

**Bangor University**

## **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **Exhibiting the everyday**

**anythe musealization of 1950s material culture in France and Germany**

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*Award date:*  
2015

*Awarding institution:*  
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# Exhibiting the Everyday:

The Musealization of 1950s Material Culture in France and Germany

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
PhD in Modern Languages

Bangor University, School of Modern Languages

February 2015

## Abstract

Over the course of the last decade, the 1950s have been transformed from little more than a historical interregnum between the Second World War and the 1960s into a powerful trope in the popular imagination. Nowhere has this shift been more significant than in France and Germany, where processes of forgetting connected to post-war nation-building and mythification are giving way to more complex reappraisals of the 1950s. The French and German museum landscapes, in particular, have seen the emergence of a large number of museums and exhibitions devoted to the period since the turn of the new millennium. Concerned with the quotidian realities of day-to-day life and the grassroots experiences of ‘normal’ people, these sites are part of a proliferation of 1950s-related remembering enacted through the lens of the everyday.

Using a variety of sources, ranging from personal interpretation of exhibitions and collections to museum catalogues and press reports, this thesis examines the multifarious nature of museum representation and remembering associated with the 1950s in France and Germany. By focusing on nine different sites, it assesses the different spatio-temporal frameworks and strategies used to narrate the 1950s, and determines how ‘counter-memories’ and more hegemonic memories and histories of the period are being constructed across different regional and national contexts. Despite the significance of national myths and memorial tendencies, it finds that the 1950s are being reimagined through a plurality of local, regional, national and transnational narratives, and that ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approaches are giving way to more nuanced ways of reframing the post-war period.

These findings highlight the increasing democratization of history and memory and the diverse ways in which ‘counter-memory’ and ‘genealogy’ are employed to reclaim the 1950s past. As such, the 1950s are being reworked from a simple decadal period into a semantically richer ‘time-space’.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>11</b>
1.1 Reviving the 1950s.....	13
1.2 Existing Histories of the 1950s .....	19
1.2.1 France .....	24
1.2.2 West Germany .....	27
1.2.3 East Germany .....	30
1.2.4 Transnational Narratives.....	32
1.3 Museums as ‘Counter-Memories’ .....	36
1.4 Project Rationale and Outline .....	40
<b>2. Memory, History and Musealization</b> .....	<b>47</b>
2.1 Memory .....	47
2.1.1 Memory and History.....	50
2.1.2 Memory and Museums .....	53
2.1.3 Memory and Material Culture .....	59
2.1.4 Memory and Nostalgia .....	65
2.2 Museum Representation.....	69
2.2.1 ‘Chronotopy’ .....	70
2.2.2 The Chronotope as Museum ‘Time-Space’ .....	78
<b>3. Biographical Time</b> .....	<b>82</b>
3.1 The Chronotope of Biographical Time and the Motif of Transition.....	84
3.2 Place Biographies .....	89
3.3 Nostalgia and Reminiscence .....	93
3.4 From the Private to the Public.....	98
3.5 Family Biographies .....	100
3.6 Family Photographs.....	109
3.7 Conclusion.....	112
<b>4. Glacial Time</b> .....	<b>115</b>
4.1 The Chronotope of Glacial Time and the Motif of the Provincial Town.....	118
4.2 Cultural Heritage Tourism .....	121

4.3 Local Identity and Civic Pride .....	126
4.4 Mimesis and ‘Hyperreality’ .....	132
4.5 Object Memories .....	137
4.6 Conclusion.....	143
<b>5. Monochronous Time .....</b>	<b>146</b>
5.1 The Chronotope of Monochronous Time and the Motif of the Idyll .....	149
5.2 Reclaiming Everyday Life .....	151
5.3 <i>Lieux de mémoire</i> and the Deceleration of Time .....	161
5.4 Reinforcing and Challenging Stereotypes of the GDR .....	167
5.5 Conclusion.....	173
<b>6. Metachronous Time .....</b>	<b>176</b>
6.1 The Chronotope of Metachronous Time and the Motif of Metamorphosis .....	178
6.2 Historical Contextualization.....	180
6.3 Differentiating the 1950s.....	187
6.4 Debunking and Sustaining Myths of the 1950s .....	198
6.5 Conclusion.....	205
<b>7. Multilayered Time .....</b>	<b>207</b>
7.1 The Chronotope of Multilayered Time and the Motif of Emergence .....	211
7.2 Architecture and Place Memory.....	212
7.3 Remembering and Forgetting.....	222
7.4 Beyond Nostalgia .....	228
7.5 Conclusion.....	237
<b>8. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>239</b>
8.1 Top-Down versus Bottom-Up Approaches.....	241
8.2 A Genealogical Revision of the Past.....	245
8.3 Museum Chronotopy and Nostalgia.....	250
8.4 Defining Memory and Counter-Memory .....	253
8.5 The Future of the Post-War Past .....	255
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>258</b>

## Acknowledgements

In his oft-cited commentary on the 1950s American condition, *The Irony of American History*, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr made the now famous observation that ‘nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone’. It is in recognition of this universal truth that I gratefully acknowledge the important contributions of a number of colleagues, research participants and loved ones to my own musings on the 1950s.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude and regards first and foremost to my supervisors, Dr Anna Saunders and Dr Nicola Frith. Their insights have profoundly shaped my work and ways of thinking, and the project as a whole has benefitted enormously from their extensive knowledge, expertise and fastidiousness. No question or problem has ever been too trivial for their attention and their unwavering support and enthusiasm has been key to my enjoyment of the whole PhD experience. I would also like to express a particular thanks to Dr Linda Shortt who has always been exceptionally generous with her time, despite it being in such short supply. She was instrumental in driving the project forward when I was stuck in a methodological rut and her advice, guidance and sense of humour have been an invaluable source of motivation over the last few years.

This project would not have been possible in the first place without the generous financial support of the Drapers’ Company from whom I have received a full, three-year PhD scholarship. Their philanthropy and commitment to education has allowed me to pursue my own research interests and their overwhelming hospitality means I will also be taking many significant life experiences from my time as a PhD student. With regards to my funding and association with the Drapers’ Company, my thanks must also go to Professor Carol Tully who has always overseen our meetings with impeccable efficiency, organization and style. I moreover gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the AGS in the form of a postgraduate travelling scholarship, which enabled me to conduct a key return visit to a museum and archive in Germany.

My primary research has been greatly aided by the enthusiasm, cooperation and commitment of a large number of museum directors, curators, and heritage specialists. Three sets of individuals deserve a special mention in the first instance. I would like to thank Annick and Joël Tusseau at the eponymous museum in Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes for their tremendous kindness and friendship, not to mention a shelf full of material and photographs. They have been good enough to share some of their most intimate family stories, personal experiences and memories, and I have gained a huge amount of knowledge from them about the 1950s and the charming area in which they live. My special thanks must also go to Kerstin von Freytag Löringhoff, her husband Dr Rüdiger Ritter and their daughters Louisa and Inge for very kindly putting me up in Bremerhaven during my second visit to the Museum der 50er Jahre, and for their overwhelming hospitality and generosity as a family. Kerstin and Rüdiger’s work has informed the project at all stages and I have benefitted enormously from their own historical scholarship. I am equally very grateful to Frau Dr Evers at the Kreismuseum Peine for such a warm welcome on an extremely cold day in Peine and for a very convivial lunch and enjoyable discussion. Last but not least, my thanks extend to all those who took time out of their busy schedules to meet me in person and to share their thoughts and expertise: Marie-Jeanne Villeroy at the Musée de Vire; Herr Stephan at the DDR Museum Zeitreise in Radebeul; Dr Andreas Ludwig formerly at the Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR; Herr Dr Bühler at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, and Herr Müller at the DDR Museum Thale. My

final thanks go to Elisabeth Chauvin, heritage specialist for the city of Le Havre, for generously posting me all the accompanying literature to the Appartement témoin Perret.

My time pursuing doctoral research in Bangor cannot go without a mention of the friendship of a number of fellow PhD students who have been there every step of the way and with whom I have shared many special moments. In no particular order, thanks to Erin Lloyd Jones, Andrea Tan Geok Poh, Anna Olsson-Rost, Charlotte Wilkin and Helen Miles. They have provided essential emotional support throughout the process and I owe them a huge thank you for much-needed respite from the project. My thanks also to fellow linguists in the School of Modern Languages, particularly Géraldine Crahay and Sven Greitschus, for their friendship and numerous fruitful discussions.

Above all, I would like to express my most sincere, heartfelt thanks to my parents and Ian without whose constant love and encouragement this project would never have materialized. My long-suffering Mum and Dad have never tired of my daily rants and rambles (or at least never shown it) and their unyielding belief in me and my abilities has, as always, been a source of perpetual inspiration. Ian has seen me through all the ups and downs and has been both the proverbial shoulder to cry on and the instigator of much-needed pep talks. Having generously given up most of his holidays for the last three years to accompany me on research trips, I would like to thank him more than anything for his patience and forbearance, to which I am forever indebted. Diolch o galon am bopeth cariad.

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# 1. Introduction

Life is one-tenth Here and Now, nine-tenths a history lesson. For most of the time the Here and Now is neither now nor here.

Graham Swift, *Waterland*, 1983<sup>1</sup>

In January 2005, *Der Spiegel*'s monthly culture supplement *KulturSpiegel* ran a series of articles on the concept of cultural recycling. Under the headline 'Aus Alt macht Neu!', the issue examined eleven different instances of 'before and after' transformation, ranging from Audrey Tautou's cinematic metamorphosis into a 'serious' French actress to the conversion of Berlin's Eliaskirche into the MACHmit! children's museum. The third example focused on the current revival of the 1950s and cited such phenomena as Hamburg's then newly opened 'Pony Bar', complete with *Cocktailsessel* and *Nierentische*, as evidence of a veritable comeback for the decade.<sup>2</sup> Whilst the article is predominantly concerned with the status of post-war popular culture in the 'noughties', it also reveals much about prevailing historical perceptions of the 1950s.<sup>3</sup> In a deliberately sensationalist comment, no doubt designed to raise readers' eyebrows, the article posits the 1950s as 'das muffigste und zu Recht vergessene Jahrzehnt des vergangenen Jahrhunderts', and in so doing, draws on a common vocabulary of absence associated with the period.<sup>4</sup> From recent scholarly works on the 1950s in British and wider European history, to more popular journalistic reflections, a perception of the 1950s as a 'lost' or 'forgotten' decade has prevailed.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of the marginalization of the 1950s in historical discourse, or perhaps precisely because of this, there exists a range of cultural associations and references relating to the 1950s in contemporary European society that have filtered through into the popular imagination. As historian Richard Vinen highlights in his analysis of the 'lost decade' paradox, although the

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Swift, *Waterland* (London: Picador, 2010), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Cocktailsessel* are cocktail chairs with tapered legs and inward-curving wing backs, designed for reclining; *Nierentische* are kidney-shaped, three-legged tables, typically topped with Formica or mosaic.

<sup>3</sup> The term 'post-war' is used throughout as a synonym for the 1950s. It continues to have wide currency among historians, though younger historians may dispense with it in time. Historian Tony Judt (1948–2010) titled a 2005 study *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. The marked use of an adjective that is not attributed to a noun as a main title suggests that the term was at that time readily understood as a shorthand for 'post-1945'. It is, however, semantically imprecise, because no sooner than the Second World War was over, many European countries were engaged in open conflict, in proxy wars, civil wars and wars of decolonization. France was at war again in Indochina as early as December 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Voigt, '3: Sie waren das muffigste und zu Recht vergessene Jahrzehnt des vergangenen Jahrhunderts. Doch plötzlich feiern die fünfziger Jahre ihr Comeback', *KulturSpiegel*, 1 (2005), 10-11 (p. 10).

<sup>5</sup> Important academic contributions to this discourse include: Nick Thomas, 'Will the Real 1950s Please Stand Up?: Views of a Contradictory Decade', *Cultural and Social History*, 5 (2008) 2, 227-35; *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. by Heiko Feldner, Claire Gorrara and Kevin Passmore (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011); *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s*, ed. by Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea and Carmel Quinlan (Cork: Mercier, 2004).

1950s may have been overlooked in historiography, ‘most people would have no difficulty in summoning up images of the 1950s’, from black-and-white television sets showing Hollywood melodramas and immaculately coiffured housewives in bright, pastel-coloured kitchens.<sup>6</sup> The range and richness of such significations have transformed the 1950s into a powerful cultural trope, whose impact extends far beyond the years 1949–1960. This has resulted in a ‘curious disjuncture between specialized academic work on the 1950s and the general image of the decade’ that has been cultivated in cultural memory.<sup>7</sup>

Taking the dissonance between traditional historiographical disregard for the 1950s and the retrospective cultural reimagining of the 1950s as a starting point, this thesis examines the current historical and memorial status of the 1950s within a specific area of Western Europe, namely contemporary France and Germany. The decision to focus on this particular geopolitical area stems from the fact that processes of forgetting (and subsequently remembering) related to the 1950s have been particularly strong within these two countries. This forgetting is connected to the problematic nature of post-war nation-building and mythification, and the marginalization or active repression of painful wartime and post-war histories. By adopting a comparative approach, this thesis demonstrates how memories are constructed through museum display across different cultural contexts, and in so doing, seeks to generate a more comprehensive and enriching understanding of memory and history formation in relation to the 1950s. Like all studies, this project is necessarily selective and focuses exclusively on the museum response to the 1950s through a range of nine different sites, based in France, eastern Germany and western Germany respectively.<sup>8</sup> Guided by a set of interrelated questions, it outlines the tensions and symbioses between so-called ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approaches to the past, and considers what ‘counter-memory’ and ‘genealogy’ (see later in this chapter) might reveal about the ways in which the 1950s are remembered in French and German museum displays.<sup>9</sup> How do the museums and exhibitions negotiate nation-centred and more personal and/or localized narratives of the 1950s, and to what extent are these narratives congruous or incongruous? How far do the sites confirm or challenge existing readings of the 1950s: do counter-memory and genealogy promote new ways of understanding the post-war

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Vinen, ‘Where did you leave them? Historians and “losing the 1950s”’, in *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, pp. 10-27 (p. 11).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> In order to avoid confusion, ‘East’/‘East Germany’ and ‘West’/‘West Germany’ (with capital letters) are used to denote the pre-unification states of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Federal Republic of Germany in existence until 1990. The terms ‘eastern Germany’ and ‘western Germany’ (with lower case letters) are used to refer to the post-unification regions of unified Germany in existence since 1990.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire’, in Suzanne Bacherlard and others, eds, *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 145-72.

past? To what extent do memory and counter-memory encourage particularly sentimental or critical modes of remembering? The analysis of a deliberately eclectic selection of case studies is designed not only to provide a response to these questions, but also to determine how such nebulous concepts as history and memory function in practice in museums across different regional and national contexts. This cross-cultural approach, which is lacking in museum and memory studies to date, is intended to open up fresh comparative perspectives both in terms of the historical reinterpretations of the 1950s and the harnessing and construction of memories and counter-memories by museums and exhibitions.

Above all, this thesis aims to refocus the scholarly gaze on the 1950s by uniting theories of memory, museology and material culture, and by exploring the main strategies, techniques and motifs concerning the representation and remembrance of the 1950s in France and Germany. In order to delineate the parameters for such a discussion, this introduction begins with a brief overview of the nature and trajectory of 1950s-related remembering, both in broad cultural terms and, more specifically, in relation to museum displays in France and Germany. Having set out the historical and cultural background for this study, the discussion then turns to questions of remembering and forgetting, beginning with existing national and transnational histories of the 1950s, before moving on to examine the case-study museums and exhibitions within the framework of counter-memory. The introduction concludes with a short commentary on the overall structure used to frame the project, including a synopsis of the main aims and ideas underpinning each chapter.

## **1.1 Reviving the 1950s**

Over the course of the last decade, the 1950s have re-emerged through a range of practices in French and German culture that have spanned everything from A-line dresses and pin-up playsuits to nostalgia-infused adverts and feel-good films.<sup>10</sup> Rediscovering the post-war past through a retro reimagining of 1950s styles, designs and iconography, this revival has nonetheless inspired a new vocabulary of retro-gazing that has developed from the more conventional ‘rétro’ or ‘kitsch’.<sup>11</sup> The historic Parisian district of Le Marais and Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg, Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain districts have become key destinations for the

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<sup>10</sup> Some material in this section appears in my article ‘Sites of Remembering and Forgetting: Memory Work in 1950s Museums in France and Germany’, *Journal of History and Cultures*, 5 (2015), 23-40.

<sup>11</sup> According to Elizabeth E. Guffey, ‘retro’ is a term with numerous significations and is used to describe a variety of phenomena, including ‘cultural predisposition and personal taste, technological obsolescence and mid-century style’. *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 9.

flea markets and ‘vintage’ shops popularized by ‘retro-styled’-shoppers. Women’s magazines and newspapers have reported on the latest incarnations of ‘retro-trend’ in Dior-esque fashion and contemporary ‘rétro-design’. Car manufacturers, such as Citroën and Volkswagen have built on the successes of earlier branding by developing ‘néo-rétro’ takes on old classics. Whilst the language of retro appears to invoke an ahistorical sense of ‘pastness’, it has, as Elizabeth Guffey highlights, also become ‘shorthand for a period style situated in the immediate post-war years’, encompassing a range of 1950s mainstream and subcultural styles, designs, goods and products.<sup>12</sup> Understood in this way, retro conveys a ‘communal myth of the decade’ based on a supposedly homogenous vision of cocktail-sipping ladies dressed in neat office twinsets, on the one hand, and brawling *Halbstarke* and *blousons noirs* clad in tight T-shirts and leather jackets on the other.<sup>13</sup>

Whilst this latest retro-inspired renaissance could be said to be little more than a cyclical revival of fads of 1950s popular culture, in a similar manner to that which took place in the 1970s fuelled by nostalgic films and television sitcoms such as *Grease* and *Happy Days*, the way that the 1950s have become anchored in the French and German popular imagination suggests that this is more than a simple recycling of the past. Unlike plain pastiche, this latest retro wave is not concerned with recreating the 1950s, but, rather, reimagining them, as Guffey notes in relation to a more general retro-sensibility in Western Europe and North America, ‘with an unsentimental nostalgia’ from a ‘bemused distance’; as such, it speaks of a ‘fundamental shift in the popular relationship with the past’.<sup>14</sup> An off-shoot of the latest memory boom, which has brought about the democratization and diversification of memory-related activities both in society and academic scholarship, this revival is about historicizing, and creating memory cultures around, the 1950s in a process of ‘musealization’ writ large.<sup>15</sup> This is evident in the many recent memory projects about the 1950s in France and Germany. Popular television programmes thematizing the 1950s include the 2005 documentary *Unsere*

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<sup>12</sup> Guffey, *Retro*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124. *Halbstarke* and *blousons noirs* refer to two subcultures of adolescents in post-war Germany and France respectively. Both were known for their distinctive rock’n’roll aesthetic and aggressive, provocative behaviour in public.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12 and 10.

<sup>15</sup> This broader process of accelerated historicism is built on the work of Joachim Ritter and was developed in the early 1980s by Hermann Lübke in response to what he saw as a proliferation of ‘musealization’, brought about by changing conceptions of temporality in contemporary society. Hermann Lübke, *Der Fortschritt und das Museum: Über den Grund unseres Vergnügens an historischen Gegenständen* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1982) and *Zeit-Verhältnisse: Zur Kulturphilosophie des Fortschritts* (Graz: Styria, 1983). For an overview of musealization discourse, see Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 137-41.

50er Jahre (accompanied by a best-selling book), the 2006 documentary *Le Roman des années 50* and the 2010 drama *Ah, c'était ça la vie!*, which explored the lives of three friends living in the Saint-Germain-des-Près area of Paris at the height of its fame as a hub of intellectual and cultural activity in the mid-1950s.<sup>16</sup> The 1950s have also been represented through cinematic explorations of the post-war period, such as the 2003 box office hit *Das Wunder von Bern*, which thematizes the 'miraculous' West German victory in the 1954 FIFA World Cup Final alongside the return of the last German POWs following the end of the Second World War, and the 2012 quaint romantic comedy *Populaire*, set in the Lower Normandy region of France, which centres on the efforts of a gifted speed typist and her self-appointed coach to win the 1959 international speed typing contest in New York City.<sup>17</sup> These nostalgic, predominantly nation-centred retrospectives have since been accompanied by more critical and differentiated literary reappraisals of the 1950s, such as Jean-Louis Marzorati's *C'était les années 50* (2010) and Helga Hirsch's *Endlich wieder leben: Die fünfziger Jahre im Rückblick von Frauen* (2012).<sup>18</sup> A distinct regionalization of literary response to the 1950s is equally identifiable in both France and Germany, such as Jean-Claude L'Hôtellier's *Souvenirs d'en France d'un petit Breton: Une enfance en Bretagne dans les années 50* (2010) and the edited volume *Nylon, Pütts und Rock'n'Roll: Erinnerungen an die 50er Jahre im Ruhrgebiet* (2012).<sup>19</sup>

As part of this broader arena of musealization, the 1950s have been, and continue to be, remembered and revisited within the museum sphere itself, with a vast number of museums and exhibitions dedicated to the post-war period emerging in France and Germany since the early-2000s. In addition to the numerous permanent exhibitions devoted to aspects of the 1950s everyday, ranging from sites such as a recreated 1950s school in Allouville-Bellefosse (Seine-Maritime) in northern France to a self-styled 'nostalgia museum' of life in the 1950s in Burgpreppach (Bavaria) in southern Germany, there have been several significant temporary and touring exhibitions thematizing the period. In 2013, the House of Bavarian History's exhibition 'Wiederaufbau und Wirtschaftswunder' went on display in numerous Bavarian

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<sup>16</sup> *Unsere 50er Jahre: Wie wir wurden, was wir sind*, dir. by Thomas Kufus and Jan Schütte (Polyband, 2006) [on DVD]; Rudolf Großkopff, *Unsere 50er Jahre: Wie wir wurden, was wir sind* (Munich: Piper, 2007); *Le Roman des années 50*, dir. by Patrick Cabouat (France 2/France 5/Planète, 2006); *Ah, c'était ça la vie!*, dir. by Franck Apprederis (France 2, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> *Das Wunder von Bern*, dir. by Sönke Wortmann (Universum Film, 2003); *Populaire*, dir. by Régis Roinsard (Mars Films, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Louis Marzorati, *C'était les années 50* (Paris: Archipel, 2010); Helga Hirsch, *Endlich wieder leben: Die fünfziger Jahre im Rückblick von Frauen* (Munich: Siedler, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Claude L'Hôtellier, *Souvenirs d'en France d'un petit Breton: Une enfance en Bretagne dans les années 50* (Brissac-Quincé: Petit Pavé, 2010); *Nylon, Pütts und Rock'n'Roll: Erinnerungen an die 50er Jahre im Ruhrgebiet*, ed. by Rolf Potthoff and Achim Nöllenhaidt (Essen: Klartext, 2012).



towns and cities, and the Domitys group's exhibition 'L'Expo des années 50' came to an end after a two-year 'Tour de France' of its residential homes.<sup>20</sup> The museum trend is by no means limited to one particular kind of institution, but has been taken up by both major public and private museums and more peripheral local museums. The 2014 French museum landscape has seen the well-known Palais Galliera (a municipal fashion museum in Paris) launch a new temporary exhibition on French fashion between 1947 and 1957, and the small, local Ecomusée du Pays sisteronais (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence) launch an exhibition on 'La Guinguette dans les années 50'. 1950s-related exhibitions for 2014 in Germany range from 'Aufbruch, Umbruch, Stilbruch?: Design der 1950er Jahre und 1960er Jahre' at the municipal Museum August Kestner in Hamburg, to 'Petticoat und Rock'n'Roll: die wilden fünfziger Jahre' at the much smaller municipal Stadtmuseum Werne (North Rhine-Westphalia). The breadth of museum appropriations of the 1950s, both in terms of exhibition content and institutional frameworks, is indicative of an increasing democratization and diversification of post-war history and memory in France and Germany. The musealized space of the 1950s is widening and, with the increasing digitization of memory, this is taking place not only in the physical space of museum displays, but also in the cyberspace of virtual collections. Explicitly linked to the wider process of musealization taking place, this can be understood as an interconnected memory and museum boom pertaining to the 1950s. Although this boom has already been in process for some time, it looks set to continue into the near future, with retro-inspired 1950s festivals and cafés-cum-museums growing in popularity throughout France and Germany, as well as additional planned museums, such as a '50er Jahre Erlebniswelt' in Zumarshausen (Bavaria).

Whilst the reimagining of the 1950s in France and Germany is not directly geographically conditioned, it is important to highlight that the growth in museums and temporary exhibitions pertaining specifically to the 1950s in Germany is anchored very much in the western German museum context. In eastern Germany, the 1950s are typically dealt with as a subsidiary branch of GDR history and culture, and appear in the permanent or temporary displays of museums thematizing the GDR *Alltag* and/or the more repressive elements of the SED regime, or as part of wider divided German experience in the larger public historical museums, such as the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn and the Deutsches Historisches Museum

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<sup>20</sup> Domitys is a commercial organization specializing in residential homes for senior citizens.

in Berlin.<sup>21</sup> Museum commemorations of the 17 June 1953 were very common on the occasion of the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of the uprising in 2003 and 2013 respectively. The Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship and the Federal Ministry of Finance's 2013 touring exhibition 'Wir wollen freie Menschen sein! Der DDR-Volksaufstand vom 17. Juni 1953', for instance, travelled to over two thousand locations nationally and internationally. Historically specific exhibitions pertaining to the 1950s more broadly, however, remain an exception in the retrospective reimagining of the GDR. Although Berlin is host to the most high-profile GDR *Alltag* museums and exhibitions, such as the centrally located DDR Museum and the Museum in der Kulturbrauerei's recently opened permanent exhibition 'Alltag in der DDR', the musealization of the East German everyday spans the length and breadth of the eastern *Länder*, from the DDR-Museum Malchow (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) in the north, to the DDR Museum Pirna (Saxony) in the south east. Such museums typically exhibit a mishmash of 'ordinary' cultural artefacts, such as clothing, furniture, consumables and vehicles, in a bid to convey what life was 'really like' in the GDR. Material incarnations of the 1950s may, therefore, include everything from Bautz'ner mustard to the Trabant P50. The museum Gegen das Vergessen: Sammlung zur Geschichte der DDR in Pforzheim (Baden-Württemberg) is currently the only GDR museum in existence in western Germany and focuses on the political nature of life under dictatorship.

The inconsistency in the current memorial status of the 1950s in France and western Germany, on one side of the spectrum, and eastern Germany on the other, raises the inevitable question as to why this discrepancy exists and how it has come about. Although it is possible to speak of a veritable proliferation of remembering with respect to the 1950s, at least in France and western Germany, many scholars have demonstrated the extent to which the current memory boom is hallmarked by forgetting. Pierre Nora seems to have summed up this paradoxical situation as early as the 1980s in his much-cited reflection that 'on ne parle tant de mémoire que parce qu'il n'y en a plus'.<sup>22</sup> For Nora, the recent obsession with memory has only occurred because of the erosion of a spontaneously occurring social memory in the first place.

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<sup>21</sup> *Alltag* means 'everyday' or 'everyday life' and is commonly used in compound nouns such as *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday history), *Alltagskultur* (everyday culture) and *Alltagmuseum* (museum of everyday life). In the context of post-1989 GDR memory, it is a politically freighted term that perpetuates a problematic dichotomy between everyday life and dictatorship (*Alltag* versus *Diktatur*; *Gesellschaft* versus *Herrschaft*). In GDR remembrance culture, *Alltag* is often equated with a trivialization of life in the GDR (see explanation of the so-called Sabrow Commission and its report in chapter five). The abbreviation SED stands for the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany), the ruling party of the GDR.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et Histoire: La problématique des lieux', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), I, pp. 23-43 (p. 23).

Andreas Huyssen has placed similar emphasis on the remembering-forgetting dialectic in the development of what he calls ‘twilight memories’, in so far as ‘obsessions with memory in contemporary culture must be read in terms of this double problematic’.<sup>23</sup> In her analysis of the emergence of a ‘mode rétro’ relating to the Second World War in France in the 1970s, Guffey shows how the revival developed as a response to the ‘collective, willed effort to forget’ the humiliating French defeat and collaboration through the mythification of ‘La France résistante’ during the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>24</sup> By dressing in wartime fashions and watching probing films, such as Marcel Ophuls’s *Le Chagrin et la pitié* (1971), Michel Mitrani’s *Les Guichets du Louvre* (1974) and Louis Malle’s *Lacombe Lucien* (1974), young French people attempted to confront the recent past by recreating it, in a process that evolved ultimately from ‘memory’s inversion’.<sup>25</sup> Reading the memory boom in this way, the current revival of the post-war period in France and western Germany can be seen less as an abundance of memory than as a reaction to a kind of double forgetting: the first based on the 1950s as a period of forgetting (avoiding or actively suppressing less assimilable Second World War narratives), and the second relating to the marginalization or forgetting of the 1950s themselves in historiography and cultural memory.

Highlighting the role of forgetting rather than remembering helps to draw out a number of possible explanations as to why the 1950s have not been subject to the same kind of cultural reinvestment in eastern Germany as they have in western Germany and France. For one thing, critical revision of the GDR’s founding myth of antifascism, which helped to marginalize and deliberately suppress problematic narratives of the National Socialist past and the Second World War in East German society, did not take place until unification in 1990.<sup>26</sup> This meant that there was not the same public backlash against the political instrumentalization that took place during the 1950s as there was in France and western Germany.<sup>27</sup> What is more, the 1950s in the GDR have never been subject to the same kind of forgetting or exclusion from

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<sup>23</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Guffey, p. 117.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. *Le Chagrin et la pitié: Chronique d’une ville française sous l’occupation*, dir. by Marcel Ophuls (NEF, 1971); *Les Guichets du Louvre*, dir. by Michel Mitrani (Gaumont, 1974); *Lacombe Lucien*, dir. by Louis Malle (CIC, 1974).

<sup>26</sup> Daniela Berghahn, *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 59; Bill Niven, ‘The Sideways Gaze: The Cold War and Memory of the Nazi Past, 1949-1970’, in *Divided, But Not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War*, ed. by Tobias Hochscherf, Christoph Laucht and Andrew Plowman (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 49-62 (p. 59).

<sup>27</sup> See Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy: De 1944 à nos jours*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: Seuil, 1990), pp. 118-54; Niven, p. 52.

historiography, because the post-war period represented the founding years of a completely new state. Historical events of the 1950s, such as Sovietization, the adoption of the economic policy of the 'Neuer Kurs' and the 17 June 1953 uprising have thus generally been weaved into a narrative of East German *Aufbau*.<sup>28</sup> Above all, however, people's relationship to the 1950s differs fundamentally in eastern Germany from that in France and western Germany because of the fact that since 1990, the GDR has ceased to exist as a political entity and, as such, debates about GDR history, memory and identity more broadly have tended to loom large. By definition, this has meant that scholars and cultural commentators have tended to reflect on 'the GDR' as a whole, and that the marginalization (and in many cases mischaracterization) of the GDR in post-unification Germany has overshadowed any processes of forgetting related to the 1950s.

## 1.2 Existing Histories of the 1950s

Retrieving the 1950s from the realms of history and memory has inevitably sparked debate as to how and why the 1950s became a 'lost decade' in the first place. For anyone who grew up in, or lived through, the post-war period, including the so-called 'silent generation', the 1950s are part of a very real past imagination, even if this carries a wealth of conflicting associations.<sup>29</sup> For those born much later, the 1950s are an equally tangible cultural construct, whose current reimagining transforms the recent past into a part of the changing present and future. How, then, has a decade so rich in significance become so tied up with metaphors of loss and forgetting? For Nick Thomas, the answer lies in the interconnected 'image problem' and 'identity crisis' that the 1950s have been experiencing, because of the contradictory ways in which they have tended to be presented in popular, academic and political discourse.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, the 1950s have come to stand for all that is positive about a return to 'normality', increasing affluence and a renewed sense of community spirit following the end of the Second World War. Yet on the other hand, the 1950s have equally come to signify a period of global

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<sup>28</sup> The 'Neuer Kurs' refers to the more lenient economic programme that was announced by the SED leadership in early June 1953. This has been ordered by the Soviet Union in order to limit the potential for unrest in the GDR following the harsh economic policies of the first five-year plan (adopted on the 1 January 1951).

<sup>29</sup> The 'silent generation' refers to those born during the Great Depression and the beginning of the Second World War (roughly the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s), who generally conformed to existing societal norms. This generation may also appear 'silent' because it is sandwiched between two much more prominent generations, namely those who came of age just before the Second World War and those born during the post-war baby boom.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas, p. 227.

unrest, ideological confrontation and threatening political rhetoric.<sup>31</sup> Such conflicting characterizations are, for Thomas, explicitly linked to historical scholarship's preference for the supposedly more eventful preceding and succeeding decades, so much so that the 1950s have been eclipsed 'by debates about the impact of the wartime and post-war austerity of the 1940s and the rebelliousness of the 1960s'.<sup>32</sup> This has not only drawn the 1950s into unfavourable comparison with the war years and the 1960s, but has also meant that there has been a dearth of rigorous, critical analysis on the 1950s, with studies 'looking at social change in the 1950s [being] few and far between, and surveys seeking to synthesize the work on various aspects of the decade [being] almost non-existent'.<sup>33</sup>

Whilst Thomas is primarily concerned with the historiographical status of 1950s Britain, his reflections seem particularly appropriate for the French and German contexts, where the 1950s have been dwarfed by a wealth of scholarship on various aspects of the Second World War and the 1960s. Historical narratives of resistance and the Occupation and Liberation have dominated pre- and post-1970s French historiography, with early, highly politicized histories, memoirs and biographies largely toeing the line of the Gaullist resistance myth, and later works actively challenging it.<sup>34</sup> The Vichy past, in particular, has been a continued source of debate amongst historians, with the first major study being published as early as 1954 in the form of Robert Aron's conservative *Histoire de Vichy*, and public consciousness being reawakened with later, more critical works, such as Robert Paxton's *Vichy France* (1972), Rod Kedward's *Resistance in Vichy France* (1978) and Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (1987), the last of which was published in the wake of high-profile war crimes trials in France.<sup>35</sup> Representing a highly controversial period of French history, Vichy is a past that, in Peter Davies's words, 'is constantly being revisited by historians'.<sup>36</sup> A similar trend can be seen in the extensive historiographical response to the events of May 1968 in France, which, as Julian Jackson notes, began virtually as soon as the last protests were over, with the Bibliothèque Nationale recording one hundred and twenty four books on the subject by October of the same year.<sup>37</sup> The recent decadal anniversaries in particular have seen renewed vigour and a

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas, p. 228.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Davies, *France and the Second World War: Occupation, Collaboration and Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 2-3.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Aron, *Histoire de Vichy* (Paris: Fayard, 1954); Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1972); H. R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France: A Study of Ideas and Motivation in the Southern Zone, 1940-1942* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Rousso.

<sup>36</sup> Davies, *France and the Second World War*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>37</sup> Julian Jackson, 'The Mystery of May 1968', *French Historical Studies*, 33 (2010), 625-53 (p. 626).

diversification of interpretations in academic scholarship on the period, with important histories emerging in 1988, such as Jacques Capdevielle and René Mouriaux's *Mai 68, l'entre-deux de la modernité* and Laurent Joffrin's *Mai 68: Une histoire du mouvement*, ten years on, in 1998, such as Jean-Pierre Le Goff's *Mai 68: L'héritage impossible* and more recently, in 2008, with volumes, such as *Mai-Juin 68* and *68: Une histoire collective, 1962-1981*. For Jackson, the growth in edited volumes in particular during the last anniversary is evidence in itself of the growing historical density of the period 'as if the sheer complexity of the events defies synthesis'.<sup>38</sup>

Histories of twentieth-century Germany have equally tended to favour the burgeoning debates surrounding the problematic National Socialist past and the tumultuous 1960s over the 1950s. In the immediate post-war period and the 1960s, West German historiography was largely concerned with the so-called *Sonderweg* interpretation of National Socialism.<sup>39</sup> Historians outside Germany mostly claimed National Socialism as a culmination of events throughout German history, whereas the dominant West German interpretation, led by Gerhard Ritter and Friedrich Meinecke, maintained it as a definitive rupture with German history and tradition, or as an expression of a much wider, shared western trend. The creation of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich in 1949 coincided with the proliferation of these debates, quickly becoming the leading centre for research into the National Socialist past, and this, together with increasing archival access and war crimes trials in West Germany, marked the beginning of what Jane Caplan sees as an 'unprecedented outpouring of academic publications on the history of National Socialism'.<sup>40</sup> In East German historiography, National Socialism took on an equally significant if not more public role than it did in the West, albeit with a very different focus. The 1960s in particular were dominated by the so-called 'stamokap' theory, which argued that National Socialism was a direct product of the German state's pursuit of monopoly capitalism. As a result, East German historians tended to place emphasis on continuity between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, and between the Third Reich and the West German state. Although party political rhetoric continued to dominate historical interpretation, the establishment of a more politically secure historical scholarship within the academy brought

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<sup>38</sup> Jackson, p. 630.

<sup>39</sup> The *Sonderweg* is a particular thesis in German historiography that considers Germany (and the pre-1871 Germanic states) to have followed a different, 'special path' of modernization from other Western nations, the particularities of which ultimately culminated in National Socialism.

<sup>40</sup> Jane Caplan, 'The Historiography of National Socialism', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. by Michael Bentley (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997), pp. 545-90 (p. 564).

about wider-ranging historiographical debates on the National Socialist past in the GDR.<sup>41</sup> This paved the way for a closer partnership with Western historians in the 1980s. In West Germany, historical investigation into National Socialism re-emerged with renewed vigour in the 1980s with Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn's *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung* (1980), which completely rejected the notion of a *Sonderweg*.<sup>42</sup> It also resurfaced in the form of the *Historikerstreit*, which saw intense debate between right-wing proponents of the totalitarianism thesis, such as Ernst Nolte, Andreas Hillgruber, Klaus Hildebrand and Michael Stürmer, and left-wing proponents of the *Sonderweg* thesis, such as Jürgen Habermas, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Hans and Wolfgang Mommsen, and Martin Broszat. The 1990s subsequently witnessed more intense historical scrutiny of the role and responsibility of 'ordinary' Germans in the consolidation of National Socialism and in conniving at or actively engaging in the Holocaust. This scrutiny was provoked by works such as Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* (1992) and Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996).<sup>43</sup>

Alongside this, more recent historiography has focused on the 1960s as an area of research, with the revolts and radicalism of the so-called '68-er Bewegung' representing key foci for historical reinterpretation. Early West German work tended to adopt a very nation-centred approach, Gerhard Bauß's landmark *Die Studentenbewegung der sechziger Jahre in der Bundesrepublik und Westberlin* (1983) being a case in point, positing 1968 as a uniquely West German and West Berlin-centred phenomenon. Since the late 1980s, however, historians have become increasingly concerned with placing 1968 in both a wider German and international context, highlighting 1968 as an experience that took place on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Whilst the traditional interpretation of 1968 as a caesura 'from the supposedly quiet, stuffy and somewhat boring 1950s' has tended to prevail, this trend has helped to rearticulate 1968 as part of shared political experiences and longer-term trajectories.<sup>44</sup> This has given way to a new historical understanding of 1968 as a transnational myth and 'global revolt against capitalism, imperialism and colonialism', reflected in a growing body of comparative

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<sup>41</sup> Caplan, p. 576.

<sup>42</sup> Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn, *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung: Die gescheiterte bürgerliche Revolution von 1848* (Frankfurt a.M.: Ullstein, 1980); the revised and expanded English translation appeared as *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London: Penguin, 2001); Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Hanna Schissler, 'Epilogue: Rebels in Search of a Cause', in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. by Hanna Schissler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 459-67 (p. 460).

studies, from the edited volume *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (1988) to the more recent *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt* (2013).<sup>45</sup>

Whilst scholarly preoccupations with the Second World War and the 1960s have produced an enduring image of the French and German 1950s as a historical vacuum, the 1950s have been equally marginalized as part of a wider narrative of twentieth-century European history. In his analysis of Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Extremes* (1994) and Norman Davies's *Europe: A History* (1997), Kevin Passmore demonstrates how the 1950s have been historically assimilated into a longer-term European Cold War framework.<sup>46</sup> Whilst he signals important differences between the two authors' approaches, he sees a broadly consistent reading of European division, roughly spanning the end of the Second World War to the fall of the Berlin Wall, as a 'diversion from the true path of European and/or world history' that had its roots in the Russian Revolution of 1917.<sup>47</sup> Within this narrative, the 1950s are only significant in so far as the economic boom beginning in this period exposed the failures and shortcomings of the Soviet system, thus representing a decisive step towards inevitable European reintegration.<sup>48</sup> Although, as Passmore notes, 'the exaggerated judgements of the years immediately following 1989 gave way to more nuanced assessments of European history, which broke with teleologies and grand narratives', other more recent works have emerged which place the 1950s in similarly broad frameworks.<sup>49</sup> Tony Judt's *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (2005) sets up the years 1945-1989 as an 'interim age: a post-war parenthesis, the unfinished business of a conflict that ended in 1945 but whose epilogue had lasted for another half century'.<sup>50</sup> Whilst the study adopts a broadly chronological approach, it sandwiches the 1950s awkwardly between two distinct historical phases: the first a more traditional 'post-war' period lasting

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<sup>45</sup> Caroline Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker, 'Introduction', in *1968: The World Transformed*, ed. by Caroline Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-28 (p. 1). *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt*, ed. by Ronald Fraser (New York: Pantheon, 1988); *Europe's 1968: Voices of Revolt*, ed. by Robert Gildea, James Mark and Anette Warring (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Ingo Juchler, *Die Studentenbewegung in den Vereinigten Staaten und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland der sechziger Jahre: Eine Untersuchung hinsichtlich ihrer Beeinflussung durch Befreiungsbewegungen und -theorien aus der Dritten Welt* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996); *1968 – ein europäisches Jahr*, ed. by Etienne François and others (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997); Michael Kimmel, *Die Studentenbewegungen der 60er Jahre: BRD, Frankreich, USA: Ein Vergleich* (Vienna: Wiener Universitätsverlag, 1998); *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956–1977*, ed. by Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Kevin Passmore, 'The 1950s in European Historiography', in *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, pp. 28-39; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994); Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (London: Pimlico, 1997).

<sup>47</sup> Passmore, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 2.



from 1945–1953 and the second a period of ‘prosperity and its discontents’ from 1953–1971. Although this helps historical interpretation to steer clear of a rigidly decade-orientated approach towards the 1950s, which as Gorrara, Feldner and Passmore quite rightly point out ‘can lead to distortions’, it nevertheless brings its own set of problems.<sup>51</sup> Devoid of any real identity and consensus, the 1950s are once again marginalized as little more than an interregnum between the end of an old era and the start of a new one. In the French and western German contexts, this historiographical tendency to merge the 1950s into the wider history of 1945–1989 is intrinsically linked to the dominant, long-term conceptualizations of the period, in the form of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder* respectively.<sup>52</sup> These entered the public imaginations as bastions of French and West German national identity and have become the basis for a set of nation-centred, top-down histories of the 1950s.

### 1.2.1 France

Of those French narratives of the 1950s to emerge in historiography, there is one which clearly stands out, due to the quasi-mythical status it has achieved as a national post-war paradigm: the *Trente Glorieuses*. Coined in 1979 with the publication of *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* by Jean Fourastié, an economist and advisor on the government’s economic planning commission, the *Trente Glorieuses* have become the dominant, if somewhat misleading, label for a not-quite-thirty-year boom period of economic and social progress that transformed the French state.<sup>53</sup> Whilst the exact duration of this phenomenon is debatable, the fact that France underwent rapid, virtually unprecedented change is undeniable. Average levels of economic growth surpassed those of both Britain and the US, and by the end of the period, even outstripped those of ‘miraculous’ West Germany, while progress was achieved in a wide range of societal domains, including professional life, work, domestic spaces, education, hygiene, health and life expectancy.<sup>54</sup> Although many French people at the time felt as though life had worsened in the 1950s in comparison to the immediate post-war years, the *Trente Glorieuses* have taken on historical significance as an

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<sup>51</sup> Claire Gorrara, Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore, ‘Introduction’, in *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, pp. 1–8 (p. 1).

<sup>52</sup> The *Trente Glorieuses* refers to the ‘glorious thirty’ years of rapid economic expansion in France spanning roughly 1945–1975; the *Wirtschaftswunder* refers to the West German post-war ‘economic miracle’.

<sup>53</sup> Jean Fourastié, *Les Trente Glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris: Pluriel, 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Knapp and Vincent Wright, *The Government and Politics of France*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 25; Fourastié, p. 169.

overwhelmingly positive rebirth of French post-war society.<sup>55</sup> For Kristin Ross, this is because the consumer society that emerged with the *Trente Glorieuses* became, both literally and metaphorically, a way of renourishing the nation following wartime and immediate post-war deprivation and austerity. Seen in this way, the *Trente Glorieuses* have become ingrained in the national mythology of the post-war period and provided the basis for a new sense of French national identity not because they constituted an extraordinary boom period, but because they were historicized as precisely the opposite. Enabling the starving nation ‘to gorge on newfound abundance and prosperity’, the *Trente Glorieuses* came to be seen as a completely ‘*natural, necessary*’ development’ in French reconstruction.<sup>56</sup> By drawing on Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies*, Ross offers an additional explanation as to why the consumption boom has become such a central narrative to French national experience of the 1950s.<sup>57</sup> According to Ross, Barthes’s work on hygiene and cleaning products suggests a post-war hunger not just for food, but also for cleanliness. Mimicking the official process of *épuration légale*, consumption became integral to the ‘new emphasis on French national purity’ in the 1950s in the wake of the Occupation, Vichy collaboration and the Liberation.<sup>58</sup> The *Trente Glorieuses* thus became the ultimate historical proof that the French state and its citizens had turned themselves around economically, socially, culturally and above all morally.

Existing histories of the 1950s in France are not, however, all consistent with an overarching narrative of unimpeded progress, growing prosperity and social cohesion. As early as the 1960s, the de Gaulle presidency was reinforcing yet another powerful myth of the previous Fourth Republic as a period of unprecedented political chaos, in order to cement the leader’s parliamentary legitimacy. Perhaps because of the extent to which historiography focused on the Resistance and the Liberation in the 1970s, this particular myth was not challenged until much later, thereby instilling a particular interpretation of the Fourth Republic as an era fraught by political paralysis. Although historians have since proposed a more nuanced understanding of the period, highlighting the extent to which its mythification and

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<sup>55</sup> Charles Sowerwine makes the interesting point that in an opinion poll in 1956, despite real per capita income increasing by six per cent in twelve months, ninety-two per cent of respondents claimed they felt life had worsened rather than improved. *France Since 1870: Culture, Society and the Making of the Republic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 265.

<sup>56</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), pp. 71-2. The importance of Ross’s study on the *Trente Glorieuses* lies in how she situates France’s cultural transformation in opposition to the waning of French imperialist control in North Africa, exploring the interrelation between modernization and decolonization. Unless otherwise stated, emphasis is always in the original.

<sup>57</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957).

<sup>58</sup> Ross, p. 74.

vilification has been, as Georgette Elgey maintains, ‘à la fois excessif et injuste’, and drawing out some of the successes in social reform, a more consistent understanding has prevailed amongst the general public.<sup>59</sup> For Pascal Cauchy, whether or not it actually merits such vehement criticism, the Fourth Republic has become the ultimate symbol of political weakness and has taken on the role of the ‘parent pauvre’ and ‘mal-aimée’ of contemporary French history because of its instability, painful decolonization process and short duration.<sup>60</sup>

This overriding image of what Catherine Fieschi sees as ‘pervasive *immobilisme*’ is intrinsically bound up with historical narratives of French decolonization. Throughout the whole of the 1950s, France was at war with at least one, if not several, of its colonies, and it was these conflicts, particularly the Algerian War, that underlined the flaws in the Fourth Republic and which ultimately led to its collapse.<sup>61</sup> Whilst the memory of Algeria was systematically repressed in the years following the end of the conflict (largely because French military conduct, in particular the use of torture, was inconsistent with the central tenets of Republicanism and de Gaulle’s politics of *grandeur*) the wars of decolonization have since become important historical narratives of the 1950s and the emergence of the current Fifth Republic. An important shift can be identified in the late 1980s, with the publication of a wave of second generation *pied noir* literature and the release of the first popular film on the Algerian War, *Cher frangin* (1989), both of which helped to bring Algeria back to the French historical consciousness.<sup>62</sup> This has been followed by the publication of important scholarly works on the French colonial past, such as Benjamin Stora’s *La Gangrène et l’Oubli* (1991), and films such as Michael Haneke’s *Caché* (2005).<sup>63</sup> Because of the nature of the colonial relationship between France and Algeria and the extent of the brutality of the Algerian War, much of this work has focused on Algeria, rendering it one of the most important French historical narratives not just of the 1950s and 1960s, but of the entire twentieth century.<sup>64</sup> The fact that in the twenty-first century the colonial past, in particular the memory of Algeria, has become a matter for

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<sup>59</sup> Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IV<sup>e</sup> République*, 6 vols (Paris: Fayard, 1992-2012), VI La République des tourmentes (1954-1959), tome IV, De Gaulle à Matignon (2012), p. xiii.

<sup>60</sup> Pascal Cauchy, *La IV<sup>e</sup> République* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Catherine Fieschi, *Fascism, Populism and the French Fifth Republic: In the Shadow of Democracy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> Fieschi, pp. 171-74. *Cher frangin*, dir. by Gérard Mordillat (Capital Cinéma, 1988).

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l’Oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998); *Caché*, dir. by Michael Haneke (Les films du losange, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, ‘Introduction: The Case for Francophone Postcolonial Studies’, in *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, ed. by Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1-14 (p. 11).

legislation and legal challenge (in the form of the so-called *lois mémorielles*) indicates that the colonial project (and its end) is still central to French national self-understanding.<sup>65</sup>

### 1.2.2 West Germany

As in France, the most important, lasting historical narrative of 1950s West Germany is that of a quasi-mythical economic transformation in the form of the *Wirtschaftswunder*. An expression used initially in the 1920s and 1930s to refer to the brief economic booms of the Weimar Republic's *Goldene Zwanziger* and early National Socialist Germany respectively, the *Wirtschaftswunder* has since come to symbolize a whole range of rapid improvements and changes that took place in West German society in the 1950s, including high economic growth and productivity, the implementation and development of a social market economy and low unemployment.<sup>66</sup> Whilst these phenomena were certainly widespread and long lasting, as David Crew highlights, the extent to which they can be described as 'miraculous' is debatable, given the time it took for most West Germans to feel tangible improvements in everyday life and the unequal distribution of this new-found prosperity.<sup>67</sup> Economics Minister and 'Vater des Wirtschaftswunders' Ludwig Erhard himself was highly critical of the term; as he saw it, the economic successes of the 1950s were down to nothing more than forward planning, favourable domestic and international conditions, and sheer hard work.<sup>68</sup> Arguably the only true miracle of the 1950s took place in 1954 when, against all odds, West Germany beat the 'Mighty Magyars' and won the FIFA World Cup. Proving that West Germans were 'wieder wer', this event more than any other signalled that the emerging *Wirtschaftswunder* was being felt at a grassroots level.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Benjamin Stora, 'La France et "ses" guerres de mémoires', in *Les guerres de mémoires: La France et son histoire: Enjeux politiques, controverses historiques, stratégies médiatiques*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), pp. 7-13 (p. 12). The passing of so-called 'memory laws' in France, such as the 2005 law on colonialism, are a clear example of the judicialization of national memory and historiography. This law in particular proved to be very contentious because article 4 required high school teachers to acknowledge the 'positive role' of the French colonial project. The ensuing public uproar meant that the law was subsequently amended in 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Armin Grünbacher, *The Making of German Democracy: West Germany During the Adenauer Era, 1945-65* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 74.

<sup>67</sup> David F. Crew, 'Consuming Germany in the Cold War: Consumption and National Identity in East and West Germany, 1949-1989, an Introduction', in *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, ed. by David F. Crew (New York: Berg, 2003), pp. 1-19 (p. 11).

<sup>68</sup> Pól O'Dochartaigh, *Germany Since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> Grünbacher, p. 181.

Historians have attempted to contextualize the *Wirtschaftswunder* more fully and have offered additional suggestions as to the reasons for the West German economic boom of the 1950s. Werner Abelshauser's notion of the 'long fifties', for instance, represents a fundamental departure from the *Wirtschaftswunder* myth, in that it explains the economic boom of the 1950s as a natural legacy of a number of much longer-term trends, which predated the Marshall Plan and the currency reform of 1948.<sup>70</sup> The *Wirtschaftswunder* nevertheless remains paradigmatic of the entire West German post-war period, and particularly the 1950s. As Abelshauser has demonstrated, in the absence of workable political codes of national identity in the wake of National Socialism, it became the founding myth of the West German state. As with the *Trente Glorieuses*, the *Wirtschaftswunder* became explicitly bound up with the consumption boom and enabled people to literally buy into the social market economy and a sense of national identity through the 'unideologische und bescheidene Rituale des Fernsehfeierabends, der Freizeit und des Konsums'.<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Wiesen even goes so far as to suggest that the *Wirtschaftswunder* was not so much a miracle as a 'consumer product' in its own right, because of the way in which it was 'dreamed up, marketed, and acquired by a public hungry for images of personal and national abundance'.<sup>72</sup> The *Wirtschaftswunder* was so omnipresent in West German advertising and media, and was such a powerful symbol of future-orientated optimism, that it became a synonym for, and overriding myth of, the post-war recovery and modernization of West Germany. Because of the terms of unification in 1990, this arguably also became the founding myth of post-unification Germany, and in striking parallels with the Adenauer era, *Wirtschaftswunder* rhetoric has been invoked in relation to another CDU politician's chancellorship, Angela Merkel's 'new social market economy' and 'Wirtschaftswunder 2.0'.<sup>73</sup>

Whilst images of the West German post-war period are dominated by the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the 1950s have been simultaneously ingrained in German historiography and cultural memory as a period of restoration of wartime and pre-war society. Despite official denazification, many of those found responsible for war crimes were given amnesty and both former Nazi party members and low-ranking officials in National Socialist Germany found their way into key administrative and judicial positions in the new West German state through

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<sup>70</sup> Werner Abelshauser, *Die Langen Fünfziger Jahre: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949-1966* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1987).

<sup>71</sup> Bernhard Giesen, *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation: Eine deutsche Achsenzeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 241.

<sup>72</sup> S. Jonathan Wiesen, 'Miracles for Sale: Consumer Displays and Advertising in Postwar West Germany', in *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, pp. 151-78 (p. 151).

<sup>73</sup> Angela Merkel, 'Die Wir-Gesellschaft: Über die Notwendigkeit einer Neuen Sozialen Marktwirtschaft', *FAZ*, 18 November 2000, p. 11; Christian Reiermann, 'Wirtschaftswunder 2.0', *Der Spiegel*, 17 (2007), 80-82.

new legislation in 1951 regarding Article 131 of the *Grundgesetz*. This meant that in some parts of the country, such as North Rhine-Westphalia's justice service, there were more (former) Nazi party members employed in German public services in the mid-1950s than there were in the late 1930s.<sup>74</sup> Alongside the prevalence of these so-called '131er' in West German society, historians have argued that the 1950s represented a continuation of earlier times because of the prevalence of more traditional German values. Hanna Schissler and Vanessa Beck have shown how the post-war period signalled a return to pre-war gender roles and how a 'culture of domesticity and motherliness' was both forced upon, and exercised by, women in West German society.<sup>75</sup> Christopher Wickham, Elizabeth Boa, Peter Blickle and Alon Confino have equally demonstrated how West Germans drew on earlier notions of national identity during the 1950s by reappropriating a more 'authentically German' Heimat through such media as film, theatre, literature, poetry and song.<sup>76</sup> Above all, 1950s West Germany has been characterized as a period of restoration because of what critics and historians claim to be an unwillingness or reluctance to actively engage with the National Socialist past. As in the French context, this is consistent with both the dominant national myth of economic progress in the 1950s, as well as the thesis of the long fifties, because it places emphasis on the extent to which memories of National Socialism, the Holocaust and the Second World War were repressed through political and cultural reinvestment in the post-war boom. In a 1959 lecture entitled 'Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?' Theodor Adorno criticized the West German process of *Aufarbeitung* on the basis that it did not mean actively processing the past (in the sense of 'verarbeiten') but rather it implied distancing West Germany from that past by drawing a line under it and, in so doing, removing it from memory.<sup>77</sup> In 1967, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich made a similar psychological case for this 'Schlussstrichmentalität' and the

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<sup>74</sup> Martin Sabrow, 'Von der Vergangenheitsbewältigung zur Erinnerungskultur: Zum Umgang mit der Diktaturvergangenheit in Deutschland', in *Wirtschaftswunder, Wohlfahrtsstaat und Wiederbewaffnung: Geschichten aus der Geschichte der 50er-Jahre: Journalisten/innen-Workshop 16. / 17. März 2006 in Bonn*, ed. by Berthold L. Flöper (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2006), pp. 11-16 (p. 12).

<sup>75</sup> Hanna Schissler, "'Normalization' as Project: Some Thoughts on Gender Relations in West Germany during the 1950s", in *The Miracle Years*, pp. 359-75 (p. 369); Vanessa Beck, 'Women, Work and Unemployment in Post-War West Germany', in *Power and the People: A Social History of Central European Politics, 1945-56*, ed. by Eleonore Breuning, Jill Lewis, and Gareth Pritchard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 219-34 (p. 219).

<sup>76</sup> Christopher J. Wickham, *Constructing Heimat in Postwar Germany: Longing and Belonging* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999); Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat – A German Dream: Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture, 1890-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002); Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit: Reden und Gespräche*, written and read by Theodor W. Adorno (Munich: DHV, 2003) [on CD].

subsequent adoption of the *Wirtschaftswunder* as the new cultural and moral compass of the West German state as an ‘inability to mourn’ the loss of Hitler and National Socialism.<sup>78</sup> In 1987 Ralph Giordano even went so far as to liken the ‘crimes’ of the 1950s with those that took place under National Socialism, claiming that the repression and denial of the ‘first guilt’ of National Socialism and the Holocaust during the 1950s constituted a ‘second guilt’ in its own right.<sup>79</sup> More recent historical reappraisals of the 1950s have given way to more nuanced readings of the mechanics of repression and forgetting, although even these are broadly consistent with earlier interpretations. For Martin Sabrow, it would be wrong to claim that National Socialism was ‘vollständig “vergessen” oder “verdrängt”’ during the 1950s; even if it went largely ignored in public life, the National Socialist past, was in fact ‘im Alltag stets überaus präsent’, particularly in the form of literary responses to German culpability.<sup>80</sup> Other historians such as Robert Moeller and Hanna Schissler have made similar claims that memory of the National Socialist regime was always in the background and drawn on selectively during the 1950s. They argue, however, that narrativization of the war was almost always centred upon the victimization and suffering of the non-persecuted majority of Germans and, as such, these findings represent no significant departure from earlier critiques of the 1950s.<sup>81</sup>

### 1.2.3 East Germany

Of the vast body of scholarship on the GDR, there are two clear, interconnected historical narratives which have become recurrent themes in the historiography of the 1950s and which have cemented a view of the decade as one characterized by significant political and economic change: the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* and the 17 June 1953 uprising. Announced by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, Walter Ulbricht, during the Second Party Conference in early July 1952, the ‘planmäßiger Aufbau des Sozialismus’ was a programme of political, economic and social change aimed, amongst other things, at collectivizing industry and agriculture, raising work norms, undermining the influence of opponents of socialism (such as the church), and establishing the dominance of the SED under the protection of the newly

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<sup>78</sup> Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: R. Piper, 1967). They argue that the German people had been unable to mourn the loss of their narcissistic love-object, Hitler, leading to a rejection of the reality of the past and a diversion of their energies into the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

<sup>79</sup> Ralph Giordano, *Die zweite Schuld, oder Von der Last Deutscher zu sein*, 2nd edn (Cologne: Kiwi, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Martin Sabrow, ‘Von der Vergangenheitsbewältigung zur Erinnerungskultur’, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Robert G. Moeller, ‘Remembering the War in a Nation of Victims: West German Pasts in the 1950s’, in *The Miracle Years*, pp. 83-109 (pp. 83-86); Schissler, ‘Epilogue: Rebels in Search of a Cause’, p. 461.

formed Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Stasi). The domestic policy of socialization since the state's creation in 1949 was so rapid that by the time of Stalin's death in March 1953, the East German state had developed and anchored a centrally planned economy, a state security apparatus in the form of the Stasi, and a ruling party in the form of the SED supposedly grounded in Marxism-Leninism.<sup>82</sup> Although historians generally agree that the basic premise behind the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* was that full employment, real per capita income and better access to material goods could be realized through central planning and state and collective ownership, the programme has also been historically interpreted as one of the principal causes of the 17 June 1953 uprising and the GDR's extensive brain drain of the 1950s.<sup>83</sup> Supposedly laying the foundations of a new socialist state, the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* has for historians come to represent the beginning of a series of repressive measures instigated from the 1950s onwards that would eventually culminate in the peaceful revolution of 1989.

Intrinsically linked to the economic measures outlined above, and particularly the issue that the raised work norms were not rescinded with the 'Neuer Kurs', the 17 June 1953 has taken on particular significance as a political watershed and defining moment in GDR and European history, both of the 1950s and more widely.<sup>84</sup> As the first uprising to take place behind the Iron Curtain, which had major political and social implications for numerous states and their citizens, the 17 June has come to be seen not only as the 'Anfang vom langen Ende der DDR', to use Rolf Steininger's words, but also as the beginning of the end of the entire Eastern Bloc.<sup>85</sup> Within East Germany, the uprising carried enormous moral weight and became a date that was remembered 'voller Stolz'.<sup>86</sup> Until the 1990s, this view of the 17 June was more or less exclusively confined to the realm of popular memory. Due to the nature of the uprising and the paranoia it instilled in the authorities, thorough historical investigation into the causes and significance of the uprising was strictly forbidden. The 17 June became a taboo subject and 'Un-Datum' in GDR historiography.<sup>87</sup> With unification and the subsequent widening of archival access, however, the 17 June became an important field of study in its own right, and

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<sup>82</sup> Gareth Pritchard, *The Making of the GDR: 1945-53: From Antifascism to Stalinism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> O'Dochartaigh, pp. 43-44. Whilst the 'Neuer Kurs' was implemented in order to curb some of the damaging effects of the measures introduced in the first five-year plan (under the remit of the *Aufbau des Sozialismus*), it failed, crucially, to tackle the issue of the increased work norms which had been the source of particular discontent.

<sup>84</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 177.

<sup>85</sup> Rolf Steininger, *17. Juni 1953: Der Anfang vom langen Ende der DDR* (Munich: Olzog, 2003).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.



new light was shed on many aspects of the uprising.<sup>88</sup> Particular emphasis was placed on the extent to which the uprising was instrumentalized on both sides of the Wall from 1953 onwards in order to legitimize the East and West German states. In East Germany, the uprising was portrayed as a ‘counter-revolutionary putsch’ and an attempt to undermine the socialist state by Western provocateurs or ‘fascists’. In West Germany, the 17 June was seen as either a ‘people’s uprising’ or a ‘workers’ uprising’ and became proof of the existence of a repressive regime that had crushed the valiant East German people who had tried to rise up against it in a ‘day of national unity’.<sup>89</sup> Whilst contemporary historical interpretations generally seek to avoid such categorization and labelling on the basis that ‘a single heading will inevitably fail to capture the multiple dissatisfactions, and the ways in which these interrelated, overlapped, and snowballed as events proceeded’, the uprising has become fixed as a key component in the Cold War battle of words and ideologies that characterized East and West Germany’s foreign policies throughout the 1950s.<sup>90</sup> It is thus recognized that in both German states, the 17 June ‘took on a political force beyond the historical realities of the events of June 1953 themselves’: a semantic overloading that has since been reproduced in the post-unification period with the uprising’s seeming transcendence of chronology and geography as an ‘Erinnerungsort der DDR’.<sup>91</sup>

#### 1.2.4 Transnational Narratives

In addition to the aforementioned national narratives pertaining to France, West Germany and East Germany respectively, the 1950s have been historicized through a variety of transnational narratives, which have produced a view of the period as a homogenous pan-European or even global experience. Because of the superpower status of the US following the Second World War, the 1950s have come to represent the ‘first distinctively “American” decade’ in European history: a period when the ‘American dream’ became a conceivable if not yet tangible reality for many people.<sup>92</sup> For contemporary scholars, the establishment of post-war American

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<sup>88</sup> Christian F. Ostermann, ‘Introduction and Acknowledgements’, in *Uprising in East Germany 1953: The Cold War, The German Question, and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain*, ed. by Christian F. Ostermann (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), pp. xix-xxv (p. xxi).

<sup>89</sup> Pritchard, pp. 207-17.

<sup>90</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 178.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*; Myriam Renaudot, ‘Der Siebzehnte Juni’, in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), pp. 516-25.

<sup>92</sup> Darryl Jones, Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy, ‘Introduction’, in *It Came from the 1950s! Popular Culture, Popular Anxieties*, ed. by Darryl Jones, Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1-16 (p. 4).

supremacy can be attributed not only to America's military and political hegemony, but also to its cultural imperialism, enacted through the 'first genuinely global popular culture'.<sup>93</sup> In European terms, this has translated as a veritable cultural offensive of all things American that infiltrated most aspects of everyday life in the 1950s, such as Coca-Cola, Hollywood films, jazz, boogie-woogie and jeans. In countries looking for a new direction and founding myth in the wake of the Second World War, America was, as Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May succinctly put it, 'here, there and everywhere' and its 'popular culture reigned supreme'.<sup>94</sup> At a very tangible, grassroots level, the American presence was also felt by a large number of people throughout the 1950s in the form of GIs stationed as occupation forces in order to maintain the Pax Europaea. Bringing their own culture, attitudes and mannerisms, not least their own brand of cigarettes, GIs were material proof that life in the US was very different and, therefore, for the most part better than in many parts of Europe. Whilst historians and cultural commentators have been careful to draw out the nuances of this 'Americanization', highlighting the many ambivalences towards American goods and ways of life during the 1950s, for Donald Sassoon, it is undeniable that American popular culture was seen as 'more exciting than most locally produced popular culture' in the West.<sup>95</sup> Even in the Eastern Bloc where Americanization did not officially exist and the authorities took pains to launch a counter-attack in the form of Sovietization, 'Soviet culture had no such popular basis' and people actively sought to get their fill of American popular culture.<sup>96</sup> In places such as East Berlin, this was comparatively easy throughout the 1950s, because the relative openness of travel across the border meant that GDR citizens could watch American films in West German cinemas and indulge in American music and dance styles in West German nightclubs. More than any other cultural influence, music, and particularly rock'n'roll, symbolized the post-war devotion to American popular culture and created what Axel Körner sees as an important 'dialogue across the Iron Curtain'.<sup>97</sup> Whilst Eastern Bloc countries such as the GDR may have been more successful in resisting American influences than their Western counterparts, Americanization has nevertheless become a pivotal concept of the 1950s, because it represented the ever-present benchmark against which all standards of East German everyday

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<sup>93</sup> Jones, McCarthy and Murphy, pp. 3-4.

<sup>94</sup> Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, 'Here, There and Everywhere: Introduction', in *Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, ed. by Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), pp. 1-13 (p. 6).

<sup>95</sup> Donald Sassoon, 'Politics', in *Europe Since 1945*, ed. by Mary Fulbrook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 14-52 (p. 29).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Axel Körner, 'Culture', in *Europe Since 1945*, pp. 146-86 (p. 158).

life were set and ‘became a central component in the cultural and political dynamics that shaped the growing division between the two Germanies’.<sup>98</sup>

This overarching narrative of American cultural hegemony during the post-war period is linked to another important transnational history of the 1950s: consumption and the birth of the global consumer society. Whilst consumption so far has been discussed in relation to nation-centred histories because of its significance as a basis for national identity and citizenship, it is important to add that it has also become a kind of historical trope of the 1950s more generally. In her discussion of consumption patterns in the US, Lizabeth Cohen argues that the end of the Second World War has come to represent a turning point in the evolution of a consumerist political culture, because it triggered the emergence of the ‘*customer as citizen* who simultaneously fulfilled personal desire and civic obligation by consuming’.<sup>99</sup> Belief and ‘faith in a mass-consumption-driven post-war economy’ thus became symbolically ingrained as an expression of the economic success and democratic freedom of both individual consumers and the post-war American way of life.<sup>100</sup> According to popular histories of the 1950s, this American model of consumption was adopted as the blueprint for European modernization and manifested itself in a number of different ways during the post-war period, including, but not limited to: a prioritization of consumption over production, new technologies and the consumption of leisure experiences as well as physical objects, and increasing emphasis on the role and diversification of advertising.<sup>101</sup> These developments, along with external conditions, meant that by the end of the 1950s, most Europeans were better off in material terms than they had been during the Second World War (and in many cases before), creating a kind of mythology around Americanized consumption as the bearer of new standards of living, well-being and prosperity. Like Americanization more generally, this richly endowed narrative of the 1950s transcends the Iron Curtain. Whilst those in the Eastern Bloc may never have become consumer citizens like their counterparts in the West and whilst they continued to experience material shortages throughout the 1950s (and beyond), they were still able to take advantage of some of the new consumer opportunities. This took place in the GDR, for instance, following

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<sup>98</sup> Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 31.

<sup>99</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, ‘Citizens and Consumers in the United States in the Century of Mass Consumption’, in *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, ed. by Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 203-21 (p. 214).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Jüt, ‘Introduction’, in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern and Matthias Jüt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-7 (p. 5).

the ‘consumer turn’ of 1958, when, to use Eli Rubin’s words, ‘East German socialism was launched onto the path of a full-fledged consumer society.’<sup>102</sup> It is also important to highlight that although countries such as East Germany were on a very different economic path to those in the West, American-inspired consumption and modernization still had a very real impact, both as a historical actuality and myth. By the time efforts increased to create an alternative socialist consumer culture in 1953 in the GDR, it was already clear that because of the proximity of the two Germanies, the performance of the East German consumer economy was being, and would continue to be, defined by its West German counterpart, and that at least one element of the Cold War battle between East and West would be fought out through consumption.<sup>103</sup> The full significance of this was not realized until the *Wende*, when the 1950s American consumption myth became a palpable reality for GDR citizens.<sup>104</sup>

Finally, a ‘global 1950s’ can be identified in the growing body of historical scholarship on the Cold War to emerge since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Whilst the conflict has been historicized in very different ways according to different national historiographies, more recently historians have stressed the importance of appreciating the Cold War as a truly global history, in the sense that it was not just a conflict which took place between the US and the Soviet Union, or which was solely confined to the elite world of state leaders and politicians, but which was characterized by shared developments, experiences and tensions worldwide.<sup>105</sup> This has led to the rejection of a sharp division between East and West and an increasingly fluid response to the significance and impact of geopolitical borders. Thomas Lindenberger’s notion of East and West Germany as a border region of the Cold War encapsulates the contradictions and ambiguities of the conflict, highlighting the commonalities in everyday experience between the states. According to Lindenberger, the inner German border represents a highly illustrative example of the Cold War as a shared experience, because it was not only a borderline (separating the two states

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<sup>102</sup> Eli Rubin identifies 1958 as a ‘consumer turn’ in the GDR because it marked the end of rationing and the unveiling of the Seven Year Plan (1959-65) at the SED’s Fifth Party Congress, where Ulbricht famously stated that it was the GDR’s ‘chief economic task’ to overtake West Germany in per capita consumption. He does, however, acknowledge that a more consumer-orientated form of socialism had been developing since 1953. *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 33-42.

<sup>103</sup> Judd Stitzel, ‘On the Seam between Socialism and Capitalism: East German Fashion Shows’, in *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, pp. 51-85 (p. 53).

<sup>104</sup> The *Wende* is a term used to refer to the political transformations of East Germany from autumn 1989 to unification in 1990.

<sup>105</sup> Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde, ‘Introduction’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. by Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-11 (p. 3).

spatially) but it was also a borderzone (an area of proximity or overlap between the two states), meaning East and West German Cold War responses were shaped by ‘mutual perception’ and ‘continuous interaction’, particularly in the 1950s.<sup>106</sup> Spanning almost fifty years, the Cold War was not chronologically specific to the 1950s, but the threat of political and military conflict which escalated during this period has become a key component in the historical narrativization of the new societal points of reference to emerge in the 1950s, such as consumption and domesticity. Cold War panic instilled into many Western European and North American citizens the fear that the ‘frontline of the battle [...] was the home front’, leading the suburban family home to be reconceptualized ‘as a kind of fortress’.<sup>107</sup> With reference to the French national context, Ross describes this reinvestment in the apolitical, private sphere during the 1950s as a ‘movement inward’ on the part of the middle classes ‘to their comfortable domestic interiors, to the electric kitchens, to the enclosure of the private automobiles, to the interior of the new vision of conjugality and an ideology of happiness built around the new unit of middle-class consumption, the couple’.<sup>108</sup> A similar ‘Rückzug ins Private’ has been suggested by Günter Gaus in relation to the GDR, whereby citizens retreated into apolitical ‘niches’ as a means of escaping the wider political system.<sup>109</sup> Although there are clear political differences between these two theses, both posit domestic retreat during the 1950s (and beyond in the case of the GDR) as a direct result of ideological Cold War conflict. In this way, the 1950s have come to epitomize the daily realities of the Cold War as experienced at a grassroots level.

### 1.3 Museums as ‘Counter-Memories’

The narratives outlined above have provided the foundations for current historical understandings of the 1950s in France and Germany, both as a set of nation-centred and transnational/global histories. Based predominantly on key political and economic events, these have furnished a top-down perspective of the post-war period, which has marginalized

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas Lindenberger, ‘Divided, but Not Disconnected: Germany as a Border Region of the Cold War’, in *Divided, but Not Disconnected*, pp.11-33 (p. 14).

