Constructing 'Authentic' Memories of the German Democratic Republic since 2008: Memoir, Fiction and Film

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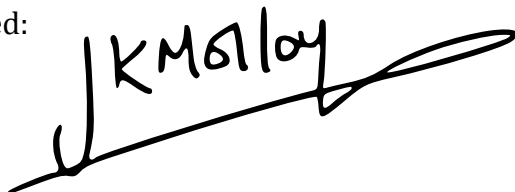
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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge the content of this thesis is my

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Signed: JKMolloy

Date: 9th October 2017

Abstract

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) was arguably one of the most efficient authoritarian regimes of the twentieth century. In this thesis I suggest that to fully understand the lived experience of GDR citizens, and contribute to understandings of the East German past, it is necessary to consider individual memories.

This thesis presents a close reading of three post-millennial sources of individual memory: a memoir (*Red Love*, Leo), a historical novel (*The Tower*, Tellkamp) and a historical feature film (*Barbara*, Petzold). Memory theory offers a valuable analytical framework to understand these sources as complex interpretations of individual memory, social memory, political memory and existing cultural memory and also acknowledges the impact of the present and media in their construction.

The three texts vividly portray the impact of the GDR State on everyday life and demonstrate that Leo, Tellkamp and Petzold did not experience the GDR in the same way; sometimes their interpretations overlap, and sometimes they conflict.

While previous phases of cultural memory focused on the needs of unification and identity struggles, this thesis suggests that there has been a post-millennial shift towards remembering the GDR with greater nuance, but that competing interpretations of the GDR are still present in German memory culture.

Cover image: Actress Nina Hoss in Christian Petzold's film '*Barbara'* (2012).

Contents

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Abbreviations and Glossary

FDJ	*Freie Deutsche Jugend* Free German Youth
GDR	German Democratic Republic Also known as East Germany
Nischengesellschaft	Niche Community Used to describe the possibility of escape from the reach of the GDR State.
NVA	*Nationale Volksarmee* The GDR's National People's Army
Ostalgie	A portmanteau of the German words *Ost* (east) and *Nostalgie* (nostalgia). Generally understood as nostalgia for the GDR.
Stasi	*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit - MfS* The GDR's Ministry of State Security

Introduction

Remembering the German Democratic Republic since Unification: Phases of Political and Cultural Memory

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the unification of East and West Germany, German politicians, historians and former East and West Germans have constructed divergent representations of the East German past.[1] In the twenty-seven years since unification these memories, or interpretations of the past, have confirmed, reinforced, conflicted, reflected, and informed each other.

It is not my purpose to examine why the German Democratic Republic (GDR) collapsed as it did, but to explore some of the complex and conflicting narratives regarding the GDR past, that can be found in sources of cultural memory. Cultural memory is reliant on mediation and literary and film constructions add to our understanding of the past in their detail, and in how the past is remembered and represented.[2] Cultural representations provide interpretations of the GDR past and encourage debate. They also contribute to the assimilation of East German memories into a German narrative and have created a distinctive 'afterlife' for the GDR. [3]

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[1] Fall of the Berlin Wall – 09.11.1989   Unification – 03.10.1990

[2] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2011), p. 113.

[3] Karen Leeder, "After-images – afterlives: Remembering the GDR in the Berlin Republic," in Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 214

History and Memory

Post-structural and post-modern philosophies of the 1980s emphasise the constructed nature and narrative of historiography, and that history, as memory, rests 'not on the past as it really was, but on the past as a human construct'.[4] This understanding of history reduced some of the debate between dichotomous understandings of history and memory; it identifies historiography as one cultural memory medium and suggests that historians are not the only ones who interpret and represent the past. [5] Many others, including artists and filmmakers, are also 'engaged in the common enterprise of reconstructing and shaping the past'.[6] This thesis focuses on memory and how the GDR has been remembered in cultural representations of the past.

Historical Understanding from Cultural Memory

An analysis of sources of cultural memory may not necessarily result in explicit factual knowledge of the GDR's past and must confront questions of accuracy and authenticity. The exploration of memory texts can, however, provide valuable insights into how the GDR is remembered and represented and highlight shifts in historiography, political climate and memorial culture. Sources of cultural memory can contain surprising and conflicting memories that can be used to reinterpret understandings of East Germany, or may instead confirm and consolidate existing

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[4] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research* vol. 75, no. 1 (2008): p. 54.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-72.

interpretations of the past.[7] It is the very interpretive nature and subjectivity of these texts and the impact of media on their construction which is their strength.[8] This thesis focuses on the memory found in three kinds of cultural sources: memoirs, historical novels and historical feature films.

Using Memory as an Approach to Historical Enquiry

Current discussions in the discipline of Memory Studies generally take the theories of Maurice Halbwachs as their starting point. Halbwachs was a French sociologist who emphasised the 'reconstructive character of remembering' and the significance of cultural frameworks in shaping individual memory.[9] However, Halbwachs did not differentiate between individual memory based on lived experience, and the more metaphorical notion of cultural memory.[10] Individual memory was defined as the medium by which individuals process their experiences and construct their identity; the terms cultural memory, or collective memory are used to refer to commonly held understandings of the past which have become removed from individual memory.[11] Since the 1920s, memory theorists have developed a range of slightly different approaches and varied yet overlapping terminologies in their study of memory.[12] Significantly, there is broad agreement over the constructed nature of memory and the significance of the

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[7] Mary Fulbrook, "History and Memories: *Verklärung* or *Erklärung*?," in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 92.

[8] Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 232.

[9] Geoffrey Cubitt, History and Memory (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 158.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[11] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p. 13.

Ibid., p.12.

Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 10.

[12] Astrid Erll, "Towards a Conceptual Foundation for Cultural Memory Studies," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 2-3.

present social context in which it is constructed.[13] While the present impacts on memories of the past - a finding that has been confirmed by recent neurobiological findings - the past can also be seen to impact on the present.[14] In the case of the GDR, sources of cultural memory can still draw on individual memory and they are representative of the transition between individual and cultural memory. In this thesis my focus is on the ways in which individual memory is constructed and represented in different media. By using the term individual I recognise that individual memory is not formed in isolation. Individual memory goes beyond the boundaries of personal experience and is changed and enriched by incorporating memories from other sources.[15] Consequently there can be a quick transition from individual experience to individual memory that incorporates this social or communicative memory. Individual memories are constructed through narration, and also through listening and exchange of experiences. Individual memory is also constructed within a temporal socio-cultural landscape, defined by politics and culture.[16]

In the late twentieth century media saturated world, individual and social or communicative memories of East Germany were more quickly published as memoirs, novels and films and shared more widely. Once published, they have the

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[13] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, p. 8.

[14] Yadin Dudai, and Micah G. Edelson, "Personal Memory: Is it personal, is it memory?," *Memory Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2016): p. 276.

[15] See Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), pp. 11-18. for her discussion on individual memory, social memory, collective memory and cultural memory. In Assmann's framework social memory replaces the term communicative memory, but encompasses the concept of memory shared in society, spoken and understood, but not necessarily adopted in national and political memory or in cultural representations. Assmann defines collective memory as the socio-political framework within which individual memory construction takes place.

[16] Nadežda Zemaníková, "Parallels and Divergences in Post-1989 Memory Discourse," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 182.

potential to frame and influence agendas, as well as be appropriated by those who did not have the experience themselves. Alison Landsberg defines memories obtained through mediation in this way, as 'prosthetic memories'.[17] Through texts and other cultural media, memory is established as cultural memory and becomes temporally limitless in its reach.[18] Culturally mediated memory becomes more static and is available to a broader audience for debate and acceptance or contestation. Yet, due to the temporal proximity of the GDR, East German sources of cultural memory are still open to debate. Only with the loss of the generations with lived experience and communicative experience of East Germany, will the East German past stabilise in cultural memory. Political or national memory defines memory culture that is applied and supported by the State. This type of memory provides a simplified, unambiguous perspective and is celebrated collectively.[19] Although media may be presented as a 'neutral carrier' of memory, it plays a significant role in how the past is remembered and how memories constructed.[20] Astrid Erll asserts, that given the relationship between memory and media it is 'no surprise' that cultural memory research is often also media research.[21]

[17] Astril Erll, *Memory in Culture*, p. 133.
[18] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, p. 21.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[20] Astril Erll, *Memory in Culture*, p. 114.
See Astrid Erll for examples of how media affects the kind of memory that is produced. "The Power of Fiction: Novels and Films as Media of Cultural Memory," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 390-391.
[21] Astril Erll, *Memory in Culture*, p. 114.

Post-1989 Political Remembering

The government of unified Germany was particularly active in establishing how the East German past was going to be remembered. From as early as 1991, the government put in place a series of commissions and parliamentary enquiries. The first *Enquete-Komission des Bundestages* (Parliamentary Investigation) sought to establish a state position on the GDR past.[22] This report emphasised the repressive and anti-democratic nature of the East German state and concluded that the GDR had been ruled by violence. These findings validated West German values of democracy, justice and anti-totalitarianism and assisted unification.[23] Paul Cooke suggests that East Germany seemed to be functioning as a kind of 'Saidian Orient'; as a way for West Germany to distance itself from the Third Reich and its own dictatorial past.[24]

Focusing on the totalitarian nature of the state and on the *Stasi* (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, the German State Security Service) often reduced individuals to their relationship with the state.[25] Andrew Beattie asserts that official memory was not imposed and that East Germans were actively involved in official memory

[22] David Clarke and Ute Wölfel, "Remembering the German Democratic Republic in a United Germany," in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 12.

[23] The Enquiry Commissions were in 1992-1994 and 1995-1998. See Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold, "Introduction: *Wissen wie es war?*," in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2013), p. 4.

[24] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 28.

[25] Andrew Port, "The Banalities of East German Historiography," in *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler*, ed. Mary Fulbrook and Andrew Port (New York: Berghahn, 2013), p. 1.

production.[26] 'Spectacular' events like the fall of the Berlin Wall and themes of power and repression, dissidence and resistance interested historians and the public alike, but many East Germans felt that their everyday experience was being misrepresented and that accounts of their past lacked authenticity. [27]

The second *Enquete-Komission des Bundestages*, completed in 1998, established guidelines and funding priorities on how the GDR should be remembered. This led directly to the establishment of the *Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands-Diktatur* (Foundation for Coming to Terms with the Socialist Unity Party-Dictatorship), which funded private and public memorials as well as education projects. Many of these still presented a singular view of the GDR as a repressive state.[28] East Germans who expressed positive views, were seen as ignoring the oppressive nature of the East German state.[29] Historians who focused on any positives of East Germany were likewise accused of being overly sympathetic to the socialist state and the *Verniedlichung* (sentimentalising) of the GDR past.[30] Therefore, it is quite likely that the historical

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[26] Andrew H. Beattie, 'The Politics of Remembering the GDR,' in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 24. and p. 27.

[27] Donna Harsch, "Footnote or Footprint? The German Democratic Republic in History", 23rd Annual Lecture of the GHI, Washington DC. Nov 12, 2009, p. 14.
Dennis Tate, "Autobiographical Writing in the GDR Era," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.91.
Andrew Port, "The Banalities of East German Historiography," p. 1.
Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, p. 28.

[28] Andrew H. Beattie, 'The Politics of Remembering the GDR,' p. 24. and p. 29.
Sara Jones, 'The Rhetoric of Representing the Socialist Everyday after Unification,' *German Politics and Society*, Issue 114, vol. 33 No 1/2 (2015) pp. 119-120.

[29] Claire Hyland, "*Ostalgie* doesn't fit! : Individual Interpretations of an Interaction with *Ostalgie*," in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan Memory Studies, 2013), p. 101.

[30] Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2015), p. 330.

circumstance of German unification inhibited early objective debate on the East German past and mainly supported memories that were in keeping with the political agenda.[31] A more nuanced representation may be achieved by considering lived experiences and individual memories of East Germany.

Impact of Political Remembering on Memory of the GDR

The demise of the GDR allowed cultural representations of the GDR past to be made without overt issues of state censorship. However, the euphoric images of the fall of the Berlin Wall belied the complexity of social and economic insecurity produced by the end of the GDR, as well as the loss of 'self' that many East Germans experienced, and these images did not adequately reflect the lived experience of many East Germans.[32] Unification allowed the East German past to be explored, but mainly within a narrative that framed GDR State control as being all-powerful and omnipresent, for political purpose.[33] Cultural representations of the GDR from this initial period of unification, need to be understood as reflections of the past, influenced by the volatile struggle for German identity and self-image, both within Germany and more broadly in the West, rather than as representative of the lived experience of many East Germans.[34]

Silke Arnold-de Simine and Susannah Radstone, "The GDR and the Memory Debate," in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, p. 28.

[31] Patricia Hogwood, "Selective Memory in Post-GDR Society," in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2013), p. 37.

[32] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia,* p. 28

[33] Alison Lewis, "Tinker, tailor, writer, spy: GDR Literature and the Stasi," in *Rereading East Germany: the Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 180.

[34] Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 101.

Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, p.28.

Early post-unification memory texts, scholarship and the German government all focused on the formal organisations and institutions of the GDR.[35] Historical scholarship equated the GDR to the Third Reich and focused on the *doppelte Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the Nazi Dictatorship and the East German Dictatorship).[36] This effectively emphasised the legitimacy of the West German political system, often perpetuated older animosities and post-war political divisions and created new animosities and alienation amongst some sections of the East German population.[37] It also became evident that nuanced historical scholarship, which had been developing since the 1970s, was being ignored.[38] In addition, almost immediate access to the Stasi archive in 1992 highlighted the totalitarian nature of the GDR and the extent of the Stasi's surveillance of the East German population.[39] Alison Lewis suggests that the Stasi archive became the privileged method of accessing the GDR past, to the detriment of other archives such as the 'rich body of literature and theatre' and consequently

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[35] Early post-unification memory texts are usually dated up to the mid 1990s. See Dennis Tate, "Cultural Resistance to the Iconic Images of November 1989," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 7.

[36] Konrad H. Jarausch, "The German Democratic Republic as History in United Germany: Reflections on Public Debate and Academic Controversy," *German Politics and Society* vol. 15, no 2 (1997): p. 38.

Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2015), p. 201.

[37] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 27.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[39] Catherine Epstein, "East Germany and Its History since 1989," *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 75, no. 3 (2003): p. 635.

Alison Lewis, "Tinker, tailor, writer, spy: GDR literature and the Stasi," p.180.

supported the victim/perpetrator narrative.[40] According to Cooke, this focus on the Stasi added to the alienation of sections of the East German population.[41]

German Government Narrative in Early Post-1989 Cultural Representations

The dominant memories supported by the official government narrative became embedded in early cultural representations. Cultural memory texts either reflected the need to establish the GDR as a corrupt, totalitarian state, used comedy clichés that sometimes ignored the political developments of unification, or normalised German-German relations, and exoticised the GDR.[42] This early phase of memory construction is exemplified in von Trotta's film *Das Versprechen*. (*The Promise*, 1995) and *Go, Trabi, Go* (1991).[43] Von Trotta wove a story of lovers divided by the Berlin Wall and ultimately reunited. In doing so she metaphorically reflected the fates of the two countries and mirrored the dominant narrative and media cliché.[44] The film affirmed the narrative of the GDR as a failed state, and can be seen as reflecting public sentiment, rather than exploring less commonplace responses.[45]

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[40] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[41] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, p. viii.

[42] Seán Allan, "East-West Relations in Post-Unification Comedy," in *German Cinema Since Unification*, ed. David Clarke (London, Continuum, 2006), pp. 106-107.
Karen Leeder, "Remembering the GDR in the Berlin Republic," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 223.
Dennis Tate, "Autobiographical Writing in the GDR Era," p. 91.

[43] Margarethe von Trotta, *Das Versprechen* (*The Promise*), (Bioskop Film, 1995).
Peter Timm, *Go, Trabi, Go,* (Bavaria Film, 1991).

[44] Dennis Tate, "Cultural Resistance to the Iconic Images of November 1989," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 8.

[45] Brad Prager, "Passing Time Since the *Wende*," *German Politics and Society* vol. 28, no. 1 (2010): p. 98.

The film asserted the view that the State and the Stasi wholly defined the GDR.[46] In her popular film, von Trotta, a West German, seemed to imply that unification 'only needed to be negotiated' in the East, rather than being an equal partnership between East and West.[47] *Go, Trabi, Go* (1991) was one of the first post-unification films and it comically exploited differences between East and West Germany while mainly avoiding politically sensitive issues. The East German characters were portrayed as naïve and provincial, but the film's East German director Peter Timms did make political comment by portraying their Western relations as shallow and mean. Although the GDR was clearly a totalitarian and oppressive state, unification and the rush to disclaim the GDR past, as well as the harsh economic realities of unification, did not always provide East Germans with the identity support they needed.[48] It seemed as though everything East German was being swept away.

