

**Stasi, Sex and Soundtracks:
Thomas Brussig's *Postalgie***

by

Elizabeth Nijdam
B.A., University of Victoria, 2005

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies

© Elizabeth Nijdam, 2007
University of Victoria

All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by
photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

**Stasi, Sex and Soundtracks:
Thomas Brussig's *Postalgie***

by

Elizabeth Nijdam
B.A., University of Victoria, 2005

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Peter Gölz, Supervisor
(Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies)

Dr. Ulf Schuetze, Departmental Member
(Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies)

Dr. Tom Saunders, Outside Member
(Department of History)

Dr. Reinhart Illner, External Examiner
(Department of Mathematics and Statistics)

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Peter Gözl, Supervisor
(Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies)

Dr. Ulf Schuetze, Departmental Member
(Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies)

Dr. Tom Saunders, Outside Member
(Department of History)

Dr. Reinhart Illner, External Examiner
(Department of Mathematics and Statistics)

ABSTRACT

Since the fall of the Wall, a new era of East German literature has emerged. This genre of literature exists even though East Germany's borders dissolved over a decade and half ago and is challenging the way we think about the former German Democratic Republic. East German author Thomas Brussig is pivotal in this new genre of literature. His novels *Helden wie wir* (1995), *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (1999) and Leander Haußmann's cinematic adaptation, *Sonnenallee* (1999), confront the negative associations and stereotypes connected with East Germany to deconstruct how formal history has portrayed its past and its citizens. Brussig's texts take a completely different approach to remembering the GDR, which simultaneously challenges history's dominant perspective as well as the *Ostalgie* phenomenon. Through his texts' recollection, Brussig subverts the East German state in hindsight and begins the construction of a new mythology with which to associate former East Germany.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The New East German Mythology	6
Chapter 2: Freudian Comedy, Hutcheonesque Parody and Carnival Laughter	20
Chapter 3: <i>Helden wie wir</i> : Penile Politics	40
3.1 The Media of Manipulation	48
3.2 (Anti)Fascist Fathers and Socialist Mothers: the Uhltscht Family Allegory	52
3.3 In the Tradition of <i>Vergangenheitsbewältigung</i> , in the Spirit of <i>Postalgie</i>	65
3.4 Klaus' Statute of Sexual Liberty	69
3.5 The Perverse Subversive	78
Chapter 4: Literary and Cinematic <i>Postalgie</i> : United We Remember	84
Chapter 5: <i>Sonnenallee</i> : Remembering and Re-rendering the East German Past	100
5.1 <i>Rock statt Marx</i> : Rock and Roll Narratives in <i>Sonnenallee</i>	114
5.2 <i>Ostrock</i> Rebellion	125
Conclusion	145
Bibliography	150

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Victoria for their generous support over the past two years. Without the UVic Fellowship, Faculty of Grad Studies' Travel Grants and the Office of International Affairs' International Activities Fund that I received, I would not have been able to complete my research.

I'd also like to acknowledge my department, its staff and students. The UVic Germanic and Slavic Studies Department has been my greatest asset. Irina Gavrilova has always been there to answer my questions and solve my problems. Without her, I would not have completed any of the paperwork necessary to finish my thesis, organize my defense or even graduate! The professors and colleagues I have worked with have inspired and changed me over the past seven years, and I've been very fortunate to be part of such a supportive and intimate department. I would specifically like to thank Matthew Pollard for inspiring me in my undergraduate degree. Without his enthusiasm, passion and encouragement, I would not have pursued Germanic Studies. Most importantly, I'd like to thank Peter Gözl, to whom I am forever indebted for his patience, assistance and brilliance. I couldn't have found a better supervisor and friend to work with me on this project and I'm eternally thankful for all his support and ongoing encouragement. The Germanic and Slavic Studies Department is very fortunate to have such a talented and capable chair.

I would also like to thank Thomas Brussig for his patience and understanding. I am so grateful for the opportunity to spend Valentine's Day morning drinking tea and listening to the man that has influenced my life so much. I am greatly indebted to him and his cats for accepting me into their home.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. For without my mother's encouragement, my father's support, Mike's patience and Pepper's company, I would have never finished it.

Thank you.

Introduction

With the 1990s came the deaths of many prominent post-war German authors and with them the definitive end of the German *Nachkriegsliteratur* (Kraft 11). The fall of the Berlin Wall not only brought the demise of the GDR (GDR), it also concluded the forty year-old East German literary tradition of coding political criticism deep in metaphor to circumvent State censorship. In “Die DDR als Absurditätenshow – vom Schreiben nach der Wende,” Daniel Sich discusses the plight of East German authors after 1989 and quotes Adolf

Endler:

‘Na ja, ich hatte mich ganz gut eingespielt auf diese spezielle Absurditätenshow, die mir die DDR geboten hat. Meine Erzählmethode waren eingerichtet auf diesen verrückten Staat, auf diese für mich immer abstruser werdende DDR. Und als die wegbrach, geriet natürlich auch mein literarisches Spiel durcheinander. Ich habe wie fast alle sogenannten DDR-Schriftsteller 1989 große Schwierigkeiten mit dem Schreiben bekommen. Ich konnte auf die neuen Verhältnisse nicht mit den gleichen Mitteln eingehen. Ich habe dann ernster geschrieben oder auch noch verrückter, habe verschiedene Wege gesucht. Ich suche eigentlich immer noch.’¹

Since the fall of the Wall, a new variety of East German literature has emerged. It arose after unification and is thriving today even though the East German borders dissolved over a decade and a half ago. The new East German literature takes from the tradition of *Heimatliteratur*, but looks back at a “home” that does not exist and attempts to recreate it in writing. Despite the disappearance of its nation-state of reference, this new East German literature continues to examine East German issues, pivots around East German themes, functions in the development of a post-Wall East German identity and criticizes the Socialist state in a way not feasible before 1989 – openly. A new era has begun for East German literature and through their writings, authors are reevaluating their pasts and – through this –

the present. Thomas Brussig's distinctive combination of burlesque comedy, sarcastic satire and everyday depictions of the GDR culminate in this new genre of East German literature, for which he is the decisive author.

Born in 1965 in East Berlin, Thomas Brussig is part of the last generation of authors for which East Germany is a distinct reference point (Fröhlich 21). As Carl Weber points out, he is a "child of East German society as it was shaped after the closing of the GDR borders and the erection of the Berlin Wall" (Weber 143). Brussig's films, novels and plays centre around the GDR, but he began his writing career after the fall of the Wall. He whimsically remarks in a number of interviews how he handed in his first manuscript the day of East Germany's demise (Maischberger). Brussig's texts mainly focus on the period between 1968 and 1989, with only *Sonnenallee* not extending to the end of the GDR. Brussig's unique perspective of being raised in the East but writing in unified Germany gives him the appropriate authority, vantage point and means to criticize the Socialist state.

Brussig's texts provide interesting insight into how East German citizens dealt with the rapid demise of the GDR. When the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, what began as euphoria turned into disappointment by October 3rd the next year, the official day of German unification. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the relationship of authors, artists and citizens of former East Germany towards their vanished home has changed. It became part of the evolving nature of the East German historical consciousness, which was trying to reconstruct a positive identity for itself after its destruction (Betts 724). According to Paul Betts, the perception of history was destabilized because of the inadequacy of traditional

¹ Most of the published material on Thomas Brussig's texts as well as on post-unification East German literature and cinema in general is from webbased resources or available through online databases. Consequently, many of the sources cited in this thesis will not have page references.

forms of documenting one's past and East Germany's once stable narratives fragmented into "countless unofficial stories" (735).

Brussig's texts are exemplary of a new mode of remembering East German history that has evolved out of the inadequacy of formal history. He has refigured GDR using humour, satire, parody and subversive recollection. Brussig's writings are among the best-known examples of post-unification fictional analyses of former East Germany and his influence has reverberated throughout united Germany. Andrea Rinke asserts that "*Sonnenallee* remains to date the only post-*Wende* film made by East Germans about East Germany that has appealed to audiences in both East and West" (26) and *Helden wie wir* became an international bestseller. *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* and its cinematic adaptation reached cult status and *Helden wie wir* opened the floodgates to comic depictions of the GDR (Neubauer).² Essentially, these three texts took a fundamentally new approach to the German tradition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

Received enthusiastically across united Germany, *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee*³ are among the most talked-about texts of the new East German literary and cinematic movements. Despite that Brussig's readers pick up their novels for a good laugh or that his average viewer solely enjoys the kitschy quality of *Sonnenallee*, Brussig's texts are crucial in discussions on post-unification Germany and their function extends well past entertainment. *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* not only depict life in East Germany, they confront its negative

² Unfortunately, Sebastian Peterson's cinematic adaptation of *Helden wie wir* neither functions in the same way as Brussig's novel, nor reached its level of popularity. For this reason, the film version of *Helden wie wir* will essentially be excluded from this thesis' discussion of Brussig's *Postalgie*.

³ Unless otherwise specified, *Sonnenallee* refers to Thomas Brussig's novel *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* as well as Leander Haußmann's cinematic adaptation *Sonnenallee*.

associations and stereotypes that have existed since before the fall of the Wall and contribute to discussions on how we remember the GDR.

The West and the East often have very different conceptions of how to remember former East Germany. Formal history recalls the GDR in terms of its political problems, strict censorship and secret police. The memories of former East German citizens, on the other hand, recollect vastly different elements of the history of the GDR, often at the expense of the “hard” facts. “Unsere Geschichten erzählen von enttäuschten Hoffnungen, von kleinen und großen Träumen, von Angst und Feigheit, Trauer und Freude - von alledem, was in der Geschichtswissenschaft nicht vorkommt” (Wolle). As a result of the disparity between these two modes of remembering, the *Ostalgie* phenomenon emerged. Stefan Berg addresses East German nostalgia and writes: “Sie ist eine Form von Notwehr gegen die Erwartung, westliche Verhältnisse müßten nun auch überall westliches Verhalten herbeiführen” (53). Dietmar Pieper quotes Jens Reich, the 1993 East German alternative candidate for Federal President: “Die närrische Nostalgie ... könnte, paradox genug, das Heilmittel werden gegen Minderwertigkeitsgefühl und aggressiven Stau” (Pieper 49). Unfortunately, these opinions are rare and due to its generally positive perspective on the history of the GDR, East German nostalgia has been overarchingly dismissed as “idealistic” *Ostalgie*. Consequently, it is neither acknowledged as the principal sign of the current East German identity crisis, nor a blaring indication that unification never fully succeeded.

Neither *Ostalgie* nor formal history suffices in accurately depicting the GDR. And although *Ostalgie* provides the picture perfect image of East Germany, the representation is just as inadequate and misrepresentative as traditional history’s bleak conception of living under Socialism. Brussig’s texts aim to counter both modes of thinking and effectively subvert the

Ostalgie phenomenon, while simultaneously deconstructing the GDR 's negative associations. The image of East Germany that evolves from Brussig's texts is thus a combination of formal history's factual analyses of the repercussions of the GDR's Socialist policy and East German individuals' nostalgic memories of growing up in the shadow of the Wall, where neither negates the other. *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* work toward the creation of a new German national identity that incorporates the East German experience into the West German peripheral vision. They aim to subvert the government of GDR in hindsight in order to return East German pride to its former citizens and confront the division between East and West that still exists today. Brussig aims to tear down the Wall once again, but this time it is the *Mauer im Kopf* and he does so with laughter instead of sledgehammers, trying to illustrate how *Ossis* and *Wessis* are not so fundamentally different after all.

Chapter 1: The New East German Mythology

Mythology is as old as civilization itself and every era has had its own variety. Historically, through the legends and maxims of any given society, their morals and ethics reign in allegorical manifestations as they tried to explain the inexplicable. The Greeks described Zeus atop Mount Olympus and the Romans told stories of Jupiter. The North West Coast First Nations attribute humanity's origin with the legend of the raven and the clamshell. The Egyptians inscribed the sagas of their deities in hieroglyphs on pyramid walls and Runes decorated the caves of Scandinavia and Ireland. In our postmodern society, myths have evolved to become more tangible and our "deities" are now embodied in talk show hosts and media personalities. Contemporary society's fables are located in the star personas of countless actors and pop singers and our morals and fears are embodied in urban legends. These icons and myths illustrate that although traditional oral folklore has been left by the wayside, society still employs mythology to reflect its ideology and social concerns. In today's society, although myth plays the same historical role, its impact has changed. This chapter shall examine how the contemporary literature and cinema on the former GDR that has emerged in the last decade functions in establishing a new mythological framework with which to remember East Germany.

Percy Cohen defines myth in his essay entitled "Theories of Myth:"

The chief characteristics of myth are as follows: a myth is a narrative of events; the narrative has a sacred quality; the sacred communication is made in symbolic form; at least some of the events and objects which occur in the myth neither occur nor exist in the world other than that of myth itself; and the narrative refers in dramatic form to origins or transformations. The narrative quality distinguishes a myth from a general idea or set of ideas, such as a cosmology. (337)

More recently, the term “mythology” has been associated less with folklore and legend. It is now used rather loosely and employed in discussions on politics (i.e. “political mythologies”), culture and society (i.e. “racist myths”) (Halpern 132) and in some cases, “mythology” has almost become synonymous with “ideology.” But David Pan writes that the definition of “myth as always ideology ... limits the category of myth as a conceptual strategy” (41). Although mythology often functions as an ideological manifestation, it is also a tool for the exploration of history.

Cohen’s conception of mythology contributes an interesting perspective on its function, but it is Suzanne Langer’s definition of myth that is most important in interpreting the work of Thomas Brussig. In “The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution,” David Bidney cites Langer’s theory of myth:

The myth, according to Langer, is not to be understood as a development of the fairy tale or Volksmärchen, as Wundt and other German scholars have suggested, but rather as something newly emerging which involves a "thematic shift" in function. Myth is said to be motivated, not by subjective, wishful thinking, but rather by the quest for an understanding of the significance of nature and life... myth, at its best, is to be regarded as a recognition of the drama of human existence. Its ultimate aim is not the wishful distortion of the world, but rather serious comprehension and envisagement of its fundamental nature. Myth is regarded as representing metaphorically a world-picture and insight into life generally and may, therefore, be considered as primitive philosophy or metaphysical thought.
(17)

Brussig’s writings employ this notion of mythology and it is important to note that neither Langer’s philosophy, nor Brussig’s texts operate on an understanding of myth that relies on the depiction of real historical events. Rather, the mythological portrayal of history is intended as an exploration into history and in the case of Brussig’s texts, it is an investigation into the connection between history and memory. *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* confront the

traditionally negative associations of East Germany's formal political and ideological mythologies to examine how the history of the GDR should be remembered.

The end of the Second World War brought with it the destruction of Nazi Germany and the dismantling of its ideology and social structures. This demolition of everything that went before May 8, 1945, had a devastating effect on the country and in terms of German society, it resulted in an "ideological hole" (Hell 913). When confronted with Germany's ideological hole, the communists, who were returning to Germany to rebuild the country's political structure, resurrected the image of the antifascist hero, which manifested itself in the father figure (Hell 913). It was from this inherent antifascism and the concept of the antifascist hero that the GDR developed its ideology, creating the image of East Germany as the "Sieger der Geschichte" (Winkler 169).