<sup>107</sup> Jones, McCarthy and Murphy, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Ross, p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt: Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1983), p. 157. According to Gabriele Müller, the notion of the GDR as a *Nischengesellschaft* has been used in highly contradictory ways and has been taken far out of the context in which it initially originated. It has nevertheless ‘proven to be a pervasive paradigm’, particularly in the field of *Alltagsgeschichte*. ‘Re-Imaging the Niche: Visual Reconstructions of Private Spaces in the GDR’, in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. by Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 197-213 (pp. 197-98).

the everyday experiences of smaller memory communities and local knowledge in favour of such broad notions as nationhood, national myths and identities, and shared pasts. It is the contention of this thesis that, in the wake of the memory boom and scholarly developments such as the cultural turn and the growth of *Alltagsgeschichte*, this approach, together with the historiographical marginalization of the 1950s, is being challenged.<sup>110</sup> As a result, museum institutions and individual agents throughout France and Germany are engaging in a process of ‘writing back’ and reinvesting in the 1950s at a more personal, local level.<sup>111</sup> Unlike the tendency of a certain kind of historiography to privilege metanarratives of history and memory, the emphasis with this approach to the 1950s is the pluralization of the past to allow for its ‘multiple interpretive possibilities’.<sup>112</sup> Calling into question the way in which the 1950s have been “‘misplaced” in the popular and scholarly imagination’, the case study museums and exhibitions can be seen to ‘re-root’ the 1950s, to borrow Rod Kedward’s terminology, through the lens of ‘counter-memory’.<sup>113</sup>

Developed by Michel Foucault in the 1970s, the concept of ‘counter-memory’ designates a mode of genealogical remembering that is produced when history is transformed into a ‘tout autre type de temps’.<sup>114</sup> Implying rupture and discontinuity with official, sanctioned versions of history, counter-memory is concerned with the reappearance of previously hidden or hierarchically inferior knowledge from below. For Foucault, this includes forms of knowledge that have been masked in hegemonic frameworks, as well as those marginal, delegitimized ways of knowing and experiences pertaining to ‘normal’, everyday people at a local level.<sup>115</sup> As he sees it, it is the task of critical genealogy to produce counter-memories through the ‘insurrection des savoirs assujettis’, and it is the process of recovering these forms

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<sup>110</sup> *Alltagsgeschichte* emerged as a field of study in the 1980s and was developed by historians Alf Lütke and Hans Medick. See *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen*, ed. by Alf Lütke (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1989).

<sup>111</sup> ‘Writing back’ is a term that originated in the postcolonial lexicon to refer to postcolonial literature that challenged the traditional canon and the dominant ideas that emerged in it. It has since been used in a wide range of contexts, including GDR studies. See Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 61-101.

<sup>112</sup> Gorrara, Feldner and Passmore, ‘Introduction’, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 7; H. Rod Kedward, ‘Re-Rooting the Resistance in Post-War France’, in *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, pp. 68-83.

<sup>114</sup> Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire’, p. 158. Foucault defines genealogy as a process of combining erudite knowledge and local memories. It is this which provides the basis for a historical knowledge of struggles. He sees genealogy as an antiscience because it combats against the centralizing power effects of any discourse that is considered scientific. ‘Cours du 7 janvier 1976’, in “*Il faut défendre la société*”: *Cours au Collège de France (1975-1976)*, ed. by François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (2012), digital edition from CD-ROM, Le Foucault Électronique (2001) <[http://monoskop.org/images/9/99/Foucault\\_Michel\\_Il\\_faut\\_defendre\\_la\\_societe.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/9/99/Foucault_Michel_Il_faut_defendre_la_societe.pdf)> [accessed 29 October 2014] (pp. 11-12).

<sup>115</sup> Foucault, ‘Cours du 7 janvier 1976’, pp. 10-11.

of knowledge which enables scholars to unveil the structures of domination and subordination embedded in power constellations.<sup>116</sup> According to Patrick Hutton, this shift from memory to counter-memory has found favour with a number of contemporary historians, because it has placed emphasis on the ways in which historical discourse is shaped by power relations. Whereas traditions and myths once represented the cornerstones of national memorial heritages, they have now become case studies for determining how history, memory and commemoration are manipulated according to present political purposes.<sup>117</sup> As José Medina notes, Foucault's genealogical method reminds us that counter-memory is not just a question of what is remembered or forgotten, but how, by whom and to what effect.<sup>118</sup>

Building on Foucault's work, George Lipsitz has offered an alternative reading of counter-memory as a 'way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal'.<sup>119</sup> Like Foucault, Lipsitz understands counter-memory as a means of rediscovering 'the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives'.<sup>120</sup> But whereas Foucault's genealogical method must locate the 'singularité des événements, hors de toute finalité monotone' in order to avoid the pitfalls of teleology and reproduce the dominant ideologies of histories and myths, Lipsitz's interpretation does not preclude the possibility of finality.<sup>121</sup> For Lipsitz, such a 'refusal of all totality could just as easily obscure real connections, causes, and relationships', and the ultimate goal of all historical investigation, is, at any rate, to achieve a 'truly total story inclusive of the plurality of experiences on our planet'.<sup>122</sup> Whereas Foucault's notion of counter-memory is characterized by fundamental disunity with dominant, official memories and histories, Lipsitz's concept of counter-memory represents a changed perspective and is used to 'reframe and refocus dominant narratives'.<sup>123</sup> In this sense, counter-memory can be understood not as a 'rejection of history, but a reconstitution of it': a way of turning history on its head and gradually branching out towards

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<sup>116</sup> Foucault, 'Cours du 7 janvier 1976', p. 10.

<sup>117</sup> Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), p. 120.

<sup>118</sup> José Medina, 'Toward a Foucaultian Epistemology of Resistance: Counter-Memory, Epistemic Friction, and *Guerrilla Pluralism*', *Foucault Studies*, 12 (2011), 9-35 (p. 9).

<sup>119</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 213.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la généalogie et l'histoire', p. 145.

<sup>122</sup> Lipsitz, p. 214.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

a more complete historical narrative from the particularities of personal and local experiences.<sup>124</sup>

This reconceived notion of counter-memory provides a useful way of theorizing the dynamics of remembering and forgetting at the case-study sites because it acts as a model for understanding how memory communities negotiate the tensions between ‘local, immediate and personal experiences, and global, indirect and social realities’.<sup>125</sup> Counter-memory does this by drawing on both ‘linear history and orally transmitted popular history’, privileging the way in which historical consciousness is shaped through collectively authored narratives alongside written and state-sanctioned histories.<sup>126</sup> This thesis argues that the museums and exhibitions selected create specific counter-memories in the way that they mediate between these two modes of remembering, drawing, in Lipsitz’s words, on the ‘plurality of the past to illumine the opportunities of the present and the future’.<sup>127</sup> Unlike static historical narratives and myths, the sites are not based on monolithic interpretations of the 1950s, but rather their emphasis on plurality helps to furnish a more comprehensive view of the past and further ‘historical thinking in new and significant ways’.<sup>128</sup> By emphasizing the way in which history is remembered and represented, this thesis demonstrates that the case studies construct specific counter-memories of the 1950s not only in the way that the post-war era is reappropriated through personal/local narratives and more hegemonic narratives, but also in the way that it is reimagined through specific spatio-temporal frameworks, all of which serve to extend the 1950s beyond the confines of a decade or historical period. Just as Lipsitz makes the point that ‘traditional categories of classification cannot encompass the structure and aims of novels employing counter-memory’, existing museum genres and categorization strategies appear to be too restrictive for the purposes of the case-study sites.<sup>129</sup> Acting as interfaces between history and memory, mediating between high and low culture, drawing on top-down and bottom-up approaches, and conflating time and space, these museums and exhibitions cannot be classified simply by chronology or theme, and do not fit under the traditional label of history. They belong to the vague realm of everyday life and popular culture, and occupy a murky territory

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<sup>124</sup> Lipsitz, p. 227.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 230.



somewhere between oral traditions of communicative memory and the more formalized pasts of cultural memory.

With this conceptual dilemma in mind, this project looks beyond well-known museum typologies of theme (such as history, heritage or technology) and finds a solution in Mikhail Bakhtin's 'chronotope', a literary concept which refers to the 'intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relations' in forms of cultural media, and which maintains these relations as the basis for narrative and narrative structure.<sup>130</sup> The thesis uses the chronotope as a means of explaining how 'real historical time and space' and 'actual historical persons' are articulated through museum display and employs it as the methodological framework and tool for understanding the modalities of counter-memory at the case-study sites, the specificities of which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.<sup>131</sup> Extrapolating this theory to the case-study museums and exhibitions, this project shows how counter-memory links to chronotopic reimaginings of the 1950s. Based on a plurality of narratives and interpretations, the museum representations of the 1950s are read through five different chronotopes, including biographical time, glacial time, monochronous time, metachronous time and multilayered time, each of which are dealt with as a separate chapter in this thesis. Together, these demonstrate the diverse ways in which the 1950s are currently being reimagined in France and Germany, and the range of meanings that are being attributed to the post-war period through specific spatio-temporal strategies.

#### **1.4 Project Rationale and Outline**

As the above discussion has shown, the examination of a range of museums and exhibitions will not only reveal much about the nature of historical representation and counter-memory formation at the case-study sites, but will also highlight the changing role and significance of the 1950s more widely in contemporary France and Germany. This project was conceived at a time when the history and memory of the 1950s, at least in this specific museum sphere, finally seem to be converging, and when dominant, hegemonic narratives are being reconsidered in light of more personal, localized memories and experiences through the lens of counter-memory. As far as rigorous academic work on the 1950s is concerned, however, there still

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<sup>130</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258 (p. 84).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

remains a significant lacuna in historical research, particularly in a comparative context. This, together with the way in which the 1950s have been subject to their own kind of forgetting in historiography makes new scholarly reflection essential, particularly at a time when the current memory boom and a specific generational intersection is changing the status of the post-war period in cultural memory. Renewing the dialogue on this under-researched period of history and generating new understandings of the ways in which it is encoded in history and memory is one of the most important ways in which this thesis proposes to break new ground.

As far as the wider research context is concerned, this project represents an important contribution to memory studies, museology and material culture studies. By uniting theories from all of these fields, it seeks to improve our understanding of the myriad contexts in which material objects are used as repositories of memory and props for identity, and the way that museums may harness or reject sentiments such as nostalgia for specific narrative purposes. Moreover this project is born out of a need to use these theories in order to further problematize the concept of everyday culture, which has been gaining scholarly ground over the last few decades. To date, Anja Schöne's *Alltagskultur im Museum* (1998) remains the principal comprehensive study to look specifically at the musealization of everyday culture in different regional and national (albeit exclusively germanophone) contexts.<sup>132</sup> Whilst her work has helped to lay much of the groundwork for a more systematic understanding of the everyday, particularly with regard to the relationship between the everyday as a theoretical concept and how it is employed and understood in practice in museums, the study remains a more general analysis of the role and representation of *Alltagskultur* in a specific set of regional and Heimat museums. By focusing exclusively on the 1950s, this project seeks to take these concepts in a different direction and to assess the musealization of everyday culture of a specific historical actuality across three distinct cultural contexts. The emphasis is not so much on the everyday per se, but more on how everyday life and everyday objects pertaining to the 1950s are reappropriated and recontextualized in museum environments. At a time when technological advancement and the growth of virtual environments are rapidly changing the role of the museum, this research highlights the continued importance of the material quality of the object in both memory and identity formation. By adopting a much wider geographical spread, and by analysing a range of different types of museum and exhibition, this study also attempts to draw more on the local and national specificities of how the 1950s are remembered and represented, and to take account of how museum display pertaining to this period is

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<sup>132</sup> Anja Schöne, *Alltagskultur im Museum: Zwischen Anspruch und Realität* (Waxmann: Münster, 1998).

diversifying. The interconnections across national borders will feed into a broader understanding of how representations of the 1950s are figured at a local, national and transnational level. The findings will not only inform ongoing debates in the key fields to which this study relates, but may also be of interest to practitioners working in an increasingly decentralized heritage industry.

The research data at the heart of this project is taken from a variety of sources and is as wide-ranging as possible within the scope of the study. Due to the number of case studies used and the unpredictability of visitor numbers to the more peripheral museums, this project does not undertake visitor surveys, but is based predominantly on author observation and interpretation, reading the spaces through the chronotopes essentially as texts. Primary research involves the examination of exhibitions and collections, informal discussions with museum directors and curators, and the consulting of guest books (where available). Secondary sources such as exhibition catalogues, museum and exhibition leaflets and other advertising material, press reports and museum websites also provide essential material for analysis. As far as the actual exhibition content is concerned, this is very much dependent on the individual approaches of the sites concerned, and comprises most categories of everyday object, including, but not limited to: clothing, consumables, electrical items and appliances, furniture, interior design, architecture, transport and popular culture more widely. The case studies themselves were selected on the basis of a number of criteria and are most obviously linked through their recent thematizations of the 1950s, all taking place within the latest memory and museum boom pertaining to the post-war period in France and Germany since the early 2000s.<sup>133</sup> There are three sites according to each cultural context (France, West Germany and East Germany), resulting in a sufficiently wide yet manageable range of nine museums and exhibitions, all of which attempt to show something different or previously unexplored about the 1950s. Together, they provide an interesting mix of private and public institutions, and museums and temporary exhibitions. Their location mostly on the periphery of the museum landscape helps to decentralize the scholarly gaze and investigate the emergence of more localized memories in relation to those of the nation. With the exception of the GDR museums, very little or no scholarly work has been done on the sites, bringing a fresh, original perspective to musealization in France and Germany. On a practical note, these particular sites were also

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<sup>133</sup> The Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR is the only case-study site to have been established prior to this period (1993). Its permanent exhibition, however, underwent complete renovation in 2012 and its 1950s Historische Wohnung did not open until 2008.

chosen because of the willingness and interest on the part of the individual museum directors and curators concerned for their institutions to be a part of this study, and to share their thoughts and experiences. This personal interaction has been very much at the core of the project since its inception.

The six following chapters unfold according to a largely theoretical framework of ‘chronotopy’, demonstrating the conceptual elasticity of counter-memory by moving from very personal, highly nostalgic chronotopic reimaginings of the 1950s to much more critical chronotopic approaches and explorations. Each of the five main chapters is given over to a particular chronotope, through which two case-study sites (and their main strategies of representation and remembering) are critically compared and contrasted.<sup>134</sup> Before turning to empirical data, however, chapter two provides an overview of some of the key developments in memory and museology which have both clarified and complexified the wider contextual fields of study. The chapter begins by mapping some of the well-established approaches to history and memory and weighs up their potential and limits in three specific contexts, namely museums, material culture and nostalgia. It also critically evaluates the use of certain concepts and terminologies with reference to this particular project. The second half of the chapter turns to the question of museum representation and addresses the issue of spatio-temporal framing in museums. This section deals with the concept of the chronotope more exhaustively and foregrounds its usefulness and originality as a methodological tool.

Following on from this contextualization, chapter three marks the beginning of the in-depth analysis of the case studies. Through a chronotope of ‘biographical time’, it examines the private Musée Tusseau “les années 50” in Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes (Loire-Atlantique, France), and the temporary exhibition ‘Mode für Jedefrau und Jedermann...“Sich-Kleiden” in der Zeit des Aufbaus und des Wirtschaftswunders’, which thematized 1950s fashion and was displayed at the Kreismuseum Peine (Lower Saxony, Germany). The chapter posits counter-memory, when reimagined in this particular chronotopic form, as a way of reinvesting in highly personal, local narratives of the 1950s, effectively transforming the 1950s from a broad historical experience into a sentimental biography of the localities concerned, their inhabitants, and their everyday objects. Because of the very personal links to the past promoted at these

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<sup>134</sup> Two case studies (the Historische Wohnung and the Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR respectively) are used from the same site in Eisenhüttenstadt and are dealt with separately due to the very different strategies of representation employed. As a result, there are ten case studies examined from a total of nine different sites.

sites, this chapter draws a strong link between biographical time and nostalgia and reminiscence.

Similarly nostalgic overtones are detected in chapter four with the chronotope of 'glacial time'. This examines the Appartement témoin Perret in Le Havre (Seine-Maritime, France), a reconstructed post-war apartment and micro-museum, and the Historische Wohnung in Eisenhüttenstadt (Brandenburg, Germany), a recreated 1957 apartment which was open between 2008 and 2012 as part of the Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR. By fixing the 1950s as a quasi-eternal past, glacial time provides a means for the museums and the wider communities to reclaim their respective localities through the guise of heritage, and in so doing, they generate 'hyper-real' reconstitutions of the 1950s. The form of counter-memory produced in this chronotope thus becomes a way of raising the cultural profile of the localities, using post-war architecture and interior design in particular as the basis for new founding myths.

Chapter five is concerned exclusively with GDR history and memory, and through a chronotope of 'monochronous time', it analyses the large private DDR Museum Zeitreise in Radebeul (Saxony, Germany) and the smaller private DDR Museum Thale (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany). Although neither of these museums is devoted specifically to the 1950s, exhibition content relating to this period is sufficiently wide-ranging and multifarious to enable as effective an analysis of the 1950s everyday as the other case studies. With monochronous time, the 1950s are fused into one continuous narrative of East German *Alltag* and by reimagining the GDR through the spatio-temporal framework of the idyll, counter-memory can be seen as a way of laying claim to a distinct yet 'normal' eastern identity that was effectively marginalized and delegitimized with unification. Although both museums are shown to simultaneously exploit and critique nostalgic practices, nostalgia it is revealed to be a much more complex process than has traditionally been perceived, having the capacity to instil longing and engender a more critical reappraisal of the past.

The conceptual counterpart of monochronous time is discussed in chapter six in the form of 'metachronous time', in which the 1950s are temporally and thematically fragmented. This chapter examines two temporary exhibitions devoted to the 1950s: 'Permis de (Re)construire, Vire 1944-1965', which looked at local experiences of the reconstruction period and was displayed at the Musée des arts et traditions populaires de Vire (Calvados, France), and 'Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre: Zeitzeugen aus unserem Depot', which

thematized 1950s technology and was displayed at the Deutsches Museum in Munich (Bavaria, Germany). With metachronous time, the 1950s are divided into three specific micro-narratives, but are also framed by an overarching narrative of progress, and thus the sites mediate between dominant national and transnational myths, and more differentiated narratives. The prioritization of archival research in both exhibitions also provides a way of reinserting previously unknown or hidden material into cultural memory. In this sense, this form of counter-memory can be seen as a way of opening up new perspectives on the 1950s and contributing to their critical historical reassessment.

Chapter seven completes the main analytical sections and through a chronotope of 'multilayered time', sets up the comparison between the private Museum der 50er Jahre in Bremerhaven (Lower Saxony, Germany) and the public Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR in Eisenhüttenstadt (Brandenburg, Germany). Through a palimpsestic layering, multilayered time reimagines the 1950s through the lens of the past, present and future, and counter-memory operates as a genealogical process of unearthing the narratives encoded in these temporalities. This takes place both in the physical realm of museum architecture and in the semantic realm of museum narratology. The critical reappraisal of marginalized and actively repressed narratives can also be seen as an attempt to differentiate historical understandings of the 1950s and the GDR *Alltag* more widely, and the equal emphasis placed on remembering and forgetting provide evidence of counter-memory's complex re-rooting of the 1950s past. That this level of critical engagement is found solely in German museum counter-memory suggests that there may be important differences between France and Germany in terms of the complexity and capacity for self-referential critique of their national memory cultures.

Having mapped the multi-chronotopicity of the 1950s that is created within the museums and drawn out the characteristics of the counter-memorial processes identified across the different case study sites, I will then synthesize the various chronotopic strands in a final concluding chapter. As stand-alone studies, the individual chapters are useful in demonstrating the particular mechanics of memory formation in the sites selected and in highlighting the various characteristics and qualities of the particular chronotopes concerned, but together, they advance an argument that is greater than the simple sum of its parts. When taken as a whole, the chapters spectralize the different ways in which counter-memory is being used to recast the 1950s; only once the findings are collated is it possible to determine the full implications of this, and how this process may change over time. This is not just a case of simple rediscovery

or recreating the post-war period 'as it really was'. The memory boom, generational transition and new scholarly thinking are all serving to reinterpret and provide more detailed readings of, the 1950s. As with genealogy, the key point in all this is not so much the outcome of these meanings as the process of meaning-making through history and memory. As the next chapters demonstrate, this reveals just as much about our present need to remember and re-engage with the 1950s as it does about the 1950s themselves.

## 2. Memory, History and Musealization

Having set the parameters for the discussion of more hegemonic historical narratives and counter-memories of the 1950s, this study now considers the wider conceptual implications of using memory and history methodologically in museum studies, and draws out the specificities of museum representation. The first half of this chapter sheds light on the different modes of remembering promoted at museums and is based on the premise that, in order to understand how remembering and forgetting function in practice, it is first necessary to establish what is meant by the terms memory and history. Linked to this is the fact that, as discourses, both memory and history have their own histories and have been appropriated in very different ways according to academic discipline. Rather than recapping the evolutions of memory and history as objects of study (which have been covered extensively in monographs and anthologies of theoretical texts), this section focuses on the specific concepts and theories that are relevant to this particular project and highlights the areas of discussion that this project is driving forward.<sup>135</sup> The second half of this chapter examines the nature of museum representation in more depth and considers how historical time is reconceived in exhibition space. It begins with a brief overview of how space and time have been theorized in relation to museum display, before turning to the chronotope as the principle framing device of the project. The final part of this section brings the discussion full circle by foregrounding the relationship between museum chronotopy and the history and memory of the 1950s.

### 2.1 Memory

In the wake of the memory boom, memory has become a key frame of reference in social practice and academic discourse. Its ascendance has sparked a wide range of socio-cultural responses, from the political arena of national commemorations, traditions and the recognition of wrongdoing, to the everyday realm of cathartic ‘misery-lit’ and heritage tourism. As a scholarly field of study, memory has become a key concept in the humanities and social sciences, representing a particularly rich vein of research for the more culturally orientated

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<sup>135</sup> For overviews of the evolution and growth of memory studies as a discipline see: *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. by Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010); *Memory: History, Theories, Debates*, ed. by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010); *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, ed. by Michael Rossington, Anne Whitehead and Linda R. Anderson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).



fields of anthropology, material culture studies and museology because of its capacity to extend beyond the parameters of conventional historical discourse and empirical research. It is, however, by no means an uncontested term and its ‘protean malleability’, to use Eva Hoffmann’s phrase, is as problematic as it is helpful, with a wide but bewildering array of competing theories and terminologies available to researchers.<sup>136</sup> It is no longer common to talk simply of memory, but rather: collective memory, collective versus collected memory, cultural versus communicative memory, official memory, public or social memory, private memory, declarative memory versus procedural memory, postmemory, national memory, prosthetic memory, and of course, counter-memory, to name but a few cognates. The way that memory studies has been appropriated conceptually within different academic disciplines and the modes through which it has grown into a global interdisciplinary field have raised numerous concerns regarding memory’s semantic ambiguity and methodological translucency. The entire discipline of memory studies has come under fire as a field lacking in focus and negligent in its failure to engage with the methodological and epistemological issues engendered by its use.<sup>137</sup>

If, as Alon Confino argues, memory still needs to be fully theorized and historicized, that can only be done by returning to the infrastructures and wider systems in which memory is enshrined, maintained and constructed.<sup>138</sup> Jan Assmann’s concept of cultural memory is among the most influential approaches to set this process in motion by highlighting both the highly mediated and material nature of memory.<sup>139</sup> This model of cultural memory is based on Maurice Halbwachs’s theory of collective memory as a socially constructed phenomenon situated within social frameworks.<sup>140</sup> In a departure from Halbwachs, however, Assmann sees collective memory as an umbrella term and distinguishes more specifically between two different *modi memoranda* that he terms communicative memory and cultural memory. According to Assmann, these modes of remembering are separated by a temporal lacuna known

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<sup>136</sup> Eva Hoffman, ‘Complex Histories, Contested Memories: Some Reflections on Remembering Difficult Pasts’, *Occasional Papers of the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities*, 23 (2000), 1-20 (p. 2).

<sup>137</sup> Alon Confino, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method’, *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), 1386-1403 (p. 1387); Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies’, *History and Theory*, 41 (2002), 179-97 (p. 179); Emily Keightley, ‘Remembering Research: Memory and Methodology in the Social Sciences’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 13 (2010), 55-70 (p. 67).

<sup>138</sup> Confino, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural History’, p. 1403.

<sup>139</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 6th edn (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2007).

<sup>140</sup> Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), p. xvi.

as a ‘floating gap’.<sup>141</sup> Spanning a period of eighty to one hundred years (or three to four generations), communicative memory comprises biological memories which belong to the recent past and which are passed on through verbal communication between members of memory communities such as families or generations. Cultural memory, on the other hand, is a more formalized type of memory, which is directed towards a specific point in an absolute past and is ingrained symbolically in ceremony and tradition.<sup>142</sup> Astrid Erll maintains that the most important difference between the two modes of remembering is not to do with time (in the sense of chronological distance between the event and when it is remembered), but concerns the way in which memory communities respond, and how remembering takes place through certain media.<sup>143</sup> Seen in this way, certain historical events can simultaneously be remembered communicatively and culturally, as they remain part of living memory and take on the foundational character of myth.<sup>144</sup>

For the purposes of this study, the concept of communicative and cultural modes of remembering is a useful way of framing memory because it places emphasis on the form that memory takes and the media through which events are remembered. Because cultural memory is concerned with the way in which society shapes its past through tangible and intangible cultural heritage, it helps to theorize how such institutions as museums act as repositories of memory much more clearly than broader frameworks such as collective or social memory. It also seems particularly relevant for museums dealing with such a recent past as the 1950s, where the period is still within living memory, but has also taken on the role of a myth, meaning communicative and cultural memories coexist. Employing the distinction helps to explain how counter-memories and dominant historical narratives are encoded, and how they function in practice in the temporary exhibitions and museums. Whilst the terms communicative memory and cultural memory are used throughout, this project does, however, recognize that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to memory may be neither conceptually fruitful nor particularly adaptable given the multifarious modes of remembering the 1950s which are at stake. This project therefore advocates a more nuanced approach to memory, which allows for the strategic implementation of several memory theories according to the specific dynamics of remembering

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<sup>141</sup> Assmann takes this term from Jan Vansina who explains the ‘floating gap’ as a kind of hiatus of historical information between a period of the recent past for which there is ‘plenty of information’ and a much earlier period for which there is a mythicized ‘wealth of information’. *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>142</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, pp. 48-59.

<sup>143</sup> Astrid Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen: Eine Einführung*, 2nd edn (Stuttgart: J.B.Metzler, 2011), pp. 128-32.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

and forgetting across the various case studies. At times, therefore, this thesis also speaks of other crystallizations of memory, such as national memory (highlighting the way in which memory draws on national narratives), *lieux de mémoire* (highlighting the emplacement of historicized memory) and prosthetic memories (highlighting the vicarious nature of memory formation in certain museums and exhibitions), the latter two of which are discussed in more detail in this chapter. Whilst there is a danger that reducing entire models of memory to single workable concepts may take those theories out of context or in some way dilute them theoretically, it is hoped that this more fragmented approach will enable the project to tease out better the various points of contention and convergence that exist in the different ways memory is ingrained and constructed at the case-study sites. Like the very concept of counter-memory, this is about recognizing that the richness of comparison lies in thinking about and using memory not in the singular, but in the plural.

### 2.1.1 Memory and History

Before considering the notion of museum memory in more depth, it is necessary to highlight specifically what is meant by memory and history, as well as the implications of the memory versus history debate for this particular study. On the one hand, as commonly used terms, ‘memory’ and ‘history’ seem readily comprehensible — ‘memory’ is generally understood either as a remembered past or the cognitive faculty through which this is possible, and ‘history’ either as a series of past events or the formalized record of these — and yet the terms have inspired wide-ranging, conflicting interpretations by historians and memory scholars.<sup>145</sup> In his posthumously published work *La mémoire collective*, Halbwachs draws sharp distinctions between collective memory and historiography, and autobiographical memory and historical memory. The difference between collective memory and historiography, Halbwachs argues, is that collective memories constitute a naturally developing ‘courant de pensée continu’ which have the ability to shape visions of the past and senses of identity in the present because they live on in the conscience of the group, whilst historiography documents a past which no longer has an active role in the present because it is detached from the social frameworks in which memory is constructed.<sup>146</sup> Similarly, autobiographical memory refers to those memories of a

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<sup>145</sup> In each case, the terms ‘memory’ and ‘history’ encompass two separate significations: products of memory culture and memory studies; and historical events and historiography. This conceptual difference is not, however, always made apparent in scholarly literature.

<sup>146</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997), p. 131.

very personal nature which have been experienced first-hand, whereas historical memory refers to the memories of others, which are fixed by society and external to the individual.<sup>147</sup> For Halbwachs, history and memory are thus understood to be dichotomous, because historiography normally only begins when tradition (the different modes through which collective memory is constituted) and social memory fade away.<sup>148</sup> This view has also been taken up by scholars, such as Henry Rousso, who claims that memory products and historiographies are fundamentally different because ‘*mémoire est un vécu, en perpétuelle évolution. Tandis que l’histoire — celle des historiens — est une reconstruction savant et abstraite*’.<sup>149</sup> Whilst Pierre Nora’s work on *lieux de mémoire* is not based on such a black and white opposition of history and memory, he too sees more differences than similarities, because the acceleration of history (in the form of the documentary record) in the post-industrial age has led to the replacement of a spontaneously occurring social memory by a historicized one.<sup>150</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, some scholars go almost as far as to assimilate memory products and historiography. For Patrick Hutton, history is best understood as an ‘art of memory because it mediates the encounter between two moments of memory: repetition [which refers to the presence of the past] and recollection [which refers to the present’s efforts to evoke the past]’.<sup>151</sup> By far the most common interpretations, however, occupy the middle ground and maintain that whilst there are differences between history and memory, they are not polar opposites, as they share the same origins and inform each other at all levels of practice.<sup>152</sup> Thus in Wulf Kansteiner’s view ‘collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from the same material’; in Geoffrey Cubitt’s view memory and history ‘inhabit a similar mental territory’; in Jeffrey Olick’s view they originate from the same ‘historical consciousness’; and in Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson’s view ‘la mémoire croise l’histoire, la pénètre souvent et s’impose dans la commémoration’.<sup>153</sup> Whilst

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<sup>147</sup> Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, p. 99.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>149</sup> Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy: De 1944 à nos jours*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p. 10.

<sup>150</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et histoire: La problématique des lieux’, in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), I, pp. 23-43.

<sup>151</sup> Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993).

<sup>152</sup> Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>153</sup> Kansteiner, p. 25; Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 4; Jeffrey K. Olick, ‘Introduction’, in *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection*, ed. by Jeffrey K. Olick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 1-16 (p. 8); Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, ‘Introduction: Les guerres de mémoires: un objet d’étude, au carrefour de l’histoire et des processus de médiatisation’, in *Les guerres de mémoires: La France et son histoire: Enjeux politiques, controverses historiques, stratégies médiatiques*, ed. by Pascal Blanchard and Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Paris: La Découverte, 2010), pp. 15-49 (p. 16).

such claims have generally attempted to go beyond the problematic binaries or parallels associated with the memory-history debate and foreground a more differentiated relationship between the two approaches, some are also inevitably loaded with subjective preferences for one over the other. In the past, history invariably triumphed as the more scientific and trustworthy of the two formats because historiography was seen as based on rigorous empirical research.<sup>154</sup> This view continues to dominate in France, where many historians remain, as Christine Chivallon puts it, ‘mobilisés contre la mémoire’, and where intense public debates have driven a further wedge between memory studies and historiography.<sup>155</sup> As Sharon Macdonald points out, however, in other contexts, this hierarchy has been inverted to some extent in the advent of the memory boom, with memory studies affording a supposedly more ‘honest’ and ‘transparent’ approach to the past.<sup>156</sup> The latest transformation in the debate has seen scholars move away from the issue altogether, with Jan-Werner Müller claiming that ‘memory versus history is something of a false dichotomy to start with’ since memory studies is precisely about ‘memory *in* history’.<sup>157</sup> Even more vocal in her criticism of ‘the whole question of “history and/or/as memory”’ is Erll who maintains that it is ‘simply not a very fruitful approach’ for memory studies.<sup>158</sup>

For the purpose of this thesis, history (as historiography) and memory (as cultural memory, a product of memory culture) are understood as different ways of referencing the past, but the analysis proceeds from the premise that the modes of remembering promoted at the case-study sites necessarily draw on both. This study does not thus oppose counter-memory and history, but is concerned rather with the ways in which both historical narratives and different types of memories are invoked. Counter-memory, in providing a way of reframing the past and opening up new perspectives on the 1950s, can be seen as a mode of remembering made up of more hegemonic histories, formalized cultural memories and more contingent communicative memories.

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<sup>154</sup> See, for instance: Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. by Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. xi-xii; David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 212-13.

<sup>155</sup> Christine Chivallon, *L’esclavage, du souvenir à la mémoire: contribution à une anthropologie de la Caraïbe* (Paris: Karthala, 2012) p. 59. See also Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson, ‘Introduction’, pp. 15-49 (pp. 16-17).

<sup>156</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>157</sup> Jan-Werner Müller, ‘Introduction: the Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory’, in *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-35 (p. 24).

<sup>158</sup> Astrid Erll, ‘Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction’, in *A Companion to Memory Studies*, pp. 1-15 (p. 7).

### 2.1.2 Memory and Museums

With the proliferation of memory discourse, modern museums have taken on a privileged role as guardians of cultural memory, and have come to be seen as one of the ‘main contemporary institutions in which the rituals of remembrance and commemoration are performed [...] and where the collective nature of the activity of remembering is acted out’.<sup>159</sup> For Susan Crane, this reconceiving of the museum in both popular and academic discourse has been so powerful that ‘the museum-memory nexus [now] forms one of the richest sites for inquiry into the production of cultural and personal knowledge’.<sup>160</sup> This is because of the recognition of the multifarious modes of remembering associated with museum visits and the design of exhibitions, as well as the range of meanings and relations constructed through collections and specific ensembles and objects. Although much of the scholarly inquiry into this phenomenon has concerned the materiality of memory, museums have also come to be understood as much more than simple repositories of cultural artefacts. In a museological age where a huge number of memory projects and heritage-related activities are open to the public at any one time, museums have been revalued as ‘sites of interaction between personal and collective identities, between memory and history, between information and knowledge production’.<sup>161</sup>

The reimagining of museums as special interfaces of memory has in part been triggered by the recognition that the museum exhibition not only fulfils a representational function, but also has potential to harness and elicit memories amongst its visiting public. In this way, memory originates from what Crane sees as a ‘dialectic between production and reception’ that is ingrained in the very nature of museum representation.<sup>162</sup> The museum has also taken on symbolic value as a metaphor for the actual workings of cultural memory, which has formed the basis of a number of competing theories.<sup>163</sup> The model of the museum as ‘canon’ and ‘archive’, as suggested by Aleida Assmann, employs a metaphorical use of the museum to make the distinction between active and passive types of remembering. Assmann argues that cultural memory is made up of two separate but simultaneous processes: the presentation of a select number of memories which constitute the ‘Funktionsgedächtnis’ (functional memory or canon); and the storage of other memories which have not met the rigorous selection process,

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<sup>159</sup> Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 11.

<sup>160</sup> Susan A. Crane, ‘Introduction: Of Museums and Memory’, in *Museums and Memory*, ed. by Susan A. Crane (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 1-13 (p. 4).

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

making up the ‘Speichergedächtnis’ (storage memory or archive). By functional memory, Assmann refers to an acquired memory formed from a ‘Prozeß der Auswahl, der Verknüpfung, der Sinnkonstitution’; storage memory, by contrast, is made up of the ‘unbrauchbar, obsolet und fremd Gewordene, das neutral, identitäts-abstrakte Sachwissen, aber auch das Repertoire verpaßter Möglichkeiten, alternativer Optionen und ungenutzter Chancen’.<sup>164</sup> The museum illustrates these processes well because the objects that belong to the museum’s collection always go through an extensive selection process which sees them move from the museum depot where they are simply held in reserve, to the temporary or permanent exhibition where they are on display, and back again. It follows from this that the sum of material left in the museum depot and memory’s archive is always far greater than what is on display in exhibitions or what is held onto in memory’s canon.<sup>165</sup> In practice, of course, museums can be seen not only as metaphorical illustrations of cultural memory, but also as sites which actively produce and perpetuate cultural memory and identity because the cultural artefacts that museum professionals choose to exhibit become a central part of the wider narrativizing system that is the museum. As part of this process, material objects effectively live on within the museum context, far beyond the realms of the everyday from where many objects originate, and far beyond the generational lifespan of those individuals who created, used and reappropriated the objects.<sup>166</sup>

The distinction between functional and storage memory as two modes of remembering is useful in the study of museum cultural memory in the sense that it reminds us of the conscious decisions and choices made when displays are put together, and that the remembering promoted through the exhibition of the canon always takes place in the context of the passive remembering constituted by storage in the archive (which might appear tantamount to forgetting). In this way, it not only provides a way of conceptualizing the relationship between what is on display and what is left in the depot, but also the dynamics of remembering and forgetting in museums. As some scholars have pointed out, however, the distinction also brings with it a potential danger that functional memory could be seen as more important than storage memory, because it plays a central role in the construction of identities and in legitimizing the sentiments of belonging of certain groups of people. For Erll, storage memory should be

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<sup>164</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, 3rd edn (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), p. 137.

<sup>165</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), pp. 54-61.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

viewed as no less important, because it too plays an important role in these phenomena.<sup>167</sup> Indeed, the archive is the reservoir of possible future canon memories and is thus a resource for renewed cultural knowledge.<sup>168</sup> Whilst they are thus two different modes of remembering, they are by no means dichotomous and actually work together to produce the patterns of remembering that constitute cultural memory. The terminology used, however, and the traditional concept of the canon itself implies a certain hierarchy inherent within the two modes. The nature of a selection process would also seem to suggest that those objects deemed less ‘museum worthy’ or those memories deemed less significant (according to the context) tend to remain in the archive, while those which are considered more important are promoted to the canon. When applying this theory to museums of everyday culture, the distinction between canon and archive could potentially become blurred because ‘everyday objects’ are by their nature commonplace and ‘mundane’. What is more, many amateur museums do not operate on the model of selection from the archive, the curators choosing instead to exhibit all of their collections (see chapter five). Whilst the model is thus useful for illustrating how cultural memory works and the relationship between museums and cultural memory, in certain cases such a rigid distinction may not be appropriate.

Arguably the most influential concept to be used in the study of the museum-memory nexus is Pierre Nora’s notion of *lieux de mémoire*.<sup>169</sup> Referencing an eclectic range of sites devoted to the French Republican past — from the *Marseillaise* to gastronomy and the Sacré-Cœur — *lieux de mémoire* can be seen as emplacements and crystallizations of the historicized memory that Nora argues now reigns supreme. As the products of the interplay of memory and history, *lieux de mémoire* are more than merely historical sites because they are constituted by a particular ‘volonté de mémoire’.<sup>170</sup> It is this desire to create and perpetuate memories which distinguishes ‘authentic’ but inert historical witnesses to the past (such as forgotten battlefields) from potentially ‘artificial’ but active memorial sites (such as museums). Only the latter would constitute *lieux de mémoire* according to Nora’s definition. Whilst the concept of *lieux de mémoire* is by no means exclusive to museums, they have a natural affinity for each other, because this will to remember is evident at several different stages of the museum process: there is an initial will to remember the particular period of time, event or culture to which the

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<sup>167</sup> Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*, p. 34.

<sup>168</sup> Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, p. 140.

<sup>169</sup> Some material in this section appears in my article ‘Sites of Remembering and Forgetting: Memory Work in 1950s Museums in France and Germany’, *Journal of History and Cultures*, 5 (2015), 23-40.

<sup>170</sup> Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire’, p. 37.



museum is dedicated in order for the museum to be established (irrespective of whether the museum is privately or publicly funded); in most cases there is a will to remember on the part of those who donate objects to museums; there is a will to remember on the part of the curators and museum professionals who are responsible for putting together exhibitions and selecting artefacts from the museum's permanent collection; and finally, most visitors to museums possess a will to remember to some extent, which often acts as the prompt for their initial or return visit. In addition to this, *lieux de mémoire* must also operate on a material, symbolic and functional level and exhibit these qualities continually and simultaneously. Archives, for instance, despite representing a strong will to remember, would only become *lieux de mémoire* if they were invested with a symbolic aura which complemented their materiality and functionality.<sup>171</sup> Museums, on the other hand, seem to embody all three aspects very clearly: they are by the very nature of their physicality and collections 'material' sites; they are 'functional' in that they are constructed with the purpose of achieving clear educational, social and cultural aims; and they are often highly 'symbolic', both architecturally and as a result of the aura invested in certain collections and artefacts.

From a theoretical point of view, it would seem that *lieux de mémoire* are an obvious starting point for analysing how museums operate as loci of cultural memory, as most types of museum would conform to Nora's explanation of what constitutes an individual site of memory. Applying Nora's theory of *lieux de mémoire* in practice, however, is not possible without at least some acknowledgement of the possible problems of transferring this model to different contexts and cultures. Although subsequent works have applied the theory of *lieux de mémoire* to other national contexts, such as the Italian *I luoghi della memoria* and the German *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, the concept and term *lieux de mémoire* does not travel well linguistically or culturally.<sup>172</sup> Nora's discussion of *lieux de mémoire* is rooted in a distinctly Republican French historical context that is supported by what Jay Winter refers to as 'effusions of a kind of French rhetoric', and which is used to sustain what Perry Anderson refers to as 'one of the most patently ideological programmes in post-war historiography'.<sup>173</sup> The central aspect of Anderson's critique is that the whole seven-volume work *Les lieux de*

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<sup>171</sup> Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et Histoire', p. 37.

<sup>172</sup> Pim den Boer, 'Loci memoriae – Lieux de mémoire', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, pp. 19-25 (p. 23). *I luoghi della memoria*, ed. by Mario Isnenghi, 3 vols (Bari: La Terza, 1997); *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, ed. by Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, 3 vols (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001).

<sup>173</sup> Jay Winter, 'Review of Pierre Nora, ed, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past (Vol. 1: Conflicts and Divisions)*', *H-France, H-Net Reviews* (October 1997) <<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1354>> [accessed 05 July 2012] (para. 10 of 16); Perry Anderson, 'Union Sacrée', *London Review of Books*, 26 (2004), 10-16 (p. 10).

*mémoire* neatly side-steps France's entire colonial and postcolonial history (and, indeed, all of France's problematic pasts) and therefore rests on an overtly self-celebratory cultural history. As Anderson succinctly challenges: 'What are the *lieux de mémoire* that fail to include Dien Bien Phu?'<sup>174</sup> As Nancy Wood suggests, *lieux d'oubli* are equally as important as *lieux de mémoire* and any study that looks at collective memory and remembering must also demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the dynamics of collective amnesia and forgetting.<sup>175</sup> On a more practical note, the terminology of Nora's concept has also been critiqued on the basis that it could misleadingly suggest that collective remembrance is somehow anchored to *lieux de mémoire* in a static and amnesic way.<sup>176</sup> Nora's selection of the terms 'lieu' and 'mémoire' has also been characterized as too imprecise.<sup>177</sup> Considering Nora's examples of *lieux de mémoire* are often wholly unrelated to any physical site, the term 'lieu' is in many ways an odd choice. 'Mémoire' too requires more clarity, as the memory to which Nora refers is not a spontaneously occurring memory, but rather a historicized memory, altered by what Nora sees as the gradual erosion of memory by history. Arguably what Nora attempts to define in *Les Lieux de mémoire* is not a theoretical model of memory per se, but rather, as Steven Englund suggests, the 'willed re-creation' of historicized memory relating to French national identity at certain sites.<sup>178</sup>

The extent to which *lieux de mémoire* are rooted in the national French Republican experience suggests that not only is an epistemological shift necessary when using such a top-down model to explain the dynamics of memory and counter-memory formation in the more personal, localized contexts of the case studies, but that a more nuanced application of the theory could also prove more illuminating. Rather than simply demonstrating the ways in which particular museums represent individual *lieux de mémoire*, this thesis proposes to deconstruct the concept and determine how specific localities and artefacts relating to the museums and exhibitions also function as *lieux de mémoire* in their own right. In so doing, it generates more capacity for comparison because it takes into account the numerous different associations and symbolic meanings that these may have, only some of which are linked to

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<sup>174</sup> Anderson, 'Union Sucrée', p. 10.

<sup>175</sup> Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), pp. 10-13.

<sup>176</sup> Ann Rigney, 'The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts Between Monumentality and Morphing', in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, pp. 345-53 (p. 345).

<sup>177</sup> Steven Englund, 'The Ghost of Nation Past: Review of *Les Lieux de mémoire, part 1. La République, part 2. La Nation* ed. Pierre Nora', *The Journal of Modern History* 64 (1992), 304-05.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305. Chivallon highlights how Nora's thinking has changed over time. In his later work, memory is seen to have usurped historical work and is, therefore, treated as illegitimate and suspect in relation to history, p. 62.

national and collective identity. In line with an increasingly pluralized vision of the 1950s, this idea is based on museums as complex networks of memory, where memories and counter-memories of the 1950s are negotiated museologically not as discrete *lieux de mémoire*, but rather as an ensemble of ‘competing’ *lieux de mémoire* (including, for instance, the museum buildings, the time periods to which the museums are devoted and the artefacts on display).

One final way of reimagining the relationship between museums and cultural memory is Alison Landsberg’s concept of prosthetic memory, which conceptualizes how individuals are able to form deeply personal, internalized memories of past events that they have not themselves experienced, by encountering historical narratives at experiential sites such as museums.<sup>179</sup> Prosthetic memories formed in museums can be said to be ‘prosthetic’ because of four principal qualities. First, they are not organically formed through social experience, but, as in many theories of cultural memory, are mediated through museum discourse. Second, like artificial limbs, prosthetic memories are embodied sensuously because they are the result of an experiential engagement with a mediated narrative. Third, the term prosthetic recalls their commodification and susceptibility to the forces of interchangeability and exchangeability, making reference to the wide availability of mediated narratives because of the commodification of mass culture. Fourth, they are prosthetic due to their value in society as potential instruments for social responsibility, empathy and political alliances that move beyond such contested stereotypes such as race, class and gender. It is in this sense that prosthetic memories generated by museums can help to bring about respect for the memories of individuals and communities from radically different backgrounds.<sup>180</sup>

Prosthetic memory represents a fundamental departure from most other memory theories because it rejects the idea proposed by Halbwachs that memories are formed at the intersection of personal experience of events and social context. Prosthetic memories and the identities that they support are not the result of lived personal experience, nor are they subject to biological or ethnic claims of belonging. Rather, they are capable of being transferred across different social and cultural contexts and are produced from an individual’s engagement with a vision of the past that is mass mediated. For this reason, prosthetic memory represents another significant departure from most other memory theories because it provides a framework for understanding how those visitors who are either too young to have personally experienced the

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<sup>179</sup> Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

past represented in such sites or who are from other cultural backgrounds, engage with the narratives on offer. This is an important development for understanding the relationship between the case-study sites and their visitors because many visitors will not have lived through the 1950s. Emerging at the precise crossover point between truly individual and cultural memories, where visitors' own expectations, experiences and knowledge come into contact with those presented at the museum, prosthetic memories can thus be best articulated as 'privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person's own archive of experience'.<sup>181</sup> Based on the premise that mass culture is the central medium through which memories are formed in contemporary society, prosthetic memory, therefore, provides a useful response to the growing sense of affiliation that people feel with pasts to which they themselves have no personal connection, such as the current phenomena of retro and vintage relating to the 1950s. It provides a way of explaining how non-experiential memory communities could visit a 1950s museum and come away with a 'deeply felt memory' of the post-war period, thereby placing emphasis on the vicarious nature of some types of memory formation promoted in museums.<sup>182</sup> It also seems to take account of the growing consensus within cultural memory studies that, because of the development of mass culture, there is virtually no memory that is not in some sense mediated and that those mediated memories are being shared by an increasing number of people.

### **2.1.3 Memory and Material Culture**

One of the central ways in which museums act as repositories and creators of memory is through the exhibition of material artefacts. Objects are significant memory triggers because of the way they are imbued with meaning and because of their ability to hold associative memories of other people and important events over time. The museum exhibition represents one of the most important sites for an engagement with the past that is based around the arrangement and presentation of objects, making it a locus of material memories. For Huyssen, it is precisely the materiality of exhibited objects which makes the museum a particularly special institution of memory in the age of electronification. As three-dimensional relics, museum objects provide a physical, tangible connection to the past that is challenged by the

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<sup>181</sup> Landsberg, p. 19.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2. By 'vicarious' I refer to the process by which visitors are able to form prosthetic memories of the 1950s by reading about the experiences of those who actually lived through the period. This is a type of indirect, secondary memory formation because visitors adopt and reappropriate the memories of experiential generations.

increasing diversification of virtual channels to memory. This is then strengthened by the ‘temporal aura’ imposed by the museum, where objects are removed from their original context, and embedded in the homogenizing force of the museum narrative.<sup>183</sup> Although it is inevitable that only part of the memories associated with the objects can ever be recorded, it is important to remember that when placed in a museum environment, objects are ‘*re-* rather than *de-*contextualised’.<sup>184</sup> By incorporating objects into museum collections, artefacts are thus reinvested with a new kind of meaning that is determined by the surrounding medium. For everyday objects, these meanings can be particularly problematic because they are often inconsistent with the way in which the objects have been used in ‘normal’ day-to-day life. Such objects can be relocated culturally and temporally, however, through haptic engagement (potentially generating a more realistic visitor engagement with objects that are designed to be handled in everyday life) and by supporting narration with the first-hand memories and experiences of historical eye-witnesses.

The exhibition of material culture is based on the premise that because of their ability to convey the signs of time, material objects are socially and culturally meaningful. For Huyssen, ‘there is no such thing as the pristine object prior to representation’, suggesting that irrespective of new meanings attributed in the museum, all museum objects continue to carry the marks of the past, whether these are physical (in terms of patina) or socio-cultural (in terms of objects being products of specific period of time).<sup>185</sup> Artefacts have the power to communicate the history of their appropriation — the various ways in which people have interacted with objects on a daily basis, either by manufacturing them, using them, living with them or collecting them — and, in so doing, are one of the principal ways through which people can gain a better understanding of, and articulate their relationship with, the society and culture of the past.<sup>186</sup> Objects are not only material evidence of trends, such as technological development, but are also strong indicators of how people’s lives and identities were defined, as well as prevalent social and cultural attitudes. Holding material clues about the lives of those thematized in exhibitions, museums are, therefore, important precisely because of the

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<sup>183</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 32-33.

<sup>184</sup> Sandra Dudley, ‘Introduction: Museums and Things’, in *The Thing About Museums: Objects and Experience, Representation and Contestation*, ed. by Sandra Dudley and others (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1-11 (p. 2).

<sup>185</sup> Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p. 32.

<sup>186</sup> Ruth B. Phillips, ‘Re-placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age’, *The Canadian Historical Review*, 86 (2005), 83-110 (p. 108).

materiality and ‘thingliness’ of their collections.<sup>187</sup> That museum visiting remains so popular an activity in the virtual age is testament to what Huyssen sees as the longevity of ‘the real, the physical materiality of the museum object, the exhibited artifact that enables authentic experience’ of history.<sup>188</sup> As David Lowenthal points out, however, although objects have the ability to encapsulate bygone times, they only become meaningful in relation to the past once it is apparent that they are actually from the past.<sup>189</sup> This is one of the most important ways in which museums differ from other institutions and heritage sites, because they revolve around, and make meaning from, authentic material objects.<sup>190</sup> Even with this expectation of the real in museums, however, museum objects are not an ‘autonomous guide’ to history and memory, but require certain strategies and techniques, as well as a recognition of their historical authenticity on the part of museum professionals and visitors, in order to contribute effectively to the narrativization of the past.<sup>191</sup> In order to determine the role of material objects in the construction of museum memories, it is thus necessary to look beyond the artefacts to the structures of meaning-making embedded in museums and exhibitions. Accordingly, the analyses of the case-study sites are not only concerned with the objects themselves and their physical attributes, but also how they relate to the overall chronotopic frameworks and the specific display techniques adopted by the museums and exhibitions.

One of the most significant developments in material culture studies has been the recognition that objects are not only historical artefacts, but also historical witnesses to the past, with their own biographical data and ‘lives’ to be explored. Through being embedded in narratives, objects are seen to develop their own social stories and, in so doing, acquire a range of social and cultural significations. Within this field of study, two particular ways of analysing objects as they move through their biographical trajectories have emerged: the ‘cultural biography’ of a particular object, as put forward by Igor Kopytoff; and, on a much larger scale, the ‘social history’ of a particular category of object as developed by Arjun Appadurai. The cultural biography approach looks at objects as culturally constructed entities and analyses the

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<sup>187</sup> Gottfried Korff, ‘Dimensionen der Dingbetrachtung: Versuch einer museumskundlichen Sichtung’, in *Die Macht der Dinge: Symbolische Kommunikation und kulturelles Handeln*, ed. by Andreas Hartmann and others (Münster: Waxmann, 2011), pp. 11-26 (p. 13).

<sup>188</sup> Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p. 32.

<sup>189</sup> Lowenthal, p. 238.

<sup>190</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p. 24.

<sup>191</sup> Lowenthal, p. 238.

various stages of their life histories.<sup>192</sup> An eventful object biography is thus the story of its various singularizations, classifications and reclassifications. These singularizations can be carried out both by individuals (as in the private singularization of family heirlooms or cherished objects) and by groups (as in renewed appeal and worth in antique furniture and old cars), but in both cases, singularization takes place because of the passing of time. As the relationship to the original date of manufacture and use differs with age, however, different generations are likely to experience and singularize material objects in different ways and at different times. Retro, for instance, is normally popularized by younger generations who are the furthest removed temporally from the post-war era. By extension, the status of museum objects from this period is likely to depend on the generation to which the curators and museum directors belong, as well as such considerations as their social background and place of birth. Objects tend to acquire a fuller biography and are more likely to undergo singularization if they are rare or considered valuable, whereas everyday objects, by contrast, tend to move through their life cycle much quicker, until eventually they are discarded or recycled. The exception to this, however, is when such humble objects appear in museum collections and are intentionally singularized because of their social history value, thereby moving to an ‘afterlife’ for which they were not originally intended.<sup>193</sup> The social history of things, on the other hand, takes a longer-term view of the ebb and flow of meaning which is inscribed in the form, use and trajectories of types of objects over time.<sup>194</sup> This meaning is subject to change across space and time and as such, the distinction between everyday and luxury objects may only represent a difference in demand over time, the locus of production, or consumption. What were perhaps considered luxuries in the 1950s, for instance electrical appliances, have now become now a standard part of everyday life in present-day Western Europe and have become ingrained in the everyday mythology of the 1950s in museums.

Whilst there are significant differences between the two approaches, namely that the biographical approach is more appropriate for examining the use contexts of specific objects, and the social history approach is more appropriate for looking at wider shifts and dynamics of particular types of object, they share common analytical ground. Both approaches highlight the

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<sup>192</sup> Igor Kopytoff, ‘The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process’, in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64-91.

<sup>193</sup> Karin Dannehl, ‘Object Biographies: From Production to Consumption’, in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, ed. by Karen Harvey (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 123-38 (p. 126-8).

<sup>194</sup> Arjun Appadurai, ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’, in *The Social Life of Things*, pp. 3-63 (p. 34).

necessity of studying the entire trajectory of the object (as opposed to focusing purely on production or commoditization), and both view commoditization as a stage in the full life history of the object (rather than a thing in itself). They are intrinsically linked because changes to the social history of things may impact upon the cultural biography of individual objects and vice versa. This emphasis on change is particularly useful for the purposes of this study, since it provides a way of understanding how objects and object categories undergo semantic shifts through singularization and classification and because of wider historical circumstances and conditions. Whereas the two approaches outlined by Kopytoff and Appadurai are concerned predominantly with temporality, this project also maintains that is necessary to track changes according to spatiality, looking at how the reimagining of 1950s objects take place within the time-space of the museum and exhibition and taking into account different spatial contexts within and across national borders.

Where this project most significantly hopes to advance thinking on objects is in its effort to initiate more overlap between memory theory and material culture theory. According to Marius Kwint, material objects serve memory in three different ways: first, they help to furnish recollection by contributing to a ‘picture of the past’; second, they trigger both deliberate and unintended forms of remembering, and third, they act as repositories for information extending beyond individual experience.<sup>195</sup> Whilst these mechanisms are widely discussed in material culture studies, this thesis finds that they can be better understood through the application of key memory theories. In the chapter on biographical time, recollection is retheorized through the notion of the ‘autotopography’ (see chapter three), which serves to map personal memories within exhibition space, and by discussing the role of particularly powerful memory objects, such as photographs and heirlooms.<sup>196</sup> In addition to Marcel Proust’s paradigmatic concept of involuntary memory (also used by Kwint), the distinction between deliberate efforts to remember and purely ‘serendipitous encounter[s]’ with memory is concretized throughout this thesis through discussions of more immersive, sensory-led remembering promoted at the sites.<sup>197</sup> Finally, the way in which objects act as repositories of memory is conceptualized through the distinction between communicative and cultural

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<sup>195</sup> Marius Kwint, ‘Introduction: The Physical Past’, in *Material Memories: Design and Evocation*, ed. by Marius Kwint, Christopher Breward and Jeremy Aynsley (Oxford: Berg, 1999) pp. 1-16 (p. 2).

<sup>196</sup> Jennifer A. González, ‘Autotopographies’, in *Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies*, ed. by Gabriel Brahm Jr. and Mark Driscoll (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 133-50.

<sup>197</sup> Kwint, p. 2. Proust discussed the concepts of involuntary and voluntary memory in a series of letters and preparatory notes relating to the publication of *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913), one of which appeared as an interview with Élie-Joseph Bois in *Le Temps*, 12 November (dated 13 November) 1913. Reproduced in *Textes retrouvés*, ed. by Philip Kolb, Cahiers Marcel Proust, III (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 285-91.



memory (objects importantly having the ability to mediate between both realms), and Anne Fuchs's notion of 'memory icons'. This has come to be used as an umbrella term within German memory studies to refer to those 'objects such as photographs, diaries or letters which serve to enshrine a particular version of family history'.<sup>198</sup> Although Fuchs associates these predominantly with traumatic experience, this thesis demonstrates that they can also be associated with more positive narratives and used by different memory communities as the basis for nostalgic remembering because of their affective capacity.

This leads to a final reflection on memory and material culture: that objects are significant not only as historical vestiges and symbolic incarnations of memory, but also because of their capacity to elicit emotions on the part of those who come into contact with them. Being inherently polysemous, objects have the ability to trigger a wide range of meanings and emotional responses, and within the museum environment, this affective engagement can play a significant role in the overall experience of the museum visit. Visitors tend to cherry-pick displays for emotional engagement, concentrating on the ensembles and individual objects with which they find the most personal resonance. As a form of object recognition, this 'Aha-effect' enables individuals to make connections between their personal stories and cultural memory through material artefacts.<sup>199</sup> Individuals may, for example, identify with objects because family and friends or they themselves once owned them ('Granny/I had one of those') or they may draw parallels to substitute triggers ('Granny/I had one just like that').<sup>200</sup> Because of this, content from the past which still remains within communicative memory is likely to provoke the strongest emotional reactions from visitors since the potential for object recognition is much greater. This can have an important therapeutic benefit in terms of reminiscence and helping those visitors with disorders such as dementia to access personal memories, as well as encouraging intra- and inter-generational dialogue about the past. It is, of course, also possible that the objects and narratives on offer at museums and exhibitions may also jar with visitors' own personal archives of experience, leading to the rejection and reversal of this phenomenon ('it wasn't like that'). This may lead visitors to form very different

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<sup>198</sup> Anne Fuchs, 'From "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" to Generational Memory Contests in Günter Grass, Monika Maron and Uwe Timm', *German Life and Letters*, 59 (2006), 169-86 (p. 184).

<sup>199</sup> Daphne Berdahl, 'Re-presenting the Socialist Modern: Museums and Memory in the Former GDR', in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), pp. 345-66 (p. 356).

<sup>200</sup> Christine Johnstone, 'Your Granny had one of those!: How Visitors use Museum Collections', in *History and Heritage: Consuming the Past in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by John Arnold, Kate Davies and Simon Ditchfield (Shaftesbury: Donhead, 1998), pp. 67-77 (pp. 68-73).

interpretations to those encouraged by the sites and to construct their own memories and counter-memories as a form of resistance.

#### **2.1.4 Memory and Nostalgia**

Finally, in linking nostalgic remembering to therapeutic reminiscence, affective engagement with the past and identity formation, this thesis is based on a more nuanced understanding of nostalgia and its relation to memory that has been gaining currency in memory studies over the last few decades. Although museums are often described as sites which sentimentalize and romanticize the past — a critique based on a traditionally pejorative understanding of nostalgia as dangerously selective — the case-study museums and exhibitions demonstrate nostalgia's equally large capacity for both critique and positive meaning-making, as well as its complex negotiation of temporality. Svetlana Boym's work on nostalgia in post-communist cities employs a distinction between the two nostalgic tendencies of 'restorative nostalgia' and 'reflective nostalgia'. Restorative nostalgia masquerades as 'truth and tradition' and is directed towards the 'national past and future', aiming to bring about a 'transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home'; by contrast reflective nostalgia belongs to the realms of individual memory and cultural memory and 'cherishes shattered fragments of memory', aiming to create an 'individual narrative that savours details and memorial signs' rather than to 'rebuild the mythical place called home'.<sup>201</sup> Reflective nostalgia implies awareness that the past can only be represented and that there is a 'gap between identity and resemblance'.<sup>202</sup> The distinction is useful in so far as it places emphasis on the specific types of narrative framework towards which nostalgia is directed, whether it be more the personal and local, or the more dominant historical and nation-centred. With such a rigid separation of the two forms of nostalgia, there is, however, little room for overlap, such as when particular objects of nostalgia may feed into both these modalities, or where personal and national experiences coincide. Highlighting the pluralization of the 1950s past at the case-study sites, this thesis aims not only to draw out the intricacies of nostalgia as outlined by Boym, but also to explore the bridges and crossover points between restorative and reflective nostalgia. The distinction is also based on the assumption that nostalgia is a mode through which those with first-hand memories remember the past, but as Landsberg has shown with her concept of prosthetic memory, and as the various

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<sup>201</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. xvii and 49-50.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

waves of *Ostalgie* have demonstrated, remembering can also take on a vicarious nature.<sup>203</sup> Tom Vanderbilt has come up with the concept of ‘displaced nostalgia’ to explain the phenomenon of nostalgia for periods of time that people have not personally experienced.<sup>204</sup> This is a particularly useful concept for this project because it helps to explain how phenomena such as retro and vintage, which draw heavily on nostalgia, have become so associated with the 1950s years after the end of the decade. The very existence of displaced nostalgia also calls into question the retrospective nature of nostalgia and suggests that, as Hodge notes, it is actually more of a ‘prospective memory uniting visions of the *future* based on *present* perceptions of *past* conditions (experienced or imagined)’.<sup>205</sup> Nostalgia is thus anchored temporally and can be seen as a longing for a past time, but which takes place specifically in the present, with a view to the future.

Given the strong relationship between retro and nostalgia (see chapter one), this thesis is necessarily concerned with the way in which nostalgic discourse has become ingrained in the retro-infused history and cultural memory of the 1950s in France and Germany, in particular the way it has crystallized as a sentimental desire for the golden age of the post-war period, and how this impacts upon museum representation. On the face of it, the 1950s have come to represent a golden age because they symbolize economic and social stability (particularly in comparison to the war and immediate post-war period, as well as the uprisings and movements of the 1960s) and because they represent a period of relative simplicity in contrast to the ‘accelerated rhythms of life’ in the current technologically complex era.<sup>206</sup> As Janelle Wilson reminds us, nostalgia appears to be rooted predominantly in popular culture and the fact that the 1950s was in many ways a boom period for popular music and television, and coincided with the heyday of Hollywood cinema, is perhaps the most convincing reason for the decade’s constitution as a golden age.<sup>207</sup> Even with this characterization, however, it is important to highlight, as Nick Merriman does, that these golden ages are not necessarily always seen as ‘better’ than the present (because people usually acknowledge the lower standards of living and the hardship of past ways of life), but are indicators of particular feelings about the present in relation to the past, and of very specific conditions for memory work.<sup>208</sup> The focus with

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<sup>203</sup> *Ostalgie* is a conflation of *Ost* and *Nostalgie* to refer to nostalgia for the former East Germany.

<sup>204</sup> Tom Vanderbilt, ‘The Nostalgia Gap (from The Baffler)’, *Utne Reader*, 5 (1993) 152-57.

<sup>205</sup> Christina J. Hodge, ‘A New Model for Memory Work: Nostalgic Discourse at a Historic Home’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 17 (2011), 116-35.

<sup>206</sup> Boym, p. xiv.

<sup>207</sup> Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), p. 31.

<sup>208</sup> Nick Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case: The Past, the Heritage and the Public in Britain* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 22-40.

respect to this particular project is, therefore, how nostalgia and retro have created an overarching image of the 1950s as a golden age, and whether museums consciously draw on or reject this for specific purposes.

Linked to this reappraisal of nostalgia is also a more complex understanding of *Ostalgie* as a particular eastern German form of nostalgia. Although *Ostalgie* has come under constant fire ‘firstly as a self-indulgent and rose-tinted vision of the GDR, and secondly as a divisive phenomenon’, not to mention its commodification and potential trivialization of everyday life in the GDR, it has since undergone a more nuanced reappraisal.<sup>209</sup> For Daphne Berdahl, who identifies distinct phases in the *Ostalgie-Welle*, the *Ostalgie* boom can be seen as an ‘expression of a kind of counter-memory’ in itself.<sup>210</sup> She maintains that *Ostalgie* is not really about identification with the GDR past, but about trying to ‘recuperate, validate, and anchor’ GDR memory in the present.<sup>211</sup> This echoes both Foucault and Lipsitz’s understanding of counter-memory as a way of giving voice to hidden histories and legitimizing the memories, experiences and identities of smaller memory communities. By matching the case-study GDR museums against what Berdahl sees as the latest phase of *Ostalgie*, this thesis attempts to show how *Ostalgie* is used to promote a more critical way of remembering the GDR *Alltag* in current displays in eastern Germany, and how it has changed the meanings and associations of a number of key GDR objects. At a time when scholars are speaking of the diminishing importance of *Ostalgie* in post-unification Germany, this project highlights the continued relevance of nostalgia and reminiscence, at least within the museum sphere. It does not find *Ostalgie* to be, as Anselma Gallinat claims, a ‘thing of the past’, or a specific pathology of the 1990s or 2000s, but a very present mode of remembering that continues to be created and sustained in a variety of different ways.<sup>212</sup> The major difference between the current appropriation of *Ostalgie* and those of the past is simply that it is now an accepted and even expected frame of reference, and that this familiarity has enabled museums and their visitors to use it in a much more complex manner. It is in this way that GDR museums, just like films

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<sup>209</sup> Anna Saunders, ‘“Normalizing” the Past: East German Culture and *Ostalgie*’, in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp. 90-91.

<sup>210</sup> Daphne Berdahl, ‘(N)Ostalgie for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things’, *Ethnos*, 64 (1999), 192-211 (p. 202).

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>212</sup> Anselma Gallinat, ‘Playing the Native Card: the Anthropologist as Informant in Eastern Germany’, in *The Ethnographic Self as Resource: Writing Memory and Experience into Ethnography*, ed. by Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 25-44 (p. 34).

and literature, can help to carve out a role and place for *Ostalgie*, as Anna Saunders explains, ‘within a self-confident nation striving for normality.’<sup>213</sup>

Finally, this thesis calls into question simplistic associations of nostalgia and temporality by reworking nostalgia as more of a ‘structure of relation to the past’ than a specific sense of temporality in itself.<sup>214</sup> In his study of historicity and invocations of epoch in the village of Monadières, near to the southern French city of Narbonne, Matt Hodges identifies nostalgia as a complex process underwritten by periodization.<sup>215</sup> Whilst he argues that nostalgia can have both a palliative and critical function, he views both forms as part of an epochal characterization of history that draws a definite dividing line between the mythicized past and what is seen as the ‘present epoch of flux’.<sup>216</sup> Drawing on Hodges’s work, Macdonald argues that nostalgia provides a means of challenging the ‘parcelling up of time that serves to make the past more clearly passed’ and which is ingrained in the division of history into epochs and generations.<sup>217</sup> For her, nostalgia can be seen as a form of rebellion against the ‘evolutionistic conception of temporality as progress’.<sup>218</sup> Understanding nostalgia in this way, this thesis draws a definite link between nostalgia, counter-memory and chronotopy, because both Lipsitz’s concept of counter-memory and Hayden White’s concept of chronotopy can be seen as ways of counteracting historical linearity and periodization. For Lipsitz, although counter-memory tries to act within the confines of temporality, it also ‘understands the limits of historical time’.<sup>219</sup> Similarly for White, the chronotope constitutes a more genealogical response to the past and thus attempts to move away from the reductive approach to history as a series of continuities and ruptures underpinned by periodization.<sup>220</sup> Representing, as Silke Arnold-de Simine argues, a ‘desire to envisage time spatially and [...] a refusal to surrender to the irreversibility of time that conditions our notions of memory and history’, museum nostalgia is thus shown to be inherently chronotopic.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Saunders, ““Normalizing” the Past: East German Culture and *Ostalgie*”, p. 92.

<sup>214</sup> Mieke Bal, ‘Introduction’, in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. vii-xvii (p. xi).

<sup>215</sup> Matt Hodges, ‘The Time of the Interval: Historicity, Modernity and Epoch in Rural France’, *American Ethnologist*, 37 (2010), 115-131 (p. 121).

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Macdonald, p. 220.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>219</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 229.

<sup>220</sup> Hayden White, ‘The Nineteenth-Century as Chronotope’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 11 (1987), 119-29.

<sup>221</sup> Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, pp. 56-57.

## 2.2 Museum Representation

The synergy between time and space is central not only to the mechanics of nostalgia, but to all historical representation within the museum environment. By compressing historical narratives within the physical confines of exhibition space, museums anchor the forces of time and space and these serve as the basis for a variety of hermeneutic relationships. That these relationships are continually remade in the present adds another temporal dimension to the framework, conveying the immediacy of representation as the ‘there and *now*’.<sup>222</sup> Drawing on Christopher Prendergast’s work on representation, museums and exhibitions can be seen to use the spatial and the temporal in order to ‘represent’ in two ways: first, in the sense of ‘[making] present again’, and second, as a way of standing for something else in the ‘form of a simulacrum’ or substitution.<sup>223</sup> Whilst museum representation can, therefore, be understood as a way of continually structuring, visualizing and ‘making real’ certain historical phenomena, it is also only ever a reflection or remodelling of the real ‘world and our ways of being in the world’.<sup>224</sup> This capacity for ongoing historical actualization is, nevertheless, at odds with many of the traditional readings of museums as lifeless, static spaces. Adorno’s famous observation that ‘Museum und Mausoleum verbinden nicht bloß die phonetische Assoziation. Museen sind wie Erbbegräbnisse’ raises the issue of the funereal inertness of museums and their collections, as they appear as relics of past lives.<sup>225</sup> The adjective ‘museal’ has not only acquired an ‘unfreundliche Farbe’ in German, but also in French, with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s similar remark that the museum constitutes the ‘historicité de mort’.<sup>226</sup> Confined to the realm of retrospection, the museum divests its collections of their original intended meanings and significations and encourages a way of seeing that is, for him, tantamount to the ‘recueillement de nécropole’.<sup>227</sup>

If these characterizations of the museum as no longer seem appropriate for contemporary institutions, museums continue to represent, at the very least, temporally complex sites.<sup>228</sup> The unique spatio-temporal characteristics of the museum are explored by

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<sup>222</sup> Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>224</sup> Jen Webb, *Understanding Representation* (London: Sage, 2009), p. 10.

<sup>225</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Versuch das Endspiel zu verstehen: Aufsätze zur Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 16.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960; elec. edn Chichoutimi, Saguenay: Université de Québec, 2011), p. 63. Université de Québec ebook <[http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/merleau\\_ponty\\_maurice/signes/merleau\\_ponty\\_signes.pdf](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/merleau_ponty_maurice/signes/merleau_ponty_signes.pdf)> [accessed 17 September 2014].

<sup>227</sup> Merleau-Ponty, p. 62.

<sup>228</sup> Jennifer Anne Walklate, ‘Timescapes: The Production of Temporality in Literature and Museums’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2012), p. 6.

Foucault in his concept of ‘heterotopias’: a way of theorizing strange, uncanny spaces ‘à la fois mythique et réelle’, which exist outside ‘normal’, everyday space and constitute ruptures with linear time.<sup>229</sup> For Foucault, museums are one of the clearest examples of ‘heterotopias of time’, where ‘le temps ne cesse de s’annoncer et de se jucher au sommet de lui-même’.<sup>230</sup> In its all-encompassing effort to archive and record all historical experience, the museum constitutes ‘un lieu de tous les temps’, but the perpetual nature of this process and the fact that time ‘s’accumule à l’infini’ also means that it is ‘lui-même hors du temps’.<sup>231</sup> Whilst heterotopias have proved to be a popular means of conceptualizing time in museum studies, it is important to highlight a limitation with Foucault’s model.<sup>232</sup> Although heterotopias may indicate a particularly unusual or complex form of temporality, all the examples that Foucault cites clearly operate very much within the realm of ‘normal’ time. Through their collections and narrativization, museums, for instance, can mediate between the past, present and future, but ultimately exist in the temporal reality of linear time. As such, ‘shared, social, chronological time may behave and be treated strangely in the museum, but it is never entirely absent’ from it.<sup>233</sup> What can be taken as read from heterotopias is that, irrespective of the particular characteristics of temporality, time and space co-exist in the museum. If, as Reinhart Koselleck argues, time can only be envisaged ‘über Bewegung in bestimmten Raumeinheiten’, then museum representation and meaning-making is by extension determined by the interplay of both temporality and spatiality. In order to fully understand the nature and impact of museum representation, a systematic framework of spatio-temporalities or ‘timescapes’ is thus required.<sup>234</sup>

### 2.2.1 ‘Chronotopy’

Literary studies have long been concerned with temporality and spatiality as modes of critical inquiry, and there exists a large body of scholarship on the relations between these dimensions

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<sup>229</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘Des espaces autres’, *Empan*, 2 (2004), 12-19 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3917/empa.054.0012>> [accessed 18 September 2014] (para. 18 of 36).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 28 of 36.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> For works that apply Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia to museum studies see, for instance: Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Jennifer Barrett, *Museums and the Public Sphere* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Gordon Fyfe, ‘Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums’, in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. by Sharon Macdonald (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 33-49.

<sup>233</sup> Walklate, p. 8.

<sup>234</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Zeitschichten: Studien zur Historik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 9; Barbara Adam, *Timescapes of Modernity: The Environment and Invisible Hazards* (London: Routledge, 1998).

in narratology and textual and biographical criticism, as well as in the referentiality between texts and the real, outside world.<sup>235</sup> Of all the theoretical developments to emerge exploring this time-space continuum, Bakhtin's theory of 'chronotopy' has proved to be one of the most significant, not only because of how it has shaped modern literary criticism (particularly genre theory), but also because of how it has been appropriated by other disciplines and used as the basis for a much wider range of cultural investigations. Coming from the Greek terms 'chronos' (time) and 'topos' (space), the chronotope — literally 'time-space' — can be seen as the conceptual counterpart to Einsteinian space-time theory, but has its roots in the Kantian philosophy of time and space as pure forms of all sensory intuition.<sup>236</sup> Whereas for Kant, time and space are 'transcendental' in cognitive processes, meaning intuition of time and space is presupposed and based on a priori knowledge, for Bakhtin time and space are active components of cognition, constituting a 'most immediate reality'.<sup>237</sup> Bakhtin draws on Kant only insofar as time and space are essential to cognition, with the added qualification that they are inseparable in all but abstract thought. Unlike formalist or structuralist readings of time and space which treat them as separate entities, the chronotope appears as a fundamental unity in literature.<sup>238</sup> As in real, everyday life, time and space 'are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history'.<sup>239</sup> The chronotope emerges as a framework in which time and space are mutually inclusive and simultaneously encoded, time and space each adapting to the mechanics of the other.

