

INTRODUCTION

Questions of Discourse, Narrative, and Memory after Fundamental Regime Change



Twenty-five Years On, Does the East German Past Still Matter?

It is the summer of 2013, four years since the research project on “the socialist past today,” on which this book is based, finished. The project explored how two different types of institutions, a group of policymakers/bureaucrats and a daily newspaper, create representations of the East German¹ past in the present. I have just returned to my desk at Newcastle University after visiting my family in Germany. Questions of the East German past and identity, unification,² and East–West German differences were on my mind during the last week because I knew I would come back to write this book. These topics usually present themselves swiftly and without much invitation during fieldwork stints and visits home, but halfway through the long weekend with my brothers and their partners, I had begun to wonder whether they had now really moved into the background. Three days in Berlin and there had been no mention of before and after, of East versus West, or similar.

It did not take long, however, for these questions to reemerge. As soon as we—my oldest brother, Clemens, his partner, and I—had set off for a last bit of sightseeing in Berlin, the East Side Gallery, Steffi asked, “Is this now East or West? I can’t even tell anymore what used to be East or West.” My brother explained, but when the question returned as we parked at Ostbahnhof (East station), his response got cheeky: “Well, look around: there is a Lidl, a Mercedes retailer, a DIY store—that can only be the West.”

Well, it was not and he knew it, and so did Steffi, judging by the grimace she made at him and the laughter that followed. This side used to be East Berlin, and some may say that this mixture of derelict buildings, deserted spaces, budget shops, and car retailers indicates exactly that—a poor East Germany infiltrated by the shine of Western capitalism, like a scene from *Good Bye, Lenin!* (Becker 2003).

Contentious Pasts in the Present

Later that day we were at my dad's, talking over coffee. My father had explained a certain complex situation to which Clemens remarked how no one would have made such a fuss in the past, "back then." My father agreed, leading Clemens to quip, "See, it wasn't all bad in the GDR." Dad retorted, "I didn't say that!"

There is more in this exchange than the brief sentences might suggest. "Back then" can refer to many different pasts, of long-gone childhoods, previous decades, or wholly different eras. Eastern Germans employ the phrase in the last sense to refer to a shared and fundamentally different past prior to unification that is almost like another world that cannot be returned to. This is certainly what Clemens had meant and what I believe our father agreed with, although with the hindsight of his longer life, he may include an appreciation of the GDR past as also characterized by certain decades and caught up in wider social and technological developments: you might not have had such a fuss in the 1970s more generally. Yet Clemens responded with a version of the popular statement "Not everything was bad (in the GDR)." This phrase, or rather trope, is commonly used in reevaluations of the GDR past that appeared to have been quickly deemed outmoded and just as quickly done away with during unification. For some, however, the phrase also speaks of a problematic attitude toward both the socialist past and unification—an attitude that hangs onto the past of a dictatorial regime that caused much suffering and an attitude that now creates obstacles for unification as it, in turn, rejects important aspects of the free and democratic present. I was surprised my brother had used that phrase in the parental home, even if in a version that suggested a certain caution.

As both our parents were trained pastors in the German Lutheran Church, themselves the offspring of families who had fled from East Prussia (Ostpreussen) into heartland Germany at the end of World War II, our family belonged to a pocket of GDR society (see Thelen 2009). Our parents were critical of the East German state and its authoritative structures. Through the church we had regular contact with befriended families

in West Germany, and our father traveled there relatively regularly. He brought back presents, sweets, and political magazines, the inevitable *Der Spiegel* hidden among theological literature.³ Both our parents, as many eastern Germans, were conscious of the keen eyes of the State Security Police and experienced a number of state and Stasi interferences in their working and family lives.

Given this background, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and unification were embraced without question by our parents and both my then-adult brothers. The two brothers had grown up within the critical family discourse and made some of their own difficult experiences with socialist authoritarianism, while I, as the youngest daughter, who was to be protected from “too much knowledge,” had happily joined the socialist children’s organization, the pioneers (the Young Pioneers and later the Thälmann Pioneers), and taken up roles in the school class committee. The troubles many eastern Germans experienced with unification, the rapid changes, and East–West German cultural differences thus largely passed us by. Reevaluating the dictatorial socialist past in conversation is therefore, however, also very much out of the question, at least if our father has anything to do with it. And this marked his quick-fire response that day, “I didn’t say that,” as well as Clemens’s fast retreat as he realized that even his amended version of the popular statement touched a sore spot; my father’s quick response also wiped any agreeing grin off my face.

The above episodes reveal that talking about the GDR past is still very much an aspect of everyday life twenty-five years on, at least for eastern Germans. It does not come up every day, but certain situations, events, or problems lead to references to this shared past whether for orientation, jokingly, to reminisce, or to make a point. Inevitably, some of these references have become tropes that suggest very particular kinds of meanings in the present that now go beyond the then-lived reality. Shared as it may be, this past, its interpretation, and the way it is invoked in the present nevertheless differs between individuals even within eastern German society depending on how speakers position themselves toward this past and the present. All of this memory talk, whether it concerns former socialism and one’s life directly or whether it concerns rhetorical invocations of the past to comment on situations in the present, is suffused with often political and just as often moral messages. As the above shows, evaluations of personal and collective life achievements “back then,” for some a throwaway comment, can function for others as political statements contesting West German judgments of apparently inferior GDR culture, just as it can be seen as an inappropriate reevaluation of an inhumane regime. If this is the case, comments about aspects of GDR culture—the “it” in “it wasn’t all bad” can concern anything from kindergartens to road traffic management,

from financial benefits for mothers to a piece of fiction one once read—will also apply to individual lives.

Another day that week my father, a supporter of Angela Merkel's chancellorship, gave me his take on recent revelations. Although critical of aspects of her leadership style, he strongly disagreed with a recent attempt to disqualify Merkel on the basis of her East German background. It had emerged that she had carried office within the socialist Free German Youth (FDJ), which, some people argued, indicated that she was trying to set herself up for a political career in the GDR (Kleine 2013; Martin 2013). If this were true, it would cast doubt on her suitability to hold office with the conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDU) today, never mind leading the country. Father felt, however, that that was taking interpretation too far. The "FDJ wasn't that kind of organization," he said. He explained that if you lived in East Germany, you had to come to some kind of accommodation with the state. People had to decide for themselves where their line was in terms of compliance or involvement with the regime, since living in this country and completely withholding yourself from socialist structures was not possible; that got you arrested eventually, he finished. The problem is that the accommodations people made are not always acceptable to others.