But unlike traditional mythologies, East Germany's founding mythology did not evolve naturally. Instead, in its forty years of existence, the citizens of East Germany had their Socialist mythology imposed on them. The East German state and its propaganda informed the nation of its founding principles. The GDR's forefathers asserted that the origin of its society was based in the working class and the GDR was created in the image of the "erste[r] deutsche[r] Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat" (Winkler 169). In his article "Ende aller Sonderwege," Heinrich August Winkler discusses how this mythology contributed to the longevity of the GDR: "Er erlaubte es dem Staat von Ulbricht und Honecker, das Fehlen einer demokratischen Legitimation bis zu einem gewissen Grad durch den Schein einer historisch-moralischen Legitimation auszugleichen" (169). As a result of this strictly enforced ideology, counter mythologies emerged, which manifested themselves in the alternative corners of East German culture, such as in rock and roll music.

Since the collapse of the Wall, it has become apparent that the founding narratives of the GDR did not actually reflect the beliefs of many East German citizens. In his essay on East German material culture, Paul Betts explores East Germany's reassessment of its past:

Given that language, culture, and history were so closely patrolled in the former East Bloc, it is little wonder that the post-cold war era has witnessed a veritable explosion of new post-Soviet histories and "rediscovered" national pasts. (735)

With the dissolution of the GDR, the East German mythological slate was wiped clean and the opportunity to recreate the image of the former GDR in hindsight has emerged. The specific portrait this thesis shall explore deemphasizes those aspects of formal East Germany history that do not concur with the memory of individual East Germans in an attempt to create a new East German mythology. In order to redraw the lines of East Germany's definition, this new mythology values the individual over the majority as well as illustrates the political resistance of these individuals over the state propagated image of Socialist conformism.

Traditionally, the GDR has been judged rather harshly. Mike Dennis examines the state's negative connotations in his introduction to the history of the GDR:

The German Democratic Republic attracted a plethora of negative comments during its forty-year history. It was variously described as the state that ought not to be, Stalin's unloved child and an artificial construct of the cold war dependent on Soviet bayonets and raw materials for life support. Even the long-time Soviet ambassador to the GDR, Abrassimov, denigrated the GDR as a homunculus from the Soviet test tube. Western commentators, certainly until the late 1960s, tended to view it as a link in German history's chain of misery, a totalitarian state bearing a striking similarity to the National Socialist dictatorship and an unjust system which denied basic human rights to its own citizen and imprisoned them behind the monstrous Berlin Wall. ... Since the breakdown of the East German Communist state, revelations of a vast system of surveillance by the Ministry of State Security have served to underline the image of an illegitimate and repressive regime. And the sheer rapidity of the collapse has added fuel to those who see the history of the GDR in terms of a decline and fall in states, a consequence of the structural

flaws inherent in the imposition of the Stalinist political and economic model on an unreceptive population. (x)

The political atrocities committed by the East German government were very real and often had devastating repercussions. But to recall their history with such animosity has had a destructive effect on the former citizens of the GDR.

Reunification euphoria did not last long. Both West and East Germans soon realized that the heroic dismantling of the Berlin Wall was nothing compared with confronting the more intractable mental wall dividing *Wessis* and *Ossis*. Already by the time Reunification was made official in October 1990 the televised fest of East-West fraternity the year before had become a distant memory. German-German relations often degenerated into ugly bouts of repeated recriminations and mutual misunderstanding, thus exposing the illusory quality of the long-cherished cold war dream of a so-called *Kulturnation* that supposedly transcend geopolitical partition. The evident collapse of any idea of a united German culture after 1989 only pointed up the larger problem of articulating any viable post-Reunification national identity. (Betts 736)

Thus a trend has emerged that expresses the East German experience in new terms. Many of these accounts of day-to-day life in the GDR have been dismissed as *Ostalgie*, rose-tinted nostalgia for everything East German, but Brussig's texts offer an alternative to both the traditional and the *ostalgie* modes of remembering. This thesis shall approach Brussig's *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* as a newly materializing variety of East German mythology. This mythology functions not only to restore the East German identity that disappeared with the Wall and to redevelop the East German cultural memory, it also normalizes the East German experience for West Germans, an attempt that "unification" itself never fully succeeded in.

Jens Bisky explores the issues surrounding the East German identity crisis in his article "Zonensucht:"

Ostdeutschland ist keine Region und kein politische Gebilde, es wird von keiner Partei vertreten, dennoch fühlten sich elf Jahre nach der Vereinigung 80 Prozent der Bürger in den neuen Ländern Ostdeutschland verbunden. Das

Operettenhafte, das lokale Sonderbewußtsein andernorts als eine harmlose Färbung des Lebens erscheinen läßt, fehlt der Identität Ost... Sie mag ihre historische Berechtigung gehabt haben, das ist vielfach beschrieben worden. Ihre Kritik steht noch aus. Heute wirkt sie wie das eiserne Gehäuse eines Kollektivgeschicks, jene Kräfte bannend, die eine Besserung der ostdeutschen Lage herbeiführen könnten. Im Namen nebelöser Gleichheit unterwirft sie die Ostdeutschen einer gleichmachenden Wahrnehmung. Dafür bietet sie ein erfolgreiches Verfahren, das eigene Leben, wie immer es gewesen sein mag, "in Würde" erzählen zu können. (117)

Namely, the fundamental problem when examining the East German identity is that physically, East Germany no longer exists. In an interview with Michael Neubauer, Brussig states: "Wir sind aus einer Generation, wir sind aus der DDR und die gibt es nicht mehr." The GDR cannot be located on a map and as a political body, it holds no weight in the German parliament. Essentially, almost immediately after the fall of the Wall, East Germany no longer had any authentic formal cultural, political or ideological representation. The conflict lies in that although East Germany does not physically exist, it is still ever-present in the minds and hearts of its former citizens. Only in the last decade has East German cultural representation begun to reemerge in the literature and cinema of formerly East German authors and directors. These artists explore the subject of East Germany as they experienced it almost two decades ago and how they remember it today, and in doing so contribute to the new East German mythology.

Many contemporary theories on myth do not actually pertain to the traditional conception of mythology that Western society inherited from the Greeks. In particular, Roland Barthes' understanding of myth plays a crucial role in interpreting how contemporary literature and cinema about East Germany function in society. Barthes' definition of mythology is simple. He asserts that myth is "a system of communication" and "a mode of signification, a form" (109). Although Barthes explains myth as "a type of speech" (109), he does not restrict the concept solely to oral expression, but rather, stresses that myth can be manifested in

literature, photography, cinema, and even sports. What remains the common denominator in Barthes' exploration of myth is that it employs two systems of communication.

It can be seen that in myth there are two semiological systems, one of which is staggered in relation to the other: a linguistic system, the language (or the modes of representation which are assimilated to it), which I shall call the language-object, because it is the language which myth gets hold of in order to build its own system; and myth itself, which I shall call metalanguage, because it is a second language, in which one speaks about the first. When he reflects on a metalanguage, the semiologist no longer needs to ask himself questions about the composition of the language object, he no longer has to take into account the details of the linguistic schema; he will only need to know its total term, or global sign, and only inasmuch as this term lends itself to myth. (115)

Essentially, myth not only incorporates the linguistic system of the narrative, it infuses it with subsequent meaning. Barthes refers to this second level of meaning as the mythical system: "That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second" (114). This element of Barthes' definition can easily be applied to traditional mythology in that many of the Greek and Roman gods were in fact allegorical representations of attributes, emotions or ideas. Thus the sign signals multiple meanings. The same can be recognized in Brussig's narratives, as the protagonist in *Helden wie wir* represents the political perversion of the Socialist state and the characters of *Sonnenallee* are each manifestations of a type of political resistance. Barthes also stresses how the mythological "signification" (121) is never arbitrary and that the definition of myth is inherent in the motivation of creating it: "myth plays on the analogy between meaning and form, there is no myth without motivated form" (126). Brussig's intention in writing *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* was not solely to depict narratives of an East German style, but to examine the way in which we remember the GDR. His texts are infused with metaphor and allegory to add the supplementary meaning of Barthes' mythological

signification. Thus the mythology of Brussig's texts is discernable in his motivation as well as his texts' structure.

There are a number of other elements of Barthes' theory that complement Brussig's literary and cinematic endeavours. As will be explored in the following chapters, Brussig's texts function to normalize the East German experience and in his exploration, Barthes acknowledges the naturalizing function of mythology:

What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality. And just as bourgeois ideology is defined by the abandonment of the name 'bourgeois', myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made. The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences. A conjuring trick has taken place; it has turned reality inside out, it has emptied it of history and has filled it with nature, it has removed from things their human meaning so as to make them signify a human insignificance. The function of myth is to empty reality: it is, literally, a ceaseless flowing out, a hemorrhage, or perhaps an evaporation, in short a perceptible absence. (142)

Brussig's texts reconstitute the history of the GDR in order to empty it of its negativity and replace it with a narrative compromise. In order to more accurately reflect the GDR's past, *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* incorporate the stories of East German individuals as well as the factual perspectives of formal history. Brussig takes *Ostalgie's* positive perspective and validates it by including the facts of East Germany's formal history.

A second function of the new East German mythology is that it assists in dealing with the history of the GDR.

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. ... In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any

going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves. (Barthes 143)

Julia Hell's assessment of the East German past approaches history in the same way. She writes that in order to understand the past, it is necessary to recreate it. She refers to the fall of the GDR as a traumatic event and discusses history as trauma:

What I mean by *history as trauma* is the need to comprehend what has happened as the result of a specific structure of experience in which an overwhelming event has not been assimilated or fully experienced at the time of its occurrence but only belatedly, as it repeatedly "possesses" those who lived through it. Trauma is characterized by a "delay or incompleteness in knowing." History as trauma means that those who have lived through momentous changes "carry an impossible history with them," a history which they cannot assimilate. It is as if an unassimilable historical moment, in this case the recent past of the GDR's dissolution, is now approached from the vantage point of the not-so-recent past because the past, although it too has lost its contours, is still more familiar than the present. (912)

Brussig recreates the image of the GDR, but on his terms. *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* explore the demise of East Germany as Brussig himself observed and experienced it – through the perversion of the state and rock music rebellion.

According to Oliver Igel, more is said in fiction about the reality of the GDR than in official documents (8) and "literarische Texte aus der DDR wurden und werden häufig als Zeitdokument gelesen" (8). He asserts that it is not reality that is important, rather it is the medium and the intention that needs to be investigated (8). Hell asserts that the trauma of the fall of the GDR was such an overwhelming event that it "can only be understood belatedly" (Hell 913) through its recreation in contemporary texts. In the early to late 1990s, *Ostalgie* began to recreate the GDR for the former population of East Germany. The phenomenon helped former East Germany begin to understand its past as well as its cultural extinction. But Brussig's

Post-*Ostalgie* or *Postalgie* literature and cinema is the means through which his readers deal with the controversial history of the GDR. Essentially, *Ostalgie* masked the ideological hole and today, Brussig is attempting to fill it.

The questions surrounding mythology and cultural memory in *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* go hand and hand. In order to understand fully how Brussig's texts function in German society today, a second group of theories needs to be explored. Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory complements Barthes' concept of mythology and through Brussig's texts, the two theories unite. In his attempt to create a new East Germany mythology, Brussig resurrects the GDR in German cultural memory. Tanja Nause examines Assmann's theory of cultural memory in her analysis of East German autobiographies. She claims that Assmann's theory illuminates the emergence of first-person narratives after the fall of the Wall.

Assmann's *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* explores collective memory, how societies remember and "how communities imagine themselves through memory" (Nause 159). He examines the subject from the point of view of a social anthropologist and his theories can be applied to the construction of cultural memory in any society. Assmann's exploration into the way cultures develop the concept of collective memory is pertinent in understanding post-Wall East German literature.

According to Assmann's theory, collective memory is divided into four dimensions. *Das mimetische Gedächtnis* is the memory of actions and gestures that we learn through repetition (Assmann 20). *Das Gedächtnis der Dinge* recalls ideas associated with objects:

Daher spiegeln die Dinge ihm ein Bild seiner selbst wider, erinnern ihn an sich, seine Vergangenheit, seine Vorfahren usw. Die Dingwelt, in der er lebt, hat einen Zeitindex, der mit der Gegenwart zugleich auch auf verschiedene Vergangenheitsschichten deutet. (Assmann 20)

Das kommunikative Gedächtnis is a “living memory,” with a lifespan of eighty to a hundred years. It belongs to the individual, is shared by contemporaries and includes the memory of things that individuals have themselves experienced or know from hearsay (Nause 160). It is the memory that results from language and the communication between people (Assmann 20). The last sphere of memory is *das kulturelle Gedächtnis*. This realm of memory is unique because it builds a space in which all the other areas of memory interact (Assmann 21). As soon as mimetic memory, the memory of things or communicative memory transcends the everyday (Nause 160), when acts become rituals and when objects become icons, they become part of cultural memory (Assmann 21). Nause summarizes cultural memory as “the sphere where the meaning and values of a society are created. It is the accumulated knowledge that shapes identity” (Nause 160).

Assmann stresses that it is not facts that are stored here; rather it is myths that are remembered (re-constructed) again and again. Cultural memory transcends individuals. It is formal and exists in repeatable images, words, actions, etc. (Nause 160)

Cultural memory is the sphere of humanity’s myths and ritual meaning (Nause 160), where a society defines its ideology and identity.

Incorporating Assmann’s theory into the reading of Brussig’s texts illustrates how he utilizes the first three spheres of memory to recreate the East German *kulturelles Gedächtnis*. *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* evoke the East German experience to reiterate *das mimetische Gedächtnis*, resurrect East German everyday objects to revive *das Gedächtnis der Dinge* and recall the accent and language of East German communication to reinstate the East German *kommunikatives Gedächtnis*. Brussig’s literature and cinema resurrect the East German experience in terms of

actions, objects and communication and in doing so a decade after the fall of the Wall, he restores the first three elements of East German collective memory and transfers them immediately into the realm of *kulturelles Gedächtnis*.

The analysis of Thomas Brussig's novel *Helden wie wir* shows that much of everyday life in the GDR is actually preserved in the satirical elements of the text. But *Helden wie wir* is also a story about education, socialization and repression: presumably it reminds not only ex-GDR citizens of their childhood but also many more people outside GDR of their own early years. This is important because it enables readers from completely different backgrounds to enjoy the novel. (Nause 169)

Secondly, Brussig's writings not only resurrect the GDR in the cultural memory of former East Germans. As texts enjoyed throughout united Germany, *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* assist in developing a shared cultural memory that transcends the East-West divide and locates itself in the cultural memory of former West Germans as well.