Conceived as a means of determining the historical poetics of the novel, the chronotope provides a model for understanding the relationship between the real world time-space (and the people who inhabit this) as referent, and its representation through 'fictional time, space, and character'.<sup>240</sup> The chronotope is not just concerned with the relationship between time and

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<sup>235</sup> See, for instance: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: A. Francke, 1946); Hans Meyerhoff, *Time in Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960); Joseph Francese, *Narrating Postmodern Time and Space* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, *Literatures of Memory: History, Time and Space in Postwar Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Elana Gomel, *Narrative Space and Time: Representing Impossible Topologies in Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>236</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998).

<sup>237</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258 (p. 84).

<sup>238</sup> Niele Bemong and Pieter Borghart, 'Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives', in *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, ed. by Niele Bemong and others (Gent: Academia Press, 2010), pp. 3-16 (p. 3).

<sup>239</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 84.

<sup>240</sup> Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 201.



space in different literary works, but also how the textual time-space relates to the time-space continuum of the real, historical context in which the works are produced and received. Although Bakhtin highlights the importance of recognizing the distinction between these two chronotopes, they continue to impact upon and enrich each other in a process of continual mutual interaction.<sup>241</sup> This means that the chronotope extends beyond the remit of a unit of formal, literary analysis and is operational on three different levels:

First, as the means by which a text represents history; second, as the relation between images of time and space in the novel, out of which any representation of history must be constructed; and third, as a way of discussing the formal properties of the text itself, its plot, narrator, and relation to other texts.<sup>242</sup>

At each level, spatio-temporal indicators are necessarily accompanied by semantic elements, which assign meaning and value to textual content and which exist outside the parameters of the chronotope. Irrespective of what these meanings and values are, Bakhtin argues that they too must take on chronotopic form in order to enter the concrete realm of experience. As such, although the semantic is independent of the temporal and spatial, ‘every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope’, because the chronotope provides essential spatio-temporal expression.<sup>243</sup> In positing the chronotope as the gateway to all semantic and affective experience, Bakhtin elevates it ‘to the central ordering principle’ of all real and fictional activity.<sup>244</sup>

The chronotope is discussed most extensively in ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’ in *The Dialogic Imagination*, and ‘The *Bildungsroman*’ in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, and for the most part is adopted as a *modus operandi* for determining the spatio-temporal dynamics of entire novelistic genres. This is evident in the emphasis that Bakhtin puts on the major chronotopes in the above essays, as well as repeated remarks acknowledging the chronotope’s generic significance.<sup>245</sup> In his analysis of the three main forms of novel in ancient times, Bakhtin isolates three chronotopes: adventure time (in the Greek

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<sup>241</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 253.

<sup>242</sup> Vice, pp. 201-2.

<sup>243</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 258.

<sup>244</sup> Esther Peeren, ‘Through the Lens of the Chronotope: Suggestions for a Spatio-Temporal Perspective on Diaspora’, in *Diaspora and Memory: Figures of Displacement in Contemporary Literature, Arts and Politics*, ed. by Marie-Aude Baronian (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 67-77 (p. 68).

<sup>245</sup> Bemong and Borghart, p. 8. See this article also for a comprehensive overview of chronotope terminology (pp. 6-8). In order to make the distinction between the two main types of chronotope as clear as possible I henceforth distinguish between chronotopes and chronotopic motifs.

romance), adventure-everyday time (in the adventure novel of everyday life) and biographical time (in ancient biography and autobiography). In addition to this, Bakhtin goes on to identify chronotopes for folklore, the chivalric romance, the *Bildungsroman* and the Renaissance fiction of Rabelais. Bakhtin equally identifies the chronotope on the level of the motif, using the terms ‘chronotope’ and ‘motif’ often interchangeably to designate recurring events or locales that are ‘congealed’ and which act as ‘condensed reminder[s] of the kind of time and space that typically functions there’.<sup>246</sup> Such chronotopic motifs include those of: encounter or meeting, the road, the castle, the salon, the provincial town, the threshold, and the public square. In Bakhtin’s chronotopic reading of the Greek Romance, for instance, he isolates the chronotope of adventure time — a ‘highly intensified but undifferentiated’ time-space characterized by adventures and events governed by ‘chance meetings and failures to meet’ — and the chronotopic motif of meeting (and parting).<sup>247</sup> Here, the motif of meeting ‘enters as a constituent element of the plot [...] and, consequently, is part of the concrete chronotope that subsumes it’.<sup>248</sup> Whilst Bakhtin is at times terminologically imprecise in his elucidation of chronotopes and chronotopic motifs, the two remain at least conceptually distinct throughout. The chronotope provides the spatio-temporal ‘setting’ for the unravelling of the narrative, whereas the chronotopic motif represents a portable, repeated reflection of that ‘setting’.

Bakhtin clearly sees the chronotope as first and foremost enhancing genre theory, but in his ‘concluding remarks’ to ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, he outlines two additional ways in which the chronotope is conceptually significant. First, as ‘organizing centers [...] where the knots of narrative are tied and untied’, chronotopes determine the course and form of narrative events in literary texts, and therefore make an important contribution to narratology.<sup>249</sup> In line with Russian Formalism, the chronotope can be described, as a unit of narrative analysis, as the ‘total matrix’ produced by the story (a chronology of an event) and plot (a mediated narration of an event).<sup>250</sup> In a number of works spanning more than two decades, Darko Suvin extends the narrative implication of the chronotope to the level of *differentia generica* of narrativity. On this basis, narrative texts are more complex than metaphoric texts because of the existence of a chronotopic layer of meaning which provides

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<sup>246</sup> Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 374.

<sup>247</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, pp. 90-94.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>250</sup> Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 111.

spatio-temporal concretization.<sup>251</sup> Second, the chronotope is the central means for visualizing and ‘materializing time in space’, meaning it has ‘representational importance’.<sup>252</sup> By way of a corporal analogy, Bakhtin conceptualizes the chronotope as a means of embodying narrative: ‘the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins’.<sup>253</sup> This is echoed in Michael Frank’s analysis of Bakhtin in relation to the spatial turn, in which he conceives the chronotope as ‘das Fleisch auf dem Skelett der Plot-Struktur’.<sup>254</sup> The role of the chronotope can thus be interpreted in two ways: for some scholars it provides the foundation for narrative (meaning it is foundational to the text), and for others it serves to ‘flesh out’ and concretize narrative (meaning it is that which gives the text its individuality).

In literary studies, the chronotope figures as a means of framing narrative and representation and determining the relationship between the represented, textual time-space configuration and the real spatio-temporal context with which the text resonates. However, as Bakhtin acknowledges, the application of the chronotope is not limited to literature, but can be extended to ‘other areas of culture’.<sup>255</sup> In her application of the chronotopic motif of encounter and ambiguity to the works of Flaubert and Manet, Janice Best shows how artistic meaning is created through specifically chronotopic images, developing a model for how the chronotope can be used to read paintings like novels.<sup>256</sup> Robert Stam argues convincingly that the chronotope may be a cinematic tool par excellence, ‘for whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is quite literal, splayed out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time’.<sup>257</sup> Vivian Sobchak applies the concept at the level of cinematic genre and motif, identifying the chronotope of film noir as a ‘lounge time’ that emerges in the wartime and post-war spaces of American culture, such as nightclubs, cocktail lounges, bars, hotels and diners, which figure as recurring

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<sup>251</sup> See, for instance: Darko Suvin, ‘On Metaphoricity and Narrativity in Fiction: The Chronotope as the Differentia Generica’, *SubStance*, 14 (1986), 51-67; Darko Suvin, ‘The Chronotope, Possible Worlds, and Narrativity’, in *Narratologie, Texte, Genre: Proceedings of the XIth ICLA-Conference*, ed. by Jean Bessière (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 33-41; Darko Suvin, *Defined by a Hollow: Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

<sup>252</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 250.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Michael C. Frank, ‘Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn: Ansätze bei Jurij Lotman und Michail Bachtin’, in *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*, ed. by Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), pp. 53-80 (p. 73).

<sup>255</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 84.

<sup>256</sup> Janice Best, ‘The Chronotope and the Generation of Meaning in Novels and Paintings’, *Criticism*, 36 (1994), 291-316.

<sup>257</sup> Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 11.

locales.<sup>258</sup> Bakhtin's motif of the road, in particular, is employed frequently in the study of so-called 'road movies', whereby the road and the personal (metaphysical) journey of the protagonist(s) are subject to specific spatio-temporal grounding, in which distance covered is tantamount to time passed.<sup>259</sup>

The concept has been applied with equal rigour to other areas of scholarly inquiry, such as anthropology. Deanna Davidson makes the case for the existence of a post-socialist East German chronotope in her analysis of former East Germans' uses of the adverbial deictics 'here' and 'now', and cultural and linguistic anthropologist Keith Basso uses the chronotope to conceptualize recurring geographical features of Western Apache cultural narratives.<sup>260</sup> This relationship between landscape and cultural meaning has been further elucidated by geographers such as Mireya Folch-Serra. Folch-Serra demonstrates the methodological advantage of adopting the chronotope as a way of reading landscapes, whereby chronotopes appear as points of crystallization of dialogical interaction.<sup>261</sup> Approaches such as these posit the chronotope as a 'gateway to an alternative dialogical approach to narrative truth-telling about the landscape'.<sup>262</sup> A growing body of work employing the chronotope in the field of diaspora studies has helped not only to map a multitude of chronotopic representations of diaspora, but also to show how diaspora can be conceived as a chronotope, 'as a specific ideological construction of space and time that governs the lives of diasporic subjects'.<sup>263</sup> Here studies are beginning to draw less on the chronotope's representational significance and instead highlight its performative qualities.

The chronotope has been used as a methodological tool in museology for determining the modes and mechanics of museum representations of the past. Drawing on globalization discourse, Pascal Gielen offers a reconceived chronotopy of the museum, articulating the

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<sup>258</sup> Vivian Sobchak, 'Lounge Time: Postwar Crises and the Chronotope of Film Noir', in *Refiguring American Film Genres: Theory and History*, ed. by Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 129-70 (pp. 156-57).

<sup>259</sup> See, for instance, Alexandra Ganser, Julia Pühringer and Markus Rheindorf, 'Bakhtin's Chronotope of the Road: Space, Time, and Place in Road Movies Since the 1970s', *Facta Universitatis*, 4 (2006), 1-17. For other locales see Michael V. Montgomery, *Carnivals and Commonplaces: Bakhtin's Chronotope, Cultural Studies, and Film* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

<sup>260</sup> Deanna Davidson, 'East Spaces in West Times: Deictic Reference and Political Self-Positioning in a Post-Socialist East German Chronotope', *Language & Communication*, 27 (2007), 212-26; Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

<sup>261</sup> Mireya Folch-Serra, 'Place, Voice, Space: Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogical Landscape', *Society and Space*, 8 (1990), 255-74.

<sup>262</sup> James Lawson, 'Chronotope, Story and Historical Geography: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Space-Time of Narratives', *Antipode*, 43 (2011), 384-412 (p. 391).

<sup>263</sup> Peeren, p. 70.

representation of history in museums within a tripartite chronotopic framework. Gielen distinguishes between three different configurations of museum time-space: 'local time' (a linear but strongly localized representational approach to history), 'global time' (a universality of temporality and spatiality which foregrounds an emotional engagement with history, thereby privileging visitor experience of history over historical context and fact) and 'glocal time' (a polyphonous 'novelization' of history which takes into account the complex relationship between past, present and future).<sup>264</sup> Applying such a framework to the case study of the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, Belgium, Gielen shows how such chronotopes can co-exist in a single museum, advancing the notion of museum multi-chronotopicity as a means of providing visitors 'with several ways into the story'.<sup>265</sup> As the aim of Gielen's study is to determine the relationship between museums, visitors and the presentation of history, he sees 'museumchronotopics' as a potential way for museums to enhance their understanding of their visitors and attract a more differentiated public. This is useful in the sense that it draws attention to the fact that different chronotopes may appeal to different kinds of visitors, but in so doing, it seems, crucially, to overlook the wider representational significance of chronotopes. If museum explorations of history and memory are to be furthered using the concept of multi-chronotopicity, studies must foreground not only how chronotopes represent ways into historical narratives, but also versions of historical narratives in their own right.

In such studies, the chronotope represents a way of reading history in museums, which exist as tangible cultural artefacts comparable to texts or films. However, the representation of history has been conceptualized through one further chronotopic approach, in which there is no tangible cultural artefact, and where the chronotope emerges not as a framework of presentation, but as an imagination of history itself. In his 1987 work "'The Nineteenth-Century' as Chronotope", White proposes a chronotopic framework for explaining the reinvention of the nineteenth-century past in the present and its transformation from a 'period' into a 'chronotope'.<sup>266</sup> White argues that this is taking place because, at the time he is writing, the nineteenth century, although belonging to history, is not yet confined to the realm of the past, being very much 'alive in our own age, in the form of residues of institutional practices and dogmas which are causes of as well as impediments to the resolution of problems unique

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<sup>264</sup> Pascal Gielen, 'Museumchronotopics: On the Representation of the Past in Museums', *Museum and Society*, 2 (2004), 147-60.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>266</sup> White, p. 121.

to our age'.<sup>267</sup> Turning to Fredric Jameson's work on the 'political unconscious', White offers the chronotope as a solution to what Jameson sees as the problems of the representation of history as a series of historical periods, that is, the totalizing impact of historical periods as 'seamlessly interrelated' and the linearity of history as a 'succession of such periods'.<sup>268</sup> Drawing on Jameson's reading of Joseph Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* (1899–1900), White further sees the chronotope as a means of outlining the "'conditions of possibility" for the occurrence of the kinds of events conceived to be imaginable' in literary texts or in overarching literary 'styles'.<sup>269</sup> From this, White makes only a small conceptual jump to historiography, substituting historical style for literary style – in this case, the style of the nineteenth century.

Conceptually, White distinguishes the chronotope from the period in a number of ways. First, as a fusion of temporal, spatial and socio-cultural markers, the chronotope is characterized by a 'greater degree of specificity and of referential concreteness' than the period.<sup>270</sup> Second, the chronotope is a more real expression of history than a period, because:

whereas the notion of a period directs attention to the interplay of process and change, continuities and discontinuities, that of the chronotope directs attention to social systems of constraints, required repressions, permissible sublimations, strategies of subordination and domination, and tactics of exclusion, suppression, and destruction effected by a local system of social encodings.<sup>271</sup>

A periodization of history necessarily invokes comparison between preceding and succeeding periods in terms of continuity and discontinuity, but the focus of the chronotope is much more complex, concentrating interest on the quasi-palimpsestic latency of what has been 'forgotten, repressed, or simply excluded or marginalized' politically, socially and culturally.<sup>272</sup> Third, the chronotope is more accessible than the period because it incorporates the historical real (documentary records) and experiential (individuals' testimonies). The fusion of these produces a set of "'mental maps" of a given time, place, and cultural condition', and enables history and memory practitioners to determine the 'common code' of lived experience, both

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<sup>267</sup> White, p. 129.

<sup>268</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 27-8.

<sup>269</sup> White, p. 123. Jameson identifies the sea as a container of all naturally unfolding action (akin to the chronotopic motif), and quasi-palimpsestic sedimentation as the dominant structure of the classical modernistic genre (akin to the chronotope). *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>270</sup> White, p. 124.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

latent and manifest, shared by the writers of such testimonies.<sup>273</sup> Fourth, the chronotope conceptualizes ‘regional variations of a cultural epoch’ that mediate between the micro and the macro.<sup>274</sup> The chronotope, therefore, represents a lens through which it is possible to determine the relationship between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, between ‘art, literature, philosophy, science, religion, and law, on the one side; and the social realities, the practices, experiences, and urgencies of everyday life, on the other’.<sup>275</sup> For White, the difference between a periodic and chronotopic reimagining of a historical epoch is tantamount to the distinction between ‘a grammatical and logical “analysis” of a text, on the one hand, ‘and a rhetorical and figurative “reading” of it’ on the other.<sup>276</sup> ‘Reading’ a historical epoch as a chronotope initiates a more contextual process, which is able to go into more depth than the period and which takes into account the ‘psychological, social, moral and aesthetic, political, economic, and epistemological *ambivalences* of an age’.<sup>277</sup> Whereas a periodic approach attempts to resolve the mysteries that characterize linear history, a chronotopic approach tries instead to comprehend them, forging a connection between the ambivalences as they were enacted in history, and as they are relived in the present reinvention of that history.<sup>278</sup>

### **2.2.2 The Chronotope as Museum ‘Time-Space’**

Applying chronotopy to museology, this thesis uses the chronotope as a methodological tool for investigating how history, memory and counter-memory relating to the 1950s are represented in the case-study museums and exhibitions. In so doing, it refutes Walklate’s claim that the chronotope offers ‘limited value’ with regard to scholarly reflection on museum temporalities.<sup>279</sup> Whilst it acknowledges the dangers of imposing rigid generic interpretations on certain museums and exhibitions, it maintains that the chronotope is nonetheless a very useful broad framing device and can be employed effectively to draw out the similarities and differences between representational strategies and the impact that these have on the construction of memories and counter-memories. Indeed, that the concept of the chronotope has been underused in such studies appears to be an oversight in critical discourse, for it possesses two significant advantages over other theoretical approaches. First, the chronotope

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<sup>273</sup> White, p. 124.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., p. 127-28.

<sup>279</sup> Walklate, p. 33.

enables time and space to be reconceived as a single unit, whereby ‘both dimensions are treated as symmetrical and absolutely interdependent’.<sup>280</sup> As an amalgamation of time and space, the chronotope conceptualizes the two forces equally as they are experienced in everyday life, thereby providing a means of determining meaning-making in museums based on the intrinsically interconnected forces of temporality, spatiality and materiality. This is something that appears to have been under-theorized in most museum studies to date and merits further critical attention within the framework of the New Museology, as institutions seek to further their understanding of museum learning, interpretation and hermeneutics.<sup>281</sup> Second, chronotopy is useful in that it concentrates attention on the relationship between the real life chronotope in which the museums and exhibitions are constructed and located, and the chronotope(s) produced at those sites. It does this by conceptualizing the relationship between the real and represented chronotopes as one of reflection: ‘out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the sources of representation) emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the work.’<sup>282</sup> This is central to all museum studies, because the issue of representation is explicitly connected, and in many ways determined by, the wider geographical, political, cultural and social environments in which museums are situated. With regard to the musealization of the 1950s, this is also important in determining the relationship between the 1950s as a historical actuality and the 1950s as they are represented in the case-study sites.

Building on and expanding the work of Gielen on museum multi-chronotopicity, this thesis explores representations of the 1950s in relation to five different chronotopes, each with very different spatio-temporal markers, which represent different museum visions of the 1950s. In this analysis, the 1950s are being reimagined chronotopically in the case-study museums and exhibitions, and this reimagining is itself multi-chronotopic. On a semantic level, each chapter also identifies chronotopic motifs, which are recurring features common to the museums and exhibitions within each chronotopic category. Together, the chronotopes and chronotopic motifs relate to different representations of history, memory and counter-memory, and promote different ways of remembering. This represents a shift in emphasis in relation to Gielen’s study, for the focus of this thesis is not to explore individual museums and exhibitions

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<sup>280</sup> Gielen, p. 152.

<sup>281</sup> The New Museology can be broadly explained as a way of defining the transformation from museums as exclusive, divisive and elitist institutions, to museums as self-reflexive, inclusive community spaces, committed to furthering pedagogical aims and societal development.

<sup>282</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 253.



as multi-chronotopic places. Rather, it seeks to map the multi-chronotopicity of the 1950s and the way this affects different forms of remembering and relates to specific representations of history, memory and counter-memory.<sup>283</sup>

Like the museums of Foucault's heterotopias of time, there is a sense that the 1950s have fallen outside the realms of linear time, because of the way in which they were overlooked in historiography and have been subsequently reappropriated and reinvented through contemporary culture.<sup>284</sup> As Mary Caputi remarks in relation to the significance of the 1950s in the US, this process of rediscovery has been so widespread that 'by now, "the 1950s" no longer refers to a mere ten-year interval whose significance can be captured in historical narrative, for its impact reaches beyond chronology'.<sup>285</sup> Becoming a 'highly charged and emotionally laden' trope, the 1950s are changing in both scope and meaning in a manner similar to that described by White in relation to the nineteenth century.<sup>286</sup> Subject to active chronotopic reimagining in France and Germany, the 1950s are being transformed from a historical period into a chronotope and this is identifiable in three particular facets of their current musealization. First, the case-study museums and exhibitions dedicated to the culture, technology, fashion and everyday life of the 1950s constitute a very specific, concrete form of reimagining, based almost exclusively on conceptions of the everyday, thereby repositioning the micro within the macro. Second, the museum representation of the 1950s is made up of, and draws on, the historical real and documentary, on the one hand, and the experiential and testimonial on the other. In this way it encompasses the realms of both history and memory/counter-memory. Third, the reimagining of the 1950s is driven by a more bottom-up approach to history and maintained through private and public memory projects, which attempt to rework the forgotten or marginalized experiences of smaller localities and 'normal' people into French and German cultural memory. The 1950s represented and remembered in such museums and exhibitions are characterized by a degree of latency, requiring historical re-evaluation precisely because they have been overlooked or misrepresented in historiography. This has led to a distortion of history and memory similar to that of Paul Connerton's third type of forgetting — forgetting constitutive in the formation of a new identity — whereby certain histories and memories of

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<sup>283</sup> Gielen, p. 158.

<sup>284</sup> Richard Vinen, 'Where did you leave them? Historians and "losing the 1950s"', in *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. by Heiko Feldner, Claire Gorrara and Kevin Passmore (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), pp. 10-27 (p. 16); Mary Caputi, *A Kinder, Gentler America: Melancholia and the Mythical 1950s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 1.

<sup>285</sup> Caputi, p. 1.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

the 1950s were discarded because they served no historical or political purpose (particularly in relation to national identity).<sup>287</sup> In this way, the recent revaluing of the 1950s can be seen, in a Freudian sense, as a belated attribution of meaning to that era.<sup>288</sup> This has been made possible because of the memory boom and the democratization of memory and constitutes an attempt to reclaim the 1950s everyday by means of specific museum configurations.

Such a chronotopic reading of the 1950s not only effectively takes stock of the changes underway in the French and German museum spheres but has the additional advantage that it moves away from the reductive lens of continuity and change between preceding and succeeding historical eras that is encouraged with a periodical approach to history. In this way, this project seeks to contribute to a framework in which the 1950s can finally be understood and historicized as part of a longer-term view of social, political, economic and cultural change in twentieth-century Europe, rather than in contradistinction to the Second World War or the 1960s. Sustaining what White refers to as a more ‘genealogical’ reappraisal of the past, this approach traces a lineage from the present back to the 1950s.<sup>289</sup> As the 1950s are not yet seen as a closed past, this reinvestigation is more nuanced than traditional historical analysis, and prioritizes the process (of reading the past) over any fixed outcome. The chronotopic reinvention of the 1950s ultimately marks a difference in how, and the attitudes with which, we approach the 1950s. The case-study museums and exhibitions are in one way or another all characteristic of new attitudes towards the 1950s, whether it be a willingness to identify new common themes, reconceived ideas of the geographical areas that merit further attention, new interpretations of America and Americanization, or renewed reflection on stability and change.<sup>290</sup> These are partly a result of the passing of time and generational change, but speak, above all, of a new relationship to history and historiography in France and Germany. As we shall see in the following chapters, the forms of representation and modes of remembering encouraged at the sites are not necessarily about challenging historical narratives and orthodoxies of the 1950s, but about calling into question the practices, tendencies and ‘broader assumptions’ upon which these are founded.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Paul Connerton, ‘Seven Types of Forgetting’, *Memory Studies*, 1 (2008), 59-71 (p. 63).

<sup>288</sup> Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (belatedness or afterwardsness) discussed in a number of his works from the 1890s refers to the ‘belated understanding or retroactive attribution of sexual and traumatic meaning to earlier events’. Teresa De Lauretis, *Freud’s Drive: Psychoanalysis, Literature and Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 118.

<sup>289</sup> White, p. 127.

<sup>290</sup> Vinen, pp. 22-24.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.

### 3. Biographical Time

Biography is a form of life writing and can be understood as a mode of narration in which the life history of a particular person or group of people is laid out. Encompassing a range of related categories, such as autobiography and memoir, the biography has also evolved as a kind of umbrella term for a wide variety of ethnographic practices, in which the experiences, histories and memories of different subjects are recorded. At their most basic level, biography and autobiography are seen to differ in terms of the actual agents responsible for the narration: biographies typically formed through interpretation by scholars external to the subject and autobiographies constructed through memory work by the subjects themselves. Because of this, autobiography is also typically posited as a more subjective but potentially less revealing mode of narration. Although it can draw on more privately felt, internalized personal experiences, it is ultimately restricted to the realm of living people.<sup>292</sup> Memoirs represent a distinct third category, as they are also created by the actual subjects but typically thematize the role of other people and events shared with other people. Due to the nature of their episodic structure, memoirs are often seen to recount more sensationalist life histories than autobiographies.

Although biographical narratives are most commonly articulated in relation to people, life histories are by no means restricted to animate objects and can also have as their subject places, entire categories of object and specific artefacts. In line with this wider view of biography, there exists a growing body of practices adopting an increasingly fluid approach to narration and existing at the interface between biography and autobiography. By recognizing areas of overlap, hybrid concepts may offer more conceptual flexibility than the traditional categories of biography and autobiography, with terms such as ‘auto/biography’ highlighting the interconnectedness of ‘self and other(s) in a context in which a dialectic of relationality is both acknowledged and problematized’.<sup>293</sup> Auto/biography appears as a form of testimony in which notions of self and other can be mutually inclusive, and where private, personal memories and experiences can be expressed alongside, and in relation to, wider historical narratives. It is in engaging different sources of knowledge and ‘[piecing] together distinctive combinations, that is, individual subjectivities’ from both hegemonic and nonhegemonic discourses that auto/biographies have the capacity to produce more differentiated explorations

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<sup>292</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 6.

<sup>293</sup> Jeanne Perreault and Marlene Kadar, ‘Introduction: Tracing the Autobiographical: Unlikely Documents, Unexpected Places’, in *Tracing the Autobiographical*, ed. by Marlene Kadar and others (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), pp. 1-7 (p. 3).

of memory and identity.<sup>294</sup> By exploring these Foucauldian ‘subjugated knowledges’ (of ‘normal’ people, smaller localities and everyday objects) in relation to dominant, officially sanctioned histories and memories, auto/biographies can reference ‘new ways of knowing’ the past and can be seen as a form of counter-memory.<sup>295</sup> By drawing on both biographical and autobiographical sources, auto/biographies need not necessarily work against dominant historical narratives, but can simply use personal reflection as a way of reframing these from a different perspective.

With these implications in mind, this chapter explores modes of auto/biographical narration of the 1950s and their relation to history, memory and counter-memory at two case-study sites: the Musée Tusseau “les années 50” in Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes (Loire-Atlantique, France), and the temporary exhibition ‘Mode für Jedefrau und Jedermann... “Sich-Kleiden” in der Zeit des Aufbaus und des Wirtschaftswunders’, which was displayed at the Kreismuseum Peine (Lower Saxony, Germany) from 29 June to 19 October 2003, a small part of which is still shown as part of the museum’s permanent 1950s exhibition.<sup>296</sup> This chapter is based on the premise that these sites can be understood as auto/biographical because the strategies of representation and modes of remembering at work fuse traditionally biographical and autobiographical approaches, and arise from the interplay between more hegemonic narratives and counter-memories. Reading the sites through a chronotope of biographical time, it demonstrates how auto/biographical narratives are used to refocus existing nation-centred histories through the lens of the more personal and local. The modes of representation and remembering employed at the sites remain consistent with an overarching narrative of the 1950s as a golden age enshrined in the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder* (see chapter one), but this is particularized through the biographies of certain individuals and groups of people, geographical localities and specific material objects.

The Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition constitute interesting comparative representations of history and memory: whilst both sites are devoted exclusively to everyday life of the 1950s, both necessarily implicate a longer time-span than that which is immediately perceived. By framing the sites through a chronotope of biographical time, exhibition content takes on meaning to encompass the entire biographies of the curators, donors and objects

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<sup>294</sup> Susan Hekman, ‘Subjects and Agents: The Question for Feminism’, in *Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice*, ed. by Judith Kegan Gardiner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 194-207 (p. 203).

<sup>295</sup> Perreault and Kadar, p. 2.

<sup>296</sup> For simplicity, the case studies are henceforth referred to as the Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition.

concerned, meaning the significance of the 1950s is extended chronotopically beyond the parameters of the decade and historical period. This chronotopic reimagining of the 1950s occurs at the intersection of two formats of memory, where personal, communicative memory is ingrained as longer lasting, public cultural memory. They stimulate a highly nostalgic form of remembering the 1950s, based on a materialized memory schema promoted by memory icons, such as photographs, items of clothing and furniture. As highly personal explorations of the post-war everyday conceived by curators who were either born or grew up during the 1950s, the sites moreover testify to a reinvestment in the 1950s in France and western Germany driven by experiential generations. The chapter thus posits this counter-memorial reinvestment as a kind of therapeutic public processing of the past in order to gain the recognition and legitimization of such grassroots memories of the 1950s in French and German cultural memory.

### **3.1 The Chronotope of Biographical Time and the Motif of Transition**

The biographical time chronotope foregrounds highly personalized approaches to historical representation and is used to explore the spatio-temporal characteristics of the Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition, as well as the strategies they use to narrate auto/biographies of the 1950s. The term is a Bakhtinian neologism and is conceptualized in order to determine the chronotopic characteristics of ancient autobiography and biography. Bakhtin concentrates his study on Greek, Hellenistic and Roman literary forms, and identifies the chronotope as a sort of generic thread linking the different auto/biographical types in which ‘a human image [is] constructed to new specifications, that of an individual who passes through the course of a whole life’.<sup>297</sup> Bakhtin maps modifications to the form of the chronotope according to a chronology of ancient auto/biography, but the central principle of biographical time — that the private is intrinsically public, because of how the work is conveyed — never changes. Auto/biographical narration, whether in literature or museums, can be understood as a means of publicly externalizing a testimony or account of oneself or that of another individual.

In the Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition, biographical time provides a framework for representing what Bakhtin calls the ‘life course’ of particular people or objects.<sup>298</sup> The

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<sup>297</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics’, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258 (p. 130).

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

exhibition content of the Musée Tousseau and its spatial arrangement constitute a reflection of the life path of the curators, whereas the Peine exhibition centres on the lives of ten local women (and their spouses), including an almost complete exhibition of their wardrobes, as well as the life and work of local seamstresses and milliners, such as Elfriede Stolte and Christa Lehnert. The chronotope is organized around the ‘basic and typical aspects of any life course: birth, childhood, school years, marriage, the fate that life brings, works and deeds, death, and so forth’, and because these details pertain to the lives of real, historical people, ‘biographical time is quite realistic’, echoing the real-life chronotope of the individuals concerned.<sup>299</sup> Although this ‘life course’ constitutes an all-encompassing auto/biographical whole, it is comprised of distinct stages, and is conceived as ‘broken down into precise and well-marked epochs or steps’.<sup>300</sup> Such fragments of auto/biography have particular narrative value, and include significant personal experiences, events and rites of passage. In highlighting these moments of change, it is possible to conceive auto/biography, as Carolyn Barros does, as a kind of “‘before” and “after” [narrative] of individuals who have undergone transformations of some kind’.<sup>301</sup> Because these transformations have particular meaning and constitute ‘a significant mutation in the characteristic qualities and societal relationships of the principal persona’, they extend beyond the usual realm of metaphor and take on the role of a chronotopic motif.<sup>302</sup> In other words, they function as a condensed instantiation of biographical time.

In the Musée Tousseau, biographical time figures as a nostalgic practice of mapping personal growth and development, moving ‘from youth through maturity to old age’, to use Bakhtin’s words.<sup>303</sup> It is comprised of the three distinct stages of childhood, adolescence and adulthood, and develops from the chronological springboard of the curators’ birth year of 1943, which is mentioned in the museum’s first wall text and on the front page of the museum’s advertising leaflet. The three stages are conveyed through the attachment of particular personal memories and narratives in the form of wall texts to specific exhibits and objects on display, thereby creating a link between the textual and the visual. Joël and Annick Tousseau’s childhoods are conveyed predominantly in the form of anecdotal information related in

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<sup>299</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 17. This section is taken from Bakhtin’s analysis of Goethe’s literary visualization of time.

<sup>300</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 130.

<sup>301</sup> Carolyn A. Barros, *Autobiography: Narrative of Transformation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>303</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 11.

discussion with visitors and displayed in wall texts.<sup>304</sup> These include temporally specific, detailed narratives such as ‘Les soirs d’été, Annick vers l’âge de 10 ans, allait avec son oncle LOUIS [*sic*] conduire la jument “SIRÈNE” [*sic*] dans le pré, elle était installée à califourchon’, and more general, contextual narratives such as ‘Joël, même très jeune aimait aller faire le bois, avec son père, dans les champs des “Landes” ou des “Marières”’.<sup>305</sup> These texts are positioned in relation to the cowshed and stable exhibit and the woodworking tools respectively. As an extension of the main exhibition, the curators manage a second museum in the village, a former girls’ school, which they acquired in 2004 and restored in 2008, because it reminded them of their own school memories of the 1950s. Complete with 1950s school desks, cupboards, educational posters, books, writing equipment, a chalk board and school photos of pupils in Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes and the surrounding area, the school house constitutes a reimagining of the curators’ childhood school days.

Following on from childhood, the chronotope enables the representation of adolescence, which is reconfigured through three specific narratives and rites of passage attached to particular exhibits and material objects. First, Joël Tusseau’s experience as an apprentice mason is materialized through the exhibition of craft tools and the Solex (VéloSoleX) moped that he used to get to work. Second, Annick Tusseau’s memory of going to a village dance in 1955 is incorporated as part of a wall text pertaining to the display of a washstand-cum-dressing table, because it represents a particular occasion where she wore her mother’s make-up. The narrative of going to dances holds particular value, because the couple met at a Sunday afternoon dance. As such, it represents one of the most significant transformations from adolescence to adulthood that constitutes a chronotopic motif of transition. This motif is constructed in the museum in the form of wall texts and objects, and is also reproduced in secondary literature pertaining to the museum, such as in two interviews with regional French daily newspaper *Ouest-France* in 2011 and 2012, where the curators discuss the significance of going to dances.<sup>306</sup> Finally, the narrative of learning to drive is

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<sup>304</sup> Annick and Joël Tusseau adopt a very personal approach and are keen to share their memories and experiences with visitors as they walk around the site. Most, if not all visits to the museum are, therefore, guided to some extent (although not as prescriptive as formalized guided tours).

<sup>305</sup> In order to preserve the integrity of the case studies, all original formattings and spellings have been retained. The term *sic* is henceforth used throughout to highlight any instances of unusual or incorrect orthography or grammar that have been reproduced from wall texts, labels and other sources.

<sup>306</sup> Claire Dubois, ‘Le musée qui fait revivre les années 1950’, *Ouest-France*, 25 April 2011 <<http://www.ouest-france.fr/le-musee-qui-fait-revivre-les-annees-1950-184430>> [accessed 28 November 2013]; Élisabeth Mafart, ‘Annick et Joël: un mariage simple et convivial’, *Ouest-France*, 8 June 2012 <<http://www.ouest-france.fr/annick-et-joel-un-mariage-simple-et-convivial-1325085>> [accessed 28 November 2013].

included as part of a wall text in the garage exhibit. This pertains not only to a personal memory of the curators acquiring their driving licences in 1961, but also relates to the wider cultural context of the 1950s, as ‘a [*sic*] cette époque-là c’était le début ou [*sic*] les jeunes passaient leur permis dès l’âge autorisé.’ The curators taking their driving tests as soon as they reached the minimum legal age is thus narrated as something simultaneously atypical and typical in relation to the French national context, as it was unusual to do so prior to the 1950s, but common as of the 1950s. The narrative of learning to drive and the garage exhibit feed into the motif of transition, as the same wall text relates that the curators got their first car (a Citroën 3CV, commonly known as the ‘Ami 6’) upon marriage in 1964. Such exhibits testify to a transition from adolescence to adulthood that is enacted through courtship and marriage, which reaches its culmination in the curators’ principal wedding photograph and other souvenirs from the wedding day.

In the Peine exhibition, specific auto/biographical moments contribute to a chronotope of biographical time, in which a non-particularized life course is represented. The distinct moments are made up of personal experiences and rites of passage, such as attending school, confirmations, marriages and christenings, but unlike in the Musée Tousseau where such events form an auto/biographical unity, they constitute only fragments of auto/biographies in the Peine exhibition. This is because the ten principal donors of clothing to the museum are for the most part anonymized, which prevents establishing narrative connections between particular items of clothing. The donor of the confirmation dress from Peine-Essinghausen may, therefore, be the same person as the donor of the engagement dress, also from Peine-Essinghausen — with the narrative implication that the girl pictured in the confirmation dress went on to get engaged — but because the donors remain anonymous, these narratives cannot be easily connected, nor the auto/biography extended.<sup>307</sup> The chronotope of the Peine exhibition seems, therefore, to represent a framework for narrating the social history of 1950s clothing and the cultural biographies of specific garments (see chapter two), just as much as the biographies of their donors and manufacturers. Whereas cultural biographies are concerned with the way in which individual items of clothing accumulate their own biographies through stages of appropriation and singularization, social histories necessarily imply a much broader perspective, taking into

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<sup>307</sup> Dörte Becker, ‘Katalog’, in *Mode der 50er Jahre für Jedefrau und Jedermann*, ed. by Landkreis Peine (Braunschweig: Appelhaus, 2003), pp. 36-263 (pp. 142-43 and 148-49).



account the longer-term shifts and larger-scale dynamics of 1950s fashion.<sup>308</sup> Due to the highly personal nature of clothing and the way in which it is shaped and embodied by specific individuals, both the cultural biography and social history approaches remain intrinsically connected to the biographies of people.

Transition is identifiable as a chronotopic motif that feeds into biographical time, in which various stages of transition correspond to particular events in the development of 1950s fashion. A chronological timeline maps the different clothing lines and cuts developed in the 1950s, for instance, starting with Dior's 'wasp waist' New Look and Fath's pencil line in 1947, and finishing with Yves Saint Laurent's Op-Art fashion and Chloé's prêt-à-porter fashion in 1963.<sup>309</sup> Another chronological timeline highlights the significant developments in specifically West German fashion, starting with the wartime fashion legacy of 'Aus Alt mach' Neu!', which is attributed to 1947, and finishing with Uli Richter's ponchos in 1963.<sup>310</sup> Such points of transition represent critical stages or turning points in the social history of 1950s clothing and fashion. The motif also functions for the individual items of clothing in the exhibition, where specific points of transition appear as various instances of the garment's cultural biographical appropriation and singularization, from its manufacture, purchase and use to its eventual absorption into the Kreismuseum's collection. The salmon-coloured cocktail dress from Peine-Stederdorf, for instance, is marked by four specific points of transition: its initial manufacture by seamstress Frau Tschirner and first use by the donor in 1952, its use as an outfit to the donor's cousin's wedding in 1959, its last use in 1961, and finally its incorporation into the collection of the Kreismuseum.<sup>311</sup> Such an inclusion of a garment as part of a museum collection constitutes the ultimate singularization, because the passage of time has rendered the artefact 'sacred' enough to be completely removed from the normal object ageing process.<sup>312</sup> This is especially pertinent for items of clothing because they tend to be discarded quicker than other types of objects such as furniture. The unusually well-documented provenance of the clothing in the exhibition means that these stages are clear for almost every garment. It is through these stages, including their final singularization as a museum artefact and their

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<sup>308</sup> Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3-63 (p. 34).

<sup>309</sup> Dörte Becker, 'Einführung', in *Mode der 50er Jahre für Jedefrau und Jedermann*, pp. 8-13 (pp. 10-11).

<sup>310</sup> Dörte Becker, "'Sich-Kleiden" in der Zeit des Aufbaus und des Wirtschaftswunders: Die Mode der 50er Jahre in Deutschland', in *Mode der 50er Jahre für Jedefrau und Jedermann*, pp. 14-22 (pp. 18-19).

<sup>311</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', pp. 166-67.

<sup>312</sup> Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in *The Social Life of Things*, pp. 64-91 (p. 80).

absorption into the narrative of the donor and manufacturer that the garment acquires its own cultural biographical narrative and becomes imbued with meaning.

### 3.2 Place Biographies

The concept of place takes on particular significance within biographical time, as the auto/biographical narratives constructed in the museums are intrinsically connected to specific localities. As Bakhtin highlights in his discussion of the biographical novel, ‘each event is localized in the whole of [the] life process’, to the extent that ‘secondary characters, countries, cities, things, and so on enter [...] in significant ways’.<sup>313</sup> Rather than simply providing a backdrop for the unfolding of biographical time, notions of place actively shape the auto/biographical events represented and along with occupation and kinship ‘acquire a life-determining essence’ with regard to the plot.<sup>314</sup> The importance of place within auto/biographical narratives means that ‘it becomes possible to reflect reality in a more profoundly realistic way’, enabling the represented chronotope of biographical time to follow the real-life chronotope more closely.<sup>315</sup>

For the Musée Tusseau, the village of Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes is particularly significant not only because of the curators’ own auto/biographies, but also with regard to the museum’s origins. In 1997, the curators hosted the first gathering of communes named Saint Sulpice in France through the creation of the ‘Association “St Sulpice au rendez-vous”’: a cultural organization, of which Annick Tusseau was president until 2007, which unites the forty-seven towns and villages in France bearing the name Saint Sulpice, and which meets on an annual basis in one of the chosen communes. In 2001, the association helped the curators to organize a ‘Fête au bourg des années 50’ in their own village of Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes, which took place during the weekend of 30 June to 1 July. The curators undertook research about which kind of businesses existed in the village in the 1950s and opened the festival with the unveiling of several 1950s room exhibits and the village shop. Complete with funfair games, horse drawn carriage rides and street performances, the festival constituted a reimagining of French rural community gatherings and everyday life in the 1950s, relating particularly to Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes through events such as the photography exhibition of

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<sup>313</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 18.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

twentieth-century scenes of the local area.<sup>316</sup> Due to the large number of visitors to the festival (the curators estimate between three and four thousand people), the curators decided to continue with the concept of a 1950s museum in the village, which was officially inaugurated in September 2009 on the occasion of the ‘Journées européennes du patrimoine’.<sup>317</sup> That this event in particular was selected is significant, because it can be seen as an attempt to tie the museum and the locality into a much wider national and international heritage discourse. In so doing, Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes of the 1950s is not only articulated within a framework of commonly shared European heritage, but also effectively becomes part of France’s state-sanctioned, self-congratulatory Republican national identity, based on ‘concrete representations’ of French *patrimoine*.<sup>318</sup> According to Nora, the ‘mémoire-patrimoine’ that has underpinned French national identity for the last few decades has transformed *patrimoine* into a more localized heritage of common possessions and, in so doing, has bolstered attachment and feelings of belonging to the nation.<sup>319</sup> In other words, it is through archiving more popular heritages, such as everyday experiences of the 1950s, that people are, paradoxically, able to reinvest in nationhood. Understood in this way, the creation of a distinct place auto/biography for Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes of the 1950s is not simply about rediscovering local heritage and distinctiveness, but, rather, about using the locality as a way reframing the national past and French national identity through a process of counter-memory.

This relation between the local and the national can be seen in the way that the Musée Tusseau has become more anchored in the cultural memory of the locality since its inception in 2001. The museum has continued to reflect a French rural way of life in the 1950s with exhibits such as the Café de la Barre David (Saint-Sulpice-Barre-David being the old name for Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes) and the display of farm machinery, but the objects on display also pertain to an extended narrative of the history of the village and the surrounding area. Photographs depicting well-known scenes of the village in the main museum building, such as the Moulin de la Barre (taken in 1909) and the replica of the Lourdes grotto (taken in 1955), as well as a series of 1950s whole school photographs (of schools in Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes and the nearby village of Vritz where Joël Tusseau attended school) serve to position exhibition

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<sup>316</sup> “‘Fête au bourg des années 50’ à Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes (Loire-Inférieure!)’ [festival programme].

<sup>317</sup> Annick and Joël Tusseau revealed this in conversation (August 2012).

<sup>318</sup> Faith Evelyn Beasley, *Salons, History and the Creation of 17th-Century France: Mastering Memory* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 7.

<sup>319</sup> See Pierre Nora, ‘La Nation-mémoire’, in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), II, pp. 2207-16; Pierre Nora, ‘Introduction’, trans. by Richard C. Holbrook in *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 4 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), IV, pp. vii-xiv.

content within a wider history of the locality and the surrounding area. In addition, there are instances of very careful attention to detail, where the curators have actively sought to draw out some of the specificities of the locality. In the cowshed and stable exhibit, for instance, a wooden cut-out of a cow and calf has been painted according to the specific colours of the local Rouge des prés (formerly Maine-Anjou) beef and dairy cattle and is accompanied by a wall text stating that the breed celebrated its centenary in 2008 at the Paris International Agricultural Show. Objects such as these serve to acknowledge the role of place (and specifically home) in the construction of the curators' auto/biographies and reflect a civic pride in features of the local area. They also speak of a desire to find recognition of the local within regional, national and international contexts, as the Rouge des prés common around Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes is very much concentrated and celebrated within the Pays de la Loire region, and also enjoys national and international prestige as a quality dual-purpose breed.

In the Peine exhibition, the Peine Landkreis and Kreisstadt are central geographical and cultural reference points for the unfolding of auto/biographical narratives, as the collection belongs to the Kreismuseum.<sup>320</sup> The museum (as it currently exists) was founded in 1988 as a museum of regional and industrial history, and is dedicated to the *Alltagskultur* of the Landkreis.<sup>321</sup> As such, the collection pertains to the history of a very specific geographical part of Lower Saxony, at the heart of which is Peine's population. The museum's extensive clothing collection began with a donation of an almost entire lifetime of clothes by a local teacher 'die in einem großen Bauernhof mit viel Platz im Landkreis Peine eingeheiratet hatte und alle, aber wirklich auch alle ihre Kleider seit der Konfirmation auf das sorgsamste verwahrt hatte – eine Dokumentation ihres Lebens in Kleidern!'<sup>322</sup> The exhibition displays a number of these items of clothing, along with others that have been donated by other local individuals, thereby contributing to an overall narrative of the 'spezifische Modeverhalten in den 50er Jahren in einer kleinen, agrarisch geprägten Industriestadt.'<sup>323</sup> The exhibition does not lay claim to a particular 'Peiner Mode', but aims, rather, to narrate what everyday, working people typically wore in Peine, as well as the Peine people's relationship to clothing in the 1950s.<sup>324</sup> Through

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<sup>320</sup> The Landkreis Peine is a rural administrative district comprising of eight municipalities with a total population of around one hundred and thirty thousand people. The Landkreis has its seat in the Kreisstadt Peine, a town of around forty-eight thousand people, in which the museum is situated.

<sup>321</sup> The museum has its foundations in the Peine Heimatmuseum, however, which was formed in 1911.

Kreismuseum Peine, 'Geschichte', *Kreismuseum Peine: Museum für Alltagskultur* <<http://kreismuseum-peine.de/geschichte.php>> [accessed 12 December 2013].

<sup>322</sup> Ulrika Evers, 'Vorwort', in *Mode der 50er Jahre für Jedefrau und Jedermann*, pp. 4-7 (p. 5).

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

the display of clothing and accessories made by local seamstresses and craftspeople, the exhibition also documents the history of clothing manufacture in Peine in the 1950s: ‘in der Stadt Peine und auch in den kleinen Orten auf dem Lande gab es viele Damen- und Herrenschneiderwerkstätten, die bis 1954/59 die meiste Kleidung herstellten’.<sup>325</sup> This narrative of manufacturing is reiterated in the descriptions of clothing in the exhibition, such as that for the black Christa Lehnert hat, which briefly outlines the history of the Lehnert family hat-making business in Peine’s Breite Straße (1903–2002).<sup>326</sup>

The exhibition focuses on the clothing particularities of the geographically specific area of Peine and the surrounding region. However, far from representing fashion homogeneity, Peine is presented as a microcosm of a wide range of 1950s West German dress habits because of the diverse range of social backgrounds in the Landkreis. According to the catalogue, in the 1950s, ‘die verschiedenen Gesellschaftsgruppen in der Kreis- und Industriestadt Peine und in der umliegenden Region wertschätzten Kleidung recht unterschiedlich’, ranging from wealthy families (often from the steel-making town of Groß Iselde) who bought high quality, on-trend garments in cities such as Hannover and Braunschweig, and sometimes even further afield, to less well-off families who made their own clothes and recycled family garments.<sup>327</sup> This variety of clothing-related experiences in the Peine area in the 1950s is evident in the exhibition of items of clothing such as the Groß Iselde evening dress made by leading German fashion designer Heinz Oestergaard alongside those such as the homemade apron, the same material out of which the donor made her daughter a pair of overalls.<sup>328</sup> Incorporating such contrasting clothing narratives, the exhibition reveals an entire ‘Spektrum der Kultur der 50er Jahre’ through the specific lens of Peine society.<sup>329</sup> Like in the Musée Tousseau, the construction of an auto/biography of the locality also becomes a way of reframing national experience and identity. The emphasis placed on the role of the locality in this form of counter-memory is thus not about going against the grain of the national experience, but repositioning the local within this.

In their construction of specific place biographies, the Musée Tousseau and the Peine exhibition contribute to a sentimental form of remembering, presenting an idealized version of

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<sup>325</sup> Dörte Becker, ‘Mode für Jedefrau und Jedermann: Die Modesammlung des Kreismuseums Peine’, in *Mode der 50er Jahre für Jedefrau und Jedermann*, pp. 23-34 (p. 23).

<sup>326</sup> Becker, ‘Katalog’, p. 205.

<sup>327</sup> Becker, ‘Mode für Jedefrau und Jedermann’, p. 26.

<sup>328</sup> Becker, ‘Katalog’, pp. 186-67 and 66-67.

<sup>329</sup> Evers, ‘Vorwort’, p. 7.

1950s Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes and Peine through specific exhibits and material objects, and their textual narration. The Musée Tusseau's foregrounding of rural, village life creates a sense of time similar to that described by Arnold-de Simine in relation to the folk museum, 'that allegedly allowed for a simpler yet more fulfilled life, embedded in a community and in touch with nature.'<sup>330</sup> The Peine exhibition's narration of clothing manufacture in the local area and its display of fashionable items of clothing testify equally to a reimagining of the 1950s as 'den Jahren der Vollbeschäftigung und des Wirtschaftswunders', when 'fleißige Arbeiter waren gesucht und verdienten gut' and the Peine area boomed as a consequence.<sup>331</sup> Whilst these feed into different national discourses — the Musée Tusseau expressing a wistful French national desire for the simplicity of rural life, and the Peine exhibition invoking the West German myth of the economic miracle — both are ultimately consistent with a retrospectively imposed historical narrative of the 1950s as a golden age.<sup>332</sup> In sustaining this image of the 1950s in the auto/biographical histories of Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes and Peine, the sites encourage stronger attachment to those localities through a nostalgic yearning for the imagined places of the 1950s.

### 3.3 Nostalgia and Reminiscence

Nostalgia can be directed towards numerous phenomena and take on many forms, but one of the most significant ways in which it emerges is as 'a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood'.<sup>333</sup> For Boym, whilst this often appears as a sentimentalized longing for a past or imaginary home, it is ultimately a question of temporality and the unwillingness to accept and 'surrender to the irreversibility of time'.<sup>334</sup> In the Musée Tusseau and Peine exhibition, nostalgia for the 1950s as childhood is a key facet of auto/biographical narration, because it represents a mode of remembering individual and family narratives, and is inherently chronotopic in the way it encourages the past time of childhood to be revisited and re-envisaged as space.<sup>335</sup> In the construction of chronotopic auto/biographies, memory icons, autotopographies (see later in this chapter) and photographs can be seen to contribute to what Boym terms reflective nostalgia, as they constitute, to use Jennifer González's words, 'material

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<sup>330</sup> Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 54.

<sup>331</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', p. 86.

<sup>332</sup> The romanticization and mythification of the French rural past can be seen, for instance, in the growth of published rural memoirs and autobiographies since the 1980s. See Deborah Reed-Danahay, 'Sites of Memory: Women's Autoethnographies from Rural France', *Biography*, 25 (2002), 95-109.

<sup>333</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xv.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*; Arnold-de Simine, p. 56.

representations of longing' for the 1950s.<sup>336</sup> Such objects provide material proof of the auto/biographical narratives of the 1950s that are constructed in the museum spaces, and the act of amassing these objects and incorporating them as part of museum displays provides the basis for nostalgic longing. In both sites, it is, to use Boym's words, a 'defamiliarization and sense of distance' between the 1950s and the present which compels the curators to 'narrate the relationship between past, present and future', and in so doing, acknowledge the changes that have occurred with the passage of time.<sup>337</sup> In the Musée Tusseau, the mechanics of reflective nostalgia are epitomized in a newspaper report on the museum, which employs a distinction between the adjectives 'nostalgique' and 'passéiste':

Nés en 1943, les Tusseau, qui affichent photos de classe comme de famille, ne se lassent pas de raconter leur jeunesse. "C'étaient de belles années: les sorties au bal, les veillées en famille, du travail pour tout le monde. En même temps, nous avions peu d'argent, donc peu de loisirs." Un soupçon nostalgiques, donc, mais pas passéistes. D'ailleurs, le musée n'est pas installé chez eux. Et pour équiper leur maison, ils n'ont choisi que des meubles contemporains.

Whereas 'passéiste' is used as a pejorative term to imply a backward-looking attempt to recreate the 1950s, 'nostalgique' implies a more complex relationship to the past, which, although sentimental, develops in full acknowledgement of the passing of time. In a similar manner, in the Peine exhibition, reflective nostalgia is used as a lens through which the 1950s are refocused in relation to the present. Referring to over fifty items of clothing made by Elfriede Stolte, the director of the Kreismuseum Peine writes in the exhibition catalogue that 'die Kleider, Blusen, Röcke, Kostüme sind von hervorragender Qualität und überaus elegant, so elegant, wie heutzutage sich niemand mehr kleidet'.<sup>338</sup> Items of clothing in the exhibition provide the means of nostalgically re-envisaging the 1950s in relation to everyday dress habits in the present.

It is clear from the comments in the Musée Tusseau's guest book that the museum functions as a site of reflective nostalgia for many visitors with personal memories of the post-war period. The museum's exhibits and objects inspire a nostalgic longing for 'le bon vieux temps' of the 'BELLE EPOQUE' [*sic*] of the 1950s.<sup>339</sup> This prompts visitors to recall their own

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<sup>336</sup> Jennifer A. González, 'Autotopographies', in *Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies*, ed. by Gabriel Brahm Jr. and Mark Driscoll (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), pp. 133-50 (p. 137); Boym, pp. xvii and 49-50. The concept of the autotopography will be defined

<sup>337</sup> Boym, p. 50.

<sup>338</sup> Evers, 'Vorwort', pp. 5-6.

<sup>339</sup> Signed entry in Musée Tusseau Guest Book, 3 July 2011; Patrick Leblanc 'Président '55'56'57 Classic Chevy Club France', Musée Tusseau Guest Book, 2011.

childhoods by remembering ‘les enfants que nous étions’.<sup>340</sup> As an object of nostalgia in its own right, the museum serves as a kind of time machine, encouraging visitors to believe that they are returning to the 1950s through reimagined scenes of private and public life, giving visitors ‘l’impression d’y être encore’.<sup>341</sup> This representation strategy is equated to a chronotopic journey of nostalgia as the act of walking through the space of the museum appears tantamount to moving back through time. Through this process, those visitors with first-hand experience of the 1950s are effectively able to ‘revenir dans le passé’ and regain childhood memories.<sup>342</sup>

Nostalgia is an equally powerful emotion for visitors who have no personal memories of the 1950s, but who have acquired second-hand ‘postmemories’ from older generations and prosthetic memories through retrospective mass cultural representations of the period.<sup>343</sup> The notion of postmemory was originally developed in order to explain the passing down of traumatic narratives from Holocaust survivors to second and third generations, but the concept has been extended to encompass a process of embodying the ‘experiences — and thus also the memories — of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and of inscribing them into one’s own life story’.<sup>344</sup> In this case, postmemories refer to the memories of the 1950s that the children and grandchildren of those who actually lived through the period inherit and acquire through intergenerational communication. The creation of postmemories can actually take place during the museum visit when different generations of the same family visit the site together, such as when twelve and eight-year-old siblings ‘Chloé et Nathan ont découvert le musée Tusseau des années 50 avec leur mamie’ in August 2012 and ‘ils sont allés de surprises en découvertes’ through the transmission of personal memories and experiences of the 1950s from their grandmother.<sup>345</sup> In a similar way, prosthetic memories of the 1950s are those memories created through contact with retrospective representations of the period, often linked to retro, vintage and kitsch-inspired visions of the post-war past, and based on icons of popular culture.<sup>346</sup> As postmemories and prosthetic memories both concern individuals who have no

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<sup>340</sup> Signed entry in Musée Tusseau Guest Book, 24 April 2011.

<sup>341</sup> Danielle et Jean-René ‘La Maison du Meunier’, Musée Tusseau Guest Book, 2010.

<sup>342</sup> Famille Legault, Musée Tusseau Guest Book, 18 July 2011.

<sup>343</sup> Marianne Hirsch, ‘Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory’, *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14 (2001), 5-37.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>345</sup> Ouest France, ‘Les dimanches à la découverte du musée Tusseau – Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes’, *Ouest France*, 7 August 2012 <<http://www.ouest-france.fr/les-dimanches-la-decouverte-du-musee-tusseau-1311424>> [accessed 18 December 2012].

<sup>346</sup> Elizabeth E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 124.



personal experience of the past in question, however, the longing that is awoken in visitors with such memories is not reflective nostalgia, but rather displaced nostalgia. According to Wilson, who has built extensively on Vanderbilt's concept of displaced nostalgia, because of the extent to which the past is 'mythologized and romanticized' through popular culture, 'nostalgia for bygone times does not require having actually experienced those times'.<sup>347</sup> One entry in the Musée Tousseau's guest book explicitly links the phenomenon of nostalgia to a non-experiential engagement with the 1950s past, as a 'retour dans le passé même si on n'a pas tous connu ce temps là ... Nostalgie quand tu nous tient [*sic*].'<sup>348</sup> The specific link between displaced nostalgia and a pervasive retrospective communal vision of the decade is visible in the museum's display of contemporary wedding photographs of local couples with various objects and exhibits in the museum. A photograph of 'Bruno et Sophie' on their wedding day in 2009 in the main museum building, for instance, shows the two stood either side of the curators' Citroën 2CV: an object and *lieu de mémoire*, which has become synonymous with a nostalgic retro reimagining of 1950s France.<sup>349</sup> The 2CV was one of the first affordable, reliable cars for the masses, and because of the popularity of the model during the 1950s and the more relaxed pace of life it afforded, it has taken on a particularly significant role in French cultural memory more as a way of life than as a car. Enabling new leisure pursuits, such as weekend trips, driving holidays and picnics by the side of the road, and becoming the vehicle of preference for many farmers and winegrowers, the 2CV has become associated with a mythicized vision of rural France.<sup>350</sup> Like the Trabi in East Germany (see chapter five), the simplicity of home repairs meant that the 2CV was often passed down through members of a family, representing an intergenerational constant, symbolic not only of French design and engineering, but also of French national identity encoded in everyday experience. Like the *ostalgic* reinvention of the Trabi, the 2CV has become a cult object in more recent years, with numerous classic car clubs and films immortalizing the model, and the 2CV being reappropriated by younger generations and tourists in Paris. The 2CV has now become as 'typically French [...] as camembert and

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<sup>347</sup> Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), pp. 93-99.

<sup>348</sup> Sylvie and Alexis Hervé, Musée Tousseau Guest Book, 2010.

<sup>349</sup> It is significant that Barthes includes a 1950s Citroën car (albeit the DS model) in his *Mythologies*. Playing with the word pun (DS being pronounced as 'Déesse'), he refers to its enchanting power as a kind of magical object, which bears no traces of human manufacture and thus appears as though it has simply fallen from the sky. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), pp. 140-42.

<sup>350</sup> *Le 13 heures*, TF1, 23 August 2010, 1pm.

calvados’, so much so, that it has become an instantly recognizable emblem of 1950s Frenchness.<sup>351</sup>

By prompting sentimental commodifications of the past, the nostalgia evoked by museums has been heavily criticized for creating biased, overly simplified and sanitized representations of history. However, when brought about through reminiscence activities with material objects, nostalgia can be a powerful therapeutic tool for enabling museum visitors with clinical memory disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease to engage with the past. According to Chia-Li Chen, exhibited ‘objects and the physical context of the museum prompt visitors’ memories. They provide opportunities for recollection and stimulate remembering’, and in so doing provide a means of allowing visitors to reclaim their personal memories and identities.<sup>352</sup> In this way, museums relating to the recent past can have a similar social function to the nostalgia villages and rooms, reminiscence pods and memory boxes currently used by hospitals and care homes to develop patient dementia care. Residents of local care homes make up a large proportion of visitors to the Musée Tusseau, which, through its objects and recreated scenes of everyday life in the 1950s, can help to trigger memories. As Annick Tusseau explains: ‘Les résidents des maisons de retraite des alentours visitent souvent [...] l’école mais aussi, le salon de coiffure, l’habitat, le matériel agricole, le magasin... Souvent, ils se souviennent.’<sup>353</sup> By visiting a museum which pertains to a past encoded in long-term memories, such visitors are sometimes able to recreate personal links to the past and relive certain events from their childhoods.<sup>354</sup> In a similar way, the Kreismuseum Peine undertakes reminiscence work with senior citizens in the community through a mobile outreach programme known as ‘Museum aus dem Koffer’, which takes museum objects to care homes. This portable museum invites visitors to engage in memory work with museum professionals by handling various objects, including those from the 1950s. Rediscovering memory objects haptically can prove to be a sensory and memory-rich process for such visitors, potentially providing the means for them

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<sup>351</sup> John Reynolds, *The Citroën 2CV* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>352</sup> Chia-Li Chen, ‘Museums and the Shaping of Cultural Identities: Visitors’ Recollections in Local Museums in Taiwan’, in *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed*, ed. by Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 173-88 (p. 174).

<sup>353</sup> Annick Tusseau, quoted in Christelle Beuget, ‘Nous avons visité l’école des années 50...’, *Ancenis Mauges Mag*, September 2012 <[http://www.ancenis-mauges.fr/Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes-Nous-avons-visite-l-ecole-des-annees-50\\_a1409.html](http://www.ancenis-mauges.fr/Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes-Nous-avons-visite-l-ecole-des-annees-50_a1409.html)> [accessed 11 December 2013].

<sup>354</sup> By long-term memories, I refer to the well-known neurological Atkinson-Shiffrin model often used in the study of dementia, which distinguishes between short-term and long-term stores of memory, and a sensory register. Long-term memories are those which store cognitive information semantically and which can be retained indefinitely by individuals. R.C. Atkinson and R.M. Shiffrin, ‘Human Memory: A Proposed System and its Control Processes’, *Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, 2 (1968), 89-195.

to reconstruct their own autobiographies by establishing narrative connections between the selected museum objects and memory icons from their own pasts.

### 3.4 From the Private to the Public

The narrativization of auto/biographies necessarily implicates, as Bakhtin explains in relation to ancient biography and autobiography, ‘real human beings giving a public account of themselves’ or others.<sup>355</sup> In the Musée Tusseau, the 1950s provide a temporal setting in which the curators narrativize their own private lives within a very specific rural locality. This takes place during informal guided visits and is reiterated within the museum in the form of wall texts and pamphlets: ‘A travers ce musée, cette collection d’objets, c’est l’histoire de deux enfants nés en 1943. Elle retrace la période 1945–1965, à la campagne. C’était leur enfance et leur adolescence.’<sup>356</sup> By using the third person, the curators distance themselves from the narrative, thereby adopting a biographical approach to their own autobiographies. This is similar to the approach taken in the Peine exhibition, where the curators externalize the biographies of other individuals, such as specific donors, as well as items of clothing. As at the Musée Tusseau, there is a blurring of biography and autobiography at the Peine exhibition, as autobiographical excerpts about the donors and their items of clothing are included alongside biographical narratives. The piece entitled ‘Das Rauchblaue’ by Annette Elbe about an annual family shopping trip to Hannover in 1955, and her mother’s subsequent purchase and wearing of the eponymous smoky-blue two-piece suit, is a particularly evocative example of the selective use of autobiography in the exhibition catalogue.<sup>357</sup> Such excerpts are accompanied by longer autobiographical texts which give more general contextual information about clothing and everyday life in the 1950s, such as the piece entitled ‘Meine 50er Jahre’ by Lore Born, author of *Leibchen und Seelchen... Kindheit im 2. Weltkrieg*.<sup>358</sup> In both sites, the textual and material fixing of auto/biographical narratives and the nature of museum display mean that exhibition content is rendered explicitly public. As such, the real life chronotope in which the exhibition is situated becomes as significant as the reflected chronotope of biographical time created in the exhibition, because ‘it is precisely under the conditions of this real-life

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<sup>355</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 131.

<sup>356</sup> This section of one of the museum wall texts is echoed on the front of the museum’s visitor leaflet: ‘Joël et Annick sont nés en 1943 “Les années 50” retracent la période vécue à la campagne, c’était leur enfance puis adolescence’, *En Loire-Atlantique: Au bourg de St-Sulpice-des-Landes*.

<sup>357</sup> Annette Elbe, cited in Becker, ‘Katalog’, pp. 118-19.

<sup>358</sup> Lore Born, cited in Becker, ‘Mode für Jedefrau und Jedermann’, pp. 31-4. Lore Born, *Leibchen und Seelchen... Kindheit im 2. Weltkrieg* (Bonn: Frauenmuseum, 2000).

chronotope, in which one's own or another's life is laid bare (that is, made public), that the limits of a human image and the life it leads are illuminated in all their specificity'.<sup>359</sup> The biographical time chronotope is, therefore, intrinsically connected to the real life chronotope, because it is precisely through the externalization of auto/biographical narratives that they acquire significance and meaning.

The musealization of auto/biographical narratives as part of the biographical time chronotope occurs at a point of transition between private and public memories that can be conceptualized as a shift from communicative memories to cultural memories. Within the biographical time chronotope, the musealization of auto/biographical narratives, as part of museum wall texts, leaflets, exhibition catalogues and guided visits, means that individuals' communicative memories are actually fixed in the Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition as cultural memories and, in so doing, become more formalized ways of referencing the past. The fact that this process is determined by the mechanics of museum representation rather than the passage of time means that there is no 'floating gap', as Jan Assmann argues, necessary in the transition from one framework of memory to the other. As part of the museum fabric, the cultural memories are no longer merely private, familial memories, but relate, rather, to a more public memory of the 1950s. With the crystallization of communicative memories as cultural memories, the two museum spaces function as chronotopic motifs, similar to Bakhtin's motif of the public square or agora that he identifies in Classical Greek autobiography. As such, the Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition function as representational interfaces in which the 'autobiographical and biographical self-consciousness of an individual and his life [are] first laid bare and shaped'.<sup>360</sup> The articulation of all auto/biographical narratives within this framework means that there is no difference in practice between autobiographical and biographical approaches at the two sites, as 'everything here, down to the last detail, is entirely public'.<sup>361</sup> This process of rendering highly personal, localized auto/biographies public can be seen as a means of externalizing histories, memories and counter-memories relating to the 1950s. In the case of the Musée Tusseau, because these stories are constantly revisited and rehearsed to visitors during informal guided tours, the curators are able to gain some form of control and agency over these narratives. This therapeutic form of memory work thus becomes

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<sup>359</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 131.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

a central component of counter-memory and the desire to reclaim historical narratives of the 1950s at a more personal, local level.<sup>362</sup>

### 3.5 Family Biographies

The auto/biographies constructed in the Musée Tusseau and the Peine exhibition unfold within the spatio-temporally limited arena of biographical time. However, as auto/biographies necessarily position the individuals discussed in relation to others, the representation of ‘biographical life is impossible outside a larger epoch, which goes beyond the limits of a single life, whose duration is represented primarily by *generations*’.<sup>363</sup> The auto/biographical narration of individuals’ social lives extends the chronotope both temporally and spatially through a sense of generationality that underlines the ‘contiguity of lives taking place at various times’.<sup>364</sup> In foregrounding aspects of life, such as birth, marriage and death, auto/biographies privilege the social unit of the family, and as Bakhtin highlights in his discussion of Roman autobiographies and memoirs, ‘autobiographies are documents testifying to a family-clan consciousness of self’.<sup>365</sup> According to Bakhtin, in Roman family clan contexts, autobiography would ‘[write] itself’ organically, with the passing down of narratives from one generation to another, and would simply be recorded and preserved in a family archive.<sup>366</sup> In the contemporary museum context, auto/biographies are not simply written, but actively constructed through museum texts and the exhibition of material objects. The museum acts as an archive of family narratives, but the aim is not so much to preserve those narratives (although this is one aspect of the process), as to consciously select and develop those that are most significant and consistent with the overall narrative presented. These are, of course, just as much products of the wider cultural and political interpretation and reappropriation of the 1950s, as they are of the curators’ own memories and personal relationships to the 1950s. By privileging certain narratives over others, the curators are involved in a complex process of differentiation, which sees them single out certain functional memories from a wide reserve of archived storage memory.

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<sup>362</sup> Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 54.

<sup>363</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 18.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>365</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 137.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

In the Musée Tusseau, family biographies are constructed through the exhibition of selected memory icons. As ‘prostheses of the mind’, these objects act as repositories of the family narrative, embodying the personal events and experiences that constitute the curators’ life histories.<sup>367</sup> In the museum, such objects take the form of family heirlooms, which have been passed down to the curators through the generations. At their most basic level, the icons act as triggers of personal auto/biographical narratives connected to family members. The inclusion of the milking stool in the cowshed and stable exhibit, for instance, is directly connected to a specific childhood memory (incorporated into a nearby wall text), when ‘Annick venait à l’étable, pour reciter ses leçons à sa mere au moment de la traite’. Here, the exhibition of the milking stool feeds primarily into the particular auto/biographical narrative of Annick Tusseau’s childhood, relating only to the memory of her mother by association. In a similar manner, the display of the vat as part of the cider press exhibit acts as a trigger for one of Joël Tusseau’s specific childhood memories, when he would sample the must (the pre-fermentation apple juice) when his parents produced cider in the shed next to the family home. As with the milking stool, the exhibition of the cider vat relates back to the specific auto/biographical narrative of Joël Tusseau’s childhood, connected to his parents and the parental home only as part of the narrative setting.

At a more complex level, memory icons exhibited in the Musée Tusseau act as direct embodiments of the associative memory of those family members who once used and owned them (and who have often since passed away). The incorporation of family heirlooms provides a link to past generations, bringing about a sense of the continuity of family identity and its embeddedness within the local narrative. In the exhibit of a bedroom of a young couple in the main museum building, an accordion is on display which belonged to Annick Tusseau’s father, François Juvin, accompanied by the following wall text:

Accordéon de François JUVIN [*sic*]. François a animé un seul bal de noces: Lors du mariage de Hélène DELIMEL [*sic*] et Alexandre SERREAU [*sic*] le 15 novembre 1938. En 1939 François est parti faire son service militaire. La guerre a éclaté il a été fait prisonnier en 1940. Il est rentré en 1941 comme soutien de famille.

The display of the accordion and its narrativization as part of a wall text acts as a memory cue for important details about the life of Annick Tusseau’s father, starting with his initial biographical connection to the accordion and moving on chronologically to his active military

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<sup>367</sup> González, p. 133.

service in the Second World War. Reinforcing the absence and triggering the memory of François Juvin, the accordion becomes a material expression of his identity. The accordion holds further importance with regard to the family narrative, as it relates back to an important event in Annick Tusseau's life: 'L'accordéon de mon père, la première fois que je l'ai vu, c'était le 19 Mai 1954, j'avais 12 ans, le Jour de ma Communion Solonnelle. C'est mon oncle qui avait joué.'<sup>368</sup> The accordion is significant as part of the motif of transition from childhood to adolescence, as the first time Annick Tusseau saw it was on the day of her Solemn Communion: the most significant Catholic coming-of-age event. As a memory icon, the heirloom thus embodies a truly family narrative, forging a connection between Annick Tusseau's auto/biography and those of her father and uncle. Finally, the presence of the accordion in the museum triggers a material memory, part of which is also connected to the wider family auto/biography: 'Mon cousin Robert avait un accordéon, il jouait lors de nos surprises-parties, entre jeunes vers 1958.'<sup>369</sup> By nature of its materiality, the accordion provides a means of accessing the memory of Annick Tusseau's cousin Robert's accordion, thereby widening the family auto/biography to include members of her extended family.

This auto/biography is intrinsically connected to the broader French national narrative, as the accordion simultaneously represents a marker of French national identity *à la parisienne*. Evoking a distinctive style of French *musette* popularized by such singers as Fréhel and Édith Piaf, the accordion has become one of the ultimate symbols of the 'quintessentially Parisian nexus of romance, exoticism, and sophistication'.<sup>370</sup> Although the accordion fell out of favour in the 1960s, its reinvention by contemporary rock bands in the late 1980s and 1990s and subsequent retro reimagining in such films as *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001) has meant that it has once again struck a chord with French people, both as a 'nostalgic gesture' of the French past and political statement of 'working class solidarity'.<sup>371</sup> Being such a distinctive French artefact, the accordion thus also fits into a much wider nation-centred cultural narrative and, like the Citroën 2CV, represents an object of restorative nostalgia as a transhistorical trope of Frenchness. Due to the nature of the auto/biographical narrative attached to the accordion

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<sup>368</sup> Annick and Joël Tusseau, *Nos Souvenirs D'enfance: Annick et Joël* [unpublished dossier of childhood memories connected to museum exhibits, objects and wall texts], p. 25.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>370</sup> Phil Powrie, 'The Fabulous Destiny of the Accordion in French Cinema', in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. by Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 137-51 (p. 137).