What people did in GDR times, what professions they learned, and what roles they exercised continue to matter in post-unification Germany, not just in the political realm where opposing parties or unsympathetic media ask thorny questions about individual biographies but also in everyday interactions. During previous fieldwork with former political prisoners of the State Security Police, whenever a new person appeared in any conversation, the immediate question would be, "What did he used to do?" Individuals' work "back then" gives an indication of not only their closeness to the regime but also their level of political training, or "indoctrination." Some people thus become immediately doubtful and untrustworthy. "Victims" of the former regime are not the only people who engage in this kind of discourse: I had heard those kinds of questions and assumptions before, at home.

The fall of socialism and the "unification by accession" (Glaeser 2000) created a wholesale cultural change in eastern Germany that included the value system—an already ambiguous value system that had previously supported decision-making and life paths. While the demonstrations in the autumn of 1989, with their calls for democratization and freedom, were already defining the GDR leadership as controlling, if not outrightly "totalitarian," few East Germans who joined the thousands of people on the Monday demonstrations or who left the East for the West that summer, had imagined how far into their own biographies this *Wende* (the political

“turnaround” from a “dictatorship” to a free democracy) would go on to reach.⁴

In Germany, in contrast to many other postsocialist states (cf. Adler 2012; Borneman 1997), the socialist past was very quickly approached by the new government, which, following the Federal German Republic’s “antitotalitarian consensus,” defined it as a difficult period in history that required reckoning. This consensus had developed in the aftermath of the Third Reich and the Holocaust and is intrinsically intertwined with a sense of safeguarding the freedom and democracy that Germany had only achieved relatively recently (see chapter 1). The discourse of the *Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*, the “reworking of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) dictatorship,” that was then initiated, which encouraged historical research, museumification, and commemoration, was soon challenged by popular nostalgia in the mid-1990s.⁵ This *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the East; a play on words) was prompted by senses of dislocation and loss caused by the fast-paced, wholesale change that followed unification. This nostalgia was moreover bound up with an assertive East German identity that challenged the new all-German narrative that was so clearly a West German one (Berdahl 1999a; Cooke 2005). While often seen as an inevitable aspect of the experience of historical rupture (Berdahl 1999a; T. Richardson 2008: 137), for people who had been victimized during GDR times and for policymakers invested in *Aufarbeitung* and the unification process, *Ostalgie* spelled trouble. It was soon judged to be an unreflective reevaluation of the dictatorship (“it wasn’t all bad”) put forward by people who were possibly still hanging onto the same socialist ideas that state control and surveillance had been founded on.⁶ The East German identity with which *Ostalgie* came to be bound up was seen as creating obstacles for unification as an “inner process,” thus reestablishing the wall, now in people’s minds (e.g., Veen 2001).

Many years have passed since the mid-1990s, and social memory in eastern Germany continues to change. *Ostalgie* no longer has the character of the collective and public performances that Daphne Berdahl observed (1999a) and I experienced (Gallinat 2010a) in the 1990s. At the grassroots, in personal conversation, references to the past have also lost some of their contentiousness, and eastern German identity is no longer so defensively assertive but rather based on more muted senses of local belonging (Gallinat 2008). Even our father has recently used the tricky phrase “it wasn’t all bad,” albeit speaking very quietly. Nevertheless, the memory discourses that developed in the early years after socialism’s fall gave rise to tropes and master narratives that continue to circulate in German society. The political contestations and moral positionings they are bound up with still give certain metaphors political force, moral currency, and emotive power.

Few eastern Germans like to see themselves as “ostalgic,” given the contentiousness of the term, yet few can see themselves as having lived in a dictatorship either, given the term’s associations with the Third Reich and the image it casts of a society of victims and perpetrators.

Most people’s experiences and memories move between these opposing poles. Many experienced the state’s harsh hand—the limitations placed on choices and freedoms—at one point or another in their lives, and almost everyone struggled with the “shortage economy” (Kornai 1980; Verdery 1996).⁷ There are thus widely shared understandings of the socialist regime’s shortcomings. At the same time, people also remember successes in their professional and private lives that “happened to take place” during or were achieved despite socialism (Gallinat and Kittel 2009). Moreover, socialist ideology purported ideals of equality and peace, the value of which increased (Straughn 2009) with the experience of growing inequalities in the transition to a free market economy. Just as a collective East German identity pushed to the fore after the East German state’s dissolution, so did reflections on the value and meaning of some of socialist ideology’s key ideas. The narrative frameworks that emerged out of the interaction between the discourses of “reworking” and East German identity ask questions of individual lives in the past, their position in German society today, and their views of the future that continue to emerge in social interactions. Similar questions are asked in turn of stories created for wider public consumption as they go on to provide pointers for individual memory narratives and to govern the interpretation of such narratives.

An Ethnography of Postsocialism

At its heart this book is an ethnography about the production of versions of the socialist past in the democratic, postsocialist present against the backdrop of imagined national futures. Katherine Verdery argues that in the field of postsocialist studies, historical anthropology may well be privileged (Hann et al. 2002). When considering the question of whether the notion of postsocialism still makes sense, some ten years after socialism’s fall, Berdahl pins her response almost exclusively on the question of memory, arguing that the category remains useful “as long as the socialist past remains a prime reference point for many people in their own personal histories and memories as they struggle to make sense of the present” (2010b: 131). Questions of memory are of particular import in the postsocialist realm because history writing was central to Marxist–Leninist ideology and was frequently censored and rewritten as a result (Rausing 2004; also Kaneff 2004; Wanner 1998; Watson 1994). Thus “the demise of state socialism

and with it its hegemonic hold on memory and history production has allowed and in fact generated an outpouring of counter memories and histories hidden, ‘forgotten’ and forbidden under the intrusive discipline of the socialist regimes” (Pine et al. 2004: 1). Moreover, as Frances Pine et al. state, institutional bodies but also interest groups now “attempt to legitimate their claims, and to establish their *right*, to power . . . in claiming a particular version of the past as ‘true’” (2004: 4). Such attempts to institutionalize new cultures, however, including new memory cultures, always lead to contestations, as Catherine Wanner argues (1998), which in turn means much public and private reflection. For Germany, John Borneman thus notes that an apparent silence on issues of the GDR past in polls in the early and mid-1990s was not an indication of public amnesia but rather an effect of an intense social involvement in postsocialist, or postdictatorial, memory-work (1997: 107).