Assmann's study of collective memory approaches the subject with the relationship of three elements: " 'Erinnerung' (oder: Vergangeheitsbezug), 'Identität' (oder: politische Imagination) und 'kulturelle Kontinuierung' (oder: Traditionsbildung)" (16). He explores the connection between these three by defining what Assmann refers to as *die konnektive Struktur*:

Jede Kultur bildet etwas aus, das man ihre *konnektive Struktur* nennen könnte. Sie wirkt verknüpfend und verbindend, und zwar in zwei Dimensionen: der Sozialdimension und der Zeitdimension. Sie bindet den Menschen an den Mitmenschen dadurch, daß sie als "symbolische Sinnwelt" (Berger/Luckmann) einen gemeinsamen Erfahrungs-, Erwartungs- und Handlungsraum bildet, der durch seine bindende und verbindliche Kraft Vertrauen und Orientierung stiftet. Sie bindet aber auch das Gestern ans Heute, indem sie die prägenden Erfahrungen und Erinnerungen formt und gegenwärtig halt, in dem sie in einen fortschreitenden Gegenwartshorizont Bilder und Geschichten einer anderen Zeit einschließt und dadurch Hoffnung und Erinnerung stiftet. Dieser Aspekt der Kultur liegt den mythischen und historischen Erzählungen zugrunde. Beide Aspekte: der normative und der narrative, der Aspekt der Weisung und der Aspekt der Erzählung, fundieren Zugehörigkeit oder Identität, ermöglichen dem Einzelnen, "wir" sagen zu können. Was einzelne Individuen zu einem solchen Wir zusammenbindet, ist die *konnektive Struktur* eines gemeinsamen Wissens und Selbstbilds, das sich zum einen auf die Bindung an gemeinsame

Regeln und Werte, zum anderen auf die Erinnerung an eine gemeinsam bewohnte Vergangenheit stützt. (Assmann 16)

It can be argued that *Ostalgie* was the first attempt to force the East German experience into the German cultural memory. Unfortunately, its nostalgic view was perceived as forgetting many elements of East Germany's controversial history and trivializing the political problems of the state. It was also a phenomenon that appeared to have been appropriated and marketed by West Germans, with, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, many of *Ostalgie's* quintessential examples orchestrated by former West German citizens (Boyer 21) and large West German manufacturers reintroducing East German products and brands (Blum 229). Thomas Brussig's texts on the other hand, work in opposition to the *Ostalgie* phenomenon and succeed where *Ostalgie* failed. *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* offer new and refreshing perspectives on life in East Germany, where the citizens resisted the East German state with sex and music and where simply talking about failure is heroic. Brussig's version of the history of the GDR neither trivializes its political immorality nor neglects the niceties of living in a Socialist state, where unemployment, crime and hunger were virtually unheard of.

This analysis of myth and cultural memory locates the two in close proximity to each other, often interacting. But Assmann's theory also illustrates where myth and cultural memory converge and operate synonymously. Within Assmann's definition, he broaches the theory of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and discusses his theory of collective memory (34). Assmann writes that what is important about Halbwachs' definition of collective memory is that although it acknowledges memory as individual, it also asserts the role of society and cultural memory in creating memory's framework:

Subjekt von Gedächtnis und Erinnerung bleibt immer der einzelne Mensch, aber in Abhängigkeit von den "Rahmen", die seine Erinnerung organisieren.

Der Vorteil dieser Theorie liegt darin, daß sie zugleich mit der Erinnerung auch das Vergessen zu erklären vermag. Wenn ein Mensch – und eine Gesellschaft – nur das zu erinnern imstande ist, was als Vergangenheit innerhalb der Bezugsrahmen einer jeweiligen Gegenwart rekonstruierbar ist, dann wird genau das vergessen, was in eine solchen Gegenwart keine Bezugsrahmen mehr hat. (36)

With the help of Halbwachs' theory, the function of Brussig's texts in united Germany today becomes clear. Brussig recreates contemporary Germany's collective framework with which it remembers the history of GDR. The current culture of remembering East Germany's past is ridden with negative connotations and stereotypes and Brussig's texts endeavour to reconstruct this image of the GDR. With *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenalle*, Brussig develops the mythology of an East Germany, where the people were not unanimously supportive of the Party. At the same time, his texts acknowledge the political and moral issues surrounding the Socialist government as well as the blissfulness of youth.

Chapter 2: Freudian Comedy, Hutcheonesque Parody and Carnival Laughter

Wolfgang Gabler notes in his essay “Die Wende als Witz” that since the fall of the Wall, an abundance of comic literature on the politics surrounding German Unification has emerged (141). Thomas Brussig’s work is an example of such comic literature and much of his success is due to his ability to deal with history through humour. Gabler describes the comedy of Brussig’s novel as a *Verstehensort* and by taking a closer look at the humour in *Helden wie wir*, the reader acquires a better understand of Brussig’s text and the *Wendeliteratur* phenomenon in general. With this enhanced awareness of the means and modes of Brussig’s work, we can begin to see how it affects debates on East German identity and how it functions in assisting the creation of a new national German identity.

Brussig’s comedy operates on three levels. The first can be seen as a reflection of Sigmund Freud’s theory of comedy in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. The second is located in the novel’s parody and can be decoded through the application of Linda Hutcheon’s postmodern theory. The third operates on a public level and is patterned after Michael Bakhtin’s understanding of Rabelais’ carnival laughter. Brussig’s application of Freudian comedy, Hutcheonesque parody and Rabelais’ carnival laughter reveal different elements of the humour that characterizes his novel *Helden wie wir*. Through this comedy, parody and satire, Brussig develops a novel tale, in the original sense of the word, that is not only critical of East Germany in its telling, but also in its reading.

Freud’s theories play an important role in Brussig’s novel. The most apparent example of this is Brussig’s use of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* as a model to characterize his protagonist’s perversions. Brussig stated in an interview that “die Art, wie Klaus zu den

Perversionen geführt wird, ist Freud für Erstsemester” (Straubel, Szabo and Wendtorf 55-56). But less frequently acknowledged is that Freud’s work on jokes is just as pivotal. Like his *Three Essays*, Freud’s *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* was published in 1905 and only a short time after the former text. In fact, according to James Strachey who translated and edited the Norton Library edition published in 1963, both manuscripts were written simultaneously (5).

Freud’s analysis of comedy begins with the division of jokes or joke formulations into types. Freud identifies four categories and explores their purpose and impact in the first chapters of his book. He states that jokes are either obscene, hostile (97), cynical (110) or skeptical (115), the difference lying solely in their intention. To understand how Freud’s concepts of comedy are used as narrative devices in *Helden wie wir*, their definitions must first be explored.

In Brussig’s novel, obscene humour is the most obvious adaptation of Freud’s theory. According to Freud, obscene humour or smut is a response to our sexual repression since childhood and is a means of exposure (97). In *Helden wie wir*, this term “exposure” functions in two ways. It is read to be both the exposure “of the sexually different person to whom it’s [the joke] directed,” as Freud defines it (98), but in adopting literally what Freud discusses abstractly, it is also exposure in the sense that Brussig’s comedy reveals a deeper level to his work.

In Brussig’s novel, as will be shown in the next chapter, sexual repression and political oppression are synonymous. The sexuality and perversion of the protagonist, Klaus Uhltscht, is representative of and a response to the “perverse” operations of the East German state itself, with the sexual repression imposed on him by his mother, Lucie Uhltscht, the physical embodiment of East Germany’s political oppression. The jokes and

the humour that ensue from the abnormal sexuality of these two characters is Brussig's way of exposing the perversion of the state.

Freud's analysis of obscene humour is expanded in a later chapter in *Jokes*, where he discusses the comic of sexuality and obscenity (221). He writes that exposure is only the starting point in the analysis of obscene humour. The comic of sexuality and obscenity also functions in terms of degrading and unmasking its subject.

Apart from this, the spheres of sexuality and obscenity offer the amplest occasions for obtaining comic pleasure alongside pleasurable sexual excitement; for they can show human beings in their dependence on bodily needs (degradation) or they can reveal the physical demands lying behind the claim of mental love (unmasking). (222)

In this context, Brussig uses Klaus' perversions and the obscene humour that erupts from them as a means of degrading and unmasking the East German state. This degradation contributes to *Helden wie wir's* subversion in hindsight, a concept that will be explored in more depth in the next chapter.

Freud's second genre of jokes is categorized as hostile humour, which is also derived from repression, but the repression of our hostilities. It is used to belittle or make one's subject insignificant or comic (103) and is a way to rebel against or liberate oneself from authority (105). Most of the humour in Brussig's novel can be categorized as hostile for it was Brussig's intent to degrade East Germany through its representation (Fröhlich 26) and in his comic portrayal, he disarms the *Stasi* with laughter. Brussig uses his humour as his means of personal and public *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and after writing *Helden wie wir*, Brussig's revenge-quest against the GDR was complete (Maischberger) and he ventured onto a less "damning" literary endeavour, namely, *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee*.

Several examples arise out of the exploration of obscene and hostile humour in Brussig's novel. In terms of *Helden wie wir's* sexually explicit comedy, one specific sequence comes immediately to mind. The second time Klaus masturbates is atop the stairwell of the *Wurstfrau's* apartment building (*Helden wie wir* 194). Klaus has returned to the site where he had almost committed the most heinous of sexual crimes: rape. As he is fulfilling his sexual desires one again, he begins to formulate a letter to Minister Mielke (*Helden wie wir* 196). The letter reads as a validation for his sexual deviance and is interjected with the sound effects of his masturbation. Klaus identifies his "Selbstbefriedigung" as his "proletarische Pflicht" (*Helden wie wir* 196) and an act of pure patriotism (*Helden wie wir* 198). He relates how his masturbation is in preparation for the day the *Stasi* calls on him to collect the *Mikrofische* of NATO's General Secretary and affirms his enthusiasm for the task ahead. The ridiculousness behind Klaus' pseudo-dictation makes a mockery of the formal processes of the GDR and strengthens the novel's metaphorical exploration of East Germany's perverse politics. "Brussig is again emphasizing the parallel between what is often regarded as sexual perversion and the real perversion of the state" (Neuhaus 159). In this same situation, one example of the novel's hostile humour is also apparent. Klaus identifies his masturbation as patriotic and by doing so he mocks the true values of the state's ideology. Brussig's equation of his protagonist's sexual perversion and the state's political perversion demeans the political affairs of East Germany to the sexually explorative pastimes of a late adolescent. Through his hostile humour and mockery the GDR's governmental systems, Brussig robs East Germany of its oppressive power with laughter.

In a similar vein to Freud's hostile humour, he examines joke formulation using a definition that encompasses not only jokes, but also anecdotal and comedic stories (Freud 105). The

only stipulation to Freud's definition of a joke is that it incorporates more than one person, but whether they are present or not is irrelevant.

Generally speaking, a tendentious jokes calls for three people: in addition to the one who makes the joke, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke's aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled. (Freud 100)

In the case of Brussig's novel, the three people take on different forms, but are nevertheless present (in the abstract sense of the word). The teller of the joke would of course be the narrator, and the listener, whose pleasure is fulfilled or who laughs at the joke, is the reader. This interpretation of Freud's theory as it applies to *Helden wie wir* is fairly obvious, it is in the presence of the third person that things become more complicated. The third person in Brussig's *Helden wie wir*, at whose expense the joke is told, is the GDR itself.

The last two categories of Freudian humour, cynical comedy and skeptical comedy, are closely related in Brussig's novel. According to Freud, cynical humour is often directed at institutions and ideologies as well as the people that represent them (110), while skeptical humour questions the very nature of knowledge itself and our certainty of it (115). This variety of humour can be perceived in Brussig's caricatures of the *Stasi* and the satirizing of the state's operations as well as in Klaus' insecurity with his own knowledge.

The repetition of the several phrases related to Klaus' work with the *Stasi* lead the reader to question the legitimacy of the organization. The recurring statement "Sie wissen wo Sie sind" (*Helden wie wir* 147) directed at Klaus, when he in fact had no idea (*Helden wie wir* 148, 207), reinforces how ridiculous the government institution was. After Klaus realizes that he is working for the *Stasi*, his doubt subsides for a second. But directly after the confirmation that he is in fact with the *Stasi* (*Helden wie wir* 150), he begins to question whether or not he is working for the "real" *Stasi* (*Helden wie wir* 153, 158) and starts speculating that there are

perhaps two – the ridiculous *Stasi* by which he is currently employed and the real *Stasi* who will one day come for him. Through the statement's repetition, the meaning of the phrase alters and instead of the comment referring to his location, it acquires a philosophical connotation. What was originally Klaus questioning whether or not he was in the presence of *Stasi* men becomes cynical and skeptical humour in the abstract inquiry as to whether or not he believes in what they are doing.

In his introduction, Freud significantly quotes Jean Paul: "Freedom produces jokes and jokes produce freedom" (11) and through the comedy located in *Helden wie wir*, Brussig tries to free the citizens of former East Germany of the burden of their past. Through his obscene humour, Brussig attacks the hypermoralism and perversion of the state as embodied by his protagonist's sexuality; through the novel's hostile humour, Brussig releases his repressed hostility towards the state in which he grew up; through his cynical humour, Brussig criticizes the Socialist ideology and the system itself and through his skeptical humour, *Helden wie wir* questions its readers' understanding of the history of the former GDR, the East German stereotypes still prevalent, how these assumptions emerged and how they are supported by today's hegemony. Freud himself agrees that comedy liberates from suppression, repression (134) and now, through Brussig's work, oppression – even in hindsight.

Although Freudian theory is useful in decoding the comedy in *Helden wie wir*, it is insufficient in understanding Brussig's use of parody. Freud defines parody as "the degradation of something exalted in another way: by destroying the unity that exists between people's characters as we know them and their speeches and actions, by replacing either the exalted figures or their utterance by inferior ones" (Freud 201). This definition is adequate insofar as

it describes the most superficial level of Brussig's parody, but in order to acquire a better understanding of how the parody in *Helden wie wir* operates, an exploration into Linda Hutcheon's postmodern theory is necessary.

Parody has been a means of dealing with the past in literature and life for centuries.

According to Hutcheon, parody is one method of coming to terms with literature's long and intimidating legacy (4) and it has undergone innumerable changes in definition (32). Falsely, parody has been confused with a number of other literary techniques, including irony, satire (Hutcheon 43), pure and simple imitation, quotation and allusion (Hutcheon 34). Scholars have also discussed parody as a genre in itself, excluding any recognition of its broad scope. Lastly, the term "parody" has been used interchangeably with genres such as pastiche (Hutcheon 38), burlesque and travesty (Hutcheon 25), potentially obscuring its meaning.

Essentially, parody has been a point of contention between literary theorists since Sophocles. Despite the controversy, Linda Hutcheon's postmodern theory illuminates parody's elusive definition. Her exploration into the philosophy behind parody in modern literature, art and even architecture lends itself well to an overall understanding of its intent, function and format. In particular, Hutcheon's theories on how parody relates to the comprehension of and coming to terms with our histories will play an essential role in understanding Brussig's efforts to reconcile past and present in his work.

Irony and parody work on two levels, the surface or foreground and the implied or background (34). The primary level is essentially the text itself and the secondary level is the work or works it references. Despite the multilayeredness of the operations of parody and irony, all meaning is derived from context (34). Since the origin of parody, the consensus has been that in order to understand it, the readership needs an inherent knowledge of the

subject under analysis (Hutcheon 2). In this way, Brussig's parody and irony function in a duplicitous manner. Brussig's work is able to function on two different levels depending on the reader's familiarity or relationship with the former East. For the formerly West German audience reading Brussig's parodies of the former East, *Helden wie wir* undermines the firmly held stereotypes propagated in the West before 1989 and in united Germany today. For the formerly East German reader, Brussig's inversion of Socialist stereotypes remembers subtle forms of daily resistance in the GDR, while recalling the East German everyday and returning the forgotten East German identity.

The definition of parody according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* reads:

1. a. *trans.* To compose a parody on (a literary or artistic work, author, or genre); to turn into parody; to produce or constitute a humorously exaggerated imitation of; to ridicule or satirize.
- b. *intr.* To create or compose a parody or parodies. Now rare.
2. *trans.* In extended use: to imitate in a way that is a parody; esp. to copy or mimic for comic or derisive effect; to make fun of, satirize.

