne, see Thomas Flierl, "'Thälmann und Thälmann vor allen". Ein Nationaldenkmal für die Hauptstadt der DDR', in: *Berlin: Perspektiven durch Kultur. Texte und Projekte*, Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2007, pp. 37-98; and Peter Monteath, 'Ein Denkmal für Thälmann', in: Peter Monteath, ed., *Ernst Thälmann: Mensch und Mythos*, Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000, pp. 179-201.

¹⁵ Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep. 902 Nr. 5333, Eingaben an die Abteilung Kultur 1982, Brief von Werner Richter an 1. Sekretär der Bezirksleitung der SED Berlin, 14 March 1982.

¹⁶ Thomas Flierl, 'Mit der Geschichte Leben', in: Sonjya Guhr, ed., *Berlin, Prenzlauer Berg, Strassen und Plätzen: Mit der Geschichte Leben*, Bezirksamt Prenzlauer Berg von Berlin and Edition Hentrich: Berlin, 1991, pp. 6-13 (here: p. 8). Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 902 Nr. 5469, Letter from Jürgen Schuchardt to Horst Oswald, Berlin, 16 September 1981.

¹⁷ Thomas Flierl, 'Gegen den Abriss eines Baudenkmal. Eine Rede aus dem Jahr 1984', *kritische berichte*, 3 (1992), 53-7. The rhetorical nature of the SED's claim was demonstrated about a decade later, in 1995, when poison was found in the soil where

the gasworks had stood. The pipes from the gasworks had been left in the ground and simply covered with grass. See for example, Thilo Gabelmann [Egon Grübel], *Thälmann ist niemals gefallen? Eine Legende stirbt*, Berlin: Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1996, p. 303.

¹⁸ Lev Kerbel may very well have had the Egyptian sphinx in mind, since it was his inspiration for his enormous head of Marx erected in Chemnitz in 1971. A more recent precursor to the East German formal device of using the sky as a backdrop stems from cinematic techniques employed in the 1930s and 1940s, such as in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* where Hitler appears with the sky behind him. See Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, 'Optimale Sicht auf den erzwungenen Konsens', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5 January 1994; Dolff-Bonekämper, 'Kunstgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte: Das Thälmann-Denkmal in Berlin', in: Wolfgang Kersten, ed., *Radical Art History: Internationale Anthologie. Subject: O.K. Werckmeister*, Zurich: Zip, 1997, p. 139.

¹⁹ Dirk Schumann, 'Marx geht, die Monumente bleiben?', *taz*, 4 August 1990. Deemed an unnecessary expense after 1989, the heating system is no longer in operation.

²⁰ Compare Baudirektion Hauptstadt Berlin, *Ernst-Thälmann-Park in der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin*, p. 23-4, and Landesarchiv Berlin, C Rep. 902, Nr. 5420, 'Ministerrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik an N.A. Tichonow, Vorsitzenden des Ministerrats der Union der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken', Berlin, 22 May 1984.

²¹ Bundesarchiv-SAPMO (BA-SAPMO) NY/4090/556, Letter from Binz, Staatssekretariat für Materialversorgung, to Dr. Liebknecht, Berlin, 15 December 1950, 'Betrifft: Material für Ernst-Thälmann-Denkmal'.

²² Maoz Azaryahu, trans. Kerstin Amrani and Alma Mandelbaum, *Von Wilhelmplatz zu Thälmannplatz: Politische Symbole im öffentlichen Leben der DDR*, Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1991, p. 24. Azaryahu briefly mentions Berlin's Thälmann monument, but erroneously names the sculptor Nikolai Tomsy.

²³ Flierl, 'Thälmann und Thälmann vor allen', p. 87.

²⁴ Quoted in Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, p. 202.

²⁵ Isabel Bayer, 'Schandmale verordneter Geschichte oder lebendige Erinnerung? Die ungewisse Zukunft der politischen Denkmäler der DDR in Berlin', NDR3 radio broadcast, 21 January 1992.