Nostalgia, Humour, Cynicism and Satire from the mid-1990s

In line with broader historiographical trends, by the mid-1990s, historiography of East Germany had turned to more social and cultural matters; the everyday lived experience of East Germans and questions regarding agency.[49] According to Andrew Port, the idea of Totalitarianism was 'attacked' by this new wave of sociocultural research and led to analysis that highlighted the 'limits of dictatorship'. This sought to explore ideas of individual agency, either in opposition or support of the East German State and its ruling party the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party, SED).[50] The Stasi

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[46] *Ibid.,* p. 97.
[47] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, p. 108.
[48] Andrew Port, 'The Banalities of East German Historiography," p. 7.
[49] *Ibid.,* p. 2.
[50] *Ibid.,* p. 3.

was still seen as a 'distinctive feature of East German society' but it had become evident that the Stasi had relied on popular support to function.[51] German historians at the *Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung* (Centre for Contemporary Research) worked with Lüdtke's concept of *Eigensinn* (self-will), the idea that relations between state and society were not entirely one-sided, and that life had been more than total fear and dominance by the state. This concept has been widely used to suggest that East Germans were not passive victims of their state. It dovetailed nicely into research on *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday life) as a way of distinguishing between the state and its objectives, and the realities of how East Germans were able to live and survive on their own terms.[52] Peter Grieder summarises a further ten descriptors of the GDR that seek to explain the relationship between the GDR State and its citizens, including Mary Fulbrook's concept of 'participatory dictatorship'. Fulbrook suggested that there was more to East German society than totalitarian dominance.[53] A number of scholars disagreed with Fulbrook's notion of 'participatory dictatorship' and other similarly nuanced understandings of the GDR, and found interpretations of GDR society which focused on social welfare: child-care, housing and women's employment, as 'impossible to reconcile'.[54]

What all of these approaches allowed for, is that historians could move away from a top-down view of the GDR, one in which the SED dominated, and towards

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[51] Alison Lewis, "Tinker, tailor, writer, spy: GDR Literature and the Stasi," p. 180.

[52] Scott Moranda, "Towards a more holistic history? Historians and East German everyday life," *Social History* vol. 35, no. 3 (2010): p. 332.

[53] Mary Fulbrook, "Structures and Subjectivities in GDR History." in *Becoming East German: socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler*," ed. Mary Fulbrook and Andrew Port (New York: Berghahn, 2013), p. 277.

[54] Gary Bruce, "Review – Mary Fulbrook, The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker," *Journal of Cold War Studies* vol. 12, no. 3 (2010): p. 138.

exploration of the multi-directional relationship between East German citizens and the State. Some of the cultural memory texts in the second phase of cultural remembering, from the mid-1990s to 2000, turned to *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the East).[55] Nostalgia is often understood as reflecting a desire to return to the past. Boym, however, differentiates between two forms of nostalgia: restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia. Through restorative nostalgia one would seek to return to the past. Restorative nostalgia seems to allow only one version of the past, whereas reflective nostalgia can be seen as a 'comforting collective script for individual longing'.[56] *Ostalgie* can be interpreted as reflective nostalgia; as a response to the rapid loss of familiar products, and more importantly the loss of security of housing and employment, the dismantling of businesses and academia, and as a response to East Germany and East German identity being subsumed by the West.[57] What films such as Haußmann's *Sonnenallee* (Sun Alley, 1999) and Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) reflected, was the sense that it was acceptable to acknowledge that life in the GDR had been of 'consequence'.[58] This was particularly important for East Germans who felt as though their identity and their previous lives were being erased in the process of unification. East Germans defended their *Errungenschaften* (achievements).[59] There are many further examples of what was

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[55] *Ostalgie* – a portmanteau of the German words Ost (east) and Nostalgie (nostalgia) and generally understood as nostalgia for the GDR. See Jill Twark, "Satirical Novels in the GDR and beyond," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 132.

[56] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 49.

[57] Karen Leeder, "After-images – afterlives: Remembering the GDR in the Berlin Republic," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 218.

[58] Brad Prager, "Passing time since the *Wende*," p. 97.

Leander Haußmann, *Sonnenallee* (Sun Alley), ((Boje Buck Produktion , 1999).

Wolfgang Becker, *Good Bye, Lenin!*, (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003).

[59] Although *Errungenschaften* translates as 'achievements', and may include marriage, family and career, Gallinat also suggests that it an East German context has the implication of having overcome struggles and difficulties. Anselma Gallinat, "Memory Matters and Contexts," in *Remembering and*

claimed as *Ostalgie* for East German everyday life. *Ostalgie* is reflected in the reverence towards objects as diverse as Trabant cars and *Spreewaldgurken[60]* (a brand of pickles) as well as in the iconic value of *Ampelmännchen* (green and red pedestrian crossing symbols)*,* the *Sandmännchen* (a children's bedtime character) and plastic, chicken shaped eggcups.[61] These objects proliferated in private museums and retro cafes which sought to recreate and preserve the 'look and feel' of the everyday life of the GDR's past, as well as in films and memoirs of this period.[62] However, historians Silke Arnold-de Simine and Susannah Radstone maintain that the interest in East German products was largely due to tourism, rather than real East German nostalgia.[63]

Jana Hensel's memoir of her GDR childhood, *Zonenkinder* (*After the Wall*, 2002) seems to redress the balance from the totalitarian, grey version of the GDR past but has sometimes been critiqued as an *Ostalgic text.*[64] It is significant, that what

Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities, ed. Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2013), p. 160.

[60] Stephen, Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 41.

[61] For *Ampelmännchen*, see *www.ampelmann.de/en/*

For Sandmännchen, see *www. Sandman.de*

For chicken shaped egg-cups from Sonja Plastics, see *gdrobjectifies.wordpress.com*

[62] Stephen, Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond," p. 41. The *GDR Museum*, in Berlin, although private is commercially sophisticated. Other museums were little more than small collections in domestic basements.

The Mauerblümchen in Berlin is an example of an *Ostalgic* café. See '*Neue Kneipe mit altem Flair: Das Mauerblümchen vermittelt DDR-Alltag: Zurück in die Vergangenheit,*' accessed April 7, 2017, http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/neue-kneipe-mit-altem-flair--das--mauerbluemchen--vermittelt-ddr-alltag-zurueck-in-die-vergangenheit-16923246

In another commercialised example of *Ostalgie*, 'Trabi-safari.de' provides tourist trips around Berlin in Trabant cars.

[63] Silke Arnold-de Simine and Susannah Radstone, "The GDR and the Memory Debate," in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan Memory Studies, 2013), p. 31.

[64] Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold, "Introduction: '*Wissen wie es war*?," in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2013), p. 6.

are considered to be *Ostalgic* views of the GDR's past, have been trivialised. Deeper engagement with her memories allows a more complex and less *Ostalgic* interpretation.[65] A number of cultural representations of East Germany, similarly to Hensel's use the metaphor of the GDR being somehow unreal, a fairy tale; not to suggest that it was idyllic, but rather that *die Uhren anders gingen* (the clocks moved differently) and that it is not easy to remember the *Märchenzeit* (fairy-tale times).[66] The film *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) is often cited and reviewed as an *Ostalgic* text.[67] However, despite its fame as the ultimate GDR feel-good film, Stephen Brockmann argues that it was about 'the difficulty of imagining or recreating the GDR'.[68] It can also be seen as a film that seeks to put the GDR into the past; a celebration of a past that has gone, and has no consequence in unified Germany.[69] As with many *Ostalgic* texts, *Good Bye, Lenin!* can be interpreted with more nuance than it was credited with in the 1990s.[70] It is however notable that none of the texts suggested that there was any desire to return to the political and structural realities of the GDR. *Ostalgic* interpretations were seen as 'downplay[ing] the real terror of the SED's surveillance society'.[71] However, they are now generally recognised as parallel 'cultural assertions of a widely felt

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[65] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[66] Stephen, Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond," p. 43.

[67] Seán Allen, "*Ostalgie,* fantasy and the normalization of East-West relations in post-unification comedy," in *German Cinema since unification* ed. David Clarke (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 106. "Television Joins the "Ostalgie" Bandwagon," *Deutsche Welle* 25.08.03, accessed February 2, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/television-joins-the-ostalgie-bandwagon/a-955473

[68] Wolfgang Becker, *Good Bye, Lenin!*, (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003). Stephen Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond," p. 41.

[69] Brad Prager, "Passing time since the *Wende*," p. 98.

[70] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*, p. 74.

[71] Scott Moranda, "Towards a more holistic history: Historians and East German everyday life," p. 332.

entitlement to a complex post-GDR identity', rather than a sentimental *Ostalgic* yearning for the past.[72]

Although many cultural representations of the GDR are, to use Boym's terminology, reflectively nostalgic, there is evidence of a great deal of cynicism and satire too.[73] Many cultural memory texts had less global success than *Good Bye, Lenin!* or von Donnersmarck's account of good and evil in *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006), but are equally significant in understanding memories of the GDR and the complexities of unification. Kerstin Hensel's novel *Tanz am Kanal* (*Dance at the Canal*, 1994) the 'hard life story of a young East German woman' is 'an act of resistance to the emerging national grand narrative'.[74] Thomas Brussig's novel *Helden wie wir* (*Heros like us*, 1995) challenged people to face up to their failure to resist the system and their collusion in it.[75] *Go, Trabi, Go 2* (1992) was far more satirical than its predecessor just one year earlier, as it dealt with property speculation and corporate capitalism, but was also less successful.[76] The issue of capitalism and commercialism, along with ironic commentary on *Ostalgie* is also evident in Sparschuh's comedy *Der Zimmerspringbrunnen* (The Indoor Fountain, 1995).[77] Films such as Stöhr's *Berlin is in Germany* (2001) and Schmid's *Lichter* (Distant Lights, 2003) directly reflect the disillusionment of unification and

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[72] Dennis Tate, "Cultural Resistance to the Iconic Images of November 1989," p. 9.
[73] See Svetlana Boym, '*The Future of Nostalgia*,' p. 49. She defined two types of nostalgia – 'reflective nostalgia' which focuses on longing and loss, and 'restorative nostalgia' which seeks to reconstruct what is lost.
[74] Dennis Tate, "Cultural Resistance to the Iconic Images of November 1989," p. 8.
[75] Elizabeth Boa, "Familial Allegories of Wish-Fulfillment," in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse Since 1990*, ed. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), p.74. and p. 76.
[76] Seán Allen, "*Ostalgie,* fantasy and the normalization of East-West relations in post-unification comedy," p. 108.
[77] Georgina Paul, "The Privatization of Community: The Legacy of Collectivism in the Post-Socialist Literature of East German," *Oxford German Studies* vol. 38, no. 3 (2009): p. 289.

the stripping of East German identity. Neither seeks to remember the GDR negatively nor nostalgically, but reflect the hopes and disillusionment of unification.[78]

Cultural representations of the GDR clearly embody and reflect the cultural debate around how the GDR should be remembered and the process of unification. These nuanced memories are valuable to current historiographical thinking, which seeks to abandon polarising and moralising debates, and increasingly attend to issues of how East Germans shaped the GDR.[79] The significance of cultural artefacts in memory debates is exemplified by Haußmann's film *Sonnennallee* (*Sun Alley*, 1999). The film critically examined *Ostalgie*, but largely showed East German childhood to be the same as West German childhood.[80] The film was criticised in Germany for trivialising the past and the filmmakers were sued by an organisation that supported victims of SED violence.[81]

Cultural Memory Since 2000: The Last East German Generation

Since 2000, greater temporal distance from the GDR, and new possibilities born of political and generational change have allowed for increased confidence in the production of more complex and durable representations.[82] Despite exceptions caused by key sources of cultural memory produced by West Germans with little personal experience of the GDR, it is significant that many sources of GDR cultural

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[78] Brad Prager, "Passing time since the *Wende*," p. 98 and p. 105.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 16.

[80] Stephen, Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond," p. 49.

[81] *Help e.V* - See Seán Allen, "*Ostalgie,* fantasy and the normalization of East-West relations in post-unification comedy," p. 125.

[82] Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold, "Introduction: '*Wissen wie es war*'?" p. 7.
Dennis Tate, "Cultural Resistance to the Iconic Images of November 1989," p. 9.

memory are autobiographical. [83] T.J. Reed argues that autobiographical representations are significant because they 'provide an access nothing else can match, a vision drawn from individual experience, connecting and enlivening disparate data'.[84] Media too specifically impacts on the way that memories are constructed and represented.[85]

Methodology and Source Selection

In this thesis I will analyse three sources of cultural memory of the GDR, their writers' and director's autobiographies, and engage with the process by which these three individuals remember and represent significant chapters in their past and the ways in which interpretations of the past are debated and contested in the present. [86] The sources have been specifically selected from a number of considered options and were chosen as exemplars of post-millennial representations. Significantly, these sources incorporate individual memory of the GDR. The three sources of cultural memory are by two writers and a director who grew up in a divided Germany, between 1960 and 1970 and who, by the late-1980s, were adolescents.[87] The similar dates of production, between 2008 and 2012, place these sources of cultural memory at a similar temporal distance from the GDR, and the generational similarities of their authors and director means that

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[83] Karen Leeder, "After-images – afterlives: Remembering the GDR in the Berlin Republic," p. 222. Both *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *The Lives of Others*, the two most commonly know filmic representations of the GDR, were directed by West Germans. In *Good Bye, Lenin!* the main role was played by West German, Daniel Brühl.

[84] T.J. Reed, "'In that dawn…': Revisiting the *Wende*," *Oxford German Studies* vol. 38, no. 3 (2009), p. 255.

[85] Astrid Erll, "The Power of Fiction: Novels and Films as Media of Cultural Memory," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), p. 389.

[86] On the usefulness of Amazon reviews as reader/viewer responses see "History, the Holocaust and children's historical fiction," Hsu-Ming Teo, *TEXT* Special Issue, 28, 2015, p. 15.