<sup>371</sup> Barbara Lebrun, *Protest Music in France: Production, Identity and Audiences* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 55. *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, dir. by Jean-Pierre Jeunet (UGC Fox, 2001).

on display, this Frenchness is, however, implicitly linked to Catholicism. The accordion thus figures as an insignia of national identity rooted in the older, pre-secular French tradition.

In the museum, family biographies are not only enshrined in individual memory icons, but also in entire exhibits of private, domestic spaces. These exhibits constitute reimaginings of the 1950s based on specific familial memories of home interiors, and as such, represent ‘private-yet-material memory landscape[s]’ known as autotopographies.<sup>372</sup> According to González, autotopographies comprise the ‘more intimate expressions of values and beliefs, emotions and desires that are found in the domestic collection and arrangement of objects’ and as such, create a spatial enactment of family identity.<sup>373</sup> In the main museum building, the representation of a 1950s ‘salle commune’ (a kitchen-cum-living room-cum-bedroom) has been modelled extensively on Joël Tusseau’s memory of the Tusseau family ‘salle commune’:

Nous l’avons reconstituée comme chez mes parents. Dans les années 1950-1960. La table au milieu, dans les angles il y avait deux à trois lits, à côté une grande armoire. Au-dessus d’un lit l’horloge l’Œil-de-bœuf. Je le regardais souvent le matin pour être à l’heure à l’école. La grande cheminée où l’ont [sic] faisait la cuisine. Vers 1958-1959 nous avons eu la TSF (poste de radio) nous pouvions écouter de la Musique [sic]. Dans le musée, pour moi, C’est [sic] la pièce qui me rappelle le plus de souvenirs.<sup>374</sup>

If, as González maintains, memory can indeed be understood as a process of situating ‘those rooms, objects, events, and landscapes that we have encountered again and again in pacing through time’, the act of reconstituting the ‘salle commune’ can be seen as an act of memory in its own right.<sup>375</sup> In this particular case, the act of memory pertains to the desire to ‘faithfully’ reconstruct a family room and specific objects within that room (notably the radio) that Joël encountered on a daily basis as a child growing up in the 1950s. The actual reimagined ‘salle commune’ in the museum therefore becomes a visualization and ‘representative reconstruction of personal memory’ relating to the family auto/biography.<sup>376</sup> The radio plays a particularly significant role in the autotopographical construction of the family narrative, as this object is not only a family heirloom, but was also a gift given by Joël Tusseau to his father upon receiving his first wages as an apprentice in 1957.<sup>377</sup> Objects such as this function less as

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<sup>372</sup> González, p. 133.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Annick and Joël Tusseau, *Nos Souvenirs D’enfance: Annick et Joël*, p. 10.

<sup>375</sup> González, p. 135.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>377</sup> Dubois, ‘Le musée qui fait revivre les années 1950’ <<http://www.ouest-france.fr/le-musee-qui-fait-revivre-les-annees-1950-184430>> [accessed 28 November 2013].



triggers than as ‘representative tokens’ of family memory, enabling the curators to work through their auto/biographies by turning the autotopography into a ‘phantasmal space’ where they can spiritually ‘keep company’ with family members.<sup>378</sup>

As the Musée Tusseau is devoted to such a recent period of history as the 1950s, surviving family heirlooms represent a significant proportion of the material on display in the exhibition spaces. As mnemonic retainers, triggers and embodiments of the family biography, heirlooms, together with other autobiographical and culturally significant objects, contribute to a collage or ‘physical map of memory’, in which the entire museum space can be conceived as its own autotopography.<sup>379</sup> By musealizing personal objects and reimagining domestic spaces as museum exhibits, almost all of which have particular auto/biographical significance and meaning, the Musée Tusseau is a means by which the curators are able to represent their auto/biographical identities and embed them within cultural memory.<sup>380</sup> It is in this way that the museum functions as a ‘museum of the self’ in the most literal sense of the phrase.<sup>381</sup> As an autotopography, the museum enables the curators to situate these auto/biographical identities ‘in relation to a larger social network of meaning’ envisaged as the historical representation of the 1950s.<sup>382</sup> The museum representation of auto/biographical narratives is thus not confined exclusively to the private domain of domestic experience, but extends into the wider cultural sphere of the 1950s. Exhibits such as the hair salon contribute predominantly to a personal and familial auto/biography — in this case the set of heated rollers acting as a memory cue for Annick Tusseau’s first experience of having her hair curled professionally for her first communion in 1954 — but also relate to the socio-cultural context of popular 1950s aesthetics and fashion, as well as the national context of French identity connected to Catholicism.<sup>383</sup>

In the Musée Tusseau, the chronotope of biographical time is extended to encompass family biographies through numerous different memory icons and autotopographies. By contrast at the Peine exhibition, the chronotope is extended to encompass family biographies and a sense of generationality through one principal type of object – clothing. Much has been

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<sup>378</sup> González, p. 145.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>380</sup> Annick Tusseau, interviewed in Pulceo.com, ‘St Sulpice des Landes: replongez dans l’atmosphère des années 50’, 8 November 2010 <<http://www.pulceo.com/videos/ancenis/histoire/st-sulpice-des-landes-replongez-dans-atmosphere-des-annees-50>> [accessed 3 December 2013].

<sup>381</sup> González, p. 134.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Annick and Joël Tusseau, *Nos Souvenirs D’enfance: Annick et Joël*, p. 26.

written about clothing and its significance as a category of material object, because of the close relation between the specific garment and the body of the wearer.<sup>384</sup> As an extension of the self, clothing operates as a medium between the wearer's own body and the outside world, through which individuals are perceived and perceive themselves. Expressing forms of cultural adherence and membership, clothing can be seen as culturally coded, linked to the performance of personal and social identities.<sup>385</sup> For this reason, clothing and appearance have been discussed as some of the most important symbolic forms of communication, having the ability to reflect the differences that exist between different social groups in society at a single glance.<sup>386</sup> As a manifestation of taste, clothing has been defined as an act of social distinction.<sup>387</sup> In everyday contexts, however, clothing is often less an expression of personal choice, than the result of different social exchanges that take place between family members and friends. Items of clothing are frequently given as gifts, recycled as 'hand-me-downs' or borrowed from others, and exchanged between friends who share each other's wardrobes.<sup>388</sup> In the process of exchange, the garments become expressions of the social relationships through which the exchanges take place and in turn, take on specific roles in the auto/biographies of individuals and groups of people.

In the Peine exhibition, items of clothing on display act as repositories for family biographies and memories because of specific connections to important family events. Many of the garments were bought, made or worn for family occasions such as weddings and christenings and whilst they then contribute to the individual wearer's auto/biography and constitute points of transition in that auto/biography (as part of the motif of transition), they also relate to the wider life course of the family. Items of clothing in the exhibition, such as wedding dresses and the 'little black dress' commissioned by a mother for her daughter's confirmation in 1954 are direct products of significant family gatherings, and thus constitute

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<sup>384</sup> See, for instance: Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Joanne B. Eicher, Sandra Lee Evenson and Hazel A. Lutz, eds, *The Visible Self: Global Perspectives on Dress, Culture, and Society*, 3rd edn (New York: Fairchild, 2008); Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins, Joanne B. Eicher and Kim K. P. Johnson, eds, *Dress and Identity* (New York: Fairchild, 1995); Marilyn J. Horn, *The Second Skin: An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975); Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

<sup>385</sup> Ruth P. Rubenstein, *Dress Codes: Meanings and Messages in American Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), pp. 9-18.

<sup>386</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 203-04.

<sup>387</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique Social du Jugement* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

<sup>388</sup> Peter Corrigan, 'Interpreted, Circulating, Interpreting: The Three Dimensions of the Clothing Object', in *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects*, ed. by Steven Harold Riggins (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 435-49 (pp. 440-43).

material symbols of the families concerned.<sup>389</sup> The act of actually donating items to the Kreismuseum that belonged to other family members is highly evocative of the strong emotional ties to clothing that exist within families. Many of the pieces making up the Kreismuseum's collection were donated precisely because the relatives did not want to throw anything away 'aufgrund vieler Erinnerungen'.<sup>390</sup> Imbued with the memories of loved ones, the garments were donated to the museum because the individuals saw this as a more faithful act to the memory of the deceased relatives than simply discarding them. In this way, the bequeathing of items of clothing can be seen as an attempt to relegitimize the personal memories and experiences inscribed in these objects and find a place for the auto/biographical narratives concerned within the cultural memory framework of the museum.

Other items of clothing in the exhibition testify to family auto/biographies in the way that they have been recycled and reconstructed anew, or simply passed down through different family members as 'hand-me-downs'. Garments that have undergone alteration figure as palimpsests, because the identities of the originals and those of their wearers are covered over, but still remain visible, as the garments have been, quite literally, refashioned for other family members. The confirmation dress from Peine-Schmedenstedt, for instance, was sewn by seamstress Elfriede Stolte in 1954 out of a long, black dress that belonged to the girl's (the new wearer's) grandmother.<sup>391</sup> Similarly, the pale blue girls' dress from Peine-Essinghausen was made by the donor for her sister's wedding, and was then changed and shortened many years later as a dress for her own daughter.<sup>392</sup> With such items of clothing, the principal characteristics of the fabric are unchanged and the garment, although altered according to the needs of the new wearer and despite the passage of time, provides a material connection to the original wearer. In a similar manner, 'hand-me-downs', such as the children's winter coat from Peine-Vöhrum which was worn by two sisters born six years apart, are inscribed with the material traces of the two wearers through patina.<sup>393</sup> Appropriated by one family member and then by another, and adapted to the forms and styles of each individual, the garment enshrines elements of the family narrative and represents a continuation of family identity.

Much of the clothing incorporated as part of the exhibition has been hand sewn, and the act of making clothes by hand in the 1950s was strongly connected to the family unit, as it was

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<sup>389</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', pp. 146-47.

<sup>390</sup> Evers, 'Vorwort', p. 5.

<sup>391</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', pp. 144-45.

<sup>392</sup> Becker, 'Mode für Jedefrau und Jedermann', pp. 25-51.

<sup>393</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', pp. 248-49.

a skill that was more often than not passed down by family members. The children's bib shorts and blouse set from Peine-Stederdorf, for instance, was made by the donor for her son from one of her old linen jackets. The donor would also use her sewing skills in a more professional context, occasionally helping out her aunt who was a seamstress.<sup>394</sup> 1950s clothing is explicitly linked to family auto/biographies, not just because of the recycling and handing down of specific garments, but because sewing and dressmaking was a skill often acquired and taught in family contexts. Once learnt, the skill was reproduced by the mothers, grandmothers and aunts of families in order to make items of clothing for other members of the family.<sup>395</sup> The handmade clothes in the exhibition testify to a familial exchange and encoding of knowledge, reimagined chronotopically through their musealization as part of specific family auto/biographies. Such garments also speak of a much wider West German (or indeed European) narrative of material shortages in the post-war period, as making clothing by hand was a common way of coping with rationing. The experiences of Peine families can thus also be seen as a snapshot of national and European experience in the 1950s.

As a collection of material testimonies of individuals and families, the Peine exhibition conveys important narratives about people living through the 1950s as a specific generation of experience, thereby relating to the wider cultural context. The exhibition is divided according to different types of clothing, such as women's everyday clothing, Sunday clothing, formal wear and work wear, which reflect the cultural attitudes of the 1950s. The colours and cuts of the items in the exhibition testify to a highly gendered concept of clothing and fashion, and support the historical narrative of a return to pre-war gender roles, as well as a renewed sense of femininity and masculinity in the 1950s. Women's often pastel-coloured clothing, for instance, celebrated the female silhouette by accentuating the bust and minimizing the waist. Similarly, men's typically dark clothing accentuated the ideal, toned masculine form through well-tailored, slim-line suits. That said, the numerous examples of women's work wear in the exhibition suggest that the 1950s did also bring about changes with regard to traditional gender roles and societal expectations of women, even if women's office suits remained very conservative and orientated towards the styles of the previous generation.<sup>396</sup> Whilst the exhibition catalogue disputes the existence of a distinct teenage clothing style in the 1950s, as

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<sup>394</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', pp. 234-35.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

youngsters went immediately from dressing as children to dressing as young adults, it acknowledges that not everyone conformed to clothing expectations:

Anfang der 50er Jahre gab es auch Proteste. Eine 12 oder 13 Jahre alte Schülerin aus Schmedenstedt fuhr jeden Tag mit dem Fahrrad zum Lyzeum nach Peine. Ein Stück hinter ihrem Elternhaus hielt sie am Straßengraben an und streifte sich ein weißes Oberhemd ihres Großvaters und seine schwarze Jacke über. Sie empfand diese Kleidung als Protestzeichen.<sup>397</sup>

This anecdote of resistance is assigned to two of the donor's cape-style garments in the exhibition and acts as a counterbalance to the overarching narrative of 'typical' everyday clothing in the 1950s.<sup>398</sup> The sheer volume of clothing represented as part of the Peine exhibition means that the items are able to reflect a variety of personal experience and thus contributes to a more differentiated historical representation of the 1950s. On the one hand, the large number of handmade garments in the exhibition, as well as items of clothing such as the swimming costume, which came to Peine in a care package from the USA, support a narrative of the 1950s that stresses the continued influence of the war years.<sup>399</sup> What is more, the exhibition of three blue-coloured versions of the Redingote — a coat with a narrow, nipped-in waist and wider hem, popular in the 1940s — indicates that wartime aesthetics, as well as mentalities, prevailed into the 1950s.<sup>400</sup> On the other hand, items of clothing such as the Italian-inspired summer skirt, Capri pants and Capri hat testify rather to a *Wirtschaftswunder*-narrative of the 1950s, where increasing prosperity fuelled a *Reisewelle* to other countries for family holidays, notably Italy.<sup>401</sup> Whether or not this is intentional, the fact that such items of leisure wear are left to the very end of the exhibition catalogue suggests that *Wirtschaftswunder* phenomena such as the *Reisewelle* took place chronologically late on in the post-war period and are not necessarily typical of the whole of the 1950s. Whilst the exhibition is, therefore, keen to present a more differentiated historical interpretation of 1950s clothing and fashion, it does also place more emphasis on 'normal' familial experiences and typically domestic images of everyday life in West Germany.

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<sup>397</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', p. 228.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-77 and 258-59.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-77.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-89.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid., pp. 270-80. Corinna Wodarz notes that Italy became the dream destination for West German tourists in the 1950s because of romantic associations with the Blue Grotto (off the island of Capri) and Venetian gondolas, and the penchant for Italian food and Chianti. Italians (particularly actresses such as Gina Lollobrigida) were also famed for their beauty and sex appeal. *Nierentisch und Petticoat: Ein Bummel durch die 50er Jahre* (Oldenburg: Isensee, 2003), pp. 28-29 and 36.

### 3.6 Family Photographs

In both the Musée Tousseau and the Peine exhibition, family photographs play a central role in enshrining elements of the auto/biographical narratives constructed. As memory icons, photographs act as repositories of family memory and history, serving as material reminders of specific individuals and constituting genealogical indexes of the families concerned as part of photograph albums and family archives. According to John Berger, as visual relics of the past, photographs and other images also offer ‘direct testimony about the world which surrounded other people at other times’, and this testimony has the potential to be more powerful than those produced by texts and other artefacts.<sup>402</sup> In contrast to certain textual and material objects, images appear, as Susan Sontag highlights, as ‘unpremeditated slices’ of society, where history is not perceived as staged or manufactured, but rather captured in time.<sup>403</sup> What is more, as ‘neat slice[s] of time’ and space, photographs have the potential to be more emotive and memorable than the moving images of cinema and television, because they appear immortal and can be re-experienced by way of their materiality.<sup>404</sup>

In the Musée Tousseau, a large number of family photographs of the curators’ immediate and extended families are exhibited by the entrance in the main museum building. Arranged as part of a shrine-like display, the exhibit effectively constitutes a family photograph album, complete with the usual labels and dates relating the specific details of the photographs. The photographs are not arranged according to a particular schema of memory or sense of chronology, but represent, rather, a collage of personal memories. The collection contributes to the curators’ auto/biographies in the same way that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton have noted in relation to the role of photographs in the home: by ‘imparting a tenuous immortality to beloved persons and by providing an identity, a context of belongingness, to [their] descendants’.<sup>405</sup> Through their display, the photographs form a symbolic representation of family ties, but because the photographs are actual portraits and images of members of the family who have passed away, they also take on a deeper personified

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<sup>402</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC, 1972), p. 10. Berger explains this by stating that the photograph is not a mere ‘mechanical record’; on the contrary, it encapsulates a complex ‘way of seeing’ because viewers are aware that the photographer has actively selected the sight according to his/her aesthetic preferences and/or external conditions. He makes the additional point that viewers’ perceptions of images also depend upon their own way of seeing, pp. 10-11.

<sup>403</sup> Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 69. Sontag’s work is, of course, much more complex than this, but her point that photography is essentially a means of capturing reality is highly significant to museum studies.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>405</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 69.

signification and ‘acquire an almost mystical identification with the deceased’.<sup>406</sup> As the photographs are often all that remains of the departed relatives, or simply the most personal surviving connections to them, the photographic images become synonymous with the memory of the person photographed. This can actively promote nostalgic forms of remembering, based on elegiac responses to the family, in the sense of lamenting and mourning the dead.<sup>407</sup> In turn, this mourning can bring about a ritualistic re-engagement with the family auto/biography and the 1950s as a new chapter in the family narrative. Although this functions as an impetus for remembering and reinvesting in the 1950s primarily for the curators, the photograph display may also prompt some visitors to reflect on their own family narratives and draw comparisons between these and the narratives on offer at the museum.

At the same time, family photographs, such as those of deceased relatives, may act as obstacles to family memory recall, because, as Maya Barzilai explains in relation to Barthes’s *Le Chambre claire*, they allow ‘no room for imaginative elaboration or fabrication’.<sup>408</sup> Barthes argues that the photograph actually blocks naturally occurring involuntary memory, because the visual quality of the photograph means that sight is privileged over the other senses to the extent that a violent abundance of visual perception denies real sensory memory. Quite the opposite of a memory prop, the photograph can, therefore, become a kind of antithesis to memory.<sup>409</sup> The existence of the photograph means that the image and the associated memory are always perfectly preserved, effectively robbing the viewer of the ability to spontaneously reminisce. This fixity also denies the viewer the opportunity to alter memories over time, imposing a false rigidity to memory’s vicissitudes. In this way, for the curators, family photographs may merge with personal and family memories and limit the work of memory, rather than act as props for auto/biographical and nostalgic remembering.

As part of the family auto/biography, the photographs contribute to the chronotopic motif of transition, as many photographs on display pertain to specific events and rites of passage, such as dances, weddings and military service. Here the actual act of photography is important to the construction of the auto/biographies, because the taking of photographs is a

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<sup>406</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, p. 69.

<sup>407</sup> Sontag, p. 15.

<sup>408</sup> Maya Barzilai, ‘On Exposure: Photography and Uncanny Memory in W.G. Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten* and *Austerlitz*’, in *W.G. Sebald: History, Memory, Trauma* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 205-18 (p. 205); Roland Barthes, *La Chambre Claire: Note sur la Photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 129.

<sup>409</sup> Barthes, *La Chambre Claire*, p. 142.

means of attributing value to the family unit and preserving it for posterity. As Sontag notes (although not with reference to the 1950s):

through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself – a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness. It hardly matters what activities are photographed so long as photographs get taken and are cherished. Photography becomes a rite of family life.<sup>410</sup>

With the exhibition of the family photograph album, it is not the specific individuals and events depicted in the photographs that are significant, but rather the way in which together they testify to the overarching image of the family unit. In this way, the exhibit can enable visitors to recall their own sense of ancestry according to a more generic historical awareness of the family, as opposed to triggering specific involuntary memories regarding the personal qualities and physical characteristics of people depicted in the photographs.<sup>411</sup> The exhibit also acts as a prop for the narration of the wider history and memory of the 1950s through the trope of the family unit, as the photographs relate to an overarching image of romanticized post-war domesticity ingrained in the mythology of the *Trente Glorieuses*.

The family photographs used in the Peine exhibition relate to individuals' and families' biographies as snapshots of everyday life, as well as specific events and rites of passage, such as confirmations and weddings. However, because the photographs have been selected on the basis of what people depicted are wearing, the photographs no longer remain purely family photographs, and instead are used to re-personalize specific garments or to help relate particular narratives. Thus, the photograph of a young boy and (presumably) his baby brother sat underneath a decorated Christmas tree no longer relates to a family auto/biography and memory, but is used, rather, as an example of lederhosen-inspired boys' clothing in the 1950s and relates to a specific object memory.<sup>412</sup> Here, the photograph is employed as visual proof of such garments' widespread use in the 1950s, thereby validating and giving credence to the museum clothing narrative offered. Once incorporated into the museum collection, family photographs, to use Barbie Zelizer's words, 'turn somewhat magically into iconic representations that stand for a system of beliefs, a theme, an epoch.'<sup>413</sup> The actual act of

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<sup>410</sup> Sontag, p. 8.

<sup>411</sup> Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), p. 15

<sup>412</sup> Becker, 'Katalog', pp. 228-29.

<sup>413</sup> Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 8.



musealizing such photographs means they are transformed from private, family photographs into documentary evidence of everyday life in the 1950s. It is, however, important to note in reference to this particular photograph that this narrative of the everyday is being imposed through the museum exhibition, because the event depicted in the photograph is most likely a special occasion. Given the circumstances, the two young boys are, therefore, more likely to be wearing items of clothing that were reserved for best, such as Christmas holidays, when friends and family would visit and important moments would be caught on camera. As such, this represents an instance where something more unusual or atypical is reclaimed as part of the mythology of the everyday (see chapter seven). Once incorporated into this particular museum narrative, the photographs nevertheless become visual representations of everyday history and, in this particular case, of the social history of 1950s clothing. For Zelizer, this ‘capacity to freeze, replay, and store visual memories’ for visitors not only plays an important role in the narration of the past per se, but more specifically, in ‘[making] the past work for present aims’.<sup>414</sup> As a form of visual testimony, such photographs are not only used as the basis of museum representations of the *Alltag*, but also to support popular readings of the 1950s and as evidence of a distinctly national narrative that West Germans dressed and acted in a certain way. The fact that the two young boys are dressed in lederhosen testifies to the continued importance of tradition and the popularity of folkloristic styles of dress during the 1950s, despite the social and cultural changes underway following the Second World War. This seems to support the museum’s overall narrative of the 1950s as a period of gradual change, where, at least in the early to mid-1950s, West Germans still looked predominantly to the past as a source of inspiration.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

Reading the Musée Tusséau and the Peine exhibition through the lens of biographical time has highlighted the first way in which the 1950s are being chronotopically reimagined in museum displays in France and Germany. Together with the motif of transition, biographical time provides a narrative framework for auto/biographical representation, in which the 1950s are transformed from a historical period and reconceived as a series of life histories, including those of the curators and other individuals thematized in the displays, categories of object and specific material artefacts, and geographically delineated localities. Since the emphasis is on

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<sup>414</sup> Zelizer, p. 7.

the way in which the 1950s act as the central point of reference in these histories (as a privileged golden age), biographical time extends the significance of the 1950s beyond the confines of the historical decade to encompass the much wider realm of auto/biographies. As we shall see in the following chapters, this semantic and spatio-temporal widening of the 1950s is by no means limited to biographical time, but is reproduced, albeit in varied ways, according to chronotopic form.

In order to narrate these auto/biographies, the case studies rely on a particular form of counter-memory that foregrounds the memories and histories of smaller memory communities and localities. Concerned with the everyday lives of ‘normal’, local people in 1950s Saint-Sulpice-des-Landes and Peine, the sites contribute to a highly nostalgic reinvestment in the post-war past, which can be seen as an attempt to relegitimize and gain more public recognition for grassroots experiences. In both cases, it is the act of narrativizing, externalizing and rendering public such experiences which makes this kind of memory work possible, as personal testimonies and communicative memories are transformed into cultural memories through museum display, and in so doing, become more formalized versions of historical knowledge. As contributors to a more public discourse on the post-war past, sites such as the Musée Tousseau and the Peine exhibition play an important role in a democratized revision of the history of the 1950s, rewriting the narratives of everyday lives of small groups and communities of people into the broader sphere of French and German cultural memory.

Although counter-memory privileges the more personal and local, in practice, the auto/biographies constructed at the sites are formed from the interplay of local, regional, national and international narratives. Objects may hold particular significance as memory icons in personal and familial auto/biographies, but by their very origins as products of a particular culture, they necessarily relate to wider shared contexts. Localized traditions and forms of knowledge can equally be seen as a way of reinvesting in more patrimonial senses of national identity, with the family unit being fetishized within this construction. In this sense, the personal/local does not represent the antithesis of the region or nation, but simply provides a different way of accessing the same historical knowledge. In a similar manner, the auto/biographical narratives ingrained at the sites, albeit concerned with aspects of everyday life that tend to be overlooked in historiography, are largely consistent with, and indeed seem to actively support, the dominant historical interpretations of the 1950s as the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder* respectively. This form of counter-memory thus begins with the more personal and local as a different perspective on the post-war past, with the ultimate aim

of reactivating local forms of knowledge, as well as maintain more hegemonic narratives, rather than correct national and transnational configurations of the 1950s.

That said, the sites do promote a potentially more differentiated view of the 1950s than the dominant historical narratives, because of their capacity to negotiate different modes of remembering and different contextual loci. Whereas the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder* are exclusively concerned with the nation and a national memory of the 1950s, the decentralized approach at the Musée Tuseau and Peine exhibition enables us to understand better how national frameworks impacted upon people at an everyday, local level, and vice versa. Through the exhibition of memory icons and family photographs, and the arrangement of objects in autotopographies, the museums act as forums for the communicative exchange of personal, post- and prosthetic memories, as they have the potential to generate memory work and to instil nostalgic longing in visitors both with and without first-hand experience of the 1950s. Counter-memory and nostalgia can, therefore, have a therapeutic function, fulfilling important social roles within the community in terms of outreach and reminiscence work, and providing ways of reforging visitors' memories and rebuilding their identities. This reminds us that counter-memory and the current memory boom are not concerned with the reinvestment in the 1950s for old times' sake, but for specific present purposes, rooted in the particularities of the narrative themes, localities, curators and visitors concerned.

## 4. Glacial Time

The present-centredness of the current revival of the 1950s must be articulated, at least in part, in relation to the ever-expanding parameters of heritagization and patrimonialization in France and Germany. Since France's self-proclaimed 'Année de patrimoine' in 1980, *patrimoine* has developed as a kind of social nostalgia designed, as Martine Segalen explains, 'to provide former communities threatened by unemployment and other social problems, with local identities.'<sup>415</sup> This patrimonial consciousness has also been part of an overtly political programme, tied, as we have seen in the previous chapter, to an 'authentic', self-celebratory Republican French national identity. In its broadest, most eclectic sense, *patrimoine* has come to represent a range of places, objects, people, traditions and historical events which must be 'rediscovered, remembered, and restored in order to ensure the survival of the nation' with increasing Europeanization and globalization.<sup>416</sup> The post-unification German promotion of *Kulturerbe* has similarly developed according to what Jason James sees as a nostalgic nationalist agenda that he terms 'heritage fetishism'.<sup>417</sup> Within this particular patrimonial conception, 'heritage and *Heimat* serve as complementary sites of longed-for wholeness and moral purity', becoming a means of reinvesting in a more readily assimilable unified national history and identity in the wake of the Holocaust and divided German past.<sup>418</sup> Whilst James concentrates his study on heritage discourse in present-day eastern Germany, this is something which can also be traced back to the early 1980s, with the rapid growth of local (often rural) *Heimat* museums and sentimental television series and films, such as Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*.<sup>419</sup> In both France and Germany, heritage has thus developed as a highly 'nostalgic and selective', not to mention largely ahistorical, sense of pastness that creates a romantic fantasy of nationhood mapped onto the family unit.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Martine Segalen, 'Anthropology at Home and in the Museum: The Case of the Musée national des arts et traditions populaires in Paris', in *Academic Anthropology and the Museum: Back to the Future*, ed. by Mary Bouquet (New York: Berghahn, 2001), pp. 76-91 (p. 88).

<sup>416</sup> Dayna Oscherwitz, *Past Forward: French Cinema and the Postcolonial Heritage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), p.1.

<sup>417</sup> Jason James, *Preservation and National Belonging in Eastern Germany: Heritage Fetishism and Redeeming Germanness* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 5.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>419</sup> Reitz's monumental, sixteen-hour drama *Heimat* premiered at the 41<sup>st</sup> Venice International Film Festival in 1984 and was broadcast on West German television in the autumn of the same year, at the peak of the heritage boom. Following three generations of a family living in a small agricultural community in Rhineland-Palatinate, the series presents a mythicized vision of the German past encoded in the rural 'idyll' (see chapter five). *Heimat – Eine deutsche Chronik*, dir. by Edgar Reitz (Artificial Eye, 1984).

<sup>420</sup> James, p. 23.

One of the most important ways in which this reconceived notion of heritage has manifested itself in France and Germany is in the form of an attachment to, and quasi-mythical reinvestment in, the post-Second World War built environment.<sup>421</sup> These town- and cityscapes have become powerful symbols of post-war reconstruction and modernity, enshrining narratives of progress and redemption, and acting as props for new senses of national belonging that erase the immediate wartime past. Attracting an increasingly diverse public on the basis of their architectural value, they are also part of a global heritage movement promoted by cultural tourism. Transformed through local, regional, national and international instantiations of patrimonialization and used as the basis for cultural regeneration, they can be seen as forms of social space and structure that offer a particular engagement with the past, and which have been termed by various scholars as ‘heritage-scapes’. For Mary-Catherine Garden, the heritage-scape refers to those loci that are widely recognized and delineated as heritage spaces, and which encompass boundaries (demarcation and acknowledgement as heritage), cohesion (imparting a sense of placeness) and visibility (what is seen and how it is interpreted). Heritage-scapes function as multi-stage processes, because they refer to the sites as physical actualities, and as social spaces envisaged by museum professionals and perceived by visitors, the latter of whose experiences ‘may be shaped by prior knowledge, or, indeed, the novelty of the space’.<sup>422</sup> Building on Appadurai’s work on ‘scapes’ of global cultural flows, Michael Di Giovine has formulated the concept of the heritage-scape as a specific form of globally designated heritage.<sup>423</sup> This is formed through the interaction of different groups of people and organizations and mediated through memory work, when placeness is positioned within UNESCO’s overarching narrative framework.<sup>424</sup> Di Giovine argues that heritage-scapes hold such cultural value due to their ‘perceived intransience’, in that they are seen as providing some sort of resistance to the linear progression of time.<sup>425</sup>

Understanding the heritage-scape as a way of spatio-temporally anchoring the past to a specific site, this chapter examines how patrimonialization, heritagization and tourism are

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<sup>421</sup> This is a very recent appropriation of heritage and is perhaps rather unexpected given that neither *patrimoine* nor *Heimat* are traditionally associated with post-war modernity.

<sup>422</sup> Mary-Catherine E. Garden, ‘The Heritagescape: Looking at Landscapes of the Past’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 12 (2005), 394-411 (pp. 395-400).

<sup>423</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 33-35.

<sup>424</sup> Michael A. Di Giovine, *The Heritage-scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 442. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) oversees the listing of World Heritage Sites deemed of outstanding universal natural or cultural value.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

reshaping the built environment of the 1950s into its own heritage-scape of modernity through a process of counter-memory, and, by extension, how this is used as the basis for the creation of new founding myths and senses of ‘imagined communities’.<sup>426</sup> This chapter focuses on two specific sites, based in France and eastern Germany respectively: the Appartement témoin Perret in Le Havre (Seine-Maritime) and the Historische Wohnung in Eisenhüttenstadt (Brandenburg).<sup>427</sup> The Appartement témoin is a reconstructed post-war apartment and self-proclaimed ‘micro-museum’ named after its architect Auguste Perret that opened in 2006 following Le Havre’s designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Historische Wohnung was a reconstructed 1957 apartment open to the public between 2008 and 2012 as an extension of the Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, situated in Germany’s ‘größtes zusammenhängendes Flächendenkmal’.<sup>428</sup> Whilst the localities discussed encompass very different post-war experiences — Le Havre being the most devastated French city in the Second World War and thus one of the most important reconstruction projects in post-war Europe, and Eisenhüttenstadt being the first East German socialist model town inaugurated in 1953 (as Stalinstadt) to house the workers of the new Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost — they represent interesting comparative case studies as products of wider national and patrimonial movements focusing on the 1950s built environment. Because the heritage-scape must be seen, according to Garden, as an ‘integral part of the larger landscape in which it is located’, and the boundaries which define the site are not ‘restricted to the physical limits of the place’, the analysis is not confined exclusively to the museums, but is also concerned with how the 1950s are transformed by the heritagization of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt.<sup>429</sup> Although at times this may seem to direct the focus away from the case studies, as this chapter demonstrates, there is an important synergy between the museums and the localities in which they are situated, and this wider view is central to understanding the impact and repercussions of heritagization and patrimonialization.

Building on John Urry’s work on time and space, while drawing on Bakhtin’s chronotopic motif of the provincial town, this chapter argues that the 1950s are being recast as a heritage-scape in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt through a chronotope of ‘glacial time’.

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<sup>426</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>427</sup> The case studies are henceforth referred to as the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung. The Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR (Brandenburg) is referred to as the Eisenhüttenstadt museum.

<sup>428</sup> Land Brandenburg, ‘Flächendenkmal Friedrich-Engels-Straße’, *Landesamt für Bauen und Verkehr* <[http://www.lbv.brandenburg.de/1161\\_1208.htm](http://www.lbv.brandenburg.de/1161_1208.htm)> [accessed 24 February 2014].

<sup>429</sup> Garden, p. 398.

Coined by Urry, the term ‘glacial time’ refers to a sense of time that is ‘extremely slow-moving and ponderous’ and which can be understood as a ‘form of resistance to the “placelessness” of instantaneous time.’<sup>430</sup> By drawing on the same museological approach and by providing the basis for cultural heritage tourism, the museums renarrate the 1950s within glacial time, which serves to preserve time and space as essentially unchanged. This chapter demonstrates that the 1950s are chronotopically reimagined as a heritage-scape in the two sites and localities, and as such, that their narrative significance is extended beyond that of the historical decade to convey a quasi-eternal sense of the past. Although the patrimonial focus is on the locality, this desire to impose fixity is also linked to the construction of progressive national narratives, as according to Todd McGowan, nationhoods and national identities are ‘born in retroactively definitive past events’ that conform to a specific sense of chronology.<sup>431</sup> The memories and counter-memories constructed at the sites thus mediate between the local and the national as narratives of the locality are shown to be largely synonymous with the dominant historical discourses of the French reconstruction and *Trente Glorieuses* and the East German *Aufbau des Sozialismus*. Whereas Kevin Walsh argues that the slowing down or even ‘freezing’ of time is inherent in all museum displays, this chapter argues that it is very much specific to the glacial time of the heritage-scape and its reclamation through tourism.<sup>432</sup> By representing the 1950s as a glacial heritage-scape, the museums are able to lay claim to a distinct sense of place identity and renewed sense of civic pride, in which architectural ‘modernity is [...] conceptualized as heritage’ on a local, national and global level.<sup>433</sup>

#### **4.1 The Chronotope of Glacial Time and the Motif of the Provincial Town**

In the Appartement témoin and the Historische Wohnung, the chronotope of glacial time represents a spatio-temporal configuration in which the 1950s are reimagined as preserved relics of the past. Fully furnished with artefacts and décor from the period, and exhibited in 1950s apartment blocks, the museums are presented as historical witnesses, which have the ability to communicate the 1950s as authentic fragments of history. This is reflected in the terminologies used to market the museums. The Eisenhüttenstadt museum’s decision to name

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<sup>430</sup> John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 157-58.

<sup>431</sup> Todd McGowan, *Out of Time: Desire in Atemporal Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 184.

<sup>432</sup> Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 32.

<sup>433</sup> Di Giovine, p. 14.

the apartment the *Historische Wohnung* is indicative of a specific desire to fix the apartment as a historically authentic space. According to the visitor leaflet, the apartment is not only ‘im Stil der Zeit möbiliert’, but also situated ‘im historischen Zentrum der “Planstadt Eisenhüttenstadt”’, thereby creating a connection between the historical space of the apartment and its historical location in a 1950s apartment block and a modern, socialist model town. Historical authenticity is projected onto the *Appartement témoin* by use of the term ‘témoin’ in the sense of being an eye witness to the past. The museum’s exhibition catalogue refers to reconstruction apartments in Le Havre and other European towns and cities as ‘les “témoins” d’une profonde transformation’.<sup>434</sup> This conveys a sense of historical progression inscribed into modernity and the national French reconstruction project. The term ‘appartement témoin’, however, is also used in contemporary French language to refer to a new-build show apartment and was employed during the reconstruction period (along with the term ‘appartement-type’) and afterwards to encompass ‘la qualité de vie inhérente à l’émergence d’une nouvelle norme de l’habitation, guidée par l’élan de la modernité et la foi dans le progrès’.<sup>435</sup> By invoking this terminology, the *Appartement témoin* and the entire city of Le Havre are deliberately reframed within the discourse of post-war modernity. This serves not only to temporally distance the war past from the present, but also to fix a clear qualitative narrative of progress and development through chronological linearity.<sup>436</sup> This is necessarily selective because it eclipses all those histories that fall outside this trajectory of forward movement and has the potential to underpin national narrative claims based on historical advancement. The *Appartement témoin* thus encapsulates a double meaning of the concept of ‘témoignage’, both of which, however, unite architecture, interior design and the historical 1950s everyday within a discourse of modernity. Time and space are glacial, to use Urry’s words, in the sense that ‘people feel the weight of history, of those memories and practices within that very particular place’; through the historically convincing setting and *mis-en-scène* of artefacts, they believe that it ‘will still be there in its essence in many generations’ time’, as the 1950s are reimagined in the present and future.<sup>437</sup> Thus, while Urry’s glacial time freezes time, or at least slows it down to a point where change is imperceptible, the museums seek to impose a teleological, forward-looking narrative

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<sup>434</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartements témoins de la Reconstruction du Havre* (Bonsecours: Point de vues, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>436</sup> Marc Guillaume maintains that the organization of historical knowledge and thus the separation of the past from the present is the ‘mythe fondateur de la modernité’. ‘Invention et stratégies du patrimoine’, in *Patrimoines en folie*, ed. by Henri-Pierre Jeudy (Paris: Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 1990), pp. 13-20 (p. 16).

<sup>437</sup> Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, p. 159.



of the 1950s as an era of social and technological progress. As we shall see later on in this chapter, this is used for a variety of present purposes, including identity formation, civic pride and urban and cultural regeneration. In this way, glacial time can be seen as a way of mediating between stasis and pace in the sense that the glacial time-space of the museums becomes a way of instilling a specific narrative of the 1950s as an era of unprecedented change and development in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt.

By representing the 1950s in such a way, the two sites contribute not only to a capturing of historical time, but also to what Urry describes as a ‘slowing down of place, or the capturing of place’ by their visitors and communities.<sup>438</sup> This reclamation of place has significance and acts as an ‘ancillary time’ and space within glacial time, akin to Bakhtin’s motif of the provincial town that he isolates in the work of Flaubert.<sup>439</sup> According to Bakhtin, the provincial town serves as a ‘locus of action’, but it is a time-space characterized by ‘stagnant life’, because it is concerned with commonplace activities of everyday life and the ‘everyday details of specific locales’.<sup>440</sup> By establishing a strong narrative connection between the museums and the localities in which they are situated, the museums help to lay claim to unique local counter-memories of the 1950s, which draw on Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt’s *genius loci*. It is with this that the Appartement témoin is not just any recreated French post-war apartment, but rather, as the catalogue claims, the product ‘d’une expérience unique en matière de reconstruction’ in terms of scale, construction material and architectural and design quality.<sup>441</sup> Similarly, the Historische Wohnung is presented as atypical of East German post-war builds in that it is part of an apartment block constructed in the first socialist model town, for a steel mill that represented ‘de[r] wichtigst[e] Schwerpunkt des wirtschaftlichen Wiederaufbaus nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg im Osten Deutschlands’.<sup>442</sup> According to Urry, this ‘appreciation of the detail of certain localities presumes glacial time’ and creates a highly localized sense of place, providing the basis for local identity and counter-memory formation through a shared sense of locality.<sup>443</sup> At the same time, the recognition that the apartments are symbolic of some of the most important national trends in architecture and interior design, together with the fact that

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<sup>438</sup> Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, p. 159.

<sup>439</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics’, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258 (p. 248).

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 247-48.

<sup>441</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre, la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: Proposition d’inscription du centre reconstruit du Havre sur la liste du patrimoine mondial* (Le Havre: Ville du Havre, 2005), p. 27.

<sup>442</sup> Andreas Ludwig, *Alltag: DDR: Ständige Ausstellung* (Eisenhüttenstadt: Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, 2012) [free visitor booklet about the new permanent exhibition].

<sup>443</sup> Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, p. 159.

they typify certain commonalities in everyday experience of the 1950s, also means that they feed into their respective national heritages as glacial vestiges of the past and are ‘treasured as symbols of culture’.<sup>444</sup> The museums thus conform to a particular type of counter-memory and spatio-temporality that is centred on a localized attachment to place, but which is also framed by, and articulated in relation to, the wider sphere of the nation.

One of the principal motivations of visiting recreated sites such as the Appartement témoin and the Historische Wohnung and places such as Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt is to gain an insight into post-war everyday life in such localities. By exploring recreated apartments and historic town centres, visitors seek to gain a sense of what life was like in the past by imagining how past generations engaged with such spaces on a day-to-day basis. In the Appartement témoin’s guest book, one visitor has sketched a rather elaborate cartoon of a visit to the apartment on a ‘journée du patrimoine’, showing a group of visitors watching the apartment’s occupant doing the washing up. The occupant’s speech bubble reads: ‘avec toutes les visites, pas moyen de faire sa vaisselle tranquille!’, showing that, even if in a rather ephemeral way, glacial time encourages visitors to form mental images of the past and to see their visit as an experiential engagement with that past.<sup>445</sup> Glacial heritage-scapes are thus equated to ‘authentic’ and historically accurate preserved pasts.

## **4.2 Cultural Heritage Tourism**

As a way of motivating people to visit places that are seen as far removed from what they encounter in day-to-day life, tourism can be understood as the product of a fundamental dichotomy between the commonplace/everyday and the extraordinary.<sup>446</sup> With the development of tourism in particular localities, Urry and Jonas Larsen argue that the ‘tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary’.<sup>447</sup> This designation of a kind of ‘espace autre’ that exists outside the ‘normal’ realm of the everyday has been theorized by Foucault in relation to museums in his theory of heterotopias (see chapter one). Whereas for Foucault heterotopias are a product of a particular kind of temporality, for Urry and Larsen, sites are constructed as extraordinary through tourism

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<sup>444</sup> Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, *Contested Natures* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 160.

<sup>445</sup> Unsigned entry in Appartement témoin Perret Guest Book, 2011.

<sup>446</sup> John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage, 2011), p. 15.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

and the orientation of the tourist gaze. This means that in visiting sites dedicated to everyday life, and particularly those laying claim to historical authenticity, tourists hoping to see and experience what ‘normal’ life was like in the past are necessarily inclined to interpret that past as historically and culturally remarkable. By nature of tourist rituals and their effect in eliciting particular emotional and sensory responses on the part of visitors, and by transforming the spaces of everyday life into heritage tourist attractions, the everyday is changed into something distinctly special and uncommon.<sup>448</sup>

With the reinvestment in the 1950s in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt, tourism is one of the central means through which the post-war everyday is transformed into a heritage-landscape. In Le Havre, the development of tourism has been one of the key municipal priorities since 1995, when the city took the first major step in the preservation and recognition of reconstruction architecture in the city in the form of the ‘Zone de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural, Urbain et Paysager’ (ZPPAUP).<sup>449</sup> This was followed by Le Havre’s incorporation into the national network of ‘Villes et Pays d’art et d’histoire’ in 2001 and the establishment of one hundred and thirty-three hectares of Le Havre’s city centre as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005, as part of which the Appartement témoin was opened in the central Place de l’Hôtel de Ville in 2006. The “‘mise en tourisme” du Havre’ through the heritagization of its 1950s architecture has translated into a substantial increase in the number of visitors to the city, which tripled from five thousand to seventeen thousand between 2004 and 2006, and which reached thirty thousand in 2010.<sup>450</sup> Associated with a growing recognition of its cultural value, Le Havre has foregrounded tourism as a ‘vecteur du changement d’image, du rayonnement de la ville et du renforcement de son activité économique’.<sup>451</sup> In particular, the recognition of the city’s post-war architecture by UNESCO has served to bring about what Elisabeth Chauvin sees as a ‘regard extérieur positif, plaçant Le Havre aux côtés de villes aussi emblématiques que Tel-Aviv, Brasilia ou Chandigarh’.<sup>452</sup> As a World Heritage Site, Le Havre is, therefore, attributed cultural significance not only in France, but also internationally, and is

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<sup>448</sup> Tom Mordue, ‘Time Machines and Space Craft: Navigating the Spaces of Heritage Tourism Performance’, in *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past*, ed. by Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 173-94 (p. 173).

<sup>449</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre, la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: Proposition d’inscription du centre reconstruit du Havre sur la liste du patrimoine mondial*, p. 137.

<sup>450</sup> Elisabeth Chauvin, ‘Le Havre, ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: redécouverte, interprétation, mise en tourisme’, in *Villes françaises du patrimoine mondial et tourisme: Protection, gestion, valorisation*, ed. by Maria Gravari-Barbas and Sébastien Jacquot (Paris: Unesco, 2010), pp. 46-53 (pp. 46-50).

<sup>451</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre, la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: Proposition d’inscription du centre reconstruit du Havre sur la liste du patrimoine mondial*, p. 137.

<sup>452</sup> Chauvin, ‘Le Havre, ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret’, p. 51.

marketed as being on a par with cities which have traditionally received much more critical attention and appreciation. Articulated within the framework of what Di Giovine terms ‘UNESCO’s newly ordered social structure’, 1950s Le Havre has become part of a network of global heritage-scapes.<sup>453</sup> According to Chauvin and Pierre Gencey, as part of this heritagization of architecture, ‘le patrimoine Perret devient incontournable, voire emblématique de l’image touristique du Havre’, which has been transformed from little more than an industrial port city to a designated site of architectural modernity.<sup>454</sup>

A similar promotion of architectural tourism can be identified in Eisenhüttenstadt, which has centred on the ninety-four hectares of predominantly 1950s and 1960s listed buildings in the town’s city centre that have had legal monument protection since 1984.<sup>455</sup> Eisenhüttenstadt’s tourist office was founded in 1991 with the aim of developing high-quality tourism in the town and does much to promote the town’s unique cultural and historical claim as a monument area and centrally planned ‘Städtetyp, der in dieser Form in Deutschland einmalig geblieben ist’.<sup>456</sup> The tourist office’s website draws attention in particular to the fact that because of the preserved monument status of entire post-war residential complexes, ‘Eisenhüttenstadt ist Architekturgeschichte’, and the website’s homepage proudly displays a Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg video report on Eisenhüttenstadt detailing its recent high-profile architectural publicity in the form of actor Tom Hanks’s visit to the town in December 2011.<sup>457</sup> On his return to the US, Hanks spoke about his guided tour of Eisenhüttenstadt’s protected *Wohnkomplexe*, as well as his visits to other German towns and cities, on David Letterman’s *Late Show*.<sup>458</sup> According to Eisenhüttenstadt’s mayor Dagmar Püschel, the actor’s visit rendered the town ‘einen unbezahlbaren Dienst’ in enlarging its media profile and the

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<sup>453</sup> Di Giovine, p. 6. He refers to the UNESCO heritage-scape as a ‘social structure’ because UNESCO is based on the narrative of ‘unity in diversity’ and aims to bring about ‘peace in the minds of men’, pp. 37 and 9.

<sup>454</sup> Elisabeth Chauvin and Pierre Gencey, ‘Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne – deux échelles complémentaires pour concilier mémoire et dynamique urbaine au Havre’, *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, 3 (2011), 243-51 (p. 247).

<sup>455</sup> Land Brandenburg, ‘Flächendenkmal Friedrich-Engels-Straße’ <[http://www.lbv.brandenburg.de/1161\\_1208.htm](http://www.lbv.brandenburg.de/1161_1208.htm)> [accessed 24 February 2014]. The Eisenhüttenstadt town council placed Wohnkomplexe I to III on the 1984 *Denkmalliste* on the basis that these buildings represented a ‘wichtig[e] Entwicklungsetappe der DDR’ and that scheduled monument status would preserve the ‘Vorstellungen des sozialistischen Städtebaus’ for posterity, not only as a ‘historisches Dokument aber auch als lebendiges Werk des Städtebaus’. They were later placed on the *Bezirksdenkmalliste* of the administrative region of Frankfurt (Oder). Eisenhüttenstadt, Stadtarchiv Eisenhüttenstadt, Rat der Stadt, Ratssitzung vom 14.11.1984.

<sup>456</sup> Tourismus Oder-Region Eisenhüttenstadt e. V., ‘Stadtführungen & mehr’, *TOR Eisenhüttenstadt* <<http://www.tor-eisenhuettenstadt.de/de/stadtfuehrungen/stadtfuehrungen-mehr/>> [accessed 24 February 2014].

<sup>457</sup> Tourismus Oder-Region Eisenhüttenstadt e. V., ‘Herzlich willkommen’, *TOR Eisenhüttenstadt* <<http://www.tor-eisenhuettenstadt.de/de/>> [accessed 24 February 2014].

<sup>458</sup> Whilst filming in Germany, Hanks also visited the DDR Museum Zeitreise where, as a typewriter fan, he was presented with a GDR Erika typewriter. His visit is also promoted on the museum’s website homepage and was reported in local newspapers, but was not subject to the same media frenzy as in Eisenhüttenstadt.

town's tourist office took advantage of this by launching a new marketing campaign in the wake of Hanks's visit with merchandise such as t-shirts and insulated mugs branded with the motto 'Iron Hut City'.<sup>459</sup> The media hype surrounding Hanks's visit has seen a tangible increase in the number of visitors to Eisenhüttenstadt seeking to experience the town's post-war architecture for themselves. Whereas in the early 2000s the tourist office organized around twenty guided tours per year, the figure increased to almost four times that between 2011 and 2012. The tourist office also witnessed a substantial increase in the number of hits to its website following Hanks's visit, rising from 145 in a typical January week in 2011 to 1540 in the same week in 2012.<sup>460</sup> What could legitimately be described as the 'Hanks effect' in Eisenhüttenstadt has therefore had a similar impact to the 'UNESCO effect' in Le Havre in completely overhauling the image of the town in the national and international public eye through a recasting of its post-war architecture as cultural heritage.<sup>461</sup>

The Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung have been at the forefront of the rapid development of architectural tourism in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt respectively. The Appartement témoin was envisaged as a 'regard complémentaire' to the Le Havre city centre architecture, enabling visitors to grasp a sense of the relationship between exterior and interior architecture and between architecture and interior design.<sup>462</sup> Its opening in 2006 coincided with an unprecedented annual growth of over eighty per cent in the number of visitors taking guided tours in Le Havre, outstripping even that of the UNESCO year of 2005.<sup>463</sup> Due to the way in which visitors are encouraged to participate in the space, the Appartement témoin represents a new type of tourism marketing tool and has become so exemplary of Auguste Perret's work that it is used almost synonymously with the entire city's architectural heritage.<sup>464</sup> In a similar move to unite the exterior and interior impact of post-war architecture, the three-bedroom Historische Wohnung located in an apartment block on Eisenhüttenstadt's central Straße der Republik (about a five minute walk from the main museum building) was opened with the aim of becoming an 'Anlaufpunkt für Touristen', who, in their visits to the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, had expressed a particular wish to learn more about past living conditions and ways

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<sup>459</sup> Leticia Witte, 'Eisenhüttenstadt im Tom Hanks Fieber', *Münchener Merkur*, 29 February 2012 <<http://www.merkur-online.de/freizeit/reise/kurioses/tom-hanks-eisenhuettenstadt-reise-tourist-1621511.html>> [accessed 25 February 2014]. 'Iron Hut City' was how Hanks referred to Eisenhüttenstadt on the *Late Show*.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

<sup>461</sup> Chauvin, 'Le Havre, ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret', p. 53.

<sup>462</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartements témoins de la Reconstruction du Havre*, p. 5.

<sup>463</sup> Chauvin and Gencey, 'Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne' (2010), pp. 1-13 (p. 7) [manuscript version].

<sup>464</sup> Chauvin and Gencey, 'Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne', p. 248.

of life in the city.<sup>465</sup> Unlike the majority of museums dedicated to the GDR *Alltag*, the Eisenhüttenstadt museum takes a firmly narrative-based approach to exhibition content and aims to situate artefacts in historical context through more traditional museum interpretation in the form of wall texts, labels and oral history. As such, the Eisenhüttenstadt museum's recreation of a GDR apartment was designed as a historical visualization of everyday life that was deemed incompatible with the museum's permanent exhibition.<sup>466</sup> Although at odds with the museum's overall concept, the Historische Wohnung was, therefore, established with the aim of fulfilling visitors' expectations regarding the musealization of the GDR and the relationship between built and lived space, as well as increasing tourist footfall in Eisenhüttenstadt.

In order to sustain these levels of tourism, the municipal authorities in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt have both launched accompanying initiatives in the form of guided and sightseeing tours, which position visitors and local participators in a specific 'heritage tourism performance'.<sup>467</sup> The Le Havre tourist office now operates two types of sightseeing tours to enable visitors to appreciate the vast architectural heritage of the city, including a typical 'train touristique', which takes tourists around the principal UNESCO sights, and a more unique 'rétr'autocar' tour of Le Havre in a 1959 Setra bus, given by comedian and actress Valérie Lecoq dressed as a 1950s 'Madame'. Physically transporting visitors around the city, both tours are envisaged as a 'voyage dans l'histoire' around the 'monde du Perret', casting the entire city as an architectural heritage-scape to be discovered by tourists.<sup>468</sup> Similarly, in Eisenhüttenstadt, architectural guided tours are offered by the town's tourist office and recommended by the Eisenhüttenstadt museum as an accompaniment to the visit of the museum.<sup>469</sup> The tourist office

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<sup>465</sup> Märkische Onlinezeitung, 'Erstmals Wohnung aus DDR-Zeit für Museumsbesucher geöffnet', *Märkische Onlinezeitung*, 22 August 2008 <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/25477>> [accessed 25 February 2014].

<sup>466</sup> The museum's founder and former director Andreas Ludwig revealed in conversation that the Eisenhüttenstadt museum does not support room reconstructions (as are the exhibition norm at the majority of other museums dedicated to everyday life in the GDR) and that as a result, the Historische Wohnung was 'nur für Touristen' (August 2012). Evidently many visitors to the main museum building are also tourists, but Ludwig's comment indicates a deliberate attempt to distance himself as a museum professional from naively 'realist' reconstructions.

<sup>467</sup> Mordue, p. 174.

<sup>468</sup> Ville du Havre, 'Rétr'autocar – Un voyage dans l'histoire!', *Le Havre Tourisme* <<http://www.lehavretourisme.com/agenda-complet-havre/retrauto-car-un-voyage-dans-lhistoire-,FMANOR0760002654.html>> [accessed 25 February 2014]; Ville du Havre, 'Train touristique', *Le Havre Tourisme* <<http://www.lehavretourisme.com/sorties-et-sports/loisirs-activites-sportives/train-touristique,ASCNOR0760001568.html>> [accessed 25 February 2014].

<sup>469</sup> Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, 'Das Museum: Eisenhüttenstadt', *Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR* <<http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/das-museum/eisenhuettenstadt/>> [accessed 26 February 2014].

has also put together a leaflet of walking tours, enabling visitors to appreciate the 1950s-built Wohnkomplexe I–III by themselves. Such initiatives contribute to the ‘spectacle-isation of place’, whereby as ‘themed “time machines”’ set to the 1950s, Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt become ‘museums of themselves’ and are transformed from places into specific forms of cultural heritage.<sup>470</sup> Whereas Di Giovine argues that this musealization of the wider heritage-scape is an unintended outcome of heritagization and tourism, in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt, it seems to have been deliberately encouraged by the tourist offices in an attempt to continue the UNESCO and Hanks effects.<sup>471</sup> Although the heritage-scape can thus be seen to be bringing about a reinvestment in place, this situation also highlights the danger that heritagization and tourism may be ‘responsible for the destruction of a sense of place’, based on artificial mediatizations of history and the scripting of local people as heritage performers.<sup>472</sup>

### 4.3 Local Identity and Civic Pride

The glacial reimagining of the 1950s not only provides the basis for the transformation of place into cultural heritage, but also lays the groundwork for a reconceived sense of local identity and civic pride in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt. As part of this, the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung can be seen as emblematic of the trend towards revaluing 1950s architecture through counter-memory, which plays an important role in uniting civic visions of the past, present and future. In Le Havre, a series of urban protection and development measures have been taken over the course of the last twenty years in order that official cultural designations and labels ‘se traduise[nt] sur le terrain par une valorisation du patrimoine’.<sup>473</sup> These include the appointment of a dedicated ‘Agent de développement du patrimoine’ by the city in 1999, in order to make businesses and shop owners aware of heritage protection legislation, and to ensure the careful monitoring of all building work in the city centre, as well as the employment of new conservation and construction methods by building relationships with suppliers and research centres. Alongside such measures, the city authorities have undertaken cultural redevelopment of the city centre by creating a ‘nouvelle dynamique

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<sup>470</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 156; Mordue, p. 176; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 151.

<sup>471</sup> Di Giovine, p. 12.

<sup>472</sup> Walsh, p. 145.

<sup>473</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre: la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: Patrimoine mondial de l’Humanité* (July 2005) [press kit] <[http://unesco.lehavre.fr/Dossier\\_de\\_presse.pdf](http://unesco.lehavre.fr/Dossier_de_presse.pdf)> [accessed 19 February 2014] (p. 12).

culturelle, commercial et touristique' in the form of a casino, hotel and restaurant complex, and by introducing a 'schéma lumière' in order to light the principal reconstruction buildings by night.<sup>474</sup> In taking such steps, Le Havre has sought to ensure that the post-war reconstructed city centre occupies an important position in the local landscape and that by revaluing it as heritage, it becomes a point of reference and place of identification for local residents.

In Eisenhüttenstadt, a comparatively more formalized approach has been adopted to the present and future value of the town's architectural heritage by forging a distinct local identity. In 2004, Eisenhüttenstadt launched its concept for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research's national 'Stadt 2030' competition, in which it outlined the importance of its 1950s architecture as a defining cultural feature:

die Aufbaugeschichte von Stadt und Werk im Sozialismus ist historisch einzigartig in Deutschland. Die Darstellung der Entwicklung von Werk, Stadt und Gesellschaft sowie die Wohnkomplexe als Zeugnis des Städtebaus in der DDR bilden ein besonderes touristisches Potenzial. Das Städtebauensemble der 1950er Jahre unterscheidet Eisenhüttenstadt von allen anderen deutschen Städten und hat einen hohen Wiedererkennungswert und somit Symbolcharakter für die Stadt. Eisenhüttenstadt will dieses Potenzial nutzen und weiter erschließen. Weiterhin etabliert sich die Stadt bei der Vermittlung von DDR-Geschichte und -Alltagskultur.<sup>475</sup>

Including the town's 1950s architecture, as well as GDR history and material culture as part of this concept effectively made them an integral part of Eisenhüttenstadt's urban plans for the future. Rather than simply listing the 1950s town centre as a tourist attraction, however, the concept goes further to posit it as a unique heritage which sets Eisenhüttenstadt apart from all other German towns and cities and which is symbolic of the whole town. This is something which has been reinforced in the 2008 approved 'Integriertes Stadtentwicklungskonzept Eisenhüttenstadt' (INSEK) which aims, amongst other things, to promote culture in the town and to increase residential density specifically in the town centre. The INSEK builds on the previously initiated 'Gesamtstädtisches Stadtumbaukonzept', which was launched in order to

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<sup>474</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre: la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret* <[http://unesco.lehavre.fr/Dossier\\_de\\_presse.pdf](http://unesco.lehavre.fr/Dossier_de_presse.pdf)> [accessed 19 February 2014] (pp. 12-13).

<sup>475</sup> Projektteam Eisenhüttenstadt 2030, *Eisenhüttenstadt 2030: Leitbild für Eisenhüttenstadt*, 19 February 2004 <[http://www.eisenhuettenstadt.de/Stadtentwicklung/Leitbild\\_2030.PDF?phpMyAdmin-qjMr6MjYP-RaxiaHL80-Vj-Gii7](http://www.eisenhuettenstadt.de/Stadtentwicklung/Leitbild_2030.PDF?phpMyAdmin-qjMr6MjYP-RaxiaHL80-Vj-Gii7)> [accessed 26 February 2014] (p. 6). Eisenhüttenstadt was one of the twenty-one prize winning towns and cities selected by the competition's judging panel.



re-centre Eisenhüttenstadt's falling population in the heart of the town.<sup>476</sup> It plans for the demolition of just over six thousand apartments (predominantly in the 1980s-built Wohnkomplex VII) and the renovation and redevelopment of between three thousand five hundred and four thousand apartments in the town centre (predominantly in the 1950s and 1960s-built Wohnkomplexe I to IV) by 2015.<sup>477</sup> It is hoped that by rehousing people in the listed post-war residential areas of the town centre, 'das Zentrum wird wieder als Adresse geschätzt', becoming a thriving community and providing the foundation for a renewed sense of cultural identity in Eisenhüttenstadt.<sup>478</sup> As in Le Havre where urban regeneration has involved a sympathetic restoration of reinforced concrete, the renovation of entire listed complexes in Eisenhüttenstadt has required the sensitive employment of original construction materials and the revival of past construction methods.<sup>479</sup> The process of transforming the city and town centres of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt respectively into sources of civic pride and local identity has, therefore, necessarily required the faithful conservation of 1950s architecture, forging a link between historical preservation and present and future urban development.

In order to achieve large-scale restoration and urban restructuring, and to align 1950s architecture with reconceived notions of identity in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt, it has been necessary to work at changing people's attitudes towards the post-war built environment. Le Havre's inhabitants have always had a difficult relationship with the city centre's 1950s architecture, because the initial reconstruction process was led by a team of Parisian-based architects 'considérée comme une sorte de corps étranger' and which was, as a result, 'rejetée presque immédiatement par la population comme quelque chose d'étranger à la culture de la ville'.<sup>480</sup> Almost as soon as construction started, the new architecture was othered and alienated

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<sup>476</sup> Since the *Wende*, Eisenhüttenstadt's population has almost halved and as a result, in the early 2000s, some of the apartment blocks in Wohnkomplexe I to IV were up to sixty per cent vacant. Wolfgang Kil, 'Das schwierige Denkmal', *Der Freitag*, 4 January 2008 <<http://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/das-schwierige-denkmal>> [accessed 26 February 2014].

<sup>477</sup> Stadt Eisenhüttenstadt, *Stadt Eisenhüttenstadt Integrierte Stadtentwicklungskonzeption* (Potsdam: Brandenburgische Beratungsgesellschaft für Stadterneuerung und Modernisierung, 2008) <[http://eisenhuettenstadt.de/Stadtentwicklung/INSEK-Beschlussfass09-2008\\_Teil1.pdf?phpMyAdmin=qJMr6MjYP-RaxiaHL80-Vj-Gii7](http://eisenhuettenstadt.de/Stadtentwicklung/INSEK-Beschlussfass09-2008_Teil1.pdf?phpMyAdmin=qJMr6MjYP-RaxiaHL80-Vj-Gii7)> [accessed 26 February 2014] (p. 10).

<sup>478</sup> Kil, 'Das schwierige Denkmal' <<http://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/das-schwierige-denkmal>> [accessed 26 February 2014].

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Joseph Abram, 'Le Havre: du rejet à la fierté: le destin singulier d'une reconstruction', in *Architectures et patrimoines du XXe siècle "de l'indifférence à la reconnaissance"* (CAUE de Loire-Atlantique: Nantes, 2009), 60-71 (p. 63) [on CD]. This contrasts very neatly with the reconstruction experience in nearby Caen, which, led by Parisian architect Marc Brillaud de Laujardière, was perceived as an immediate success by local residents.

as a world apart from the old city and its inhabitants. Compounding the rapidity with which the city had been destroyed just a few days before its liberation during the Second World War, reconstruction therefore initiated a long-felt nostalgia for the pre-war city.<sup>481</sup> As a consequence, Le Havre's reconstruction architecture continued to be criticized on the grounds of its 'morne uniformité' and 'austere géométrie' for almost fifty years, 'dénigrée pour son aspect "stalinien" s'amalgamant à une équipe municipale communiste, élue après la reconstruction (1965-1995)'.<sup>482</sup> From the 1960s onwards, Le Havre's architectural style thus acquired explicitly political overtones, modernity becoming synonymous with Stalinist communism. Adopting the same vocabulary with rather more justification, local residents of Eisenhüttenstadt have equally had to be convinced of the cultural value of a post-war architecture 'die unlängst noch als "stalinistischer Zuckerbäckerstil" verspottet worden war'.<sup>483</sup> In both Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt, this transformation has been underpinned by a patrimonial reframing of architectural modernity as culturally valuable, despite negative politicization and the pejorative associations with the later-built concrete *grands ensembles* and *Großwohnsiedlungen* of the larger French and German cities.<sup>484</sup> In this way, counter-memory is not just about rewriting personal, localized memories into French and German cultural memory, as is the case at the Musée Tousseau and Peine exhibition (see chapter three), but is about changing popular attitudes towards 1950s architecture.

The counter-memorial recognition of the localities' architectural heritages has been driven by the implementation of a number of key cultural policies aimed specifically at younger, non-experiential generations, who are seen to hold less prejudice and thus have the potential for greater aesthetic appreciation of 1950s architecture.<sup>485</sup> The city of Le Havre has sought to build on the architectural reappropriation of Auguste Perret and Structural Classicism (initiated by a series of key specialist publications and exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s) by adopting a clear pedagogical strategy aimed at re-educating local inhabitants about the specific

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<sup>481</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre: la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret* <[http://unesco.lehavre.fr/Dossier\\_de\\_presse.pdf](http://unesco.lehavre.fr/Dossier_de_presse.pdf)> [accessed 19 February 2014] (p. 5).

<sup>482</sup> *La Réponse de l'architecte: les intérieurs chez Auguste Perret*, dir. by Matthieu Simon, voiceover by Xavier Perier (Château-Rouge, 2008) [on DVD]; Chauvin and Gencey, 'Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne', p. 244.

<sup>483</sup> Kil, 'Das schwierige Denkmal' <<http://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/das-schwierige-denkmal>> [accessed 26 February 2014]. 'Zuckerbäckerstil' refers to grandiose, wedding cake-style architecture, where buildings have distinct tiers.

<sup>484</sup> Chauvin and Gencey, 'Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne', p. 244.

<sup>485</sup> Interview with Elisabeth Chauvin in *La Réponse de l'architecte* [on DVD].

characteristics of Le Havre's reconstruction heritage.<sup>486</sup> In 1997, a poster campaign was launched entitled 'Ma ville aujourd'hui' where photographs of local scenes were displayed on large posters around the city. The campaign's aim was to 'resituer géographiquement et dans la mémoire commune un fourmillement de détails issus du patrimoine architectural havrais', engaging local people in a shared appreciation of the city's architecture through the message 'regardez le Havre d'aujourd'hui; vous pouvez être fier de votre ville'.<sup>487</sup> This was followed by a second campaign entitled 'Laissez-vous conter Le Havre' organized by the Ville d'art et d'histoire service, as well as the inauguration of six different exhibitions in 2002 alone around the theme 'Le Havre, ville réinventée', which were visited by around seventy thousand people. The year 2002 was so significant in terms of the number of Auguste Perret-related heritage activities and the local reappropriation of Le Havre's architecture that it was 'baptisée localement "année Perret"'.<sup>488</sup> Since then, the city has continued to engage the local community in the heritagization of its reconstruction architecture through additional temporary exhibitions and the expansion of its guided tours programme. This expressly personal approach is of particular importance in the re-education process, since it allows guides to pass on their enthusiasm and expertise to local people, so that they are able to understand and appreciate architectural detail in the reconstructed city centre:

La première phase de médiation a permis de cibler quelques édifices majeurs pour en détailler la construction, les modes de fabrication, les techniques et le parti architectural: la plupart des habitants n'avaient pas remarqué que les bâtiments reposaient sur des colonnes ou que le béton n'était pas uniformément gris... Cette première étape de réappropriation n'est pourtant pas le simple fait d'une volonté ou d'une méthode mais elle relate aussi une capacité des publics à distinguer (différencier) cette architecture.<sup>489</sup>

This level of identification is equalled in the guided tours in the Appartement témoin, where guides highlight aspects of Perret's style, such as the original concrete column in the apartment's hallway. Whereas such columns were often plastered over by residents in the post-war period through to the 1980s, many residents now recognize them as décor in their own

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<sup>486</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre, la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: Proposition d'inscription du centre reconstruit du Havre sur la liste du patrimoine mondial*, p. 113.

<sup>487</sup> Direction de la communication de la Mairie du Havre, cited in Béatrice Galinon-Méléneq, 'Voiles et dévoilements du Havre', *Communication et organisation*, 32 (2007), 64-79 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4000/communicationorganisation.310>> (p. 72).

<sup>488</sup> Ville du Havre, *Le Havre, la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret: Proposition d'inscription du centre reconstruit du Havre sur la liste du patrimoine mondial*, p. 115.

<sup>489</sup> Chauvin and Gencey, 'Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne', pp. 246-47.

right and are opting to strip them down to their original concrete finish, as is the case at the *Appartement témoin*.<sup>490</sup>

In Eisenhüttenstadt, the process of revaluing the 1950s town centre has been less about architectural appreciation and more about achieving a suitable balance between remaining faithful to historical monument status and the preservation of the town's architectural integrity on the one hand, and meeting the needs of the city's current population on the other. As local resident and architect Gabriele Haubold explains:

94 Hektar, das größte Denkmalensemble dieser Art deutschlandweit! Davon 39 Objekte nochmals einzeln gelistet, was soll denn da alles rein? Wir können nicht aus jeder Kita ein DDR-Museum machen. Andererseits: Wenn die Weinert-Schule zum Callcenter wird – was bleibt dann noch vom Original?<sup>491</sup>

Haubold's view highlights a particular issue in the reappropriation of post-war architecture, that whilst it needs to be reassessed according to its architectural merit, it must also fulfil a function in present-day municipal life. In order to ensure the continued use-value of 1950s and 1960s residential buildings in the town centre, the increase in rents of renovated apartment blocks has been limited to €1.80 per square metre, so that the apartments are still affordable for local residents.<sup>492</sup> This suggests that patrimonialization and counter-memory is more than a shift in aesthetic sensibility and is underwritten by a recognition of the grassroots social and economic value of cultural heritage.

The heritagization of the post-war centres of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt and the use of 1950s architecture as a basis for renewed senses of identity and civic pride has wider significance in the construction of new founding myths. Whereas, until recently, Le Havre epitomized French national suffering during the Second World War and the immediate post-war period (not only because of the material and civilian cost of the Allied air raids in 1944, but also because of the painful liberation process at the hands of American GIs in 1945), it is now seen as a globally significant site of post-war architecture and urbanism.<sup>493</sup> Rather than

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<sup>490</sup> See *La Réponse de l'architecte* [on DVD].

<sup>491</sup> Gabriele Haubold, quoted in Kil, 'Das schwierige Denkmal' <<http://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/das-schwierige-denkmal>> [accessed 26 February 2014]. Haubold is alluding to the Eisenhüttenstadt museum which is sited in an old *Kita* (*Kindertagesstätte*) or day care facility for children.

<sup>492</sup> Kil, 'Das schwierige Denkmal' <<http://www.freitag.de/autoren/der-freitag/das-schwierige-denkmal>> [accessed 26 February 2014].

<sup>493</sup> UNESCO, 'Le Havre, la ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret', *UNESCO* <<http://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/1181/>> [accessed 4 March 2014]. For more information on the city's liberation, see Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

seeing 1944 as the end of an old way of life and social order in Le Havre and France's history, tourists and local people alike are encouraged to view the reconstruction as a watershed and defining moment in the city and nation's rebirth. This narrative attests to the local resilience of the people of Le Havre and is used as the basis for a new local founding myth and sense of local identity, but also supports a national narrative of reconstruction hailing the advent of the *Trente Glorieuses*. In short, by transforming the 1950s into a globally significant heritage-scape, local and national narratives of suffering have essentially been forgotten and overwritten by those of success. Similarly, whereas Eisenhüttenstadt once represented one of the last vestiges of SED control and central planning, not to mention East German heavy industry, its architectural quality and significance now mean that it is a 'komplexes Denkmal der DDR-Geschichte', taking on the role of a significant historical narrative in post-unification Germany.<sup>494</sup> The reclamation of the forgotten 1950s in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt can, therefore, be understood as a means of transforming more problematic historical narratives into positive founding myths and using these as the basis for local, regional, national and global identities in order to achieve increased cultural recognition.

#### **4.4 Mimesis and 'Hyperreality'**

Just as Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt are transformed from nondescript places into cultural heritage-scapes through patrimonialization and tourism, museum display in the *Appartement témoin* and *Historische Wohnung* is, to borrow Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's words, 'an interface that mediates and thereby transforms what is shown into heritage' for visitors.<sup>495</sup> Although heritage appears to be an authentic remnant of the past, it is a new 'mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past'.<sup>496</sup> By conflating historical actuality with the strategies and techniques employed to represent this, museum display elides the distinction between the *Appartement témoin* and *Historische Wohnung* (the sites of heritage production) and the wider architecture of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt, just as it also elides the distinction between the 1950s and their representation in the museums.<sup>497</sup> The *Appartement témoin* and

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<sup>494</sup> Thomas Topfstedt, 'Abschied von der Utopie: Zur städtebaulichen Entwicklung Eisenhüttenstadts seit Mitte der fünfziger Jahre', in *Aufbau West – Aufbau Ost: Die Planstädte Wolfsburg und Eisenhüttenstadt in der Nachkriegszeit*, ed. by Rosmarie Beier (Ostfildern: Gerd Hatje, 1997) <[http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/aufbau\\_west\\_ost/katlg10.htm](http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/aufbau_west_ost/katlg10.htm)> [accessed 4 March 2014] (para 19. of 21).

<sup>495</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 7.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid.

Historische Wohnung are thus reimagined through glacial time by being cast into a heritage performance, in which museum representation is likened to the ‘real thing’.