²⁶ Günter Feist, 'Platz gemacht für Monumentalpropaganda. Ein Kapitel Stadtbildpflege in der "Hauptstadt der DDR"', in: Eckhart Gillen and Rainer Haarmann, eds,

Kunst in der DDR, Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1990, pp. 126-36 (here: p. 136); Friedrich Dieckmann, 'FRIEDRICH UND ILJITSCH: Zwei Berliner Monumente', in: *Demontage ... revolutionärer oder restaurativer Bildersturm?*, p. 47.

²⁷ Schumann, 'Marx geht, die Monumente bleiben?'

²⁸ Isabel Bayer, 'Schandmale verordneter Geschichte oder lebendige Erinnerung?'

²⁹ Sabine Vogel, 'Symbole der Systemüberwindung?', *Tagesspiegel*, 29 April 1990.

³⁰ Maria Rüger passed by East Berlin's Lenin monument daily for twenty years and stubbornly refused to look at it. Similarly, on several occasions Peter Ustinov passed Kerbel's Marx head in former Karl-Marx-Stadt also never looking in its direction. 'Das Berliner Lenin-Denkmal', *kritische berichte*, 3 (1992), 36-42. Published in English as 'The Lenin Statue in Berlin', in: James Aulich and Tim Wilcox, eds, *Europe Without Walls: Art, Posters and Revolution 1989-93*, Manchester: Manchester City Art Galleries, 1993.

³¹ Bayer, 'Schandmale verordneter Geschichte oder lebendige Erinnerung?'

³² Schumann, 'Marx geht, die Monumente bleiben?'; Hubertus Adam, 'Zwischen Anspruch und Wirkungslosigkeit. Bemerkungen zur Rezeption von Denkmäler der DDR', *kritische berichte*, 1 (1991), 44-64 (here: p. 55).

³³ Annette Lettau, 'Soll Marx den Sockel räumen?', *Pan. Zeitschrift für Kunst und Kultur* 12 (November 1990), 42-7.

³⁴ Schumann, 'Marx geht, die Monumente bleiben?'

³⁵ See Monteath, *Ernst Thälmann: Mensch und Mythos*, and Elfert, *Denk Mal Positionen zum Ernst Thälmann Denkmal*, p. 10.

³⁶ Clara Zetkin, letter to Nikolai Iwanowitsch Bucharin (9 November 1927), in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 33 (1991), 778-82; Ruth Fischer, *Stalin und der deutsche Kommunismus. Der Übergang zur Konterrevolution*, Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Hefte, 1950, p. 514; both Zetkin and Fischer are quoted in René Börrnert, *Wie Ernst Thälmann treu und kühn! Das Thälmann-Bild der SED im Erziehungsalltag der DDR*, Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2004, pp. 67-8. See also Annette Leo, 'Liturgie statt Erinnerung: Die Schaffung eines Heldenbildes am Beispiel Ernst Thälmann', in: *Ernst Thälmann: Mensch und Mythos*, pp. 17-30.

³⁷ Hermann Weber and Bernhard H. Bayerlein, eds, *Der Thälmann-Skandal: Geheime Korrespondenzen mit Stalin*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2003.

³⁸ For critical post-unification research on the historical representation of Thälmann, see Gabelmann, *Thälmann ist niemals gefallen?*; Kulturamt Prenzlauerberg, *Mythos Antifaschismus – Ein Traditionskabinett wird kommentiert*; Monteath, *Ernst Thälmann: Mensch und Mythos*; Börrnert, *Wie Ernst Thälmann treu und kühn!*; and Alan Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, p. 99.

³⁹ Annette Leo, 'Die Berichte der Thälmann-Kuriere', in: *Ernst Thälmann: Mensch und Mythos*, pp. 81-91.

⁴⁰ In German the diction was: 'Thälmann und Thälmann vor allen! Deutschlands unsterblicher Sohn. Thälmann ist niemals gefallen. Stimme und Faust der Nation.' Monteath, 'Ein Denkmal für Thälmann', 194; BA-SAPMO NY/4090/556, 'Ernst Thälmann-Denkmal: Wettbewerb.'