Although these definitions are useful in identifying much of the parody in contemporary literature, Linda Hutcheon offers a better understanding of postmodern parody in *The Theory of Parody* and argues that the traditional definitions are insufficient and misleading (Hutcheon 32). She points out that her primary issue with the traditional definition of parody is the implicit need for ridicule (6). Although mockery is often prevalent, it is not necessary and the disparity between Hutcheon's definition and the traditional definition leads to a different understanding of the function of parody in Brussig's work.

Hutcheon's definition of parody stems from the word's Greek derivative. She identifies that the word parody is derived from the Greek noun *parodia* meaning "counter-song." She asserts what many theorists on parody have before her, but she elaborates by saying that when the prefix is isolated, deeper meaning into the word's origin and significance can be

deduced. *Para*, meaning “counter” or “against,” establishes that parody is the “opposition or contrast between texts” (32), but unlike many theorists, Hutcheon reveals a second meaning to the Greek *para*. According to Hutcheon, *para* can also mean “besides,” a definition that is inconvenient and often neglected in the theory of her contemporaries and predecessors. *Para*, she explains, implies an intimacy with rather than an aggressive position against the background text (32).

This is an important distinction when looking at Brussig’s work because to dismiss his use of parody as simply a form of ridicule would not only be trivializing, it would also miss the point. There is also an element of respect in much of Brussig’s parody. *Helden wie wir* parodies the literary traditions of divided and united Germany alike. According to the historical definition of parody, this would imply that his intent is to ridicule the work of many prominent German and North American authors, but Brussig’s motives are not entirely belittling. In many regards, the act of parody itself is a form of tribute and this is both how Hutcheon understands it and how Brussig employs it.

Brussig very much admired the work of JD Salinger and John Irving. *Helden wie wir*’s parody of the plights of Portnoy in *Portnoy’s Complaint* and the comic reference to *The World According to Garp* are respectful incarnations of his favourite authors, not examples of literary ridicule. Brussig borrows Roth’s intermingling of politics and private from *Portnoy’s Complaint* to explore Germany’s history as a whole: “If Philip Roth depicts repression in a Jewish childhood and education by having a disturbed person talking about his life, why should that not be possible for someone socialized in the GDR” (Nause 168). He also composes the characters of Klaus’ constipated father and caring mother, who like in *Portnoy’s Complaint*, desires to enter her son’s locked bathroom (Nause 168), using Roth’s novel as a model.

From *The World According to Garp*, Brussig borrows Irving's sexually explicit motifs (Prager 984) and the name of the main character (Hollmer 4) to mock Grabs who only names his children monosyllabic names starting with G. Brussig also takes from a number of other novels including those by JD Salinger, Henry Miller (Zachau "Wie Amerika") and Charles Bukowski (Prager 984) to develop his characters and narrative structure. Other invocations of Brussig's parody function to ridicule, but in comparison to the amount of authors Brussig parodies out of respect, the number is quite few. Hutcheon's understanding of parody incorporates the possibility of respect that other theorists have dismissed and with it, we can better understand how Brussig's literature incorporates the literary traditions that went before him in order to move beyond them.

The parody in *Helden wie wir* manifests itself in a number of ways. Outside of the parody of specific authors and texts, Brussig also parodies literary conventions. Brussig explicitly parodies the German tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. Narrated in the first person, the story follows a young man from childhood to adult recounting not his personal development, but the development of his perversion. Matthais Mattusek writes that *Helden wie wir* is "die Karikatur auf alle großen Bildungsromane, denn dieser Klaus Uhltscht ist im Grunde schon mit seiner Geburt fertig" (210). This parody is even more focused in that he parodies a specific version of the *Bildungsroman*, the *Schelmenroman* (Hollmer 3). Traditionally a fictitious autobiography, the *Schelmenroman* or picaresque novel is told from the first person perspective and according to Bernd Neuman, recounts the fictional life story of an outcast (Nause 158).

The *Bildungsroman* dates back to the eighteenth century, but Brussig also parodies two more recent German literary traditions. First of all, Brussig's *Helden wie wir* parodies the Germanic

tradition of treating “the public world of historical events as primary object over and above the apparently private business of sexuality,” which includes the works of Günter Grass as well as that of Heinrich Böll (Prager 984). Secondly, Brussig parodies the East German literary tradition as modeled after either Socialist realism or Christa Wolf’s “subjective authenticity” (Fröhlich 21).

Thomas Brussig’s narrative parodies the East German literary legacy to its very core and does so by inverting the Socialist realism, which East German artists were mandated to adhere to. Socialist realism began in Soviet Russia in the 1920s and is often associated with the propagandistic intentions of the state’s cultural manufacturers. It was resurrected again in Socialist Germany as a cultural mandate directed at all the artists of the GDR. Socialist realism was defined as the “[k]ünstlerische Richtung und Schaffensmethode, die die Wirklichkeit in ihrer revolutionären Entwicklung, in ihrer Bewegung zur sozialistischen und kommunistischen Gesellschaft hin künstlerisch darstellt” (Sommer 495). Its intention was to depict the “real” ideas and interests of the working people and artistically express the successes of Socialism in overcoming capitalism (495). Brussig plays with the expectations of Socialist realism literally and liberally. He takes the East German tradition of writing novels about the proletariat prevailing over capitalism and inverts it. Instead of *Helden wie wir* focusing on the trials and tribulations of a working class family, it revolves around a bourgeois household. And instead of the narrative recounting the private and public conquering of capitalism, the story of *Helden wie wir* recalls the fall of Socialism and the triumph of capitalism. Lastly, instead of depicting the “Darstellung der unversöhnlichen Kritik der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft,” Brussig’s novel is a reconcilable critique of Socialism.

Brussig uses his inversion of Socialist realism to distance himself from the East German literary legacy, but he also creates a disparity between his work and that of the GDR by parodying some prominent themes of the East German literary tradition. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Brussig's novel parodies the tradition of the "antifascist father figure" and the family narrative that are characteristic of East German literature. *Helden wie wir* also takes from a number of iconic East German historical characters. Brussig references and then parodies the story of Ernst Thälman or Teddy and thus, as Fröhlich writes, "the legacy of antifascist heroism" (25). He also parodies the song "The Little Trumpeter," using the name "kleiner Trompeter" as yet another nickname for Klaus' penis. By parodying one of East Germany's Socialist hymns, Brussig also mocks the GDR's "ideological groundwork" (Fröhlich 25). Lastly, *Helden wie wir* also borrows from a number of well-known East German literary works, including Christa Wolf's writings and Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (Hollmer 2). Brussig not only manipulates the conventions of the East German novel, he appropriates and twists the narrative structure and content of Christa Wolf's literary work. Brussig even goes so far as to bastardize the title of Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963). Wolf's novel is the author's response to the erection of the Berlin Wall as embodied in the character of Rita and Brussig uses a variation of the book's title for Chapter Seven, perverting it to read *Der geheilte Pimmel*. In *Helden wie wir*, Wolf's novel about the demise of a utopia becomes a merciless farce under Brussig's parody (Magenau 44). Brussig also incorporates Wolf's *Was bleibt* into the background text of *Helden wie wir* and inverts it. Instead of the protagonist being watched, Klaus and his fellow *Stasi* men become the watchers.

Brussig manipulates Christa Wolf's work for two reasons. The first is the minor but more apparent reason, to flat out degrade Wolf and her work. Brussig finds Wolf's literature

boring and undeserving of all the praise it has received (Personal Interview) and he uses his novel to belittle her. The second reason is best explained by Hutcheon, who in quoting Freud, describes “serious parody” (54). As discussed earlier, Hutcheon’s definition of parody implies that although ridicule is often an element of parody – and in this specific case it is – it is not an inherent quality and not a necessary aspect of parody. Brussig’s parody is therefore not to necessarily ridicule Wolf, although it does in many ways. Rather, the function of Brussig’s parody is, as Hutcheon’s definition reads, to mark difference rather than similarity (6). In writing *Helden wie wir*, Brussig aimed to move beyond the kind of East German literature Christa Wolf embodies. “Um Schriftsteller zu werden, braucht man Vorbilder, aber auch Vorläufer, die man vom Sockel stoßen muß“ (Magenau 44). Brussig recognized the work of Christa Wolf as the definitive literature of East German’s previous generation. While writing his novel, in order to be a contender in East German literature, Brussig felt he needed to measure himself against the literary pillar she erected and he did this through parodying her work (Personal Interview). The fall of the Wall brought the end of East German literature as we knew it. There was no longer an East Germany to use as a reference point and neither strict censorship laws nor Socialist realism governed East German authors. In the 1990s a new type of “East German literature” emerged, one that was not restricted by the cultural officials of the GDR.

According to formalist theory, parody is one way the literary form evolves (Hutcheon 35). Brussig recalls Wolf’s texts in order to move past them and into a new and distinctly different genre of East German literature. Heide Hollmer writes that Brussig deconstructs Christa Wolf’s “altes Literatursystem” and the “Kassandra-Rhetorik der subjektiven Authentizität” (Hollmer 5). Brussig’s parody of Wolf’s emblematic example of a certain type of East German literature is the starting point of Brussig’s post-wall East German literature

or *Postalgie*, which, as will be explored in greater detail in the following chapters, is a literature that recognizes the atrocities committed by the East German state and acknowledges the strict censorship laws authors such as Wolf were writing under, but still looks back at the GDR nostalgically. Through this sort of serious parody and with his tongue-in-cheek rewriting of Christa Wolf's work, Brussig shows his respect of her position in the East German literary legacy and subverts the Socialist state she felt trapped by in hindsight through his contemporary satire. Brussig does what Wolf could not and in united Germany's political freedom, has developed a new form of "East German" literature in which he can openly criticize the state.

In her *Theory of Parody*, Linda Hutcheon proposes that parody offers a "model for the process of transfer and recognition of the past" (4). Parody revisits elements of our history, be it in literature or art, and reconstructs our connection with them. Parody's harmonious combination of praise and blame, often established through irony, results in parody's definitively critical act of reassessment and acclamation (2). Through the challenge it places on the connection between the signified, signifier and referent, parody questions and then reinvents meaning. By using recognizable elements and locatable techniques that point to earlier works, the author or artist "trans-contextualizes" (11) the reference text:

It is not a matter of nostalgic imitation of past models; it is a stylistic confrontation, a modern recording which establishes difference at the heart of similarity. No integration into a new context can avoid altering meaning and perhaps even value. (Hutcheon 8)

The author essentially appropriates the original meaning of the background text, places it in a new context and through the critical distance between the old and the new texts creates new meaning. Thus parody, in this act of reassociation and redefinition of words, literary conventions and historical meanings, reevaluates and reconstitutes our cultural memories

and notions of the past. This is an important feature in Brussig's work, which focuses on the "disrupted" history (Hell 912) of the GDR. Additionally, in noting how this variety of parody is not necessarily a nostalgic endeavour, Hutcheon's definition assists in differentiating Brussig's work from that of *Ostalgie*.

Thomas Brussig's texts are based on this understanding of parody. He employs parody and satire to reevaluate East Germany's Socialist history. He recalls the often negative cultural connotations of his native GDR and aims to deconstruct them by incorporating and then inverting them. *Helden wie wir* explores East German stereotypes through their inversion and in doing so deconstructs them.

Hutcheon defines parody as a form of imitation that is characterized by ironic inversion (6). In *Helden wie wir*, Brussig parodies the former GDR in that the historical context remains the same, but characters are inverted versions of their stereotypes. The *Stasi* men, for example, instead of being organized, meticulous and semi-omniscient, are three laughable caricatures (Nause 165). Their priorities lay in the plentiful number of *Salzstangen* (*Helden wie wir* 150) and their observational skills are reduced to an obsession over creating superlative abbreviations (*Helden wie wir* 181). Brad Prager suggests that Lieutenant Euert's misunderstanding of the "negation of negation" is a teasing reference to Hegel (991) and there is nothing *wunderlich* about Major Wunderlich (*Helden wie wir* 150). Instead of operating on the assumption that the *Stasi* was well-informed on the operations of the state, down to the comings and goings of their neighbours, Klaus professes himself to be the least informed person in the world, never really sure if he's actually a *Stasi* operative. Tanja Nause writes that although he seems like a prototype of the young East German man, he is in fact, "the staggering parody" (164). Essentially, Klaus is the caricature of a GDR citizen. He is simultaneously average, a

complete loser and potential Nobel Prize winner (Hollmer 3). “Brussig brings to the fore the absurd banality of the *Stasis* evil doings” (Fröhlich 26) and disarms them with laughter.

Everything and everyone in *Helden wie wir* is so typically East German that not only does it, as Nause suggests, become a comic modern tale full of caricatures (164), it also illustrates how foolish and inaccurate these stereotypes are.

Since the classical period through to the Renaissance and even still today, the process of repetition has been seen as didactic (Hutcheon 37). That is, the act of imitation teaches. It is here that the primary function of Brussig’s parody becomes clear. Hutcheon’s definition of parody is essentially repetition and thus parody in itself is an educational tool. Therefore, it becomes clear that Brussig uses parody to instruct his readers. But how he employs parody to educate deserves further exploration.

Helden wie wir’s inverted stereotypes of East German society simultaneously recall our cultural memories of the former GDR and reverse them to illustrate something new. With the distance imposed by the decades that have passed, we observe these characters differently. It is this difference between our past notions and our present knowledge that develops into a greater understanding of East German culture and history. This insight in turn functions in two ways, first by normalizing the East German experience for Brussig’s West German audience and second by returning a distinctly East German identity to those whose identity vanished with the fall of the Wall.

The exploration of Brussig’s ironic and textual parody in *Helden wie wir* proves an essential tool in understanding the novel. He parodies the literary conventions of the former GDR as well as the conventions of how we think and talk about East Germany: how history books portray its political past; how documentary film illustrates its daily life and how literature

describes the *Stasi*. Brussig's parody of East German stereotypes points to an incongruity between our traditional notions of the GDR and the reality East German citizens lived in. But Brussig's parody also illustrates a more important aspect of his literature. *Helden wie wir* satires the political systems of the GDR and as Hutcheon asserts, parody functions as a "disarming but effective vehicle for social satire" (44). Through parody, Brussig satirizes the Socialist state within which he was raised and within which such critical statements could never have been voiced publicly. Brussig uses his freedom today to do what so many couldn't before 1989. Linda Fröhlich references Mikhail Bakhtin and his work on Rabelais to discuss the medieval tradition of subversive public laughter (22) and through Bakhtin's theory on carnival laughter, the subversive nature of *Helden wie wir* becomes evident.

Bakhtin's book *Rabelais and his World* examines the carnivalesque spirit in the work of the sixteenth century French author. Rabelais' literature explored the folk culture of medieval Europe and Bakhtin's introduction is an in-depth analysis of how carnival laughter operated as "a boundless world of humour forms and manifestations" which "opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture" (Bakhtin 4). Rabelais' carnival humour sheds light on how public laughter undermines state authority and when this concept is applied to Brussig's novel, carnival laughter illustrates how *Helden wie wir* functions in subverting the East German state in hindsight.

Bakhtin writes that in medieval Europe, the carnival historically held an equally important position as the serious official ceremonies it parodied (6) and through the analysis of Bakhtin's theories, the same holds true in Brussig's novel. Some could say that today, Brussig's parody of the state is more important than the state's actual history for it is an attempt to come to terms with that past. The carnival offered a second life to its participants,

in which “no dogma, no authoritarian, no narrow-minded seriousness” could exist (3). One was immersed in “the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance” (9), when those characteristics weren’t prevalent in the everyday. The carnival was the “world turned inside out,” offering a reality impossible in everyday life (10).