[87] Leo and Tellkamp grew up in East Germany. Although Petzold grew up in West Germany he emphasises his continued connection with the East.

their lived experience of the GDR is mainly from the 1970s and 1980s. To assess the significance of different media on cultural constructions of the GDR past, I have chosen to analyse a memoir, a historical novel and a historical feature film. The memoir was written by Maxim Leo and is *Haltet euer Herz Bereit: Eine Ostdeutsche Familiengeschichte* (*Red Love: The Story of an East German Family,* 2009). The historical novel is *Der Turm: Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land* (*The Tower: Tales from a Lost Country*, 2008), by Uwe Tellkamp. The historical feature film is *Barbara* (2012) and was directed by Christian Petzold. As postmillennial texts these cultural representations of the GDR are temporally distant from the GDR while still retaining direct links to the GDR through their authors' and director's complex individual memories. Despite ready classification of these sources into fiction and non-fiction, they all draw on the first hand lived experiences and individual memory of their authors. In his memoir, Maxim Leo also draws on extensively on archival research and family interviews. While Leo's text is classified as non-fiction, it is a construct of memory just the same. Uwe Tellkamp and Christian Petzold do not claim to have produced autobiographical representations, but have clearly drawn on their individual memories of the GDR, as well as individual and cultural memories of the editorial board and production teams, to produce 'authentic' representations of the GDR. Both Leo's memoir and Tellkamp's novel reflect the trend of using generational stories to interpret the GDR.[88] Leo uses memories from three generations of his family to contextualise German history from before 1945 and to represent the GDR's forty-year history. Tellkamp's novel is set in the 1980s. It ends at the fall of the Berlin Wall and draws

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[88] Karen Leeder, "After-images – afterlives: Remembering the GDR in the Berlin Republic," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 216.

on a set of characters with diverse generational experience and builds a multi-faceted representation of the GDR. Petzold's film is set in 1980 and does not foreshadow the end of the GDR. Genre and media specific requirements mean that each writer has constructed their individual memory to different effect. While Erll suggests that historical accuracy is not a key concern in fictional representations, she notes that fictional texts create 'authentic' representations of the past; representations that resonate with audiences.[89] Natalie Zemon Davis echoes this understanding when she acknowledges that 'authenticity' in film is achieved when filmmakers relate values and concerns of the past, rather than focusing on accuracy in props and locations.[90] Landsberg suggests that historical fiction produces historical knowledge in a way that is not limited by facts, but rather produces a 'historical sensibility'.[91] Although Davis and Landsberg are discussing visual media, I suggest that authenticity in historical fiction is also achieved through focus on the values and concerns of the past. The sources in my investigation disrupt the lines between individual memory and lived experience, fact and fiction, and 'accuracy' and 'authenticity'. These texts can all be seen as representations of individual memory and reflections of, and interventions in, public discourse.[92]

The significance of studying memory construction in the context of the GDR is that it is still in progress: from those with direct, lived experience, to those with only mediated experiences of the GDR past. Consequently, audiences may still consist of readers and viewers with lived experience of the GDR. Their responses are

Marnie Hughes-Warrington, "Introduction: Theory, Production, Reception," in *The History on Film Reader*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 13-14.
[92] Brad Prager, "Passing time since the *Wende*," p. 96.

significant in 'authenticating' cultural memories of the GDR. The significance of published memory texts is that through texts such as these, we tell our stories, construct our memories of the past, and articulate ideas and images which contribute to public debate and inform future generations, who have not experienced this past.[93]

Despite the different ways that these authors construct and supplement their individual memory the sources contain a number of similar themes and draw on a range of memories to represent a nuanced relationship between the State and its citizens. As such these three sources are representative of post-millennial interpretations of the GDR. The mediated nature of these texts and the significance of the existing memory landscape on their production must be acknowledged. Nevertheless, they are of significant value. The analysis of the memories they present and their juxtaposition against further archives and representations of the past supports the development of a broader, more nuanced understanding of GDR memories. This analysis seeks to move beyond over-determined narratives of totalitarianism or nostalgia and to establish a foundation of the significance of media in the construction of the GDR's cultural memory and the significance of these post-millennial sources of cultural memory.[94]

By conducting a close reading of these texts, I will analyse how the three writers and director have drawn on individual, family, communicative and existing cultural memory to construct their memories of the GDR. Sources of cultural memory are not only interpretations of the past, but also reflect shifts in political,

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[93] Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in twentieth-Century History and Theory, p. 36.
[94] Anselma Gallinat, "Memory Matters and Contexts," p. 160.

social and cultural agendas.[95] Memory, mediated in cultural artefacts, plays a key role in political and social 'memory battles' and cultural artefacts present new worlds that offer the opportunity to better understand plurality of historical experience.[96] My analysis is designed to attend to details of narrative structure, plot, characterisation, atmosphere, literary devices such as realism and metaphor, and in the case of film, the use of sound, props, material culture and visual themes. I examine the biography of the writers and directors and their intentions in the construction of their memory and assess the texts as interventions in how the GDR is remembered in the 21st century. By using autobiographical memory across memoir, novels and films, I can explore the significance of media in memory formation, and the ways in which fictional genres can facilitate the construction of more complex memories.

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[95] Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold, "Introduction: '*Wissen wie es war*'?" p. 3.

[96] Sara Jones and Debbie Pinfold, "Remembering dictatorship: State socialist pasts in post-socialist presents," *Central Europe*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2014), p. 15.

Chapter 1

Childhood Memories and Family History
Red Love: The Story of an East German Family,
by Maxim Leo

'I don't need to take a position on anything, I don't need to be committed, I don't need a point of view. Politics can be a topic of conversation if you can't think of anything else. Society isn't the main subject of my life, I am.'[1]

Maxim Leo was born in 1970 in East Berlin, part of the generation who were born into the GDR and experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall as an adolescent. He is old enough to remember growing up in the GDR and to have been aware of the State and its impact on his family and his life. However, he is also young enough to have built a successful life and career in unified Germany. In the passage from his memoir above, he reveals, not just what life in unified Germany was like for him, but how it differs from life in the GDR. Leo supplemented his individual memory with family research though interviews and archives, and broader historiographical research. Although Leo invokes multiple, and sometimes conflicting, interpretations of the GDR, his book has been seen as an 'unofficial history' of the GDR.[2] Maxim Leo's memoir was originally published in German in 2009, with the title *Haltet euer Herz Bereit: Eine Ostdeutsche Familiengeschichte* and the English translation *Red Love: The Story of an East German Family,* was published in 2013.[3] There is limited scholarly engagement with Leo's memoir, but

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[1] Maxim Leo, *Red Love: The Story of an East German Family,* (London: Pushkin Press, 2014), p. 17. All subsequent references will be to this edition.
[2] Red Love, p. i. A quote from Julian Barnes, who judged the European Book prize for 2011.
[3] Maxim Leo, *Haltet euer Herz Bereit: Eine Ostdetsche Familiengeschichte,* (Munich: Karl Blessing Verlag, 2009) The literal translation is: "Hold your Heart ready: An East German family history." *Red Love: The Story of an East German Family* (London: Pushkin Press, 2013).

it did appeal both to literary and popular audiences, and won the European Book

Prize in 2011.[4] This prize is awarded to books that are seen to promote European

values and contribute to a better understanding of European nations. His memoir

was seen as improving understanding between former East and West Germans and

praised for its description of 'ordinary lies and contradictions'.[5] Numerous readers

complimented Leo's book and commented on its honesty, lack of cliché and

authenticity.[6] In this chapter I will explore how Maxim Leo constructed his memoir

by supplementing individual childhood and adolescent memories, with family

history and archival research and constructed a narrative of the GDR, and examine

the implications of constructing memory in a written memoir in this way. I will

also analyse how Leo constructs and interprets the GDR, compare his memories to

those in the other sources, and identify how his memoir contributes to memory

culture.

About Leo's Memoir

Red Love is an intergenerational story of Leo's family and of the GDR. He suggests

that his generation were pleased when the GDR was over and describes the GDR as

a country of old men whose energy had been used up.[7] Leo believed that 'their

logic no longer made sense'.[8] By drawing comparisons between the East before

and after unification, Leo overtly distances himself and his text from *Ostalgic*

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[4] For one example of engagement of this text other than in literary reviews see P. Campling, "Reflections on Resilience," *Journal of Holistic Health Care* vol. 11, no. 3 (2014/15): pp. 4-8.

[5] "Winners of the European Book Prize 2011," Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, 08.12.11, accessed July 31, 2017, http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/maxim-leo-germany-and-anna-bikont-poland-–-winners-european-book-prize-2011
Red Love, p. i. A quote from Julian Barnes, who judged the European Book prize for 2011.

[6] amazon.de For example, Kathrin Weiss, 'Ich finde viele Parallelen zu meinen eigenen Erfahrungen in dieser Zeit.' Bernhard N., 'So habe ich es selbst erlebt.' and Amazon Kunde, "Sehr authentisch. Ostdeutschen fühlen sich zu Hause in dem Buch.'

[7] Red Love, p. 176.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

representations of the GDR.[9] In the East 'everything look[ed] empty and forlorn' there were 'grey, broken walls and kerbstones with no parked cars'. Leo describes the same place, after urban renewal and gentrification in 2009, as 'a dream in pastel colours'.[10] He started to write this book in 2007 after his grandfather Gerhard had a stroke. The book is framed as a response to it; no longer able to hear Gerhard's stories Leo 'go[es] back to the GDR…to understand'.[11] Leo sees it as a way of understanding what happened in the GDR and how it impacted his family.[12] He was also motivated to intervene in memory culture and write a story of the GDR, which did not focus on 'Stasi monsters and rebels'.[13] In an interview for the *Goethe Institute* Leo claimed that his book was about the 'ordinary' life that he attributed to 85% of East Germans. This notion of 'ordinary' is one that resonates through East German accounts of their lives, along with other suggestions such as that of the *Nischengesellshaft* (niche community).[14] These interpretations of the GDR validate lived experience and allow individuals to claim agency, by suggesting that it was possible to minimise the impact of the State on individual life.[15] Mary Fulbrook has described this belief in the 'ordinary' as a consequence of later generations being socialised into a set of beliefs about what 'normal' was, but she argues that East German claims that they were able to lead normal or ordinary lives must be confronted with growing knowledge about the extent of Stasi surveillance and infiltration into society. [16]

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[9] See glossary

[10] Red Love, p. 16.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[13] "Meet the Germans - Interview with Maxim Leo," Rory Maclean, *Goethe Institut*, March 2015, accessed April 24, 2017,
http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lp/prj/mtg/men/wor/leo/en13894387.htm

[14] Mary Fulbrook *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), viii.

[15] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 13.

[16] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, p. 8

Also in 2007, the *Forschungsverbund SED-Staat* (SED State Research Group) conducted a survey of young Germans. The conclusions contradict Leo's assertions about the focus on the Stasi in GDR memory culture. According to the survey, many young Germans knew very little about the GDR as a repressive state; rather they had positive impressions of education, health and welfare systems. The authors of the survey believed that this was because of the inadequacies of family memory, as it has tended to focus on the positives of the past, rather than the GDR as a repressive regime.[17] These oppositional views clearly reflect the ongoing concerns regarding memory of the GDR and echo similar debates regarding public engagement with the National Socialist past.[18]

As a memory text *Red Love* is a complex and, at times, unresolved interpretation of the GDR. Leo still lives in Berlin and is the editor of the leading Berlin newspaper, the *Berliner Zeitung.* His individual memories act in the construction of his sense of self and his adult identity, but they are also used to frame his interpretation of the GDR as a political system, rather than as simple accounts of personal experiences and the everyday.[19] Leo uses episodes from his parents' and grandparents' lives to explain and justify their political positions, as well as to exemplify the broader narrative of the GDR. He seeks to understand and justify their pragmatic and

Mary Fulbrook, "Structures and Subjectivities in GDR History," in *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler,* ed. Mary Fulbrook and Andrew Port (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 280-281.

[17] Sara Jones, "At Home with the Stasi: *Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen* as Historic House," in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 211.

[18] Peter Fritzsche, "Narrative and its insufficiency in Postwar Germany," in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990,* ed. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), p. 36.

[19] Robyn Fivush, Tilmann Habermas, Theodore E.A. Waters, and Widaad Zaman, 'The making of autobiographical memory: Intersections of culture, narrative and identity," *International Journal of Psychology*, vol. 46, no. 5 (2011): p. 322.

idealistic support for the GDR, as well as to explain the policies, behaviours and changing beliefs that led towards its end. While being mindful of the subjectivity of Leo's interpretation, the stories of his paternal grandfather and mother provide dense detail of their GDR past and provide a significant exploration of communicative memory.[20]

Memory theorists consistently emphasise the significance of media in the construction of memory, arguing that media leaves its trace on the memory its creates.[21] In this case, Leo's emphasis on archival research seems to have limited his emotional connection with his grandparents and parents. Many of Leo's individual memories are from childhood and consequently framed through the reinterpretations and reiterations of family life.[22] His adolescent memories are not as mediated and Leo's memories of the final months of the GDR, supported with taped accounts from the time, provide 'authentic' memories of the events leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Overall, Leo not only weaves together specific episodes from his grandparents' and parents' lives into an overarching explanatory life narrative, but seeks to come to terms with the GDR past, and to present a wide narrative of the GDR.[23] Consequently, his memoir is a hybrid of the personal and the political. Although Leo claims that he feels nothing for the GDR, he also writes that it is 'like a ghost that can't find peace'.[24] I suggest that it is this inconsistency

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[20] Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 102.
[21] Astrid Erll, "The Power of Fiction: Novels and Films as Media of Cultural Memory," in A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), p. 389.
[22] Kimberley A. Wade, Robert A. Nash and Maryanne Garry, "People consider reliability and cost when verifying their autobiographical memories," *Acta Psychologies* vol. 146, no. 1 (2014): p. 28.
[23] Robyn Fivush, Tilmann Habermas, Theodore E.A. Waters, and Widaad Zaman, 'The making of autobiographical memory: Intersections of culture, narrative and identity," p. 324.
[24] Red Love, p. 12.

that frames his narrative, he is both distanced and yet entangled in the way he seeks to represent the GDR, his family and himself.

A Generational Memory of the GDR

The distinct set of characters in Leo's family allow him to construct a multifaceted memory of the GDR, in which he explores a range of beliefs and experiences and outlines the GDR from before its conception, its ideological phase and the growing disillusionment towards it. His memoir is constructed in such a way as to create a coherent temporal narrative, which embeds European nineteenth century Jewish persecution and National Socialism, with World War II resistance. He links anti-Fascism and the needs of post-war reconstruction with the growth of the socialist principles, which motivated the establishment of the GDR. In doing so, Leo places his family history into a longer European history. The way he represents the GDR is in itself a contribution to understandings of the GDR. Written between 2007 and 2009 the work is temporally removed from the urgency of unification.[25] His work responds to previous representations of the GDR in its treatment of the Stasi and everyday life. By focusing on experiences beyond his own, he is able to capture some of the complexity of generational experience in the GDR. He articulates the competing narrative positions of GDR citizens by exemplifying his parents' conflicts and ambivalence towards the GDR. His own memories provide a mosaic of detail of childhood and adolescent experience in the 1970s and 1980s. The significance of analysing this memoir is that memory texts produced by Leo's

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[25] Karen Leeder, "After-images – Afterlives: Remembering the GDR in the Berlin Republic," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR,* ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 222.

generation constitute some of the 'last literature of the GDR' based on individual, lived experience.[26]

Making an Emotional Connection to the Past

Leo's memoir opens with Leo and his maternal grandfather Gerhard in a hospital room. Leo identifies Gerhard as a hero of the French resistance who came back to Germany as a victor and someone who had helped build the GDR, 'the state in which everything was to be better'.[27] Gerhard published a memoir in the late 1970s, which is full of exciting stories of espionage and resistance work. Leo likens it to the adventurous stories that his grandfather would tell him and notes that Gerhard never seems to express any fears or doubts.[28] However, Gerhard's Stasi file reveals that he was more critical of the GDR than he seemed.[29] Leo notes a number of occurrences where he spoke out and was critical of the regime. Documents in Gerhard's Stasi file, document the accusation of his comrades that he put forward his own opinions when he should have represented the views of the Party. Leo expresses his pride in his grandfather, in the knowledge that he did not go along with everything.[30]

Leo's paternal grandfather, Werner, went to fight with the Wehrmacht in 1944 when his son Wolf was two, he returned from imprisonment in France in 1947. In 1949 the family moved to *Schönhauser Allee* in the East. According to Wolf, even though the move was practically, rather than politically motivated, Werner seemed

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 222.
[27] Red Love, p. 10.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
Gerhard Leo, *Frühzug nach Toulouse* ((East) Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1988).
[29] Red Love, p. 174.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

excited about the possibilities of socialism and a new society and 'he absorb[ed] it all like a thirsty man, like someone who urgently need[ed] something he c[ould] believe in again'.[31] Werner had his children call him by his first name in response to some of the new 'socialist rules' and Wolf started to learn about the GDR's economic aspirations at the Five-year Plan Exhibition.[32] To Wolf, a nine year old, it didn't make sense, but he knew that at least he had enough to eat now.[33]

When his grandfather was ninety-five, Leo conducted an oral history interview with him and Sigrid, his paternal grandmother. Their happy memories conflict with Leo's understanding of the Third Reich: '[i]t was lovely', says Werner.[34] Sigrid remembers that politics were discussed constantly, but also remembers these as 'the happiest years' of her life.[35] Leo juxtaposes this with his knowledge of his other grandfather who was in France and on the run. Their memories do not reflect his understandings of the Third Reich.[36] Leo's mother Anne was born in 1947 in Düsseldorf, but in a story of subterfuge, she and her family moved East in 1952.[37] Unsurprisingly given the stories her father told, Anne grew up thinking that the GDR was full of courageous fighters and that the GDR's cause was right.[38] She was the leader of her *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ - Free German Youth) group - the socialist youth group, implicit in the control of GDR society - and her

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 142
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 141.
See Harald Welzer's discussion of discrepancy in official and private memory culture. "Collateral Damage of History Education: National Socialism and the Holocaust in German Family Memory," *Social Research* vol. 75 no. 1 (2008), p. 289.
[37] Red Love, p. 25.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

classmates thought of her as a 'Red'.[39] A key theme in Leo's memoir is his mother's

growing disillusionment with the GDR and her transition from a 'Red' to being

someone who in 1989 attended civil rights meetings at the Church of the

Redeemer, in Berlin.[40] Leo's father Wolf was an artist who had a complex

relationship with the State. At times, he expressed his antagonism towards the

State, and said that the GDR was a dictatorship of civil servants who had betrayed

socialism.[41] At times, he worked with the State on artistic projects, but drew back

when he got too close to 'the powerful men.[42]The Stasi report stated that he was