The relevance of memory and history in postsocialism has been explored in a number of anthropological works. Authors have highlighted how the rewriting of national histories brings to the fore struggles over notions of belonging (Kaneff 2004; Rausing 2004; T. Richardson 2008; Wanner 1998), reconfigurations of local-center relationships (Kaneff 2004), legitimation of power holders (Verdery 1998), boundaries of the national and the state (T. Richardson 2008; Wanner 1998), and how the political is lived and new persons are created (Berdahl 2008; Kaneff 2004; Rausing 2004; Wanner 1998). Exploring the writing of the socialist past thus affords insights into the dynamic relationships between state and nation, government and citizenship, and into the making and unmaking of institutions and persons. Considering these questions of change, the anthropology of postsocialism usually focuses on the arrival of capitalism. Free markets, privatization, and production appear as the main sites of changing values and relationships where new kinds of people are produced: atomistic, individual consumers who are self-actualizing agents apt at making choices (Berdahl 2010a; Buchowski 1997; Creed 1998; Dunn 2004; Kideckel 2008; Humphrey 2002; Verdery 2003). At times democracy is included in these considerations but often as an addendum and as “market democracy” at that (Kideckel 2008: 7). This ethnography in turn focuses on the question of political life by asking what kinds of imagined democracies different actors work toward when producing histories or when using references to the past to make arguments about the present, as well as what this means for the making and unmaking of citizenship attempted by different kinds of institutions.

The fall of socialism and the subsequent transformation was marked in the West with no little amount of “triumphalism” (Berdahl 2010b; Berdahl et al. 2000; Kalb 2002; Verdery 1996). This appeared to be based foremostly on economic and technological superiority, now ultimately proven.

But beyond this there was a moral superiority, a sense that after all, democracy had proved to be the (only) order that (adequately) protected human rights and freedoms. Verdery's observation that evolutionary perspectives underpin the teleological notion of the "transition" that involves "rescue scenarios"—as if eastern European markets were "a person suffering from mental illness" and "our job is to restore their sanity" (1996: 205)—is similarly applicable to both the realm of the political and to personhood. Some ethnographic work has shown that with the aspirational goals of establishing multiparty democracies "like in the West" arose questions of what kinds of lives in the past are legitimate and which actors with what kind of biography are allowed agency in the morally different present (Dunn 2004; Junghans 2001; Klumbyte 2010; Zigon 2010). As Michal Buchowski argues (2006, also 2004) and others show, in many realms eastern Europeans' opinions have been treated as illegitimate or irrelevant due to the taint of their ideological socialization or "eastern" position (also Wanner 1998).⁸ Such sentiments are underpinned by senses of the "formerly socialist subjects" as inflexible and preconditioned by the authoritarian state, an issue that seems most notable in sites where "East" and "West" meet directly, such as in a Polish factory taken over by American owners (Dunn 2004), in training for Hungarians in civil society techniques run by Americans (Junghans 2001), in border regions (Rausing 2004), or in eastern German political institutions built up by western Germans (this monograph, also see Berdahl 2010a). As this ethnography shows, it is over these questions of what are legitimate traits in the present vis-à-vis a tainted past that governmental institutions seek to create particular kinds of citizens. However, the explorations here also show that the issue runs deeper than a neat East–West binary, since critics of the lasting effects of socialist "indoctrination" also exist on the eastern side of the former Iron Curtain (Wanner 1998).

These contentions over personhoods and morality are, as my use of terminology above already suggests, bound up with understandings of these past states as dictatorial. An identification of socialist regimes as oppressive of course serves political legitimation of those who condemn it, but human rights abuse in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is a reality that governments, citizens, and scholars of these societies need to face. Anthropology has left this terrain largely to transitional justice and historical sciences, however, so ethnographic explorations of what this difficult character of the socialist past means for belonging, citizenship, and opportunities for agency have remained rare (notable exclusions are Borneman 1997; Skultans 1998, 2001; Verdery 2013). What has in contrast engaged the discipline in recent years is the issue of counter-memories and nostalgia for socialism, which is taken as evidence of the manifold and complex ways people negotiate meaning in the present, deal with senses

of loss and despair, or begin to construct alternative visions of desirable futures in criticism of free market capitalism (Bartmanski 2011; Berdahl 2010a, 2010b; Boym 2001; Hann 2012; Haukanes and Trnka 2013; Pine et al. 2004; Todorova and Gille 2010). The issue of memory was, and remains, a pertinent one twenty and twenty-five years after socialism's fall, as a generation that did not experience life in socialism has reached maturity. This generational change will have an inevitable impact on how individuals and groups relate to official memory narratives and how memory is shared and passed on. Simply put, this juncture entails a move from a predominantly social memory that is informed by and related to individual recollections toward a memory that is more cultural, informed by and presented through history teaching, material artifacts, and popular representations of the past in film and print.⁹ The investigation this book is based on took place during a time when local policymakers were particularly aware of this change and created narratives that sought to address this new reality, while their attempts are responded to by generations who have their own memories of life in socialism.

This ethnography thus asks how representations of a contentious past are created and maintained, for which present-day reasons and with what futures in mind. To gain insights into why this past continues to matter so much—how it can lead to comforting reminiscing as quickly as to emotionally fought arguments—this book focuses on two very different institutional realms of past production. One of these is a group of governmental institutions, the other a daily, regional newspaper. Each of these groups is differently positioned toward the local population, giving rise to distinct institutional agendas and, from that, specific ideas about present and future, which influence what kinds of stories about the past—the dictatorship, the nation's history, the context of individuals' lives—can be produced.

This question of the production of public memory is a particularly pertinent one in the case of eastern Germany (Arnold-de Simine 2013; Jones 2014; Saunders and Pinfold 2013). Of all the states in the socialist realm, East Germany went through the fastest and most complete transformation. Here, the “transition” based in “linear, teleological thinking in relation to the direction of change: from socialism or dictatorship to liberal democracy, from a plan to a market economy” (Berdahl 2000: 1) could be said to have taken place and, at least on paper, concluded. While German unification meant that eastern Germans might have been spared some of the chaos and violence that unfolded in other former bloc states and Soviet republics, the breathtaking speed of change and sense of cultural devaluation and dispossession brought other challenges. Given the character of unification as accession alone, it hardly seems surprising that eastern Germany was the site of the now infamous *Ostalgie* or that this nostalgia should be bound

up with an assertive sense of identity. Moreover, in Germany there is a particularly strong public interest in national history. Pine et al. remind us quite rightly that “it is not only one party [one-party] states which have a vested interest in control and generation of particular forms of commemoration and narratives of remembered pasts” (2004: 3). Rather, scholars of memory agree that modernity’s almost utopian future orientation (Huysen 2003; Keightley and Pickering 2006; also Terdiman 1993) and the growing strength of the state (Antze and Lambek 1996; Olick and Robbins 1998; Pine et al. 2004) in the past two centuries led to an increasing concern with history. This turned into crisis, leading to a shift from history to memory in the aftermath of the fast-paced social and cultural changes modernity initiated and with postmodern thought’s attack on grand narratives (Climo and Cattell 2002; also see Arnold-de Simine and Radstone 2013; Huysen 1995).