As convincing historical reconstructions of 1950s time-space, the museums conform to a particular mode of representation that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett terms ‘in-situ display’. This refers to a specific ‘immersive and environmental’ way of exhibiting objects in situ as part of ‘mimetic re-creations of settings’.<sup>498</sup> These include displays, such as period rooms and dioramas, which appear as ‘slice[s] of life lifted from the everyday world and inserted into the museum’.<sup>499</sup> Such displays have a tendency to present narratives and cultures as coherent entities. By foregrounding ‘the quotidian as spectacle’ and ‘building the role of the observer into the structure of events’, they privilege visitor experience over historical context.<sup>500</sup> Both the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung represent mimetic displays of recreated post-war domestic spaces, the Appartement témoin reconstructed according to the kinds of apartments presented to the citizens of Le Havre in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the Historische Wohnung constituting the reimagining of a specific model socialist apartment from 1957.<sup>501</sup> In the same way that the Appartement témoin adopts the approach of an ‘histoire retrouvée’ of post-war architecture and design in Le Havre, the Historische Wohnung is presented as an unmediated encounter with the way of life typical in Eisenhüttenstadt at the end of the 1950s.<sup>502</sup>

The 1950s are narrated through glacial time in both apartments, where the in-situ displays ‘recreate a virtual world’ to which visitors are transported.<sup>503</sup> Like a time capsule, this appears to be perfectly preserved from the past. Although clear attempts are made to signal to visitors that the apartments are only reconstructions — the catalogue to the Appartement témoin stating that it is ‘simplement la reconstitution d’un modèle d’autrefois’ and a wall text in the Historische Wohnung instructing visitors that ‘es handelt sich um eine Rekonstruktion, nicht um eine Originalwohnung’ — the spaces have been staged in such a way as to make them seem

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<sup>498</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, pp. xxi-3.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>501</sup> Elisabeth Chauvin and Pierre Gencey, ‘Le spectacle du logement ordinaire et la normalisation du quotidien dans les appartements-types de la reconstruction’, in *La Reconstruction en Normandie et en Basse-Saxe après la seconde guerre mondiale: Histoire, mémoires et patrimoines de deux régions européennes*, ed. by Corinne Bouillot (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2013), pp. 179-97 (p. 179).

<sup>502</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartements témoins de la Reconstruction du Havre*, p. 7; Oder-Neiße-Journal, ‘Ausstellung “Historische Wohnung der 50er Jahre” wieder geöffnet’, *Oder-Neiße-Journal*, 31 March 2011 <<http://www.oder-neisse-info.de/berichte/1301543926.php>> [accessed 4 March 2014].

<sup>503</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 4.

historically accurate and authentic.<sup>504</sup> Through the careful *mise en scène* of décor and objects, the museums give the impression of being inhabited, as though people were still living in the 1950s and ‘où le temps semble comme suspendu’.<sup>505</sup> This is reinforced by both sites in museum literature and wall texts. In the *Appartement témoin*’s exhibition catalogue, the museum is presented as a faithful recreation of the prototype apartments presented by the Perret-led architectural team in the post-war period. By drawing the apartment into comparison with the initial model apartments presented in the late 1940s, the apartment is conceived effectively as an authentic historical artefact, which has been restored ‘en état d’origine’.<sup>506</sup> A wall text in the *Historische Wohnung* equally highlights the curatorial attempt to reinstate the apartment ‘soweit wie möglich in ihrem ursprünglichen Zustand’. In so doing, both apartments are set up as faithful, historically authentic recreations of real homes or show homes of the 1950s.

Visits to the two museums take place on an exclusively guided tour basis, with tours being undertaken mostly in small groups by professional ‘guides-conférenciers’ employed by the city of Le Havre and front of house staff from the *Eisenhüttenstadt* museum respectively. Particularly in the case of the *Appartement témoin*, this specific approach to interpretation is a key part of the museological aim to reunite the interior and exterior, where the guides provide important historical context about post-war everyday life and highlight specific design features.<sup>507</sup> To this end, the *Appartement témoin* is presented to visitors almost as a show home, which plays on the origins of this particular type of apartment as a model *appartement-type*, reminiscent of the format of an estate-agent led house viewing. Unlike in traditional ‘hands-off’ museums, both sites are envisaged as participatory spaces, where visitors are actively encouraged to interact with the *mise en scène* and handle and engage with objects according to their own preferences. This means there is an element of personal choice regarding experiential engagement which allows those visitors without first-hand experience of the 1950s (and particularly 1950s Le Havre and *Eisenhüttenstadt*) to interact with the spaces. It also enables visitors to determine the process and dynamics of remembering, attaching their own experiences and memories to the sites and the visit, and investing them with meaning. For Urry, such museum spaces are symptomatic of a cultural and museological ‘shift as being “from aura to nostalgia”’, where visitors are no longer expected to stand in awe at museum objects, but are

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<sup>504</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartements témoins de la Reconstruction du Havre*, p. 95.

<sup>505</sup> Olivier Bassine, ‘L’appartement témoin d’Auguste Perret’, *Le Havre Infos*, 18 July 2011 <<http://www.lehavreinfos.fr/2011/08/08/lappartement-temoin-dauguste-perret/>> [accessed 5 March 2014].

<sup>506</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartements témoins de la Reconstruction du Havre*, p. 15.

<sup>507</sup> Chauvin, ‘Le Havre, ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret’, p. 52.

encouraged, rather, to participate in the museum experience.<sup>508</sup> Because of this, visitors often feel more at ease to exchange memories and opinions with others and the guides. Direct visitor communication is actively encouraged and transforms the museums into sites of communicative as well as cultural memory. This level of interaction renders visits to the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung quasi-theatrical in the sense that both visitors and guides are involved in a heritage performance with the spaces.<sup>509</sup>

Alongside guided tours, visitors are encouraged to participate in the Appartement témoin during special cultural events. In this sense, the apartment is not only envisaged as a museum, but also an arts venue, where photographers, choreographers and other artists provide a cultural complement to the traditional ‘approche de l’historien’.<sup>510</sup> It is during themed cultural and artistic events with costumed actors that the apartment is at its most mimetic as an in-situ installation.<sup>511</sup> For the last few years, Valérie Lecoq, in addition to leading the ‘rétr’ autocar’ tours around Le Havre, has been invited to perform her ‘Pièces de vie’ show in the Appartement témoin. Dressed as a 1950s housewife, she provides visitors with ‘une immersion totale et perturbante’ in French everyday life in the post-war period:

une mère de famille reçoit chez elle. Surprise “en plein ménage”, elle fait visiter avec fierté son appartement reconstruit et fait découvrir la vie quotidienne des femmes au foyer, “des ménagères” [...] Madame raconte, fait découvrir les nouveautés de l’époque: arts ménagers, Carambars et shampoing DOP... Des récits enthousiastes et amusants qui se trament avec les souvenirs et les douleurs de la guerre [...] une mise en scène dynamique où les spectateurs sont priés d’intervenir.<sup>512</sup>

By narrating the everyday through a live historical figure and incorporating visitors into the script of the show and responding to them in real time, the show encourages visitors to physically relive and re-enact the post-war period.<sup>513</sup> Straitjacketing the tourist gaze according to a ‘panoptic mode’, this form of live display creates ‘the illusion that the activities you watch are being done rather than represented, a practice that creates the effect of authenticity, or realness.’<sup>514</sup> Rather than being a representation of everyday life in the 1950s, the Appartement

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<sup>508</sup> Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 130.

<sup>509</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 3.

<sup>510</sup> Chauvin and Gencey, ‘Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne’, p. 248.

<sup>511</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 3.

<sup>512</sup> Paris Normandie, “‘Pièces de vie’”, une époque épatante au Havre’, *Paris Normandie*, 29 June 2011.

<sup>513</sup> Compagnie du Piano à Pouces, “‘Une époque épatante’ Opus 2 de ‘Pièces de vie’ sur la vie dans les années 50’ <<http://pianoapouces.artblog.fr/110597/>

Une-epoque-epatante-Opus-2-de-Pieces-de-Vies-sur-la-vie-dans-les-annees-50/> [accessed 5 March 2014].

<sup>514</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 55.



témoin, therefore, becomes an embodiment of everyday life in the 1950s, where ‘le faux se mêle au vrai’ and the musealized version of the 1950s becomes indistinguishable from the actual historical time period.<sup>515</sup> By playing a ‘typical’ post-war French housewife and discussing well-known objects and brands of the period, Lecoq is also conforming to a highly stereotyped vision of the 1950s. Performances such as these are, therefore, not concerned with narrating the 1950s as they were experienced in everyday life, or rewriting more marginal narratives of the roles of women in a process of counter-memory, but, rather, presenting an idealized version of the past that is designed to conform to visitors’ expectations. In this way, the performance is recognized as ‘authentic’ because it is consistent with the image of the highly maternal, domestic realm of the 1950s that has filtered through into the French popular imagination and which has been reappropriated through retro and vintage.

The reimagining of the two sites according to a chronotope of glacial time can be seen as attempt to impose historical authenticity on a musealized and heritized version of the 1950s. However, as Umberto Eco explains, ‘in the drive to reproduce the past in a suitably vivid way, historicity is eroded’, bringing about a shift from (real) historical authenticity to (simulated) visual authenticity.<sup>516</sup> With the display and re-enactment of the post-war past in situ where historical reality and fiction are conflated, the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung effectively become hyper-real sites.<sup>517</sup> The fact that the apartments are dedicated to a relatively recent historical past serves only to intensify this hyper-reality, since all visitors are familiar with iconography of the 1950s, either through first-hand experience or mediatized filmic or televisual interpretations of the period, and are therefore able to confirm what they are presented with as historically authentic. As one visitor to the Historische Wohnung comments: ‘wenn man in ein Mittelaltermuseum geht, braucht man Fantasie, um sich das vorzustellen [...] hier sind es ganz realistische Erinnerungen und Erlebnisse, die man damit verbindet.’<sup>518</sup> In other words, because the sites conform to expectations, they are confirmed and ‘recognized as “historical”’ and subsequently ‘garbed in authenticity’.<sup>519</sup> The Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung are all the more hyper-real since the ‘reality’ exhibited in the

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<sup>515</sup> Chauvin and Gencey, ‘Le Paysage et les détails dans une ville moderne’, p. 248.

<sup>516</sup> Umberto Eco, *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. by William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 16.

<sup>517</sup> This is a distinctly postmodernist reading. In the postmodern consumer society, ‘hyper-reality’ refers to the modes through which representations emerge without original referents. As such, the representations become more ‘real’ than the originals. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Galilée, 1981).

<sup>518</sup> Kerstin Schönborn, quoted in Katrin Röper, ‘Historische Wohnung bald dicht’, *Märkische Onlinezeitung*, 10 June 2011 <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/316576>> [accessed 5 March 2014].

<sup>519</sup> Eco, p. 30.

apartments conforms to Jean Baudrillard's definition of hyper-reality as being without specific 'origine ni réalité'.<sup>520</sup> Rather than being a recreation of a particular family's apartment, the Appartement témoin is based on an idealized, utopian idea of the domestic comfort that 'ordinary' reconstruction housing could provide in the late 1940s and 1950s, as was promoted at the time.<sup>521</sup> Similarly, according to an information booklet in the apartment, the Historische Wohnung is envisaged as a curatorial interpretation of GDR housing in 1950s Eisenhüttenstadt that was a combination of 'gesellschaftliche Utopie und gebaute Realität'.<sup>522</sup> Complete with rare domestic luxuries such as indoor toilets, bathrooms and central heating, 1950s-built apartments such as the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung moreover proved to be beyond the financial reach of many of their intended inhabitants, meaning the way of life that they were supposed to facilitate was never a reality for a large number of people. In the absence of specific historical frames of reference, this hyper-reality is, therefore, based on simulation rather than reflection: 'il ne s'agit plus d'imitation, ni de redoublement, ni meme de parodie. Il s'agit d'une substitution au reel des signes du réel.'<sup>523</sup> Understood in this way, the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung produce a hyper-reality based on the museums as simulacra rather than mere reflections or recreations of historical realities.

#### 4.5 Object Memories

Everyday objects are significant as memory icons of the 1950s and appear to preserve this past by carrying what Urry refers to as 'memory-traces which signify glacial time.'<sup>524</sup> Despite the clear differences between Urry's study and mine, everyday objects simulate the effect of continuity that he describes in relation to permanently fixed objects such as trees and buildings. Having acquired socio-cultural significance through everyday practice, objects are used alone and as part of ensembles in the two apartments to create a narrative of glacial time, through which everyday life in the 1950s is mediated. As markers of glacial time, such objects constitute material proof for museum visitors of the ever-present nature of the time-space of the 1950s in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt. Products of a specific cultural context, such objects are moreover symbolic of a double resurrection of everyday life: first in the 1950s as

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<sup>520</sup> Baudrillard, p. 10.

<sup>521</sup> Elisabeth Chauvin and Pierre Gencey, "L'appartement témoin Perret" au Havre: Un idéal moderne et démocratique au service d'une œuvre urbaine globale', *Histoire urbaine*, 20 (2007), 39-54 (p. 39).

<sup>522</sup> *Wohnstadt – Stalinstadt – Eisenhüttenstadt* [information booklet to be consulted in the Historische Wohnung].

<sup>523</sup> Baudrillard, p. 11.

<sup>524</sup> Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, p. 140.

the increasing availability of consumer goods and the end of rationing signalled a return to ‘normal’ life following the Second World War; and second in the present day as 1950s material culture becomes a means of revaluing Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt’s post-war heritage.

In both museums, glacial time provides a spatio-temporal framework for the narrativization of everyday life in the 1950s. Everyday objects are transformed from commonplace items to historical witnesses to the growing economic prosperity and cultural renaissance of the 1950s in France and East Germany respectively. As objects and ensembles in the Historische Wohnung reflect the improved standard of life brought about by the construction of socialist model towns as ‘Vorzeigobjekte’ of GDR design and construction, they are used in the Appartement témoin to immerse visitors in the atmosphere of the *Trente Glorieuses* and ‘dans un Havre renaissant sous le signe de l’espérance’.<sup>525</sup> Culturally coded as emblems of post-war modernity and progress, such objects take on narrative significance that extends beyond their initial material functions. In both sites, for instance, fitted kitchens with gas appliances serve to highlight the rationalization of cooking in the 1950s and the exhibition of an American Frigidaire refrigerator in the Appartement témoin and Kristall refrigerator (manufactured by Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB) dkk Scharfenstein) in the Historische Wohnung from a time when only a very small percentage of the French and East German populations had access to such an appliance serves to highlight the apartments as design exceptions.<sup>526</sup> This is echoed in the bathroom exhibits in the two apartments, which, both indoors and fully fitted, reflect a standard of living exceptionally high with regard to the average national experience in 1950s France and East Germany. Although still fitting into an overarching narrative of national consumerist modernity during the 1950s, the exhibition of such objects serves to highlight the atypicality of everyday life in post-war Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt.

At the same time, the museums present ways of life during the 1950s that appear to be largely consistent with other national and transnational retrospectives. Although the apartments indicate that major domestic innovations were made in French and East German post-war kitchens and bathrooms, both sites foreground the living room as the principal hub of familial life in the 1950s. According to literature accompanying the Appartement témoin, ‘le living-

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<sup>525</sup> *Wohnen und Leben in Eisenhüttenstadt: Historische Wohnung der 50er Jahre* [visitor leaflet]; Chantal Ernoult, quoted in Ville du Havre, *Appartement témoin Perret: Objets choisis* (Bonsecours: Point de vues, 2008).

<sup>526</sup> Only twenty-five out of every one hundred households in France owned a refrigerator at the beginning of the 1960s. This figure was lower still in the GDR at a mere twelve out of every one hundred households. Jean-Pierre Rioux, cited in Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 150; Statistisches Jahrbuch des Lebensstandards 1966, cited in Burghard Ciesla and Patrice G. Poutrus, ‘Food Supply in a Planned Economy: SED Nutrition Policy between Crisis Response and Popular Needs’, in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. by Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Berghahn, 1999), pp. 143-62 (p. 153).

room suscite un intérêt nouveau' in 1950s France, 'regroupant salle à manger et salon'.<sup>527</sup> Similarly, according to a wall text in the Historische Wohnung's living room, 'anstelle des Esstisches als zentraler Platz für die Familie setzte sich mehr und mehr die Couchecke durch'. This resonates with many other museum representations of 1950s living rooms (see chapters four and five) and retrospective scholarly reflections on post-war design in West Germany.<sup>528</sup> Despite the pervasive image of the 1950s as a consumption boom and the numerous new electrical items and appliances that it brought, the fact that neither the living room in the Appartement témoin nor that in the Historische Wohnung contains a television suggests that the radio remained the principal leisure time object in 'normal', everyday French and East German households in the 1950s. This is a narrative which is also sustained in other museum representations of the period (see chapter six). Although both apartments thematize clothing and fashion through the exhibition of specific garments, there is an important difference between the French and East German experiences with regards to clothing manufacture. Whereas the Appartement témoin exhibits predominantly off-the-peg clothing, contributing to a narrative of clothing purchase in 1950s France, the Historische Wohnung places emphasis on the importance of making clothing by hand in GDR households. According to a wall text positioned in relation to the sewing machine in the master bedroom, making clothing by hand and altering existing garments at home was popular in the GDR and in other countries not only for financial reasons, but also because of the limited availability of women's and children's clothing in particular. This represents a marked difference from the French post-war experience of prêt-à-porter wear, but resonates in particular with the narrative of West German households making their own clothes sustained at the Peine exhibition (see chapter three). The comparison which the curators of the Historische Wohnung draw between everyday experience in the GDR and in other countries during the 1950s through a narrative of sewing can be seen as an attempt to show that shortages were common to post-war societies on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

Artefacts on display at the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung are able to convey a sense of glacial time as repositories and triggers of memory. Visitors' perceptions of these memories function on three different levels: the 'réminiscence de souvenirs personnels ou familiaux', the 'impression de "déjà-vu"' relating to mediatised iconography of the 1950s, and finally the 'transposition référencée au contexte particulier' of the post-war period in the

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<sup>527</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartement témoin Perret: Objets choisis*.

<sup>528</sup> Wodarz claims that the living room was also the most important room in West German homes in the 1950s. *Nierentisch und Petticoat: Ein Bummel durch die 50er Jahre* (Oldenburg: Isensee, 2003), p. 81.

specific localities of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt.<sup>529</sup> As visitors to both sites are able to interact with the spaces, objects can be re-experienced by visitors through the sensory functions of touch and smell, which can provide the basis for an emotional engagement with the 1950s. In this way, the apartments can be understood as sites not only promoting and producing voluntary memory, as people may visit the sites in a very deliberate attempt to remember the past, but also involuntary memory, as memory cues can lead to spontaneous, sensory-led recollection. Visitors may, therefore, make a connection, as Proust notes in relation to his infamous madeleine episode, ‘tout d’un coup’ during the museum visit, or a delayed one afterwards, between the objects on display and their personal past experiences.<sup>530</sup>

Objects exhibited at the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung can relate to individuals’ personal memories or collages of memory as memory icons, where they represent retainers of the past contexts in which the same or similar objects were appropriated and embodiments of the associative memories of those who used them. The quasi-personification of the museum spaces through certain objects means that visitors are able to make memorial connections to their family members, creating a link between their personal biographies and those of the apartments (see chapter three). Visitors to the Appartement témoin, for instance, have noted in the museum’s guest book how the space reminds them and even takes them back to the houses of their grandparents and great-grandparents, and a visitor to the Historische Wohnung has made a similar comment that when looking at certain objects, she immediately thinks: ‘Ach, meine Tante.’<sup>531</sup> This is strengthened through sensory perception, where certain smells trigger particular sensory memories. The comment that the ‘Duft erinnert an frühere Zeit, wie bei Oma’, for instance, transports the visitor back to the place of origin of that smell.<sup>532</sup> What is significant in the memorial connection to exhibited artefacts is the ‘persönliche[r] Bezug, den man zum Tisch, zum Schrank, zur Lampe oder zur Gardine hat’ and the ‘Wiedererkennungswert’ of such items.<sup>533</sup> It is through this personal recognition that memory icons in the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung have the capacity to elicit memory recall, providing the basis for spontaneous memory work and a deeper, more experiential engagement with the post-war past. For former East German visitors, this may be

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<sup>529</sup> Chauvin, ‘Le Havre, ville reconstruite par Auguste Perret’, p. 52.

<sup>530</sup> Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), I, p. 46.

<sup>531</sup> Signed entries in Appartement témoin Perret Guest Book, 2011; Schönborn, quoted in Röper, ‘Historische Wohnung bald dicht’ <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/316576>> [accessed 5 March 2014].

<sup>532</sup> Entry in Historische Wohnung Guest Book, cited in Röper, ‘Historische Wohnung bald dicht’ <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/316576>> [accessed 5 March 2014].

<sup>533</sup> Röper, ‘Historische Wohnung bald dicht’ <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/316576>> [accessed 5 March 2014].

particularly important in enabling people to lay claim to a sense of ‘normality’ of life in a state which no longer exists and whose memory discourse has been subject to much political exploitation. For one visitor, the Historische Wohnung provides a means of remembering her fond childhood in Eisenhüttenstadt in the 1950s, which despite the GDR’s vilification in the immediate post-unification period, was ‘schön, unabhängig von allem Politischen’.<sup>534</sup> In this way, memory icons and their *mise en scène* provide the basis for reminiscence and a means of reimagining the GDR niche. For another visitor (and presumably local resident), the Historische Wohnung represents an important ‘Ossipark’ attraction, where ‘Oldies’ can indulge in ‘DDR-Nostalgie’.<sup>535</sup> By drawing on their memories and experiences of the GDR, such visitors use memory work to ‘reconfigure heritage sites’ such as the Historische Wohnung as heritage-scapes and spaces of nostalgia, and to promote a continued East German identity based, to use Urry’s words, on a ‘cultural sense of a national imagined presence’.<sup>536</sup> Although this is initially prompted by a reinvestment in the *Alltag*, the reappropriation of the GDR through *Ostalgie* in effect elevates these memories above the realm of the everyday, where they are mythicized and fetishized as part of an idealized, imagined past.

For younger and foreign visitors, the *mise en scène* of the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung can play a significant role in confirming prosthetic memories pertaining to the 1950s that they have acquired through retrospective cultural representations of the period. Based on a specific iconography of the 1950s that has been sustained through retro, vintage and kitsch, these representations relate to communal myths of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* and feed into a wider global discourse on the 1950s as a boom period. The exhibition of material icons of these myths, such as radios, Bakelite telephones, *Nierentische* and *Kittelschürze* gives visitors the impression of déjà-vu, creating a link between the mediatized 1950s to which they have been exposed and the 1950s presented at the two sites.<sup>537</sup> This retrospective narrative which has been imposed on the 1950s can be seen in responses to the Appartement témoin in particular, such as a newspaper report which finds that ‘tout est vintage’ and a comment in the museum’s guest book that a visitor ‘adore le vintage et

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<sup>534</sup> Schönborn, quoted in Röper, ‘Historische Wohnung bald dicht’ <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/316576>> [accessed 5 March 2014]. This confirms Paul Betts’s thesis that the private, familial sphere of the GDR was largely untouched by the state in the 1950s. See Paul Betts, ‘Building Socialism at Home: the Case of East German Interiors’, in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), pp. 96-132 (p. 122).

<sup>535</sup> Dause, ‘schade, schade’, online comment on ‘Historische Wohnung bald dicht’ article, 13 June 2011 <<http://www.moz.de/artikel-ansicht/dg/0/1/316576>> [accessed 11 March 2014].

<sup>536</sup> Martin Selby, ‘People-Place-Past: The Visitor Experience of Cultural Heritage’, in *Culture, Heritage and Representation*, pp. 39-55 (p. 44); Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 158.

<sup>537</sup> *Kittelschürze* are women’s brightly coloured sleeveless overalls that were popular in the GDR.

le retro [sic]'.<sup>538</sup> Within this 'retroification' of the 1950s, objects become the focal points of visitor attention and 'ces petits rien dépassent leur statuts d'objets pour être admirés comme des vedettes'.<sup>539</sup> This is reinforced by the museums, where wall texts and literature single out specific objects, such as the Olympia radio in the living room of the Historische Wohnung and the Bakelite telephone in the living room of the Appartement témoin. The latter has also been the subject of an artistic reinterpretation of Jean Cocteau's play *La Voix humaine* by photographer Pascal Monteil, which has now been turned into a museum brochure.<sup>540</sup> Artistically reimagined as the key object of the play, the telephone in the Appartement témoin is thus fetishized and transformed from being an everyday object into the 'seul lien tangible avec l'Autre' and 'l'outil d'une destruction cachée derrière l'illusion d'une dernière conversation'.<sup>541</sup>

Embedded within their contexts of manufacture and use, artefacts exhibited at the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung are products and culturally mnemonic markers of national and local design trends. In both museums and accompanying wall texts and literature, there is a strong emphasis on the provenance of the objects on display, many of which were donated by local people. A wall text in the Historische Wohnung draws attention to the fact that the double bed (manufactured by VEB Ostthüringer Möbelwerke Zeulenroda) exhibited in the main bedroom was purchased by the donor on the occasion of his and his wife's tenth wedding anniversary in 1956 from a furniture shop in Bernau (Brandenburg). Incorporating such detail in the apartment serves to re-personalize and re-contextualize the objects, situating them and the museums within the local area. Whilst all the objects exhibited in the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung are in some way emblematic of international designs and construction methods in the 1950s, they are also represented as highly particular to national tendencies, and in the case of the Appartement témoin, specifically local design in Le Havre. Items of modular furniture are shown in both museums, for instance, and whilst pertaining to a transnational narrative of post-war prefabricated design, are also anchored within the more specific cultural memories of the GDR and Le Havre respectively. The 602-series sectional side-unit (designed by Franz Ehrlich and manufactured by VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau) exhibited in the living room of the Historische Wohnung is

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<sup>538</sup> Paris Normandie, 'Au cœur des années 50', *Paris Normandie*, 2 August 2011; Signed entry in Appartement témoin Perret Guest Book, undated.

<sup>539</sup> Chantal Ernout, quoted in Ville du Havre, *Appartement témoin Perret: Objets choisis*.

<sup>540</sup> *La Voix humaine* is a monologue centred on a telephone conversation which charts the protagonist's emotional breakdown as her former lover relates that he is to marry another woman.

<sup>541</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartement témoin Perret habité par La voix humaine de Pascal Monteil* (Bonsecours: Point de vues, 2008).

cited in an accompanying wall text as ‘stilprägend und in der DDR sehr verbreitet’, representing an icon of GDR design. This narrative is supported by other GDR museums exhibiting this particular piece of furniture (see chapter five). Similarly, in the exhibition catalogue to the *Appartement témoin*, modular furniture, associated with a distinctive French post-war reconstruction style, is discussed as the particular legacy of two designers whose work is featured in the museum: René Gabriel and Le Havre-born Marcel Gascoin.<sup>542</sup> The attention that certain items of their furniture receive in the *Appartement témoin* (guides invariably highlighting the design ingenuity of pieces such as Gascoin’s children’s three-position stool for visitors) stems from a desire to memorialize the largely forgotten designers and their work through counter-memory. It is significant that the majority of secondary literature about these two designers has emerged since the first public recognition of Le Havre’s city centre architectural heritage in the early 2000s, and particularly since the establishment of the *Appartement témoin* in 2006. As design icons, such objects are important not only as a means of narrating reconstruction design in France and specifically Le Havre, but also as a means of rewriting their creators into local and national narratives.<sup>543</sup> Seen in this way, museum artefacts can serve to stem the tide of forgetting; in this case, the prevention of cultural amnesia regarding some of the pioneers of 1950s design.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Analysing the *Appartement témoin* and *Historische Wohnung* through glacial time has revealed the way in which the 1950s are being chronotopically reimagined as a local, national and global heritage-scape in Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt. Providing a means of recapturing the time-space of the 1950s, glacial time represents a narrative framework in which the 1950s are extended semantically and spatio-temporally to form a quasi-eternal sense of the past. Although glacial time seeks to present the 1950s as largely unchanged and prefigured, because it casts the period as a heritage-scape of modernity, this element of fixity is ultimately embedded in a narrative of post-war change and transition, and thus glacial time has the capacity to interpose between stasis and pace. Similarly, although glacial time focuses on the *genius loci* of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt and is concerned with particular historical experiences attached to these places, the imposition of fixity and chronology also serves important national narratives of

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<sup>542</sup> Ville du Havre, *Appartements témoins de la Reconstruction du Havre*, p. 7.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.



progress and development enshrined in the dominant histories of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Aufbau des Sozialismus*.

The museums and the historic centres of Le Havre and Eisenhüttenstadt are historicized and mythicized as glacial heritage-scapes through the counter-memorial processes of patrimonialization, heritagization and tourism. These are used to reinvest in 1950s architecture and interior design, and transform the heritage-scapes into new founding myths and as bases for civic pride and reconceived senses of imagined communities. Because of the national and international recognition and prestige that these heritage-scapes enjoy, this process of reinvestment functions on a local, national and global level. Whereas in other localities and museums counter-memory is used as a way of relegitimizing more personal, localized memories and experiences (see chapter three), these configurations of counter-memory seek to initiate a complete overhaul of popular opinion and aesthetic sensibility concerning 1950s architecture. In this way, this particular form of counter-memory is not so much about rewriting these narratives of architecture and interior design into French and German cultural memory, as overwriting more problematic historical narratives (associated with the Second World War and the SED dictatorship respectively) and replacing them with more positive ones.

Recognized for their post-war architecture and interior design, the museums and the wider localities are reclaimed by both local communities and tourists through heritagization. Everyday objects are transformed into heritage through in-situ display, and through mimesis and metonymy, the apartments are presented as preserved relics of the past. This gives the impression that the sites have simply been rediscovered as opposed to museologically staged. In Le Havre, the widening of guided tours programmes and the artistic mediation of communal myths relating to popular, idealized retrospective narratives of the 1950s moreover encourage visitors to believe that what they are experiencing is an authentic, historically accurate engagement with the past. These curatorially reinforced narratives of authenticity and the performance of heritage create a relationship between the museums and the historical actuality of the 1950s that is one of simulation rather than reflection. As such, the *Appartement témoin* and the wider locality of Le Havre in particular feed into and perpetuate a narrative not of historical reality, but of hyper-reality. At the same time, however, objects exhibited in both museums have the ability to signal glacial time as emblems of post-war modernity and have the potential to generate more spontaneous, organic memory work as haptic interfaces and sensory triggers. Despite the staging of exhibition content as heritage and the questionable authenticity of these sites as heritage-scapes, they have the capacity for a more differentiated,

experiential engagement with the past, because they allow visitors to handle objects and interact with the spaces. It is thus less through public externalization in the form of the museum that historical narratives of the 1950s take on significance at the *Appartement témoin* and *Historische Wohnung* (as is the case at the *Musée Tusseau* and *Peine* exhibition), and more through active visitor participation.

## 5. Monochronous Time

Experiential engagement with the 1950s is being promoted in the growing number of so-called GDR museums devoted to everyday life in the former socialist state. Whereas sites such as *Gedenkstätten*, *Erinnerungsstätten* and other types of ‘memorial museum’ are concerned with the more repressive elements of the SED regime, GDR museums typically thematize the more commonplace occurrences and quotidian realities of the East German *Alltag*, centred on the memories and experiences of ‘normal’ people and everyday objects.<sup>544</sup> These differing approaches have led to a frequently articulated polarization between those museums seen to highlight the injustices of the dictatorial *Unrechtsstaat* and those museums seen to endorse sentimental, *ostalgic* retrospectives of the cosy *Kuschelstaat*.<sup>545</sup> According to Arnold-de Simine and Susannah Radstone, this divide is based on the premise that explorations of East German everyday life represent ‘at best a naïve sentimentalising and at worst an intentional banalising of the GDR past’, whereas the focus on institutional repression and inhumanity is equated with ‘a critical and intellectually viable approach’.<sup>546</sup> This stems from the binary framing of GDR remembrance culture that has prevailed in the public domain since the early to mid-1990s, when former East Germans began to construct counter-narratives to those inscribed in the official, state-mandated *Diktaturgedächtnis*.<sup>547</sup> The museum focus on the *Alltag* must, therefore, be understood within the discourse of writing back against the vilification of the GDR in the immediate post-unification period.

In the wake of the Sabrow Commission, however, revised exhibitions and new museums are beginning to challenge the *Kuschelstaat-Unrechtsstaat* dichotomy, with more emphasis on the way in which repression and power structures impacted upon everyday life in

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<sup>544</sup> Paul Williams defines memorial museums as sites ‘dedicated to a historic event commemorating mass suffering of some kind’. *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 8.

<sup>545</sup> 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. by Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 19-33 (p. 27); Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 160-62.

<sup>546</sup> Arnold-de Simine and Radstone, p. 27. Other ‘neat polar opposites’ include consumer culture versus state oppression; *Ostalgie* versus political debate; *bunt* versus *grau*, perpetrator versus victim; and memory versus history (p. 28).

<sup>547</sup> Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 61-101. Martin Sabrow identifies the *Diktaturgedächtnis* as the dominant state-mandated memory of the immediate post-unification period, and explains it as a ‘diktaturzentrierte Erinnerung’ of the ‘Macht- und Repressionsapparat des kommunistischen Regimes’, centred on the ‘Täter-Opfer-Gegensatz’. Martin Sabrow, ‘Die DDR erinnern’, in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), pp. 11-27 (p. 18).

the former state.<sup>548</sup> These sites are no longer tied to one monolithic interpretation of the past, but seek to convey a more complete, ‘normalized’ picture of everyday life under the SED dictatorship, and may promote conflicting narratives simultaneously.<sup>549</sup> Despite the obvious differences between Bakhtin’s object of study and mine, some of the features of his ‘idyll’ apply – perhaps unexpectedly – to the advanced industrial society of the GDR as it is reimagined in a certain kind of museum. Based on what he terms an ‘idyllic complex’, such museums effectively represent the GDR as a spatio-temporal idyll, in which, as in Bakhtin’s words, the ‘events of everyday life [take] on an importance and acquire thematic significance’, and ‘normal’ working people are heroized.<sup>550</sup> Within this particular characterization of the GDR, everyday objects can also be seen to possess similar characteristics to what Bakhtin refers to as ‘idyllic objects’ as artefacts are presented as ‘indissolubly linked’ to the contexts of their manufacture and use in everyday life.<sup>551</sup> Whereas in the two previous chapters counter-memory has been about rewriting personal and local narratives into cultural memory and overwriting certain pejorative historical narratives respectively, this form of counter-memory can be seen as a second kind of writing back against dominant, black and white interpretations of the GDR. As a means of reimagining the day-to-day realities of the GDR alongside more dominant, nation-centred histories, the idyll provides a space for renegotiating East(ern) German memory within the context of post-unification society and for reclaiming a less exoticized vision of everyday life under the SED dictatorship.

Constructed in order to ‘preserve the dying remnants’ of the former East German state, the idyll speaks of a ‘desire for stasis’, in an attempt to fix the time-space of the GDR within the ever-changing parameters of post-unification history and memory.<sup>552</sup> It is not simply about

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<sup>548</sup> Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold, ‘Introduction: “Wissen wie es war”?’ in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR*, pp. 1-15 (p. 7). The Sabrow Commission (headed by historian Martin Sabrow) was charged with the task of investigating the representation and remembrance of the SED dictatorship in the current GDR memory landscape. The findings, published in the so-called Sabrow Report, highlighted several shortcomings in current museum displays and memorial sites, such as the lack of emphasis on resistance and opposition in the GDR and the trivialization of the GDR in certain *Alltagsmuseen*. The Commission itself, however, also came under fire for its incorporation of the very notion of everyday life in the report. For the SED victims’ associations, the use of the term *Alltag* was proof that the Commission was attempting to ‘sentimentalize’ life in the GDR. See *Wohin treibt die DDR-Erinnerung? Dokumentation einer Debatte*, ed. by Martin Sabrow and others (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), pp. 17-45 and 369-74.

<sup>549</sup> Chloe Paver, ‘Colour and Time in Museums of East German Everyday Life’, in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR*, pp. 132-46. For a discussion of ‘normalization’ discourse, see Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, eds., *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006).

<sup>550</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics’, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258 (p. 229).

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 233-34.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-35.

recreating a highly nostalgic, idealized past of real existing socialism, or romanticizing the GDR as a kind of refuge from Western capitalism (although of course it may feed into these discourses), but constitutes a particular spatio-temporal configuration, in which generations of experience are brought together as part of a ‘grafting of life and its events to a [particular] place’.<sup>553</sup> As such, although the idyll is intrinsically connected to nostalgic remembering by manifesting the social, cultural and political differences between GDR society and those of West Germany and post-unification Germany, it remains conceptually distinct from it. The idyll may draw on and promote different forms of *Ostalgie*, but is not a form of nostalgia per se.

By borrowing terminology used by Gielen in his isolation of the museum chronotope of local time and by drawing on Bakhtin’s characterization of the idyll, this chapter demonstrates the way in the 1950s are framed within a counter-memorial conception of the GDR as a monochronous idyll at two case-study GDR museums in eastern Germany.<sup>554</sup> These museums have been selected on the basis of their claims to present a comprehensive view of the ‘normal’ GDR *Alltag* ‘wie er war’ and include: the DDR Museum Zeitreise in Radebeul (near Dresden, Saxony) – a private museum with the self-proclaimed largest exhibition on everyday life in the GDR, which opened in 2006 – and the private DDR Museum Thale in the Harz town of Thale (Saxony-Anhalt), which opened in 2011.<sup>555</sup> Although the museums differ significantly in terms of size and are run by a former West and East German respectively, they adopt very similar museological approaches to the GDR *Alltag* and, by adhering to a particular spatio-temporal framework, constitute a specific reimagining of forty years of East German history and memory.

By reading the museums through a chronotope of monochronous time, the chapter highlights the way in which different spatio-temporal markers fuse to form one condensed spatio-temporal idyll. By using the same modes of presentation and drawing on the same discourses, the museums situate objects and historical context within monochronous time,

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<sup>553</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 225.

<sup>554</sup> Pascal Gielen, ‘Museumchronotopics: On the Representation of the Past in Museums’, *Museum and Society*, 2 (2004), 147-60 (p. 152). He uses the term ‘monochronous’ to refer to a mode of museum representation and narration where the past constitutes a ‘closed period for which the story is fixed’ and ‘which organizes history according to one absolute principle’, pp. 152 and 155.

<sup>555</sup> Hans-Joachim Stephan, ‘Kolumne des Initiators Hans-Joachim Stephan zu Ausstellungskonzept und Gestaltung’, *DDR Museum Dresden* <<http://www.ddd-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddd-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 20 January 2014]; DDR Museum Thale, ‘Die Idee’, *DDR Museum Thale* <<http://www.ddd-museum-thale.de/die-idee/index.html>> [accessed 20 January 2014]. The case studies are henceforth referred to as the Radebeul museum and the Thale museum.

which serves to compress East German experience spatially and temporally. The chapter proposes that because narrativity is governed by monochronous time, the 1950s only possess narrative significance in the museums as part of the biography of the GDR spanning 1949–1990. This is emblematic of the wider eastern German museum landscape, as unlike in France and western Germany, there is no museum devoted exclusively to the 1950s in any of the five new federal states. This is perhaps to be expected given the fact that if there were to be anything resembling a golden age for the GDR, it would most probably be the 1960s or 1970s rather than the 1950s (it is significant that there is a 1970s restaurant specializing in nostalgic ‘Erlebnisgastronomie’ attached to the Radebeul museum). That specific cultural memories of the *Aufbau* period are present in other retrospective cultural representations of the GDR, however, suggests that there is something particular about the way in which museums like those in Radebeul and Thale fuse the 1950s into the historicization of GDR everyday life. The fact that other museum explorations of the GDR (including those of everyday life) employ more rigid temporal distinctions in exhibition content suggests a spatio-temporal anchoring of GDR history and memory which is particular to a certain type of GDR museum that is privately owned and run by non-professionals, epitomized in Radebeul and Thale. As storehouses of historicized memories of the GDR past which serve to synthesize distinct units of time-space and, therefore, stop the passage of time, such museums constitute particularly illustrative examples of *lieux de mémoire*.<sup>556</sup>

### **5.1 The Chronotope of Monochronous Time and the Motif of the Idyll**

In the Radebeul and Thale museums, the chronotope of monochronous time constitutes a framework for the spatio-temporal compression of East German history and memory. As part of this ‘flattening out of time’ and space, distinct units of time and notions of place come together simply as the GDR past.<sup>557</sup> This brings about a museum effect, as Chloe Paver observes in her analysis of colour and time in GDR museums, whereby East German material culture is ‘viewed in one simplified time dimension’.<sup>558</sup> Within this chronotopic framework, temporal distinction is elided and the 1950s are fixed within the overarching narrative of the GDR *Alltag* as a spatio-temporal continuum. As this particular spatio-temporality is condensed

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<sup>556</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire: La problématique des lieux’, in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), I, pp. 23–43.

<sup>557</sup> Paver, p. 139.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

in the form of the idyll, the idyll can be said to take on significance at the level of the motif. Understood as a way of conjoining time and space, the idyll is:

defined by the *unity of place*, by the age-old rooting of the life of generations to a single place, from which this life, in all its events, is inseparable. This unity of place in the life of generations weakens and renders less distinct all the temporal boundaries between individual lives and between various phases of one and the same life. The unity of place brings together [...] the life of the various generations who had also lived in that same place, under the same conditions, and who had seen the same things.<sup>559</sup>

As an idyll, the museum representation of the GDR serves to anchor forty years' worth of East German everyday experiences in a spatio-temporal continuum, where generational changes and memories are fused together. As one entry into the Thale museum's guest book remarks: 'Macht weiter so, denn es soll auch für die Nachwelt ein bißchen Erinnerung an die DDR erhalten bleiben. Denn wir sind eine aussterbende Generation.'<sup>560</sup> Here, 'wir' does not refer to one specific, sociologically defined cohort, such as the Baby-Boomers or 68ers, but, rather, to all those individuals who lived through the GDR, thereby uniting all generational experience.

The idyll is thematically distinctive in the sense that it is 'limited to only a few of life's basic realities', such as birth and death, labour, food and drink, and stages of growth.<sup>561</sup> For Bakhtin, these are strongly linked to nature, where there is a 'conjoining of human life with the life of nature' that is both actual and metaphorical.<sup>562</sup> The representations of the everyday never appear 'in their naked realistic aspect', however, but 'in a softened and to a certain extent sublimated form'.<sup>563</sup> The idyll is, therefore, explicitly bound up with the common occurrences and stages of day-to-day life that make up the everyday, without actually making reference to 'the trivial details of everyday life'.<sup>564</sup> In the Radebeul and Thale museums, the sublimation of the East German everyday takes place in a process of transformation from the 'GDR *Alltag* – everyday experience – into *Alltagsgeschichte* – historical narrative', where the musealized historical narratives can be understood as historicized and mediated versions of real, everyday events.<sup>565</sup> Like the idyll which celebrates the lives of 'normal', everyday people,

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<sup>559</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 225.

<sup>560</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 02 August 2012.

<sup>561</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', pp. 225-26.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 226.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>565</sup> Irene Lazda, 'Alltag becomes Alltagsgeschichte: The Haus der Geschichte in Lutherstadt Wittenberg and the DDR Museum Berlin', in *Reworking the German Past: Adaptations in Films, the Arts and Popular Culture*, ed. by Susan G. Figge and Jenifer K. Ward (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 203-22 (p. 203).

*Alltagsgeschichte*, as defined by Alf Lüdtkke, centres predominantly on the ‘Leben und Über-Leben der in der Überlieferung weithin Namenlosen’, taking a predominantly bottom-up approach to everyday life.<sup>566</sup> Although the idyll is a consistent motif, Bakhtin outlines four different ‘pure’ forms of it, each with slightly varying characteristics: the love idyll, the agricultural labour idyll, the craft-work idyll and the family idyll. With reimaginings of private, domestic spaces in the GDR and the exhibition of personal objects, the museum transformation of the *Alltag* into *Alltagsgeschichte* seems to privilege the family idyll, examining how the state and political life in the GDR impacted upon the private lives of its citizens.

## 5.2 Reclaiming Everyday Life

In their representations of everyday life in the GDR, the Radebeul and Thale museums are envisaged by their directors as occupying a middle ground between the opposites of *Kuschelstaaat* and *Unrechtsstaat*. Through the exploration of different facets of the GDR *Alltag* and the exhibition of authentic objects, the museums are intended to provide visitors with an insight into ‘normal’ life under the SED regime, negotiating more personal, local memories and narratives in relation to those of the nation. For the director of the Radebeul museum, Hans-Joachim Stephan, the museum representation of the GDR *Alltag* such as that at Radebeul is not about ‘die schon vielfach vorhandene Darstellung der DDR und seiner Unterdrückungsmechanismen. Es steht auch nicht die als “Ostalgie” benannte Zeit der Gestrigen im Fokus, sondern das ganz normale Alltagsleben mit seinen Gebrauchsgegenständen, Einrichtungen und dessen Organisation’.<sup>567</sup> At this particular site, ‘normal’ everyday life is considered to be something simultaneously political and apolitical, in the sense that life was certainly governed by the state in the GDR (and there are the occasional references and allusions to the state’s political organs and policy-making in the museum, not to mention numerous items of political memorabilia), but it was also ultimately possible for East Germans to lead ‘normal’ personal lives. By orientating the focus of the museum away from *Ostalgie*, the director implies a criticism of the phenomenon, presumably on the basis of it promoting what Daphne Berdahl refers to as ‘GDR romanticism’ associated with the second

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<sup>566</sup> Alf Lüdtkke, ‘Einleitung: Was ist und wer treibt Alltagsgeschichte?’, in *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen*, ed. by Alf Lüdtkke (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 1989), pp. 9-47 (p. 9).

<sup>567</sup> Stephan, ‘Kolumne des Initiators Hans-Joachim Stephan zu Ausstellungskonzept und Gestaltung’ <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 20 January 2014].



*Ostalgie-Welle* of the mid to late 1990s.<sup>568</sup> Whilst GDR memory and remembrance culture is not invoked in such dichotomous terms at the Thale museum, the museum's team still feels the need to explicitly distance itself from *Ostalgie* on the website: 'wir sind eigentlich keine Ostalgiker, aber 40 Jahre DDR, 40 Jahre Mangelwirtschaft und Bevormundung in einem zentralistisch geführten System haben ihre Spuren hinterlassen, die in der Zeitgeschichte verblassen werden.'<sup>569</sup> In so doing, the museum team acknowledges, but also defends itself against potential visitor criticism on the grounds of an *ostalgic* wallowing and indulgence in GDR *Wohn-* and *Alltagskultur*.

With the aim of representing everyday life in the GDR as accurately as possible, both museums adopt a broadly thematic approach to exhibition material. In the Radebeul museum, the GDR *Alltag* is presented over four floors (totalling around 3500m<sup>2</sup> in exhibition space), with each floor representing a different aspect of everyday life, including: 'Staat' (fourth floor); 'Wohnen' und 'Leben' (third floor); 'Arbeiten' (second floor); and 'Mobilität' (ground floor).<sup>570</sup> These four aspects are then broken down further into specific exhibition rooms, or 'Zeit-Räume', continuing the motif of time travel conveyed in the name of the museum 'Zeitreise', which are placed in historical context in the form of a timeline. This is arranged along the corridors of the second, third and fourth floors of the building and does not correspond chronologically to exhibition content, but simply highlights the most important political events that took place in GDR history.<sup>571</sup> In the Thale museum, exhibition content is organized along one floor of the museum building, with rooms and wall texts on one side arranged according to a historical timeline situating aspects of GDR *Wohnkultur* chronologically, and those on the other side divided into seven 'zeitübergreifende Themen'. These intertemporal aspects of the *Alltag* include: 'Parteien/Massenorganisationen'; 'Highlights der Bürokommunikation'; 'TV und Rundfunk'; 'Urlaub'; 'Klassenzimmer'; 'Kantine'; and 'Vorführraum'. In both museums, the timelines are intrinsically chronotopic, as distance covered along the timeline is tantamount to historical time passed. In the Thale museum, this is of particular significance as half of the exhibition content corresponds to the

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<sup>568</sup> Daphne Berdahl outlines three distinct phases of *Ostalgie*: the first occurring in the aftermath of the *Wende*, which can be described as a 'vernacular *Ostalgie*'; the second beginning in the mid-1990s, which constituted a veritable *Ostalgie* boom and was associated with 'GDR romanticism'; and the third arriving in the 2000s, which initiated a more critical and cynical parodying of itself. See Matti Bunzl, 'Introduction', in Daphne Berdahl, *On the Social Life of Postsocialism: Memory, Consumption, Germany*, ed. by Matti Bunzl (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. xiii-xx (pp. xviii-xix).

<sup>569</sup> DDR Museum Thale, 'Die Idee' <<http://www.ddr-museum-thale.de/die-idee/index.html>> [accessed 23 January 2014].

<sup>570</sup> Staff offices are located on the first floor.

<sup>571</sup> Ground floor exhibition space is dedicated exclusively to GDR vehicles and contains no timeline.

timeline, in that the exhibits are ‘wie auf einem Zeitstrahl angeordnet, je weiter Sie in das Museum hineingehen, je weiter dringen Sie in die Geschichte ein, bis 1949, dem Gründungsjahr der DDR’.<sup>572</sup> The fact that visitors often weave through the different rooms from side to side (thereby moving between the thematic and chronological sections), however, means that such temporal clarity is often lost, regardless of the intended concept. Therefore, although both timelines convey detailed chronological information relating to historical events, they serve as visualizations of the time span 1949–1989 and are only significant as chronotopic markers in the forty-year biography of the GDR. This, along with the grouping together of artefacts and exhibits together as part of wide-ranging thematic areas can make it difficult for visitors to situate exhibits temporally. This is particularly problematic for those with no first-hand experience of the GDR and is compounded by sparse labelling. What is more, whilst the location of the exhibition on four floors gives the Radebeul museum ample scope to examine such a complex issue as the GDR *Alltag*, the exhibition of the state and its public institutions and organizations on the top floor of the museum’s exhibition space serves to highlight the omnipresence of state power and politics in everyday life in the GDR. By positioning the state above life and work in the museum, the museum effectively becomes a metaphorical representation of the top-down approach to GDR history and memory that dominated in the immediate post-unification period.<sup>573</sup> This seems to conflict with one of the museum’s key messages, that it is ‘unpolitisch in der Darstellung’ and appears to be an ironic oversight given Hans-Joachim Stephan’s stance that the popularization of the state-mandated *Diktatur-Unrechtsstaat* narrative of the GDR is only a ‘half-truth’ of East German everyday life.<sup>574</sup>

In such thematic displays of the GDR, room reconstructions are a common mode of representation and both museums use reconstructions of private spaces. The 1950s are well represented in such spaces, with the Thale museum exhibiting a 1950s kitchen, bedroom and living room, and the Radebeul museum exhibiting three different versions of 1950s and early 1960s living rooms. This focus on domestic scenes seems to support the narrative related in the *Appartement témoin* and *Historische Wohnung* that the living room took on greater

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<sup>572</sup> DDR Museum Thale, ‘Ausstellungskonzept’, *DDR Museum Thale* <<http://www.ddd-museum-thale.de/die-idee/index.html>> [accessed 28 January 2014].

<sup>573</sup> It is important to note, however, that the museum does not fully contextualize the role of the state; exhibition content is ordered according to the director’s instinct rather than any specific historiographical discourse.

<sup>574</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Unser Museum stellt sich vor’, *DDR Museum Dresden* <<http://www.ddd-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddd-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 23 January 2014]; Hans-Joachim Stephan, interviewed in Linda Vierecke, ‘20 Jahre Mauerfall: Erinnerungen: DDR-Museum’, *20 Jahre Mauerfall*, Deutsche Welle TV, uploaded 13 October 2009 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVGPEluI2qQ#t=122>> [accessed 23 January 2014] (01.48).

significance as a family space in the 1950s (see chapter four), but may also be due to the fact that perhaps more than any other category of object, living room furniture relates to an instantly recognizable iconography of the 1950s. All furnished with carefully placed icons of 1950s design, such as televisions, radios, *Nierentische* and *Tütenlampen*, such exhibits are designed to convey an aura of authenticity, ‘als lebe hier noch jemand’, giving visitors the impression that they are walking through actual GDR *Wohnungen*.<sup>575</sup> Although the Radebeul museum uses the occasional barrier and ‘please do not touch’ sign for more fragile displays, both museums encourage visitors to interact with the exhibits and handle objects.<sup>576</sup> This contributes to a sense of authenticity that is not just passively created by walking through recreated exhibition space, but that is actively sustained through experiential engagement with material objects. As such, the exhibits are not merely visual reconstructions of East German private spheres, but constitute *mises en scène* of GDR memory and changing reimaginings of the family idyll and GDR niche. For former East Germans, this can trigger a particular kind of memory work, whereby the reimagined niche merges with their own memories of home spaces. As one reporter for Saxony’s Radio PSR commented after a visit to the Radebeul museum: ‘eigentlich fühle ich mich in meiner Jugend zurückversetzt, ich war in meinem eigenen Jugendzimmer.’<sup>577</sup> By appearing to recreate authenticity, room reconstructions have the ability to change the nature of material and spatial memories, fusing real-life experiences and memories with the highly mediated ones promoted by the museums. For the recreated spaces of the 1950s and 1960s, the same process may also be experienced by western German visitors, as according to a wall text in the Radebeul museum, ‘ein Blick auf die Möbelproduktion zeigt in den fünfziger und sechziger Jahren Möbel, die von denen im Westen kaum unterscheidbar sind.’ This is supported by a statement on the museum’s website which draws attention to potential similarities in East and West German material culture throughout the forty years of the GDR’s existence by claiming that ‘der geneigte Besucher aus den “gebrauchten” Bundesländern wird erkennen,

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<sup>575</sup> Vierecke, ‘20 Jahre Mauerfall: Erinnerungen’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVGPEluI2qQ#t=122>> [accessed 23 January 2014] (00.15). *Tütenlampen* are floor, table, wall or ceiling lamps with distinctive cone-shaped shades (made out of fabrics and synthetic materials), typically with three adjustable arms.

<sup>576</sup> The Thale museum explicitly states in a wall text at the entrance to the museum that visitors are allowed to open all cupboards and touch all objects on display; the Radebeul museum encourages a similarly heuristic approach with phrases, such as ‘DDR erleben’ and ‘Das Leben hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang zum Anfassen’ <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php>> [accessed 09 October 2014].

<sup>577</sup> Steffen Lukas, ‘DDR-Museum Radebeul’, *50 Dinge, die Sie in Sachsen getan haben müssen*, Radio PSR Sachsen, uploaded 3 September 2012 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lk3pbg8Aggc>> [accessed 25 January 2014] (02.35).

dass sich manche Epoche sehr ähnelt.<sup>578</sup> The 1950s and 1960s rooms may, therefore, contribute to a reimagining of the niche as a shared German retreat into the private sphere during this period.<sup>579</sup> The fact that this particular narrative of ‘keeping up with the West’ is attached to the exhibits is indicative of a specific agenda to dispel the idea that East Germany consistently lagged behind West Germany with regard to design and manufacturing. East German *Wohnkultur* of the post-war period can, therefore, be seen as a sphere in which it is possible for museums to write back against the mythologization of the *Mangelwirtschaft*.

The room reconstructions at the two museums correspond to a chronotope of monochronous time by condensing time and space in two different ways. On the one hand, highly detailed information in the Radebeul museum serves to decelerate time within the restricted context of specific objects and living room exhibits. According to a rather lengthy wall text accompanying three early-GDR living rooms, the exhibition begins with an early-1950s living room furnished with stand-alone pieces, then moves on to a mid-1950s living room fitted out with sectional furniture from Dresden furniture manufacturer VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau’s 602 series (as in the Historische Wohnung – see chapter four), and finishes with an early 1960s living room with ‘hochmoderne’ furniture from Stralsund people’s enterprise Möbelwerk Stralsund’s 314 ‘Sibylle’ series. Although, as Paver notes in relation to a similarly detailed wall text in the museum, some visitors may find such an instance of ‘sudden excess of detail odd’ (especially given the lack of overarching interpretive framework), the framing of time according to specific furniture models slows down the passage of historical time in the museum and actually ‘brings us closer to life-time’ as experienced by East Germans.<sup>580</sup> These items of furniture are recognized as idyllic objects, albeit in a different way to that which Bakhtin describes, because they are firmly resituated within their original contexts of manufacture, and because the labour that produced them is mythologized as part of the East German *Alltag*. On the other hand, the museums go on to situate the 1950s rooms in relation to domestic scenes from the mid-1960s through to the end of the GDR, which means that the recreations are also significant as reimagined niches of the entire forty-year period of the GDR. This is particularly true for the Thale museum which provides no temporal clarity in

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<sup>578</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Unser Museum stellt sich vor’ <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php?lang=1&id=3&anlass=0>> [accessed 09 October 2014]. The use of ‘gebraucht’ here refers to former West Germany and appears to be a tongue-in-cheek inversion of the eastern German ‘neue Bundesländer’.

<sup>579</sup> However particular the political characteristics of the GDR were, societal withdrawal is for Gaus not wholly exclusive to the GDR, as the ‘Existenzmittelpunkt’ of the West German population was also located ‘im privaten Bereich’. *Wo Deutschland liegt: Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1983), p. 159.

<sup>580</sup> Paver, pp. 143–44.

the form of labelling in the room reconstructions themselves, and where visitors interchange between the temporally specific rooms and the rooms thematizing the ‘zeitübergreifende Themen’. In effect, this creates a form of chronotopic compression which is very different from the deceleration of time and space in the Radebeul museum because the GDR is represented in a rather loose temporal way. Although reimagined in the museums, the 1950s are, therefore, significant as markers in the monochronous biography of the GDR, rather than as points of particular interest in their own right.

By privileging the role of private domestic life in the GDR *Alltag*, the museums construct a narrative of the family idyll, whereby common everyday occurrences are transformed, to use Bakhtin’s words, into ‘essential life *events*’ which unite different generations.<sup>581</sup> Food and drink in particular provide the basis for the reimagining of the GDR niche in the form of different kitchen and living room *mises en scène* and ‘partake of a nature that is social, or, more often, family’.<sup>582</sup> The reconstructed kitchens and living rooms in the museums act as visual motifs for the compression of time and space in monochronous time as ‘all *generations* and *age-groups* come together around the [kitchen or living room coffee] table’.<sup>583</sup> These motifs are presented as consistent for the entire period of the GDR, as the 1980s kitchens and living rooms strongly resemble those of the 1950s and 1960s. Food and drink thus provide a means of reconfiguring the time-space of the GDR through the lens of experiential continuity. This is reinforced through the exhibition of material objects spanning the forty years of the GDR, such as the well-known plastic chicken egg cups, which appear in both museums. Manufactured by Sonja Plastic from the late 1950s onwards, the brightly coloured egg cups were a consistently recognizable design feature of East German kitchens, as the shapes and colours remained unchanged throughout the GDR. Rather than representing the socialist manufacturing push towards plastics in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the egg cups have come to symbolize the GDR *Alltag* (including both manufacturing and consumption) in its entirety. What is more, that such plastic items are still in production by the Wolkenstein-based firm and have experienced an *ostalgic* resurgence with former East and West Germans (not to mention foreigners), testifies to what Rubin sees as the ‘refusal of East Germany to biodegrade, and of

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<sup>581</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 227.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

its haunting of post-unification Germany'.<sup>584</sup> The egg cups have thus come to epitomize spatio-temporal continuity in and of the GDR.

Bakhtin moreover highlights the 'significance and role of the image of children in idylls', where they 'frequently figure in connection with growth, the renewal of life'.<sup>585</sup> In the museums, room reconstructions of children's and teenagers' bedrooms and play rooms, as well as the exhibition of baby and children's products, contribute to the motif of the family idyll, as children are placed at the centre of GDR family life. At the Radebeul museum, the specific connection between children and renewal is rendered explicit through an exhibit of prams and other connected children's items. According to an accompanying wall text, the GDR pram was 'eine Art Statussymbol und Ausdruck der sozialen Stellung, in denen junge Eltern stolz ihren Nachwuchs präsentierten'. In this way, pushing children in a specific pram figured as a performance of life cycle renewal and social distinction enacted by parents in order to 'exhibit' their new offspring. The exhibition of children's items is also significant with regard to the wider political sphere and national narrative, as childcare and leisure pursuits in the GDR were provided for and encouraged by the state. In the same pram exhibit, the *Töpfchenbank*, labelled 'wie sie in den Kinderkrippen- [*sic*] und gärten üblich waren', is perhaps the ultimate symbol of childcare rearing practices in the GDR.<sup>586</sup> This, together with numerous items of Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) and Pioneer memorabilia in both museums contributes to a state-influenced family idyll, in which children 'grew' with the state into socialist personalities with the consolidation and dissemination of Marxism-Leninism.

At the Radebeul museum, the GDR *Alltag* is represented not only through reconstructions of private, interior spaces, but also through reimagined public spaces, such as the GDR post office, hairdressing salon and *Kaufhalle*. As part of the *Kaufhalle* exhibit, hundreds of GDR goods and products are on display in their original packaging, from convenience foods, such as 'Tempolinsen', to Gemol washing powder and Berliner Luft peppermint liqueur. Whilst this display practice is above all a reflection of the director's ethos as a collector of GDR material culture – preserving and proudly displaying even slight variations of the same object – the sheer number of products on display could also be

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<sup>584</sup> Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>585</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 227.

<sup>586</sup> The *Töpfchenbank* is the collective potty training bench that was used in East German state day nurseries (*Kinderkrippen*). *Kinderkrippen* were provided free for children under the age of three and were followed by *Kindergärten* for children aged three to six.

interpreted as an active attempt to contradict the notion of the GDR as a *Mangelwirtschaft*. By adopting this particular representation strategy, the museum suggests that not only was there a wide variety of East German manufactured goods for consumers to buy, but that products were also in abundance and shop shelves were always restocked. This implied narrative is countered in the museum's advertising leaflet, however, which reminds visitors that the "Bückware" liegt unter dem Ladentisch', highlighting the fact that certain types of merchandise, such as rare and illegally imported products, which were kept hidden under the shop counter, could only be acquired through special means. This suggests that abundance was a feature only of a certain section of basic GDR consumer goods. For those with first-hand experience of the GDR, the display has the ability to trigger personal memories of the former East German state through product recognition. As consumer goods remained essentially the same in content and form from the consumer boom of the 1960s through to 1989, such products act as 'transgenerational markers of East German culture and identity', uniting different generations of former East Germans on the basis of what Paul Betts has termed an 'aesthetics of sameness'.<sup>587</sup> This connection between consumer goods and uniformity is made in a Deutsche Welle report on the Radebeul museum, where a former West and East German discuss consumption in the context of the *Kaufhalle* exhibit:

- FORMER WEST GERMAN Kommt Ihnen da irgend'was bekannt vor, wo sie sagen, ah, das stand bei meiner Mama in der Speis[ekammer], das hab' ich auch schon gegessen oder genau diese Marke?
- FORMER EAST GERMAN Ja, alles. Alles.
- FORMER WEST GERMAN Ah, Wahnsinn.
- FORMER EAST GERMAN Das sah überall gleich aus, egal in welche Kaufhalle man gegangen ist, oder in [welchen] Konsum. Es gab überall dasselbe.

In this particular conversation, the GDR is remembered monochronously, as forty years of consumption practices are flattened to a continuous material and geographical monotony. The notion of sameness is invoked not in the context of product design and manufacturing longevity, however, but rather in terms of shop and product homogeneity throughout East Germany. Although the exhibit appears to reflect an extensive choice of consumer goods, for

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<sup>587</sup> Paul Betts, 'The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture', *The Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000), 731-65 (p. 754). Despite this notion of brand stability, clearly not all the objects on display in the *Kaufhalle* were on the shelves and available for GDR citizens to buy in one year; this approach elides all temporal distinction.

the former East German, the exhibit is indicative of all *Kaufhalle* and *Konsum* shopping in the GDR, where the same types of shops always sold the same products, irrespective of where or when these were situated. Whether or not this is intentional, the fact that the former East German expressly names these two types of supermarket-style shop draws inevitable comparison with other types of shop available to consumers in the GDR, such as the Intershops and Exquisit- and Delikat-Läden, which are not represented in either museum, but which did sell more luxury items, including in some cases, products from the West. In this sense, for visitors from the former East, the exhibit simultaneously reinforces dichotomous notions of scarcity and abundance, and homogeneity and variety.

Alongside room reconstructions, both the Radebeul and Thale museums adopt a taxonomic exhibition strategy of placing objects of the same category together. It is, therefore, not uncommon to find entire rooms devoted to specific objects, which are all presented together often irrespective of provenance and date of manufacture and/or use. This brings about a situation that Paver has neatly summarized in the context of the Radebeul museum, in which the museums exhibit ‘not just one GDR fire extinguisher, but nine, and not just one typewriter, top-loading washing machine, toaster, voltmeter, accordion or set of skis, but several, and in some cases dozens’.<sup>588</sup> Whether or not this stems from a specific desire to present GDR *Alltagskultur* in a certain way, or is simply a means of enabling the museums to present the majority of their collections, the vast quantity of objects on display in such a manner makes the museums seem sometimes more like storage facilities than traditional exhibitions. It is as though the proverbial GDR ‘rubbish heap’ of material objects that appeared following unification and that was the basis for the creation of many GDR museums in the mid to late 1990s, has simply been lifted and placed in a museum environment. Despite the fact that both museums have more objects in storage, the usual distinction present in museums between what is exhibited and what is left in the depot is blurred, and as a result, to use Aleida Assmann’s terminology, the archive is transformed into the canon. Paradoxically, however, the uniformity of the museum artefacts created through taxonomic display techniques simultaneously undermines the notion of a canon, as the exhibition effectively becomes little more than a large storehouse. On the one hand this curatorial homogeneity arguably echoes the political context of the GDR and the aforementioned aesthetics of sameness brought about by state socialism and SED central planning. At the same time, displays comprising large numbers of the same category of object create the impression of extensive product variety in the GDR; something

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<sup>588</sup> Paver, p. 133.



which is arguably quite surprising given the typical retrospective reimagining of GDR material culture as unvarying. These display techniques might, therefore, be seen as part of a specific politics of representation, having the capacity to support and challenge dominant discourses of GDR history.

Particularly when objects are accompanied by little textual information, as is the case at the Thale museum, taxonomic displays serve to present East German everyday objects in series simply as the GDR past, thereby eliminating temporal distinctions. By presenting like with like, however, it is potentially easier for visitors to appreciate the formal and aesthetic qualities of everyday objects, meaning such displays have the power to bring out the materiality of artefacts that often tends to be lost when objects become museum pieces. The exhibition of similar objects side by side enables visitors, at least theoretically, to map changes between different models of the same object. The acknowledgement of technological and design development between models has the potential, according to Paver, ‘to foreground positive personal endeavours of GDR citizens’, as objects were meaningful for the many GDR citizens who were involved in their manufacture and who, at times, went to extraordinary lengths to acquire them in the *Mangelwirtschaft*.<sup>589</sup> Such taxonomic displays thus have the ability to reinforce a distinct sense of eastern identity based on a central relationship with the supply and demand of GDR goods and products as idyllic objects. The minutiae of detail conveyed in such exhibitions are, however, unlikely to find resonance with all visitors. For those unfamiliar with the economic mechanics of the GDR, and particularly for western German visitors, younger generations and foreign visitors, such exhibitions tend not to map changes, but rather reinforce similarity and project a homogenous view of the forty-years of the GDR *Alltag* on offer at the museum.

The homogenous reimagining of everyday life in the GDR is further blurred temporally in the museums because of the difficulty in calibrating the relative ‘pastness’ of GDR objects.<sup>590</sup> All museum artefacts by nature of their incorporation into historical exhibitions appear to some extent rooted in the past as ‘collected treasures from another time’.<sup>591</sup> However, in the case of the GDR, everyday objects such as those exhibited in Radebeul and Thale are often doubly anachronistic, because many objects manufactured in the former East were

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<sup>589</sup> Paver, p. 144.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid., pp. 138-42.

<sup>591</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 159.

already outdated by the time that they were purchased and used, or soon became so.<sup>592</sup> Often mass produced from cheap materials and presented in lifeless packaging, many objects were ‘ridiculed and branded “eastern rubbish” by GDR consumers’, for whom Western products, and even empty Western packaging became status symbols.<sup>593</sup> For visitors with no first-hand experience of the GDR, it can be very difficult to identify these object anachronisms, and there is a tendency for GDR objects to be viewed simply as ‘old stuff’.<sup>594</sup> Such a way of seeing is likely to promote what Nora refers to as a distance memory, based on the recognition of the GDR as a past world considered ‘radicalement autre’ and ‘dont nous sommes à jamais coupés’.<sup>595</sup> For younger generations of Germans in particular, such objects do not provide continuity of the GDR but underline, rather, discontinuity with regard to the present, that the GDR has been consigned to the realms of history. By lumping together all GDR objects as the past, such ensembles constitute material proof of the historicization of the GDR and can contribute to present-day senses of eastern and national (German) identity by encouraging visitors to define what they are in relation to what they are no longer.<sup>596</sup> The patina that some GDR objects made from poorer quality materials have acquired can, moreover, give the impression that museum artefacts are older than they actually are, although this only applies to a very small proportion of objects on display.<sup>597</sup> Because the different levels of ‘pastness’ are now largely unreadable, GDR everyday objects seem to represent a montage of the GDR past, rather than acting as specific spatio-temporal markers and repositories of particular memories and narratives.<sup>598</sup> As a consequence of the modes of presentation adopted at the two museums, as well as the particular nature of temporality of musealized *Alltagskultur*, distinct units of time and notions of place come together simply as the GDR, which represents a forty-year long spatio-temporal continuum.

### **5.3 *Lieux de mémoire* and the Deceleration of Time**

The chronotope of monochronous time and the motif of the idyll encourage a deceleration of time in the museums that is characteristic in *lieux de mémoire*. As sites dedicated to the

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<sup>592</sup> Paver, pp. 138-39.

<sup>593</sup> Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 174. Famously cited examples of Western packaging that became status symbols include soft drink cans, such as Coca-Cola, and branded plastic bags.

<sup>594</sup> Paver, p. 139.

<sup>595</sup> Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire’, p. 35.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>597</sup> Charity Scribner, cited in Paver, p. 139. Charity Scribner, ‘Object, Relic, Fetish, Thing: Joseph Beuys and the Museum’, *Critical Inquiry*, 29 (2003), 634-49 (p. 640).

<sup>598</sup> Paver, p. 142.

preservation and narrativization of a national past, the Radebeul and Thale museums conform to Nora's definition of *lieux de mémoire* in that they are based on a clear intention to remember. For the initiators of the Radebeul museum, this process is about 'Erinnerungen wecken und Denkanstöße geben' with respect to everyday life in the GDR, as opposed to overturning historical narratives.<sup>599</sup> Similarly the museum team at the Thale museum sees the site's role as rekindling both 'die gute[n] und schlechte[n] Erinnerungen' of seventeen million former East Germans, which 'nicht in Vergessenheit geraten [dürfen]'.<sup>600</sup> A desire to remember the GDR *Alltag* is also identifiable in the many donations of everyday objects that both museums have received from local people, as well as in the museums' visitor figures, where remembering can act as a prompt for initial or return visits. In line with Nora's definition, the museums equally constitute *lieux de mémoire* in that they operate on a material, symbolic and functional level, and exhibit these qualities continually and simultaneously: they are, by the very nature of their physicality and collections, material sites; they are functional in that they are constructed with the purpose of giving visitors an insight into everyday life in the GDR and promoting remembering; and they are highly symbolic in their invocations of time and space.

As *lieux de mémoire*, the museums attempt to prevent the mechanisms of forgetting from taking hold of memories of the GDR *Alltag* in post-unification Germany and are conceived with the fundamental purpose 'd'arrêter le temps, de bloquer le travail de l'oubli, de fixer un état de choses, d'immortaliser la mort, de matérialiser l'immatériel'.<sup>601</sup> The time of the GDR has been reimagined, not only through modes of presentation such as the taxonomic display of artefacts, but also through the museum buildings. Both relics from the GDR of the 1970s, the buildings have undergone little change in their transformation into museums. The Radebeul museum is housed in the former six-story headquarters of the VEB Kraftwerksanlagenbau, which, built 'im Stil sozialistischer Industriebauten', symbolizes the GDR cityscape of the 1970s.<sup>602</sup> As the building has remained aesthetically the same since it was finished in 1978, complete with its distinctive curtain wall façade, it provides an 'authentic' everyday GDR setting for the museum's collections, so much so, that the museum

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<sup>599</sup> Wolfram Kotte, 'Einige Gedanken und Inhalte zur Ausstellung *Zeitreise*', *DDR Museum Dresden* <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 29 January 2014].

<sup>600</sup> DDR Museum Thale, 'Die Idee' <<http://www.ddr-museum-thale.de/die-idee/index.html>> [accessed 29 January 2014].

<sup>601</sup> Nora, 'Entre Mémoire et Histoire', p. 38.

<sup>602</sup> Stephan, 'Kolumne des Initiators Hans-Joachim Stephan zu Ausstellungskonzept und Gestaltung' <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 29 January 2014].

advertises that its ‘Ausstellung beginnt schon außen’.<sup>603</sup> The museum building, where ‘die Zeit ein bisschen stehen geblieben ist’ is, therefore, incorporated as part of the collection as an everyday object in its own right.<sup>604</sup> The Thale museum goes even further in its claim to authenticity, suggesting that the time-space of the GDR has been preserved almost perfectly in the exhibition space:

Seit dem Jahr 2000 betreiben wir, die Familie Müller, ein Möbelhaus. Dieses Möbelhaus haben wir ohne irgendwelche Fördermittel auf 4 Etagen in einem ehemaligen Verwaltungsgebäude des Eisen- und Hüttenwerkes Thale (EHW) errichtet und sind damit seit über 10 Jahren sehr erfolgreich. In der 6. Etage unseres Hauses, welches 1973 gebaut wurde, befand sich ein Chemielabor für die Email-Forschung des Behälter- und Apparatebaus. Als im Eisen- und Hüttenwerk 1992 die Lichter aus gingen, ist in der 6. Etage unseres Hauses die Zeit stehen geblieben. Zum Teil kleben noch die original [*sic*] Tapeten an der Wand und es riecht wie früher, nach Bohnerwachs.<sup>605</sup>

By making reference to the original wallpaper and smell of floor wax, the museum narrative implies that the building has resisted change and that the time of the GDR has effectively been frozen on the sixth floor. Highlighting the power of sight and smell, the museum moves away from traditional museum pedagogy which typically relies on the transmission of knowledge, and instead moves towards a more experiential way of knowing the past. This recalls the sensory experiences often associated with memorial museums, where there is ‘tangible proof of the event *in place*’, as well as the ‘traumascapes’ of so-called ‘Dark Tourism’.<sup>606</sup> According to Maria Tumarkin, as sites imbued with meaning from traumatic events, traumascapes are ‘full of visual and sensory triggers, capable of eliciting a whole palette of emotions’.<sup>607</sup> In this sense the Thale museum adopts techniques that are more commonly employed in sites dedicated to the more repressive elements of the GDR past, such as Berlin’s Hohenschönhausen Stasi prison (Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen), where guided tours take visitors to the original detention and interrogation cells, and Berlin’s Stasi Museum (Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte

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<sup>603</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Das Entwicklungskonzept’, *DDR Museum Dresden* <[http://www.ddd-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/module-dateidownload.php?fp\\_dwn\\_dir=../dat/id\\_1/deu/dwn/&fp\\_dwn\\_file=mappe-entwicklungskonzept-dsl.pdf](http://www.ddd-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/module-dateidownload.php?fp_dwn_dir=../dat/id_1/deu/dwn/&fp_dwn_file=mappe-entwicklungskonzept-dsl.pdf)> [accessed 29 January 2014] (p. 3).