'critical but not hostile'.[43] Leo suggests that the State was interested in people who

were different, 'the little rebels who wanted to change something, but didn't know

how'.[44] According to Leo, neither of his grandfathers could ever 'unmask the great

dream as a great lie' and their children had to 'dream along whether they wanted

to or not' and his parents lived by trying to 'keep the State off their backs' and

teaching Leo to keep his distance.'[45]

That Leo draws on memories of his parents and grandparents is significant for two

reasons. Firstly, it is common for autobiographers to frame their life with the lives

of their grandparents and parents. Aleida Assmann describes this three

generational memory as being necessary for personal orientation in the world.[46]

Secondly, for Leo and his generation these three generations also neatly

encompass the whole of the GDR. His grandfathers exemplify two sides of German

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
Peter Grieder*, The German Democratic Republic*, p. 114.
[40] Red Love, p. 239.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 202 – 203.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 194.
[44] *Ibid.*, 195.
[45] *Ibid.*, p.176 and p. 188.
[46] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), p. 13.

male war experiences, as well as the principles and pragmatism of the early days of the GDR. His parents exemplify the struggles of the second GDR generation, while Leo represents the third generation, which bridged experience of the GDR with post reunification Germany. Readers have interpreted Leo's memoir as representative of the GDR, despite the particularities of his family. Indeed, one reviewer commented 'ja, das war auch meine DDR', and added that no other book in the last twenty years had resonated so well with her own experience.[47]

Writing a memoir can be used as a way of coming to terms with the past and defining a 'correct' version of the past. It is consequently an intervention to influence the way the past is remembered, and a way to construct identity in the present.[48] Leo is not seeking to differentiate his experiences from those of other East Germans, but to produce a narrative that is comprehensible to its intended audience, and to produce an interpretation of the past that he can live with.[49] He overtly claims that he wants to 'correct a few things and perhaps lose some of the rage and grief' that is still there.[50] The discrepancy between his identification of himself as a Westerner, yet also as holding rage and grief about the past is perhaps illustrative of Gary Bruce's argument that there is consistent discrepancy in the accounts of East Germans, as many held incoherent beliefs about the East German State.[51] As this is a published memory text it is important to recognise that the

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[47] amazon.de - Bücherfan13, 'yes, that was my GDR too'.
[48] Christiane Lahusen, "Autobiography as Participation in the 'Master Narrative': GDR Academics after Unification," in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 186.
[49] Anna Von der Goltz, "Making Sense of East Germany's 1968: Multiple Trajectories and Contrasting Memories," *Memory Studies* vol. 6, no. 1 (2013): p. 65.
For more on Life Narratives see Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiographies: A Guide for interpreting Life Narratives* (2001) and Ochs and Capps, *Narrating the Self* (1996)
[50] Red Love, p. 12.
[51] Gary Bruce, *The Firm: The Inside Story of the Stasi*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 146.

commercial process may silence life stories that are at odds with an acceptable narrative.[52]

Many of the themes in Leo's memoir are common to other memory texts of the GDR. Leo writes about his childhood, school, youth groups, military training, socialist citizenship, his experience of the Stasi and the end of the GDR. Leo uses these themes to reject the GDR explicitly and to distance himself from it. Children like Leo, born in the 1970s and 1980s were less likely to have been aware of the Stasi and consequently, they were more likely to describe their childhoods as 'normal'.[53] However, using the word 'normal' to describe the GDR is as subjective as it is historiographically contentious. Fulbrook suggests that citizens 'for the most part' lived 'normal' lives, but clearly that this normality was within a very un-normal system.[54] Peter Grieder finds interpretations of the GDR that underestimate its dictatorial nature as 'untenable', yet it seems likely that life in the GDR may well have seemed normal to children such as Maxim Leo, who knew no other everyday.[55] Grieder emphasises that we need to differentiate between what was normal and what was 'the norm'.[56] However, 1990s media revelations about the extent of Stasi surveillance may have impacted on East Germans' perceptions of their own lived experiences.[57] While Leo describes his childhood as ordinary, one of his earliest memories concerns the Stasi.[58] He reveals his internal conflict by describing life as normal, but then exemplifying a life that was not. In

[52] Alistair Thomson, "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History," *The Oral History Review*, vol. 34, no. 1 (2007): p. 59.
[53] Mary Fulbrook, "Structures and Subjectivities in GDR History," p. 281.
[54] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker*, p. 8.
[55] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*, p. 1.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 125.
[57] Mary Fulbrook, "Structures and Subjectivities in GDR History," p. 280.
Gary Bruce, *The Inside Story of the* Stasi, p. 146.
[58] Red Love, p. 187.

this incident Leo was six, and was hit by a car. The impact knocked the car's number plate off and revealed another plate beneath. Leo's father Wolf led him to believe it was a Stasi car.[59] Leo spent the following six weeks in a hospital room with bars on the window. While he recognises that the Stasi were not responsible for the bars, in this childhood memory Leo links the two. Leo expresses his fears of the Stasi, and reveals the foundational messages that he received growing up as a child in the GDR. In this incident, the subjective perception Wolf communicated to his son, is more significant than factual confirmation that it was a Stasi car.[60] It is also of note that Leo used to tell this story to Westerners because 'it was exactly the way they imagined the GDR'.[61] Leo also retells a strange story of the Stasi's 'elaborate operation' to recruit his parents, further emphasising the significance of the Stasi to Leo's memory of the GDR.[62] A comment in Wolf's Stasi file states that 'unofficial contact should be made…under false pretenses' and that as a 'critical but committed citizen' he should be recruited.[63] Consequently, Leo's parents started to get visits from an engaging young man in 1976 who told them that he worked for the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA - National People's Army) in the Education Department. He claimed that he wanted Wolf and Anne to let the NVA use their letterbox to receive information from the West. Gradually the arrangement escalated into Wolf and Anne letting the NVA use their phone and their flat. They became uncomfortable with the situation and seemingly were allowed to opt out. Leo's parents have concluded that asking to use their letterbox and phone was a ruse to establish how far they would be prepared to go.[64] Their account suggests

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[59] Red Love, p. 177.
[60] Mary Fulbrook, "Structures and Subjectivities in GDR History," p. 280.
[61] Red Love, p. 178.
[62] Gary Bruce, *The Firm: Inside the Story of the Stasi,* p. 144.
[63] Red Love, p. 194. and p. 191.
[64] Red Love, p. 193.

that it was possible for them to refuse to cooperate with the Stasi, but this level of personal control is not representative of similar accounts in other memory texts.[65]

Escape to the West and the 'Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart' in Childhood Memories

In Leo's childhood memories, reinterpreted for the present, he sees himself as always having wanted to escape to the West. In the 1970s, approximately 800 people escaped from the GDR every year, but even more significantly, up to 10,000 GDR citizens per year were legally re-settled outside the GDR.[66] These figures not only indicate the level of discontent in the GDR but perhaps also explain Leo's knowledge that leaving was an option and his pre-occupation with playing a game called 'Escape to the West'.[67] Leo continues with his escape theme when he recalls a school trip to the 'Anti-Fascist Protection Rampart' (the Berlin Wall). Leo describes how he and his friends were mainly concerned with devising ways to get over the wall. Drawing on an archive of old school essays, Leo recalls that after that trip he wrote an essay about why the border must be protected.[68] This school curriculum focus, even for 8 year olds, suggests the extent to which the GDR wanted to protect itself from threats, and points to the active construction of socialist citizens through education. In his essay Leo responded by saying that border protection was necessary 'so people didn't leave the GDR', but also that there were Fascists 'over there'. His teacher told him that the real reason for

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[65] See the following chapters for similar instances in both Uwe Tellkamp's novel *The Tower* and Christian Petzold's film *Barbara.*
[66] German History in Documents and Images, available at http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/about.cfm, accessed September 13, 2017.
[67] Red Love, p. 180.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

border protection was 'so that freedom is secured'.[69] His answer, although naively contrary to what was expected, does also suggests that he considered there was something 'over there' to be protected from.[70]

At school Leo learned about socialism by making tables and filling in charts, but he suggests that he quickly forgot the details. This may speak to the retention of information by school children, but it is also supported by historical scholarship. Grieder suggests that, despite constant promotion of Marxist-Leninst ideology, the majority of East Germans didn't embrace it.[71] Leo remembers the death of Leonid Brezhnev in 1982, but frames this incident as another opportunity to represent himself as an uninterested socialist. He recalls that his teacher was disappointed that the children didn't know who Brezhnev was.[72] More than once Leo defines life in the GDR as being like switching between TV channels. The 'truth' at school, was the one that got him high marks in citizenship class, and then there was the 'truth' that he learned at home.[73] This notion of the 'double life' has been seen to suggest that GDR citizens had come to terms with the regime and were 'obedient'.[74] However, it could also be indicative of the exact opposite, that GDR citizens coped with the regime by retreating into private spaces where they could express their true thoughts.[75]

Many East German children were members of the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ - Free German Youth) and it is a common theme in GDR memory texts. By remembering

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[71] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*, p 8.
[72] Red Love, p.182.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[74] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic,* p. 13*.*
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

that wearing a FDJ shirt was 'uncool' Leo undermines the FDJ and distances himself from socialist belonging.[76] Although Leo was not old enough for military service in the *Nationale Volksarmee*, as a 15 year old he was old enough for pre-military training camp. Leo remembers that they crawled through the woods and learned how to protect themselves from a nuclear attack. He says, 'it was all very easy: you just had to throw yourself on the ground and cover yourself with a tarpaulin, and nothing could happen'.[77] The East German author Uwe Tellkamp has a far more negative memory of a similar experience.[78] An important event in Leo's life was the rejection of his application to sit the *Abitur* (end of high school exam).[79] His parents worried that it was because of a complaint they had made.[80] Without an *Abitur* certificate it was not possible to apply to university. Leo was confronted with the State's intervention in his future, and he says, 'For the first time I felt the power of this state, which could simply determine what path one's life could take'.[81]

Leo claims that by the late 1980s there was a sense of the GDR becoming 'mellower' and remembers that people were becoming more direct, that messages were no longer hidden, and that defiance was no longer as disguised. However, there are also a number of documented violent clashes, arrests and expulsions from the GDR at this time.[82] Wolf claims that in 1986 he was confident enough to

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[76] Leander Haußmann, *Sonnenalle*, (Boje Buck Produktion, 1999).
Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 169.
[77] Red Love, p. 185.
[78] Uwe Tellkamp, *The Tower: Tales from a Lost Country* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016). This novel is the subject of Chapter 2.
[79] Red Love, p. 215.
[80] Red Love, p. 186. Leo's father had complained to the school after pre-military training camp because Maxim had been allowed to use a sub-machine gun.
[81] Red Love, p. 216.
[82] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*, p. 94.

play a 'game with the State'.[83] As an artist he juxtaposed colourful images from outside the GDR with grey images of the GDR. Wolf claimed that the GDR's rules had become less clear and 'no one could tell what was allowed or forbidden'.[84] Wolf remembers that he felt as though the State was just a façade and that there would be no consequence for his actions, until a Stasi man forced his way into their flat, and four men sat outside in their grey Lada car, watching.

Leo remembers that protest meetings were mainly peaceful, but that the Stasi were present, watching and waiting.[85] Leo reminds us that he was aware of the violence in Tiananmen Square just a few months earlier, but nevertheless, paints a picture of increasing confidence and a willingness to speak out. Leo frames the months before the fall of the Berlin Wall as a period of possibility, but of fluctuating fear. He observed 'A moment ago the street still belonged to us. Now we're orderly citizens again, saying thank you nicely to the officers, glad to be allowed home'.[86]

In collective memory the end of the GDR has been framed as a peaceful revolution, and much of the violence and threat has been forgotten. Films like *Bornholmer Straße* (Bornholm Street, 2014) draw on the communicative and political memory that frames the State as not knowing what it was saying, and represents the border police as bumbling and dithery.[87] Leo was arrested on 8th October 1989, the day after the GDR's 40th anniversary. Leo and many others were taken to a courtyard, enclosed by a barbed wire topped wall. Leo recalls that he was shouted at and

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[83] Red Love, p. 233.
[84] *Ibid.*, 234.
[85] Red Love, p. 246.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 247.
[87] Christian Schwochow, *Bornholmer Straße*, (*Bornholm Street*), (Degeto Film, 2014).

made to stand up all night.[88] He remembers how he was very frightened and how the first time the interrogator raised his voice he told him everything.[89] His mother made a recording of his first telling of this event, he notes, with some embarrassment, that he had felt dominated by the interviewer and had not felt brave at all. One wonders about the inconsistency between Leo's claim that there was nothing much to be afraid of, and the fact he gave in quickly. This event and Leo's response to it seems to emphasise the real and threatening power of the State.[90]

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the opening of other Berlin borders was a media moment screened around the world, even to East Germans via their West German television channels, and has come to define the end of the GDR. However, this mediated moment devalues the courage needed by non-party East German citizens to stand against the regime over decades, as well as the sense of depression and dislocation that many East Germans experienced shortly after unification.[91] Perhaps as an acknowledgement of the media focus on the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the less than euphoric outcome of unification for many East Germans, Leo remembers that his mother and father stayed at home, went to bed early and were not caught up in that moment. In hindsight we know the significance of November 9th, 1989, but for all that demonstrations had been building, East Germans did not know how significant that night would be, or how the Stasi and the NVA would be ordered to respond. Leo comments that many East Germans saw the revolution as an opportunity to renew the GDR, in a compromise between capitalism and

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[88] Red Love, p. 249.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 252.
[91] Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation* (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), p. 273.

Socialism – a 'Third Way'.[92] According to Leo, after the fall of the Berlin Wall his mother quickly sensed that compromise 'had just been a dream'.[93]

Leo recounts how quickly East Germans became disaffected with unification. Many East Germans felt that they had been downgraded into second-class citizens as the national and cultural narratives focused on differences between *Ossis* (East Germans) and *Wessis* (West Germans).[94] Leo describes how Western officials were friendly, but embarrassing. That he felt 'like a bushman being greeted by white men in civilisation', speaks to tension in the ways *Ossis* and *Wessis* negotiated their needs and relationships.[95]

Leo drew on his individual and family memory in his memoir, but also used a significant number of additional research materials, including historiographical accounts and the Stasi archive, as well as his family archive. A large proportion of the memoir is based on his maternal grandfather's and parents' experiences and memories of the GDR. Leo has grown up with his grandfather's heroic war stories, but he also drew on his grandfather's published memoir and his Stasi file to construct his memory. The little he knows of his paternal grandfather comes not through first-hand experience, but through his own father's interpretations and retellings of the past and interviews for his memoir. Many of Leo's interpretations of his parents' GDR past, although touched with his individual experience, are based on archival research and research interviews. Leo's memoir positions East Germany as the 'other' and to some extent positions the fall of the Berlin Wall as

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[92] Red Love, p. 242.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[94] Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation*, p. 279.
[95] Red Love, p. 257.

one of his most significant memories. Leo does not seem to mourn the loss of the GDR, although he acknowledges that some people, his father included, may have positive memories of life in the GDR. In remembering his mother's and grandfather Gerhard's engagement with the State he seeks to represent some of the idealism of the early GDR. Leo explores some of the dissent of the middle years of the GDR, which he illustrates through the political differences between his mother and father, and the generational differences between his paternal grandfather and his parents.

Conclusion

To understand autobiographical memory texts one must consider the writer's situation and purpose. Leo is a well-known and respected Berlin journalist. I suggest that in this memoir Leo drew on his East German credentials to write an engaging account of the GDR, which would resonate with a wide audience. Even though Leo's memoir is framed as the memoir of a GDR family, in essence it is the story of his maternal grandfather and mother. His father is present to some extent, as is his paternal Wehrmacht-serving grandfather who works as a counterpoint to his heroic, partisan, ideological maternal grandfather. His own experiences account for a small portion of his memoir. His grandmothers and siblings are all but absent from the story, which suggests that it is a public, political story that is being told, rather than one that focuses on everyday experiences in his family. Leo links the history of his family to the history of the GDR, but in a way that often seems distant from his grandfathers' and parents' individual memory, rather he uses their experiences as an allegory of the GDR. He describes their encounters with the State, but does not explore the emotional effects of living in East Germany.

It is of note that Leo frames his memoir as that of a GDR family, rather than a German family. The GDR is almost universally framed in this way, as separate from 'German' history.[96] The story that Leo tells about the GDR is measured and yet ambiguous. He wants to suggest that it was possible to live in the GDR beyond state influence and yet many of his vignettes suggest that this was not so. However, Leo's memoir is rich with detail and presents a complex, yet unresolved reflection and interpretation of the GDR.