Put simply, and following Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (1996), a concern with memory is closely connected to rapid social change and furthermore points to a crisis of identity at national and individual levels. This partly explains why the German “obsession” with history seems to go beyond the European trend (e.g., Assmann and Frevert 1999). Here, a preoccupation with the nation’s difficult pasts has become a part of culture and is closely intertwined with notions of national identity. The state has been involved in history writing on both sides of the inner German border not only but particularly so since World War II. The fall of the Berlin Wall added a second difficult past to that of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, creating the “double burden in history” so that democracy, perceived as a lasting form of government that secures the nation’s freedom, is now doubly intertwined with memory-work. This moreover so since the postmodern shift to memory also entailed a move to concerns with morality most apparent in the rise of the “memorial museum,” which combines aims of the “history museum”—to contextualize and critique—with that of the memorial—to commemorate—in a focus on atrocities to prevent their recurrence (Williams 2007). This coalescing of seemingly contradictory agendas is, according to Paul Williams, indicative of an “increasing (global) desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts” (2007: 8). In post-unification eastern Germany, a number of memorial museums were quickly established that almost exclusively focused on the State Security Police and its victims (see Jones 2014). Chapter 1 explores these questions of the history of history writing, remembering and reckoning in the two Germanies and the united nation in more detail.

The production of versions of the past and their intertwining with notions of democracy and contestations over citizenship are explored in

this book through a focus on narratives and their discourses. On the one hand, this method is apt because much of history writing comes to us in the form of texts (Kaneff 2004; Watson 1994). On the other, a focus on narrative is useful here because it allows the exploration of motivations and intent. Narratives are usually created with certain agendas in mind. They are made to be persuasive. James W. Fernandez (1986, 1991) and more recently Michael Carrithers (2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2012a) and others (Strecker and Tyler 2012a) have argued that culture has a rhetorical edge, as actors continuously try to persuade themselves and others of the truth of their ideas and emotions, the necessity to do or believe certain things, to engender action, to defend themselves, to plea and argue. This view is particularly useful in moments of contestation and open confrontation, some of which are explored in the following pages. But a concern with persuasion and movement is also highly relevant to the two institutional realms explored here. The group of government offices broadly has a remit of political education. It uses events, teacher training, and commemorations to educate the public in *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*, the “reworking” of the SED dictatorship. Through all individuals’ reconsideration of their own past and memory, this public reworking aims to create both a shared social memory that acknowledges the truth of the socialist regime’s dictatorial character and a foundational myth of unified Germany arising from civic struggles for democracy. To reach this double goal that will produce citizens fit to safeguard democracy into the future, the narratives of *Aufarbeitung* need to be highly persuasive.

The newspaper, in turn, depends on its customers’ loyalty, which requires stories to appear relevant to readers’ concerns, as well as correct and trustworthy in light of wider contexts. News stories thus also need to be persuasive to local readers, particularly so at a regional newspaper that considers a close connection to the readership part of its remit. This positions the newspaper as a fourth democratic power (in addition to the legislative, executive, and judiciary) regionally and at odds with the state government whose policies it critically evaluates while taking the local populations’ side. Here the diversity of readership and journalistic staff creates the need for a different rhetorical tactic. While the governmental realm attempts to be persuasive through clarity of its understandings of the past, displaying a certain single-mindedness over what matters, the newspaper does so through multivocality and openness of its categories. While the governmental realm uses rhetoric to cause change in local people to *create* citizens, the paper uses rhetoric to express the concerns of a public that consists of *already existing* citizens to cause change in government. Chapters 3 and 4 explore how these two discourses are distinguished and what kinds of narratives they demand, facilitate, or discourage.

A focus on persuasion moreover highlights the future-directedness of the narratives that are produced within these two realms, while a close eye on narratives as purpose-driven and conclusive renderings of events, as intentionally meaningful fabrics of understandings, shows the considerable concerns that underpin these representations—the worry about the future of democracy—and their unintentional consequences—the creation of certain kinds of citizenship and the denial of others. Chapters 6 and 7 consider how ideas about democracy and the future on the one hand and senses of citizenship and belonging on the other relate to discourses on the socialist past or are engaged through a rhetorical mobilization of the past in the present.

Narrative and Rapid Change

The central arguments of this book are based in a firm belief that narratives are central to meaning-making with regard to the product, the story, and its rhetoric and, just as importantly, with regard to the processes of narrative making, telling, and exchanging (Carrithers 2012a; Collins 2002, 2003, 2010; Ochs and Capps 2001), which are of particular interest when it comes to the memory of socialism. Narratives here are seen as a variety of instances that are not confined to the lingual. They include the large public narratives constituted by newspaper spreads and government position papers, stories long and short that are thrown into arguments or mentioned “just because,” story seeds as acted out and embodied in commemorative ceremonies, and life stories constructed during one-on-one interviews.

Although exploring rhetoric and questions of persuasion (Carrithers 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2012a; Fernandez 1986, 1991; Strecker and Tyler 2012a), where such questions come into play, this monograph’s starting position is that storytelling, including figurative speech, is culture in the making and central to meaning-making: to understanding one’s life, the world around one, and life’s manifold conundrums (Bruner 1987, 1990, 1991; Ochs and Capps 2001). Stories are created by narrators drawing on symbols, scripts, and schemata available to them through culture (Bruner 1987, 1990, 1991, 2002; D’Andrade 1992a, 1992b, 1995; Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Jackson 2002; Ochs and Capps 2001). By relating everyday events to master narratives, describing other individuals through metaphors so they become characters, and comparing unexpected news to previous experiences, individuals interpret what happened and begin relating to it. As Jerome Bruner puts it, “we cannot verbalize experience without taking perspective” (2002: 73).

In doing so, however, tellers moreover creatively engage with the cultural cannon and its discourses to create new story themes and to expand the application of metaphors and tropes to counter new situations and experiences. This culture dependency of narrative taken together with the common expectation that narratives are linear and based in a common moral stance (Ochs and Capps 2001) makes for difficulties in the aftermath of fundamental regime change. The dynamic character of narrative as “culture in the making,” however, is exactly what provides the means for managing situations when meanings and values are in flux. Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, for example, show that conversations, in which indeterminate and open-ended stories are created, “are a prosaic social arena for developing frameworks for understanding events” (2001: 7; also Bruner 2002), or as Ivo Strecker and Stephen Tyler have put it, “rhetoric flows in times of uncertainty” (2012b: 28).