As a novel, *Helden wie wir* is a carnival of *Stasi* caricatures. He mocks the sanctimonious ceremonies of the former GDR and in doing so incites laughter – carnival laughter – which involves him as the writer, the reader, as well as the greater public.

This laughter is able to break through the narrow individual perspective one usually finds in traditional autobiographical writing and to open a much broader perspective on the GDR. *Helden wie wir* is an open invitation to remember and learn about the GDR, and to do so with pleasure – a sure recipe for future recollection. Brussig’s laughter is ultimately to be taken seriously. (Nause 170)

The carnivalesque spirit in *Helden wie wir* acts as a pressure release for all the former citizens of East Germany and provides the same “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth[s] and established order” (10) that the carnival accomplished in medieval Europe.

Bakhtin’s analysis of Rabelais’ parody cites one key difference between medieval and contemporary parody: through Rabelais’ parody, his carnival laughter incorporated the people and not just the individual. Making an argument similar in sentiment to Linda Hutcheon, Bakhtin writes that “comic verbal composition” (5) or medieval parody is manifested in “festive laughter:”

Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated “comic” event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival’s participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay participants. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival. (Bakhtin 11)

As Bakhtin states above, carnival laughter doesn’t involve individuals, it incorporates “all the

people.” He writes that it is theatre without the footlights, as it “does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators” (7). The carnival is not an event observed by the people; it is a spectacle in which the people participate. Bakhtin writes that contemporary satire places the one who laughs above that which is mocked, making it a private reaction. Rabelais’ comedy on the other hand, does not differentiate between those who are laughing and those who are laughed at (12). This is a very important element in Brussig’s novel, for *Helden wie wir* is a means through which East Germans may come to terms with their own history and if their laughter placed them outside of the mockery, it would not succeed in its *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Many East German citizens were conscious of their own oppression. Not to acknowledge their roles as individuals who supported the system, even if only in their passivity, would continue to pose the question of guilt instead of confronting it and moving on.

Again making a statement similar to Hutcheon, Bakhtin argues that Rabelais’ parody as reflected in the carnivalesque spirit of his literature differs from contemporary parody in that it is not negative: “... the carnival is far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humour denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture” (11). The carnivalesque spirit in Brussig’s parody of the GDR keeps with Rabelais’ tradition of renewal. Brussig uses the carnivalesque spirit to incorporate everyone in his ambivalent laughter and in doing so attempts to overcome the tumultuous history of the East German state.

Hutcheon-esque parody functions on the level of the individual, primarily for Brussig himself, in terms of personal retribution, but in taking into account the carnival laughter incited by Brussig’s parody of the *Stasi*, *Helden wie wir* also functions on a public level. Although

Hutcheonesque parody and carnival laughter operate differently, their results are nearly the same and both function as a release through laughter. Fröhlich writes that although an analogy between Brussig and Rabelais' work would be ahistorical, they function similarly in that "the Rabelaisian carnivalesque culture of popular laughter served as an implicit criticism, as a heretical counter-concept to the non-carnivalesque despotism of the Stalinist era and its perpetuation through the earnestness of the socialist discourse" (Fröhlich 22). To return to Freud, he writes that laughter manifests itself "in the affirmation of unrestrained physicality and the release of repressed effects" (22). For the citizens of the GDR, this repression is the result of years of political oppression and only with laughter can it be released.

Freud's theory on comedy as release and rebellion specifically pertains to "insulting rejoinders" or comic rebuttals.

The prevention of invective or of insulting rejoinders by external circumstances is such a common case that tendentious jokes are especially favoured in order to make aggressiveness or criticism possible again persons in exalted positions who claim to exercise authority. The joke then represents a rebellion against that authority, a liberation from its pressures. The charm of caricatures lies in this same factor; we laugh at them even if they are unsuccessful simply because we count rebellion against authority as a merit. (Freud 104)

If we perceive Brussig's work to be not only a novel about GDR, but also a form of rejoinder enacted as a rebuttal to East Germany's existence, interpreting the rebellious nature of *Helden wie wir* is simple. It becomes clear that through Hutcheonesque parody it was not only an act of reconciliatory rebellion for Brussig to write *Helden wie wir*. Through the tradition of Rabelais' carnival laughter, it has become a means of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* for the former East German citizens who read it.

Chapter 3: *Helden wie wir*: a Penile Parody

Thomas Brussig's most successful novel *Helden wie wir*, published in 1995, is a groundbreaking example of *Wendeliteratur* and one of the best-selling East German novels since the fall of the Wall (Cook 158). Called "[der] heißersehnte Wenderoman" by Christof Dieckmann ("Klaus"), and hailed as the "Medienereignis des Winters 1995" (Zachau, "Das Volk jedenfalls war's nicht!" 387) as well as "das literarische Ereignis zur Wende schlechthin" (Meinel 232), very few novels written during the 1990s aroused as much attention as *Helden wie wir*. By the autumn after its release, it was already in its eighth printing (Neuhaus 158). Within one year of its publication, Brussig's novel was adapted for stage and *Helden wie wir* premiered at the *Berliner Kammerspiele* on April 27th, 1996 (Weber 143). On November 9th, 1999, exactly a decade after the Berlin Wall fell, the novel's cinematic adaptation directed by Sebastian Person opened in theatres (Magenau 43). Jörg Fröhling's bibliography *Wende-Literatur* documented over 1000 autobiographical texts written within five years of the fall of the Wall exploring the East German experience (Nause 154), but the so-called "*Wendeboom*" (Lendanff) did not reach its pinnacle until the release of *Helden wie wir*. Essentially, until Brussig's publication, only a few texts effectively discussed issues surrounding the rise and fall of the GDR. Christoph Hein's "critical depictions of the East German everyday" (Fröhlich 21), Ulrich Plenzdorf's stories of the Socialist working class (Fröhlich 21) and Ingo Schulze's *Simple Stories* were all competing to be the most influential examples of *Wendeliteratur*. But even five years after the fall of the Wall, readers were still awaiting the novel that would definitively encompass the *Wende*. Even Günter Grass's self-proclaimed *Wenderoman*, *Ein weites Feld* (1995), missed the mark and was received with disappointment (Zachau, "Das Volk jedenfalls war's nicht!" 387). Essentially, not since

Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt?* had an author made such a lasting impact on how we think and talk about former East Germany.

But where many novels failed in their attempts to understand the *Wende* in literature, often due to too strong an emphasis on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or the prevalence of West German authors tackling the predominantly East German subject, Brussig's novel *Helden wie wir* offered a new perspective. What changed with the release of *Helden wie wir* was the manner in which the topic of the GDR was approached. Reinhild Meinel writes that *Helden wie wir* illustrates how "über das eigene Versagen geredet werden muß - und daß dies sogar durchaus komisch sein kann" (234). In *Helden wie wir*, the *Wendegeschichte* became not a story of heroes but of anti-heroes (Zachau, "Das Volk jedenfalls war's nicht!" 388), where the protagonist is "einer der mitläuft – so sehr, daß er auch Antreiber sein könnte" (Meinel 233). Brussig's "burlesk[er] Abschied von der DDR" (Straubel, Szabo and Wendtorf 59), effectively changed our way of remembering East Germany and how we approach the notion of memory.

Brussig's novel has been acclaimed *the Wenderoman*, but it can also be read as the complete opposite. Achim Geisenhanslüke actually identifies *Helden wie wir* as an *Anti-Wenderoman* which attempts to free itself and East German literature of the all-too prevalent *Ostalgie*-sentiments and he quotes Brussig himself saying: "Wir Ostler müssen aus dieser Ostalgie herauskommen. Das war ein wichtiger Grund, dieses Buch zu schreiben" (86). In an interview with *Die Tageszeitung*, Brussig states that *Helden wie wir* "ist ja auch kein Wenderoman, in dem Ursachen und Verlauf der Wende beschreiben werden. Das ist ein Buch, das ich aus Wut und Enttäuschung über die nicht stattgefundene

Vergangenheitsbewältigung geschrieben habe” (Neubauer). Brussig continues to describe his novel and discusses how it approaches the concept of failure:

Ich stellte eine literarische Figur her, die sich mit ihrem Versagen auseinandersetzt. Sie hat die schlimmste Mitläuferbiographie, die ich mir ausdenken konnte, und erzählt das so freimütig, daß jeder ehemalige Mitläufer nichts beschönigen muß, sondern sein viel kleineres Sündenregister erzählen kann und vielleicht dabei ein Stückchen klüger wird. (Neubauer)

The initial concept behind the *Wenderoman* is that it is a novel which should encompass the events surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall. *Helden wie wir*, on the other hand, attempts to deconstruct many of the ideas we associate with the end of the GDR. It encourages discussion and the telling of individual stories – not of fabricated victories but of authentic failures. Thus *Helden wie wir* is Brussig’s first attempt at *Postalgie* literature. Brussig’s novel is after all not an effort to describe the fall of the Wall, for according to Brussig: “Der Fall der Mauer war da nur ein Moment unter vielen” (“Ich habe einen Traum”); it is a literary medium which deals with the repercussions of November 9th, 1989, the end of the GDR and how we remember former East Germany. This concept, which Brussig explores further in the novel and cinematic adaptation of *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (1999), works in opposition to the *Ostalgie* phenomenon in order to deconstruct it and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Brussig’s first novel, *Wasserfarben*, was published under the pseudonym Cordt Berneburger in 1991 (Hollmer 2). In a semi-autobiographical fashion (Personal Interview), *Wasserfarben* explores the search for identity and direction of Anton Glienicke, an East Berlin high school student. It follows Anton as he attempts to reconcile his desire to become a journalist with the reality of living in a state that employs a strict censorship policy. The novel is a sentimental *Abiturientenroman* (Speicher), which employs a realism that disappears in Brussig’s following two novels. In contrast, *Helden wie wir* verges on “burlesque folly” (Fröhlich 21) in

Brussig's comic narrative that simultaneously reads like a pseudo-autobiographical monologue simulating an East German oral history (Fröhlich 22, Nause 163) and a parody of the confessions of a *Mitläufer* (Hollmer 3).

Carl Weber attributes *Helden wie wir's* success to Brussig's "deadpan presentation of life in the former GDR that neither repeat[s] the clichés of the Cold War mentality nor indulge[s] in the nostalgia which ha[s] been growing among East German citizens during the years since the nation's unification" (143). Brussig uses comedy, satire, parody and youth narratives to explore the successes, disappointments, mechanisms of oppression (Zachau, "Das Volk jedenfalls war's nicht!" 389) as well as the inevitable demise of former East Germany. And through these narrative techniques he has redefined East German literature.

Helden wie wir recounts the story of how young Klaus Uhltzsch essentially fells the Berlin Wall by revealing himself to the border guards. It is written in the first person and told from the perspective of Klaus as an adult taking part in a *New York Times* interview looking back at the role he played in the downfall of East Germany. Mr. Kitzelstein, the American reporter who has come to unravel the mystery of East Germany's rapid demise, never speaks but is present throughout the entire narrative by either reference or assumption. The structure is that of a recorded interview, which opens with Klaus discussing his childhood. Through the subsequent six chapters, the reader becomes increasingly familiar with Klaus' idiosyncrasies: his emblematically Socialist family, his paranoia, his perversions and his obsessions with winning the Nobel Prize. Through his father's secret position as a high-up Stasi official, Klaus joins the *Ministerium für Staatsicherheit* and through a series of comic misunderstandings, he first unintentionally and then with all consciousness develops his sexual perversions in the name of Socialism. Klaus' naiveté uncovers the inhumanity of the Socialist system (Zachau,

“Das Volk jedenfalls war’s nicht!” 388) and his sexual perversions, honed through his service to the state, essentially bring an end to communism in Europe.

The narrative structure of *Helden wie wir* is unique because although it is a novel, it is written as if it were an interview and reads as if it were a megalomaniacal monologue. Each of *Helden wie wir*'s seven chapters is the transcription of a single tape of the supposed meeting between Mr. Kitzelstein and Klaus Uhltzsch, who confesses to being the “missing link” to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the GDR (*Helden wie wir* 323). Mr. Kitzelstein, whose name is a play on words alluding to both the German word “*Kitzler*” meaning tickler and the slang word for clitoris, is a silent listener who might simply be a figment of the narrator’s overexcited imagination (Fröhlich 22). As a *New York Times* reporter, Mr. Kitzelstein is the novel’s sole representative of the West. He is the means through which Klaus’ story might be read across the American continent and thus Klaus’ monologue is the narrator talking at the West, recounting his side of the *Mauergeschichte* – the East German side of the story. Brussig’s narrative structure implies a western interest in the demise of the former GDR and it could be argued that this implication in itself creates such interest. By suggesting that the *New York Times* is intrigued by Klaus’ story, the reader assumes the *New York Times* would in fact publish such an article. This act of creating interest in the Western reader is important because it normalizes the East German experience transcontinentally and pushes it into the cultural memory of the rest of the world. Additionally, through Brussig’s narrative technique, the perception is that the reader actually *becomes* the interviewer. Ulrike Bremer writes: “Brussig stellt so die Interaktion zwischen Erzähler und Leser unmittelbar über den Interviewpartner und dessen Leserschaft her” (35).

There is a fine line between an autobiographical novel and picaresque tale, where the dividing element lies in memories, either real or invented (Nause 157). Brussig's literature teeters on this genre boundary and functions as both an autobiographical and picaresque story. Although *Helden wie wir* is distinctly fiction, all autobiographies are arguably to a large extent invention, just as fiction is often partly autobiographical (Nause 157). In Christine Casenino's article "Autobiographisch grundierte Rückblicke auf die DDR nach der Jahrtausendwende," she quotes Timothy Dow Adams: "Autobiography is the story of an attempt to reconcile one's life with one's self and is not, therefore, meant to be taken as historically accurate but as metaphorically authentic." Consequently, Brussig's novel has a duplicitous effect: as a pseudo-autobiography, *Helden wie wir* criticizes the dominant perspective on the GDR while seeking vengeance through the comic and satirical portrayal of East Germany's oppressors; as a picaresque tale, on the other hand, Brussig's novel metaphorically explores the perversion of the Socialist state through the perpetual comic failure of his protagonist, Klaus Uhltscht.

Whether *Helden wie wir's* narrative structure is that of a picaresque novel, an autobiography or both is in the end immaterial. For regardless of the literary structure, the most important feature in Brussig's novel and much of the literature written on East Germany after the fall of the Wall is its "autobiographical discourse" (Nause 158). In choosing this genre to fictively explore East Germany's controversial past, Brussig is able to examine the *Wende* in an atypical fashion and in fact comes to terms with its forty years as well as its sudden demise. Tanja Nause writes that firstly the autobiography can be a way of taking revenge.

There appears to be a particular need for autobiographical writing in times of cultural change. Why is this? Some preliminary assumptions can be made. Firstly, memoirs can be, to a certain degree, a way of taking revenge. The advantage is that the 'coming to terms' with the past takes place in a private

sphere and, in this way, possible interference can be avoided until the date of publication. (Nause 156)

Thomas Brussig's novel is thus a means of seeking personal retribution. In my interview with Brussig, he described *Helden wie wir* as a means of regurgitating the indoctrination of the Socialist state: "...womit ... ich wirklich auch mal alles auch wieder ausgekotzt habe, womit ich indoktriniert wurde" (Personal Interview). Through writing his novel, Brussig came to terms with the history of the GDR as he experienced it.