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[96] Anna Von der Goltz, "Making Sense of East Germany's 1968: Multiple Trajectories and contrasting Memories," *Memory Studies* vol. 6, no. 1 (2013), p. 54. In this article she highlights the need for East German perspectives to be included in German memories.

Chapter 2

Constructing Individual Memories of the GDR in a Historical Novel *The Tower: Tales from a Lost Country*, by Uwe Tellkamp

In this chapter I will explore how the author Uwe Tellkamp has drawn on his lived experience and constructed memories of the GDR in his historical novel *Der Turm: Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land* (*The Tower: Tales from a Lost Country, 2014*).[1] Historical novels have the capacity to present complex visions and interpretations of the past by combining research and imagination.[2] Authors do not need to have first-hand lived experience of an era, or event in to incorporate it effectively into a historical narrative. However, what is significant about Tellkamp's novel, and despite his assertion that the novel is not autobiographical, is how effectively he draws on and constructs his own memories of the GDR in a historical interpretation of the past. As a source of individual and cultural memory, it reveals how Tellkamp remembers the GDR. Although Tellkamp constructs a fictional and metaphorical world in his novel he also constructs an 'authentic' representation of the GDR which is recognisable to readers who experienced the GDR in similar ways.[3] The subjective way that Tellkamp remembers and

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[1] Uwe Tellkamp, *Der Turm: Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land* (Frankfurt am Main: Surkamp Verlag, 2008)
The English translation was first published in 2014 to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.
Uwe Tellkamp, *The Tower: Tales from a Lost Country* (New York: Allen Lane, 2014)
The novel was also reinterpreted as a film for German television, directed by Christian Schwochow in 2012.
[2] Sarah Pinto, "Emotional histories and historical emotions: Looking at the Past in historical novels," *Rethinking History* vol. 14, no. 2 (2010): p. 191.
[3] amazon.de - Kerstin Spriesterbach, 'Wie je die DDR-Gesellschaft jever Zeit erlebt hat, findet im Turm viel Erlebtes wieder. Die Figuren sind ebenso zerrissen, wie die DDR am Ende ihrer Tage selbst'.

represents the GDR provides valuable insights into his lived experience and memory of the GDR.

A Fictional Frame for Individual Memory

Uwe Tellkamp was born in 1968 in Dresden. He lost his university place and the opportunity to train to be a doctor because of his *politische Unzuverlässigkeit* (political unreliability).[4] He served in the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA – People's Army) and was imprisoned in October 1989 for refusing to break up a demonstration in Dresden. He was only admitted to university after unification.[5] Tellkamp still lives in Dresden and is now a novelist.[6] His book won the German Book Prize in 2008, a prize awarded to the best German language novel of the year. [7] Some critics described *Der Turm* as the long awaited '*Wenderoman'* (unification novel).[8] Some readers have commented that with 1004 pages and complex sentences, and structure, the novel is long and difficult to read.[9] But, these features are also indicative of Tellkamp's desire to memorialise the complexities of the GDR past. [10] In the novel Tellkamp draws on his individual memory, to reconstruct the streets, houses, buildings and spaces of Dresden, and the experiences of a bourgeois milieu. He emphasises that descriptions of the villas, the characters and their experiences, are based on his individual, social and

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[4] "Bei Uwe Tellkamp ticken die Uhren der DDR noch," *Welt24*, 13.09.08, accessed July 31, 2017, https://www.welt.de/kultur/article2438531/Bei-Uwe-Tellkamp-ticken-die-Uhren-der-DDR-noch.html. Tellkamp had been found reading poems by dissident author Wolf Biermann, and Hermann Hesse's autobiography.

[5] "Bei Uwe Tellkamp ticken die Uhren der DDR noch," *Welt24*, 13.09.08

[6] "Suhrkamp/Insel Autoren Überblick," accessed June 16, 2017, http://www.suhrkamp.de/autoren/uwe_tellkamp_7386.html

[7] "Uwe Tellkamp gewinnt Deutschen Buchpreis," *Zeit Online*, 13.10.08, accessed 31 July, 2017, http://www.zeit.de/online/2008/42/deutscher-buchpreis

[8] Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 102.

[9] amazon.de - Norbert Albrecht 08.02.2017 and Helmut 15.04.2016 .

[10] Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," p. 102.

collective memory. This is consistent with Sarah Pinto's argument that historical novels are often 'carefully constructed, fastidiously researched and historiographically self-aware considerations of the past'. [11] Tellkamp's experiences of living in the suburb of *Weiße Hirsch* in the 1970s, is particularly evident in his construction of *der Turm* district.[12] *Weiße Hirch* is a steep area of 19th century villas and Tellkamp's familiarity with this area allows him to write evocatively about the villas and their post-unification dilapidation; evident in his description of the Italian House,

> 'No side of the house was like any other. The stairwell stuck out like the bow of a ship…The portico, an Oriental-looking pavilion set in the masonry, was lit by the hall windows, which had been decorated, as in a Dolphin's Lair, with flowers and plants….. In many places, the plaster revealed the bricks that had been eaten away by time and rain.'[13]

That the houses are so pretty they seem to belong in a fairy-tale, aids Tellkamp's construction of the metaphorical 'otherness' of the GDR that is significant to his literary construction. He provides insight into aspects of GDR society such as the health system, publishing, high culture, education and the military as well as everyday life and the effects of pre-GDR history, on the GDR. The novel deals specifically with these GDR themes, rather than ahistorical stories of love and loss.[14] Tellkamp also draws on his individual and communicative memory to provide an edited range of representative characters, events and agendas; he makes use of pre-existing cultural and political memory to inform the themes and

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[11] Sarah Pinto, "Emotional histories and historical emotions: Looking at the past in historical novels," p. 192.

[12] "Zeitverschiebung: Uwe Tellkamps Dresden," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 06.10.08, accessed July 31, 2017, http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buchmesse-2008/buecher/literatur-zeitverschiebung-uwe-tellkamps-dresden-1715194.html

[13] Uwe Tellkamp, *The Tower: Tales from a Lost Country* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016), p. 17. All further references to the novel are to this edition.

[14] Sarah Pinto, "Emotional histories and historical emotions: Looking at the Past in historical novels," p. 192.

plot of the novel and claims that there are real models for everything in the novel.[15] Tellkamp's memories are so rich that, as with Maxim Leo's memoir, his novel can be considered to be both an archive and a contribution to contemporary memory culture.[16] Tellkamp uses the concept of space creatively, constructing a representation of Dresden that is not topographically accurate, but which allows him to comment on the State and its relationship with GDR citizens. *Ostrom* (East Rome), for example, is a fictional island, linked to Dresden by a bridge, where the 'State' resides:

> '[t]here was very little that was regarded as more suspicious in the district than a visit 'over there', as they would say, their scorn expressed in the avoidance of its real name'.[17]

Although Tellkamp had similar school and army experiences to one of the characters, he is emphatic that his text is not autobiographical.[18] Tellkamp explains that his characters, although based on real people, are composed of different pieces put together.[19] This allows him to replace 'factual accuracy' with evocative and representative detail that produces an 'authentic' representation of the past.

Tellkamp has noted the differences between his life and his characters; the Stasi did not approach his father, as they approach Richard Hoffmann in the novel.[20] This seems to be a way of distancing himself from writing an autobiographical account and allowing for creativity. What is significant about this fictional

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[16] Andrea Geier, 'Literary Images of the GDR Era,' p. 102.
Maxim Leo's memoir "Red Love: The Story of an East German Family" (2014). See Chapter 1.
[17] The Tower, p. 94.
[18] The Tower, p. vi
[19] "Interview mit Uwe Tellkamp, Artz und Schriftsteller: "Das ganze Thema ist immer noch radioaktiv," *artzteblatt.de*, 2009, accessed June 16, 2017,
https://www.aerzteblatt.de/archiv/63634/Interview-mit-Uwe-Tellkamp-Arzt-und-Schriftsteller-Das-ganze-Thema-ist-immer-noch-radioaktiv
[20] *Ibid.*

treatment of the GDR past is not that it combines autobiographical memory with a literary approach, but that Tellkamp presents a haunting, metaphorical re-construction. Although Tellkamp's novel can be read for its realism and its attention to detail in representing the GDR past, the metaphorical world created by Tellkamp provides an additional layer of understanding and a greater sense of how the GDR may have been experienced. He describes the GDR as 'a country with a strange disease' where young people are old, where they are 'ruled over by old men' and lie in a 'deathlike sleep' and that 'in the air there was a veil through which one breathed and spoke'.[21]

About the Novel

Der Turm is an epic, 72 chapter, 1004 page, fictional construct of the GDR. It is set in Dresden and weaves the generational story of a number of families who live in a fictional area of Dresden called *Der Turm*. The main characters live in isolation from the State, in faded 19th century villas. They use music, literature and knowledge as a form of opposition to the State (or at least – non-recognition of the real, existing GDR).[22] Their homes are symbolic refuges for their bourgeois identities.[23] The novel is set in the 1980s and as in Maxim Leo's memoir, the main focus is on urban intellectuals and their everyday lives as they live within the confines of the GDR State.[24] The main characters are the father and son, Richard and Christian Hoffmann and Richard's brother-in-law, Meno Rohde. Richard

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[21] The Tower, pp. 916-917.
[22] Stephen Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 51.
[23] Matthias Fiedler, "German Crossroads: Vision of the Past in German Cinema after Reunification," in *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse Since 1990*, ed. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), p. 138.
[24] The main exception to this is Christian Hoffman's experiences in the Army and as a worker in a chemical factory.

Hoffmann is a surgeon. At the start of the novel Christian is in his final years of school, and then goes on to be a soldier in the *Nationale Volksarmee*. Meno is an editor for an East German publishing house. Focus on these characters, the worlds they inhabit, and their interactions with other members of GDR society, gives Tellkamp space to explore GDR society and issues such as the health system, publishing, school and the military. Meno's character has two roles. Firstly he allows Tellkamp and the reader, to access GDR culture, a world where literature functions as a public forum and is politically significant.[25] More importantly, Meno's voice provides the metaphorical 'other worldliness'.

The title of the book is significant in a number of ways. *Der Turm,* while suggesting an area that is isolated from Dresden, also references German cultural memory, and alludes to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship) and the secretive *Turmgesellshaft* (Tower Community) that he joins.[26] In turn, this reference to German literary culture relates to the novel's focus on, and respect for, classical cultural heritage, and the musical and literary niche that the *Türmer* (inhabitants of The Tower) inhabit.[27] Through their respect for classical German culture the *Türmer* focus on the past, dislocate themselves from the present and attempt to isolate themselves from the State. The subtitle, 'Stories from a Lost Land' suggests that the GDR is now lost or gone, but also that the nature of GDR society meant that it was already lost and it was this 'lostness' that brought about its downfall.[28]

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[25] Stephen, Brockmann, "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond," p. 48.
[26] Goethe *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship) 1795.
[27] Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," p. 108.
Matthias Fiedler "German Crossroads: Vision of the Past in German Cinema after Reunification," p. 137.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 110

Tellkamp's novel was published one year earlier than Leo's memoir; they are from a similar moment in German memory culture. The novel confirms and reflects recent historiography of the GDR that cast society and state as being messily entangled.[29] T.J. Reed suggests that there is 'no shred of *Ostalgic* sentiment' in the novel.[30] That Tellkamp's book was published in English to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, suggests that it is conceived as part of the memorialisation of the GDR. That the book is set in Dresden rather than Berlin, shifts memory culture's focus from the Berlin centred 'end of the GDR' narrative to Dresden, and adds nuance to representations of the demonstrations and civil unrest in the last months of the GDR. Clarke suggests that the descriptions of the lost world of music, literature and other esoteric pursuits, may encourage the reader to become nostalgic.[31] However, any nostalgia is indicative of nostalgia for 19th century culture and grandeur – nostalgia for the pursuits of the *Bildungsbürgerturm* (educated middle class), not nostalgia for the GDR.[32] Geier argues that the level of detail in Tellkamp's descriptions of objects and the physical environment places both the inhabitants of *Der Turm* and the reader in a kind of timeless past. For example, in the following phrase Tellkamp combines lyrical language with GDR specifics of watchtowers and soldiers:

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[29] Scott Moranda, "Towards a more holistic history? Historians and East German everyday life," *Social History* vol. 35, no. 3 (2010), p. 333.

[30] T.J. Reed, " 'In that dawn….': Revisiting the *Wende*," *Oxford German Studies* vol. 38, no. 3 (2009): p. 263.

[31] David Clarke, "Space, Time and Power: The Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*," *German Life and Letters*, vol. 63, no. 4 (2010), p. 491.

[32] D. Clarke, "Space, Time and Power: The Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*," p. 491. Turmtour http://www.hochtouren-dresden.de/14.html (details of the walking tour from the Dresden tourist office)

'[t]he needles of moonlight were sucked into the darkness in front of the watchtowers of East Rome and faded at the bridge, across which soldiers were heading for the checkpoint on Oberer Plan'.[33]

Tellkamp's use of literary imagery allows the reader to experience the GDR as a sensory experience.[34] Through Tellkamp's novel it is possible to 'experience' the GDR, this distinguishes it from Leo's less emotive memories and limited references to the everyday. Leo tells his readers about his life in the GDR, but Tellkamp creates the GDR and leaves an imprint of its dark, suffocating heaviness, rather than vignettes of everyday life.

Memory as Literature

In the novel Tellkamp juxtaposes a realistic and detailed account of the everyday life of his intellectual characters, while describing how they function in GDR society and how the State impacts on their lives, with a dream-like construct that sits within, and at odds with the realism of many of the novel's themes. The use of italics is a re-occurring device in the novel, which separates parts of the novel from the representations of everyday realism.

Most of the characters exist outside of the harsh realities of GDR life, cocooned to some extent in *Der Turm,* until the State encroaches on their private sphere. The everyday is marked by a withdrawal and disconnect from the State into a world of music and literature or esoteric pursuits, such as the categorisation of moths and butterflies.[35] Clarke describes the retreat to *Der Turm* as 'a strategy for wintering

[33] The Tower, p. 8.
[34] David Clarke, "Space, Time and Power: The Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*," p. 496. Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," pp. 111 – 112.
[35] David Clarke, "Space, Time and Power: The Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*," p. 491. The Tower, p. 272.

out the SED while maintaining …autonomy from that rule'. Tellkamp seems to be suggesting that a *Nischengesellschaft* of sorts could exist. The range of characters in the novel means that Tellkamp is able to represent a broad range of perceptions and a complex social network. The drab realism and hardships of the GDR are exemplified in incidents that concern shortages in housing, making do with limited choices of foods, and lack of imagination in fashion and hairstyles. Criticism of the State is not treated as a distinct theme, but is woven into the everyday:

> '[w]e got her hair style from one of Wiener's magazines (from the West), you can forget what's in ours'.[36]

Obviously the reader knows that the GDR has ended, and that all these systems will come to an end, but Tellkamp manages to both preface the end of the GDR, with the imagery of the ticking clock, as well as describe the GDR without hindsight. That neither the characters nor the narrator know that the GDR will end further contributes to the readers' immersion in the GDR experience. Whereas Leo juxtaposed his Eastern self with the West, and seeks to understand the past from the present, Tellkamp's novel is more inward focusing. It is not about the East's relationship with the West, but about a closed East Germany. Memory theorists are aware of the complex relationship between the past and the present, but in Tellkamp's novel there is a sense that he has attempted to situate his memories in the past and has reduced the impact of unification on his interpretation of the GDR. Additionally, there are limited everyday references to West Germany. By not privileging these themes, Tellkamp's novel exemplifies the post-millennial trend of combining everyday realism and focus on individual agency, with the inability to totally live outside the strictures of the State. The historiographical detail of escape to the West and divided families is encapsulated in characters of Regine and

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 54 and p. 58.