Furthermore, narratives are treated here as being as central to the self and to self-making (Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Linde 1993; Schiffrin 1984) as they are to educating and informing publics. Whether in the interview situation, conversations with colleagues and friends, or commemorative ceremonies, narratives emerge out of social interaction and present themselves as inherently intersubjective (Jackson 2002). The dynamics of the “dialogual” situation their telling is based in (Collins 2002, 2010), during Working Group meetings or staff conferences—within which, as Strecker and Tyler rightly point out, narrators never have full control over the effects of the figurative speech they employ (2012b: 24)—combine with the dynamics that are inherent to narratives. Stories wield a degree of power of their own that we recognize when speaking of narratives that “ran away” with their teller or of how an interlocutor “got carried away” making those comments. Bruner points this out when arguing that narrative structures influence our perception of the world (1987, 1990, 1991), and Ochs and Capps observe this when discussing everyday conversations:

The dimension of linearity and moral stance address a central opposition that drives human beings to narrate life experience—the desire to sheathe life experiences with a soothing linearity and moral certainty versus the desire for deeper understanding and authenticity of experience. Imbuing an experience with a linear causal and temporal structure and conventional moral stance is the goal of many narrative interactions. Yet, autobiographically and historically these narrative formats may not resonate with actions, conditions and mindsets of tellers or, more important, those participating in a set of life events. Some tellers resist prevailing versions of events, disagree with one another, or begin to doubt their own memories and sensibilities. (2001: 56)

In telling stories, narrators juggle competing desires or, put differently, competing demands made by the narrative they wish to tell and the still vivid memories of the experiences that narrative addresses. “Good narratives” have a linear structure and a foreshadowed ending. They are clear in their messages, draw on a common cannon, and often relate to wider discourses (Ochs and Capps 2001; also Holstein and Gubrium 2000: 140; Mishler 2006; Schiffrin 1984; Smith 2006).

Yet, in narrative production, as Ochs and Capps highlight, memory may push against these demands of narrative, requiring a telling that is closer to the experience, that conveys the emotional troubles and the struggles of the self to cope with the conundrum. The balance between the powers of narrative and past experience depends, minimally, on the context of the narration and the interlocutors. In written narrative, even more so in texts destined for wider circulation, like newspaper stories or government papers, linearity and clarity are important since they support persuasion. But even here there can be more or less of that. It is thus important to realize moreover that narrative form is both suggestive and seductive, two characteristics that affect not only its interpretation but also the making of narratives (Bruner 1991). Narrative suggestiveness, Bruner argues, lies “in the emblematic nature of its particulars, its relevance to a more inclusive narrative type” (1991: 7). As narrators or authors develop stories that fall under a specific genre or draw on a particular script, certain tropes and symbols suggest themselves as fitting into the story. They are recognized as part of those kinds of stories, like the Stasi file in a story about dissidence in the GDR or the Coca-Cola emblem when expressing East German desire for Western-style consumption (see Becker 2003). Moreover, the more expertly told, the less interpretive work is required to understand narratives. Bruner goes so far as to argue that very well-told narratives “seduce” their audience into certain interpretations (1991: 9), which is also apparent from the way narratives arise out of and intertwine with wider discourses. While both narratives and discourses share many similarities, they differ in their power to guide and delimit understandings. As Sarah Franklin puts it, “the logic of discourse is rather . . . a logic of *enunciation*, defining the terms upon which knowledge is produced and deployed” (1990: 219). While narrative engages listeners who can identify with its subject positions in various ways, discourse ascribes and categorizes. Michel Foucault shows (e.g., 1977, 1981) that discourses more often than not come with claims to truth determining the legitimacy of specific knowledge and views of the world. In Germany, the “reworking of the past” (*Aufarbeitung*) is such a truth discourse that makes powerful suggestions about the past state, society, and lives within it, yet because it is a young discourse that is up against individuals’ personal recollections and senses of who they were

and are, it is contested and remains fledging; its categories and inscribed subject positions entail a degree of flux.

Nevertheless, the process of *Aufarbeitung*'s establishment has begun, and specific kinds of stories that suit its truths are circulating in this realm. Given the “seductive” powers of narrative, reinforced where they are by a dominant discourse, we can further ask whether communities of narrators and listeners that are used to particular kinds of stories may be seduced more easily into overcome understandings by narrations that follow, or appear to follow, familiar kinds of scripts. This is again particularly important with regard to the realm of *Aufarbeitung* because stories here are created for the purpose of government and underpinned by moral preoccupations based in empathic and ethical relationships to victims. Given the dynamics inherent to narrative, and their intersubjective character, storytelling also works back at the self that it is presenting. Certain stories about oneself come to be told due to the context, the interaction of that moment, and the need for coherence (Holstein and Gubrium 2000, 2001; Linde 1993, 2000). Chapter 5 thus asks how narrative-making in governmental and news realms work back at the stories that come to be told about individual lives.

In the field of *Aufarbeitung*, where stories that transmit a notion of the past as inhumane dictatorship also aim to do right by the regime's victims, the moral underpinnings of narrative (MacIntyre 1981; Ochs and Capps 2001) seem self-evident, even overpowering. Yet in other cases they appear to be more elusive, unless we consider any attempt to come to terms with unexpected events or to solve issues as moral, as Fernandez (2012) and Carrithers (2012b) appear to suggest. Such an inclusive view of morality, however, seems difficult to maintain in postsocialism generally and certainly in the case of the East German past, where different values compete, some narratives claim to be the only right and morally acceptable view of the past, and life stories that do not speak of GDR-time dissidence appear to be called into doubt regarding their morality. While agreeing that storytelling is based in and often motivated by thinking through values, I follow Avishai Margalit (2002) in distinguishing between morality and ethics with regard to memory (also Gallinat 2009a). The author characterizes the “ethics of memory,” which he regards as more significant in remembering, as concerning “thick relations” or human “relations to the near and dear” (Margalit 2002: 7). Morality, on the other hand, which concerns higher principles and more abstract concepts, provides guidance for thin relations to “the stranger and the remote” (7). The ethics of memory then concern questions of our intimate relationships in past and present, whom we treated right or wrong, and whose memory we should respect to treat them right, now. The morality of memory speaks, in contrast, to more

abstract, discursive questions of what constitutes good, proper memory, as when GDR-trained journalists grapple with the question of whether their professional work sustained a dictatorial regime.

Researching the Writing of the Past

The research project in which this book is based arose out of two previous projects and fieldwork stints in eastern Germany, all of which were facilitated by my status as an anthropologist working at home (Collins and Gallinat 2010; Gallinat 2010a; Narayan 1993).

While growing up as the youngest child in a family critical of the socialist state, I had not always been included in these conversations and therefore participated in many socialist activities, such as joining the socialist children's organization. Living in a particular pocket of East German society that was underpinned by an alternative ideology nevertheless provided a different view on life in socialism. And yet being only twelve years old when the Berlin Wall fell, the reader may rightly ask to what degree those experiences could have shaped later dispositions. My background taken together with the kinds of happenstances in life that influence our work much more than we usually dare to admit (Amit 2010) gave rise to three ethnographic projects in eastern Germany, on one of which this book primarily draws. These projects were fueled by a youthful wish, borne out of my in-between state and family position, to understand better what had allowed the GDR to exist and be so broadly supported for its four decades—an aim that changed with growing expertise and insights into the diversity of East/eastern German experiences and life courses.