By exploring Klaus' story from a first person perspective, Brussig not only takes his revenge against the East German system that oppressed, censored and persecuted many of its citizens; he contradicts "the official statement" that was expounded by media and academia alike in the 1990s on life in the former GDR (Nause 156). Brussig depicts East German "operations" comically and through the laughter he incites, the *Stasi* is disarmed. He portrays Honecker as sickly and juvenile and through metaphor explores many of the GDR's political weaknesses and failures.

Brussig's application of the autobiographical discourse goes one step further in that *Helden wie wir* is in fact not an autobiography at all; rather, it is a parody of the genre. Bremer writes:

Das Bild der DDR ist in *Helden wie wir* ein Spiegel der verzerrten Sichtweise der Erzählerfigur, das in seiner Verfremdung einerseits und szenischen Realismus andererseits die Künstlichkeit des sozialistischen Systems satirisch zuspitzt. Brussig macht durch die Ironisierung der Erzählfigur deutlich, daß es falsch wäre, eine direkte Rückbeziehung zu den Bürgern der DDR herzustellen. (36)

In her article, Nause explores how the autobiography is employed as the author's "opportunity to write a new version" of his or her "former commitment to the GDR and its socialist ideas" (156). Brussig manipulates this discourse to do the exact opposite and

illuminates the very act of rewriting one's past. As quoted earlier, Brussig remarks that his novel illustrates "daß jeder ehemalige Mitläufer nichts beschönigen muß" (Neubauer).

3.1 The Media of Manipulation

To say the media are an important aspect of *Helden wie wir* is an understatement and the use of a recording device as the means through which Klaus' story is told is a vital element in understanding Brussig's novel. First of all, the recording device is one of the primary allusions used to establish the novel's epistemological criticism of institutionized media.

Helden wie wir references the press both specifically in the novel's content as well as generally by referencing the tradition of the newspaper interview and the importance of recording devices in the history of the media industry. One media recording in particular is pivotal here. At a press conference on the eve of November 9th, 1989, Günter Schabowski declared that East German citizens were free to travel outside East German borders and in his confusion he stated that this was effective immediately (Nause 163). It was originally intended that the policy would come into effect the morning of November 10th only for those with a passport or visa – and in an orderly fashion (Dennis 288). But Schabowski's error resulted in crowds forming in the thousands within the hour at the border gates that led into the West. Without instructions from their superiors and without experience with such large numbers, the border guards were “compelled” to open the gates (Weber 142). Thus ended the forty-year reign of the GDR and communism in Europe – with the broadcast of the media recording of a confused SED official.

Brussig's use of a recording device effectively recalls the real reason for the demise of the GDR, but it is also a means of reclaiming the device itself. There is another strong association to be made between recording devices and the GDR: “To tape or to be taped was always associated with the methods of the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS), the Stasi” (Nause 162) and as this year's Oscar-winning *Das Leben der Anderen* illustrates, it was used

quite extensively. This dimension of reversing the East German practice of taping citizens inverts the result. Instead of valuable information on the lives of private citizens being extradited through unethical means, the “secrets” of the *Stasi* are revealed. This reversal is an important feature in Brussig’s novel because it allows the East German population to reclaim the recording device that had previously exploited them.

The recording device is also used in opposition to our traditional means of learning about the past. Namely, the television and print media play a vital role in how we understand history and with specific reference to the fall of the Wall, the *Wende* was published on magazine covers and featured in news reports not only directly after November 9th, but also a decade later and even today. In his narrative, Brussig criticizes this mediated experience of history and replaces it with a new way of uncovering the East German past – with oral histories of the GDR and the stories of its individuals.

The media’s pivotal role in Brussig’s novel is not only clear in terms of its structure. As a child, much of the protagonist’s youthful daydreaming is spent imagining the headlines he will one day make. He obsesses over *Klaus als Titelbild* and one of his most influential experiences is becoming a *Meister von morgen*. Klaus later learns that what he had thought was the long awaited recognition of his exceptionality was in fact a political ploy that his father orchestrated to deface a prominent politician (*Helden wie wir* 81). This disillusionment is key in decoding *Helden wie wir*’s media motif. The fact that the protagonist realizes the way in which the media are used as an instrument to manipulate public opinion directs the reader to make a similar conclusion. Brussig’s novel deconstructs the negative associations propagated by the media, but it is important to recognize that this is not to illustrate that East Germany was wholly good – for many parts of the government were overtly corrupt and no East

German citizen could make such a claim honestly – but that it was not altogether bad either. Brussig’s novel begins this endeavour by attacking East German stereotypes to illustrate how ridiculous such generalizations are.

The primary way in which Brussig combats East German stereotypes and negative associations constructed by the media is *with* the media. The media created the negative image of the GDR and Brussig uses the same media to launch his counter strike, with Klaus’ interview for the *New York Times*. Brussig uses his novel to make a mockery of journalism and he does so through his use of irony and sarcasm. His tongue-in-cheek reference to the “Beharrlichkeit des amerikanischen investigativen Journalismus” (*Helden wie wir* 6) alludes to Klaus’ lack of faith in the media industry and that Klaus has the audacity to assume that the story of his penis is newsworthy, let alone Nobel-prize worthy, is in itself laughable. Brussig mocks the same Western establishment from which the West acquired all their “truths” on the former East. Much of the Western press on the former GDR represented real issues in the Socialist state such as the treatment of political prisoners, strict censorship and culture of spying, but it never painted the whole picture. And this is what Brussig takes issue with in his writings: that the GDR has traditionally been represented as nothing but a *Stasi*-state.

Brussig uses the conventions of the media, documentaries and textbooks on the history of East Germany to reconstruct the popular perception of the GDR. Typically, the history of the GDR is taught in the West only in terms of its political oppression, Socialism and the *Stasi*. In *Helden wie wir*, Brussig caricatures this tradition. As the stereotypes would predict, Klaus’ father, Eberhard Uhltzsch, secretly works as a *Stasi* operative and the narrative revolves around his son Klaus as he grows up, enters the SED, and joins the *Stasi*. Klaus’ mother, Lucie Uhltzsch, is an enthusiastic member of the Party and an attentive, working

mother. These characters would not surprise a Western audience when reading an East German novel, but Brussig plays with our expectations. Essentially, he uses these same conventions, but in a very different way. Although the characters in *Helden wie wir* are emblematic of the stereotypes imposed on citizens of the former East and widely propagated in lecture halls and the media, rather than supporting the same negative conclusions, they lead their readers into making wholly different and unique assumptions about the GDR. *Helden wie wir* paints such a ridiculous image of the GDR as a *Stasi*-state that Brussig's readers cannot help but sit back, laugh and come to the conclusion that East German citizens thought their government was just as perverse as the rest of the world did.

3.2 (Anti)Fascist Fathers and Socialist Mothers: the Uhltscht Family Allegory

One of the unifying elements of conformist East German literature is, according to Julia Hell, the family narrative (915). Her essay “History as Trauma” examines East German literature’s preoccupations with the family and specifically, its focus on the image of the father as the antifascist hero.

In the creation of a new post 1945 ideology, the GDR distanced itself from National Socialism and the Third Reich through various means, but primarily through the Socialist ideology’s inherent antifascism and the antifascist hero (Dennis 18). In reorienting Socialism’s ideological focus to that of the family instead of the state, they disassociated themselves further from Nazi Germany.

In her article, Hell writes a short history of Western Europe’s “body politic.” She explains that before the democratic revolution, which was set in motion by the French Revolution, the king’s body represented the identity and unity of the regime: “This representation was in turn founded on the image of society itself as a body, a structured and hierarchical organization of different parts into an organic whole” (917). She alleges that in the process of the democratic revolution this body politic disappeared. With the decapitation of the kings, the image of the monarch’s body as representative of the people was severed (Hell 917). With the rise of National Socialism, the democratic order was abolished and Hitler became the sole figurehead of German society. Essentially, the Hitler worship that occurred during the Third Reich resurrected the imperial body politic that had died with the democratic revolution. Hell notes that in the GDR, in order to avoid yet another fascist body politic, East German ideology focused not on an all-powerful individual but on the

family. Despite the difference, a body politic was still very much evident, but this time it was centered on the body of the father (Hell 920). This element of East German ideology is marked in Brussig's novel *Helden wie wir* in a very distinct way. Klaus' family not only functions as an allegory of German politics; through Eberhard Uhltzsch, Brussig also plays with the East German body politic.

With the ideological orientation turned inward on the family, the "founding paternal narratives" of East German literature focused on the antifascist hero, which manifested itself in the father figure (Hell 914). The most widely published and disseminated literature in East Germany were Willi Bredel's *Die Väter, Die Söhne, Die Enkel*, three novels following a family from 1871 to 1948. First published in 1946, Bredel's trilogy focuses on the social democratic origins of the family. Over the forty years of the GDR twenty-five editions of the *Die Väter* were published and it became required reading in the East German school system (Hell 915). Brussig's novel takes from this tradition of the family narrative and manipulates the image of the antifascist father to depict him as quite the opposite. Although Klaus' father is apparently a stand-up *Stasimann*, who even brings his son into the "family business," he is portrayed as a jerk with distinctly fascist characteristics. These fascist elements not only undermine the Socialist ideology, they also create a link between Klaus' father and his generation's National Socialist history. Eberhard Uhltzsch is not portrayed as an antifascist hero but as an antifascist doofus. When his son claims to receive bed sheets as the prize for a writing contest, his father suspects political subversion and the failure of the Socialist economical plan, not that his son is merely going through puberty and attempting to keep his nocturnal emissions a secret (*Helden wie wir* 88-89).

In a manner independent of its parodic nature, *Helden wie wir* criticizes the GDR through an allegorical reading of Klaus' household: the Uhltscht family private story is Germany's political history.

Brussig's depiction of a philistine family idyll gradually going awry offers a detailed satirical depiction of the psychopathology of the East German family that adds up to a harsh semiserious diagnosis of East German Society. (Fröhlich 23)

Klaus' father and mother represent the German fatherland and the Russian motherland respectively. Eberhard Uhltscht, with his unfeeling demeanor, represents German fascism and *Das Vaterland* first under National Socialism and later under Socialism; Klaus' mother on the other hand, with her meticulousness, her hate of jeans and wholly un-German dislike for football, is the Mother Russia representation of Soviet Germany's hypermoralism. The confusion of the public and private spheres is furthered in the Uhltscht family in that both parents serve the same function inside and outside of the house, both privately and publicly. Lucie Uhltscht is the hygienist in her home and at school and Eberhard Uhltscht polices his household and the state (Prager 993). Bremer writes: "Mit ihrer autoritären Erziehung bilden die Eltern von Klaus die Exekutives des sozialistischen Systems und setzen dessen repressive Strukturen auf privater Ebene fort" (39).

Klaus is very critical of both parents, but he believes that his criticism of his mother is sometimes too harsh. He commends her for three reasons and they are described to Mr. Kitzelstein in three short stories. The first describes how his mother came to his second grade class to inspect the children for lice. He portrays her as an "Engel" (26) standing at the door and narrates the manner in which she explained to the children what lice are with great admiration.

Sie stellte sich wie die liebe Märchentante vor die Klasse und erzählte uns, daß es kleine Tiere gibt, *Läuse*, die schädlich sind ... Niemand muß Angst

davor haben, daß es Weh tut; sie sei zwar Ärztin, aber keine, die mit einer Spritze kommt, und wie eine Geschichtenerzählerin – und welches Kind liebt nicht Geschichtenerzähler? (27)

A metaphorical interpretation of this story uncovers an interesting approach to post 1945 Germany and the first connection between Lucie Uhltzsch and Socialism. In this circumstance, the lice can be read as a metaphor for the Nazis and the “Geheimrezepte” administered by his mother to rid the children of their lice is a metaphor for denazification. The Soviets sauntered into surrendered Germany and applied their “secret recipe” of Socialism to the children of the Third Reich. That the Nazis are referred to as lice is significant because it is along the same vein of insults they had used against the Jewish people.

The two other admirable attributes Klaus relates about his mother are her tendency to speak in principles (*Helden wie wir* 28) and “ihre Kunst des Betretens von Räumen” (*Helden wie wir* 28). Her ability to speak in principles is another way in which Lucie Uhltzsch is compared to Socialism with its idealistic political aphorisms, while her talent at walking into rooms, which could be read as a comment on the Soviet occupation of Germany, furthers the contrast between her and Eberhard Uhltzsch and thus German fascism. Klaus also describes the manner in which Eberhard Uhltzsch enters a room, but the descriptors used are almost the complete opposite of the adjectives that describe his wife’s “Kunst” (*Helden wie wir* 28-29).

Stephen Brockmann explores German hypermoralism in his article “The Politics of German Comedy” and writes that *Helden wie wir* is a critique of German hypermoralism from the East German perspective (43). Brockmann’s definition of hypermoralism is taken from the work of Heinz Bohrer (38) and is briefly defined by Bérubé, Louise as: “Concern for rules with intransigence. Desire to punish the guilty” (*International Index*). According to Brockmann, this

critique of German hypermoralism is manifested in the critique of mothers, where, Lucie Uhltscht, Christa Wolf as well as Jutta Müller embody East German hypermoralism (42-43).

Lucie Uhltscht's hypermoralism is not the only quality that aligns her with Socialism and Lucie's sexuality also explicitly links her with East German ideology. Despite her prudish nature, the sexual ideology reflected in Lucie Uhltscht's attitudes and comments towards her son is distinctly that of the East German state. The GDR was actually an unexpectedly sexually liberated country. After the fall of National Socialism, all of Germany tried to separate itself as much as possible from the Third Reich and fascism, but East and West did so in very different ways.

Under National Socialism, sex was encouraged amongst so-called "racially pure" heterosexual couples and procreation was a mandate delivered by the state. During the war, abortion was outlawed, motherhood was almost mandatory and mothers with multiple children were awarded the *Mutterkreuz* for service to their country and devotion to the cause (Eder 163). But despite the state's encouragement to procreate, "sexual activities other than for reproductive purposes were portrayed as being injurious to the body of the *Volk*" (Eder 164). After the war, West Germany rejected National Socialism by reverting to Christian values and criticized the Nazis for promoting premarital sex and promiscuity. Franz Eder writes: "In the 1950s and 1960s a conservative sexual ideology was re-established [in West Germany], anchoring sexual life in marriage once more and defining sexual matters as personal and private" (164).

East Germany distanced itself from its Nazi past through the very political ideology that defined it. Socialism rejected the fascist politics of Hitler's regime, leaving no need for ethical or moral differentiation (Herzog 196). Since the government of the GDR was highly

secularized, leftist East Germany was free to flourish sexually (Herzog 194). Thus the Socialist morale could evolve in a way West Germany's sexual politics could not.

Although the highest officials of the Socialist state were considerably conservative and fairly prudish about sex (Herzog 185), as East Germany matured, sexuality became more liberally minded (Herzog 203) and the population was encouraged to explore their sexuality (Herzog 195-196). Love and sexuality were considered a true quality of Socialism and East German youth were encouraged to develop sexual relationships. Premarital sex was condoned, but only in so far as it was clean, committed and within a relationship that would presumably lead to marriage (Herzog 195). Masturbation on the other hand was, according to the Eder's general study on German's postwar sexuality, "especially rejected" (165).