<sup>604</sup> Lukas, ‘DDR-Museum Radebeul’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lk3pbg8Aggc>> [accessed 25 January 2014] (00.21).

<sup>605</sup> DDR Museum Thale, ‘Die Idee’ <<http://www.ddd-museum-thale.de/die-idee/index.html>> [accessed 29 January 2014].

<sup>606</sup> Williams, p. 81. The term ‘Dark Tourism’ was coined in John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (London: Continuum, 2000).

<sup>607</sup> Maria M. Tumarkin, *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places Transformed by Tragedy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005), p. 12.

Normannenstraße), where visitors are able to walk around the renovated offices and private rooms of former Stasi head Erich Mielke. This may be an attempt to instill the kind of authenticity typically attributed to *Gedenkstätten*, or to elicit an affective response on the part of visitors.

By exhibiting everyday objects from the GDR in authentic settings, the museums theoretically provide visitors with the basis for a deeper engagement with the past, where objects are placed in historical and cultural dialogue with their surroundings. Invoking time travel metaphors and similes of ‘Zeitreisen’ and ‘Reisen in die Vergangenheit’, guest book comments indicate that for many visitors from the former East, the museums effectively take them back to the GDR, as though time has simply stood still.<sup>608</sup> Some visitor comments, however, indicate that authentic surroundings may not be so much triggers as inhibitors of memory. As Nora concedes, *lieux de mémoire* only exist and have meaning because of their constant capacity for metamorphosis, meaning their importance lies in their recycling of significations for different people at different times as ‘objets en abîme’.<sup>609</sup> If there has been one recurring outcome of museological studies in recent times, it is that visitors’ capacities to think and act independently allows them to accept or reject narratives on offer and construct their own meanings instead. Museums are no longer places for the perpetuation of metanarratives, but rather represent places where visitors’ prior knowledge, experiences and interpretations may often collide with the versions of the past that are exhibited.<sup>610</sup> One visitor to the Radebeul museum, for instance, comments that ‘das Museum sollte eröffnet werden wenn es auch fertig aufgebaut ist’, critiquing the museum on its apparently incomplete state.<sup>611</sup> Another visitor to the site notes that the building is ‘schlecht gelüftet!!!’, implying that former GDR office blocks do not necessarily meet present-day comfort standards.<sup>612</sup> For such visitors, taxonomic representation strategies and the authentic aura of well-worn, functional GDR buildings may, therefore, be detrimental to the overall museum visit and any memory work triggered by the exhibits.

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<sup>608</sup> See, for instance: Carola and Florian, DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, 26 July 2012; Frau Schmidt ‘aus (jetzt) Norderstedt (HH)’, DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, 10 July 2012; Signed entry in DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 22 August 2012.

<sup>609</sup> Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire’, pp. 38-39.

<sup>610</sup> Susan Crane, ‘Introduction: Of Museums and Memory’, in *Museums and Memory*, ed. by Susan A. Crane (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 1-13 (p. 9).

<sup>611</sup> Unsigned entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, August 2012.

<sup>612</sup> Unsigned entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, August 2012.

As demonstrated in the wide variety of examples outlined in *Les lieux de mémoire*, the concept of *lieux de mémoire* is not bound up with sites or places of memory in any straightforward geographical sense, but pertains, rather, to the way in which tangible and intangible national heritage can act as different loci of memory. In this way, *lieux de mémoire* need not necessarily be physical places, but can extend to encompass a much wider range of cultural artefacts and practices. The Eastern German version of *Les lieux de mémoire*, for instance, entitled *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, is a volume of essays dedicated to such varied *lieux de mémoire* as the *Jugendweihe*, *Kinderkrippe*, Trabant, *Westpaket* and socialism.<sup>613</sup> The Radebeul and Thale museums function as discrete *lieux de mémoire* in the first instance as museums, but by exhibiting objects which have particular cultural and memorial significance, the museums constitute simultaneously an ensemble of *lieux de mémoire*, as specific material goods and products featured at the sites act as *lieux de mémoire* in their own right. To an even greater extent than the 2CV in France (see chapter three), the Trabi is a particularly rich *lieu de mémoire* because not only does it represent a transgenerational trope of East German identity, but it also evokes multiple connotations and meanings concurrently:

Der Trabant ist weder ein “guter” noch ein “böser” Ort, sondern mit höchst widersprüchlichen Bedeutungen aufgeladen: Er fungiert als Repräsentant des politischen Systems, seiner “Planwirtschaft”, wie als materieller Zeuge eines “unpolitischen” Alltagslebens; er steht für die Moderne wie für ihr Gegenteil, er löst Gefühle von Sehnsucht aus, aber auch von Abneigung oder Verachtung. Durch den Trabant werden Fragen von Repression und Freiheit, Individualität und Gemeinschaft, Distinktion und Gleichheit verhandelt, die die grundsätzlichen kulturellen Wertvorstellungen der beiden deutschen Teilgesellschaften betreffen.<sup>614</sup>

Capable of eliciting such contradictory cultural memories, the Trabi is a particularly evocative example of the *lieu de mémoire*'s capacity for recycled meanings. Most recently, the Trabi has undergone an additional transformation into an icon of *Ostalgie*, achieving cult status with the release of the film *Go Trabi Go* in 1991, but also popularized from the 2000s onwards with the advent of so-called tourist Trabi-Safaris in Berlin and the growing *Ost-Mobile* industry. In the museums, the Trabi is used as an exhibition piece for the GDR *Alltag* and as an advertising tool. In the Radebeul museum, the Trabis on display form part of the ‘Mobilität’ exhibit and play an important role not only in giving visitors an impression of how people used transport

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<sup>613</sup> *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. by Martin Sabrow (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009).

<sup>614</sup> Ina Merkel, ‘Der Trabant’, in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, pp. 363-73 (p. 363).

in everyday life in the GDR, but also in aligning East and West German design and manufacturing in the early years, showing how ‘in der Klasse der 600ccm Fahrzeuge hatte auch der Westen nichts Besseres in den 60er Jahren vorzuweisen’.<sup>615</sup> The Trabi equally plays a significant metaphorical role in the museum as the starting point and vehicle for the memorial journey invoked in the museum’s name and visitor leaflet: ‘Nehmen Sie gleich am Eingang Platz im Trabi und erleben Sie eine Zeitreise in die Vergangenheit.’<sup>616</sup> Whilst the Thale museum does not exhibit vehicles per se, a bright-red DDR Museum Thale-branded Trabant 601 convertible is normally parked outside the museum and driven around the local area by director Frank Müller for advertising purposes. These are intelligent marketing strategies not only because they could potentially lead to increased footfall into the museums by indulging *Ostalgie*, but also because the museums are by definition drawing on, and positioning themselves within, the conflicting discourses represented by the Trabi as a *lieu de mémoire*.

Through the museums and the objects that they display as *lieux de mémoire*, the time-space of the GDR is decelerated or even brought to a standstill. In this way, the chronotopic reimagining of the East German *Alltag* according to monochronous time is not so much a representation as a reclamation of East German time and space. For former East German visitors, the detection of familiar sights, objects and smells provides a sense of continuity of East German identity and way of life, as though the GDR were living on within the framework of the museum. After expressing thanks for the memories sparked by the museum, one visitor to the Radebeul museum signs his/her guest book entry with ‘Liebe Grüße aus Meiningen, GDR’, suggesting that the town remains in the GDR.<sup>617</sup> A similar entry to the Thale museum’s guest book indicates that visitors can interpret museum exhibitions of everyday life as evidence of the GDR’s continued presence: ‘Es lebe die DDR! Hurra hurra hurra!’<sup>618</sup> Rather than suggesting that the ‘authenticity’ of the museum is tantamount to any actual reconstruction of the GDR, however, this particular phraseology is more indicative of the *ostalgic* return of the former East German state, as promoted by films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* (the tagline of which was ‘Es lebe die DDR’).<sup>619</sup> This deceleration or even stopping of time in the museums could be interpreted as yet another monolithic reading of GDR history and a desire to simplify the

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<sup>615</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Erdgeschoss Thema Mobilität’, *DDR Museum Dresden* <<http://www.ddd-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddd-museum.php?lang=1&id=31&anlass=0>> [accessed 30 January 2014].

<sup>616</sup> *Zeitreise: DDR-Museum-Radebeul* [visitor leaflet].

<sup>617</sup> Unsigned entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, August 2012. It is unclear from the guest book as to why the visitor has used the Anglicism ‘GDR’ as opposed to ‘DDR’.

<sup>618</sup> Unsigned entry in DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, August 2012.

<sup>619</sup> *Good Bye, Lenin!*, dir. by Wolfgang Becker (X Verleih, 2003).

complex presence and disappearance of the former state in unified Germany. At the same time, by implying a fundamental discord between the way of life in East and West Germany in the 1950s, monochronous time relates to the political ideology of German division and provides a counterbalance to the accelerated sense of time and expansion of space in the West. In this sense, monochronous time appears to be implicitly critical of West German capitalism. By slowing down time, the museums also have the potential to reflect East German time and space in a less artificial way than those sites which adopt a more traditional museological approach and employ more rigid temporal distinctions, because time and space were experienced differently in the GDR. According to John Borneman, ‘with the building of the Wall in August 1961, space in the East was shaped by a sense of confinement’, as citizens were no longer free to travel into the West.<sup>620</sup> Unlike the quickened pace of time in the West, time in the GDR after the end of the *Aufbau* period was also ‘experienced as petrified or artificially slowed down’ because of a changed relationship to time on the part of the state and its citizens.<sup>621</sup> No longer able to keep up with the West economically, the East German state ‘increasingly sacrificed “production” goals in order to slow down time so that it could record and monitor people’s behaviours, tastes, and appetites’.<sup>622</sup> This was echoed by East German citizens who had little incentive to speed up time, because ‘accelerated productivity on the job, and thus faster work, was not the principle by which people were rewarded in everyday life in the East. Instead loyalty, stability, political acquiescence, and team-work formed the bases for rewards on the job’.<sup>623</sup> Rather than being a simplification of the GDR *Alltag*, the deceleration of time and the spatio-temporal flattening of ‘the GDR’ in the Radebeul and Thale museums may, therefore, allow visitors to gain a closer insight into how citizens of East Germany experienced time and space during the forty years of the state’s existence.

#### **5.4 Reinforcing and Challenging Stereotypes of the GDR**

By fixing the everyday experiences of numerous different generations and forty years of histories and memories simply as the GDR, the Radebeul and Thale museums posit the former East German state as a spatio-temporally anchored idyll. Eliminating geographical, cultural, political and social differences, the museums bring the time and space of the GDR together,

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<sup>620</sup> John Borneman, ‘Time-Space Compression and the Continental Divide in German Subjectivity’, *Oral History Review*, 21 (1993), 41-57 (p. 44).

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>622</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.



the ‘idyllic unity’ of which can be seen, to use Bakhtin’s words, as a single ‘locus for the entire life process’ of the former state and its citizens.<sup>624</sup> As this spatio-temporal configuration has the potential to promote highly nostalgic forms of remembering, the idyll must be seen as intrinsically connected to the phenomenon of *Ostalgie*. This is frequently invoked and conceptualized by both curators and visitors in relation to museum displays of the GDR as a ‘dominant post-Wall strategy of East German memory production and cultural commemoration’.<sup>625</sup> It is, therefore, important to highlight, as Paver does, that whatever museums’ stances on *ostalgic* representations of the GDR may be, ‘*Ostalgie* is a social position well known to museum curators and their visitors.’<sup>626</sup> Rather than explicitly indulging in or criticizing *Ostalgie*, most sites are therefore aware of *Ostalgie* discourse and self-conscious with regard to their approach towards it.

Over the course of the last fifteen years, museums of everyday life in the GDR have continued to come under fire for promoting a rose-tinted nostalgia for the East. In public and official discourse, *Ostalgie* has acquired pejorative connotations as a dangerous, selective form of amnesia regarding the realities of the GDR *Alltag*, based on a ‘simple desire to reinstate the past and resist the present’.<sup>627</sup> Because of this, museum directors are now more careful to disassociate themselves from *Ostalgie* and to defend their institutions against such possible criticism. This is particularly true for those sites dependent on public funding, but is also the case for private museums where a non-*ostalgic* curatorial approach is considered to be more professional and historically credible.<sup>628</sup> It is, therefore, not surprising that the directors of both the Radebeul and Thale museums are at pains to distance themselves and their museums from *Ostalgie*, attempting to present the GDR as ‘neutrally’ as possible.<sup>629</sup> At the same time, however, both museums seem willing to actively promote and draw on *Ostalgie* for commercial purposes. The Radebeul museum’s homepage informs visitors that the *Alltag* experienced in the museum is so different from the present-day *Alltag* in unified Germany that they will not

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<sup>624</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 229.

<sup>625</sup> Betts, p. 760.

<sup>626</sup> Paver, p. 133.

<sup>627</sup> Anna Saunders, “‘Normalizing’ the Past: East German Culture and *Ostalgie*”, in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp. 89-103.

<sup>628</sup> As Paver notes following her discussion with Andreas Ludwig, it is often necessary for public museums to be seen to be moving away from *ostalgic* approaches to the GDR in order to ensure continued funding (p. 145).

<sup>629</sup> Both Hans-Joachim Stephan and Frank Müller indicated in conversation (August 2012) that their museums are, as far as is possible, non-nostalgic, ‘neutral’ representations of the GDR.

miss ‘die ostalgischen Eindrücke’.<sup>630</sup> Upon admission to the museum, visitors are issued with a ticket based on the design of the GDR single entry and exit visa, which is then stamped with the date of the visit, and they leave the museum in an equally light-hearted way through the museum shop, which sells a variety of *Ostprodukte*. The tone of the museum’s visitor leaflet is similarly playful, as it informs visitors that their “‘modischer” Badeanzug hängt schon bereit’ and that ‘Die Volkspolizei - Dein Freund und Helfer - hilft nicht sondern hat eine Radarfalle aufgebaut’.<sup>631</sup> Although the museum could be criticized on the grounds of a western mocking of the GDR *Alltag* (the director being a former West German), the choice of terminology, particularly in the leaflet, indicates a potentially more complex engagement with the past. By invoking official GDR rhetoric, such as the Volkspolizei being ‘Dein Freund und Helfer’ and by using vocabulary such as ‘modisch’ in reference to the way in which objects were perceived in the GDR and are perceived now, the museum not only pokes fun at the GDR *Alltag*, but also *Ostalgie* itself. The Thale museum is perhaps more selective in its exploitation of the marketing potential of *Ostalgie* in the museum, but has taken *Ostalgie* further to increase visitor footfall. Upon clicking on the homepage, visitors to the museum’s website are presently greeted with a rather loud voice-over of the well-known Pioneer greeting ‘Seid bereit! Immer bereit!’ that became something of an *Ostalgie*-motto following the release of *Good Bye, Lenin!* in 2003 and the subsequent craze of *Ostalgie* television shows. On the occasion of the museum’s opening on 1 May 2011 the museum went so far as to organize a town May Day celebration, complete with visitors dressed up in FDJ and Pioneer uniforms and flying GDR flags, the Volkspolizei (in full uniform and original cars) maintaining law and order, and an Erich Honecker double.<sup>632</sup> Whilst this may arguably have gone too far in the trivialization of the more repressive elements of the SED regime, the event can be seen as a self-referential parody of those elements of the GDR *Alltag* which have become foci for *Ostalgie*. Rather than necessarily conforming to reductive uses of *Ostalgie*, these ‘playful appropriation[s] and ironic parod[ies] of Ostalgie’ at the museums suggest potential recognition of the commemorative complexity of the phenomenon, in line with the latest phase outlined by Berdahl.<sup>633</sup> The fact that 1 May was selected over numerous other important dates in the GDR calendar for the inauguration of both

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<sup>630</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Das Leben hinter dem Eisernen Vorhang zum Anfassen’, *DDR Museum Dresden* <<http://www.ddd-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddd-museum.php?lang=1&id=1&anlass=0>> [accessed 01 February 2014].

<sup>631</sup> *Zeitreise: DDR-Museum-Radebeul* [visitor leaflet].

<sup>632</sup> See ‘DDR Museum Thale eröffnet’, TV Westerhausen, uploaded 31 May 2011 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0u-MHFO86Y>> [accessed 01 February 2014].

<sup>633</sup> Daphne Berdahl, ‘Re-presenting the Socialist Modern: Museums and Memory in the Former GDR’, in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. by Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), pp. 345-66 (p. 362).

museums is highly symbolic of the counter-memorial approach adopted at the two sites. Rather than foregrounding an important date for GDR sovereignty, such as 7 October (the ‘Tag der Republik’), the museums opened on what was the ‘Internationale Kampf- und Feiertag der Werktätigen für Frieden und Sozialismus’ during the GDR: a public holiday and day of solidarity of ‘normal’, working people, where schoolchildren and workers took part in large, organized parades. Fixing the museums within this particular narrative of the GDR can, therefore, be seen as a counter-memorial reinvestment in the GDR *Alltag* through which the lives of ‘ordinary’ generations of people are reinserted into the wider national narrative.

Comments in the museums’ guest books support this reading of the more complex nature of *Ostalgie*, where irony and satire are used to question its very premise. One former East German visitor now ‘in Hannover “gestrandet”’ notes that that by visiting the Radebeul museum, he was taken back to his “Klein[e] Heil[e] DDR” Welt’.<sup>634</sup> Rather than demonstrating a nostalgic longing for the GDR, the use of inverted commas means that this is an ironic use of official rhetoric, which is used to question retrospective *Ostalgie*. In a similar way, one visitor to the Thale museum uses *ostalgie* language by writing ‘es lebe die DDR und der Kommunismus! Ha, Ha, war nur ein Scherz’.<sup>635</sup> By using such vocabulary as a joke, the visitor parodies *Ostalgie*, thereby undermining its existence. Visitors use *Ostalgie* not only to question nostalgia itself, but also to legitimize GDR memory, reflecting a more sophisticated engagement with the phenomenon. Visitors to the Thale museum relate that the exhibition provides them with the opportunity ‘in alten Erinnerungen zu schwelgen’ and ‘endlich mal wieder “ALTE ZEITEN” [sic] erleben [zu] dürfen’.<sup>636</sup> Such statements appear at first glance to indicate nothing more than a nostalgic wallowing, but imply a more complex understanding of *Ostalgie* as a means of reclaiming a past that has been suppressed in post-unification Germany. As another visitor comments: ‘wir haben gute und auch schlechte Zeiten erlebt. Trotzdem erinnern wir uns gerne zurück’.<sup>637</sup> In this sense, as Saunders explains, *Ostalgie* is no longer (and perhaps never was) ‘a naïve longing to restore the past, but rather the desire to find a place for it within [the] memory’ of present-day Germany.<sup>638</sup> Other entries in the Thale museum’s guest book show how for Eastern visitors, *Ostalgie* speaks, as Arnold-de Simone highlights in relation to the commodification of GDR material culture, ‘of the urge to establish

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<sup>634</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, 20 July 2012.

<sup>635</sup> Lilli, DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, August 2012.

<sup>636</sup> Familie Hecker, DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 21 August 2012; signed entry in DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 16 August 2012.

<sup>637</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 13 May 2011.

<sup>638</sup> Saunders, “Normalizing” the Past: East German Culture and *Ostalgie*, p. 101-2.

a common identity as former GDR citizens, harking back to shared experiences of growing up in the GDR.<sup>639</sup> For one visitor, the museum provides a sense of continuity of a distinct Eastern identity as it demonstrates ‘wie ideenreich, flexibel und auch fortschrittlich wir DDR-Bürge [sic] waren und auch noch sind’.<sup>640</sup> This is important for former East Germans as a way of rewriting their memories and biographies into the hegemonic Western narrative imposed with unification. As one visitor writes:

Wir sind “Kinder” des Geburtsjahrgangs 1949. Haben eine glückliche Kindheit und Jugend erlebt. Ich persönlich habe zwei erwachsene Jungen, die leider nicht verstehen können, dass wir etwas wehmütig auf unsere Vergangenheit zurück schauen. Wehmütig schaue ich deshalb zurück, weil ich als Frau & Mutter viel, viel glücklicher in “unserer Republik” leben konnte. Werte, die für Frauen & Familie wichtig sind, konnten wir ganz anders leben, als heute in dieser konsumorientierten und egoistischen Gesellschaft. Es gibt keine kameradschaftlichen und wirklich geselligen und vor allem familieären [sic] festen Bindungen mehr.<sup>641</sup>

For this particular visitor, *Ostalgie* is an important means of reappraising her personal biography of growing up in the GDR for two distinct reasons: first, because the GDR *Alltag* merits more recognition on the basis of there being more camaraderie and conviviality in the East (where women could thrive as mothers), and second because the GDR has effectively been erased since unification, with Western political dominance and the arrival of the *Nachwendegeneration*. Far from initiating an overly simplistic, monolithic vision of the GDR as a utopian state, *Ostalgie* allows visitors from the former East to legitimize their everyday lives in the GDR, representing what Martin Blum sees as ‘an embattled site of memory and of the legitimacy of this memory’ in unified Germany.<sup>642</sup>

For visitors with no first-hand experience of the GDR, museum representations of everyday life are equally as important as educative tools and raise certain questions about the preconceptions they may hold of the GDR. For younger generations of Germans too young to remember the GDR or born after the *Wende*, museums are one of the most tangible media through which they can gain an insight into what life was like for their parents and grandparents. Comments such as ‘cool wie Mama & Papa so gelebt haben’ and ‘endlich wissen

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<sup>639</sup> Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 175.

<sup>640</sup> Familie Völker, DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 14 August 2012.

<sup>641</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 2011.

<sup>642</sup> Martin Blum, ‘Club Cola and Co.: Ostalgie, Material Culture and Identity’, in *Transformations of the New Germany*, ed. by Ruth A. Starkman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 131-54 (p. 133). The unusual length of the guest book entry is a clear indicator of strength of feeling.

wir wie unsere Eltern im jungen Jahren gelebt haben’ are common in both the Radebeul and Thale museum guest books, showing that museums play a significant role in facilitating the transmission of generationally encoded communicative memories.<sup>643</sup> For some visitors, everyday objects and room recreations such as those at Radebeul and Thale are evidence enough that the GDR was not just about political repression and the limitation of freedom, but that it was possible to lead a ‘normal’ life, just as it was in the West.<sup>644</sup> The fact that visitors at first ‘[konnten] nicht glauben, DDR [*sic*] war nicht alles schlecht’, however, goes to show how ingrained such western stereotypes can be, and the extent to which younger generations are influenced by dominant cultural retrospectives of the GDR.<sup>645</sup> Prosthetic memories formed from the interplay of visitors’ own archives of knowledge and experience and the narratives on offer at the museum can thus act as an important counterbalance to pejorative, monolithic interpretations of the GDR. Others express surprise at their interest and appreciation of GDR culture sparked by the exhibits, such as the visitor to the Radebeul museum who was ‘noch nie so lange aufmerksam, wenn es um die DDR ging!’ and the visitor to the Thale museum who now knows that in fact there were ‘sehr schöne Sachen in der DDR!’.<sup>646</sup> By ‘normalizing’ the GDR through the exhibition of everyday material culture (much of which resembled that of West Germany and beyond), museums of everyday life can play an important role in challenging dominant western stereotypes and myths.

The Radebeul and Thale museums initiate this East(ern)-West(ern) dialogue themselves by attempting to undermine overly negative perceptions of the GDR. By exhibiting such a large number of different everyday objects, the Radebeul museum, for instance, sets out to present ‘Vielfalt in vier Etagen’, showing how GDR *Alltagskultur* is more varied than traditionally perceived.<sup>647</sup> The Thale museum has an equally ambitious aim ‘alles [zu] zeigen und erklären’ about everyday life in the GDR, situating the *Alltag* within the framework of the SED dictatorship.<sup>648</sup> At the same time, however, the Radebeul museum also draws on certain

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<sup>643</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, July 2012; Andrea und Thomas ‘aus Hamburg’, DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, 6 May 2011.

<sup>644</sup> Gabriele Scherl (visitor), interviewed in Vierecke, ‘20 Jahre Mauerfall: Erinnerungen’ <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVGPEluI2qQ#t=122>> [accessed 23 January 2014] (00.31).

<sup>645</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, 5 July 2012.

<sup>646</sup> Signed entry in DDR Museum Zeitreise Guest Book, 11 August 2012; Annelie, DDR Museum Thale Guest Book, August 2012.

<sup>647</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Das Entwicklungskonzept’ <[http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/module-dateidownload.php?fp\\_dwn\\_dir=../dat/id\\_1/deu/dwn/&fp\\_dwn\\_file=mappe-entwicklungskonzept-dsl.pdf](http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/module-dateidownload.php?fp_dwn_dir=../dat/id_1/deu/dwn/&fp_dwn_file=mappe-entwicklungskonzept-dsl.pdf)> [accessed 29 January 2014] (p. 9).

<sup>648</sup> Christian Leopold, ‘Möbelhaus wird DDR-Museum’, *Bild Halle*, 12 February 2011 <<http://www.ddr-museum-thale.de/downloads/artikel-bildzeitung-halle-12.-februar-2011-.pdf>> [accessed 03 February 2014].

stereotypes, most notably an East-West opposition related to colour, that ‘grey = East, colourful = West’.<sup>649</sup> Whilst the museum is introduced on the website as a project which strives to highlight that ‘die DDR gar nicht so grau und trist war’, museum co-founder Wolfram Kotte’s comments in the next section of the website serve to undermine this, as ‘man entflohe gern dem realsozialistischen grauen Einheitsbrei, indem man sich mutig in die Fluten der kapitalistischen Buntheit stürzte’.<sup>650</sup> For Paver, ‘this metaphorical association of the state with greyness is interesting because it is a retrospective reading at odds with the regime’s historical self-presentation through colour’, such as in the state’s black, red and gold flag (used as a design backdrop in both museums and accompanying literature) featured on many exhibited items of political memorabilia.<sup>651</sup> The invocation of the ‘graue *Alltag*’, therefore, conflicts with the proliferation of colour in the political and cultural sphere of the GDR as represented in the museums, as well as the museums’ aims to present a more ‘normalized’ picture of what life in the GDR was really like, and in so doing, re-exoticizes the East German everyday. By simultaneously confirming and challenging the notion of the GDR as grey and by associating East and West Germany with two ends of the colour spectrum, the Radebeul museum foregrounds highly contradictory memory discourses relating to everyday life in the GDR.<sup>652</sup> The *bunt-grau* opposition can thus be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the *Kuschelstaat-Unrechtsstaat* dichotomy in GDR remembrance culture that the museums attempt to move away from.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Analysing the Radebeul and Thale museums through the chronotope of monochronous time and the motif of the idyll has revealed the 1950s as a spatio-temporal unit fused into the historicization of the forty-year narrative of the GDR *Alltag*. As a narrative framework for the representation of the GDR past, monochronous time condenses and flattens East German everyday life, incorporating the 1950s, along with all other spatio-temporal experience, into a forty-year long spatio-temporal continuum. Reimagined according to monochronous time, the 1950s are no longer symbolic of significant historical, cultural and political events that took

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<sup>649</sup> Paver, p. 137.

<sup>650</sup> DDR Museum Zeitreise, ‘Unser Museum stellt sich vor’ <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 03 February 2014]; Kotte, ‘Einige Gedanken und Inhalte zur Ausstellung Zeitreise’ <<http://www.ddr-museum-dresden.de/cod/php/ddr-museum.php?lang=1&id=4&anlass=0>> [accessed 03 February 2014].

<sup>651</sup> Paver, p. 136.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

place between the formation of the GDR and the 1960s, but are re-envisaged as part of the entire biography of the East German state and its citizens. As part of this chronotopic reinvestment in the GDR *Alltag*, the museums construct a particular counter-memory of the GDR as a spatio-temporal idyll, which serves to unite different generations of East Germans and fixes all generational experience. Providing a way of writing back against dominant, polarized interpretations of the GDR, the idyll refocuses the museum gaze at a more grassroots level, incorporating memories and experiences of everyday life alongside more hegemonic, political narratives of the nation. This is used as the basis for reclaiming a more ‘normalized’ vision of the East German *Alltag* within the context of the SED regime.

Unlike in French and western German museums that thematize the period, where popular reinvestment in the post-war past has led to the creation of specific museum cultural memories of the 1950s, this decade only has narrative significance at the Radebeul and Thale museums as part of the wider cultural memory and history of the GDR. This seems to be specific to the museological approach adopted in privately run *Alltagsmuseen* like those in Radebeul and Thale, which are object focused, and where there is no overarching interpretive framework. Whereas more traditional historical museums of everyday life devoted to the GDR past foreground a central narrative framework and specifically delineated chronologies, the Radebeul and Thale museums prioritize the exhibition of material culture. As such, historical narratives and temporal specificities (such as those related in wall texts and timelines) are secondary and merely provide a backdrop to the everyday objects on display. As time moves on from unification, this museum representation of the East German *Alltag* is likely to become increasingly generic, because the chronotopic reimagining of the GDR and, as Paver notes, the complex ‘pastness’ of GDR objects means that ‘the material residue of East German production may become steadily less able to evoke the chronological stages in the GDR’s 40-year span’.<sup>653</sup>

The museum representation of a particular part of East German time-space differs markedly from those of France and West Germany in other ways. East Germany no longer exists as a political entity, and memories of the former state have been caught up in competing post-unification memory discourses since the *Wende*. Rather than focusing on specific periods or highlighting particular golden ages for the GDR, historical investigations and reappraisals of the East German *Alltag* have therefore tended to assess the GDR on the basis of the entirety of its existence. Discussing the GDR of the 1950s thus invariably means situating it within the

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<sup>653</sup> Paver, p. 144.

broader framework of 1949–1989 and making it a part of relative historical proximity. Last but not least, following John Borneman’s thesis, time and space may actually have been experienced very differently in the GDR in comparison to elsewhere, because of the way in which space was confined and time was artificially slowed down. This means that monochronous time and the idyll may be a more inevitable than intentional means of framing the GDR in museums. This does, of course, also relate to specific political agendas and may be a deliberate attempt to highlight fundamental differences between East and West Germany, as well as critique western capitalism and acceleration. For all the differences between our objects of study, Bakhtin also argues that modern appropriations of the idyll form have the potential to ‘criticiz[e] the current state of society’.<sup>654</sup> Where Bakhtin saw capitalism as bringing an end to the idyll of non-mechanized labour, capitalism intervenes a second time to bring an end to the industrial ‘idyll’ of the GDR.<sup>655</sup>

By decelerating time and exhibiting mnemonically significant artefacts, the Radebeul and Thale museums constitute important *lieux de mémoire*, which act as repositories of GDR memory. For former East German visitors, the museums can provide an outlet for legitimizing their memories and biographies and rebuilding a sense of eastern identity. For other visitors with no first-hand experience of the GDR, the museums can provide an insight into the lives of parents and grandparents and a more experiential engagement with the East German *Alltag* unavailable through some other types of media. By simultaneously endorsing and challenging stereotypes of the GDR such as *Ostalgie*, the museums themselves can contribute to a more ‘normalized’ and ‘re-exoticized’ vision of the East German *Alltag*, which is supportive of both united and divided identities. *Ostalgie* in particular, however, is shown to be a complex phenomenon, which is no longer necessarily about glorifying or recreating the GDR past, but turns rather into a self-referential parodying, which is as much about the present and future of GDR memory as its past. It is in such a way that museums of everyday life, such as those in Radebeul and Thale, once critiqued on the basis of *Ostalgie*, can now contribute to a more differentiated and democratized post-unification vision of the GDR, representing sites of cultural and memorial exchange between former Easterners and Westerners and experiential, and non-experiential generations alike.

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<sup>654</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 231.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.



## 6. Metachronous Time

The recognition and promotion of the museum display as a privileged repository of history and memory can be seen as an integral part of an archival complex that is at the heart of the memory and museum boom. According to Nora, the disappearance of a naturally occurring social memory has given new impetus to safeguard traces, such as testimonies, documents, objects and images, in archival institutions like museums.<sup>656</sup> Museums and exhibitions can be understood as archival in the way that they select, organize and display these preserved traces, and in so doing, transform them into historical records. Because classification takes place within the physical parameters of the archive, archival memory can be seen as inherently chronotopic.<sup>657</sup> Nora maintains that the proliferation of archival memory has been so widespread that archiving is now the ‘impératif de l’époque’.<sup>658</sup> This has become apparent not only through the quantity of material preserved and the range of techniques employed to fulfil this, but also in the newfound documentary status of the trace as a primary source of historical knowledge.<sup>659</sup> Relating to a materialization of history and memory, the current ‘mal d’archive’ speaks of a compulsive urge and nostalgic desire to return to the moment of origin.<sup>660</sup>

Although archives have traditionally tended to serve national patrimonies and historiographies, the accumulation of archival data has coincided with an increasing decentralization and democratization of memory work.<sup>661</sup> Being refigured to meet the needs of smaller memory communities, archives may be used for the purpose of fulfilling counter narrative claims and constructing critical genealogies. It is in foregrounding the role of archival memory that museum institutions can galvanize new forms of knowledge, investigating the kinds of traces traditionally deemed unworthy of museum display, such as everyday objects and the testimonies of ‘normal’ people. Archives must, of course, still be understood as political, in the sense that they relate to a politics ‘of discrimination and of selection’, but whereas they once served exclusively nationalist agendas, they are now being reconfigured as more objective systems of historical knowledge.<sup>662</sup> By drawing on archived storage memory

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<sup>656</sup> Pierre Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et histoire: La problématique des lieux’, in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. by Pierre Nora, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), I, pp. 23-43 (p. 31).

<sup>657</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>658</sup> Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire’, p. 32.

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>660</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Mal d’Archive: Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), p. 142.

<sup>661</sup> Nora, ‘Entre Mémoire et Histoire’, p. 31.

<sup>662</sup> Achille Mbembe, ‘The Power of the Archive and its Limits’, trans. by Judith Inggs, in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. by Carolyn Hamilton and others (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), pp. 19-26 (p. 20).

and giving visitors the opportunity to engage with content that is not normally on display, museums and in particular temporary exhibitions can provide scope for challenging dominant historical discourses enshrined in the canon and construct differentiated historical narratives.

With the counter-memorial potential of the archive in mind, this chapter examines how the 1950s are being reclaimed and reimagined through the archive at two temporary exhibitions dedicated to the French and West German post-war pasts respectively: ‘Permis de (Re)construire, Vire 1944–1965’, which was displayed at the Musée des arts et traditions populaires de Vire (Calvados) from 28 April to 4 November 2012, and ‘Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre: Zeitzeugen aus unserem Depot’, which was displayed at the Deutsches Museum in Munich (Bavaria) from 17 December 2010 to 31 July 2012.<sup>663</sup> The Vire museum is dedicated predominantly to local ethnography, fine and decorative art and religious history, and typically organizes one or two new temporary exhibitions each year, which are open to the public for a duration of around three to seven months. The Munich museum, by contrast, focuses on global science and technology and has the capacity to organize multiple temporary exhibitions each year, which are open to the public for a duration ranging from a couple of months to over a year and a half. This particular temporary exhibition on 1950s technology was an experimental project designed initially to be on display for just over one year, in order to assess whether successful exhibitions could be created on a small budget, with very few museum staff and using reserve collections.<sup>664</sup> It turned out to be one of the museum’s longest running exhibitions, having been extended for five months due to popular demand.<sup>665</sup> Whilst there are obvious differences between the two sites, in that the Vire exhibition was shown in a relatively small, municipal museum in a very rural part of France, and the Munich exhibition was shown in the world’s largest museum of science and technology in Germany’s third largest city, both case studies are united in their museological reappraisals of the archive. The fact that both sites are temporary exhibitions is significant, since the transience of temporary exhibitions and their detachment from permanent museum displays is often considered to provide curators with more freedom to experiment and explore potentially conflicting histories.<sup>666</sup> Using the archive

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<sup>663</sup> The case studies are henceforth referred to as the Vire exhibition (and Vire museum) and the Munich exhibition (and Munich museum).

<sup>664</sup> Dirk Bühler, curator of the Munich exhibition, revealed this in conversation (March 2012).

<sup>665</sup> The decision was taken to extend the duration of the exhibition on the basis of it attracting over two hundred and seventy thousand visitors in its first twelve months alone. See Deutsches Museum, *Jahresbericht 2011* (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 2011) <<http://www.deutsches-museum.de/information/wir-ueber-uns/jahresbericht/>> (p. 53).

<sup>666</sup> Suzanne Macleod, *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 137.

to reframe dominant narratives of the *Trente Glorieuses*, the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the global post-war consumption boom, the exhibitions contribute to more detailed and temporally and thematically nuanced readings of the 1950s.

By appropriating the concept of metachronal processes and Bakhtin's motif of metamorphosis, this chapter argues that the refiguring of the 1950s is framed at the Vire and Munich exhibitions according to a chronotope of metachronous time.<sup>667</sup> In the context of the exhibitions, metachronous time refers to the way in which spatio-temporal markers are used to divide the 1950s (including the periods immediately preceding and succeeding the decade) into distinct temporal units. By adopting similar modes of presentation and forging similar narratives, the exhibitions produce three particular versions of the 1950s: that of the late 1940s/early 1950s, the mid-1950s and the late 1950s/early 1960s. Reading the sites in this way, the chapter highlights how the Vire and Munich exhibitions are using metachronous time and the concept of the archive in order to nuance and provide more historical clarity to the overarching national narrative of the entire decade as a heyday or golden age. As a spatio-temporal configuration and narrative setting, metachronous time allows for a more fragmented transmission of historical narratives, whilst still preserving a fluid, overriding, teleological narrative of post-war progress and development enshrined in national myths.<sup>668</sup> The exhibitions are ultimately consistent with the longer-term view of the 1950s crystallized in the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder*, as well as the thesis of the long fifties, but serve to construct more temporally and thematically distinct narratives and counter-memories of the 1950s. In so doing, they are not so much concerned with tracing a longer-term view as with bringing about a more detailed temporal fragmentation of the post-war past, providing the basis for the transformation of the 1950s from a historical period into a chronotope.

### **6.1 The Chronotope of Metachronous Time and the Motif of Metamorphosis**

In the Vire and Munich exhibitions, metachronous time resists a periodic historicization of the 1950s and instead, sustains a processual view of the post-war period as a series of micro-histories. As part of this temporal splintering, each temporal unit is essentially attributed its own identity: the late 1940s/early 1950s characterized by hardship and deprivation that is a

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<sup>667</sup> Metachronism refers to a type of synchrony in which certain processes occur sequentially at later times, such as in the distinctive coordinated actions of a Mexican wave or leg movements of a millipede.

<sup>668</sup> This is essentially the same as the Mexican wave, whereby the metachronal rhythm produced by the sequential movement of each individual or group of individuals appears as one fluid and coordinated pattern of movement.

legacy of the Second World War, the mid-1950s laying the foundation for a new consumer culture and socio-economic upturn, and the late 1950s/early 1960s constituting the realization of a fundamentally changed way of life in France and West Germany. The chronotopic reimagining of multiple versions of the 1950s represents a more detailed, nuanced interpretation of the dominant retrospective myth of the 1950s as a period of almost instantaneous progress, as tangible improvements in everyday life in France and West Germany are presented as taking place only from the mid-1950s onwards. The progress engendered by developments in the mid-1950s and late 1950s/early 1960s are moreover subject to critical reappraisal by both exhibitions.

The temporal fragmentation of the 1950s takes on significance within metachronous time, where particular events and turning points separating the three representations of the 1950s contribute to a motif of metamorphosis. Outlined in Bakhtin's discussion of adventure-everyday time, the motif of metamorphosis is understood as a 'mythological sheath for the idea of development – but one that unfolds not so much in a straight line as spasmodically'.<sup>669</sup> Because metamorphosis concentrates on the 'critical moments' of a particular narrative, it brings about a 'distinctive type of *temporal sequence*' that is not directly linear, but imagined more as a 'line with "knots" in it'.<sup>670</sup> These knots represent 'isolated, self-sufficient temporal segments that mechanically arrange themselves into no more than single sequences' and which constitute a temporary rupture in the flow of linear time by intersecting it 'at right angles'.<sup>671</sup> By the very nature of it being 'chopped up into separate segments', time in the motif of metamorphosis is, therefore, 'deprived of its unity and wholeness'.<sup>672</sup>

Representing shifts, these 'critical turning points' that make up the motif of metamorphosis are the determining factors in the disposition of each reimagining of the 1950s.<sup>673</sup> The motif of metamorphosis differs crucially from the motif of transition (see chapter three), because whereas transition represents the various stages in an auto/biographical evolution, with metamorphosis 'there is no evolution in the strict sense of the word; what we get, rather, is crisis and rebirth'.<sup>674</sup> Unlike the temporal sequence of biographical time, where

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<sup>669</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258 (p. 113).

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111 and 113.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114 and 128.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

points of transition follow a chiefly predetermined life path, the form and timing of the stages of metamorphosis in metachronous time are governed to a large extent by chance (alongside specific socio-economic circumstances and political decisions).<sup>675</sup> As a result of the ‘miraculous, instantaneous transformation’ brought about by the turning points, the three visions of the 1950s represented at the exhibitions can be seen as different eras which ‘differ profoundly from one another’.<sup>676</sup> At the same time, however, the ‘miraculous’ nature of each stage of metamorphosis maps onto the national French and West German myths of the wondrous 1950s encapsulated in the discourses of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Despite the very different nature of each representation of the 1950s, the overriding unity of the historical process of progress and development throughout the post-war period is still maintained. In this way, metachronous time can be seen as a means of reframing more dominant, nation-centred narratives rather than challenging them.

## 6.2 Historical Contextualization

The chronotope of metachronous time and the motif of metamorphosis are responsible for a distinct type of spatio-temporalization in the Vire and Munich exhibitions, where the 1950s are reimagined according to distinct temporal narratives. Because of the way in which these narratives are subject to a specific chronologization of the post-war period and determined and separated by important historical junctures, the exhibitions conform to a fairly typical historical exhibition model that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has termed ‘in-context display’. This particular mode of representation differs from in-situ display (see chapter four) in terms of the ‘performativity of objects’, as well as the nature of their staging in museums.<sup>677</sup> Whereas in-situ displays are based on mimetic room recreations and privilege an experimental engagement with the past, in-context displays ‘depend on the drama of the artefact’ and are concerned with animating exhibition content through the transmission of historical knowledge, primarily in the form of written text.<sup>678</sup>

Embedding artefacts in the multiple historical contexts of their manufacture and use is presented as a key element of both exhibitions, as all one hundred and twenty objects on display in the Vire exhibition are ‘replacés dans leur contexte dans les vastes espaces de la chapelle du

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<sup>675</sup> Bakhtin, ‘Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel’, p. 115.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid., pp. 114 and 113.

<sup>677</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

musée’, and exhibits in the Munich exhibition are positioned within the ‘Geschichte ihrer Entstehungszeit’ by focusing on important cultural and political events.<sup>679</sup> In both sites, exhibition content is recontextualized by means of object labels and wall texts, which detail the provenance and date of origin of each object and highlight their significance with regard to wider political, socio-economic or cultural events. For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, contextualization is important because it serves to ‘establish a theoretical frame of reference for the viewer’ and in so doing, ‘offer[s] explanations, provide[s] historical background, [and] make[s] comparisons’ between different objects and models.<sup>680</sup> The label for the 1964 armchair on display in the living room ensemble in the Vire exhibition, for instance, sets up a comparison between this armchair and the well-known Free-Span armchair designed by Marcel Gascoin, the ‘principal décorateur français de l’immédiat après-guerre, inventeur avec René Gabriel du style “Reconstruction”’. The label not only positions the armchair in the specific design context of the reconstruction period, but also relates much about the prevalent cultural context of the late 1950s/early 1960s, implying a certain continuity with designs and aesthetics popularized initially in the late 1940s. Similarly, the label for the 1953 Mentor wooden construction kit on display in the toys section of the Munich exhibition is not only an opportunity to relate the provenance of the toy and the origins of the East German manufacturer Hugo Fritzsche, but also enables the curators to explore the significant political and economic changes underway in the 1950s. This is done by drawing attention to the toy’s slogan and subject matter: ‘er hatte sogar den zeitgerechten Wahlspruch “Wir bauen auf!” und sogar ein zeitgemäßes Vorbild: die Stalin-Allee in Ost-Berlin.’<sup>681</sup> The label can, therefore, be seen as a way of elevating the object from an everyday toy to a historical witness to the construction boom and to the even more important political context of German division in the 1950s. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett sees the recourse to labelling in museums as a way of exerting ‘strong cognitive control over the objects’, so that they are part of a coherent historical interpretation.<sup>682</sup> Providing visitors with a kind of predetermined ‘script’, labels and other forms of textual information can subsequently create a more comprehensive, overall narrative of evolution or historical development.<sup>683</sup> Although the textual information on offer supports the temporal fragmentation of the 1950s, it

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<sup>679</sup> Musée des arts et traditions populaires de Vire, *Permis de [Re]construire, Vire 1944-1965* (2012) [press release] <[https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B\\_fNIXzYK27GUzhOczhLdmVSQjJRdXNkdnoyOHRoUQ/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B_fNIXzYK27GUzhOczhLdmVSQjJRdXNkdnoyOHRoUQ/edit?pli=1)> [accessed 26 April 2014]; Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, ‘Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre: Zeitzeugen aus unserem Depot: Einführung’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre: Zeitzeugen aus unserem Depot*, ed. by Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 2010), pp. 62-63 (p. 62).

<sup>680</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 21.

<sup>681</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, ‘Spielzeug’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 108-15 (p. 111).

<sup>682</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 21.

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

also feeds into a wider narrative of progress throughout the 1950s, which is embedded in a longer post-war trajectory spanning the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. This constitutes an overarching conceptual frame of reference for visitors that is particularly visible in the Vire exhibition, as movement through the exhibition space is tantamount to the chronological development of the reconstruction period.

Objects are equally contextualized ‘by means of other objects, often in relation to a classification or schematic arrangement of some kind, based on typologies of form or proposed historical relationships’.<sup>684</sup> Within each thematic section of the Munich exhibition, artefacts are presented according to taxonomies, which draw attention to the objects’ formal and aesthetic qualities. In the photo and film section of the exhibition, for instance, a total of seventeen cameras are shown in a display case, dating from the late 1940s to 1960; in the radios and television sections, eleven radios and nine televisions of the period are exhibited respectively. Whereas a taxonomic approach in the Radebeul and Thale museums serves to eliminate temporal distinctions and fuse the 1950s into a static, forty-year historicization of the GDR (see chapter five), taxonomies in the Munich exhibition bring about the exact opposite, contributing to the temporal differentiation of the 1950s and placing emphasis on variety, change and development. By placing a more select number of objects of the same category side by side than in the Radebeul and Thale museums and by including at times highly detailed information relating to the manufacturers and their other models, as well as specific technical details, the exhibition demonstrates the diversity of manufacturing in West Germany and the growing range of products available to consumers in the 1950s. What is more, by positioning some of the taxonomies in chronological order (according to date of manufacture), the exhibition enables visitors to grasp a sense of the historical progression of design and manufacturing throughout the 1950s. This begins with the simpler models of the late 1940s/early 1950s to the more complex designs of the mid-1950s and the late 1950s/early 1960s. This is most clearly illustrated in the television section, where the exhibit begins with the basic, first series-manufactured West German television set, the FE 8 T (manufactured by Telefunken in 1951) and ends with the more technologically advanced versions of the late 1950s/early 1960s, such as the 449 Zauberspiegel (manufactured by Grundig-Radiowerke in 1958). This model in particular included buttons for fine-tuning speech and music, a remote control and a switch at

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<sup>684</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 21.

the back of the set for automatic tuning.<sup>685</sup> In so doing, the exhibition creates a narrative of technological progress based on distinct temporal divisions of the 1950s, beginning with the basic developments of the late 1940s/early 1950s and culminating with the more sophisticated designs and technologies of the late 1950s/early 1960s.

Alongside such display techniques, both exhibitions make use of other interpretive strategies, such as catalogues, lectures and pedagogical programmes in order to place exhibition content in historical context. Undertaken by professional curators in accredited museums, both the Vire and Munich exhibitions are supported by comprehensive catalogues, which are designed as extensions of the exhibitions.<sup>686</sup> As well as providing an overview of the objects and narratives included in the actual exhibitions, both catalogues contain essays by prominent historians and other specialists, in order to explore certain areas in more detail and potentially respond to source material more critically. The collection of essays at the beginning of the Munich catalogue is designed as a contextual introduction to the exhibition artefacts shown in the second-half of the catalogue, exploring the ‘kultur-geschichtliche Entwicklung in Deutschland sowie die Geschichte des Deutschen Museums und seiner Sammlungen’ in the 1950s.<sup>687</sup> Two essays in the Vire catalogue, written by an architectural historian and historical monument conservation specialist respectively, focus on the changes to the built environment during the reconstruction in Vire and serve to situate everyday life within the wider context of urbanism and architectural change in the 1950s. The authors of these essays have also been included in the Vire museum’s annual ‘programme des animations’, leading two sessions on the subject of modernity (in relation to Vire’s 1950s architecture). These, along with other talks, workshops and guided visits form the basis of the museum’s 2012 outreach and pedagogical programme, designed to explore the wider historical context of the reconstruction period in Vire.

As well as textual information in the form of wall texts, labels and catalogues, both exhibitions make use of other media in order to relate historical context. In the chronological timeline section of the Munich exhibition, extracts are shown of the film *Rendezvous unterm Nierentisch* (1987): a tongue-in-cheek montage of original cinema adverts, newsreels and

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<sup>685</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Bühler and Lasi, ‘Fernsehen’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 126-131 (pp. 127-31).

<sup>686</sup> This is particularly important for smaller exhibitions. The director of the Vire museum, Marie-Jeanne Villeroy, explained in conversation (July 2012) that the catalogue provided a key opportunity to explore important historical material that could not be included in the exhibition due to space constraints.

<sup>687</sup> Back cover text of *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*.



documentaries, in which ‘alles, was die Fifties so unnachahmlich machte, findet sich [...] wieder’.<sup>688</sup> Incorporating adverts for products and goods actually on display, the film is conceptualized as the starting point of the nostalgic journey of rediscovery of the 1950s invoked in the initial wall text and the catalogue, and sets the largely sentimental tone of the rest of the exhibition. The extracts of the historical documentary *Vire, Mémoire d’une ville meurtrie* (1997) shown in the Vire exhibition are used to situate the reconstruction within the context of the Second World War.<sup>689</sup> Rather than endorsing nostalgia, however, these act as a springboard from which to critique the long-held sentimentality for pre-war Vire. The Vire exhibition extends historical contextualization further through an audio station, where visitors can listen to five recordings of three local inhabitants talking about specific aspects of the reconstruction period, including: ‘le déblaiement de la ville de Vire’, ‘les modifications du plan de Vire’, ‘la vie dans les baraquements’, ‘les difficultés de la reconstruction’ and ‘le confort moderne’ of reconstructed apartments. Unlike other parts of the exhibition where primary source material is alluded to or simply quoted, these interviews constitute direct instances of communicative memory and, in their narrativization of the reconstruction, can be understood as first-hand testimonies. Incorporated into the exhibition alongside other historically authentic documents, such as photographs and maps, these testimonies provide not only historical context, but more importantly, enhance the exhibition’s historical credibility. According to Ricœur, this fixing of the original spoken word as historical evidence in museum displays can be seen as a process of archiving: it is through the process of being documented and embedded in the archive (in this case the museum exhibition) that communicative memories are transformed into and sanctioned as historical documentary proof.<sup>690</sup> By incorporation into the Vire museum’s collection, communicative memories are crystallized as longer-lasting cultural memories, becoming documentary evidence not only of an individual’s experiences of the 1950s, but of the history of the reconstruction period in Vire and the wider French nation. Normally, this archiving of memory would involve a transition from the spoken to the written word, but the audio station enables visitors to experience directly the documents as original oral testimonies, thereby further strengthening the historical authenticity of the exhibition.

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<sup>688</sup> *Rendezvous unterm Nierentisch*, dir. by Manfred Breuersbrock, Wolfgang Dresler and Dieter Fietzke (Cult Film, 2004) [on DVD].

<sup>689</sup> *Vire, Mémoire d’une ville meurtrie*, dir. by Jean-Paul Dupuis (Association des Collectionneurs Virois, 2011) [on DVD].

<sup>690</sup> Paul Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 215.

As a final element of in-context museological approaches, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett highlights that the frame of reference imposed may not simply govern the historical context of exhibition narratives, but may also extend to the context and provenance of the exhibition itself, covering the ‘circumstances of excavation, collection, and conservation of the objects on display’.<sup>691</sup> Both the Vire and Munich exhibitions claim to be based on the historical repository of the archive, with much of the exhibition content never before having been shown to the public. The archive constitutes the starting point of a much wider historiographical and counter-memorial process of rediscovering and rewriting the 1950s past on the basis of new or previously hidden material and is therefore key to the differentiation of the 1950s that is ingrained in metachronous time. According to a press release from the Vire museum, along with the collection of first-hand testimonies, the reconstruction exhibition ‘se base sur un important travail d’analyse des archives’, with extensive research being undertaken at the Vire municipal archives and the archives of the Calvados département (held in Caen).<sup>692</sup> Much of the exhibition’s historical content with regard to the reconstruction process and town planning stems from this archival research, and numerous authentic documents normally only residing in archives, such as maps, plans and official correspondence have been incorporated into the exhibition and the catalogue. Both of these are supported by a large number of photographs taken by the Vire-based Polda photography studio between 1944 and 1962. Part of a collection of around two thousand surviving Polda photographs, taken in order to capture ‘pierre par pierre, îlot par îlot, rue par rue la renaissance de Vire’, and now preserved by the Association des Collectionneurs Virois, such photographs constitute an important archive in their own right.<sup>693</sup> Their incorporation into the Vire exhibition is conceived as a continuation of Daniel Urbain’s dream ‘que ces photographies servent à la mémoire collective’ of the residents of Vire and beyond.<sup>694</sup> With the exhibition of such significant archival material, the exhibition constitutes the high point of the 2011-2012 cultural season’s ‘Regards sur la Reconstruction’

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<sup>691</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, p. 21.

<sup>692</sup> Musée des arts et traditions populaires de Vire, *Permis de [Re]construire, Vire 1944-1965* <[https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B\\_fNIXzYK27GUzhOczhLdmVSQjJRdXNkdnoyOHRoUQ/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B_fNIXzYK27GUzhOczhLdmVSQjJRdXNkdnoyOHRoUQ/edit?pli=1)> [accessed 26 April 2014].

<sup>693</sup> Famille Urbain and the Association des Collectionneurs virois, ‘Polda, la mémoire de la reconstruction’, in *Permis de (Re)construire, Vire 1944-1965*, ed. by Musée des arts et traditions populaires de Vire (Bayeux: OREP, 2012), pp. 74-76 (p. 74). The Polda studio was run by husband and wife Daniel and Paulette Urbain and took more than ten thousand photographs of the reconstruction period in Vire.

<sup>694</sup> Famille Urbain and the Association des Collectionneurs virois, ‘Polda, la mémoire de la reconstruction’, p. 76.

(designed to bring ‘un nouveau regard’ to the reconstruction period) and, as such, is presented as the culmination of the historical reassessment of the 1950s in Vire.<sup>695</sup>

The Munich exhibition is equally presented as originating with an archival collection and specifically, the desire to make this available to the Deutsches Museum’s visitors. According to the catalogue:

immer wieder fragen Besucher nach Schätzen, die in unseren Depots verborgen sind, nach Objekten, die unsere Sammlungstätigkeit gut repräsentieren und einen Einblick in die technischen Errungenschaften der jeweiligen Sammlungsepoche bieten, aber normalerweise der Öffentlichkeit nicht zugänglich sind. Um diese Wissensbegier zu stillen und den neuen Sonderausstellungsraum feierlich einzuweihen, zeigen wir nun eine kleine Ausstellung, in der ausgewählte Objekte aus den Museumsdepots vorgestellt werden.<sup>696</sup>

The Munich exhibition is presented as a response to visitor interest in opening up more of the museum’s permanent collections and is immediately set up as a ‘begehbare Schaubude’.<sup>697</sup> Keen to show visitors objects which they would not normally be able to view in the museum, the exhibition contributes, therefore, not only to the differentiation of the 1950s past, but also to that of the museum’s exhibition content. By producing an exhibition exclusively from reserve objects and ephemera, the Deutsches Museum elevates the historical museum archive to what Aleida Assmann refers to as the ‘werthaft[e], geschmacksorientiert[e] und geschmackorientierend[e] Kanon’.<sup>698</sup> That this promotion of the archive involves a reappropriation and revaluing of the exhibition material concerned according to current tastes can be seen in the managing director’s decision to select the 1950s as the subject matter of the exhibition on the basis of conforming to the prevailing taste of the museum’s visitors.<sup>699</sup> As in the Vire exhibition, the use of previously unseen archival material to thematize 1950s technology can be seen as one step of a much wider historiographical and counter-memorial differentiation of the past through everyday objects, beginning with the rediscovery of the *Alltag* in the 1980s.<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> Jean-Yves Cousin, ‘Avant-propos’, in *Permis de (Re)construire*, p. 7.

<sup>696</sup> Wolfgang M. Heckl, ‘Geleitwort’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, p. 5.

<sup>697</sup> Ibid.

<sup>698</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), pp. 56.

<sup>699</sup> Dirk Bühler indicated this in conversation (March 2012).

<sup>700</sup> Sophie Gerber, Nina Lorkowski and Nina Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer? Haushaltstechnik in Westdeutschland in den 1950er Jahren’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 44-58 (p. 55).

### 6.3 Differentiating the 1950s

In their establishment of different temporal narratives of the 1950s, both exhibitions rely on distinct senses of chronology. In the Vire exhibition, all material on display is ordered according to a clear chronological progression, beginning with the history of the ancient town and ending with the creation of a new town in the 1960s. In the Munich exhibition, despite a broad thematic approach to 1950s technology, a timeline at the beginning of the exhibition serves to set exhibition content within a specific chronological framework, which charts key historical events from the end of the Second World War to the 1960s. Although to a much larger extent in the Vire exhibition, the course of history in both exhibitions thus fuses with the spatial course taken by visitors as they, quite literally, move through time and space simultaneously. Space, to use Bakhtin's words, 'becomes more concrete and saturated with a time that is more substantial' and the path taken by visitors takes on particular significance as a historical journey.<sup>701</sup> In both exhibitions, this historical journey far extends a decadal period as objects are situated according to a specific lineage of post-war change and development that begins in the mid-1940s and ends around 1965.<sup>702</sup> As we have seen in chapter four, this chronological approach also serves a clear nationalist agenda, as it supports an overarching narrative of modernity and progress during the 1950s that is central to the mythology of the French and West German post-war reconstruction projects and the consumption booms of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

Temporal fragmentation within this longer post-war trajectory is brought about by specific strategies of archival organization and provides the basis for the critique of popular retrospectives of the 1950s as a period that hailed an immediate improvement on the war and pre-war years. According to the introductory essay to the Munich exhibition catalogue, although socio-economic changes of the late 1950s have become synonymous with the whole decade, the mythicized West German *Wohlstandsgesellschaft* simply did not exist, or only for a very small, wealthy minority; what the early 1950s in fact brought was 'eine beträchtliche und anfangs sogar wachsende soziale Ungleichheit'.<sup>703</sup> Deconstructing this myth, the exhibition uses objects from the mid to late 1940s and early 1950s to tell a very different narrative of the 1950s. A washboard and tub shown in the laundry and personal hygiene section

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<sup>701</sup> Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel', p. 120.

<sup>702</sup> The Vire exhibition examines the reconstruction period in Vire spanning 1944-1965 and the Munich exhibition draws on Ludwig Erhard's official announcement of the end of the post-war period in West Germany in 1965. Axel Schildt, 'Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau: Auf dem Weg in die Konsum-Moderne', in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 8-16 (p. 15).

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

of the exhibition reminds visitors that many women in West Germany were still washing clothes by hand in the 1950s, in the same manner that they had since the mid-nineteenth century. Far from the consumption-fuelled world of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, where appliances are refigured as the saviours of West German housewives, this creates a vision of post-war everyday life as characterized by hard, physical labour. This narrative of hardship is continued in the catalogue through the incorporation of a photograph of a 1947 food ration card and a person's daily entitlement to rationed goods, highlighting the issue that food shortages far extended the end of the Second World War.<sup>704</sup> This can be seen as attempt to nuance the pervasive image of well-stocked supermarket shelves brought about by the *Fresswelle* of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

An additional essay in the catalogue relates that icons of the consumer society (which have become symbolic cultural references for the 1950s), such as cars, off-the-peg clothing, household appliances and record players were not widely consumed in the early part of the decade.<sup>705</sup> This resonates with the narrative of home-made clothing in 1950s East and West Germany constructed in the Historische Wohnung (see chapter four) and Peine exhibition (see chapter three) respectively. As such items were not readily available or affordable, the essay maintains that many people resorted to watching television, and in particular the special television broadcasts of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation in 1953 and the World Cup in 1954 (depicted in a photograph in the catalogue) through shop windows or in restaurants and pubs.<sup>706</sup> Even for the minority who could afford a television in the early 1950s, the catalogue highlights that regular broadcasting did not begin until 1952 (in both West and East Germany) and even then, only for two hours a day, meaning that people's consumption of such leisure products was inherently limited.<sup>707</sup> By highlighting access to, and consumption of, television in the GDR and exhibiting East German television sets such as the popular Rembrandt and Leningrad models (both manufactured by VEB Sachsenwerk, Radeberg), the exhibition maps out the wider historical context of television in Germany and provides a comparative reference point for former East and West German visitors alike. In so doing, the exhibition unites East and West Germany of the early 1950s through a common narrative of scarcity and limitation. This can be seen as an attempt to draw out the parallels between the two states and correct the

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<sup>704</sup> Schildt, 'Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau', p. 9.

<sup>705</sup> Axel Schildt, 'Amerikanische Einflüsse auf die westdeutsche Konsumententwicklung nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg', in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 17-27 (p. 18).

<sup>706</sup> Bühler and Lasi, 'Fernsehen', p. 127.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

pervasive pejorative image of the GDR as a state always lagging behind the West. The emphasis placed on the striving for normality in post-war West Germany in the exhibition, which resulted in an “‘Einbunkern” in den Privatraum der eigenen Wohnung’ moreover testifies to a ‘häusliche Regression’ and retreat into an apolitical, private niche, in a similar manner to that presented in the context of the GDR in the Radebeul and Thale museums (see chapter five).<sup>708</sup> The relationship between the two states in the immediate post-war period and the early 1950s is thus reimagined in the exhibition as one of historical congruencies.

The late 1940s/early 1950s are moreover reimagined as a relatively regressive period for women in West Germany. In the cooking section of the exhibition, an enlarged photograph shows a West German housewife busy preserving fruit and acts as a backdrop for a display cabinet containing a Weck slow cooker and preserving jars. An enlarged photograph for a British kitchen manufacturing company is used as a backdrop for the display of white goods in the same section, which depicts a housewife at work in the kitchen whilst (presumably) her husband sits on the worktop smoking a pipe. Images such as these testify to the significance of social norms during the 1950s, where women were expected to take up their traditionally domestic, subservient positions as homemakers. This return to pre-war gender roles is confirmed in the catalogue, which likens the number of working women in West Germany in 1950 to that of the 1920s.<sup>709</sup> The desire to return to old-fashioned family values in 1950s West Germany is moreover presented as a retreat to a way of life that had been popular in the 1930s, epitomized in a photograph in the catalogue, where the husband, grandmother and children eat together at a table, whilst the mother is still busy vacuuming.<sup>710</sup> Narratives such as these not only serve to further demythicize the notion of a nurturing *Wohlstandsgesellschaft* for all, but also function as a qualification to the overarching narrative of progress and modernity. Put another way, the *Wirtschaftswunder* may have brought economic progress, but was not necessarily socially or culturally progressive.

The dominant issue in the late 1940s/early 1950s presented in both the Munich and Vire exhibitions, however, is undoubtedly the housing shortage. Using statistics to reinforce the ‘desolate Wohnungssituation’ and the ‘miserabl[e] Wohnverhältnisse’ during this period, the Munich exhibition explains that for every three West German households in the 1950s, there

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<sup>708</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 12.

<sup>709</sup> Ute Frevert, cited in Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 48. See Ute Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 290.

<sup>710</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 11.

were only two homes, many of which had no cooking facilities and the majority of which had no bathroom.<sup>711</sup> The Vire exhibition places similar emphasis on the acute nature of the ‘crise du logement’ in Vire at the end of the 1940s. The section of the exhibition and catalogue entitled ‘Etre réfugié dans sa propre ville’ places emphasis on the terrible living conditions of many Virois in 1947 alone, where fifty-one families were deemed ‘prioritaires’, eleven others were considered to be living in housing that posed a danger to life, and sixty others had been relocated to shelters in cellars, stables and garages, where hygiene conditions were ‘extrêmement déplorables’.<sup>712</sup> By highlighting the precariousness of housing in the post-war period, both exhibitions seem to suggest that standards of living in the early 1950s were in fact lower than in the pre-war and early war years, thereby undermining the notion of the 1950s as a golden age. The Vire exhibition also makes extensive use of eye-witness testimonies of those with first-hand experience of the housing situation in the town. By reducing narratives to the level of the individual, this serves to repersonalize historical material and make it more accessible. The situation of Vire inhabitant Gisèle Lefranc is used, for instance, to show the continued shortage of housing following the construction of temporary and emergency accommodation, when her and her family shared one cramped apartment with no central heating with two other families between 1950 and 1953.<sup>713</sup> This not only engages the emotions in a more direct manner, but also potentially enables visitors to relate better to exhibition content, effectively putting themselves in the shoes of those narrativized in the exhibition.

Alongside the large amount of textual information about the late 1940s/early 1950s, the Vire exhibition thematizes this period as experientially distinct from the later 1950s through the display of specific objects. The exhibition makes use of juxtaposition to instil comparisons between the types of object available to people in Vire throughout the post-war period. On one side of the exhibition, there is a display of a bright and light 1950s kitchen and living room symbolizing the ‘confort moderne’ of the later 1950s, complete with the latest goods, products and stylish, colourful designs. Directly opposite these ensembles is an exhibition of the type of practical, functional emergency furniture given to those who lost their possessions during the extensive bombing of the city on D-Day, whose ‘esthétique rectiligne’, according to a wall text, ‘évoque la sobriété de l’architecture de la Reconstruction’. Similarly, on one side of the exhibition there is a modern gas kitchen cooker associated with the later 1950s and on the other

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<sup>711</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 9.

<sup>712</sup> Report of 22 November 1947, cited in Marie-Jeanne Villeroy, ‘Etre réfugié dans sa propre ville’, in *Permis de (Re)construire*, pp. 23-31 (p. 24).

<sup>713</sup> Gisèle Lefranc, quoted in Villeroy, ‘Etre réfugié dans sa propre ville’, p. 31.

side, there is a wood-fuelled kitchen cooker associated more with the 1940s and earlier periods. By positioning objects and ensembles of the same category in juxtaposition with each another, the exhibition maps out a clear historical trajectory of progress in everyday life throughout the post-war period, moving from privation and austerity to abundance and prosperity.

The mid-1950s, by contrast, are reimagined in both exhibitions as the beginning of a period of revival and regeneration in France and West Germany. In the Vire exhibition, the mid-1950s are imbued with special significance as a period of new beginnings that is both metaphorical and literal, as the reconstruction of private and public edifices marked the renaissance and rebirth of the town.<sup>714</sup> The physical reconstruction of the town is narrated in the exhibition as the starting point of a tangible improvement in everyday life, particularly with regard to domestic comfort and sanitation, as all new housing was built with indoor bathrooms and toilets as standard, and the majority with central heating. Representing a fundamental departure from the insalubrious shelter of the late 1940s/early 1950s, modern housing in the mid-1950s became the new foundation for a better life, where ‘espace, confort, hygiène [étaient] les maîtres-mots’.<sup>715</sup> Rather than being a period of retrospection towards the Second World War and the pre-war period in Vire, the mid-1950s is presented as a period of future-gazing, signalling a change in mentality from looking backwards to looking forwards. Notable examples cited in the exhibition include the forward planning for population growth and car ownership by town planners in Vire, as well as a procession of robot and rocket-themed floats organized around the theme ‘Vire en l’an 2000’ on the occasion of the inauguration of the new town hall in 1956.<sup>716</sup> The growing importance of the automobile in everyday life is echoed in the Munich exhibition, as ‘in der Mitte der 1950er Jahre begann die Phase der Massenmotorisierung in Deutschland’.<sup>717</sup> Like the Citroën 2CV in the Musée Tusseau (see chapter three) and the East German cars, particularly the Trabi, at the Radebeul museum (see chapter five), the vehicles on display in the exhibition, such as the Heinkel cabine bubble car 154, the Goliath Goli truck and the DKW Auto Union F93 car, all testify to a vehicle boom during the 1950s. The principal difference in the museum representation of these vehicles is that, whereas the Citroën 2CV and the Trabi are symbolic of the whole post-war period and

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<sup>714</sup> Marie-Jeanne Villeroy, ‘La reconstruction, vue par les habitants’, in *Permis de (Re)construire*, pp. 32-43 (p. 39).

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>717</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, ‘Autos’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 180-87 (p. 180).



French and East German identity more widely, the vehicles in the Munich exhibition are constructed as part of a temporally specific narrative of a mid-1950s boom.

Moreover, the mid-1950s are presented as distinct from the late 1940s/early 1950s with regard to the consumption of certain household items. In the Vire exhibition, specific artefacts, such as the iconic ‘treble clef’ coat and hat stand adorned with brightly coloured wooden edge protectors (designed by Roger Feraud and manufactured by Géo) and the bright-red ceramic fruit bowl (manufactured by ceramics company Verceram), both made in 1955, represent an important shift from dark, drab emergency furniture to colourful, stylish household products and items of furniture in the mid-1950s. Signalling a change in consumer priorities from function to aesthetics, such objects can be seen as a microcosm of the renaissance of the mid-1950s in Vire and the rest of France, where everyday objects were revitalized through colour and modernist design. Although such decorative objects are also to be found in the Munich exhibition, much more emphasis is placed on the growing consumption of electrical devices and appliances in the mid-1950s.<sup>718</sup> According to the catalogue, electrical items became so important in the construction of personal, social and cultural identities in West Germany that ‘der Besitz eines häuslichen “Maschinenparks” wurde in den 1950er Jahre zu einem erstrebenswerten Ziel – ganz gleich, welche und wie viele elektrische Geräte er umfasste.’<sup>719</sup> By highlighting the aspirational quality of consumption in the mid-1950s, the exhibition presents electrical appliances and smaller electrical household items as mediators not only of the various contexts of their use and manufacture, but also as a means of understanding how people used such objects as markers of identity, lifestyle, status and wealth. By selecting predominantly electrical items for promotional material for the exhibition, the exhibition deliberately makes use of the ‘fast hypnotische Wirkung’ of electrical objects for marketing purposes, such as the baby pink Philips Lady Shave SC 8077 electrical razor (on the front cover of the catalogue and on advertising posters) and the cream and red Original Hanau sun lamp and carrying case (also on advertising posters).<sup>720</sup> In so doing, the exhibition can be seen as re-employing 1950s consumption rhetoric, particularly surrounding new electrical items, in order to attract visitors. As well as being culturally coded, electrical artefacts are explicitly political and map onto the specific discourse of East-West competition in the 1950s. Refrigerators, for instance, are not only representations of mid-1950s ‘Sehnsüchte nach Tiefkühlkost, Eiswürfeln

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<sup>718</sup> This is, of course, to be expected given that the museum is devoted to science and technology.

<sup>719</sup> Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 46.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

und Flaschenbier’, but also constitute a ‘politischer Akt und Ausdruck der Freiheit westlicher Bürger’.<sup>721</sup> On display in the current context of post-unification Germany, such objects are symbolic of the West German freedom to consume in the 1950s and reinforce a growing political, social and cultural lacuna between East and West Germany during the mid-1950s. This represents a significant departure from the narrative constructed of the late 1940s/early 1950s, where emphasis is placed on the commonalities of everyday experience (such as the consumption of television and the retreat into the private, domestic realm) between East and West Germany. This suggests that West Germany only began to pull ahead economically from East Germany during the mid-1950s, when the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the consumption boom was properly getting under way. Promoting the values of the West German social market economy, which were developed during the 1950s and which triumphed upon unification, on the one hand, and subtly undermining those of East German state socialism, on the other, the exhibition can, therefore, be seen as appealing to certain political discourses and ideologies.

The late 1950s/early 1960s constitute the final temporal unit of metachronous time, which is reimagined as the realization of a new way of life in Vire and West Germany. According to the Munich exhibition catalogue, the conditions for and realization of a fully developed consumer society did not come about until the last third of the 1950s, and the ‘bunte Zeit der Nierentische, Petticoats und Cocktailsessel’, as well as the ‘Einzug der Technik in die Privathaushalte: mit Waschvollautomat und Föhn, Toaster und Kühlschrank, Plattenspieler und Fernseher’ that have since become synonymous with the whole decade in West Germany are a phenomenon of the late 1950s.<sup>722</sup> The extent to which Western European society was fully technologized in the late 1950s is shown in Max Frisch’s 1957 novel *Homo faber*, a paperback version of which is on display in the exhibition.<sup>723</sup> The book is not only used as evidence of the growing popularity of book clubs in West Germany in the 1950s and the publication of paperbacks, but also as a lens through which to examine popular belief in new consumer technology in the 1950s. The exhibition is by no means as critical of technology and the accelerated pace of modern life as the novel, but just as the protagonist Walter Faber is forced to question his blind faith in technology throughout the text, visitors are encouraged to understand the limitations, problems and dangers associated with certain designs and

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<sup>721</sup> Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 46.

<sup>722</sup> Schildt, ‘Amerikanische Einflüsse auf die westdeutsche Konsumententwicklung nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg’, p. 18; back cover text of *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*.

<sup>723</sup> Max Frisch, *Homo faber: Ein Bericht* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1957).

technological developments of the 1950s (see next section). In this way, *Homo faber* can be seen as a metonym for the exhibition's more nuanced reading of progress during the 1950s.