The first fieldwork, over twelve months in 2001, was for a PhD and explored continuity and change (and identity and life stories) in the socialist ritual of the *Jugendweihe* (“youth consecration”; Gallinat 2002, 2005). The second project in 2004 investigated the construction of life stories among a group of former political prisoners against the backdrop of a—then—uninviting public (Gallinat 2006a, 2006b, 2009b). Out of these and my reading of the postsocialist literature, this third project developed which sought to explore how discourses about the socialist past that go on to provide narrative frameworks for individual remembering are produced in different institutions (Gallinat 2011, 2012; Gallinat and Kittel 2009).¹⁰ My first interest in that regard was how governmental organizations approach East Germany through *Aufarbeitung*, reworking. As a point of entry, a Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung (Office for Political Education; LpB), which is a part of most federal state governments, was chosen. As a comparative but different institution, a local daily newspaper,

referred to here as the *Daily Paper*, in the same federal state appeared to be a good choice, due to its independence from the political sphere and strong relationship to its local readership.

The project was located in the eastern German state Mittelland and its capital Tillberg—both of which are pseudonyms, as are titles of institutions unless these are generic terms. Some minor details of prominent actors have also been changed to protect the identity of our informants who worked in prominent positions in the state’s government and one of its very few daily newspapers.¹¹ Mittelland is characterized by a number of larger towns, like Tillberg, and large rural areas, some of which lie along the former inner German border. The state struggled with high unemployment rates in the 1990s, which started to lift as Germany’s economy recovered in the mid-2000s. Apart from agriculture, there are now a number of new medium-sized businesses. Many of the rural areas and their small- and medium-sized towns, which—like many areas in the East—suffered significant population loss in the 1990s, however, remain relatively deprived. There is little to do, especially for young people, and job prospects are dire. In those areas neo-Nazi groups have proved attractive to the local, and mostly male, youth, which is a disconcerting problem for Mittelland, as well as for most of the “new states” (*neue Bundesländer*).

Tillberg itself is a town of more than 200,000 inhabitants and is characterized by nineteenth-century villas and GDR-time and modern-day architecture. The town center features shopping areas, medieval remains like a cloister and parts of the town wall, a cathedral, and parks. Strewn across the city center are restaurants and cafés and, in an area popular with students, pubs and bars. An unobtrusive memorial to unification was built at the cathedral place; other landmarks of East German rule and the transition, like the former Stasi prison memorial museum, are located outside of the center. There is some new economy close to Tillberg, and the city itself includes the state government, a hospital, and a university among its main employers. Over the past two decades, both Mittelland and Tillberg have changed in many ways. Most notable during the most recent fieldwork was growing social disparity. Tillberg’s city center has become much more attractive to families and individuals who could be described as middle class in British terms and *Bildungsbürgertum* (“educated bourgeoisie”) in German terms than just five or ten years previously. There is also a growing number of events and attractions to satisfy such customers’ appetite for culture, history, and education.

At the same time, at the city’s periphery, deprivation appears to have become more widespread in recent years. For example, on my way to and from fieldwork at the *Daily Paper*, I usually stopped at a local baker’s to pick up the day’s newspaper and bread rolls. My query for a specific type of

bread was one day answered by a sale's assistant who sounded stressed, even though her day at work had only just started. They do not sell those here, she explained, their clientele are only pensioners (who would not want the whole-wheat, nut-and-seed baguette I was after). "And today the prices went up too!" she continued, revealing how much she dreaded charging her regular customers, who often brought their last change to the bakery, an extra two cents apiece. She had a difficult day ahead, especially in this area of the city that suffered greater deprivation than others, as she reminded me (when enquiring at the local gym's reception about a hairbrush I had lost, I was informed I should not expect it to turn up: "People up here can use anything"). That the city's salespeople had much experience in dealing with customers with tight purse strings was also highlighted another day when I hesitated at the checkout, commiserating about which items I could keep and which I needed to leave behind, having just realized that I did not bring enough cash. The sale's clerk was unimpressed and demanded straightforward information about how much money I had. She then monitored the bill and told me exactly when I had used up my meager budget of 4 euros. It was clear that such practices of managing on tight budgets had become very common.

The project entailed fourteen months of participant observation in Tillberg and Mittelland. For this the two researchers, research associate Sabine Kittel and myself, joined in the working everyday of the two institutional realms. Fieldwork began in earnest in spring 2007 and lasted until the summer of 2008. It started with both of us visiting the LpB and the *Daily Paper* in early 2007. Sabine then moved to Tillberg to conduct fieldwork at the LpB and the Working Group *Aufarbeitung*. I traveled to Tillberg from the United Kingdom every second month, where over repeated periods of five to six, at times eight, weeks, I also conducted participant observation. I spent one month at the LpB and other institutions of *Aufarbeitung* and then focused on the *Daily Paper* for five months, while Sabine continued with the Working Group *Aufarbeitung*. Sabine then followed me to the *Daily Paper* for a concluding three months of research. During this second phase of fieldwork, we maintained connection to the LpB and attendant institutions, met with informants, and attended, often together, relevant events such as commemorative ceremonies or film showings. At the end of the fieldwork period, we ran three workshops to disseminate and discuss preliminary findings in each of the two institutional realms.

We also conducted interviews with employees at different levels of institutional hierarchies. These were life story interviews that began with one open-ended question inviting interviewees to tell us their life "from beginning to end." From there, interviews would unfold conversationally as participants told their story and interviewers asked questions for clarification

at appropriate moments. This first part was followed by a semi-structured part consisting of three questions that aimed to explore individuals' perspectives on wider debates about the East German past and the region. We each ran interviews in each realm with differently positioned individuals, with Sabine conducting the majority of the interviews. One interview was conducted jointly. Overall, we recorded hundreds of pages of field notes, which were shared once written, conducted thirty-three interviews, and collected a plethora of textual and visual materials ranging from newspaper cuttings, event programs, and fliers to position and research papers, agendas, and meeting minutes. This joint data collection may raise the question of why this book is single-authored. Sabine and I discussed the question of authorship at various points during and after the project. As the research project was an outcome of my research interests and epistemological preoccupations, Sabine asked to be recognized regarding her contributions to data collection, particularly the interviews where she built on her previous work with Holocaust survivors (Kittel 2006), but she did not wish to appear as co-author. I am greatly indebted to her for her work on this project, her interviewing skills, and her criticism and suggestions during fieldwork.