Lucie Uhltzsch exhibits these same qualities. Although she maintains a "sexualfeindliche Haltung" (Bremer 40) and is prudish about sex and her son's sexuality, she only criticizes her son's liaison with Marina based on its uncleanliness and suggests that if he were to be having sex, that he find a partner and perhaps introduce her to the family. Surprisingly, Lucie doesn't condemn him for the actual act; rather, she repeats the rhetoric of the state. She criticizes Klaus because the sex was not contained within a clean and meaningful union, which is was completely counter to the Socialist morale.

Lastly, as a mother, Lucie Uhltzsch herself is a symbol for East Germany. In the metaphorical sense, Socialism could be read as an overbearing mother. Much like the East German state, Klaus' mother tries to control every move her son makes, from him locking the bathroom door to what possible reason he could have to have a bicycle wheel next to his bed. In Brussig's interview with *Focus on Literatur*, he discusses "Weiblichkeit" in a similar vein:

Ich hatte eine bestimmte Vorstellung von der DDR- Soziologie. Nämlich, daß es einmal die autoritär-repressiv Seite gegeben hat. Daneben hat es die mütterliche Seite gegeben, die dafür gesorgt hat, daß Konflikte nicht zum Ausbruch gekommen sind. Zu dieser mütterlichen Seite kann man den weichen Stil einer Diktatur zählen. Es hat zwar Repressionen, aber keinen nackten Terror gegeben. ... Aus diesen beiden Seiten habe ich versucht, eine Familie zu bauen, in der ein Junge lebt, der für die Gesellschaft steht. Ich wollte gucken, wie sich das entwickelt, wohin das geht. Das ging dann in die Richtung, die wir kennen: Minderwertigkeitskomplexe, Größenwahn, aber auch Gehemmtheit, Unreife, nie erwachsen werden. So war eines der Schlagworte in dieser Zeit auch: 40 Jahre Kindergarten sind genug. (Straubel, Szabo and Wendtorf 56)

Lucie Uhltscht is not the only mother figure in *Helden wie wir*. Prager writes that “Klaus regularly mistakes his mother for any of the numerous other women in the text, turning all older women into variations of the same single image” (993). This image of East German mother is propagated in the characters of several female figures.

The trinity of [Jutta] Müller, Christa Wolf and his mother, women of the same age, stands for a whole generation of mothers who greatly shaped Uhltscht’s childhood and adolescence with the sense of (false) harmony they imposed on him. (Nause 165)

The same could also be said for Socialism in general. Ultimately, Klaus wants to free himself from his mother’s hypermoralism. His rejection of his mother is thereby the rejection of the motherland (Prager 994) and in *Helden wie wir*, overcoming the watchful mother is a parable for overcoming Socialism (Geisenhanlücke 89).

It is not only Klaus’ (mis)perception of these women that characterizes them as mothers, it is also in the style of Brussig’s writing of their dialogue. Lucie spoke to the children during their lice examination much like Christa Wolf talked to her audience on November 4th (Symmank 185). This too aligns the metaphor of denazification with Socialism. Motherhood is an appropriate symbol for East German Socialism and the analysis of East Germany’s mothers in Brussig’s novel, specifically in the figure of Christa Wolf, illuminates a more profound criticism of Socialism.

It can be speculated that Christa Wolf wrote about mothers to counter the Socialist focus on antifascist fathers. Stephen Brockmann notes that Wolf acts as the cultural embodiment of “...the repressive mother from whom Klaus would like to free himself. Wolf enables a safe rebellion against a certain kind of paternal authority” (42).

[Klaus wants to] break out of the oppressive GDR conform[ism] ... represented as a battle between mothers and sons, with the GDR taking on the role of the all-too-powerful scolding mother. The defeat of Socialism is thus the defeat of the female principle and the triumph of unfettered male subjectivity” (*Politics of German Comedy* 33-52).

This critique of motherhood and Christa Wolf is also another way in which Brussig attempts to overcome the legacy of the East German literary tradition (Prager 994). Christa Wolf is “vilified for her adherence to the principles of Socialism and her perceived willingness to rationalize its failures” (Prager 994). As the novel progresses, more and more of Brussig’s own voice is heard through his character’s monologue and by the time we reach the last chapter, and the pinnacle of the novel’s criticism of Christa Wolf, Thomas Brussig and Klaus Uhltscht are indistinguishable.

Wolf Biermann notes that the word for word quotation of Wolf’s speech on November 4th, 1989, attains the novel’s highest insult (Zachau, “Das Volk jedenfalls war’s nicht!” 392), but Brussig doesn’t hit the nail on the head until his protagonist is reading *Der geteilte Himmel*.

Vom deutschen Literaturstreit ahnte ich nichts, und ich hatte ihn auch nicht erwartet, und als ich erfuhr, daß es ihn gab, vertand ich gar nichts mehr: Wie kann man eine Schriftstellerin, die sich politisch fast nie verbindlich äußerte, politisch gerecht interpretieren? Wissen Sie, was Christa Wolf über Budapest 56 schreibt? Daß man mit Sorgen vor den Radioapparaten saß. Was soll das heißen? Gab es irgend jemanden, der damals erleichtert vor dem Radio saß? Ulbricht? Oder Adenauer? Und wo war der Konfektkasten? – Wer sich vielsagend ausdrückt, ist gegen weite Auslegung nicht gesichert, aber was diese Diskussion so absurd machte, war, daß jeder das aus ihr machen konnte, was er wollte. (*Helden wie wir* 309-310)

Klaus and Brussig take issue with Wolf's "Gefühlswörter" (*Helden wie wir* 306). Although critics have claimed that Wolf's work is highly political, Brussig perceives this as a convenient interpretation. He states that while writing *Helden wie wir* he read an interview with Christa Wolf:

...in dem sie sagte, ihr sei schon '68 beim Einmarsch in die CSSR klar gewesen, dass die DDR-Gesellschaft keine Chance mehr hatte. Darauf habe ich reagiert, in dem ich einen Romanhelden erschuf, der eben an dem Punkt, an dem die Schriftstellerin Christa Wolf sagt, ab hier war es aus und vorbei, geboren wird. Wenn sie das alles tatsächlich wusste, dann hätte sie das ja auch in ihren Büchern so deutlich sagen können. (Gunsker und Poser)

With his novel, Brussig pushes the East German tradition of "Feuerlagergefühle" away and offers a distinctly political perspective on the former GDR, of which the controversial nature cannot be disputed.

Helden wie wir is Brussig's "Abschied von der DDR" ("Ich bin die Wenderoman-Polizei") manifested in a farewell to the East German *Übermutter* and it is through the defeat of his mother that Klaus also defeats the GDR (Geisenhanslüke 86). Klaus finally renders his mother speechless at the sight of his massive manhood and through the power of his penis, he receives the same shock and concession during the novel's finale, the border guard showdown (Geisenhanslüke 86). Like Klaus' mother, at the sight of the protagonist's enormous penis, the border guard has no recourse but to concede to the power of the phallus. And so ends the GDR and "Mutti-Sozialismus" (Zachau, "Das Volk jedenfalls war's nicht!" 392).

Brussig's novel references another text that holds significant weight in discussions of East German society: *Der Gefühlstau: Ein Psychogramm der DDR* (1990). Tanja Nause writes that *Helden wie wir* is a literary narrative text that complements Hans-Joachim Maaz's empirical analysis of East German society (166). In an interview with Barbara Felsmann, Brussig

confirms the suspicion of many Germanists, including Nause, stating that he did in fact read *Der Gefühlstau* before beginning his novel. A psychologist out of Leipzig, Maaz wrote his book in 1990 to try to explain the mechanisms of repression and oppression in the GDR. Ulrike Bremer comments that “[Brussig habe] sich mit dem Roman *Helden wie wir* das Ziel gesetzt, die Aussagen von Maaz’ Psychogramm der DDR in *Der Gefühlstau* in eine belletristische Form zu bringen” (34). Essentially, Maaz blames East Germany’s mothers for the “retardation of East German citizens as a whole” (Prager 993). He writes that they spent too much time in the workplace instead of at home protecting their children from the “sadism of communist nurseries” (Prager 993). Bremer adds that “[n]ach den Beobachtung von Maaz ist die Erziehung in der DDR gekennzeichnet durch defizitäre Befriedigung der wesentlichen Grundbedürfnisse und die Verknüpfung von elterlicher Liebe mit der Erwartung von Fehlerlosigkeit und Leistung” (43). In Freudian terms, very appropriate for Brussig’s adaptation, Maaz writes that “the repression of energies in the GDR brought on a subsequent violent eruption” (Prager 995). Maaz’s theory manifests itself in narrative form in Brussig’s text, where Brussig places blame on the metaphorical mother of Socialism and where perversion is the substitute for normal gender roles (Symmank 181).

In discussing his parents (as they embody the most poignant political periods in recent German history), Klaus is making an interesting statement.

Wenn schon mein Vater ein Stinkstiefel war and meine Mutter das Gegenteil,
dann, so sagt mein Logik und meine Gefühle, müßte sie doch *gut* sein!
Verstehen Sie: GUT! Ich ahne, daß ich jetzt den Tatsachen ins Auge sehen
muß und eine Geschichte zu erzählen habe, die davon handelt, wie ich das
kleinere Übel vergötterte. (*Helden wie wir* 26 – italics in original)

Klaus deifies his mother because she is everything his father isn’t. Eberhard Uhltscht is the cold, overweight and demanding dictator of the household, who fathers with a fascist fist.

Klaus’ mother, on the other hand, comforts where his father alienates and gives Klaus

encouragement where his father makes him feel like an absolute loser. She also provides the love and security of the household, but needs to be in absolute control of her son. She imposes her rigid morals and sexual prudence on Klaus, but he perceives it as being in his best interest and thus doesn't criticize her too severely for it. Klaus professes that his mother is "gut" simply because she is the opposite of his "Stinkstiefel" father. This is essentially a metaphor for the East German response to their Soviet occupation. In the simplest terms, communism was perceived as good because it was supposed to be the complete opposite of fascism. This idea is supported in the latter half of the quote, where he continues to comment on his childhood naiveté regarding the assessment of his mother – realizing that in looking back he deified his mother incorrectly. Metaphorically speaking, that in hindsight, Socialism wasn't the answer and although ideologically it was in many ways completely opposite to fascism, it too was "das kleinere Übel."

Through metaphor, Brussig presents some of the arguments that the East German people used to justify their participation in National Socialism and then Soviet Socialism. Brussig employs the family dynamic to confront some of his generation's issues with Germany's past. At the end of the 1960s it became clear to the younger German generation which role their parents had played in the Holocaust by simply supporting the Third Reich politically, physically or even administratively. Although this was largely an issue amongst students in West Germany, echoes of the student protests and the large-scale individual identity crises could also be seen in the East. Brussig uses his narrative to tackle the same question.

Referring to his father as an embodiment of the fascism of his generation, Klaus questions his father's character and thus the character of this entire generation:

Ist denn mein Vater ein streitsüchtiger Mensch? Er hat doch einen Grund, darauf zu bestehen, daß die Wohnung abgeschlossen wird! Er meint es nur gut! Schließlich – ich habe es selbst gesehen! – er hat sich sogar für mich

geprügelt! Kann er denn schlecht sein? ... Ein erdrückender Konflikt. Ich liebte ihn, aber ich konnte ihn nicht leiden. (*Helden wie wir* 37)

Klaus is conflicted because he wants to assume that his father is a good man based on the fact that his father fought for him – even though he lost the battle on the playground and on the warfront.

The most poignant element of the Uhltscht family allegory is contained in the two sentences that follow Klaus' allegorical explanation of East Germany's satisfaction and even pride in the Soviet's Socialist ideology.

Was blieb mir denn übrig, als meine Mutter zum ganzen Gegenteil meines Vaters aufzubauen? Ach, ist das alles hoffungslos... *Es kann doch nicht alles schlecht gewesen sein*, um mal einen Ausspruch zu bemühen, den Helden wie wir blankziehen, wenn wir nicht mehr weiterwissen. (*Helden wie wir* 26 – italics in original)

Klaus explains that East Germany embraced Socialism because it seemed to be everything National Socialism wasn't and although it took forty years to rectify the situation, “[e]s kann doch nicht alles schlecht gewesen sein.” And although there were no distinct Socialist heroes in the end, each citizen was heroic in one way or another.

Klaus finally comes to terms with his father and Germany's fascist history near the end of the novel when Eberhard Uhltscht is on his death bed. Malignant tumors have blocked his intestine so that he “[sich] nicht mehr der Scheiße entledigen konnte, die er produzierte” (*Helden wie wir* 256). Consequently, Klaus speculates that he will eventually “zu einem einzigen Stück Scheiße verdaut [werden], das hundertzehn Kilo schwer ist und mit einem Schlafanzug im Bett liegt” (*Helden wie wir* 256). Even on his deathbed Eberhard Uhltscht functions as a political metaphor and his death, just as the state begins to crumble, is another testament to the correlation between the Uhltscht's private life and the political history of Germany (Fröhlich 27). Just like the game of Jackstraws played by hospitalized Honecker,

Eberhard Uhltzsch is at a stand still. Neither he nor the sickly Honecker can make a move without losing the game. Honecker's empire is on the verge of destruction and Eberhard Uhltzsch can neither eat nor defecate. Lastly, the fact that Eberhard Uhltzsch dies "full of shit" is an interesting return to the body politic of the anti-fascist father. Not only does it state that Eberhard Uhltzsch was himself bogus, as a representative of oppression and the war generation, Brussig is also commenting on the Socialist ideology in general.

3.3 In the Tradition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, in the Spirit of *Postalgie*

As the son of Socialist Germany and German fascism, Klaus represents his generation as a whole. He symbolizes the youth of East Germany trying to reconcile the drastically different ideologies of their parents' generation. In Germany and around the world, the postwar era was a very tumultuous time for the younger generation. Klaus is part of the third generation of GDR citizens who could neither understand the "Aufbruchspathos" of the founding generation, nor their optimism in the "Konkurrenzfieber der Systeme" (Symmank 181).

Er gehört zu einer Generation, die zu jung war, um in der DDR in Erscheinung zu treten. Mit Utopien und sozialistischem Aufbaupathos der Eltern- und Christa Wolf-Generation hatte sie nichts mehr am Hut; ihre Unlust an gesellschaftlicher Teilhabe aber war eher pubertär also politisch motiviert. (Magenau 46)

The international student movement expressed its opposition to many things. In West Germany it was namely to the previous generation's involvement in the Second World War and that these same people were still their professors, doctors, judges and priests. For former East Germany, Brussig uses the microcosm of Klaus' family to express the issues that youth across Germany were facing. In an interview with *tip* magazine, Brussig states that for his generation "wird es so etwas wie die 68er, das heißt, eine Generation, die ihre Eltern fragt, für die DDR-Vergangenheit nicht geben. Auch weil das demografische Gewicht Ostdeutschlands einfach nicht schwer genug ist, als dass eine Auseinandersetzung erfolgreich initiiert werden könnte" (Gunske and Poser). In his interview with *Die Wochenpost* Brussig expands on this subject:

Das Buch ist wirklich ein Bretterknaller, aber es soll Anlaß sein, daß man sich ernsthaft und gründlich unterhält und sich über die DDR-Vergangenheit klar wird. Wenn wir uns über unser Versagen und die Gründe unseres Versagens klar werden. Dann [sic.] wären wir sicher die interessanteren Mitglieder unserer Gesellschaft, dann bringen wir eine gewisse Sensibilität dafür mit, wo

Menschen sich verbiegen und Dinge tun, die ihnen eigentlich zuwider sind.
 Ich habe gehofft, genauso wie es 68er gegeben hat, wird es 89er geben.
 (Felsmann)

Helden wie wir was inspired by the tradition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and the sorts of questions posed in the West to parents and participants of National Socialism. But in Brussig's novel, these questions are in the spirit of *Postalgie*, confronting the citizens of the GDR.