In the Vire exhibition, the late 1950s/early 1960s are presented as a period of definitive societal rebirth, with the reopening of the Vire museum and the reconstruction of cultural institutions, such as a new library complex in 1964.<sup>724</sup> The exhibition places equal importance on the increase in consumer purchasing power throughout the 1950s, which culminated in the birth of the consumer society.<sup>725</sup> Statistics cited in a wall text in the 'confort moderne' section of the exhibition reveal the extent to which this almost exclusively occurred in the late 1950s/early 1960s: in 1954, only eight per cent of the French population had a washing machine and refrigerator, but by 1960 this figure had already risen to twenty-five per cent.<sup>726</sup> The growth in consumption is narrated in part through the development of trade fairs in Vire, which, 'emblématiques du développement de la consommation', enabled retailers and manufacturers to present innovations of the 1950s to a wider audience.<sup>727</sup> Innovations included not only those of design, but also of manufacturing processes and materials, such as rattan, imitation leather, veneers and plastics.<sup>728</sup> This is exemplified in the later-1950s kitchen and living room ensembles in the exhibition, where there are objects on display made from new materials, such as the Formica wall clock, Formica-laminated kitchen table and the oak-veneered sideboard.

In both exhibitions, television is presented as the ultimate icon of the French and West German consumer societies of the late 1950s. In the Vire exhibition, although television is still narrated as a luxury in the late 1950s, the incorporation of a Grammont television set in the 'confort moderne' living room ensemble testifies to the gradual adoption of television in Vire (as well as the wider French public) that was made possible by the installation of local transmitters in the late 1950s. In the Munich exhibition, this process is presented as taking place much quicker, with television overtaking radio in the late 1950s/early 1960s as the most popular form of leisure entertainment. With over four million registered television sets in 1959,

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<sup>724</sup> Villeroy, 'La reconstruction, vue par les habitants', p. 41. The museum reopened on the first floor of an eighteenth-century hospital (in which it is still housed) on the banks of the river Vire in 1956. Although the original collections were destroyed in the D-Day bombings, donations and new acquisitions enabled the museum to build up a similar collection of ethnographic material and fine art.

<sup>725</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>726</sup> This figure does of course show that the overwhelming majority of French people still did not own a washing machine and refrigerator by 1960.

<sup>727</sup> Villeroy, 'La reconstruction, vue par les habitants', p. 43.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid.

the television ‘entwickelte sich zu einem Massenmedium’ almost overnight.<sup>729</sup> Although the rapid development of television is attributed to a wider West German consumer boom, the phenomenon is by no means presented as exclusive to West Germany, as the ‘Tagesschau vereinte bereits Ende der 50er Jahre die gesamtdeutsche Fernsehnation, denn auch drei Viertel der DDR-Fernsehbürger schalteten um 20 Uhr diese zentrale Nachrichtensendung ein’.<sup>730</sup> At least in the consumption of television, the experiences of East and West Germans are, therefore, placed on a par in the exhibition. Given that the number of television viewers in the GDR was most likely still very low at this time, however, this narrative does seem to overplay some of the commonalities of experience between East and West Germans in the 1950s. Alongside the development of television as a mass medium, the Munich exhibition highlights the late 1950s/early 1960s as the realization of the domination of the car in West German villages, towns and cities. With just over a quarter of all West German households owning a car at the beginning of the 1960s according to the catalogue, the late 1950s/early 1960s are presented as a period of lifestyle change, where people sought to increase the distance between the home and the workplace by commuting to work, and where increasing value was placed on leisure pursuits and travel and tourism.<sup>731</sup> Unlike many other objects in the exhibition which are presented as gender specific, a 1960 cartoon-style advert for a Blaupunkt car radio showing a woman driving highlights the democratizing effect of the car, as more and more women became independently mobile.

The chronotope of metachronous time takes on significance at the level of the motif, where specific turning points separating each temporal unit represent instances of metamorphosis. In both exhibitions, the Second World War is presented as the first major turning point of the chronology, initiating a period of hardship, poverty and devastation in the short term, but providing new opportunities and developments in the longer term. In so doing, the Second World War is effectively cast as the moment of origin of these particular historical narratives and the archival impulse behind the exhibitions can be seen as a desire to reinstate this period as a kind of ‘zero hour’.<sup>732</sup> The second part of the Vire exhibition is dedicated to the physical destruction of Vire in 1944 and is based on the enduring images of the town as a ‘ville ensevelie’ and ‘ville meurtrie’, which are reiterated through wall texts, photographs of

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<sup>729</sup> Bühler and Lasi, ‘Fernsehen’, p. 126.

<sup>730</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 15.

<sup>731</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>732</sup> Derrida, *Mal d’Archive*, p. 142.

ruins and an excerpt of *Vire, Mémoire d'une ville meurtrie*.<sup>733</sup> This section of the exhibition takes a particularly critical stance on the Allied liberation and 'destruction programmée' of Vire, highlighting the disproportionate impact of the war in Normandy: 'comme de nombreuses villes et villages normands en juin 1944, Vire a payé le prix fort d'une Libération espérée.'<sup>734</sup> By highlighting the fact that Vire was the third most devastated French town in the Second World War based on the number of civilian fatalities, and by juxtaposing images of the town before and after the bombing, the exhibition posits D-Day and the whole of June 1944 as a monumental rupture with everyday life, which scarred the town both physically and mentally. Whilst the physical devastation of the Second World War is not thematized directly in the Munich exhibition, the historical timeline highlights the important work of the *Trümmerfrauen* in clearing Germany's bombed-out towns and cities, and draws out a more localized narrative of the war as a turning point in the biography of the Deutsches Museum, as eighty per cent of its building and twenty per cent of its exhibitions were either very badly damaged or completely destroyed during the war.<sup>735</sup> Whilst acknowledging the cataclysmic effect of the Second World War, both exhibitions present 1945 as a turning point of positive transformation, as war acted as a catalyst for the modernization of French and West German everyday life. According to a label for an advert on display in the Vire exhibition, for instance, the shortage of primary materials for the textile industry in occupied France and in the immediate post-war period accelerated the development of new synthetic fabrics and materials, such as rayon, bonded fibre, viscose and nylon, and necessitated the recycling of used textiles. Similarly, in the Munich exhibition, a Plexiglas lamp and vanity case displayed in the textiles and plastics section are used as a means through which to examine the creative use of materials in abundance after the Second World War (Plexiglas being particularly plentiful due to its mass manufacture for use in airplane cockpits). The exhibition places equal importance on the temporary post-war bans on aviation and motorcycle production in West Germany as a point of metamorphosis in West German industry and consumption, as prominent manufacturers, such as Heinkel and Zündapp, diversified into cars (as well as mopeds and scooters) and sewing machines respectively, paving the way for the manufacturing-fuelled consumption boom of the 1950s and 60s.

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<sup>733</sup> *Vire, Mémoire d'une ville meurtrie* [on DVD].

<sup>734</sup> Marie-Jeanne Villeroy, 'La ville ensevelie', in *Permis de (Re)construire*, pp. 15-21 (p. 15); Musée des arts et traditions populaires de Vire, 'Introduction', in *Permis de (Re)construire*, p. 9.

<sup>735</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, 'Vor 1950', in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, p. 64.

Following the turning point of the Second World War, the exhibitions portray the French and West German housing booms of the early 1950s as the point of metamorphosis, hailing the beginning of a new consumer culture in the mid-1950s. In both the Vire and Munich exhibitions, the construction of modern housing in Vire and West German towns and cities is highlighted as the principal determining factor in the growth of consumer products and technologies, because new houses and apartments were linked to electricity and gas networks.<sup>736</sup> This meant that people were able, at least theoretically, to invest in new appliances and electrical items and make use of them at home. In the Munich exhibition, the electrification of West Germany is moreover presented as having an important knock-on effect with regard to consumer spending. The increasing number of washing machines and indoor bathrooms (brought about by housing construction) meant that people became more concerned with personal hygiene, leading to the production of new electrical items, such as the electric shavers and hairdryers on display.<sup>737</sup>

As the final point of metamorphosis in the chronology of the 1950s, the years 1956 to 1957 are shown to mark an important shift from the beginning of a new consumer culture and socio-economic upturn in the mid-1950s to the realization of a fundamentally changed way of life in Vire and West Germany in the late 1950s/early 1960s. In the Vire exhibition, 1956 is cited as one of the key moments of the reconstruction period in the town, because the physical effects of the war were no longer immediately obvious and a sense of ‘normality’ had returned to everyday life: ‘l’inauguration de la mairie en 1956 marque l’achèvement du centre-ville. À ce moment, Vire, qui avait perdu son aspect de ville détruite, fonctionnait enfin de manière normale.’<sup>738</sup> The year 1957 is equally reimagined as a point of metamorphosis with regard to consumption of popular culture, as, according to the catalogue, the construction of a local television transmitter on the Mont Pinçon (the highest point of the Calvados département) during this year made it possible for the inhabitants of Vire to finally watch television.<sup>739</sup> An equally significant year in West Germany, 1957 represents an important turning point in the Munich exhibition’s narrativization of the centrality of cars to West German life in the late 1950s/early 1960s, as this year was the first time in German history that more cars were

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<sup>736</sup> Villeroy, ‘La reconstruction, vue par les habitants’, p. 43; Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 45.

<sup>737</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, ‘Wäsche und Körperpflege’, in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 92-101 (p. 92).

<sup>738</sup> Patrice Gourbin, ‘L’urbanisme et l’architecture de la reconstruction à Vire’, in *Permis de (Re)construire*, pp. 45-59 (p. 58).

<sup>739</sup> Villeroy, ‘La reconstruction, vue par les habitants’, p. 43.

registered than motorbikes or scooters.<sup>740</sup> The year thus represents the beginning of what would become a (West) German love affair with cars, as the ultimate ‘Ausdruck, Hoffnung und Wunsch des Wirtschaftswunders’.<sup>741</sup> 1957 is further presented as a key turning point in the rebirth of West German society, as the pension reform of this year ensured that ‘den bis dahin im Schatten des “Wirtschaftswunders” verbliebenen Rentnern immerhin eine bescheidene Partizipation am neuen Massenkonsum möglich wurde’.<sup>742</sup> These developments of 1956 to 1957 are reimagined in the exhibitions as particularly rapid instances of metamorphosis, creating a narrative of everyday life in Vire and West Germany of the late 1950s/early 1960s not just as an evolution or an improvement of that of the mid-1950s, but as fundamentally different from it.

#### 6.4 Debunking and Sustaining Myths of the 1950s

In their creation of different historical versions of the post-war past, metachronous time and the motif of metamorphosis serve to bring about not only a temporal, but also a thematic differentiation of the 1950s. Whilst feeding into an extended narrative of progress, the temporal fragmentation of the 1950s calls into question the extent to which the 1950s constituted a radically progressive period, highlighting potential drawbacks or limitations to certain product developments and improvements in everyday life. Despite both exhibitions showing objects made from new materials and based on new designs in the late 1950s/early 1960s, both also acknowledge the extent to which preferences for older styles dominated at this time in France and West Germany. According to the Vire exhibition, just because unfussy, minimalist furniture was available in the 1950s, it did not mean that all French citizens, or even all young households, bought into the new designs and styles. On the contrary, ‘beaucoup préfèrent à ces meubles de série pratiques et sobres, le mobilier traditionnel, en chêne moiré, chargé de décors et de symboles, dessiné et fabriqué par des ébénistes locaux au siècle passé ou suivant la mode du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle’.<sup>743</sup> This is echoed in the Munich exhibition, which explains in relation to a photograph of a woman sat in an ornately decorated living room around 1960, that many citizens gave preference to the ‘Inneneinrichtung im Gelsenkirchner [*sic*] Barock [...]: Nur wenige konnten sich für Nierentische und Tütenlampen begeistern’.<sup>744</sup> By emphasizing these

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<sup>740</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 13.

<sup>741</sup> Corinna Wodarz, *Nierentisch und Petticoat: Ein Bummel durch die 50er Jahre* (Oldenburg: Isensee, 2003), p. 12.

<sup>742</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 8.

<sup>743</sup> Villeroy, ‘La reconstruction, vue par les habitants’, p. 43.

<sup>744</sup> Schildt, ‘Westdeutscher Wiederaufbau’, p. 10.

contradictory narratives, the exhibitions claim that the styles of much earlier periods, such as the 1930s or even the nineteenth century, were still very popular in France and West Germany in the late 1950s/early 1960s. As expressions of restorative nostalgia, these preferences are indicative of national desires to find comfort and solace in more traditional, pre-war pasts, with decorative, solid wood furniture representing the ultimate contrast to wartime and post-war instability, devastation and austerity. They demonstrate a post-war desire to erase painful memories of the Second World War and enact new national identities through more authentically French and German styles and designs. This is reinforced in the Munich exhibition through the display of numerous objects developed in the 1920s and 1930s, such as the Siemens KH St 3 electric cooker, Isolette II spring camera and the Hermes Baby typewriter, but which enjoyed continued popularity and were manufactured well into the 1950s. Such objects show not only that West Germans reverted to older styles as a means of reinvesting in pre-war traditions, but also that many supposedly new products and designs in the 1950s had much earlier roots.

The extent to which the late 1950s/early 1960s brought about significant improvements in standards of living and the quality of everyday life is questioned in both exhibitions. Although the Vire exhibition creates a predominantly positive narrative of reconstruction in the 1950s, it is critical of the extent to which developments in the late 1950s/early 1960s were felt by all people in Vire. As late as 1962, for instance, four hundred and forty-two families were still living in temporary, Swedish-manufactured, pre-fabricated homes because they were not able to claim for a rent-controlled HLM.<sup>745</sup> The Munich exhibition equally challenges the extent to which developments in 1950s technology translated into tangible benefits for all parts of society. Despite the increase in the number of electronic appliances in West German kitchens from the mid-1950s onwards, which, like the advert for Küppersbusch electric cookers reproduced in the catalogue promised women ‘mehr Freude und Freizeit’, women were still working very long days. Drawing on research conducted by Siemens Electrogeräte AG, the catalogue relates that women looking after a family of five in 1958 were working an average of thirteen hours a day.<sup>746</sup> What is more, with the exhibition relating that West Germans had on average only sixteen days holiday a year in the early 1960s, the late 1950s/early 1960s are presented as a time when there was little opportunity for pursuing leisure activities and going

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<sup>745</sup> Villeroy, ‘Etre réfugié dans sa propre ville’, p. 26. The HLM (habitation à loyer modéré) is a type of social housing in France.

<sup>746</sup> Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 49.



on days out and holidays, despite people being materially better off than earlier on in the post-war period.

The Munich exhibition goes on to highlight some of the limitations of certain products developed in the 1950s. Whilst the Nyltest men's shirt on display in the textiles and plastics section of the exhibition testifies to the successful development of synthetic materials, such as nylon, in the late 1950s/early 1960s, the object label describes such shirts as having 'sehr unangenehme Trageeigenschaften', because 'man schwitzte leicht und danach klebte das Hemd auf der Haut'. The label also notes that such shirts had the added weakness of yellowing 'recht schnell'.<sup>747</sup> Similarly, whilst the 1959 AEG Favorit dishwasher shown in the cooking section of the exhibition supports the narrative of modernization of West German kitchens in the 1950s through new electrical appliances, the object label describes the model as particularly cumbersome and difficult to use, because it had to be loaded 'etwas umständlich von oben', and was 'alles andere als preiswert'.<sup>748</sup> Rather than simply extolling the virtues of technology in the 1950s, the Munich exhibition critically examines the objects on display, placing them not only in historical context, but also giving visitors an idea of how they were experienced by people in everyday life. In addition to highlighting the limitations of certain products, the exhibition thematizes particularly problematic developments of the 1950s. The natural sciences section of the exhibition provides an opportunity to explore controversial medical breakthroughs of the period, such as the development of new sleeping pills, tranquilizers and sedatives. A 1959 bottle of Contergan (the West German trade-name for the immunomodulatory drug Thalidomide, prescribed to alleviate morning sickness) on display reminds visitors of the dangers of new products developed in the 1950s, as around five thousand children were born with thalidomide-induced birth defects during the time of the drug's manufacture between 1957 and 1961 in West Germany alone.<sup>749</sup> In the same display case, a bottle of Dormalatten sedative pills dating to around 1957 is used to narrate the fact that sleeping pills and sedatives were used 'sehr leichtfertig' in West Germany in the 1950s, in order to counteract what is described in the package insert as the 'Hast der heutigen Zeit'.<sup>750</sup> Other objects in this section, such as the E52 Iron Lung and the Virelon polio vaccine, continue a more sobering narrative of 1950s West Germany to that supported elsewhere in the

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<sup>747</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, 'Textilien und Kunststoffe', in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 102-07 (p. 105).

<sup>748</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, 'Kochen', in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 76-91 (p. 90).

<sup>749</sup> Dirk Bühler and Margherita Lasi, 'Naturwissenschaften', in *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*, pp. 162-69 (p. 167).

<sup>750</sup> Ibid.

exhibition. According to the object labels, although the first polio vaccines were given in 1956, much of the population still went untreated against polio, and it was not until the mass availability of oral vaccines in 1962 that the disease declined significantly in West Germany.<sup>751</sup> The exhibition of such objects serves to deconstruct the popular myth of the 1950s as a continuous golden age, creating a more realistic counter-memory of everyday life in West Germany during the post-war period. The fact that most of these objects were manufactured in the latter half of the decade also serves to highlight some of the drawbacks and dangers associated particularly with the consumer boom of the late 1950s/early 1960s, reminding visitors that technological and scientific advances can create problems as well as solve them.

In addition to drawing out the limitations and problematic nature of certain products and highlighting the serious threats to everyday life in 1950s West Germany, the Munich exhibition finally differentiates the 1950s by critiquing the attitude towards energy consumption created during the post-war period. The exhibition thematizes what Christian Pfister has dubbed the ‘1950er-Syndrom’, which, according to the catalogue, refers to the ‘vielfältigen Veränderungen in der Produktions- und Lebensweise der deutschen Gesellschaft, die zu einem wachsenden Bruttoinlandsprodukt führten, aber auch zu erhöhtem Energieverbrauch, gestiegenem Flächenbedarf und einer zunehmenden Schadstoffbelastung von Luft, Wasser und Böden’.<sup>752</sup> Presented in a post-unification state where ecological welfare and energy consumption is now a key concern (the German government is currently championing global sustainability by striving to produce eighty per cent of its energy from renewable sources by 2050), the exhibition is, therefore, particularly poignant in highlighting the damage caused by the major consumption boom of the mid to late 1950s.<sup>753</sup> Similarly, the improvements to personal hygiene and sanitation in West Germany from the mid-1950s onwards are presented in the exhibition as a mixed blessing, since developments such as toilet paper, tampons and tissues also contributed to the creation of a throwaway society.<sup>754</sup> Presented in one of the currently best-performing states of the European Union for recycling (62% of all

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<sup>751</sup> Bühler and Lasi, ‘Naturwissenschaften’, p. 166.

<sup>752</sup> Pfister, cited in Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 46. Christian Pfister, ‘Das “1950er Syndrom”: Zusammenfassung und Synthese’, in *Das 1950er Syndrom: der Weg in die Konsumgesellschaft*, ed. by Christian Pfister (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1995), pp. 21-47.

<sup>753</sup> Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit (BMUB), ‘Vollständige Stromversorgung durch erneuerbare Energien bis 2050’, *BMUB*, 26 January 2011 <[www.bmub.bund.de/N46952/](http://www.bmub.bund.de/N46952/)> [accessed 21 April 2014].

<sup>754</sup> Thoms, cited in Gerber, Lorkowski and Möllers, ‘Der Frau ihren Kühlschrank, dem Mann seinen Rasierer?’, p. 51. Ulrike Thoms, ‘Körper, Kultur, Konsum: die Konsumgeschichte der alltäglichen Hygiene’, in *Die Konsumgesellschaft in Deutschland: 1890-1990: Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Claudius Torp (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2009), pp. 97-113 (p. 110).

municipal waste was recycled in 2010), the exhibition thus highlights the marked difference in mentality towards consumption between the 1950s and the present day, and posits the consumption boom of the late 1950s/early 1960s as a period of intensification, if not the direct source, of environmental irresponsibility in Germany.<sup>755</sup> Whilst ultimately supporting a progressive national narrative (with the implication that post-unification Germany is accountable for the developments of the 1950s and now more responsible in the wake of the environmental and energy crises), these do construct a more critical counter-memory of the 1950s, particularly with respect to energy use and product disposal. Incorporating these narratives has a potential impact on visitors' readings of the 1950s, in the sense that they may be encouraged to critically revise romanticized visions of the post-war past in relation to their own archives of values and experiences.

Whilst on the one hand deconstructing myths of the 1950s, the Vire and Munich exhibitions can also be seen to simultaneously endorse the national French and West German myths of the 1950s everyday as a heyday by drawing on and promoting nostalgia. With the aim of challenging the glorification of the pre-Second World War townscape of Vire in the immediate post-war period and afterwards, the Vire exhibition characterizes the entire reconstruction period as 'les temps héroïques', constructing a powerful, nostalgic image of civilians, construction specialists and authorities working together to rebuild the town in the 1950s.<sup>756</sup> The section of the exhibition entitled 'Le bonheur d'emménager dans les nouveaux logements' is presented as the culmination of this narrative, with personal accounts of inhabitants used to place particular emphasis on the 'rêve' of acquiring brand-new accommodation and the 'grand luxe' that it afforded. Nostalgia is similarly encouraged in the Munich exhibition, with fondness for the 1950s encapsulated in the very title of the exhibition 'Geliebte Technik'. Visitors with first-hand experience of the 1950s are spurred on not only to remember, but to actively 'schwelgen' in their personal memories and discover 'das ein oder andere ehemals heiß geliebte Stück wieder'.<sup>757</sup> For younger visitors, the exhibition is promoted as a site of displaced nostalgia, as they are able to draw comparisons between original items from the 1950s and current designs based on the current 'Retroschick der 1950er Jahre'.<sup>758</sup> The

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<sup>755</sup> European Environment Agency (EEA), 'Highest recycling rates in Austria and Germany – but UK and Ireland show fastest increase', *EEA*, <<http://www.eea.europa.eu/media/newsreleases/highest-recycling-rates-in-austria>> [accessed 21 April 2014].

<sup>756</sup> Villeroy, 'La reconstruction, vue par les habitants', p. 39.

<sup>757</sup> Back cover text of *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*.

<sup>758</sup> Bühler and Lasi, 'Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre', p. 62. This text is more or less identical to the introductory wall text situated at the entrance of the exhibition.

historical journey on which both categories of visitors are transported in the exhibition is conceptualized as a highly sentimentalized ‘Zeitreise zurück zum guten alten Röhrenradio, zu glänzenden Musikboxen, typischen Automobilen und nostalgischer Reklame’.<sup>759</sup> This is in part created and sustained through a sensory reimagining of the 1950s, promoted through the playing of jukebox music (from the Jukebox AMI Modell JAJ 200 situated close to the entrance of the exhibition) and the overall exhibition design, which is based on original patterns and popular colour palettes of the period. Display backdrops in the exhibition are, for instance, pastel coloured and reuse original wallpaper patterns of the 1950s (a sample of which is on display). These support exhibition content by recreating a stylised version of the cultural atmosphere of the post-war period, and in so doing, provide an experiential engagement with this past for visitors.

In both the Vire and Munich exhibitions, this element of nostalgia supports popular retrospectives of the 1950s, which have come to dominate cultural reinterpretations of the post-war period. Despite the Vire exhibition being dedicated to the lives of ‘ordinary’ Virois in the aftermath of the Second World War and during the reconstruction, the exhibition shows three designer dresses on loan from the Musée Christian Dior in Granville. Whilst such items of clothing give visitors an impression of the designs and cuts popular during the 1950s (Christian Dior’s 1947-formed ‘New Look’ dominating fashion industries worldwide for a decade) the display of Parisian haute couture appears somewhat at odds with other narratives of consumption stemming from a small, rural town like Vire. Rather than historicizing clothing trends and styles of the 1950s, the exhibition of designer wear seems to be more about conforming to visitors’ preconceptions and own archives of knowledge and experience regarding the 1950s as a golden age of fashion, as well as supporting the French national narrative of Paris as the centre of this renaissance. This particular narrative of clothing is supported in a related exhibition of photographs on display in another part of the museum, taken as part of the ‘Festival Ado’.<sup>760</sup> With the aim of initiating a ‘retour vers les années 50’ according to an advertising poster, teenagers from all over the département were invited to take part in workshops ‘à la mode des 50ies’, where they were dressed and made-up according to 1950s fashion in the Vire museum and then photographed with post-war buildings around the town or in the kitchen and living room ensembles of the reconstruction exhibition. In so doing,

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<sup>759</sup> Back cover text of *Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre*.

<sup>760</sup> The ‘Festival Ado’ is an annual youth event organized by Centre dramatique régional de Basse-Normandie ‘Le Préau’, based in Vire.

the teenagers were effectively encouraged to act out certain stereotypes, such as the female teenager posed in the kitchen exhibit whilst dressed as a typical French housewife and a group of male teenagers photographed around the town whilst dressed in suits and hats and armed with briefcases as typical businessmen or door-to-door salesmen. Conforming to retro visions of the late 1950s that have become ingrained in French cultural memory as exemplary of the whole decade, these can be seen as a similar kind of heritage performance to those enacted in the *Appartement témoin* (see chapter four), drawing on visitors' preconceptions and archived images of the national post-war past. Deliberately stylized according to current 'retro-ification', the resulting photographs are not so much an extension of, as a response to the *Vire* exhibition from the vantage point of present-day displaced nostalgia for 1950s fashion.

In a similar manner, the design of the Munich exhibition popularizes the retrospective representation of the 1950s as heavily Americanized. Rather than providing visitor seating in the usual museum form of chairs or benches, the exhibition includes a two-tone red and cream American diner-style booth, where visitors can sit down and leaf through a copy of the accompanying catalogue. The exhibition includes a faux-1950s popcorn maker from US company Nostalgia Electrics's 'retro series' in the same colours as the booth, which visitors are able to look at through a porthole-style window in one of the pillar stands. Embodying, according to the object label, a 'nostalgisches Kino-feeling' reminiscent of American movie theatres of the 1950s, the popcorn maker is emblematic of the exhibition's aim to present everyday technology of the post-war period 'vor dem Hintergrund dieses neu erwachten Interesses' of present-day 1950s retrochic.<sup>761</sup> Alongside such objects, the exhibition reinforces a retrospective of Americanization by the use of specific iconography, drawing on an archive of well-known images of Hollywood stars. An enlarged photograph of Marilyn Monroe on the ceiling of the exhibition, as well as those of prominent personalities and cultural icons of the 1950s on wall panels, such as James Dean and Elvis Presley, seem to fulfil no particular function in the narrativization of technological developments in 1950s West Germany. Rather than relating to exhibition content, they therefore appear to have been included with the aim of creating a familiar aesthetics of the late 1950s for visitors, and to establish a narrative connection between the 1950s as a historical entity and its current reimagining through the retro and vintage movements.

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<sup>761</sup> Bühler and Lasi, 'Geliebte Technik der 1950er Jahre', p. 62.

## 6.5 Conclusion

Using the chronotope of metachronous time and the motif of metamorphosis as the conceptual framework for this analysis has revealed the way in the 1950s are being reimagined according to specific historical micro-narratives of the post-war period at the Vire and Munich exhibitions. Bringing about a particular spatio-temporalization in which historical traces of the post-war past are re-organized as part of specific temporal units, the 1950s no longer constitute one fixed historical actuality as a decade, but are differentiated and represented as three different temporal narratives, including the late 1940s/early 1950s, the mid-1950s and the late 1950s/early 1960s. Although these narratives are thematically distinct and separated by critical turning points, because they are fixed within an overarching chronology of post-war development, they still support a teleological trajectory of progress and modernity enshrined in the more hegemonic national and transnational histories of the 1950s. Metachronous time and the archive can thus be seen as counter-memorial frameworks which allow for more differentiated narratives of the 1950s, whilst still serving national and transnational paradigms, such as the *Trente Glorieuses*, the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the long fifties, reconstruction and Americanization.

As part of this historical differentiation of the 1950s, the exhibitions can be seen to be simultaneously debunking and endorsing popular national myths of post-war France and West Germany. On the one hand, the temporal and thematic fragmentation of the 1950s enables the exhibitions to critique the myths of the whole of the 1950s as a heyday by drawing attention to the limitations of certain products or problematic developments of the period. In the Vire exhibition, the thematization of the 1950s through the local lens in particular (specifically the unique challenges facing localities such as Vire in the 1950s) can be seen as a form of counter-memory, in the sense of reframing the French national post-war reconstruction project and the *Trente Glorieuses* through more personal, localized experiences. On the other hand, both exhibitions seem keen to explore and draw on highly idealized national and transnational retrospectives of the 1950s, as well as the mechanics of nostalgia, as promoted through the retro and vintage movements. Whilst this could potentially undermine professional archival work, it does highlight the plurality of narratives regarding the post-war period, and can also be seen as a deliberate attempt on the part of the exhibitions to negotiate the place of the 1950s in French and German cultural memory, as well as to promote a less historically monolithic view of the 1950s.

Representing spaces where objects and historical narratives are fully contextualized through in-context display techniques, such as framing exhibition content through schematic arrangements and providing external commentary in the form of textual and audiovisual information, the exhibitions can be seen as important steps in the critical historical reassessment of the 1950s. The fact that the two sites are temporary exhibitions seems to be highly significant, as by making the principal motivations and the provenance of exhibition content clear to visitors, the exhibitions potentially demonstrate more self-awareness and self-referentiality than some permanent museum collections. Based on archival material and research, the exhibitions can be seen as attempts to rewrite forgotten or marginalized narratives into local and national French and West German cultural memory through the exhibition of previously hidden objects and the incorporation of first-hand testimonies. As such, the exhibitions are not only symbolic of the reinvestment in the archive as an important source of historical knowledge, but also that of the wider historiographical and counter-memorial process of reinterpreting and renarrating the 1950s from present vestiges of the past.

## 7. Multilayered Time

The value of historical traces and vestiges of the 1950s points to an archaeological or architectural dimension of knowledge, whereby remnants of the post-war past accumulate different layers of meaning over time in the form of a palimpsest.<sup>762</sup> Employed analogously in literary criticism to explain the continual reconfiguration of concepts and textual motifs in literature, the palimpsest has also been extended to fields such as art history and landscape geography to refer to the figurative accumulation of layers of historical markers and meanings. As a physical artefact, the palimpsest is the ultimate material evocation of multilayered time, as traces of different pasts remain visible despite the superimposition of more recent versions. Referring initially to a writing surface (such as a parchment or wax tablet), whereby texts are written over earlier texts that have been effaced or partially erased, the palimpsest has come to represent an amalgamation of numerous synchronous temporalities. Because the possibility of renewal is theoretically infinite, the palimpsest is intimately bound up with visions not only of the past and present, but also the future. According to Sarah Dillon, ‘the “present” of the palimpsest is only constituted in and by the “presence” of texts from the “past”, as well as remaining open to further inscription by texts of the “future”.’<sup>763</sup> As these strata are a constant feature, the palimpsest does not so much blur or remove temporal distinction, but contributes, rather, to what she terms a ‘spectralization of temporality’.<sup>764</sup>

As sites where this spectralization of past, present and future underpins their existence, museums concerned with the narration of critical histories can be seen as cultural manifestations of the palimpsest. The notion of the museological palimpsest can be used to show how museums and their objects are layered with different historical narratives and how these evolve over time. Contributing to revisions of the past, museums can act as palimpsests in the way that they attempt, quite literally, to rewrite history, and acknowledge the changes in the way different pasts have been remembered and memorialized. As an increasing amount of their collections are now digitized and available to a much wider community of visitors on the internet, it is also possible to talk of museums as virtual palimpsests. As information is updated and emphasis is placed on new acquisitions and temporary exhibitions, older webpages are

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<sup>762</sup> Some material in this section appears in my article ‘Sites of Remembering and Forgetting: Memory Work in 1950s Museums in France and Germany’, *Journal of History and Cultures*, 5 (2015), 23-40; and in my forthcoming chapter ‘Forming the Fifties in eastern and western German Museums: The Everyday Object as a Medium of Memory and Culture’, currently in press with L’Harmattan (*Les mondes germaniques*, spring 2015).

<sup>763</sup> Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 37.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*



archived and overwritten, leading to a particular kind of electronic layering of historical narratives. Within a single webpage it is not uncommon to find numerous hyperlinks and the use of hypertext, both of which serve to bring about a complex multilinearity reified in the palimpsest.<sup>765</sup> At the level of the object, many of the artefacts making up museum collections have acquired a complex layering of meanings and narratives through their own social histories and cultural biographies. By uncovering these various layers of history and memory, historians and curators are able to reveal the different stages of appropriation and singularization that have become embedded in an object's sedimentary form. The multiplicity of significations attached to individual objects or groups of objects over time, 'from the original moment of manufacture to their current resting place', mean that museum artefacts can be read as a particular kind of 'palimpsest of meaning'.<sup>766</sup> Finally, for those museums housed in converted buildings (and particularly those with a long historical significance), museums as physical architectural entities can act as 'palimpsests of space', which combine 'memories of what there was before, [with] imagined alternatives to what there is'.<sup>767</sup> Bearing traces of the buildings' former uses and carefully fusing these pasts with present and future incarnations, such spaces are visual manifestations of 'cumulative palimpsests' where all the layers of historical activity remain superimposed. Unlike other palimpsests, cumulative palimpsests have an additional layer of meaning and value, because they 'acquire a significance that is greater than the sum of the individual constituent episodes'.<sup>768</sup> The palimpsestic effect of museums located in converted historical buildings is therefore greater precisely because the various stages of the buildings' uses contribute to an overarching narrative of historicity.

Whilst a potentially substantial number of historical museums could be said to operate according to the temporal dynamics embodied in the palimpsest, the metaphor of the palimpsest is particularly illustrative for those sites adopting a genealogical approach to the past and whose spectralization of past, present and future is manifest in a variety of strategies and characteristics. Two such museums where the complex layering of temporalities informs at all levels of practice and which constitute visual incarnations of the palimpsest are the Museum der 50er Jahre in Bremerhaven (Lower Saxony, Germany) and the aforementioned

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<sup>765</sup> Chicago School of Media Theory, 'Palimpsest' <<http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/palimpsest/>> [accessed 22 May 2014].

<sup>766</sup> Geoff Bailey, 'Time Perspectives, Palimpsests and the Archaeology of Time', *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 26 (2007), 198-223 (pp. 207-08).

<sup>767</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>768</sup> Bailey, p. 203.

Eisenhüttenstadt museum.<sup>769</sup> The Bremerhaven museum is a private 1950s museum which first opened in Cuxhaven in 2000, but which reopened in 2005 in its current premises in the commercial zone of the city's container port. The Eisenhüttenstadt museum is a public GDR museum and was the first museum to focus exclusively on the East German *Alltag* when it opened in 1993. It has since undergone extensive renovation and reopened in March 2012 with a new permanent exhibition that conforms to the state guidelines for sites that historicize the German dictatorship (the so-called *Gedenkstättenkonzept*).<sup>770</sup> Although the museums differ in their institutional frameworks and are devoted to aspects of the recent twentieth-century past in former West and East Germany respectively, both are framed by an overarching aim to redress these pasts in relation to present and future needs and values, as well as to articulate better the memorial complexities of these pasts in German cultural memory. For the Bremerhaven museum, this involves foregrounding the 1950s as a period 'des Vergessen-Wollens' and reconfiguring remembrance of the 1950s on the basis of marginalized or repressed histories and memories.<sup>771</sup> For the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, this is about legitimizing the place of everyday life in the GDR in post-unification German memory discourse and situating it within the wider context of *Aufarbeitung* and the historicization of divided Germany.<sup>772</sup> As palimpsests, both sites can be seen as museological attempts to trace a critical genealogy of the past by layering visions of the past, present and future. In line with a Foucauldian reading of counter-memory, this can be understood as a process of uncovering those memories and histories which have been 'masqués dans des cohérences fonctionnelles ou dans des systématisations formelles', as well as those delegitimized 'savoirs locaux des gens', which have been disqualified from official, sanctioned versions of history on the basis

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<sup>769</sup> The Museum der 50er Jahre is henceforth referred to as the Bremerhaven museum.

<sup>770</sup> The federal government's latest *Gedenkstättenkonzept*, published in 2008, maintains that memorial sites and museums should emphasize the more repressive elements of the SED regime, and that the GDR *Alltag* should be narrated in relation to state control and power. Deutscher Bundestag legislative update, 2008, Drucksache 16/9875, *Fortschreibung der Gedenkstättenkonzeption des Bundes: Verantwortung wahrnehmen, Aufarbeitung verstärken, Gedenken vertiefen*, pp. 7-10.

<sup>771</sup> Kerstin von Freytag Löringhoff, 'Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens', *Das Museum der 50er Jahre in Bremerhaven* <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 22 May 2014].

<sup>772</sup> Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, 'Zwischen "Aufarbeitung" und "Historisierung". Konzeption für das Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR im Übergang von der begleitenden Musealisierung zur historischen Analyse', *Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR* <[http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption\\_dokzentrum\\_2011.pdf](http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption_dokzentrum_2011.pdf)> [accessed 22 May 2014] (p. 2).

of being nonconceptual, insufficiently elaborated, naïve, hierarchically inferior and unscientific.<sup>773</sup>

By drawing on this particular reading of counter-memory and genealogy and Bakhtin's chronotopic motif of emergence, this chapter argues that the 1950s are reimagined through the palimpsest at the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums according to a chronotope of multilayered time. This constitutes a spatio-temporal configuration and narrative setting in which the 1950s (as well as the wider history and memory of the GDR) are reimagined through the lens of the past, present and future, and their narrative significance extended beyond that of a decade as part of a critical genealogy of the past. Within this chronotopic reimagining, the museums can be seen not only as palimpsests, but also as spaces of emergence, where the 1950s are negotiated as a historical entity with a distinct future and resonance for generations to come. Whilst this potential for the future is presented as the most significant aspect of emergence, Bakhtin characterizes the motif as a complete 'snapshot' of time, combining:

the merging of time (past with present), the fullness and clarity of the visibility of the time in space, the inseparability of the time of an event from the specific place of its occurrence (*Localität und Geschichte*), the visible *essential* connection of time (present and past), the creative and active nature of time (of the past in the present and of the present itself), the necessity that penetrates time and links time with space and different times with one another, and, finally, on the basis of the necessity that pervades localized time, the inclusion of the future, crowning the fullness of time.<sup>774</sup>

Due to the memorial complexities associated with this temporal completeness, the chapter proposes that the two museums demonstrate particular self-awareness and self-reflexivity in their presentations of the past. That none of the French case-study sites seem to demonstrate the same capacity for critical introspection and engagement, notably where the 1950s are concerned, is significant in so far as it suggests the existence of a more sophisticated, less dogmatic national memory culture in Germany than in France. This is no doubt rooted in Germany's continuing need to be seen to be addressing its problematic twentieth-century past and the complex nature of post-unification remembrance. The Bremerhaven and

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<sup>773</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Cours du 7 janvier 1976', in "*Il faut défendre la société*": *Cours au Collège de France (1975-1976)*, ed. by François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (2012), digital edition from CD-ROM, Le Foucault Électronique (2001) <[http://monoskop.org/images/9/99/Foucault\\_Michel\\_Il\\_faut\\_defendre\\_la\\_societe.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/9/99/Foucault_Michel_Il_faut_defendre_la_societe.pdf)> [accessed 29 October 2014] (pp. 10-11).

<sup>774</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 41-42.

Eisenhüttenstadt museums not only foreground the paradigms of both remembering and forgetting, but also promote an engagement with the past that attempts to move beyond nostalgia. Placing emphasis on questions rather than answers and encouraging visitors to bring and attach their own personal memories and experiences to their visits rather than passively accepting collective notions of the past, the museums can be understood as attempts to ‘process’, ‘work on’ or ‘reappraise’ the past (invoked in the official line of *Aufarbeitung* taken by the Bundesstiftung; Adorno, however, prefers *Verarbeitung*), rather than to ‘overcome’, ‘come to terms with’ or ‘master’ the past (ingrained in the concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).<sup>775</sup> In so doing, the museums can be seen to prioritize the memorial process over any definitive historical outcome.

### 7.1 The Chronotope of Multilayered Time and the Motif of Emergence

In the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums, the chronotope of multilayered time represents a spatio-temporal framework for the unfolding of a critical genealogy of the 1950s constructed upon a multi-temporal architecture of narratives of the past, present and future. The museums and their artefacts are, according to Bakhtin’s definition, multi-temporal ‘as remnants or relics of various stages and formations of the past and as rudiments of stages in the more or less distant future’, both made possible by the process of musealization that continually evolves in the present.<sup>776</sup> Unlike the multi-temporality intrinsic in the temporal fragmentation of metachronous time (see chapter six), the layering of temporalities within this particular chronotope necessarily implies ‘synchronism, the coexistence of times at one point in space’.<sup>777</sup> Although the past, present and future are, therefore, clearly of different times, they occur within the central time-space of the museums, creating the effect of ‘the past and present merging into one’, along with the future.<sup>778</sup> Acting as a form of temporal deconstruction, this spectralization of past, present and future can be seen as a way of undermining and challenging the chronological teleology of more hegemonic nation-centred discourses.

The resurgence of hidden and delegitimized memories within this genealogical approach takes on significance at the level of the motif, where the museums constitute spaces of emergence. The emphasis with this motif is on presenting an ‘authentic fullness of time’,

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<sup>775</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit: Reden und Gespräche*, written and read by Theodor W. Adorno (Munich: DHV, 2003) [on CD].

<sup>776</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 28.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

where the 1950s are not simply remembered as a past historical actuality, but as a retrospective that is being reinvented and reinterpreted in the present for current and future generations.<sup>779</sup> The chronotopic nature of the 1950s is subsequently revealed ‘with all of its necessity, its fullness, its future’.<sup>780</sup> According to Bakhtin, a fullness of time is understood as the past acting creatively on the present and future, where the past is recognized as having ‘its *effect* in the present’ and, in turn, where it ‘produces in conjunction with the present a particular direction for the future, and, to a certain degree, predetermines the future’.<sup>781</sup> As spaces of emergence, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums are not concerned with the renewal of the past for the sake of historical reappraisal per se, but because they identify an ‘*essential link* between the past and the present’ and this ‘aspect of the past and the present [is] linked to a *necessary future*’.<sup>782</sup> The impact of this motif of emergence is that it becomes possible, at least theoretically, for visitors to the museums to see the ‘*necessary connections* between this past and the living present’ and to gain an understanding of the ‘*necessary place* of this past in the *unbroken line of historical development*’.<sup>783</sup> Multilayered time and the motif of emergence can thus be understood as the particular spatio-temporal configurations through which the 1950s, as well as the broader histories and memories, of both East and West Germany are reconfigured as continually relevant and constructive for post-unification German identities at a local, regional and national level.

## 7.2 Architecture and Place Memory

The museums are both housed in buildings constructed in the 1950s that have been converted from their original uses. As historical remnants of this period that also fulfil a role in current communities through their latest appropriation as museums, the buildings provide a sense of continuity of the 1950s into the present day, representing ‘*living vestige[s]* of the past in the present’.<sup>784</sup> Bearing the architectural stamp and historical traces of this past, the museums can also be seen as palimpsests of space, which have acquired a cumulative layering of temporalities through their different uses. In this way, they differ significantly from the other historically ‘authentic’ case-study sites, such as the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung (see chapter four) and the Radebeul and Thale museums (see chapter five), because

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<sup>779</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 36.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

this layering is very visible, and there is a clear distinction between the buildings' original uses and their current uses as museums. Rather than effacing the past, conversion in both cases has served to protect the architectural integrity of the original structures and add another layer of meaning to the overall narrative of the buildings. The Bremerhaven museum is housed in a former post chapel built in the early 1950s in the US Military Staging Area (renamed Carl Schurz Kaserne in 1973) of Bremerhaven-Weddewarden for use by members of the US Armed Forces.<sup>785</sup> Originally located on North Carolina Street (now named Amerikaring), the chapel formed part of a leisure complex for those stationed at the site, including also a recreational centre known as 'Radio City': a converted hangar which housed a snack bar, grocery store, post exchange, service club, green room, bowling alley, gymnasium, cinema and photography shop.<sup>786</sup> Part of this complex is now used as the museum's principal depot, holding collections which are not on permanent display. Whilst current museum narratives have been superimposed onto the chapel building, there is much visible indication of its former use. Architecturally, the red brick structure has not been altered, with the original round-arched windows and door, dark wooden roof rafters and bell tower still in place. The museum has made creative use of the prominent west gallery by allowing visitors to picnic on this (for a nominal fee) and enjoy views over the whole space from this vantage point. These features constitute, to use Bakhtin's words, a layering of 'complex visible signs of historical time' and, by providing a physical connection to the 1950s, serve to strengthen the authenticity of exhibition content relating to this period presented in the museum.<sup>787</sup>

The Eisenhüttenstadt museum is housed in a protected former GDR *Kinderkombination* (a complex housing a *Kinderkrippe*, *Kindergarten* and *Wochenkindergarten*) known as 'Kindergarten II' built on Erich-Weinert-Allee in 1953. Together with neighbouring buildings, this provided a complete childcare service for the residents of Wohnkomplex II: one of four *Wohnkomplexe* to be erected in the 1950s, the completion of which resulted in over six thousand apartments in total.<sup>788</sup> Situated to the south of the city centre, Wohnkomplex II was constructed as a 'Musterbeispiel der Nationalen Bautradition', the architectural qualities of which are as prominent in the present day as they were upon completion in 1954:

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<sup>785</sup> This was part of the Bremen Enclave of the American Occupation Zone which had been negotiated with the British in 1945 because the American Zone was initially landlocked.

<sup>786</sup> Ron Fandrick, 'Base Photos - - Album #1', *6913<sup>th</sup> RSM, ReActivated*, last updated 11 July 2010 <<http://www.6913th.org/PH/BASE1.htm#top>> [accessed 26 May 2014].

<sup>787</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 25.

<sup>788</sup> Stadt Eisenhüttenstadt, 'Planungsgeschichte der Wohnkomplexe I-IV', *Stadt Eisenhüttenstadt* <<http://www.eisenhuettenstadt.de/index.php?mnr=4&Id=520&su1=&su2=&aseite=1>> [accessed 26 May 2014].

Die Baublöcke sind monumental am Blockrand angeordnet und umschließen große Innenhöfe. Das Achsensystem, das die Stadt untergliedert, ist hier deutlich erkennbar. Jeweils am Ende der Grünachsen Erich-Weinert-Allee und Pawlow-Allee stehen öffentliche Gebäude. Über das Viertel verteilte Geschäftszentren sind teilweise durch Arkaden hervorgehoben. In seinem reichen Fassadenschmuck, ausgeprägter Symmetrie und über vier Geschosse hoch gezogene Fassaden erscheint der II. Wohnkomplex wie eine Wiederholung der Berliner Stalinallee.<sup>789</sup>

With its imposing block structure, large columns and complex balustrade detailing, the exterior of the museum building (as with the whole of Wohnkomplex II) can be seen as a collection of ‘visible vestiges’ of 1950s East German urban spaces, now protected under cultural monument status.<sup>790</sup> Despite the extensive renovation of the building — following its conversion into a museum, but also as part of the city-wide ‘Integrierte Stadtentwicklungskonzept’ (see chapter four) — this layer of historical narrative is also visible in the interior of the museum, where, to use Bakhtin’s words, ‘everything [...] bears the stamp of time, is saturated with time, and assumes its form and meaning in time.’<sup>791</sup> In an exhibition room maintained according to its original function as a *Sanitärraum*, a wall text highlights the specificities of Kindergarten II and how memories of this particular site are physically inscribed in its interior design. The text draws attention in particular to the original lead-glazed stained glass windows in the main stairway that were produced by one of the best-known East German Socialist Realist artists Walter Womacka between 1954 and 1955. These are significant not only as remnants of the 1950s past (and specifically the architectural and artistic past linked to Socialist Realism), but more importantly as markers of the building’s former use. Depicting scenes of children and animals under the title ‘Aus dem Leben der Kinder’, the windows are imbued with the building’s history as a *Kinderkrippe* and *Kindergarten* and act as a continued palimpsestic inscription of this memory despite the superimposition of the current overarching museum narrative. In addition to this highly visible trace of the *Kinderkombination*, the text highlights other less obvious markers for visitors, such as the second handrail in the stairway (which is positioned lower than the main handrail for children) and the viewing windows between the play and work areas and the dormitories (so that childcare staff could monitor the children without disturbing them). By highlighting these features for visitors, the museum actively encourages them to be seen as historical vestiges and memory cues, providing a more

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<sup>789</sup> Andreas Ludwig, *Eisenhüttenstadt: Wandel einer industriellen Gründungsstadt in fünfzig Jahren* (Potsdam: Brandenburgische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2000), pp. 53-54. The Berlin boulevard is now named Karl-Marx-Allee.

<sup>790</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 25.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

‘authentic’ memorial space for the exhibition content. The importance of this claim to historical authenticity is reinforced in an additional nearby wall text, which details the conversion of the building and the museum’s striving to preserve its ‘ursprüngliche Substanz [...] bis hin zu Ausstattungsdetails’. To this end, original fixtures have been re-used in the museum and entire rooms have been preserved such as the *Sanitärraum*, with its original tiles, washing facilities and a *Töpfchenbank*.

For both the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums, the palimpsestic nature of the buildings is key in cementing the historical narrative of the 1950s and GDR *Alltag* respectively to the sites and their visiting publics. First, as historical artefacts in their own right and as repositories of original material objects, the museums are able to provide those visitors who have no first-hand experience or memory of these pasts with a more tangible and experiential engagement with history. This is central to the aims of both museums in highlighting the continued relevance and impact of these pasts for present and future generations of Germans. By using converted structures and drawing attention to the retention of original architectural features and interior fixtures, the museums are effectively able to invite visitors to re-experience the past. Whilst not explicitly stated, this is certainly implied by the Bremerhaven museum’s rhetoric, with the tagline ‘Geschichte als Erlebnis’ and reference to the exhibition space as an ‘Atmosphäre der Wirtschaftswunderjahre’, both of which appear in the visitor leaflet.<sup>792</sup> Second, the historical significance of the sites seems to be even more important in sustaining communicative and cultural memories of the post-war period and/or the GDR. As the guest book demonstrates, the Bremerhaven museum normally receives visits from former US servicemen each year, who were stationed in Bremerhaven or the surrounding area, and for whom the building provides an important connection to their personal memories and experiences. Entries such as: ‘I lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> building entering here to the right from July 1962 until April 1965. Have returned with my daughter and granddaughter the above date’; ‘Went to church here in 1958. Lived at 11/3 Eckleingarten 1958-1960’; and ‘I was stationed here from March 1957-Sept 60, April 1961-June 62, 59<sup>th</sup> MP.Co. Good to see that something is still left’ are particularly revealing because they highlight the fact that the personal memories are attached to the chapel building, as well as the other remaining physical structures of the former Staging Area and Kaserne.<sup>793</sup> The fact that some of the former servicemen who return

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<sup>792</sup> *Museum der 50er Jahre: Alltagsleben auf dem deutschen Wirtschaftswunderweg* [visitor leaflet].

<sup>793</sup> John Crum, *Museum der 50er Jahre Guest Book*, 30 May 2010; Greg Brawner ‘Houston TX, USA’, *Museum der 50er Jahre Guest Book*, 22 August 2010; W. Thompson, *Museum der 50er Jahre Guest Book*, 19 September 2010.



to the site are clearly pleased that some of the original buildings still exist shows that these buildings play an important role in the narration and continuation of their own personal biographies. This is confirmed in the strong online presence of this community, who use the internet as a means of connecting and reminiscing with other former servicemen who were based in the Bremen Enclave, sharing photos of the numerous different sites and their buildings (comparing photographs from then with now) and documenting and commemorating the lives of individual service personnel and the units to which they belonged.<sup>794</sup> As was always intended with the chapel, the museum building continues to act as an important point of reference in the articulation of communicative memories of the past and, as a site of transnational identity, links together local residents and former servicemen.

For the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, aside from the obvious practicalities of space and location, the decision to exhibit the collections of GDR *Alltag* in such an ideologically significant structure as a former *Kinderkrippe* highlights an important move to situate the museum within the wider context of *Aufarbeitung*. According to an introductory text in the catalogue, the *Kinderkrippe* was a key ideological instrument and mechanism of the SED regime that penetrated all parts of society, and by using such an institution to house the collections, it enables the museum to show the full ‘Spektrum der Lebenswelten in der DDR im Kontext der Diktatur’.<sup>795</sup> The ‘Familie’ section of the catalogue in particular draws on the prominent debates linking GDR child-rearing with post-unification eastern neuroses, beginning with the heated debates in the German press around 1990–1991 (especially in *Neues Deutschland* – the former official newspaper of the SED) initiated by child psychologists and academics, and the publication of psychotherapist Hans-Joachim Maaz’s controversial works *Der Gefühlsstau* (1990) and *Das gestürzte Volk* (1991) which looked, amongst other things, at the significance and impact of repressive state child-rearing and education.<sup>796</sup> The catalogue goes on to highlight the renewal of these debates in 1999 with the publication of criminologist Christian Pfeiffer’s provoking *Spiegel* article ‘Anleitung zum Haß’, which proposed a link between institutional child-rearing, GDR education and post-unification racism and

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<sup>794</sup> See, for instance: Fandrick, ‘Bremerhaven, Germany’, *6913<sup>th</sup> RSM, ReActivated*, last updated 16 May 2013 <<http://www.6913th.org/>> [accessed 27 May 2014]; ErichG2 and others, ‘Carl Schurz Kaserne Bremerhaven, Germany’, *Military.com* <<http://forums.military.com/eve/forums/a/tpc/f/65819558/m/1360013542001>> [accessed 27 May 2014].

<sup>795</sup> Bernd Neumann, ‘Grüßwort für den Katalog zu der neuen Dauerausstellung im Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR in Eisenhüttenstadt’, in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2012), pp. 9-10 (p. 10).

<sup>796</sup> Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Der Gefühlsstau: Psychogramm einer Gesellschaft* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2010); Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Das gestürzte Volk oder die verunglückte Einheit* (Munich: Knauer, 1993).

xenophobia in the eastern *Länder*.<sup>797</sup> By detailing these debates, the museum's team seems keen to position the site within the broader politics of representation and remembrance of the GDR in post-unification Germany. This is reinforced through the exhibition of related icons of GDR cultural memory, such as the *Töpfchenbank*, which have become almost metonyms for the whole of the SED regime, and which have been at the forefront of the aforementioned debates.<sup>798</sup> As the readers' letters to Pfeiffer's article showed in the late 1990s, the exhibition of such objects and the overall setting of the former *Kinderkrippe* are likely to provoke a range of strong, emotional responses on the part of visitors with first-hand memories of the GDR, whether in agreement or disagreement with Maaz's and/or Pfeiffer's theses. As such, the museum building and many of its objects can be seen as tools designed to renew dialogue on the GDR and its ideological framework. This narrative concerning the politicization of child-rearing and state education is consistent with the overarching narrative of the *Alltag* as a wider arena for the articulation of everyday experiences and as a means of reframing GDR history. The museum wall texts and catalogue texts which thematize the role of *Kinderkrippen* in the GDR also highlight the additional motivations for the widespread use of childcare services, including the economic advantages of large numbers of working women and the legal equality of men and women (enshrined in the first constitution of 1949), as well as their right to work and financial independence. The essay that explores the potentially damaging effects of the East German education system equally makes the point that an authoritarian upbringing at home (in what is often considered to be a more apolitical realm) may have been 'problematischer als der gemeinsame Toilettengang'.<sup>799</sup> By attempting to provide a balanced historical reappraisal of East German childcare and by reappropriating GDR history and memory through post-unification debates, the museum can be seen as a space of emergence, inviting continued discussion on the GDR in the present and future.

The spectralization of temporalities and historical narratives enshrined in multilayered time not only takes place within the physical locus of the museum building, but also within the wider geographical area. With this emplacement of history and memory, the museum acts as a space of emergence for the locality in which it is situated, and the past is shown to be 'necessary and productive under the conditions of a given locality, as a creative humanization of this locality, which transforms a portion of terrestrial space into a place of historical life for people,

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<sup>797</sup> Marcus Merkel, 'Für 5.000 Mark Begrüßungsgeld', in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 207-12 (p. 210). See Christian Pfeiffer, 'Anleitung zum Haß', *Der Spiegel*, 12 (1999), 60-66.

<sup>798</sup> A picture of children sitting on a *Töpfchenbank* was notably included in Pfeiffer's article.

<sup>799</sup> Merkel, 'Für 5.000 Mark Begrüßungsgeld', p. 210.

in a corner of the historical world'.<sup>800</sup> The locality is significant not just as a place which represents the past, but which also has its own past, and where its histories and memories are visibly layered into its unique geography as a cumulative palimpsest. For the Bremerhaven museum, the remnants of the Staging Area and Carl Schurz Kaserne, as well as the rest of the city of Bremerhaven represent an important contextual locus for one of Bremerhaven's golden ages as the gateway to the rest of West Germany for the US Armed Forces in the post-war period. Similarly, for the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, the topography of the town centre and the extensive *Flächendenkmal* represent the key contextual locus for Eisenhüttenstadt's golden age as the GDR's first socialist town. The chronotopic reinvestment in the 1950s and GDR pasts can be seen as a genealogical and counter-memorial process of reattributing meaning and value to the localities of Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt, foregrounding local experiences of, and insights into, the past.

In their attempts to emplace historical narratives and memories, the museums rely on a network of place significations that Shelley Hornstein has termed an 'architecture of the heart'.<sup>801</sup> By this, Hornstein understands 'a place within us that holds onto the emoting memory of a place' and which functions as a set of 'symbolic construction[s] that connects our idea or image of a place to its physicality'.<sup>802</sup> In addition to the museum building itself, the Bremerhaven museum has a large collection of material objects relating to its status as a hub of American culture in the 1950s. In a reincarnation of its role as a 'Vorort von New York' in the nineteenth century (as a departure point of over seven million Germans to the United States), Bremerhaven was the sole US Army Port of Embarkation in West Germany for all army, navy, marine corps and air force personnel, and the cultural impact of the American presence in Bremerhaven in the 1950s led the Staging Area (and later the Kaserne) to be known colloquially as 'klein Amerika'.<sup>803</sup> From 1947–1957, more than ten million tons of goods, three and a half million people and almost two hundred thousand private vehicles passed through Bremerhaven en route to main military bases further south, forging a strong bond between Bremerhaven and the US.<sup>804</sup>

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<sup>800</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 34.

<sup>801</sup> Shelley Hornstein, *Losing Site: Architecture, Memory and Place* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 72.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>803</sup> Rüdiger Ritter, *Vorort von New York? Die Amerikaner in Bremerhaven: Ergebnisse einer Studie am Museum der 50er Jahre Bremerhaven* (Bremerhaven: NW, 2010).

<sup>804</sup> Marco Butzkus, 'Die Amerikaner in Bremerhaven: Teil 1 – Der Ursprung', *Seestadt Bremerhaven*, 30 March 2012 <<http://www.bremerhaven.de/meer-erleben/stadtleben/die-amerikaner-in-bremerhaven-teil-1-der-ursprung.48151.html>> [accessed 2 June 2014].

Items on display in the museum, such as the Marilyn Monroe lamp, Elvis Presley poster and Coca Cola merchandise represent material testaments to this narrative of Americanization and, together with contextualizing wall texts, act as props for this place affect. Whilst such objects are to some extent cultural markers of the US influence on the whole of western Europe in the post-war period, they are highly symbolic of the Americanized way of life in Bremerhaven and the rest of West Germany, where, according to a wall text, ‘der enge Kontakt veränderte Geisteshaltungen und Lebensformen’ and ‘Amerikanisches wird allenthalben imitiert’. Amongst such items, the poster of Elvis Presley is particularly significant to Bremerhaven and its inhabitants, because Presley passed through Bremerhaven in October 1958 — already a global star following a string of number one singles and three feature films with Presley receiving top billing — in order to start his year-long national service with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division in Friedberg (Hesse). Although Presley’s presence in Bremerhaven was extremely brief and a seemingly ‘unbedeutendes Ereignis’ (he travelled to his base in Friedberg the same day and flew from Frankfurt am Main on his return to the US), it constitutes ‘bis heute ein wichtiges Datum in der Bremerhavener Stadtgeschichte’ and has become part of what the curator’s partner, historian Rüdiger Ritter, sees as an entire process of mythification concerning ‘die Amerikaner in Bremerhaven’.<sup>805</sup> According to Ritter, the cultural impact of Presley and his entourage of military police, fans, reporters and photographers in Bremerhaven far outweighs its temporal duration and has become a ‘Symbol des Aufbruchs in die Moderne und des Anschlusses von Bremerhaven an die internationale Welt der Stars’.<sup>806</sup> By employing this narrative as the basis for a new founding myth and sense of identity, Bremerhaven has been able to transform itself into a locality of national and international significance, positioning itself ‘endlich einmal wieder im Rampenlicht’.<sup>807</sup> In so doing, the locality and its inhabitants have also appropriated what was quite an extraordinary event into the mythology of the everyday (see chapter three), using Elvis Presley’s stardom to reimagine the commonplaceness of everyday life in the 1950s and beyond.

The ‘Bremerhavener Mythos’ of American-German association can be seen as a process of double mythification because of its two distinct temporalities: occurring first in the 1950s, as soon as the first American units were stationed in the city and their presence was felt in all aspects of everyday life, and second, being retrospectively reimagined in the present (as

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<sup>805</sup> Ritter, p. 237.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid.

part of the future conception of the locality) as a “‘Goldenes Zeitalter” der Bremerhavener Stadtgeschichte’.<sup>808</sup> Engagements with this ‘Presley past’ that belong to this later realm of mythification include the 1979 television drama *Der Tag, an dem Elvis nach Bremerhaven kam*, the memorialization of the event in the form of a plaque at the Port of Embarkation, and a touring exhibition of ‘Elvis Presley in Germany’ which came to Bremerhaven in autumn 2008.<sup>809</sup> By exhibiting Elvis Presley iconography, the museum draws on the ‘emoting memory’ of Bremerhaven, creating a connection between those concepts of American modernity and youth culture that have become closely associated with Bremerhaven of the 1950s, and the physical locality. Alongside individual objects of particular local relevance, the museum also has entire ensembles of local objects in its collection, such as a 1950s confectioners, pharmacy, *Tante-Emma-Laden* and port doctor’s surgery, all from Bremerhaven, as well as a complete bar, jukebox and records from the Bremen pub ‘Zum Tuschkasten’. By collecting such ensembles and putting some of them on display, the museum aims to situate narratives of the 1950s within ‘lokalgeschichtliche Zusammenhänge’, helping to sustain localized place memories.<sup>810</sup> For those with personal memories of post-war Bremerhaven, such exhibits may help to prompt recollection of the past and provide a stable point of reference for the continuity of local identity. Even for those without such first-hand experiences, local exhibits may enable visitors to contextualize better museum narratives on offer and map changes in the city’s architectural and cultural profile. By embedding historical narratives and memories firmly within the local context of 1950s Bremerhaven, the museum can be seen not only as a site advancing debate on the 1950s, but also highlighting the ‘zentrales Thema der Bremerhavener Stadtgeschichte’.<sup>811</sup>

Just as what Bakhtin refers to as a ‘deep, painstaking, and concrete perception of the locality’ is visible through an ‘architecture of the heart’ in the Bremerhaven museum, a strong sense of place as a locus for important historical narratives is conveyed in the first section of the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, ‘Eisenhüttenstadt – Neue Stadt’, with numerous objects on display of local provenance and interest.<sup>812</sup> In the first display case of this section, a bowl of four coloured, glass-like lumps of slag are on display, which were donated to the museum by

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<sup>808</sup> Ritter, p. 18.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid., p. 237. *Der Tag, an dem Elvis nach Bremerhaven kam*, Das Erste, 11 April 1979, 8.15pm.

<sup>810</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, ‘Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens’ <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 2 June 2014].

<sup>811</sup> Kerstin von Freytag Löringhoff, ‘Einige einleitende Bemerkungen’, in *Vorort von New York?*, pp. 9-11 (p. 11).

<sup>812</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 34.

a local resident (the interview with whom is available on the museum audio guide as an ‘object history’) who found them in the sand paths put down as part of the open space design of Wohnkomplexe I–III, and for whom they represent ‘Erinnerungsstücke an eine Kindheit in der “Neuen Stadt”’.<sup>813</sup> Although such objects may be mere by-products of glass manufacturing, they represent, both literally and metaphorically, ‘Fundstücke einer “Geschichte von unten”, Teil einer Geschichte, die in Eisenhüttenstadt spielt’ and are presented in the museum as mnemonic retainers of those local memories which would typically be hidden and marginalized in official histories.<sup>814</sup> By musealizing such items, the museum privileges those objects and memories which hold significance at a grassroots level, through which a critical genealogy of a localized, more differentiated 1950s can be traced. By including the interview with the donor as part of the exhibition and using it to narrate the objects, the museum is also able to give voice to a ‘normal’, everyday person, thereby blurring the usual distinction between communicative and cultural memories, as well as deconstructing the traditional hierarchy of memories. As historical vestiges of the local past, the lumps of slag are significant not only as physical products of the local glassworks based in Fürstenberg, but also because they relate to a much wider narrative of new beginnings in the 1950s: of people moving to the then Stalinstadt for employment opportunities at the iron and steel works and for a new way of life in the socialist new town.<sup>815</sup> Other objects on display which relate to this narrative include a copy of Karl Mundstock’s 1952 novel *Helle Nächte*, which chronicles the early years of the *Aufbau* in Eisenhüttenstadt, and town planning maps and documents relating to the new town construction project.<sup>816</sup> Like the 1950s and Americanization in Bremerhaven, the 1950s and socialism hold symbolic significance in Eisenhüttenstadt as a golden age when the town was the showpiece of socialist power and planning:

Eisenhüttenstadt ist als völlig durchgeplante “Neue Stadt” ein Kind seiner Entstehungszeit. Die besonderen Umstände ihrer Gründung und Ausformung geben der Stadt eine Bedeutung über das Regionale hinaus. Hier wurde ausprobiert, wie der Sozialismus in der DDR nach Auffassung ihrer Lenker einmal aussehen sollte.<sup>817</sup>

The construction of Eisenhüttenstadt can be seen as a metonym for the construction of socialism and the town’s embodiment of socialist principles became ‘ein Gründungsmythos,

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<sup>813</sup> Andreas Ludwig, ‘Sammeln, tauschen, erinnern’, in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 47-48 (p. 47).

<sup>814</sup> Ibid.

<sup>815</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>816</sup> Karl Mundstock, *Helle Nächte* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1952).

<sup>817</sup> Ludwig, ‘Eisenhüttenstadt – Neue Stadt’, in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 41-45 (p. 41).

der mit dem der DDR verbunden ist: Eisenhüttenstadt sollte die Geschichte des jungen Staates versinnbildlichen'.<sup>818</sup> As in Bremerhaven, the formation of this founding myth is based on a double mythification: the first taking place during the early post-war period in the form of propaganda enshrined in the first five year plan and the declaration of the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* at the second party conference, and the second occurring in later years, when Eisenhüttenstadt continued to be retrospectively imagined 'als moderner Industriestandort und moderne Stadt'.<sup>819</sup> By narrating the town's mythification through such objects, the museum makes a deliberate connection between the national East German *Aufbau des Sozialismus* and the physical locality of Eisenhüttenstadt. Rather than being representative of the whole of the GDR, Eisenhüttenstadt's experience of the *Aufbau* is presented as something extraordinary and special in relation to the national context. Whilst on the one hand belonging to Eisenhüttenstadt's narrative of the *Alltag*, this also links in with a more positive reimagining of the locality as a unique contextual locus of history, thereby bringing about a blurring of the everyday and the extraordinary.

### 7.3 Remembering and Forgetting

In a manner reminiscent of the first modern museums and cabinets of curiosities, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums were founded on the premise of the collection and preservation of objects, in response to what was perceived as the rapid disappearance of the material culture of 1950s West Germany and the GDR respectively. Although the Bremerhaven museum did not officially open until 2000, the process of musealization began much earlier in 1984 with the decision of the curator, Kerstin von Freytag Löringhoff, to retrieve 'die Welt [ihr]er Kindheit' from the 'Spermüll' of German material culture, by acquiring 1950s objects from auctions and flea markets and later through donations.<sup>820</sup> Similarly, the Eisenhüttenstadt museum's former director, Andreas Ludwig, began lobbying Brandenburg's Kulturministerium for an *Alltagmuseum* as early as January 1992 'um die materiellen Hinterlassenschaften aus dem Alltag in der DDR zu bewahren', following the widespread rejection of GDR products and goods upon unification, in favour of those from the

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<sup>818</sup> Ludwig, 'Eisenhüttenstadt – Neue Stadt', p. 45.

<sup>819</sup> Ibid.

<sup>820</sup> Kerstin von Freytag Löringhoff, quoted in Solveig Grothe, 'Die Fünfziger: das Kreuz mit dem Nierentisch', *Spiegel Online*, 27 January 2008 <<http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/die-fuenfziger-a-946495.html>> [accessed 3 June 2014].

West.<sup>821</sup> For both museums, the decision to focus on seemingly banal *Alltagskultur* reflects the initiators' desires to present what they perceive as the 'normal', everyday past, away from the metanarratives and state-mandated memories of some (other) public museums. It is also testament to their belief in the ability of artefacts to act as repositories and triggers of memory and history. Unlike other forms of testimony, objects seem to represent a more neutral, less biased form of historical representation (even though they may in fact not be), because of their status as what Marc Bloch refers to as 'témoins malgré eux'.<sup>822</sup> This is especially the case for everyday objects, because with the exception of souvenirs, mementos and political memorabilia, they were not designed to be imbued with, or act as markers of, specific memories or historical events. Nevertheless, as 'Träger von Spuren der Geschichte', everyday objects constitute palimpsests of meaning that are open to analysis, critique and research like any other historical documents and considered more objective precisely because '[sie] erzählen nicht aus sich selbst heraus, aber sie können befragt werden'.<sup>823</sup> By investing heavily in this process of historical investigation, both museums are symbolic of a more grassroots rediscovery of the past. This is based on the retrieval of what can be seen as forgotten or delegitimized memories (most other institutions, certainly at the time the museums were founded, considering everyday objects to be 'unworthy' of museum representation) enshrined in multilayered time and genealogy.

Although the museums remain firmly object-centred, both can be seen to embody a shift from a past-orientated collection and preservation of material objects to a present and future-orientated contextualization of material objects. This is particularly apparent in the changes between the Eisenhüttenstadt museum's initial concept, which called, amongst other things, for increasing recognition of the 'gesellschaftliche Bedeutung' of everyday objects and its most recent concept, which outlined the role of material culture in the wider historicization of the GDR, especially for generations of visitors for whom the GDR *Alltag* is increasingly 'fremd'.<sup>824</sup> As the museums become further temporally removed from the pasts that they thematize, they are becoming increasingly concerned with the second 'forgetting' of the 1950s

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<sup>821</sup> Andreas Ludwig, *Alltag: DDR: Ständige Ausstellung* (Eisenhüttenstadt: Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, 2012) [visitor booklet].

<sup>822</sup> Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou Métier d'historien* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1974), p. 69.

<sup>823</sup> Andreas Ludwig 'Alltag: DDR. Zur Einführung', in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 27-38 (p. 28); Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, 'Aufbaugeneration – Ein Leben in Urkunden', in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 49-51 (p. 49).

<sup>824</sup> Andreas Ludwig, 'Alltagskultur der DDR: Konzeptgedanken für ein Museum in Eisenhüttenstadt', *Bauwelt*, 27 (1994), 1152-55 (p. 1153); Dokumentationszentrum, 'Zwischen "Aufarbeitung" und "Historisierung"' <[http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption\\_dokzentrum\\_2011.pdf](http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption_dokzentrum_2011.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014] (p. 2).



and GDR *Alltagskultur* respectively that is inevitably taking place as experiential generations age and pass away. This has provided the museums with new impetus to highlight the continued relevance and impact of the past on the present and the future, which is at the heart of multilayered time. For von Freytag Löringhoff, it is of vital importance not only to keep memories of National Socialist atrocities alive, ‘sondern auch die deutschen Jahre ins Gedächtnis zu rufen, in denen die NS-Zeit möglichst ins Vergessen geraten sollte – die 50er Jahre.’<sup>825</sup> As the museum’s visiting public constitutes the generational legacy of this historical forgetting, the curator considers it particularly timely to question how much of this mentality has been passed on to present generations and, crucially, the extent to which it will be carried on ‘in die nächsten Generationen’.<sup>826</sup> Equally, for the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, because an entire generation of young people born shortly before or after unification have no first-hand memories of the GDR, ‘umso wichtiger ist, dass auch die neue Dauerausstellung im Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR in Eisenhüttenstadt daran erinnert und die Alltagsgeschichte in der DDR nachvollziehbar macht.’<sup>827</sup> By exploring these periods in the form of exhibitions, the museums can be seen as direct attempts to embed these pasts in German cultural memory, thereby providing access to these pasts for present and future generations.

As institutions founded upon the dynamics of remembering and forgetting, it is perhaps no surprise that these concepts underpin much of the narrativization of exhibition content at both museums. As sites promoting the need to re-examine critically the past through specific strategies of remembering and forgetting, both museums aim to situate the 1950s and the GDR respectively within the ongoing processes of German cultural memory and national identity, which are being continually renegotiated and remade through multilayered time. This particular approach is very different to those adopted at the other case-study sites, because emphasizing the role of forgetting allows the museums to problematize German national identity through those histories and memories that have been deliberately repressed and excluded from the national narrative. Rather than simply counterbalancing or reframing more dominant, hegemonic narratives, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums attempt to deconstruct the notion of hegemony, highlighting the ways in which certain histories and memories have been marginalized and privileged over others. This potentially allows for a sophisticated critical

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<sup>825</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, ‘Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens’ <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 22 May 2014].

<sup>826</sup> Ibid.

<sup>827</sup> Neumann, ‘Grußwort’, p. 9.

engagement with the 1950s and GDR pasts, and foregrounds a representation strategy which is more open and self-reflexive.