Jürgen. Jürgen is already in the West, and Regine is waiting to follow with their child Hansi. This emphasises Regine's lack of control, and the emotional pressure of not knowing if she will be allowed to leave.[37]

A significant thread in the novel is the sense of being wary of what you say, of assessing who is dangerous and about learning to lie convincingly in a 'life [that] was a tightrope'.[38] A friend who was an actor teaches Christian 'how to deliberately turn red or pale, how to flatter someone with a certain amount of dignity, how to say stupid things with a serious expression', and 'to drape them like a disguise over [his] true thoughts'.[39] In other instances the characters avoid bugs and surveillance by taking 'problem walks' or passing notes.[40] Contrary to Leo's assertion in his memoir *Red Love* that it was possible to avoid becoming a Stasi informer, in *Der Turm* Dr Richard Hoffmann is approached by the Stasi and because of information from the 1950s, from when he informed on a colleague, as well as significant personal information, they enforce his compliance.[41] Richard Hoffmann knows that as a doctor he will not be given an exit visa: '[t]hey can't simply hold us here!', says his wife, '[t]hat's exactly what they can do' replies Richard. They are also concerned of the effects on their children if they do not comply with what the State asks. The incident illustrates the complexities behind decisions to 'inform' and informs understandings of those who informed on friends and colleagues.[42]

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[37] The Tower, p. 586.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 332.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 332.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 282 and p. 382
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 283.
[42] The Tower, p. 287.

The novel is set in the 1980s and ends, as East Germany did, with the fall of the Berlin Wall. However, the novel ends abruptly, without any of the traditional sense of euphoria. There are no scenes of celebrating crowds excitedly crossing over to the West. Instead there is a perhaps exhausted sense of relief that fresh air is sweeping through the GDR. The book ends with a semi colon, and a blank page, as if to suggest that something new is possible, but denies the significance of the fall of the Berlin Wall as the defining moment.[43]

> '.....but then, all at once…
> the clocks struck 9 November, 'Germany, our Fatherland',
> their chimes knocking on the Brandenburg Gate:'[44]

Although this book was written and published in 2008, almost 20 years after the end of the GDR, Tellkamp focuses on remembering the everyday GDR, as his characters experienced it. Even though the characters battle to distance themselves from the State, they do not live outside of its reach. In *Der Turm* they attempt to construct a *Nischengesellschaft* in which cultural artefacts of the past are celebrated, and through which they identify themselves as distinct from the State and the working class. Andrew Plowman sees Tellkamp's novel as pitting 'state' against 'society' and the reiteration of the *Nischengesellschaft* interpretation of the GDR as a cliché.[45] However, it is illustrated through incidents where the State conflicts with the inhabitants of *Der Turm* that it was not always possible for the *Türmer* to remain in their timeless world.[46] Tellkamp's novel and the construction of Tellkamp's memories of the GDR contributes to historical

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[43] T.J. Reed, " 'In that dawn….': Revisiting the *Wende*," p. 263.
[44] The Tower, p. 1004.
[45] Andrew Plowman, " "Eine Armee wie jede andere auch"? Writers and Filmmakers Remember the Nationale Volksarmee," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 121.
[46] David Clarke, "Space, Time and Power: The Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*," p. 498.

understandings of the GDR that also allows readers to experience the complexity of everyday life.[47]

Memory theory suggests that the media used to represent memory can impact on how memories are created.[48] This suggests that the construction of memory, be it a composite of individual, social and communicative, political and existing cultural memory, is marked by the way in which it is remembered.[49] Although Leo and Tellkamp have similar biographies and generational experience they have chosen to remember the GDR through different text based media. Tellkamp uses the qualities of fiction to construct and represent his memory of the GDR and identify concerns and benefits of using fictional texts to communicate historical narratives. Although he is keen to emphasise the fictive nature of his work, Tellkamp's memory of the GDR draws on both his lived experience and broader social and cultural memory. He is released from the confines of writing about known characters and uses literary techniques that create a less literal, but more revealing metaphorical world. Maxim Leo's memoir although engaging and interpretive was written more figuratively.

In addition to the complexities of the plot and the detail of the everyday, a significant feature of this novel is that Tellkamp overlays the realism with a mythical construction of Dresden. He does this with the topographical/spatial construction of the novel, as well as Meno's voice as narrator. For all Tellkamp's

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[47] Dennis Tate, "Cultural Resistance to the Iconic Images of November 1989," in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. Renate Rechtien and Dennis Tate (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p .13.
[48] Astril Erll, "The Power of Fiction: Novels and Films as Media of Cultural Memory," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (de Gruyter: Berlin, 2010), p. 389.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 389.

attention to detail in his evocative descriptions of the streets and their 19th century villas, in which he draws on his individual memory, there is something uncomfortable about the Dresden that Tellkamp creates. The Dresden that Tellkamp describes is a mix of factual accuracy and metaphorical construction, which seems to hold the characters in stasis. Even though the *Türmer* have created a *Nischengesellschaft*, events in the hospital, at school and in the army exemplify the fragility of their niche and confirm that there was little escape from the ideological reach of the regime.[50] The ticking clocks and the sense that they were 'stiff and captive' and hidden behind a fairy-tale hedge of roses, as in the Brothers Grimm's dark fairy-tale of Sleeping Beauty, emphasise their oppression and sense of waiting to be released. In the German edition (Surkamp Verlag 2008), the inside cover had a map of the significant sites of the narrative which indicates the significance of Tellkamp's use of space in his novel, and his memory of the politics of space in state socialism.[51] That there is no map in subsequent editions may have contributed to some readers' difficulties with the novel. However, in Tellkamp's Dresden, spatial separation is symbolic of a dysfunctional society. Dresden is divided into three areas. *Der Turm*, is high on a hill, away from the city centre, and is the refuge of the Hoffmanns and their intellectual middleclass friends and acquaintances. The party leadership live on the island of *Ostrom* (East Rome), the centre of socialist ideology. They are separated from *Der Turm* district by a bridge, guarded at both ends, and for which GDR citizens need a visa to cross. This separation alludes to the State's dislocation from the needs of GDR citizens.[52] The third key area of Dresden in the novel is the city centre, an area representative of

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[50] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic,* p. 13.
[51] David Clarke, Space, Time and Power: the Chronotopes of Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm*, p. 492.
[52] Matthias Fiedler, "German Crossroads: Vision of the Past in German Cinema after Reunification," p. 139.

public and socialist space, described as 'culturally and emotionally depleted'; a space for socialist rallies, dominated by 1950's socialist architecture. It rarely features in the book, until the end when the 1989 demonstrations start to reclaim the space. The demonstrations bring the *Türmer* down from their reclusive tower and they start to engage with the State. Prior to that, the city centre is shown as a dysfunctional space where there are no goods in the shops, reflecting the inconsistencies of the socialist economy.[53] Through this imagined construction of Dresden, Tellkamp can comment on fractures in GDR society and the State's distance from its citizens. These spatial distinctions can also be seen as a reflection of the opposing ideologies of the State's political and public face and the private and intimate space of *Der Turm* and as a repeated reference to the political division within the GDR.[54] The characters and circumstances of Uwe Tellkamp's novel mean that he has constructed a memory text that adds detail and complexity to his understanding of the GDR and the small details and descriptive language create and allow the reader to experience and feel the GDR.[55]

That Tellkamp's 1000 page book ends with a four-page list of characters highlights its complexity. The literary construction of this memory text means that it achieves more than the exploration and representation of a group of familiar GDR themes, although it does that too. When Tellkamp reconstructs the everyday GDR he uses a similar set of themes to Maxim Leo and his memories affirm current historiographical understandings of the GDR. This is not a memory text which questions established narratives of the GDR, but one which creates complexity by

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[53] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 139.
[55] Andrea Geier, "Literary Images of the GDR Era," p. 111.

proposing competing narrative positions and justifications, and captures the details of lived experience.

The early chapters of the novel create the metaphorical framework, establish some of the topographical concepts and establish the significance of *Der Turm*. The novel starts with an 'Overture', which not only foreshadows the significance of classical culture in the novel, but also immediately frames the GDR metaphorically as 'Atlantis' and invokes the German children's character of the *Sandmännchen* (Sandman) who sprinkles sleep over the GDR. [56] This section, written from the perspective of Meno Rhode, one of the main characters, describes the GDR as a place where 'swill from the sewers crept' and invokes the industry and pollution of the GDR.[57] Meno also introduces the imagery of clocks, which is a recurring theme in the novel. Meno lists all the clocks he can hear, including the West German time-signal that was being listened to openly by East Germans. He seems to suggest that East Germany will 'wake from its paralysis', like the hands of the clock that seems to be paralysed, and yet slowly shift.[58]

The first chapter describes Christian Hoffmann's return to *Der Turm*. He is 17 and returning home from his boarding school for his father's birthday party. Tellkamp draws attention to Christian's musical skills and to the literature he is reading. As Christian ascends by funicular railway to *Der Turm*, he sees the quirkily named 19th century villas, Cobweb House, Caravel, Elephant, and the House with a Thousand Eyes of Tellkamp's youth, and it becomes clear that this is an area of painters and writers. Below he can see the watchtowers of *Ostrom*, the bridge with

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[56] The Tower, p. xv.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. xi.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

its checkpoints, and the soldiers. In this way, Tellkamp juxtaposes the cultured musical and literary world, with the State. The everyday is invoked in the comments of telephones that do not work and the fifty-metre queue to buy hats recently delivered from Yugoslavia.[59] There is a sense that the villas and culture are a refuge from the State. Richard Hoffmann's party is an opportunity to focus on the seemingly comfortable middle-class lives of the Hoffmanns and their friends. There are apples, pears, oranges and 'real bananas'. The food looks so good that they are sure 'it's from the other side'.[60] This is one of the few overt comparisons between East and West Germany. Another episode at the party emphasises Richard Hoffmann's irritation with the State because of lack of medical supplies. He complains, but his colleague is made nervous by the conversation and asks him to be quiet.

Through the character of Christian Hoffmann, Tellkamp is able to explore his remembered relationship between school, political education, army training and life chances. Tellkamp is more autobiographically similar to Christian than any other character in the novel. As Tellkamp was considered *politisch unzuverlässig* (politically unreliable) because of his reading material, Christian also finds himself in trouble, caught reading a banned biography of a Nazi U-boat commander. Christian's character allows Tellkamp to describe the link between school and life opportunities, and how to survive socialist ideology and the State. Meno asks, 'And the teacher, is he dangerous?'[61] Christian replies that he is left in peace if he 'regurgitates' what he is told. Meno's advice for his nephew is to walk with his head

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[59] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

down, 'humble like the dust'. In this we can see how Christian is taught to live with the State and an ideology he does not agree with.

Christian wants to become a doctor like his father, but he is warned by his principal that he will need more than good grades, 'what use to us are traitors…a sense of social responsibility is more important than anything'. To gauge Christian's socialist commitment and worthiness for medical study he is expected to 'assent to three years service' in the army. Although only eighteen months service was necessary and the rest was 'voluntary'. In his meeting with the school principal Christian's university application was clearly open on the desk and is indicative of his lack of choice.[62] His parents had schooled him to answer questions at this 'commitment meeting' without dangerous lapses in socialist thought as a way of demonstrating his social responsibility.[63] School is shown to be a place of silence, where any rebellion against the system is punished. Both at school and in the army Christian is punished, and he eventually loses his place at university. On each occasion his family uses a lawyer called Sperber to argue Christian's case. Although they need Sperber's help they do not trust him asking, 'What if he's one of them?'. This scene is one of many that illustrate the doubt about knowing who can be trusted and who to speak openly in front of. Sperber's office is on one of Tellkamp's mythical islands, separated from *Der Turm* by a narrow metal bridge for which Richard and Meno needed permits to cross. The meeting with Sperber is indicative of the inconstancies and luck needed to survive in Tellkamp's GDR; Sperber has two similar cases to deal with, and whether he will takes Christian's

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[62] Andrew Plowman, " "Eine Armee wie jede andere auch"? Writers and Filmmakers Remember the Nationale Volksarmee," p. 120.
[63] The Tower, p. 329 and p. 323.

case is dependent on the toss of a coin.[64] Christian is not expelled from school, but his file is 'marked' and he is required to attend a 'pre-military training camp'. When Christian wears his uniform people around him fall silent. In an example of the effects of the pre-GDR past on GDR citizens, a former officer of Rommel's Africa Corps says to Christian, 'We thought we'd paid. I saw lads like you die like flies, and then you turn up here in that outfit'. He tells Christian to go home and only wear his uniform when he has to.[65] Tellkamp's descriptions of Christian's school and pre-military training are more threatening, than similar experiences described by Maxim Leo. The author suggests that for Christian wearing the uniform out in public was a form of public suffering. For Christian, the pre-military training, compulsory for all fifteen and sixteen year olds, and army life proper, bear many similarities.[66] He defines it as a process of humiliation and of having his weaknesses exposed.[67] Leaving for national service, 'the tram set off, leaving behind it Simmchen's clockmaker's shop, ….the ticking wall clocks at Pieper's Clocks…'[68] the suggestion being that in the army the clocks would no longer tick. Christian feared that he would be made to forget poetry and language '…that they would manages to cut out part of his brain'.[69] The chapters concerning Christian's army experiences often start with a quote from the GDR guide book '*What it Means to be a Soldier*', which provides a comparison between the ideals and the realities of Christian's experience. In addition, Christian is initially able to voice his experiences in a series of letters to his mother. This literary device give the reader access to Christian's thoughts and interpretations. Despite the significance of pre-

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 329.
[65] The Tower, p. 440
[66] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 83.
[67] The Tower, p. 444.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 537.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 539.

military training and the army in Christian's life, as in many other accounts, Grieder maintains that the GDR sought to avoid military conflict and that the army can be seen more as a means of showing commitment to the GDR.[70] Through the total removal of privacy and the struggle to keep his individual-self alive, Christian battles with the NVA as the 'totalitarian heart' of the GDR.[71] His letters to his mother become increasingly fragmentary, as he is unable to articulate or share his experiences with her. Plowden suggests that in Tellkamp's memories of the NVA there is a reluctance to remember the army and the process of conscription as 'normal'.[72]

Conclusion

By constructing his individual memories in this novel, Tellkamp has been able to construct a detailed, and broad representation of the GDR past. The literary nature of the text is central to creating the GDR as a sensory experience and giving access to the interiority of the characters. Tellkamp's complex network of characters allows the reader to experience the conflicts and dilemmas of GDR society and the ways that people supported, conflicted with, and accommodated the State. Pinto argues that historical novels are 'a crucial way in which pasts are talked about, written and lived'.[73] I suggest that as memory constructed through literature, Tellkamp's novel is highly evocative of the GDR past. Not only is his individual memory detailed and insightful, but creative license into the interiority of his characters and the layers of metaphorical and spatial divisions create an

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[70] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*, p. 122.
[71] The Tower, p. 928.
Andrew Plowman, " "Eine Armee wie jede andere auch"? Writers and Filmmakers Remember the Nationale Volksarmee," p. 120.
[72] Ibid., p.123.
[73] Sarah Pinto, "Emotional histories and historical emotions: Looking at the past in historical novels," p. 200.

'authentic' sense of State dominance of everyday life and East Germans' efforts to negotiate that dominance.

Chapter 3

Memory of a Filmmaker
Christian Petzold's Historical Feature Film *'Barbara'*

Christian Petzold's film is set in a small town in East Germany in 1980, and focuses on daily life and the implications of political dissent.[1] Barbara is a doctor and has been removed from her position at the prestigious Charité hospital in Berlin, because she applied to leave the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The film presents a brutal portrayal of the GDR State, but the brutality is juxtaposed against a nuanced representation of everyday life, not only in its attention to material culture, but in the complexities of the characters and their motivations.

Christian Petzold's historical feature film was written and produced in 2012 and was listed in Germany as one of the top 100 grossing films of the year.[2] It was awarded a Silver Bear in the category of Best Director at the Berlin Film Festival and named the best feature film of 2012 by the Association of German Film Critics who identified his film as an 'authentic' representation of the personal experiences of those who had lived in the GDR.[3]

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[1] Christian Petzold, *Barbara*, (Schramm Film, 2012) All subsequent references to the film are to this 2012 edition and the translations are my own.