As is typical in research, neither the field research nor the data we collected were quite what I had in mind when designing the project. While the Office for Political Education provided the focus of the first part of the project, we soon learned that it collaborated with some other governmental, government-funded, and civil society organizations in a formal Working Group on topics that fall under the umbrella term *Aufarbeitung*. Fieldwork widened to include the group and its core member institutions and staff. This included memorial museums,¹² like the former Stasi prison in the capital; government offices concerning the State Security Police, such as the state's Stasi commissioner (LStU); and two local branches of the Federal Commissioner for the Documents of the State Security Police (Bundesbeauftragter für die Stasi-Unterlagen, BStU), which administers the Stasi archives. Since much of the everyday work in this realm is desk based and not all away meetings allow for the presence of a researcher, fieldwork here could be slow going for Sabine and at times awkward, especially at the Office for Political Education, where staff work in individual offices and meet friends and spouses from other government offices at lunchtime.¹³ Participant observation here then meant participating in Working Group meetings and discussions, catching up on what had happened in between through informal chats and helping prepare for events—by stuffing folders or sourcing stationery, collecting texts about and produced at these institutions, and attending events together with relevant staff, like teacher training courses as well as the occasional lunch or a beer at the pub. While many of the managerial staff at the LpB were, as Sabine had suspected,

originally from West Germany, the move into the Working Group *Aufarbeitung* reestablished an eastern–western German balance. However, during fieldwork it became apparent that eastern–western German differences or contentions played a relatively small role for most individuals in this field, as coming chapters will show. Instead, political affiliation, party membership, and internal hierarchies pushed to the fore.

Less expectedly, due to naïveté on my part, we also found a number of western German staff at the *Daily Paper*, as well as staff who had worked in journalism since GDR times and others who had grown up in East Germany but entered the profession after 1989. Here, ages and backgrounds were more widespread than in the governmental sphere. And fieldwork seemed easier in the open-plan editorial office, where colleagues routinely chat over the shoulder-high screens that separate desks, congregate around printers, and go to lunch together since the office is outside of town. At the *Daily Paper* fieldwork thus involved observing the newsroom, following news agencies, attending staff conferences, and engaging in informal conversations—in short, “deep hanging out” in the newsroom (Geertz 2001). I also provided hands-on help like typing or editing readers’ letters and occasionally writing short journalistic pieces (for one reason or another the staff there considered me their local expert on all matters British).

Like my recent holiday in Germany, field research had also begun with concerns over the degree to which contentions about the GDR past were still emerging in and entertaining the public, yet they soon proved unfounded. The years 2007 and 2008 saw a number of éclats and projects that concerned the socialist past and involved the various institutions that we observed, the least of which were the preparations for the anniversary year 2009. To name but a few, there was the revelation that the director of the Chamber for Trade and Commerce had been an unofficial employee (IM; a spy) for the Stasi, leading to his resignation; the finding of an “order to shoot” (to kill; *Schiessbefehl*) at the inner German border at the local BStU office; an éclat over the presence of a GDR-time prosecutor in political cases, now a member of the state parliament, in the advisory committee of the Memorial Foundation; and a public book reading at which GDR backgrounds of local personalities, including the town’s mayor, were revealed that was later read as an attempt to interfere with the mayoral election campaign.

As the project progressed, it became increasingly apparent that doing an ethnographic project on the memory of the socialist past and its moral ambiguities was not an easy task. Both researchers found that we would get sucked into the very debates we sought to explore: what can and cannot be said about the past “dictatorship,” who is allowed to remember what, who were informants during that period, and what, if anything, did that

mean? I have explored these issues more comprehensively elsewhere (Gallinat 2009a). The writing of this book was no easier task. While much anthropology of eastern Germany, for good reason, has focused on the toll that unification and western German hegemony took, my “native” status does not allow me to put aside the dictatorial character of the SED state. How the past is defined is a tense issue “back at home” that I cannot ignore given my family background, previous research, and the relationships that arose from this. At the same time this work has also shown me that memories of the past are much more flexible and multifaceted than the discourse of *Aufarbeitung* seems able to acknowledge, and my training as an anthropologist has taught me to seriously consider the impact of fundamental, dislocating change. This has led me to the present exploration of what the institutional, structural, and humane reasons are for the mobilization of different kinds of memory by different kinds of people in different contexts. And yet it may have left me with the further conundrum that I understand both sides of the argument, for and against the notion of the dictatorship, for and against loose references to the past that could be read as “nostalgic.” The writing of this book thus entails a balancing act of my academic understandings and conceptual curiosities, as well as fieldwork and personal allegiances. There may be a point here that in some ways my status as “anthropologist at home” has led to too many sensitivities. However, I believe this work encompasses important insights into a particular aspect of the “postsocialist condition” and the presence of the past in the longer-term aftermath of fundamental regime change.

The Contents of This Book

In order to explore the production of versions of the socialist past, the book begins in chapter 1 with an exploration of the role of history in nation-building in Germany. The chapter considers the development of memory discourses in the two Germanies until and following 1990 in their historical contexts, including the experiences of socialism’s fall and unification, which influenced the reception of governmentally driven memory-work at the grassroots of society. The chapter explores the origin of the term *Aufarbeitung* and how it has become connected to the East German past, as well as the main contents and traits of the discourse: its emotive and morally guided character, the intertwining of remembrance with historical research, and the increasingly important goal of education. Exploring the contentions that have arisen around the discourse, the discussion shows up the split in memory culture that appeared to develop in the 1990s (Arnold-Simine 2013: 160). The chapter concludes with debates about a revised

federal memorial concept that unfolded during fieldwork in 2008 and the concept's more recent reconsideration to trace the development of the emerging discourse of *Aufarbeitung* over the past twenty-five years.

Having set out this context, chapter 2 introduces the two realms of fieldwork, the Working Group *Aufarbeitung* and the *Daily Paper*. An exploration of these institutions' remits and their position vis-à-vis Mittelland's population highlights, on the one hand, the LpB's aim to *shape* citizens fit for the democratic present through education, a purpose that is closely linked to the office's history and the time of its western German staff's arrival in Mittelland shortly after German unification. The *Daily Paper*, on the other hand, tries to *enable* citizenship through information and the expression of opinion on its pages arising from its explicit aim to represent local people's concerns. The chapter concludes by showing how these differential goals relate to the two realms' critical considerations of each other.

Chapters 3 and 4 then explore the distinct discourses that each of these institutional realms produces through ethnographic description and narrative analysis. Chapter 3 focuses on the *Daily Paper*'s approach to creating news stories about the East German past by exploring the news story of the apparent find of a *Schiessbefehl*, an "order to shoot" (to kill), at the inner German border. In this case, the newspaper's goal of presenting local people's concerns and the need to speak to a varied audience led to a narrative production that appears nonlinear and open-ended akin to the "living narratives" of the everyday (Ochs and Capps 2001). This gives rise to a notion of the GDR as the nation's unresolved life event that requires continuous debate for which the *Daily Paper* in turn provides the platform. The story on the order to shoot was published on the anniversary of the building of the Berlin Wall that year, which is commemorated in local events attended by members of the Working Group *Aufarbeitung*.