The Bremerhaven museum adopts a critical stance on everyday life in the 1950s and positions itself within the wider museum landscape as a ‘Stätte der Erinnerung’, dedicated to a period of time in which people forgot and actively repressed the horrors of the Second World War and National Socialism in favour of the ‘Zukunftsoptimismus’ of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.<sup>828</sup> A particularly provocative wall text directly juxtaposes pre- and post-war society to suggest that West Germans actively bought into the *Wirtschaftswunder* as a means of escapism: ‘soviel Leichtigkeit, Pastellfarbigkeit, Modernität so schnell nach all den seelenzerstörenden Bildern von Krieg, Konzentrationslagern, Gewalt und Tod?’ In the museum’s interpretive framework and in a wall text, the curator engages with Giordano’s concept of the repression of these memories (particularly in the post-war period) as a ‘zweite Schuld’: the first ‘guilt’ being the ‘Schuld der Deutschen unter Hitler’ and the second being the ‘Verdrängung und Verleugnung der ersten nach 1945’.<sup>829</sup> By setting this out as the overarching concept, the museum encourages visitors to remember and reflect on the 1950s as a period of forgetting. This is very different to those self-celebratory French national narratives of the *Trente Glorieuses* narrated in the *Appartement témoin* (see chapter four) and *Vire* exhibition (see chapter six), in which the 1950s are mythologized as a period of progressive reconstruction and consumption. Whereas the successes of the French 1950s in such sites as the *Appartement témoin* and *Vire* exhibition testify to the resilience and courage of the French people as victims of the Second World War, the West German *Wirtschaftswunder* in the Bremerhaven museum speaks of a collective desire to erase the crimes of the Second World War and the Holocaust, committed by a nation of perpetrators. This fundamental difference with respect to the Second World War and its narrativization may go some way in explaining why multilayered time is a more common representational framework for the German than the French past.

The notion of societal silence in the post-war period regarding the National Socialist past is cited as one of the principal motivations for the Eisenhüttenstadt museum’s ‘archival,

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<sup>828</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, ‘Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens’ <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014].

<sup>829</sup> Ralph Giordano, *Die zweite Schuld, oder Von der Last Deutscher zu sein*, 2nd edn (Cologne: Kiwi, 2008), p. 17.

open, and communicative character'.<sup>830</sup> According to Ludwig, the museum was conceived as a fluid and dialogic space precisely in order to 'avoid the long-term silence in public debate on all aspects of the dictatorial society that was significant in Germany after 1945'.<sup>831</sup> Whilst the Bremerhaven museum is more critical of the extent to which this past remains 'bis heute immer noch weitgehend ungesprochen', both sites acknowledge the limitations of wider German dialogue on its problematic twentieth-century pasts.<sup>832</sup> By critiquing post-war mentalities and behaviours, the Bremerhaven museum hopes to generate what it sees as much-needed debate and discussion about the German past and the role of this past in national identity. The museum even goes so far as to align the lack of consensus in the past and present by citing historical events such as the Historikerstreit and the Goldhagen debate as proof that the current 'Erben des Wirtschaftswunders' are still without a 'konsensstiftende nationale Identität' and a 'zustimmungsfähige' version of the Second World War and the National Socialist Past. This continued renegotiation of the role of the past in German national identity is reiterated in the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, for whom 'die immer wieder aufflackernde Debatte um ein konfligierendes Gedächtnis bezüglich der DDR-Erinnerung in Deutschland verdeutlicht, dass es sich um einen noch keinesfalls abgeschlossenen Prozess [...] handelt.'<sup>833</sup> Whereas at sites such as the Appartement témoin and Historische Wohnung (see chapter four) and the Radebeul and Thale museums (see chapter five) national identity is served by fixity, chronology and stasis, in the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums, national identity is conceived as a fluid process with ever-changing parameters and points of historical reference. According to the Eisenhüttenstadt museum's catalogue, the lack of national German consensus on the GDR is symptomatic not only of a broad, national tendency, but has also been perpetuated at a more localized state level. Brandenburg's minister for science, research and culture, Sabine Kunst, for instance, notes that until the opening of the Eisenhüttenstadt museum's new permanent exhibition, the representation of GDR *Alltag* under the SED dictatorship belonged 'zu den blinden Flecken der brandenburgischen Erinnerungskultur'.<sup>834</sup> For both museums, their exhibitions are part of a wider process of reinterpreting the National Socialist and GDR pasts

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<sup>830</sup> Andreas Ludwig, 'Representations of the Everyday and the Making of Memory: GDR History and Museums', in *Remembering the German Democratic Republic: Divided Memory in a United Germany*, ed. by David Clarke and Ute Wölfel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 37-53 (p. 49).

<sup>831</sup> Ibid.

<sup>832</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, 'Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens' <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014].

<sup>833</sup> Ludwig, 'Alltag: DDR. Zur Einführung', p. 28.

<sup>834</sup> Sabine Kunst, 'DDR-Alltag und totalitärer Anspruch', in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, p. 13.

that is just as much about the present and future (and the status of these pasts and German national identity in the present and future), as it is about the past.

Rather than making broad claims about collective German notions of history, memory and identity, both museums attempt to initiate the process of reappraising the past at the level of the individual. The extensive use of open-ended, rhetorical questions in the Bremerhaven museum's wall texts is designed to prompt personal recollection and place emphasis on the idea that each individual 'trägt eigene Verantwortung' for remembering and engaging with the National Socialist past and its repression in the 1950s. The guest book situated by the museum's entrance and exit point provides further space for individual reflection on the museum's exhibition content and narratives. This prioritization of the individual's capacity for *Aufarbeitung* is also at the heart of Ludwig's endeavour, through the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, to perpetuate personal memories of the GDR and convert them into cultural memories.<sup>835</sup> To this end, he positions the museum within memory discourse, referring to the Assmanns' distinction between communicative and cultural memory and Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* in his introduction to the catalogue.<sup>836</sup> In so doing, Ludwig sets up the museum as a site not only of memory (both communicative and cultural), but also as one which promotes communicative memory work by attempting to activate memories and conversations between visitors.<sup>837</sup> One of the most important ways that communicative memories are incorporated into the exhibition narratives of the Eisenhüttenstadt museum and used to generate visitor memories and dialogue is through interviews with object donors, around one hundred of which have been conducted since the museum's inauguration. It is by preserving the multiple contexts of use and appropriation pertaining to the artefacts in the museum's collection and by placing these in wider context through additional archival and bibliographical material that the museum 'versteht sich als Archiv der materiellen Kultur'.<sup>838</sup> For the museum's revamped permanent exhibition, excerpts of thirty-three of these interviews have been included as part of an audio guide of 'Objektgeschichten' and reproduced in the accompanying catalogue for visitors. By incorporating these into the exhibition, the museum provides a means of repersonalizing the memory icons on display and preserving the communicative nature of the memories concerned, so that visitors are able to directly engage in memory work in the present. This is particularly

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<sup>835</sup> Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 170.

<sup>836</sup> Ludwig, 'Alltag: DDR. Zur Einführung', p. 28.

<sup>837</sup> Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 170.

<sup>838</sup> Ludwig, *Alltag: DDR: Ständige Ausstellung*.

important given that haptic interaction with artefacts is prevented through a ‘no touch’ policy and the extensive use of display cases, and goes some way to enabling visitors, even those with no first-hand experience of the GDR, to experience the materiality of memory. Although these interviews were envisaged as providing a complete contextualization of the objects concerned (including how the donors came to acquire them, how they were used and valued in day-to-day life, specific narratives and memories attached to them, and why they were being donated) Ludwig himself recognizes their limitations in representing the history and memory of GDR *Alltagskultur*. As Ludwig highlighted as early as 1999, the interviews are often far removed from the objects themselves, because either the donors did not provide extensive commentary during the interview process, or they used donation as an opportunity to relate rehearsed stories about their own lives, in a process of personal testimony.<sup>839</sup> What these challenges show is that not only are objects used as props for identity and biographical narration, but, and perhaps more importantly, that the donation process does not so much revolve around the significance of the object, as around gaining acknowledgement and confirmation of the importance of people’s own biographies. Because of the problematic nature of personal testimony and no doubt due to the fact that both von Freytag Löringhoff and Ludwig are professionally trained historians, both museums show a keen awareness that personal memories are not simply taken for granted and ‘uncritically endorsed’.<sup>840</sup> To ensure a critical genealogy of the 1950s and GDR pasts, both museums, therefore, rely on personal memories and historical narratives of the everyday.

#### 7.4 Beyond Nostalgia

By adopting what can be seen as a genealogical approach within multilayered time, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums are conscious in their self-presentation and take pains to situate themselves outside of nostalgia and *Ostalgie* discourse. According to its interpretive framework, the Bremerhaven museum is founded upon a ‘wissenschaftliche[r], erklärtermaßen nicht nostalgische[r] Ansatz’, which maintains that the popular retrospective representation of the 1950s has been misleadingly pigeonholed as ‘rein[e] Nostalgie’ and that the ‘Beschäftigung mit der grauen Seite dieser in der Außenwirkung farbenfroh geprägten Zeit

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<sup>839</sup> Andreas Ludwig, ‘Discursive Logics in the Material Representation of East German History. Exhibitions and History “Ten Years After”’, paper presented at *Ten Years After – German Unification* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2 December 1999) <<http://www.unibg.it/dati/corsi/44005/34842-10736-History%20of%20GDR%20in%20museums%20and%20exhibitions.pdf>> [accessed 3 June 2014] (p. 16).

<sup>840</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff repeatedly emphasized in conversation (April 2012) that the museum’s central aim is to provide a critical representation of everyday life in the 1950s; Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 170.

erhält nicht genügend Raum'.<sup>841</sup> The Eisenhüttenstadt museum is equally critical of the commodification of the GDR through nostalgia that is arguably promoted at some of the current private GDR museums in the eastern *Länder*, and is therefore very clear in its affirmation that it must not be understood as a form of 'Themenpark Ostalgie' or 'Gedächtnispark Ost'.<sup>842</sup> By anchoring GDR *Alltagskultur* in German cultural memory, the museum hopes to position personal memories in a wider historical context and correct what it sees as 'nostalgische Betrachtungsweisen'.<sup>843</sup> Whereas other sites, such as the Radebeul and Thale museums (see chapter five) are keen to employ nostalgia and harness it as a tool with which to create a more emotional engagement with the past or differentiated view of history, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums take up a traditionally historical suspicion of nostalgia as a dangerous, selective form of remembering.<sup>844</sup> In so doing, the museums are able to lay claim to historical objectivity and set themselves up as spaces of emergence which provide a theoretically scientific approach to historiography. The Bremerhaven museum presents itself as the sole 1950s museum to address the more problematic aspects of post-war West German society and the Eisenhüttenstadt museum promotes itself as 'das einzige Museum, das die Alltagskultur der DDR auf wissenschaftlicher Basis und ein [*sic*] einem breiten gesellschaftsgeschichtlichen Kontext bearbeitet'.<sup>845</sup> In order to fulfil these claims, both museums make deliberate use of distancing devices, which are used to dissuade visitors from wallowing in nostalgic remembering. Whilst the Bremerhaven museum relies heavily on a *mise en scène* of history and memory through reconstructions of private and public spaces, its numerous wall texts and object labels act as critical interfaces between visitors and exhibition content. These help not only to reinforce the fact that visitors are being presented with a mediated, musealized version of history, but are also designed to highlight the continued relevance and active role of the 1950s on the present and future. This theoretically provides the conditions for a less nostalgic engagement with the past, in that visitors are less likely to make

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<sup>841</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, 'Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens' <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014].

<sup>842</sup> Wolfgang Kaschuba, "'Gedächtnispark Ost' oder 'Deutsche Erinnerung'?", in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 15-17 (pp. 16-17). Ludwig highlighted in conversation (August 2012) that the museum deliberately avoids what he sees as the cruder display techniques used by private GDR museums (such as room reconstructions) in order to distance itself from Ostalgie.

<sup>843</sup> Dokumentationszentrum, "'Zwischen Aufarbeitung' und 'Historisierung'" <[http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption\\_dokzentrum\\_2011.pdf](http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption_dokzentrum_2011.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014] (p. 5).

<sup>844</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), pp. xiv-xvi.

<sup>845</sup> Dokumentationszentrum, "'Zwischen 'Aufarbeitung' und 'Historisierung'" <[http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption\\_dokzentrum\\_2011.pdf](http://www.Alltagskultur-ddr.de/fileadmin/data/pdf/museumskonzeption_dokzentrum_2011.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014] (p. 5).

a sharp distinction between the past and the present and future, and because the emphasis during the visit is on acquiring new insight into the post-war period and challenging nostalgic 1950s ‘wir sind wieder wer’ retrospectives. In the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, distancing devices, such as glass display cases and touch screen computers are used in a similar manner to enable visitors to explore certain objects and ideas further, thereby ‘offering up surprising perspectives and connections instead of simply generating the familiarity of the “already known”’.<sup>846</sup> Wall texts are also used with the aim of further contextualizing exhibition content and giving visitors the opportunity to form their own opinions and conclusions rather than simply rehearsing or endorsing well-known myths and interpretations of the GDR.<sup>847</sup>

In order to deconstruct and critique present-day nostalgia and provide a more historically accurate picture of the past, the museums rely on a multilayered, palimpsestic conception of temporality, re-examining the 1950s and the GDR from the vantage point of the present as a legacy of those pasts. As part of this historical reappraisal, the museums are committed to addressing some of the more problematic aspects of divided German history that have typically tended to be overlooked or actively excluded from popular retrospective representations, but which continue to hold significance as part of a shared historical conscience and identity. The fact that many of the same issues are addressed by both museums reflects the extent to which these experiences are part of a broader national shared history and sense of identity, representing points of reference for former East and West German visitors alike. Both museums address the widespread nature of authoritarian discipline and violence in children’s upbringings and educations during the post-war period and after. The Bremerhaven museum places emphasis in particular on child rearing with the infamous *Teppichklopfer* and *Kleiderbügel* in 1950s West German homes, and educational discipline through painful and embarrassing school punishments. For von Freytag Löringhoff, such practices are illustrative of excessive institutionalized child discipline that was ingrained in West German society in the 1950s. This issue of state and family initiated authoritarianism is also thematized in the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, which, as well as discussing the role of state-run *Kinderkrippen* and *Kindergärten*, singles out the GDR’s *Jugendwerkhöfe* (set up in the immediate post-war period for orphaned and homeless young people, but which became more synonymous with controlling and ‘re-educating’ those considered to be ‘problembehaftet’ under the SED regime)

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<sup>846</sup> Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 173.

<sup>847</sup> *Ibid.*

as places of particularly extreme discipline and punishment.<sup>848</sup> Whilst such experiences may only be representative of a small percentage of the GDR's population, the catalogue highlights them as an important part of the state's ideological self-conception. Such pedagogical institutions were used to suppress notions of individuality, so that young people could be reformed as part of the collective.<sup>849</sup> This feeds into the concept of the museum's new permanent exhibition, which presents the GDR *Alltag* as intrinsically politicized. This is equally evident in the museum's approach towards gender issues, and particularly the role of women in the GDR, which are presented as heavily state dictated. Whereas traditional gender stereotypes may have been reinforced within family units, the state was, at least officially, committed to achieving gender equality in the workplace by actively encouraging and providing the necessary incentives for women in the GDR to go to work (for both ideological and economic reasons).<sup>850</sup>

Alongside the thematization of authoritarianism and discipline, the Bremerhaven museum actively engages with issues that were considered societal taboos in the 1950s and which are still points for discussion in post-unification Germany. The display of a large collection of nude and semi-nude black female figurines and plaster cast busts popularized in East and West German living rooms in the 1950s and 60s, alongside German-American journalist Hans Massaquoi's best-selling autobiography, published in German as '*Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger!*', provides an opportunity for the museum to explore the issue of race relations and German attitudes towards 'otherness' in the 1950s and today.<sup>851</sup> Whilst these material representations of the black female form are significant in highlighting the German fascination with the 'exotic other' and stereotypes of black women as highly sexualized, the sculptures are also important because, according to a wall text, they present a westernized conceptualization of the black female anatomy and physiognomy, combining fine facial features, straight hair and long slender bodies. Because of the lack of clothing and the way in which the figurines are mostly posed in crouching positions, this western gaze promotes what Corinna Wodarz sees as a 'chauvinistische Vorstellung von durch Zivilisation unberührten Wilden voller Anmut und unschuldiger Nacktheit', linking into German colonial rhetoric of

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<sup>848</sup> Daniel Krausz, *Die Umerziehung schwererziehbarer und krimineller Jugendlicher in den Jugendwerkhöfen der DDR: Methoden einer Erziehungsdiktatur* (Hamburg: Diplomica, 2009), p. 33.

<sup>849</sup> Marcus Merkel, 'Für 5.000 Mark Begrüßungsgeld', pp. 210-11.

<sup>850</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207-09.

<sup>851</sup> Hans J. Massaquoi, *Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2001). This autobiographical work details the author's personal experiences of discrimination as a multiracial child growing up in National Socialist Hamburg.



white supremacy.<sup>852</sup> Rather than imposing one interpretation on these objects, however, the wall text encourages visitors to engage with the concepts of race and racial stereotyping by summarizing two contrasting points of view: ‘nichts als Koketterie mit dem ganz Anderen? Oder spielt hier die Auflösung des bisherigen Rassenbegriffes eine Rolle?’ The careful display of Masseur’s autobiography in relation to the figurines serves to place the different objects in dialogue with each other, not only drawing on the consumption of such figurines as a product and legacy of German colonial and National Socialist attitudes towards people of different ethnicities, but also highlighting the continued relevance of issues of race, ethnicity, racism and stereotyping in contemporary multicultural Germany.

In a similar manner, the Bremerhaven museum addresses the theme of sexuality, which is presented, according to a wall text, as a ‘Reizthema in den 50er Jahren’. The recreated bedroom exhibit, whilst giving visitors an impression of the kind of style and designs of bedroom furniture popular in the late 1950s, is set up as a space of retreat and ‘Fluchtburg der Eltern’, where arguments and adult discussions would take place away from children.<sup>853</sup> Because the master bedroom was generally off-limits to others, it also acted as a ‘geheiligt Reich’ for physical intimacy, and as such, became something of a taboo space for children and subject of discussion in wider society.<sup>854</sup> For von Freytag Löringhoff, the bedroom is symbolic of the tabooing of a whole range of practices and areas of daily life in the 1950s.<sup>855</sup> This meant that important issues, such as sexuality, gender and contraception went undiscussed in public. The condom packet placed carefully on what appears to be the man’s bedside table in the bedroom exhibit (evoked through clothing, gendered toiletries and cosmetics) moreover suggests that sex was dictated largely by men in heterosexual couples, hinting at a gender imbalance with regard to taking control of sex and responsibility for contraception. Whilst the thematization of these issues is key to unmasking and understanding what the museum sees as the ‘Verschwiegenheit dieses Zeitalters’, they are also important in revealing the impact of 1950s ‘Denk- und Sprechverbote’ in twenty-first century Germany ‘noch nach Generationen’.<sup>856</sup> The ability to talk openly about issues of sexuality and sexual preference holds particular relevance in present-day Germany, which despite largely leading the way in

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<sup>852</sup> Corinna Wodarz, *Nierentisch und Petticoat: Ein Bummel durch die 50er Jahre* (Oldenburg: Isensee, 2003), p. 102.

<sup>853</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, quoted in Grothe, ‘Die Fünfziger: das Kreuz mit dem Nierentisch’ <<http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/die-fuenfziger-a-946495.html>> [accessed 15 June 2014].

<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> Ibid.

<sup>856</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, ‘Das Museum der 50er Jahre: Erinnerung an eine Zeit des Vergessen-Wollens’ <[http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum\\_info.pdf](http://www.museum-der-50er-jahre.de/seiten/museum_info.pdf)> [accessed 3 June 2014].

Europe in the acknowledgment of LGBT rights, continues to hold divided opinion on the recognition and equality of same-sex partnerships (which have been granted legal status as civil life partnerships as of 2001, but are, crucially, not marriages). The issue of gender equality is similarly significant, as although Germany's overall gender gap is relatively small in relation to other European nations, gender discrimination in the workplace, particularly the discrepancy between male and female salaries, remains a common phenomenon and source of fierce debate.<sup>857</sup> By touching upon issues which are as relevant in today's society as they were in the 1950s, the museum establishes itself as a space of emergence and a cumulative palimpsest, exploring connections between the past and the present and setting up present-day Germany as a legacy of 1950s attitudes and mentalities.

Alongside examining those narratives which continue to spark debate in the present, the museums serve to create a distinct layering of historical time by critiquing those objects popularized in East and West Germany during the 1950s and early 1960s as innovative and symbolic of a new kind of modernity, and which have been retrospectively transformed into icons of nostalgia. Following numerous cultural historians of West German design, the Bremerhaven museum challenges the practicality and functionality of the much-celebrated *Nierentisch*: an item of furniture which has come to represent 1950s West Germany more than any other object because of what Betts refers to as its 'visual vocabulary of restored optimism and material prosperity' and because of the way it has been appropriated and become ingrained in cultural memories.<sup>858</sup> Rather than confirming these romanticisms of the West German 1950s, the museum actively seeks to dispel the myth of the *Nierentisch*, 'mit seinen spitz zulaufenden, unpraktisch schrägen Beinen, über die man dauernd stolperte.'<sup>859</sup> Von Freytag Löringhoff recalls her own experience of the failings of the family *Nierentisch* as a child:

Als Kind merkt man, ob etwas praktisch ist. Ich sehe ihn noch vor mir, wie er in unserer engen Wohnung im Flur steht. Der Tisch hatte drei schräg abstehende Beine, über die man ewig

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<sup>857</sup> Germany is currently ranked fourteenth according to the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report*. The Nordic countries typically perform best. See World Economic Forum, 'Global Gender Gap', *World Economic Forum*, 2013 <<http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>> [accessed 18 October 2014].

<sup>858</sup> Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 109.

<sup>859</sup> Wodarz also cites the example of a contemporary critic, Erica Schondorff, remarking upon the impracticalities of the *Nierentisch* design as early as 1955, p. 83. See Erica Schondorff, *Möbel, Haus und Wohnung* (Munich: Droemer, 1955).

stolperte, so dass er dauernd umkippte. Bekam jemand Porzellan geschenkt, das er nicht wollte, gab es oft den augenzwinkernden Rat: 'Stell' es auf den Flurtisch.<sup>860</sup>

Whilst the *Nierentisch* has become anchored in German cultural memory as a design icon of the 1950s, it is presented in the museum as an aesthetic, but ultimately impractical object, because of the curator's own childhood memories. By foregrounding such memories and experiences over nostalgic retrospectives, the museum hopes to reassess the daily realities of life in the 1950s, providing a more accurate (although arguably equally as subjective) insight into the West German *Alltag*. Alongside critiquing the design structure of the *Nierentisch*, the museum also questions the extent to which it is an appropriate symbol of the whole of the 1950s as a decade. According to a wall text, the form and materials used to manufacture items like the *Nierentisch* were popularized from the mid-1950s onwards and found more commonly in West German homes of the early 1960s. Like the Munich exhibition (see chapter six) the Bremerhaven museum claims that styles preferred during National Socialism and before, such as the 'Gelsenkirchener Spätbarock', continued to enjoy popularity into the post-war period, thereby questioning the extent to which all West Germans restyled their homes and particularly living rooms, according to the so-called 'Nierentisch Modern'. This is reiterated elsewhere in the museum with objects such as the Starmix blender in the kitchen exhibit, which although retrospectively constructed as an icon of the post-war consumption boom (the melodic television advert for which is one of the particular highlights of *Rendezvous unterm Nierentisch* – see chapter six), is typical of the second half of the 1950s.

Just as the Bremerhaven museum makes use of the curator's own personal memories and experiences to critique cultural narratives of the *Nierentisch*, the Eisenhüttenstadt museum makes use of communicative memory in the form of an interview with a donor in order to critique a dishwasher dating to the beginning of the GDR's consumption boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Whereas objects from this period have often been used to support a narrative of material progress in the GDR (instigated at the Fifth Party Congress of the SED in 1958 in response to an increasing number of people fleeing to the West) and increasing competition with the West, the dishwasher exhibited in the museum is used to highlight the very opposite, exemplifying the functional failings of electrical appliances manufactured in a centrally planned economy. According to the donor, Herr Z, the 'so nutzloses Ding' was purchased with the intention of reducing the household workload, but because it had to be manually filled with

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<sup>860</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, quoted in Grothe, 'Die Fünfziger: das Kreuz mit dem Nierentisch' <<http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/die-fuenfziger-a-946495.html>> [accessed 15 June 2014].

hot water and the overflow often stopped working leading to water spillages in the kitchen, it ended up being more laborious than washing dishes by hand.<sup>861</sup> First-hand testimony is used to correct GDR propaganda about the benefits of new consumer appliances and to show that the ‘Realität sieht anders aus’, as well as to counteract the GDR’s own retrospectively imposed narrative of rapid consumption progress in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Whilst the museum is arguably keen to exploit the marketing potential of objects rediscovered and popularized through *Ostalgie* – the museum shop, like a great many others, selling items such as the Sonja Plastic chicken egg cups, as well as Ampelmännchen merchandise – it does tackle the issue of the retrospective *ostalgic* reappropriation of GDR *Alltagskultur*. The mustard-coloured Schwalbe moped (manufactured by VEB Fahrzeug- und Gerätewerk Suhl), on display in the family section of the exhibition, is presented as a significant object of the *Alltag* of working women in the GDR, but more significantly, also of the *ostalgic* revival of the GDR in the 1990s, when it was transformed into an object of ‘communist cool’ and achieved a cult status ‘als exotisches, trendiges und zugleich robustes und preisgünstiges Fahrzeug’.<sup>862</sup> Such an object is representative of what the museum sees as a complete reimagining of *Ostprodukte* during the *Ostalgie-Welle* of the mid-1990s. According to the catalogue, during this time, GDR objects were revalued on the basis of their integrity and reliability and became repositories of a ‘konkurrenzlose, emotionale Nestwärme’ in the face of the rapid disappearance and vilification of the East German state.<sup>863</sup> By highlighting the palimpsestic nature and ‘double life’ of artefacts on display, the museum acknowledges that GDR everyday objects have to be understood in the context of *Ostalgie* (as a movement centred on the present and future conception of the GDR in post-unification Germany), as well as the wider past political context of the GDR.

The motivation for demythologizing certain narratives and artefacts and exploring more controversial topics in both museums can be seen as an attempt to achieve a more balanced historical reappraisal of the divided German past that endorses neither polarized view that the 1950s and the GDR were ‘all good’ or ‘all bad’. Seeking to engender a form of remembering that is somehow beyond nostalgia, the museums attempt to deconstruct certain elements of the past by adopting a critical approach to history and memory. For the Bremerhaven museum, this

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<sup>861</sup> Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, ‘Eine ärgerliche Anschaffung’, in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 265-67 (p. 267).

<sup>862</sup> Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR, ‘Nichts mit Easy Rider’, in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 217-19 (p. 219).

<sup>863</sup> Elke Kimmel, ‘An den Bedürfnissen vorbei’, in *Alltag: DDR. Geschichten / Fotos / Objekte*, pp. 253-55 (p. 255).

is about examining what it refers to in a wall text as the ‘grau[e] Alltag’ and the realities of everyday life alongside the more popular, mythicized ‘pastel-bunt’, invoking similar metaphors of colour to the Radebeul and Thale museums (see chapter five). For the Eisenhüttenstadt museum, this process involves finding a middle ground within the heavily polarized *Diktatur-Alltag* discourse that has tended to dominate GDR historiography.<sup>864</sup> Whilst the museums are arguably based on more scientific and rational approaches than the other case studies, they are not, however, exclusive of all emotional (and subjective) interpretation of the past. Von Freytag Löringhoff recalls a change in her attitude towards visitor engagement with the 1950s since the opening of the museum, from initial disappointment at cries of ‘das hatte meine Oma auch!’ to an appreciation of such reactions as evidence of an ‘Einstieg ins Erinnern’.<sup>865</sup> Likewise, while Ludwig recognizes that fewer and fewer visitors to the Eisenhüttenstadt museum have first-hand experience of the GDR, he maintains that an ideal visitor scenario would involve a family made up of three generations, so that exhibits and museum narratives could act as prompts for intergenerational discussion and the transmission of communicative memories.<sup>866</sup> Whilst both museums thus strive to distance themselves from nostalgia, both are, at the same time, keen to promote an affective (but critical) mode of remembering amongst their visiting public.

In attempting to encourage critical reflection, the museums can be seen as sites which promote memory work as a counterpart to historical knowledge. The Bremerhaven museum actively promotes itself as a memory cue and medium for working through the past, describing itself in a wall text as a ‘Knoten im Taschentuch’. Rather than simply providing visitors with prescriptive historical narratives of the 1950s, the museum seeks to encourage them to form and answer their own questions during the visit, engaging with their own personal and prosthetic memories of the period. The museum is, however, just as much ‘eine Art Selbsttherapie’ for the curator von Freytag Löringhoff, as it is for visitors of the same generation, ‘die mit dieser Zeit auch noch nicht fertig sind’.<sup>867</sup> As the daughter of a German mother and American GI father (whom she never met), raised in a single-parent family in post-war Würzburg, von Freytag Löringhoff’s personal past is intrinsically tied up with that which she explores in her museum. Just as she is trying to trace her own genealogy as a GI baby through online networks (she has successfully made contact with half siblings in America), so

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<sup>864</sup> Ludwig, ‘Alltag: DDR. Zur Einführung’, p. 30.

<sup>865</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, quoted in Grothe, ‘Die Fünfziger: das Kreuz mit dem Nierentisch’ <<http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/die-fuenfziger-a-946495.html>> [accessed 15 June 2014].

<sup>866</sup> Ludwig revealed this in conversation (August 2012).

<sup>867</sup> von Freytag Löringhoff, quoted in Grothe, ‘Die Fünfziger: das Kreuz mit dem Nierentisch’ <<http://www.spiegel.de/einestages/die-fuenfziger-a-946495.html>> [accessed 15 June 2014].

too is the museum a personal genealogical process of unearthing marginalized and hidden pasts of the 1950s and creating links between the past, present and future. She does not, however, see this as a nostalgic mechanism of trying to recreate or glorify the past in any way, but as a therapeutic way of processing the past critically through memory. As such, her museum representation of the 1950s does not pretend to present “‘die’ 50er Jahre’, because, as explained in a wall text, this simply does not exist: ‘jeder erlebte sie letztlich auf seine ganz persönliche Weise’. Whilst Ludwig does not have the same personal connection to the GDR past represented in the Eisenhüttenstadt museum (like many GDR museum directors, Ludwig is in fact a former West German – something which he sees as beneficial in being able to view the GDR from a critical distance), he is equally keen for the museum to move away from monolithic visions of the East German *Alltag*.<sup>868</sup> Highly critical of those private museums which claim to represent the GDR *Alltag* ‘wie er war’, he sees the museum’s role in negotiating the polarization of GDR memory as one which acknowledges and allows space for a variety of interpretations, in order to account for a wide range of different experiences in the GDR. As such, both the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums can be seen as sites advancing a more processual approach to history and memory, constructing a genealogical counter-memory of the past that, as Foucault argues, goes beyond the dialectic of ‘connaissance et ignorance’, and which draws on a plurality ‘*des savoirs les uns contre les autres*’.<sup>869</sup>

## 7.5 Conclusion

Through the chronotope of multilayered time, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums can be seen as sites centred on a palimpsestic layering of temporality. Embodied in the physical structures of the two sites, this complex spectralization of past, present and future is evident in the architectural features and historical vestiges of the buildings that have been inscribed by different communities of people over time. Providing the framework for the exploration of the 1950s and GDR pasts as part of the post-unification German present and future, this temporal layering is also visible in the museums’ approaches to narrativization, where previously marginalized histories and memories are revealed in order to provide new insights and perspectives on the past. The way in which the museums attempt to scratch beneath the surface of dominant historical narratives and retrospective representations of post-war East and West Germany, and relegitimize the memories of everyday people at a grassroots level, reflects an

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<sup>868</sup> Ludwig revealed this in conversation (August 2012).

<sup>869</sup> Foucault, ‘Cours du 7 janvier 1976’, p. 119.

attempt to advance a critical genealogy and counter-memory of the 1950s and GDR pasts. Because of this, the museums can be understood as spaces of emergence, where previously hidden memories of the divided German past are recognized as part of a shared historical conscience and identity that is being continually renegotiated in the present and future.

As part of this process of historical rediscovery the museums foreground the mechanics of both remembering and forgetting, promoting a way of engaging with the past that attempts to move beyond simple nostalgic retrospectives and which, instead, brings about possibilities for discussion and critique. This process is itself multi-temporal, as the museums are concerned with examining societal silence and forgetting in 1950s East and West Germany following the Second World War, as well as the inevitable fading away of the 1950s and the GDR from present and future communicative memory as there are fewer and fewer people with first-hand memories and experiences of these pasts. By anchoring these within German cultural memory, however, the museums strive to generate critically reflective memory work at the level of the individual visitor, in order to allow for a range of different historical interpretations.

The fact that none of the French case-study museums conform to a multilayered narrative framework is itself revealing and potentially suggests the existence of a more critical, self-reflective memory culture in Germany than is the case in France. Whereas local and national French identities appear to be based on a much more self-congratulatory historiography and cultural memory, the Bremerhaven and Eisenhüttenstadt museums are concerned with demythologizing and reappraising certain aspects of the past. This seems to reflect the wider trend of the *Aufarbeitung* of the National Socialist and GDR pasts underpinning much of the current memorial work in Germany. This is particularly relevant for the Eisenhüttenstadt museum whose new permanent exhibition was part-financed by the state, and which, therefore, had to conform to the official *Gedenkstättenkonzept*.<sup>870</sup> At the same time, however, the private nature of the Bremerhaven museum and the continued threats to the future financing of the Eisenhüttenstadt museum suggest that more than anything, these sites are the initiatives of individuals. Equally as important as any state-directed impetus to remember has been, therefore, the personal and professional commitment of von Freytag Löringhoff and Ludwig to critically re-examine the 1950s and the GDR ‘from below’, and to make these divided German pasts a part of the unified German present and future.

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<sup>870</sup> Arnold-de Simone, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, p. 172.

## 8. Conclusion

Around ten years since the emergence of the latest bout of ‘fifties fever’ in France and Germany, retro-fuelled nostalgia seems to be giving way to a more complex public discourse on the post-war past. Long considered the bulwarks of French, West German and post-unification German national identity, the powerful myths of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the *Wirtschaftswunder* are being carefully deconstructed, casting a more critical light on hegemonic narratives of a miraculous post-war recovery and affluence for all. Especially in the wake of the current global financial, energy and environmental crises, academics and cultural commentators have sought, in particular, to unravel the folkloric nature of modernization and progress during the 1950s. The year 2013 saw the publication of the scholarly volume *Une autre histoire des “Trente Glorieuses”* in France and the broadcasting of the television documentary *Unser Wirtschaftswunder: die wahre Geschichte* in Germany, both of which received a great deal of high-profile media attention for their critiques of the 1950s.<sup>871</sup> Conceived with the aim of overturning previous historiographical interpretations of the period, the French volume unites a number of French and American researchers seeking to disengage ‘le regard historien du mythe des “Trente Glorieuses”’ by focusing on more ambiguous and problematic areas, such as the environment, science and technology, and social and intellectual movements.<sup>872</sup> The different contributions can be seen as attempts not only to unravel the processes of mythification instilled at the time by post-war modernizers, but also to advance new, retrospective counter-histories of the period, such as the ‘Trente Ravageuses’, ‘Trente Dangereuses’ and ‘Trente Pollueuses’, which emphasize the long-lasting, damaging impact of unrestrained growth.<sup>873</sup> According to Christophe Bonneuil,<sup>874</sup> these counter-histories serve as an act of provocation and demonstrate deliberate disdain for the official historical narrative of the *Trente Glorieuses* as progress.<sup>874</sup>

The television documentary is similarly explicit in its critique that the *Wirtschaftswunder* was, in reality, ‘gar nicht so wundersam’, and attempts to re-contextualize

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<sup>871</sup> *Une autre histoire des “Trente Glorieuses”*: modernisation, contestations et pollutions dans la France d’après-guerre, ed. by Céline Pessis, Sezin Topçu and Christophe Bonneuil (Paris: La Découverte, 2013); *Unser Wirtschaftswunder: Die Wahre Geschichte*, Das Erste, 15 July 2013, 11.50pm.

<sup>872</sup> Interview with Christophe Bonneuil in Anthony Laurent, ‘Les Trente Glorieuses étaient désastreuses’, *Reporterre*, last updated 26 december 2013 <<http://www.reporterre.net/spip.php?article4725>> [accessed 22 October 2014].

<sup>873</sup> Christophe Bonneuil and Stéphane Frioux, ‘Les “Trente Ravageuses”?: L’impact environnemental et sanitaire des décennies de haute croissance’, in *Une autre histoire des ‘Trente Glorieuses’*, pp. 41-58.

<sup>874</sup> Interview with Christophe Bonneuil in Laurent, ‘Les Trente Glorieuses étaient désastreuses’ <<http://www.reporterre.net/spip.php?article4725>> [accessed 22 October 2014].



historiographical and popular interpretations of the period in light of new findings and enquiries.<sup>875</sup> By drawing on archival material and the work of key historians, the documentary probes the popular narrative of self-propelled post-war economic recovery as the product of West German industriousness. In place of the myth of a miraculous boom period, it constructs a narrative of fortuity and luck, in which West Germany benefitted from numerous favourable situational factors, and where economic development was fuelled by input from the United States, as opposed to being home grown. This unraveling of the West German myth of the *Wirtschaftswunder* has important implications not only with regard to post-unification Germany's self-conception, but also its role and status in the current Eurozone crisis. As the documentary's presenter and producer Christoph Weber points out, denunciations of "die faulen Südländer", vor allem "die faulen Griechen", [sind] durchaus virulent. Und das stützt sich natürlich auch darauf, dass man glaubt, das Wirtschaftswunder [...] hätte man mit der eigenen Hände Arbeit geschafft. Und das ist eben nicht richtig'.<sup>876</sup> By scrutinizing the *Wirtschaftswunder* effectively as a piece of propaganda, the documentary encourages viewers to re-examine the post-war period not only for the sake of historical reappraisal, but also in order to determine the legitimacy of some core German values.

This new-found capacity for critique suggests that our relationship to the 1950s is changing, and that naïve sentimentality may be giving way to a more complex engagement with the past that could be classed as 'post-retro', or as Fredric Jameson has put it, 'post-nostalgia'.<sup>877</sup> Both these terms encompass the idea of "[moving] beyond" the pure nostalgia element' and using this as a kind of platform from which to generate new ideas.<sup>878</sup> For Jameson, the encounter of past, present and future in the representation of the 1950s and 1960s in postmodern nostalgia films constitutes a post-nostalgic, 'allegorical processing of the past'.<sup>879</sup> It is through the mobilization of visions of the past, present and future that viewers are encouraged to articulate and question their own relationships to the narratives constructed.<sup>880</sup> According to Arnold-de Simone, this conceptualization differs markedly from nostalgia,

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<sup>875</sup> Interview with Christoph Weber in Karin Fischer, 'Demontage eines deutschen Mythos', *Deutschlandfunk*, 25 July 2013 <[http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/demontage-eines-deutschen-mythos.691.de.html?dram:article\\_id=254071](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/demontage-eines-deutschen-mythos.691.de.html?dram:article_id=254071)> [accessed 22 October 2014].

<sup>876</sup> Ibid.

<sup>877</sup> 'Post-retro' is a term used in gaming to refer to a specific genre of games which 'utilize a retro aesthetic mixed with both retro and modern gameplay elements to create a wholly new experience', Jeff Fulton and Steve Fulton, *The Essential Guide to Flash Games: Building Interactive Entertainment with ActionScript 3.0* (New York: Springer, 2010), p. 474; Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 287.

<sup>878</sup> Fulton and Fulton, p. 474.

<sup>879</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 287.

<sup>880</sup> Ibid.

because it recognizes and ‘faces up to the fact that the past can never be retrieved “for real”, allowing for a more ironic and self-reflexive relationship to the past.’<sup>881</sup>

The adoption of a more complex, post-retro, post-nostalgic imagination with regard to the 1950s is very much central to the processes of counter-memory identified in this thesis. By definition, counter-memory expresses a dissatisfaction with the versions of history and cultural memory that have been maintained in dominant, nation-centred narratives. By seeking to include multiple voices and marginalized everyday experiences, it attempts to move beyond overly simplistic interpretations, creating more comprehensive and inclusive visions of the past. In critically comparing and contrasting the museums and exhibitions selected, this thesis has drawn out a number of important findings, which, together, advance academic understanding of how counter-memories and more hegemonic narratives are deployed and constructed in relation to a specific historical context. These findings are grouped into four main observational strands that form the basis of this conclusion. The first relates to the dismantling of top-down and bottom-up forms of remembering, which allows for a plurality of local, national and transnational narratives. The second highlights the impact of a more genealogical approach to the past, which serves to differentiate the 1950s temporally and thematically. The third examines the concept of museum nostalgia, detailing its ability to negotiate multiple temporalities and its complex relationship to change and modernity. And the fourth sketches the contours of memory and counter-memory more broadly, outlining certain conduits and manifestations of counter-memory relating to the 1950s, before commenting on the potential direction of this memory for the future. All of these strands are intrinsically connected and, together, provide a deeper understanding of the role of the chosen case-study museums and exhibitions in the 1950s-related memory boom and the proliferation of memory discourse.

### **8.1 Top-Down versus Bottom-Up Approaches**

This project began with an initial observation on the content and form of existing memories and histories of the 1950s which have been cemented in French and German historiography and cultural memory. Dominated by major political and economic events, these top-down paradigms were shown to be highly nation specific, but also linked to broader, overarching transnational narratives, aligning post-war French and divided German experiences with those

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<sup>881</sup> Silke Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum: Trauma, Empathy, Nostalgia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 130.

of other European nations and the US. This suggested the presence of both national and global frames of reference in the articulation of 1950s-related remembering. As the chronotopic reimagining of the 1950s has revealed, however, in the case-study museums and exhibitions, elements of national memory are constructed in very different ways across the sites, meaning that there is no thoroughly consistent national approach in the way that the 1950s are remembered or represented. Rather, at all the sites, the 1950s are framed through a combination of more personal, locally orientated memories on the one hand, and more hegemonic national and transnational narratives and myths on the other. More often than not, these concepts of the local, national and transnational are interconnected as different narratives feed into one another and collections are multicontextual.

Although counter-memory is traditionally perceived as a more bottom-up approach, the case studies reveal the categories of bottom-up and top-down modes of remembering to be too simplistic, because even in sites which foreground the highly personal and local, the national and transnational remain important frames of reference. Rather than being socially constituted from below, counter-memory appears in fact to be multidirectional, drawing on memories and histories that work bottom-up, top-down and sideways.<sup>882</sup> The museums and exhibitions analysed support Lipsitz's claim that counter-memory need not imply opposition to hegemonic metanarratives, but that it is more about reframing these from a different perspective.<sup>883</sup> Thus many of the sites are consistent with the national and transnational narratives which have come to dominate popular and scholarly interpretations of the 1950s, but are at the same time concerned with approaching these in a different way and building in some element of critique. The chronotopic arrangement of the case studies illustrates that counter-memory emerges in different relations to these more hegemonic narratives of the post-war past, ranging from near congruity in biographical and glacial time to clearer rupture and discontinuity in multilayered time. Whereas Lipsitz argues that 'counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story', the case studies' narrative strategies studied here have been shown to operate from a variety of starting points, including the personal, local, national and transnational.<sup>884</sup> The counter-memories constructed within the various

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<sup>882</sup> 'Multidirectional' is a term that I borrow from Michael Rothberg who theorizes it in relation to Holocaust memory 'as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative'. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

<sup>883</sup> George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 213.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*

chronotopic reimaginings of the 1950s appear to be concerned precisely with the links and tensions between these different approaches, as opposed to the particular approaches themselves. The interest in counter-memory lies in the idiosyncrasies and singularities of remembering and forgetting, focusing on the grey areas of overlap that exist between more monolithic black and white visions of the past.

The construction of museum counter-memories calls into question the relevance and legitimacy of nation-centred histories and myths but the importance of these, together with national memory cultures and identities, should not be overlooked. Although all the case studies can be seen as part of a wider decentralization and democratization of remembering, it is also possible to identify certain national tendencies in the way in which the 1950s are represented. As a whole, the French sites seem generally to be more protective of dominant narratives of the 1950s enshrined in such myths as the *Trente Glorieuses*, American-inspired consumption and post-war reconstruction. Because these narratives serve a predominantly self-congratulatory nationalist agenda, they provide less scope for challenging existing readings and rely more on nostalgic conceptions of the past. The critiques that are emerging in French public discourse, for instance in the form of publications such as *Une autre histoire des "Trente Glorieuses"*, thus remain largely absent from the French museum landscape pertaining to the 1950s. That none of the case studies refer in any direct way to the complex processes of decolonization or working through Vichy collaboration that were underway in the 1950s underlines the extent to which this museum landscape is disconnected from more problematic national narratives. It also demonstrates the extent to which memory work relating to the 1950s is largely unaffected by the shifts that have taken place in other areas of national remembrance, for instance relating to the memory of slavery, the Holocaust and the Algerian War.<sup>885</sup>

Reflecting the wider difficulties of assimilating the GDR into post-unification German memory culture, the eastern German museums denote a less coherent pattern of representation and remembrance regarding the 1950s. The case studies are clearly split between those sites attempting to visually recreate aspects of the GDR past on the one hand, and those which seek more historical distancing and objectivity on the other. The former conform very much to a standard form of narrativization operational in private GDR museums, which rely on specific representational strategies, such as room reconstructions and taxonomies, and which can serve

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<sup>885</sup> Although there have been clear attempts to integrate these contentious histories into cultural memory (for instance through national legislation, school curricula and commemorative ceremonies), it is important to note that they are still struggling to find 'normative' national narratives.

highly *ostalgic* modes of remembering. Although all the museums are united in their attempts to gain more recognition of the *Alltag* within GDR remembrance and reclaim a sense of ‘normality’ of life under dictatorship, the Eisenhüttenstadt museum in particular seems to be somewhat of an anomaly in its capacity for self-reflexivity and critique. Unlike the other sites, it positions itself within the wider sphere of East German history and memory by drawing on key historical debates and engaging with memory discourse, using these to renew popular and scholarly dialogue and intergenerational discussion on the GDR past. In this particular site, counter-memory constitutes a fluid mode of remembering that negotiates memory of the 1950s, both as part of the dominant narrative of the *Aufbau des Sozialismus* and the more localized narrative of Eisenhüttenstadt’s construction and architecture.

The western German museums and exhibitions seem more readily able to construct critical genealogies of the 1950s that help to demythologize more hegemonic narratives of the *Wirtschaftswunder* and post-war consumption. Reflecting wider trends in West German and post-unification German memory culture, the museums examine the 1950s both in relation to the Second World War and earlier periods, as well as present-day values and beliefs. Unlike the French context where museums and exhibitions are disengaged from less assimilable national narratives (because there has been less working through of these histories at a national level), the western German museums use shifts in memory work and public debates as impetuses for change and reflection regarding popular interpretations of the post-war period. Since these sites often direct the responsibility of remembering to the individual and use critical historical contextualization to support the narratives on offer, they provide more capacity for challenging existing readings of the 1950s, as well as nostalgic remembering. They are able to use the 1950s as a lens through which to examine critically more taboo subjects and problematic developments. Although this potentially fulfils a redemptory function as part of the national narrative, it also suggests the existence of a more sophisticated memory and remembrance culture, where self-referential critique is built into the very narrativization of the 1950s.

The variation in national approaches to the post-war period exemplified in the case studies demonstrates that the 1950s are subject to a wide range of temporal and spatial appropriation as a multi-chronotopic construct. The historical versions of the 1950s reified in the different chronotopes draw on a plurality of personal, localized memories as well as more hegemonic national and transnational narratives, thereby transcending the parameters of exclusively top-down histories. Whilst these findings highlight the continued importance and

impact of national memory cultures, they also suggest an increasingly fluid museum response to such notions as nationhood, national memory and national identity, particularly in Germany. The chronotopes have revealed that the memory communities involved with, and attached to, the different museums and exhibitions do not rely on homogenous conceptions of a French, West German or East German 1950s, but are concerned with drawing out the particular nuances and intricacies of 1950s-related histories and memories as experienced at local, national and transnational levels. Moreover, the divergence in significance reveals that the 1950s are polysemic and have the capacity to sustain a large number of readings and meanings. These often support, but also have the potential to bring greater subtlety to, dominant communal myths and national paradigms, such as the *Trente Glorieuses*, the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the *Aufbau des Sozialismus*.

## 8.2 A Genealogical Revision of the Past

By deconstructing top-down, nation-centred histories and memories and promoting modes of remembering that are sensitive to a wide range of locally, nationally and transnationally framed narratives, the museums and exhibitions can be seen as contributing to a broadly genealogical revision of the 1950s. With its newfound museum status, the locality and its unique features, such as architecture, geography, culture and memory, represents a key contextual locus of everyday experience of the 1950s. The locality is moreover being relegitimized as a source of historical knowledge, and has the capacity to harness new forms of identity. What can be described as the more personal and local is thus recast as an equally valuable way of knowing and mode of remembering the 1950s. It is in this particular sense of rediscovering and reinvesting in forgotten or previously marginalized pasts (often centring on the more personal and local) and allowing for a diverse number of interpretations and differentiated readings that the museums and exhibitions can be seen as belated attributions of meaning to the post-war period. They are part of a critical genealogy in which the 1950s are changing in both content and form in France and Germany in a manner that White has conceptualized in relation to the nineteenth century as a transformation from a generic historical period into a more semantically specific chronotope.<sup>886</sup> This chronotopic reimagining of the 1950s is evident in so far as many of the sites are concerned with the palimpsestic latency of what has been forgotten, repressed and marginalized in relation to the 1950s, as well as what has been actively incorporated into

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<sup>886</sup> Hayden White, 'The Nineteenth-Century as Chronotope', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 11 (1987), 119-29.

present-day history and cultural memory.<sup>887</sup> They moreover combine the historical documentary with the experiential and the emphasis is on cultural and geographical variations of the 1950s, which mediate between the micro (including more personal, localized counter-memories) and the macro (including more hegemonic historical narratives).<sup>888</sup> Above all, this transformation can be identified in the various museum representations, which have attributed more specificity and concrete meaning to the 1950s.<sup>889</sup> Whilst many of the narratives on offer at the sites do not overtly challenge or counter dominant national or transnational histories, they provide a different perspective to the nation-centred histories and myths ingrained in national identities. They contribute to a democratization of history and memory, and produce a differentiated reading of the post-war period based on three departures from state-mandated historiography and cultural memory.

First, all of the museums and exhibitions and the chronotopic structures to which they conform necessarily place histories and memories of the 1950s within a longer timespan than is suggested in a decade-orientated approach. This is consistent with narratives of the 1950s encoded in national myths and historiographical theses, such as the notion of the long fifties, but with important differences. With many of the chronotopes, the emphasis is more on the temporal nuancing of the period rather than simply setting the period within a wider temporal framework. With biographical time, the sites map the 1950s onto particular human and object lives, in order to demonstrate the full social and cultural significance of the 1950s (which continues into the present). With metachronous time, the 1950s are temporally fragmented as the sites attempt to draw distinctions between the early post-war 1950s characterized by deprivation and hardship, the mid-1950s which signal the beginning of changing consumer habits and improvements in national economies, and the later 1950s with its modern, consumption boom-fuelled improvements in everyday life. With multilayered time, the 1950s are explored in relation to the past, present and future, in order to explore the continued impact of more positive and problematic narratives in relation to current national identities and memory cultures. This longer-term view is key to assigning new, diverse meanings to the post-war past and complements what Gorrara, Feldner and Passmore have highlighted as an ‘enlarged framing of the 1950s’ that has been brought about with the recent rejection of a

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<sup>887</sup> White, p. 124.

<sup>888</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>889</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119-29.

decennial approach to the 1950s in European historical scholarship.<sup>890</sup> As they demonstrate, the impact of adopting a longer-term view of the 1950s extends beyond the realm of the temporal, because it also places emphasis on the phenomenon of change (including continuity and rupture with the past), as well as the notion of geography and borders. The reframing of the 1950s can thus be seen as a means of differentiating the post-war period temporally, thematically and spatially.

Second, the differentiation of the 1950s afforded by taking into account longer temporal and spatial trajectories means that the chronotopes have the capacity to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the post-war period by placing emphasis on a plurality of complementary and contradictory narratives. Just as Gorrara, Feldner and Passmore argue that the enlarged framing has led to a number of contradictions in historiography on the 1950s, the museum chronotopes provide the space in which to negotiate seemingly contradictory and polarized interpretations of the post-war past.<sup>891</sup> Dichotomies that emerge as part of specific sites and chronotopes include: austerity and affluence, scarcity and abundance, homogeneity and variety, *bunt* and *grau*, stasis and transition, and remembering and forgetting. In the Peine exhibition, for instance, austerity and affluence are conveyed with the thematization of different types of clothing (ranging from hand-me-downs and recycled garments to designer haute couture) as well as the range of clothing manufacture and consumption during the 1950s in the Peine locality (see chapter three). Similarly, conflicting narratives of scarcity and abundance and homogeneity and variety emerge in a single ensemble in the Radebeul museum, as the well-stocked shelves of the *Kaufhalle* exhibit show both a plethora of GDR goods and products, but also deal with the issue of under-the-counter goods (see chapter five). The range of objects on display also seems to reflect considerable variety in consumption in the GDR, but for former East German visitors, exhibits such as this may also serve to highlight the issue of product homogeneity in the GDR, as *Kaufhallen* always sold the same brands.

Rather than highlighting inconsistencies with regard to the representation of the 1950s, the conflicting interpretations and approaches promoted by individual sites and across different chronotopes may help to advance scholarly understanding of the complexities of the 1950s, as a ‘period in which the “old” and the “new” co-existed, and which looked back to pre-war and

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<sup>890</sup> Claire Gorrara, Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore, ‘Introduction’, in *The Lost Decade: The 1950s in European History, Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. by Heiko Feldner, Claire Gorrara and Kevin Passmore (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), pp. 1-8 (pp. 1-3).

<sup>891</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



wartime traditions and legacies but also looked forward to new concepts and ideas'.<sup>892</sup> This more nuanced reading of metanarratives of blinkered future-gazing and unhindered progress and development (particularly with respect to consumption and technology) in the 1950s that have been enshrined in national myths can be seen as a common form of critical genealogy linking the different museums and chronotopes. Within biographical time, for instance, the Musée Tusséau and the Peine exhibition place emphasis on both continuity and rupture with the past as people in post-war France and West Germany preserved older objects and more traditional styles whilst also buying into the new consumption boom (see chapter three). The Munich exhibition goes on to highlight the more problematic aspects of the 1950s consumption boom, such as the creation of a throwaway society and the use of energy, and draws out problems with specific developments in the 1950s, such as nylon shirts (see chapter six). This is echoed in multilayered time, where the Bremerhaven museum critiques iconic objects such as the *Nierentisch*, and the Eisenhüttenstadt museum includes first-hand testimonies to show the realities of technological developments in the GDR of the 1950s, such as the manual dishwasher (see chapter seven).

Third, the museums and exhibitions reveal that the conception of the 1950s everyday is actually part of a fluid transition between the everyday/typical and the extraordinary/atypical, where one is constantly transformed into the other and vice versa. By the nature of museum display, all of the everyday objects exhibited in the case-study sites are assigned particular meaning and significance through selection as important historical vestiges of, and witnesses to, the past, and are therefore posited as somehow extraordinary. The process of canon and archive conceptualized by Aleida Assmann supports this as objects and ensembles are carefully chosen for permanent or temporary museum display from a much larger collection.<sup>893</sup> The artefacts which appear as part of exhibitions are, therefore, necessarily inscribed with more meaning than those that remain in the archive, because they are considered more illustrative and important, or of better quality. In a subsequent reversal of this phenomenon, in some of the case studies the canon is transformed back into the archive, or the two are blurred because of taxonomic approaches to representation (see chapter five) or because the archive and the process of archiving is staged as the centrepiece of the exhibition (see chapter six).

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<sup>892</sup> Gorrara, Feldner and Passmore, 'Introduction', p. 2.

<sup>893</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2006), pp. 56.

Alongside these processes, some of the everyday objects exhibited are singled out as particularly emblematic of certain developments and styles and therefore become subject to a form of object fetishization. Objects or classifications of object that are drawn out and invested with special significance across the different case study sites include those pertaining specifically to the 1950s, such as modular furniture, the Bakelite telephone, the Citroën 2CV, the *Nierentisch*, the *Tütenlampe* and the *Cocktailsessel*, as well as those that have become retrospectively associated with the whole of the GDR *Alltag*, such as the *Trabi*, the Sonja Plastic chicken egg cups and the *Töpfchenbank*. Because of the range of meanings attributed to these objects (from the 1950s to the present) and the way that they have been appropriated by different memory communities and discourses, they have a mnemonic and cultural significance that far exceeds their initial use value or status as museum artefacts. For those objects ingrained in myths connected specifically to the 1950s, this process of fetishization is explicitly linked to consumption and object commodification. The symbolic significance of the objects was created initially in communication contexts, such as advertising during the post-war period, and has since been reinforced in recent years in retro-inspired branding and iconography, as well as in cultural retrospectives such as television, cinema and literature. For those objects that have become representative of GDR history and memory, fetishization is also linked to consumption and object commodification through *Ostalgie*, as a retrospective process of reinvesting in the GDR. For items such as the *Töpfchenbank*, however, the reattribution of meaning is less to do with the actual desirability and aura of the object, and more about its capacity to spectralize issues of GDR representation and remembrance.

The concept of the everyday is further problematized through the incorporation of aspects of high and celebrity culture into the everyday mythology of the 1950s. By using cultural tropes that would traditionally be considered atypical of day-to-day experience in order to narrate the everyday, such as designer haute couture, stars of popular music and cinema, and prominent historical figures, many of the museums and exhibitions inscribe elements of the extraordinary as part of the narrativization of ordinary, everyday life in France and Germany. Although this seems to be consistent with the way in which processes and products filter between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture in society, the crystallization of the everyday and the extraordinary in the case study sites is different because the emphasis is not so much on the impact of designer wear or celebrities on popular culture and everyday life in the 1950s, but, rather, an assimilation of the two. The figure of Elvis Presley, for instance, has become so ingrained in Bremerhaven’s founding myth of Americanization and German-American

relations that it has taken on the role of a symbol of everyday life in the locality during the 1950s (see chapter seven). This process operates in reverse in Le Havre, where cultural heritage tourism and heritagization transform 1950s everyday culture (and post-war reconstruction architecture in particular) into something more unique to the locality (see chapter four). As a form of historical knowledge and way of referencing the past, everyday life is thus shown to mediate the commonplace and the extraordinary, blurring the boundaries between the two approaches.

### **8.3 Museum Chronotopy and Nostalgia**

One of the principal advantages of using the chronotope as a methodological tool is that it problematizes the relationship between the ‘real-life’ time-space of the 1950s as a historical actuality and the ‘reflected’ time-space of the represented 1950s, thereby putting emphasis on the impact of musealization. What the chronotopes have shown in their particular arrangement is that this relationship between the real-life and reflected time-spaces starts off very blurred, but becomes more distinct and clearer in the later chronotopes. With biographical, glacial and to a lesser extent monochronous time, the strategies of representation adopted mean that it is often very difficult to tell the difference between the two, and this has important repercussions with respect to narrativization and nostalgia. These sites are by definition more prescriptive and dogmatic in their approaches, because, in attempting to show how ‘the 1950s’ really were, they leave less space for individual visitor interpretation and reflection. In their visual recreations of domestic spaces, they promote nostalgia as a kind of homesickness based on an instantly recognizable canon of 1950s iconography and objects. As Boym reminds us, nostalgia in its simplest form expresses ‘a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed’, and is thus intimately bound up with the mythology of the 1950s everyday enacted through the trope of the home and the family unit.<sup>894</sup> These sites harness and have the ability to instil nostalgic longing more than the other sites because they encourage visitors to immerse themselves experientially in the past, often enacting some kind of performance. Guided tours and mediating the past through heritage brokers are some of the most important strategies through which this is possible. By contrast, with metachronous and multilayered time, the difference between the 1950s as a historical actuality and as a museum narrative is clearer, because of deliberate distancing devices. Whereas narration techniques close down other

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<sup>894</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. xiii.

interpretations in the earlier chronotopes, wall texts, catalogue essays and the use of different media open up different interpretations in the later chronotopes and acknowledge the limitations of museum displays. Because it is clearer that what visitors are seeing is only a representation of the post-war past, they are discouraged from indulging in nostalgic yearning and rather than simply enacting a pre-rehearsed performance, actually direct the nature and mode of remembering themselves by forming questions and reflecting on exhibition content.

Although many of the museums and exhibitions deliberately discourage nostalgic longing and are highly critical of it as a lens through which to re-examine the 1950s, nostalgia proved to be a common mode of remembering at all the sites. In line with findings in memory studies, nostalgia has been shown to represent a much more complex process than merely a sentimental recourse to the past.<sup>895</sup> Unlike many studies which posit nostalgia as a clear distinction between ‘then’ and ‘now’ or longing for a different time, however, the chronotopes have revealed nostalgia’s capacity to negotiate numerous different temporalities.<sup>896</sup> In the case-study sites, nostalgia emerges more as a result of an attempt to escape the periodization which has come to characterize historiography on the 1950s rather than reinforce it. It arises precisely out of the desire to reinterpret and reinvest in the 1950s as a chronotope. Operating across different local and national contexts, the particular expressions of nostalgia embodied in the chronotopes also highlight a spatial dimension of nostalgic remembering that takes into account both the museum and wider geo-political frameworks. Nostalgia can be seen as a means of rearticulating our relationships to the past, revealing it more as a process and mode of remembering than something we possess. It can be retrospective and retroactive, but it is almost always linked to changing discourse on the present and future, including: recognizing the experiences and heritage value of localities and local memory communities (biographical time), creating new founding myths for localities (glacial time), constructing more ‘normalized’ visions of the GDR and rekindling eastern German identity (monochronous time), revisiting the past on the basis of new archival material (metachronous time), and mapping the nature of remembering and forgetting in relation to the 1950s and GDR pasts respectively (multilayered time).

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<sup>895</sup> Boym, pp. xiii-xix; Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2005), pp. 7-11; Arnold-de Simine, *Mediating Memory in the Museum*, pp. 54-64.

<sup>896</sup> Boym, p. xv; Sharon Macdonald, *Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 93; Matt Hodges, ‘The Time of the Interval: Historicity, Modernity and Epoch in Rural France’, *American Ethnologist*, 37 (2010), 115-131 (p. 121).

The complex patterns of nostalgia identified in the chronotopes raise the inevitable questions of whether there is something particular about the 1950s and whether people may be particularly susceptible to bouts of nostalgic longing for the post-war era. Given nostalgia's propensity to rely on popular culture, it is certainly no surprise that the 1950s have become so romanticized.<sup>897</sup> Because the 1950s have come to represent the dawning of a consumerist age, they have become entrenched in the popular imagination through material icons of its culture. As a result, retrospective representations rely on these icons to create a familiar aesthetics of the period and are able to draw on these in their commodifications of the post-war past. The 1950s may also provide a particularly suitable vehicle for nostalgia, because they are seen to epitomize a simpler, stress-free way of life, when people were happier in an age of innocence.<sup>898</sup> Whether or not this is true, it is certainly the enduring image of the 1950s that has been preserved in communal myths of the decade reified through pastel-coloured retro. Nostalgia has been described as a rebellion against the notion of temporality as progress, but as we have seen in the different chronotopic frameworks, national narratives of post-war progress are nearly always preserved in the case-study sites.<sup>899</sup> The different chronotopic reimaginings of the 1950s suggest that manifestations of nostalgia are not merely 'side effects of the teleology of progress', but that progress can actually become the object of nostalgia.<sup>900</sup> Thus nostalgia may not be so much a longing for the 'slower rhythms' of our childhood pasts, as Boym maintains, but a yearning for the accelerated change of modernity.<sup>901</sup> In this way, the museums and exhibitions can be seen as harnessing and promoting nostalgia for the 1950s, not on the basis that they represented a slower pace of life, but because they represent the ultimate age of expansion and development, where people actually felt as though the economy was booming and life was filled with opportunity.

Where nostalgia could be seen more as a process of reclaiming a simpler, slower way of life is in monochronous time, where the GDR is reimagined as an *ostalgic* idyll. As a way of challenging the post-unification German teleological narrative of progress, *Ostalgie* seems to fulfil a therapeutic function, enabling visitors to reclaim distinct East German memories and identities through reminiscence and memory work. Protecting a particular reading of the GDR as a state and community which prioritized the values of loyalty and consistency over

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<sup>897</sup> Boym, pp. 33-39; Wilson, pp. 29-31.

<sup>898</sup> Wilson, p. 95.

<sup>899</sup> Macdonald, p. 219; Boym, p. 10.

<sup>900</sup> Boym, p. 10.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xv.

production capacity, *Ostalgie* serves as an empowering tool for relegitimizing everyday histories and memories away from state-mandated narratives and national agendas. At the same time, however, as Boym notes, ‘nostalgia works as a double-edged sword’, and in its role as a political neutralizer, it ‘remains the best political tool’.<sup>902</sup> *Ostalgie* and the concept of the idyll could, therefore, also be interpreted as a filtering through of the politicized stereotypes of the GDR dominant around the time of the *Wende*, in which the GDR was cast as a backward society and economy characterized by stasis. *Ostalgie* is highly malleable and is able to support both these conflicting readings of the East German *Alltag*. Like nostalgia for the 1950s, *Ostalgie* has been shown to have a wide capacity for critique, representing an object of both remembering and self-reflexive pastiche. In a clear departure from scholars who tend to confine discussions of *Ostalgie* to the past tense or who write it off completely, however, the museums demonstrate its continued relevance in debates about East German history and memory.<sup>903</sup> The difference now is that *Ostalgie* no longer seems to be an issue on which sites must take a clear stance (although they invariably do), but rather represents a well-established mode of remembering the GDR of which museum professionals and visitors are already aware.<sup>904</sup> Whilst certain sites are thus keen to explicitly distance themselves from and indulge in *Ostalgie* according to the museum agenda, *Ostalgie* remains a popular tool in reappropriating the GDR *Alltag* in an increasingly competitive post-unification memory landscape.

#### 8.4 Defining Memory and Counter-Memory

Alongside drawing out the relationship between the real-life and reflected time-space of the 1950s, the chronotope has proved to be a useful framing device for discussing the case-study museums and exhibitions, because it has allowed for greater flexibility with regard to how the 1950s have been represented through history and memory. Synthesizing numerous different memory theories, museological strategies, representational media, and cultural and geographical contexts, the chronotope has placed emphasis on the memorial complexities of the different sites. This approach has demonstrated that, irrespective of their particular focus

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<sup>902</sup> Boym, p. 58.

<sup>903</sup> See, for instance: Anselma Gallinat, ‘Playing the Native Card: the Anthropologist as Informant in Eastern Germany’, in *The Ethnographic Self as Resource: Writing Memory and Experience into Ethnography*, ed. by Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 25-44 (p. 34); Sebastian Heiduschke, *East German Cinema: DEFA and Film History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 33-36; Mattias Frey, *Postwall German Cinema: History, Film History and Cinephilia* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), pp. 107-38.

<sup>904</sup> Chloe Paver, ‘Colour and Time in Museums of East German Everyday Life’, in *Remembering and Rethinking the GDR: Multiple Perspectives and Plural Authenticities*, ed. by Anna Saunders and Debbie Pinfold (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 132-46 (p. 133).

and collections, all of the museums and exhibitions are founded upon and promote the creation of personal, post and prosthetic memories relating to the post-war past, and that these are influenced by both experiential and non-experiential modes of remembering. Whilst nation-centred histories and myths, as well as national memory cultures remain central to the museum narratives on offer at the sites, the chronotopes have undermined the notion of a pervasive French, western German or eastern German ‘collective memory’ of the 1950s. In place of such broad paradigms, the chronotopic reimagining of the post-war past fosters a decentralized, multifaceted approach towards concepts of locality, nationhood, history and memory, and revalues them as a part of a plurality of modes of remembering and forgetting. Whilst Jan Assmann’s distinction between communicative and cultural memory has been employed throughout and has been useful in highlighting the difference between those memories spontaneously created and exchanged between various agents, and those ingrained in the museums and exhibitions and in national memory cultures, the case studies have all dispelled the notion of a ‘floating gap’. This is because with this interconnected memory and museum boom pertaining to the 1950s, the reinvestment in the post-war period in cultural memory has been in part created and sustained by those with first-hand memories and experiences of the period. Whilst the two modes of remembering thus remain conceptually distinct, it seems that in practice, communicative and cultural memories are both bound up in the current musealization process of the 1950s.

The concept of the chronotope has been moreover central in furthering Nancy Wood’s claim of memory as ‘essentially *performative*’, in the sense that counter-memory is invoked and enacted at specific sites, according to certain types of memory work and particular spatio-temporal structures.<sup>905</sup> Understanding performativity as the organization of forgetting, as well as the *mise en scène* of representations of the past, Wood’s study is concerned with the way in which memories achieve or are denied recognition and articulation through a range of conduits or vectors of this performativity, such as historiography, novels and films.<sup>906</sup> Although Wood focuses her analysis on public memory, the emphasis on the interplay of strategies of remembering and forgetting is particularly appropriate for counter-memory because by definition, counter-memory is concerned with what has been forgotten or marginalized, and can be understood as a way of reframing more hegemonic narratives (see chapter one). Whilst the concept is useful in retheorizing remembering and forgetting, however, this particular study

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<sup>905</sup> Nancy Wood, *Vectors of Memory: Legacies of Trauma in Postwar Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>906</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

finds little consistency in the memorial performativity of specific types of media. As the case-study sites are framed by different chronotopes and perform very different memorial functions, this project lays no claim to the museum or exhibition as a single vector of counter-memory, as Wood does for novels and films. Rather, it is concerned with the way in which different chronotopic reimaginings of the 1950s relate to different vectors, such as nostalgia, *Ostalgie*, reminiscence, tourism, patrimonialization, heritagization, writing back and ‘normalization’. These instantiations of memory work can be understood as vectors of counter-memory, because they ultimately determine the nature of representation and the modes through which the 1950s are remembered or forgotten. Taking Wood’s concept one step further, we might add that these specific vectors of counter-memory, together with the chronotopic framework in which they emerge, relate to specific manifestations or avatars of counter-memory, namely auto/biography, the heritage-scape, the idyll, the archive and the palimpsest. Formed from the interplay of both remembering and forgetting, these can be seen as expressions of counter-memory’s performativity.

### **8.5 The Future of the Post-War Past**

This project has sought to examine the nature and impact of the current museum boom surrounding the 1950s in France and Germany at a time when different memory communities and public administration bodies are linked through rewriting and forging new founding myths and identities from particular narratives of the post-war past. Whilst it will be interesting to see how the new meanings imposed on the 1950s will change in the various localities concerned and in French and German cultural memory, this particular drive to reinvest in the 1950s seems to be a timely phenomenon which is limited to specific memorial, cultural and political conditions present in contemporary France and Germany. According to Michael Kammen, ‘nostalgia is most likely to increase or become prominent in times of transition, in periods of cultural anxiety, or when a society feels a strong sense of discontinuity with its past’, positing nostalgia as a consequence of a loss of faith in the present and future.<sup>907</sup> Boym makes a similar point that waves of nostalgia are often preceded by revolutions, nostalgia in this sense being a yearning for ‘unrealized dreams of the past and visions of the future that became obsolete’.<sup>908</sup> With this in mind, we might look to the more tumultuous events of the last decade, such as

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<sup>907</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 618.

<sup>908</sup> Boym, p. xvi.



armed conflict in the Middle East, the global financial crisis, and gun attacks, such as the Toulouse and Montauban shootings in 2012 and the Frankfurt Airport shooting in 2011 for the reasons underpinning this memory boom. If these occurrences have served to strengthen nostalgic longing for the supposedly simpler, gentler time of the 1950s, however, it is not out of belief that the 1950s really were better, but rather the ‘contrast between the perceived hopefulness of the fifties and our own misgivings about the future’.<sup>909</sup> Representing a time of renewed optimism, the 1950s seem to illuminate and intensify our sense of disillusionment with the present and future.

The revaluing of the 1950s is not only timely, but also temporally limited, as it is taking place at a specific generational intersection, whereby experiential and non-experiential memory communities are united in remembering the post-war past. As the private museums studied are all dependent on the memory work of individuals, it is doubtful as to whether these will represent lasting interventions in the memorial landscape, particularly as the ‘baby-boomer’ generation dies out and sentimental versions of the 1950s give way to a more post-retro and post-nostalgic public discourse. The public museums selected are equally dependent on the continued funding and support of memory projects relating to the 1950s. As the Eisenhüttenstadt museum demonstrates, public GDR museums face their own unique financial uncertainties in a unified Germany, where the divided German past is increasingly distant. It remains to be seen whether such sites can hold continued relevance for different generations of Germans and whether the post-war and GDR pasts respectively will be subject to the same kind of intense interest, reinvestment and scrutiny that they have in recent years.

Like all projects, this thesis has been necessarily restrictive, and a wider range of case studies with greater cultural and geographical diversity would have produced an even more enriching study. There is the potential that similar projects would be possible in the future for the museum reappraisal of the 1960s and 1970s in France and Germany. However, the fact that the 1960s and 1970s have already been the subject of much historiographical attention and appropriated in cultural memory suggests that the revaluing of these periods would be much less widespread than is the case for the 1950s, or would take place at least in a very different manner. The 1950s have come to dominate the current zeitgeist and museum landscape precisely because of the extent to which they have been forgotten and overlooked in the annals

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<sup>909</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), pp. 34-35.

of history. Related to this is their capacity to sustain complementary and conflicting readings by different memory communities. No longer the 'lost decade', the 1950s are being rediscovered as a unique twentieth-century past, whose marginalization and misinterpretation are at the core of a number of counter-memory projects. More than a historical period sandwiched between the political turmoil of the Second World War and the socio-cultural revolutions of the swinging sixties, and more than a romanticized golden age of the 'good old days', the 1950s are being reclaimed as a unique time-space in the French and German imaginations. Although this chronotopic reinvestment in the 1950s has the capacity to produce different interpretations of the post-war past, this process is more about the battle for the legitimacy of memories relating to the 1950s than wholly endorsing or critiquing existing readings. By exhibiting the everyday, the case-study museums and exhibitions seek to construct a more complex counter-memory and genealogy of the 1950s that illuminates the ambivalences of the post-war era: a time of retro- and future-gazing, with grey-flannelled conformists and 'rebels without a cause', and where pre-war tradition entwined with consumerist desires for modernity.

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*Unser Wirtschaftswunder: Die Wahre Geschichte*, Das Erste, 15 July 2013, 11.50pm

*Vire, Mémoire d'une ville meurtrie*, dir. by Jean-Paul Dupuis (Association des Collectionneurs Virois, 2011) [on DVD]

*Le 13 heures*, TF1, 23 August 2010, 1pm