[2] "Petzold's 'Barbara' challenges US cinema-goers," *Deutsche Welle*
"Mitten ins Herz," *SZ.denewspapermagazine*, 07.03.12, accessed August 8, 2017,
http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/barbara-im-kino-blonde-gesellschaftskritik-1.1302021

[3] "Internationale Filmfestspiel Berlin – Prizes and Honours 2012," *Berlinale*, 2012, accessed August 21, 2017,
https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2012/03_preistrger_2012/03_preistraeger_2012.html
" Preis der deutschen Filmkritik 2012," *Verband der Deutschen Filmkritik eV*, 04.09.17 available at
http://www.vdfk.de/301-preis-der-deutschen-filmkritik-2012

Authenticating Individual Memory

Petzold was born in West Germany in 1960 after his family had fled from East Germany. They spent some years living in transitional housing, and Petzold felt himself a *Zugereiste* (outsider).[4] The narrative in *Barbara* then, is not Petzold's story and as such, it is the most loosely autobiographical of the three main texts in this thesis. However, Petzold and his family retained their connections with East Germany and he and his brother spent many summer holidays there, with relatives. He says that despite his parents' success in the West, they were homesick for the East, and that they all felt the loss of the GDR in 1989. Petzold believes that he has an understanding of the East, based on his individual memories of living in the GDR and visiting the GDR, communicative memories from his parents and wider community, as well as from his experiences living in West Berlin in the 1980s.[5] In 2006, Petzold met a doctor who told him about the experiences of a group of GDR doctors who had made *Ausreiseanträge* (departure requests) and were subjected to *Erziehungsmaßnahmen* (re-education) and sent to work as military doctors. The female doctors however, were sent to provincial hospitals. Their *Zwangsversetzung* (forced redeployment) was a form of exile.[6] This becomes 'Barbara's' story. Petzold's retelling of this story from communicative memory clearly serves to authenticate his re-examination of this East German past. While Petzold defends his right as a West German to tell an East German story, he also clearly draws on his experiences as an East German.[7] He suggests that his interest

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[4]"Barbara: Interview with Christian Petzold," *Electric Sheep*. 28.09.12, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/features/2012/09/28/barbara-interview-with-christian-petzold/electricsheep
[5] "Petzold's 'Barbara' challenges US cinema-goers," *Deutsche Welle*, 27.12.12, accessed August 21, 2017, http://www.dw.com/en/petzolds-barbara-challenges-us-cinema-goers/a-16481570
[6] "Ich wollte, dass die DDR Farben hat," *taz.de*, 11.02.12, accessed Auguest 21, 2017, http://www.taz.de/!5100957/
[7] "Barbara: Interview with Christian Petzold," *Electric Sheep*.

in the character of Barbara, a *Zugereiste*, reflect his own experiences.[8] To create an 'authentic 'representation of the GDR, Petzold and his film team conducted extensive research, and made sure that they used original GDR objects where possible. However, not only did they avoid a clichéd approach to GDR everyday objects, but even the expected portrait of GDR leader Erich Honecker is missing from the hospital.[9] Additionally, the film's colour palette is vibrant and striking, in comparison to the muted tones of a film like *Das Leben der Anderen*. Petzold clearly references his personal experiences and individual memory of the GDR when he states, 'I wanted the GDR to have colour. I went to the GDR every year and I have memories of a colourful land'.[10] Petzold also references his childhood experiences of being a patient in GDR hospitals and his desire to represent the hospital as a 'light and warm-toned place'.[11] In this chapter I will analyse Petzold's work as a construction of his individual memory in film.

More Sources of Memory

While drawing on his own memories of the GDR, Petzold also identifies two literary texts and a number of existing film texts as his inspiration for this film. The first is the novel '*Barbara'*, written in 1936 by Austrian author, Hermann Broch. The novel is set in 1928 and is the story of a female doctor who works in a rural hospital to hide her communist activities. The second is a novella written by East German author Werner Bräunig. The novella '*Rummelplatz'* (Fairground) was

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[8] "No time like the present: The Edges of the World in Christian Petzold's *Barbara*," Brad Prager, *Senses of Cinema*, 09.17, accessed August 14, 2017, http://sensesofcinema.com/2017/christian-petzold-a-dossier/christian-petzolds-barbara/

[9] "Liebe in Zeiten des Misstrauens," *Zeit Online*, 13.02.12, accessed August 21, 2017, http://www.zeit.de/kultur/film/2012-02/berlinale-barbara-petzold

[10] "Ich wollte, dass die DDR Farben hat," *taz.de*, 11.02.12.

[11] *Ibid.*, *taz.de*

Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 282.

written in the 1960s, but published posthumously in 2007. As it was written during the GDR years, Bräunig's novella features state sanctioned literary themes such as the importance of work and the working class. Clearly, Petzold drew on Broch's work for his main character and story, but also on Bräunig's work for authentic themes and ideology. In addition, he drew on a number of GDR films, including Jürgen Böttcher's '*Jahrgang '45'* (*Born in '45*, 1966) to create an authentic look for the film. Petzold also acknowledges West German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (The Merchant of Four Seasons, 1972) as one of his influences.[12] The cast and crew of *Barbara* watched Fassbinder's film and Petzold modelled its portrayal of historical atmosphere and melodrama in his own film.[13]

About the Film

The film is set in a provincial hospital and provides insight into some aspects of the health system and life in the GDR outside of major cities. Popular reviews identified the film as a love story, and while it is true that the relationship between Barbara and Dr. André Reiser follows a love story narrative pathway, which moves from initial disdain, to growing respect and ends in (possible) love, this reading of the film seems to focus on the ahistorical notion that love was possible, even in the GDR's difficult climate.[14] The film can perhaps be interpreted as a GDR-specific

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[12] "Barbara: Interview with Christian Petzold," *Electric Sheep*.
[13] *Ibid.*, *Electric Sheep*
[14] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," *German Life and Letters* vol. 67, no. 2 (2014): pp. 258 and 280.
"Liebe in Zeiten des Misstrauens," *Zeit Online*, 13.02.12.

representation of how romance could evolve despite repression, and how trust could grow despite surveillance.[15]

The most significant thread of the film however, is the GDR specific climate of silence and mistrust between colleagues and friends, and the workings of the Stasi and the everyday implications of surveillance. The GDR regime is portrayed as brutal, but there is also a sense that it was possible to achieve happiness in the private spheres of love and work.[16] Petzold's film responds directly to constructions of the GDR that focus on Stasi omnipresence. In his review in *The Guardian*, Philip French finds that *Barbara* is 'not as persuasive' as *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*) in its representation of the GDR and the Stasi.[17] Significantly, this is not a German review and I suggest that the multi-faceted depictions of GDR life in *Barbara* which effectively disturb the traditional GDR binaries of victim and perpetrator, good and bad, may have been unexpected to a non-German audience. It may have made the film 'less persuasive', but it has allowed for a more nuanced representation of the GDR past.

Petzold does not claim that his film provides an objective view of the GDR, but that it is the GDR from Barbara's perspective; the aim was to focus on Barbara's private sphere.[18] As the audience, we only ever know as much as Barbara. By restricting access to the interiority of the characters we too are left to judge and interpret their actions, and feel ourselves struggling to know whom and when to trust.

[15] Christina Gerhardt, "Looking East: Christian Petzold's Barbara (2012)," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* vol. 33, no. 6 (2016): p. 555.

[16] Christian Petzold, *Barbara* (Schramm Film, 2012). See the scene in André's home, where he is surrounded by books and cuts herbs from his garden for cooking.

[17] "Barbara – review," Philip French, *The Guardian*, 30.09.12, accessed August 21, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/sep/30/barbara-review-petzold-nina-hoss

[18] "Life in a bubble – Christian Petzold on his new GDR drama "Barbara"," *signandsight.com*, 21.03.12, accessed Auguest 14, 2017, http://www.signandsight.com/features/2231.html

Petzold's aim was to create emotional authenticity, rather than authenticity dependent on clichéd symbols of the GDR, such as the Berlin Wall or material culture, as in *Good Bye, Lenin!*[19] This focus on GDR material culture was indicative of interpretations of the GDR that understood the GDR only through its lack of Western consumer products.[20] *Barbara* focuses on how people lived in the GDR, without the overt symbolism that was present in representations from the mid-1990s.[21]

Memory as Film

In the construction of this film Petzold has drawn on his individual memory as well as existing literary texts, for the characters, plot and ambience. His insistence on the use of colour can be seen as a response to the clichéd imagery of the films that represent the GDR as 'mousegrey'.[22] This film can also be seen as a response to the historiography and memories of the GDR, which have established binaries between victims and perpetrators, GDR citizens and the State.[23] Petzold exemplifies the complex reasons behind *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter* (IM – unofficial Stasi collaborators) actions, as well as some of the ideals of the GDR, specifically regarding the value of work. As with historical fiction, some people have been sceptical of the value of historical film, although many scholars see film as 'a source of valuable and even innovative historical vision'.[24] Film has the ability to 'recreate' the past through its use of visual and aural texture and has the power to shape

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[19] Wolfgang Becker, *Good Bye, Lenin!*, (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003).
[20] Christina Gerhardt, "Looking East: Christian Petzold's Barbara (2012)," p. 554.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 554.
[22] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 282.
[23] Daniela Berghahn, "Remembering the Stasi in a Fairy Tale of Redemption: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen*," *Oxford German Studies* vol. 38, no. 1 (2008): p. 321.
[24] Marnie Hughes-Warrington, "Introduction: Theory, Production, Reception," in *The History on Film Reader*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 3.

influential versions of the past. While memory making novels and films are not bound by notions of accuracy, they can reconstruct 'truthful' and authentic' version of the past and are significant media of memory. [25] With its sparse dialogue and terse characters, Petzold's film recreates more than an authentic look and an authentic GDR story. It constructs a GDR framed by surveillance and fear, where the audience feels and lives the threat and fear of the State and the distrust towards fellow citizens and where 'every glance, every exchanged look or avoided eye-contact holds significance' and asks the audience to consider what is unsaid. [26] In addition, Petzold presents an additional layer of critique in his use of literary, artistic and musical references, further complicating the audiences' interpretation of the plot and the characters. Petzold says that he was only able to conceive of this film in 2012, because of temporal distance from the GDR.[27]

Another aspect of memory contained in this film, is the memory that the actors bring to their portrayal of the characters. In *Good Bye, Lenin!* the main character, was played by Daniel Brühl, a West German. This compounded perceptions that the East German past was being colonised by the West.[28] Of the two actors playing a main character in *Barbara,* Nina Hoss was born in West Germany, while Ronald Zehrfeld was born in East Berlin. I do not wish to suggest that actors cannot create characters with which they have no direct link, but it is interesting to note Zehrfeld's awareness that he was bringing his East German memory to his role as

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[25] Astrid Erll, "The power of Fiction: Novels and Films as Media of Cultural Memory, " in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), p. 389.

[26] Christina Gerhardt, "Looking East: Christian Petzold's Barbara (2012)," pp. 554-555.

[27] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 280.

[28] Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p. 2.

André.[29] Zehrfeld commented that in the GDR, mistrust resulted in vigilance towards others, and he suggests the dependence on glances and hidden messages was a normal way of being in the GDR. This mode of communication between Barbara and André is fundamental to the story that Petzold tells about the GDR.

Characters, Plot and Ambiguity

Barbara is set in 1980 in a provincial East German town, close to the Baltic coast. The main plot revolves around Barbara and her relationships with the State, her work as a doctor, the West and plans for escape. These relationships are exemplified in scenes with Barbara and the Stasi, Barbara and her colleagues and patients, and Barbara and Jörg, her lover from the West. Barbara has been removed from her position at the prestigious Charité Hospital in Berlin as punishment for applying for an exit visa. There is a limited set of characters, each one representing a specific section of GDR society, or as an allegorical representation.[30] Barbara and André, while both doctors, reflect the different pathways to medical education in the GDR. Barbara seems to be from the Berlin middle class, André suggests that he received his educational training as a benefit of the State.[31] Klaus Schütz, and a few other unnamed officers represent the Stasi. While caring for the two patients Stella and Mario, Barbara and André exhibit professionalism and the emotional engagement absent in the rest of their interactions. Mario serves as an allegory for the dualism of care and observation in the GDR. Similarities and contrasts with the West are illustrated through Barbara's

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[29] "Liebe in Zeiten des Misstrauens," *Zeit Online*. 13.02.12.
[30] The patient Mario can be seen an allegory for the GDR. His emotions have vanished, and he needs to be observed, so they can know what's going on inside his head.
[31] In response to Barbara's suggestion that the workers and farmers have financed her studies and that now its time to pay them back by withdrawing her application to leave, André replies, 'Well, that's right actually'.

relationship with Jörg, who wants to help her escape, and his work colleague. The film takes place over a period of two and a half weeks in 1980. Petzold does not frame the GDR as a state that will not survive. The final scene is not a resolution, and the audience knows that whatever the consequences, it will be nine years until the end of the GDR regime.

In this film Petzold interweaves characters and plot and intellectual engagement with music, art and literary texts to further complicate the GDR memory debate, and draws on individual memory for the film's distinctive visual and soundscapes. That Barbara and André make skilled readings of cultural artefacts for their subversive messages reflects their position in the East German cultural elite, but as a film device they are used to speak to the audience behind the characters' backs.[32] The coded messages in this film speak both to the complexity of film, but also specifically to the historicity of the GDR and the finely judged coding and interpretation needed to counter the climate of mistrust amongst friends and colleagues. The sparse script means that much of the meaning passed between Barbara and André is conveyed through coded speech and body language. Petzold's layering of image, sound and language thoroughly supports Rosenstone's suggestion that film can create a unique realm of meaning.[33]

Petzold does not represent relationship between victims and perpetrators as neat opposites. He humanises Stasi agents and *Inoffiziele Mitarbeiters*, but does not justify their practices. By devoting more time to Barbara's relationship with André's, than on her relationship with Jörg, the audience becomes more invested

[32] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 291.
[33] Robert Rosenstone, *History on Film: Film on History* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2006), p. 182.

in the success of her relationship with André.[34] This film relies on the audiences' emotional investment in the characters and their visceral involvement.[35] The audience feels the characters' mistrust, hesitancy, commitment, fear and frustration.

Settings without Cliché

Barbara has been allocated an apartment by the State in a slightly dilapidated 19th century building. The exterior is characterised by flaking plaster and unkempt weeds. The inside is brown, dim and bare, but has a piano. Later André comments that it is a horrible place. Even though Barbara has just arrived, there is little evidence that she plans to make it her own; she does not seem to have many personal effects, other than her hairdryer and the red vanity case where she stores her Western cigarettes. Barbara's apartment is her private space, but a space that is regularly violated by her Stasi surveillance team, even as they observe from a car outside. Barbara's past experiences seem exemplified in the apprehensive way that she moves to answer her doorbell. The first time it is just her unfriendly landlady, but already Petzold has created the ambiance for the emotional tension and sense of threat that Barbara lives with. André's house appears in one scene. Not only does it emphasise the increasingly personal nature of Barbara and Andre's relationship, but also it serves as a contrast with Barbara's apartment. It is pleasant and homely. André cooks for her and brings fresh herbs from his garden. His home is filled with books. Even though Barbara is committed to leaving the GDR, there is a hint that staying, in a place such as this, might not be so bad. The

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[34] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," pp. 284-5.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 289

West is symbolised though Barbara's relationship with Jörg, and the *Interhotel* where she meets him.[36] Jörg is a businessman, who seems to travel to the East quite regularly. The audience assumes they met on such a business trip and that this exposure to the West has influenced Barbara's desire to leave. Jörg plans and pays for Barbara's escape. It's not always clear where the information comes from, but Barbara meets Jörg in the woods and at his *Interhotel*, and he is able to get money and messages to her. Unlike the relationship between Jörg's work colleague and Steffi, the young girl who only seems to want gifts from the West, Barbara and Jörg's relationship seems to be one of love. Jörg suggests that he could come to the East, Barbara thinks it is a crazy idea; 'You can't be happy here'. Barbara seems to be suggesting that no one can be happy in East Germany, not just Jörg. A constant theme in the film is just how tired Barbara and the other doctors are. The suggestion is that they work long hours, with few resources. Petzold occasionally alludes to poor building maintenance, with shots of broken windows and leaking rooves, but overall the hospital seems efficient and well managed. However, Jörg notes Barbara's tiredness and tells her that in the West she will not need to work. Although Barbara does not reply, it is evident that she considers the implications of becoming a housewife in the West. Her realisation about life in the West may strengthen her commitment to stay in the East.[37] Jörg fails to recognise that Barbara works because of her professional commitment to helping others, not because of the pay she receives.[38] Christina Gerhardt suggests that Petzold is commenting on 'the contrast between East and West Germany in supporting

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[36] *Interhotel* – an East German hotel designated mainly for Westerners and used as a way of earning Western currency.
[37] Christina Gerhardt, "Looking East: Christian Petzold's Barbara (2012)," p. 558.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 559.

women's careers'.[39] Many East German policies regarding women and work related to maternity leave, childcare and some additional help in balancing work and domestic duties.[40] Barbara had no family duties so she would not have received any of these provisions, but women like her may have benefited from increased levels of equality in educational provision.[41] A higher proportion of women in East Germany were in paid employment than in West Germany, although this does not necessarily reflect greater emancipation.[42] Just as happened in the West, women often worked beneath their level of qualification and experienced continued discrimination.[43]

Early in the film Barbara takes a train to collect a package. This is part of the narrative of her escape plan, and emphasises the rural setting and Barbara's exile from Berlin. At the train station the faded sign, '*In die Zukunft mit Optimismus schauen*' (Looking into the future with optimism), does not suggest much optimism in the GDR. The sign is one of the few overt references to the GDR's ideological vision in Petzold's film. Although Grieder suggests that ideology played a significant role in party leadership up until 1989, for Pinfold, the sign suggests that by 1980, the GDR hardly believed in itself.[44] Petzold filmed *Barbara* in the summer

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[39] *Ibid.*, p. 559.