⁴¹ Günter Hortschansky and Walter Wimmer, *Ernst Thälmann. Kleine Biographie*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988, pp. 297-300.

⁴² Leo, 'Liturgie statt Erinnerung', p. 28.

⁴³ Börrnert, *Wie Ernst Thälmann treu und kühn!*, p. 82.

⁴⁴ Honecker's stele reads: 'Mit der Gestaltung des Sozialismus in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik setzen wir Ernst Thälmann, dem kühnen Streiter für Freiheit, Menschlichkeit und sozialen Fortschritt unseres Volkes, ein würdiges Denkmal.' As spoken by Erich Honecker at the keynote address for the Second Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED on 3 September 1976. Thälmann's stele states:

Mein Leben und Wirken kannte und kennt nur eines: Für das schaffende deutsche Volk meinen Geist und meinen Willen, meine Erfahrungen und meine Tatkraft, ja, mein Ganzes, die Persönlichkeit zum Besten der deutschen Zukunft für den siegreichen sozialistischen Freiheitskampf im neuen Völkerfrühling der deutschen Nation einzusetzen!

Ernst Thälmann, excerpt from a letter to a fellow prisoner, January 1944. Both quotations appear in Baudirektion Hauptstadt Berlin, *Ernst-Thälmann-Park in der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin*, p. ii.

⁴⁵ Bruno Flierl, 'Politische Wandbilder und Denkmäler im Stadtraum', in: Monika Flacke, ed., *Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Staat: Die Kunst der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR*, Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum and Ars Nikolai, 1994, pp. 47-60 (here: p. 57).

⁴⁶ Schumann, 'Ernst Thälmann', p. 37.

- ⁴⁷ Börrnert, *Wie Ernst Thälmann treu und kühn!*, p. 188.
- ⁴⁸ Baudirektion Hauptstadt Berlin, *Ernst-Thälmann-Park in der Hauptstadt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin*, p. 24.
- ⁴⁹ Louis Marin, trans. Martha Houde, *Portrait of the King*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, pp. 45-6.
- ⁵⁰ Wolfgang Spickermann and Jochen Zimmermann, '100000 bei Einweihung des Ernst-Thälmann-Denkmal in traditionsreichen Arbeiterbezirk Berlins', *Neues Deutschland*, 16 April 1986.
- ⁵¹ Stephen R. Burant, ed. *East Germany: A Country Study*, Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, United States Government, 3rd edn 1988, p. 171.
- ⁵² In actuality and unofficially, she barely knew or cared for her father. Börrnert, *Wie Ernst Thälmann treu und kühn!*, p. 57.
- ⁵³ Spickermann and Zimmermann, '100000 bei Einweihung des Ernst-Thälmann-Denkmal in traditionsreichen Arbeiterbezirk Berlins'.
- ⁵⁴ Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 16.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 41, 48.
- ⁵⁶ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, p. 18.
- ⁵⁷ Spickermann and Zimmermann, '100000 bei Einweihung des Ernst-Thälmann-Denkmal in traditionsreichen Arbeiterbezirk Berlins'.
- ⁵⁸ Gabelmann, *Thälmann ist niemals gefallen?*, 301-2.
- ⁵⁹ Martin Schönfeld, 'Die Konstruktion eines politischen Idols: Darstellungen Ernst Thälmanns in der Kunst der SBZ/DDR und ihre Funktion', in: *Ernst Thälmann: Mensch und Mythos*, pp. 147-78.
- ⁶⁰ Dolf-Bonekämper, 'Kunstgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte', p. 141.
- ⁶¹ See Wilfried Karger, 'Kämpfer wie Thälmann: Ergebnisse des Plakatwettbewerbs zum 100. Geburtstag Ernst Thälmanns', *Bildende Kunst*, 3 (1986), 102-3.
- ⁶² Gabelmann, *Thälmann ist niemals gefallen?*, p. 296.

⁶³ Kirsten Küppers, 'Thälmann soll wider glänzen', *taz*, 17 October 2001.