Chapter 4 begins with a scene from such a ceremony, the ritual and social relations of which remind attendees of the importance of "reworking" to prevent future occurrences of such violence. The chapter then focuses on the development of a teacher training course on East German history by the Working Group *Aufarbeitung* to show how meetings and discussions shape the discourse of *Aufarbeitung* in practice. Notable here is how the group negotiated the potential inclusion of ambiguous content, specifically memories of everyday life in the GDR, which are often considered to lead to "to be countered" nostalgic sentiments. As the group moved from attempts to include the everyday to reinterpret the topic to suit a view of the "GDR as dictatorship," it becomes clear that this discourse requires narratives to be linear, categorically clear, and morally certain. This pressure on narrative production arises from the fact that what is at stake in *Aufarbeitung* is not the past per se but rather the present and future of democracy and freedom.

Given the power of discourse and the subject positions it entails, it needs to be asked how this narrative production works back at the actors in these realms. Chapter 5 thus presents the life stories of two members of the Working Group *Aufarbeitung* and two journalists from the *Daily Paper* to show how narrative making in the governmental and the news realms relates to the stories that come to be told about individual lives. The chapter highlights the particular binding powers of the discourse of *Aufarbeitung* through its impact on the individual narrations of members of the Working Group, which appear as similarly linear and purpose driven as the narratives the group produces for wider audiences. Similarly, the considerably more multivocal and inclusive news discourse creates more space for a telling of personal stories for the journalists. These stories appear more like ongoing reflection on historical events and experiences, some of which seem to remain unresolved in their meaning, that extend beyond 1990. Cutting across the life stories of members of the Working Group are differences in understandings and practices of political agency between eastern and western Germans that impact actors' perceptions and expectations of Mittelland's population.

The question of how memory-work relates to understandings of citizenship and democracy in the present is further explored in chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 returns to the Working Group *Aufarbeitung* and its preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, which took place against the backdrop of a large-scale survey that was understood as proving the persistence of nostalgia for state socialism within the population. The survey had been commissioned by Mittelland's government, which also developed the political response to its results. As the survey findings coincided with the approach of the anniversary, the memory-work of *Aufarbeitung* became a tool of party-political problem-solving, as only education about the "SED dictatorship" was believed to help create the civic skills required of local people to bring Mittelland's transition to democracy to conclusion. The chapter explores the kinds of texts that developed in response, showing how, in a process during which *Aufarbeitung* was appropriated for party-political government, particular kinds of citizenship were legitimated while others were delegitimized—this although the meaning of the trope of "democracy," around which actors rallied, was variously interpreted.

Chapter 7 explores the *Daily Paper's* reaction to the Mittelland survey and the government's response to its findings, the Campaign for Democracy, to show how the newspaper positions itself as local people's advocate vis-à-vis government, both practicing democracy through facilitating debates on its pages and enabling readers to practice their citizenship by raising concerns in published readers' letters. A representation of Mittel-

land as a “normal,” non-transitional state is both an outcome of and a cause for the successful performance of the newspaper’s role of narrator/advocate. This presentation is created to avoid any sense of the local population as forever “East German” (Ostdeutsch), an identifier that has become associated with a number of problems such as right-wing violence, a penchant for authoritarianism, and lack of civic courage. In these processes the past emerges as immanent in the present, and shorthand references to the past create memory communities, for example, which bind readers to the *Daily Paper* and facilitate belonging. In these everyday practices at the *Daily Paper*, a citizenship is invoked that extends *from past to present* and has always already had legitimacy. The concluding remarks bring together the various strands under exploration, highlighting how the dynamics of narrative and their institutional production impact memory-work after fundamental regime change, which in turn is informed by concerns about the present and future of democracy and citizenship. The conclusion also returns to the question of ethics and morality in memory and narrative that this chapter introduced.

Notes

1. In this book I will use the words “East” and “West” to refer to East and West Germany prior to unification (GDR and FRG, respectively). I will use the terms “eastern” and “western” to refer to the post-1990 regions of former East and West Germany. However, this distinction is not made in the German language, so in some cases the denominators East and West will be used for post-unification times to signal continuations of German division in thinking.
2. I will use the term “unification” to refer to the end of national division in 1990. This is the term most commonly used in academic texts. During fieldwork, articles and reports by the *Daily Paper* used the German version of *Vereinigung* (“unification”). At the Office for Political Education, both *Vereinigung* and *Wiedervereinigung* (“reunification”) appear in written texts. In translations from texts collected during fieldwork and when quoting from interviews, I will therefore use the English equivalent of the term used in the original source. Interestingly, in spoken language during fieldwork and in my personal life, the term *Wiedervereinigung* prevails. Either way I am not problematizing this choice of terminology in this book.
3. *Der Spiegel* is one of Germany’s leading political magazines. It appears weekly.
4. I discuss the different denotations applied to the GDR and my own terminology in chapter 1. To refer to the fall of the GDR government in 1989 and unification in 1990, I will occasionally use *Wende*, as this is the term most commonly used in popular parlance to describe those two or so years of intense change and upheaval. This usage is not uncontentious (see Simon 2014).

5. *Aufarbeitung*, short for *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*, has been translated in various ways. Andrew H. Beattie refers to it as “working through the past” (2008: 9), Sara Jones as “reappraisal” (2014: 11), and Silke Arnold-de Simine and Susanna Radstone as “reworking of the past” (2013: 27). In this book I will use the term “reworking of the past” and in short “reworking.”
6. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (2010) observe such vilification of postsocialist nostalgia more generally.
7. The term “shortage economy,” introduced into the anthropology of postsocialism by Verdery (1996), has been subject to some debate (Thelen 2011, 2012; Dunn and Verdery 2011). My use of the term here should be read not as an endorsement of one position or the other but rather as a shorthand to describe a socioeconomic situation characterized by considerable shortages that people managed through barter, exchange, and hoarding, among other techniques.
8. This issue of a tainted personhood for eastern European personhood has also been raised in the guise of difficult questions over which anthropology and anthropologists get to be heard in an anglophone, Western academic discourse (Buchowski 2004; Kürti 1996, 2000; Lampland 2000).
9. See Assmann (2006) on cultural memory; for a brief critique of Assmann’s distinctions between various types of memory, see Arnold-de Simine and Radstone (2013: 25).
10. The project was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (RES0061-23-0035).
11. For the same reason, I am not providing references to documents produced by these specific institutions. If a reader wishes to obtain more information about data sources, please contact me directly.
12. I use the term “memorial museums” here for places that are maintained as memorials, (*Gedenkstätten*), as they are dictatorial aspects of socialism, but have been developed into larger complexes or museums to engage with the public more actively (Williams 2007).
13. See Lisa Garforth (2012) for difficulties of researching office work ethnographically.