[40] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 72.

[41] In East Germany in the 1980s, 50% of schoolchildren passing the *Abitur* (school leaving certificate) were female, and 50% of higher education students were female too. In West Germany, 50.4% of school children passing the Abitur were female, and 37.9% of higher education students were female. See Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2015), p. 196.

[42] In 1984, 50% of women in East Germany were in paid employment. 39% of women were in paid employment in West Germany in the same year. See Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany*, p. 195.

[43] Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation*, p. 195.
Andrew Port, "The Banalities of East German Historiography," in *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler,* ed. Andrew Port and Mary Fulbrook (New York: Berghahn, 2013), p. 16.

[44] Peter Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic*, p. 91.
Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 283.

and early autumn, so that he could capture the light brown tones of the land.[45] This is not the polluted GDR of Tellkamp's Dresden; rather it is unspoiled and beautiful. The forest where she meets Jörg can be seen as a site of refuge.[46] When Barbara rides her bike to an isolated spot to hide her escape money, the scene is filled with the sound of the wind, the sea and the melancholy cawing of seagulls. Barbara seems to be temporarily outside the view of the State, although 'going missing' has its consequences. On one occasion, André asks if she and her apartment are searched often. Barbara replies, 'I was missing for a few hours', seeming to imply that it does happen whenever the Stasi feel they have lost control of her. In the continuation of this scene, André asks her where she has been - an innocent question or potential information for the Stasi? – Barbara snorts, shakes her head and says nothing.

The opening scene shows Barbara's arrival for work at the provincial hospital. Her new boss, Dr. André Reiser and Stasi man, Klaus Schütz, look down on her from a hospital window. Many pre-unification East German cultural texts reflected the significance of work in GDR culture and Petzold has mirrored this focus on the work place by using the hospital as one of the main settings for his film.[47] Already the audience knows that Barbara is under surveillance by the Stasi and that André is implicated in that surveillance. Already the audience senses that the work place and Barbara's professionalism will not be a niche in which she can hide from Stasi surveillance. Barbara believes that she is under surveillance by André, and she

[45] "Ich wollte, dass die DDR Farben hat," *Tageszeitung Berlin*, 11.02.12
[46] Christina Gerhardt, "Looking East: Christian Petzold's Barbara (2012)," p. 556.
[47] Wolfgang Emmerich, "The GDR and its Literature: An Overview," in *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR,* ed. Karen Leeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 18. See for example Braunig's novel *Rummelplatz* (Fairground) and K. Wolf's film *Sonnensucher*.
"Life in a bubble – interview with Christian Petzold," *signandsight.com*.

chooses not to sit with him or her other colleagues at lunch, illustrating her mistrust. However, Barbara shows how she is willing to confront the system when she confronts André with the fact that he already seems to know where she lives. Portrayals of the Stasi in cultural representations of East Germany go to the heart of the debate of how the GDR should be remembered. Films such as Höntsch's *Die Vergebung* (*Forgiveness*, 1995) did engage with the Stasi's legacy, but Nick Hodgin suggests that audiences preferred melodramas and comedies to socially critical dramas.[48] Despite the flawed narrative in the redemption of the Stasi operative in von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006) the film was seen as a response to light-hearted portrayals, and as a reminder of the GDR as a terrifying police state.[49] Although Petzold portrays Klaus Schütz as a perpetrator, an unexceptional figure, and also as someone in need of empathy, the other Stasi operatives in his team remain closed and threatening.[50] They are ready to do whatever the State deems necessary. However, realising that Schütz has his own difficulties, does not reduce the real impact to Barbara, caused by aggressive surveillance and control tactics. Sometimes Schütz sits outside Barbara's apartment in his car, he does nothing, but she knows he is there. He is not evident on Barbara's train trip, but when she gets back he is there – he knows she has been away. They search her flat and in a further reduction of Barbara's privacy, even answer the door to her apartment, and let in the woman who will conduct Barbara's physical search. There is no pretence that Barbara has any power, even though she is in her own home; the searches demonstrate the Stasi's control and domination over her. The actress Nina Hoss portrays a woman who is strong and

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[48] Nick Hodgin, "Screening the Stasi," in *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the East German State Since 1989*, ed. Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester: Camden House, 2011), p. 75.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 69. Comedy portrayals such as those in *Sonnenallee* (1999) allow for the possibility of remembering the GDR without referencing the State's failing and abuses.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

composed and yet unable to change what is happening to her. The dread and threat experienced by Barbara in these scenes is palpable.

André seems to be a good and caring doctor and in a seemingly considerate move he sends a piano tuner to tune the piano he has seen in Barbara's apartment. Barbara, however, responds with suspicion, 'Am I supposed to thank you?, I hate that kind of surprise'. Nevertheless, André continues to be considerate towards Barbara, letting her sleep in his office when she becomes exhausted. Barbara half jokes with him about what he will write in his report, 'W slowly becomes trusting'.[51] André does not deny that he will write a report, but responds that he will write 'something like that'. It is impossible to gauge how genuine André's manner and actions are. The film audience is confined to Barbara's point of view and lives the tension of not knowing who or when to trust. Although André is positioned as someone who is participatory in the GDR's system of surveillance, for many people participation did not necessarily mean belief in the State.[52] Petzold disturbs the line between victim and perpetrator when André explains his own reason for being at the provincial hospital.[53] It seems that André has also been exiled to the provinces. After having a medical mistake 'hushed up', André has been allowed to continue to work, on the understanding that he delivers reports to the Stasi. André tells Barbara, 'I have no ambition in this regard'. However, Barbara is not swayed by his story and remains suspicious. A further episode that confronts the characterisation of Stasi perpetrators occurs when Barbara has to search for André in the town. She finds him in Klaus Schütz's home. Schütz is the main

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[51] This is a reference to code names found in Stasi files.
[52] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 236.
[53] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 285.

perpetrator in Barbara's hostile treatment by the State and his professional actions violate her physical and personal space. On this occasion it is Barbara who is in his home, but he does not even seem to recognise her. This seems to suggest that his treatment of her is neither personal nor ideological. André has come to see Schütz's wife, who is terminally ill. This time it is Barbara who is uninvited and Schütz who is vulnerable. André does not defend Schütz's behaviour, but suggests that even such a man can be in need of compassion and professional help, complicating the audiences' feelings towards Schütz.

Much of the narrative around Barbara and André focuses on their responses and treatment of two patients; Stella and Mario. Stella is a young girl who is dragged into the hospital by two uniformed police officers. Stella is an inmate of the Torgau *Jugendwerkhof* (Youth Detention Camp) who has become unwell after escaping and hiding in the fields for some days. Youth detention camps were an integral part of the GDR system of youth justice, and were often used as an early intervention, rather than as a last resort.[54] 'Educational measures' were deemed necessary for crimes such as gathering in groups in public spaces and other 'asocial' behaviours.[55] Youth detention camps had punitive, prison like regimes and Torgau was well known as the centre of the Wehrmacht's prison system.[56] Torgau became synonymous with young people for, 'fear, drill and punishment'.[57] Stella has already been to the hospital four times and André believes that she is pretending to be ill, because she does not want to work. André thinks of Stella as a criminal,

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[54] Michael Krause, "Involving the community in youth justice: "naming and shaming" and the role of local citizen courts in Britain and the former GDR," *Social Justice* vol. 38, no. 4 (2011): p.100.

[55] Ibid., p.101.

[56] "Dokumentations und Informationszentrum (diz) Torgau," Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten, accessed September 13, 2017, https://www.stsg.de/cms/torgau/startseite

[57] Michael Krause, "Involving the community in youth justice: "naming and shaming" and the role of local citizen courts in Britain and the former GDR," p. 104.

but Barbara humanises her by using her name and admonishes André for his treatment of her. In this scene André reveals the extent to which GDR citizens were surrounded by and complicit in the authoritarian practices of the State. Barbara, however, is transformed from her tense and taciturn self, into what Debbie Pinfold has characterised as 'her true self'.[58] Barbara's professionalism and confidence contrasts with the hostile and distant behaviour that Barbara has developed to survive the East German State. Although Barbara and André do help Stella, and keep her at the hospital for a few extra days, they are ultimately unable to avoid her being taken back to Torgau.

Hidden Messages – Rembrandt, W.G. Sebald and Huckleberry Finn

In addition to the visual authenticity of the film and strong actors who effectively communicate in glances and in what remains unsaid, Petzold adds further texture to his film through the incorporation of literary texts. These texts can be seen as adding depth to the narrative; they also allude to the necessity of hiding messages and not communicating too overtly in the GDR. The first example is not a literary text, but a painting. In one of the early scenes between André and Barbara they are looking at a copy of Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). The painting is of doctors at work, and hangs in André's laboratory. André expresses his wish to go and see it in the West, and allies himself with Barbara and her wish to leave the GDR.[59] Again, it is impossible to know just how authentic André is. However, there is more to the painting. André, while establishing himself as an intelligent man, draws attention to some of the errors in the painting. In a

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[58] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 288.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 291.

complex reading of the painting, André discusses the notions of criminality and victimhood, which can potentially be read as André reassuring Barbara that he sees her not as a criminal, but as a victim of the State.[60] Pinfold identifies a further intricacy of this scene; André's description of the painting is borrowed from W.G Sebald's *Ringe des Saturn* (*The Rings of Saturn,* 1995) which also had an error in it that André repeats.[61] Error upon error are emphasised by the script and in the camera work, suggesting that André's interpretation of the situation may also be wrong, and further emphasising the problems of trust in the GDR.[62]

A literary text that Petzold uses for symbolic effect is the story of Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1835). As an expression of empathy, Barbara reads to Stella. However, the camera focuses on Barbara's choice of book and emphasises its significance. The parts of the book that Barbara reads concern Huck's plans to run away and the part after the escape where Huck and Jim are deciding what to do next. The choice of this text can be seen as part of the web of coded messages used both by the filmmaker and in the GDR. It may suggest to Stella that there is some possibility of freedom. As an additional reading, Pinfold suggests that this is a prefiguring of the plot in the similarity between Huck's flimsy raft and the flimsy device, that is sent for Barbara's escape across the Baltic to Denmark.[63]

In a surprising twist, an injured and exhausted Stella arrives at Barbara's door. Barbara takes her to the beach and sends her on the fragile craft to Denmark. Barbara will not be reunited with Jörg, but the film ends with a song from the

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[60] *Ibid.,* p. 292.
[61] *Ibid.,* p. 293.
[62] For further analysis of this part of the film, see Debbie Pinfold, p. 292.
[63] Debbie Pinfold, "The End of the Fairy Tale? Christian Petzold's *Barbara* and the Difficulties of Interpretation," p. 296.

1970s, which declares, 'Now I'm free'. [64] It is unclear what exactly it is that Barbara is free from. The Stasi have already raided her flat and think that she has gone, and at the very least she will have to deal with the consequences of helping Stella to escape. In addition, the lyrics raise questions for the audience regarding their own perceptions and interpretations, particularly of André as a worthy confidant for Barbara, as the song is about a lover who cannot be trusted. Barbara returns to the hospital and she and André sit together and watch over Mario. Petzold leaves the ending of the film open to interpretation. Although the audience can only speculate about how Barbara will be punished for helping Stella to escape, or how her life at the hospital will continue, Petzold acknowledges that it could have been possible for her to stay in the GDR and do good work, while also acknowledging that for Stella the West held a more hopeful future.

Conclusion

In this film Petzold has constructed a representation of the GDR past that responds to previous memory phases of the GDR. He has used his individual memory and numerous cultural references to produce a pointed retort to both the drabness of films such as *Das Leben der Anderen*, and the comedy and *Ostalgia* of films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* Petzold challenges these representations. He undermines the certainties of victim/perpetrator. Barbara is a victim, but perhaps so too is André, even though he is complicit with the State. Stella is a victim, but André considers her to be a criminal. Petzold restricts the formulaic focus on material culture, but recreates an 'authentic' GDR based on his individual memory of colour and feel. He highlights the GDR specific importance of work as a source of Barbara's identity

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[64] The version used was the Chic disco version. Lyrics accessed September 7, 2017, http://www.metrolyrics.com/at-last-i-am-free-lyrics-chic.html

and suggests that choices between East and West were not clear-cut. The film is saturated with uncertainty and the ways that distrust permeated everyday life and relationships with neighbours and colleagues. Petzold's use of cultural references in the film further emphasises the audience's uncertainty about who to trust. By using film as a medium to construct individual memory, Petzold has created an intense and emotionally authentic representation of the GDR using literature, art and music, to enrich the film's narrative.

As with Tellkamp's novel, Petzold's film demonstrates the power of a fictional representation to make an 'authentic' and emotionally engaging intervention in memory culture.

Conclusion

The most successful cultural representations of the GDR after the fall of the Berlin Wall were the ones that reflected the dominant German government narrative and media cliché. The German unification process and early access to the Stasi archives focused attention on the State and its methods of control and surveillance. Consequently, some East Germans, who claimed that life in the GDR had been 'ordinary' found that their experiences were not adequately represented. East German writers and filmmakers constructed humorous or satirical accounts of the GDR. Some of the most commercially successful interpretations of the GDR were not even by East Germans; memory of the GDR was lost between *Ostalgie* and Stasi oppression.

In this thesis I have focused on how Maxim Leo, Uwe Tellkamp and Christian Petzold constructed their memories of the East German past. Their memoir, novel and film are exemplars of post-millennial interpretations of the GDR. They drew on their personal experiences and individual memory and incorporated broader cultural memory into their interpretations of the GDR. Leo, Tellkamp and Petzold remember the complexities of the GDR and explore the effects of the State on individual lives. Leo explored the whole history of the GDR through his family history and his childhood and adolescent memories. He used his text as a way of understanding his family and his feelings towards the GDR as he looked back from the present. Tellkamp and Petzold attempted to reconstruct life in the GDR as sensory experience. They focused on the detail and look of the everyday, but also constructed representations that accurately represented the values and concerns of the past.

Tellkamp and Petzold do not claim that their texts are autobiographical, yet the texts are clearly a complex mix of individual and cultural memory. Even though Tellkamp and Petzold produced more polished interpretations of the GDR that draw on their skills as, respectively, a novelist and a filmmaker, all the memories provide a significant contribution to post-millennial understandings of the GDR and contribute to the assimilation of East German memories into a national German narrative. However, they do construct different versions of the past; sometimes their narratives overlap, although at other times, Leo presents a more benign vision of the past than the others. Leo is more conflicted than either Tellkamp or Petzold in his memory of the GDR. He seems unresolved as to whether life could be classified as 'normal'. There were significant differences in the way that Leo and Tellkamp experienced the military, which have resulted in different interpretations of the impact of the State on their lives. As an 'outsider' who mainly grew up outside the GDR, Petzold is the only one who suggests that it was possible to stay in the GDR and build a better society. The most significant similarity between these memory texts is their focus on mistrust and uncertainty, the need to create safe spaces and the need to switch between saying what they really thought and knowing what they could say at school or work. Leo's childhood memories suggest that this nuance was something that even young children quickly learned. Despite Leo's conflict with the definition of normal, all three cultural representations provide a rich archive of detail. Tellkamp's novel and Petzold's film are perhaps more successful at bringing the past back to life for their audience because of the emotional connections they create. As expressions of individual memory they vividly portray the impact of the GDR State on everyday life, the effects of surveillance and the treatment of dissenters and 'criminals', but also that

life in the GDR was worthwhile and that escape to the West was not the only solution.

In their differing interpretations, Leo, Tellkamp and Petzold both reflect and respond to historiographical understandings and misinterpretations of the GDR past. Clearly they did not experience the GDR in the same way, but exploration of their individual memory and interpretations of the GDR are significant in understanding what East Germans really meant by 'normal' and how they experienced the GDR.

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