⁶⁴ Produced by the Politburo-led Fernsehen der DDR for the program 'Aktuelle Kamera', broadcast on 1 May 1989. Film footage housed at the privately owned DDR Museum Berlin.

⁶⁵ *Neues Deutschland*, 16 April 1986.

⁶⁶ Landesarchiv Berlin C Rep. 902 Nr. 5421, Letter from Günter Schabowski to Erich Honecker, 18 December 1985. The 1987 postmark depicting the monument was shown in the exhibition, 'Hin & weg – Postgeschichten von Berlin – Prenzlauer Berg' (20 December 2006 – 29 April 2007), held at the former Prenzlauer Berg Museum in Berlin. The value of the 1987 stamp depicting the Thälmann monument was 1.35 DM and 2.4 million copies were printed. See *Michel. Briefmarken-Katalog Deutschland 1987/88*, Munich: Schwaneberger, 1987-88, No. 3123.

⁶⁷ Stamps indicate in a particularly germane way the markers that a city and state wish to employ as part of their ideal image, and not solely because of the value attributed to the stamp and hence the subject portrayed. Lenin had insisted on the crucial function of the postal system in society, seeing it as one of the most important media through which to establish and strengthen social relations. 'Socialism', said Lenin in April 1918, 'without the postal system, the telegraph and the machine is an empty phrase.' See Fritz Steinwasser, *Berliner Post: Ereignisse und Denkwürdigkeiten seit 1237*, Berlin: Transpress, 1988, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Recalled in a discussion meeting at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, on 8 February 1994. Quoted in Dolf-Bonekamp, 'Kunstgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte', p. 143.

⁶⁹ Rainer Gries and Cordula Günther, "'Jeden Tag ein neues Geschenk". Gedanken zum Geschenkgestus in der DDR', in: Dieter Vorsteher, ed., *Parteiauftrag: Ein neues Deutschland. Bilder, Rituale und Symbole der frühen DDR*, Berlin: Koehler & Amelang, 1996, pp. 241-53.

⁷⁰ Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in: Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 4th edn, 2006, p. 23.

⁷¹ Mauss, *The Gift*, p. 42.

⁷² Russel Lemmons provides an inadequate account of the people's relationship to Thälmann in his article, "'Imprisoned, Murdered, Besmirched": The Controversy Concerning Berlin's Ernst Thälmann Monument and German National Identity, 1990-1995', in: Silke Arnold-de Simine, ed., *Memory Traces: 1989 and the Question of German Cultural Identity*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2005, pp. 309-34. Lemmons's title

(‘EINGEKERKERT ERMORDERT BESCHMIERT’) refers to graffiti meticulously stencilled on the pedestal of the Thälmann monument during the winter of 1995-6. Lemmons concludes too hastily that the graffiti aimed to attack the former SED regime rather than post-1989 viewers who had disgraced (besmeared) the figure of Thälmann. Lemmons’s argument is curious when he then contends that, ‘Officials hoped that this brief comment would place the massive statue in its proper historical context’ (p. 331). Lemmons not only mistakenly makes local officials supporters, even agents of the anonymous graffiti, he also discounts the degree to which the figure of Thälmann was beloved by many locals.

⁷³ Matthias Oloew, ‘Ein Wohnpark als Bastion’, *Tagesspiegel*, 14 April 1998.

⁷⁴ Andrew I. Port, *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 8.

⁷⁵ For an example of this kind of gift practice under Socialism, see Yunxiang Yan, *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

⁷⁶ Annette Kurth, ‘Streit um Thälmann auf dem Höhepunkt – Abriss oder nicht?’, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 April 1993.

⁷⁷ Flierl, ‘Thälmann und Thälmann vor allen’, 92.

⁷⁸ Marked unrest also took place in 1977, during the 7 October celebrations of the founding of the GDR on East Berlin’s Alexanderplatz.

⁷⁹ Uwe Rada, ‘Gasometer sprengt man nicht!’ *taz*, 31 March 1994.

⁸⁰ Feist, ‘Platz gemacht für Monumentalpropaganda’, p. 134; Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 212.