With *Helden wie wir*, Brussig incorporates the histories of Nazi Germany as well as the GDR and the novel uses Klaus, his mother and father as a means of dealing with the German past. Typically, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* focuses on Germany's Nazi past and only since the fall of the Wall has Germany's Socialist past been taken into consideration. Therefore, in the tradition of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Brussig's *Postalgie* functions in overcoming the East German past. According to Stephan Brockmann, the comedy of contemporary cinema and literature is a sign that we are replacing one *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* with another (48) and through laughter, the German people may be seeking an apathetic distance from otherwise painful situations and memories (49). Through the Uhltzsch family, Brussig reconciles Germany's tumultuous history incorporating the metaphorical representations for the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of Nazi Germany, the *Postalgie* of Soviet Germany and laughter as the new method of dealing with both while using his novel to integrate the East German past into our cultural memory. By doing this, Brussig encourages a revision of the German concept of national history, so that neither the history of the West nor the East is excluded, creating a shared history. Through the shared history offered in *Helden wie wir*, East and West Germans find their common denominator and use it as a unifying rather than a dividing element in the creation of their national identity.

Significantly, *Helden wie wir's* message reaches beyond the destruction of the GDR. After German unification, one could speculate that with Nazi Germany and the GDR behind them, united German was ready to move forward, but that is not the note on which Brussig's novel ends.

Ich wollte weg, ich hatte Angst, und als ich wieder eine Kamera vorm Gesicht hatte, stieß ich ein Wort aus, das aus den tiefsten Sümpfen meiner Seele kam: »Deutschland!«, halb geröchelt, halb geflüstert. – *Deutschland aus Angst*. Die Westdeutschen nahmen es natürlich wörtlich, allerdings, indem sie es um eine entscheidende Nuance entstellten: Sie taten so, als ob alle, die Deutschland sagten, Bundesrepublik meinten. (*Helden wie wir* 322 – italics in original)

For the first time in the novel a word uttered or understood by Klaus Uhltscht is not to be taken literally. Through his protagonist, Brussig expresses the disappointment felt by many East Germans entering united Germany, for it was not a united Germany – East and West did not converge to create a new Germany; rather, East was amalgamated into the West and thus East Germany was lost forever. Through his novel, Brussig aims not to resurrect the East Germany of *Ostalgie*, rather he evokes the image of the East Germany of *Postalgie*. In t/his Germany, neither the negative nor the positive aspects of living in the former GDR are excluded. It is a Germany where the *Stasi* are disarmed with laughter, where Brussig seeks retribution on behalf of all GDR citizens and where the acts of political subversion are in hindsight.

Through the political allegory of the Uhltscht family, Brussig expresses in terms everyone can understand how oppression and repression produce perversion.

The novels' delineation of how normalcy and conformity with the system nevertheless produce morally abject monstrosities is a key in understanding its inherent provocation. Brussig puts his finger into an open wound by hinting at the failures of the GDR's founder generation whose sacrifices and tireless efforts were, in spite of their best intentions, unable to prevent East German society from subverting its own integrity and eventually falling apart. (Fröhlich 23)

Helden wie wir insinuates that despite their parents' best intentions, sometimes children end up completely dysfunctional and often it is a result of their trying too hard. Bremer writes: "Der Perfektionismus der Mutter, die Mißachtung des Vaters und die grundsätzlichen Zweifel beider an ihrem Sohn legen den Grundstock für dessen charakterliche Deformierung" (41). But Brussig ensures that this allegory isn't interpreted only in terms of mothers and father: "Ich war nicht nur das Kind meiner Eltern, ich war auch Schüler meiner Lehrer und Leser meiner Bibliotheken. Ich war einer von uns" (*Helden wie wir* 107). Brussig stresses that the issues of parental guidance in terms of both child rearing and state politics are the responsibility of everyone and in the above statement doesn't shirk the blame. Rather, through the political allegory of the Uhltscht family, Brussig illustrates that many citizens of the GDR were at least to some extent responsible for their own oppression. But at the same time, he illustrates how on November 9th, 1989 those same citizens were responsible for their own liberation. Brussig uses the private sphere of Klaus' life to negotiate the issues of the public and political spheres of the GDR (Prager 983). He makes the Uhltscht family an allegory for twentieth century German politics, but the political parallels do not end here. Brussig's most controversial political analogy, and that which was most criticized, is his explicit depiction of young Klaus' sexual development, which in *Helden wie wir* is a parable for the perversion of the East German state.

3.4 Klaus' Statute of Sexual Liberty

Klaus' perversion reflects Brussig's feelings on the corruption and perversion of the GDR. Bremer writes that "Brussig führt in seinem Roman *Helden wie wir* anhand einer fiktiven Biographie die Formen charakterlicher Deformierung vor, die einerseits aus dem System resultierten, es andererseits aber auch wieder prägten" (48). But Klaus' sexuality is also the way in which he frees himself first from his parents and the ideologies they represent, and then eventually from the GDR itself. Thus his sexual endeavours can be read as a private form of resistance and his movement towards sexual ordinariness is the motion towards political freedom. Unfortunately, both attempts at sexual normalcy fail and Klaus doesn't succeed in finding his sexual and political freedom until the end of the novel.

In his interview with Sandra Maischberger, Brussig agrees that "Sex war der einzige Bereich, in den der Staat nicht eingreifen konnte, und deshalb hat man sich dort besonders ausgelebt." In *Helden wie wir*, he takes this idea to the next level and sex becomes outright dissidence. Franz Eder examines the response of the postwar generation to National Socialism in his exploration of German sexuality between 1700 and 2000:

During the late 1960s the 'dirty' secret that the postwar generation made out of sexuality – and also of their political past – was the reason why young people withdrew from the parental culture. For them sexual experience and liberation became a political act as well as a question of identity. (166)

With heterosexual sex Klaus shifts away from Socialist ideology. He buys a pair of "James Dean jeans," starts using English slang instead of high German and hums rock and roll riffs (*Helden wie wir* 132). He uses his sexuality to rebel against his mother and father and what they represent – Socialism and fascism respectively.

Auf dem Heimweg dachte ich mir weitere schockierende Sätze auch, was nicht schwer war, denn meine Mutter ist eine Frau, die Roadie und Rowdy nicht auseinanderhalten kann, weil für sie beides ohnehin irgendwie dasselbe

ist. Mama, wenn ich morgen zum Bockbieranstich gehe und ein bisschen Pfennigskat spiele, kommt hier einer von meinen neuen Kumpels vorbei, so einer mit ‚ner Nixen-Tätowierung am Hals, und will ‚n Hunni für seine Sex-Pistols-LP, die ich im Suff liegenließ, als wir in einer Bahnhofskneipe den Auswärtssieg von Union feierten. Hab keine Angst, er ist auf Bewährung und weiß, das er sich nichts leisten darf, wenn er nicht wieder einfabren will. (131 – italics in original)

He pays no attention to his mother's hygienically-minded household mandates and is determined from then on not to duck under the vacuum clearer's cord, pee standing up and ignore the sacred order of the couch cushions.

Auf die Frage, warum ich heute schon komme, antwortete ich leichthin: Tja, hat sich so ergeben. Ich spazierte durch die Wohnung, ich lehnte mich in den Türrahmen, ich verschränkte die Arme über der Brust und gähnte, ohne mir die Hand vor den Mund zu halten, ich ließ mich in den Sessel plumpsen, und einmal wagte ich es sogar aufzustoßen – Gründe genug, enterbt zu werden. Von jetzt an werde ich mich nicht mehr bücken, wenn das Kabel des Stausaugers aufzuraffeln ist! Ich werde im Stehen pinkeln und die Füße hochlegen und jedermann mit *Hi* begrüßen! Ich werde Türen ranziehen, ohne sie zu klinken! Die geheiligte Ordnung der Sofakissen ignorieren! Und alles in Jeans! (132)

Similarly, Klaus' opinion of his father is drastically altered and his resolve to change his habits to almost inconvenience his parents extends well past his mother's obsession with hygiene. Klaus intends on winning the age-old argument he's had with his father about locking the front door. Instead of apologizing for his absentmindedness, Klaus makes the decision to intentionally leave the door unlocked from then on.

Throughout Brussig's novel, the symbol of the door is critical. The door to Klaus' home represents Germany's foreign policy and with Klaus' sexual development his relationship with this door changes. It begins as the main point of contention between Klaus and his father and whether Klaus has or has not locked the door is a frequent argument at the dinner table (*Helden wie wir* 35). Eberhard Uhltzsch, in the tradition of German fascism, wants the door and the German borders closed. Klaus' continued absentmindedness is

emblematic for his generation's desire for freedom and his blatant refusal to lock the door foreshadows his involvement in the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Klaus rejects the Socialism of his mother's world and the fascism of his father's demeanor and instead retreats into the German counter-culture defined by its allegiance to American and British rock music. Through his attempts at sexual normalcy, he escapes the East German dogma to embrace the rock and roll lifestyle and political ideology. Brad Prager writes that in *Helden wie wir* "[s]exual liberation goes hand in hand with the West" (996). This concept of sexual liberation as political freedom is introduced with Klaus' first sexual encounter and the character of Marina.

Ich betrachtete mein Spiegelbild in den Schaufenstern. Das war ich? Bisher lief ich herum wie die Zeugen Jehovas, nicht mal die Ärmel wagte ich hochzukrempeln – und dieser halbe Elvis im Spiegel, war *ich* das? War ich das wirklich? Kaum zu glauben, wie ein Fick einen Menschen verändern kann. (132 – italics in original)

Klaus' affair with Marina is a means of private resistance. Through their copulation he is not only distancing himself from the East German sexual norm, he is resisting the Socialist ideology.

Klaus' father's reaction to his son's liaison with Marina supports this idea, but from an opposite perspective. According to Eberhard Uhltzsch, irresponsible heterosexual sex is one way in which the West is able to corrupt East German youth.

“Denn stell dir mal vor” – er redete weiter auf mein Mutter ein – “sie kommt in den Westen und äußert in dem obligatorischen Gespräch mit feindlichen Geheimdienstleuten, daß sie Intimverkehr hatte mit dem Angehörigen der Sicherheitsorgane Klaus Uhltzsch. Da wollen die natürlich alles ganz genau wissen. Und damit wäre er *erpreßbar!*” (*Helden wie wir* 136)

He speculates that Marina intends to leave their beloved republic, repeating over and over again: “Er unterschätzt die Gefährlichkeit des Gegners!” (*Helden wie wir* 136, 137).

Klaus' only possible retort lies in Marina's favourite song, "Über sieben Brücken mußt du gehn." He claims that she is distinctly East German because her favourite song is by the East German band *Karat* (*Helden wie wir* 136). Had he spoken it aloud, Klaus' explanation would only be partially successful in the argument with his father. *Karat* was part of the *Ostrock* and *Beatmusik* movements from which many controversial East German bands stem, whose song lyrics often metaphorically explored the youth generation's displeasure with the Socialist state. *Karat* was also one of only three East German bands that were permitted to tour in the German Federal Republic (Mass and Reszel 269) and West German Peter Maffay even covered their most famous song (Mayer 153). Declaring "Über sieben Brücken mußt du gehn" as Marina's favourite song identifies her as neither a West German spy corrupting East German youth with sexual and political exploration nor a devoted member of the SED party. Marina is an example of the East German youth resistance movement forged in and furthered by her generation of GDR citizens who, through their music, were quietly rebelling against the state.

When Klaus' parents discover that he has gonorrhoea and learn of their son's promiscuity, his newfound independence fades away. Essentially, when his private rebellion is made public, its value diminishes and effectiveness disappears. With his secret resistance revealed, his confidence in rock and roll freedom vanishes and Klaus plunges back into his sexually perverse behaviour and his employment with the politically perverse *Stasi*.

Klaus seeks sexual and political liberation a second time when he and Yvonne meet. Her obsession with democratic Holland, home of the Hague, love of jazz music and ability to see the world differently through her kaleidoscope, mark Yvonne as an envoy of the West. But before they are able to consummate their puppy-love, thus affirming Klaus' sexual and

political liberty, Yvonne requests that Klaus get kinky and hurt her. Klaus had idealized Yvonne into an “Engel” and when she reveals that she has an appetite for sadomasochism, Klaus’ romanticized image of Yvonne is shattered and he runs (*Helden wie wir* 237).

All of Klaus’ encounters with sexual-political freedom are never long-lived and have the same result:

After his first act of sexual intercourse, he claims to finally understand the meaning of the Beatles’ ‘Happiness is a Warm Gun’ (128-129). ...Klaus hopes to be emancipated by looking Westward, not realizing that the centres of power from which his sexual and political identity are deployed will elude him there as well. (Prager 996)

This idea is reflected once again in Klaus’ and Yvonne’s interaction and near-consummation. Klaus’ response to Yvonne is very similar to that of East German youth to West German culture after the fall of the Wall. In reality, the West wasn’t all that the East German youth had hoped for and the “real-existing” capitalism destroyed the idyllic image of life on the other side of the Berlin Wall.

Klaus’ introduction to masturbation is a perverted attempt at normal sexual behavior. And if heterosexual sex is a metaphor for political liberation, by analogy the Socialist System is a perverted attempt at democracy. After spending days waiting for the appropriate emotionally weak and relatively unattractive “desperate woman” to satisfy his sexual frustrations, Klaus finally approaches the *Wurstfrau* (*Helden wie wir* 188). They take the *Straßenbahn* to her apartment where the foreplay begins. But upon the discovery of Klaus’ diminutive penis, the *Wurstfrau* bursts into laughter and refuses to continue to stimulate and arouse him. So angered and sexually frustrated by the mockery, instead of pursuing sexual consent, Klaus attacks and proceeds to try to rape the *Wurstfrau*. (*Helden wie wir* 192). Upon recognizing himself in a potentially dire situation, his ironic concern for his future with Socialism

compels Klaus to leave. Unfortunately, with his erection still plaguing him, before he even exits the building, Klaus has no recourse but to satisfy himself (*Helden wie wir* 193).

Klaus' first experience masturbating is out of fear of the repercussions of raping the *Wurstfrau*. But everything perverse thereafter he considers “pure[r] Patriotismus” (*Helden wie wir* 198). Ironically, Klaus' second masturbatory emission is incited to affirm Socialism's “kriminalistische Grundregel.” Klaus is told that “[d]en Täter zieht es immer an den Ort seiner Verbrechen zurück” (*Helden wie wir* 194 – italics in original) and believing Socialism infallible, he returns to the “scene of the crime” to essentially prove the hypothesis correct (*Helden wie wir* 197). Brauer writes that “Klaus Uhltscht deutet seine Selbstbefriedigung als proletarische Pflicht und als Beweis für die Gültigkeit der marxischen Lehre” (47). Klaus now masturbates not for his personal satisfaction, but for Socialism itself. Thus Klaus' perversion becomes both an embodiment and a response to the perversion of the state.

The German word for masturbation is an interesting clue to the novel's relationship between the perversion of Klaus and the perversion of the state. When one takes the word “Selbstbefriedigung” apart, we're left with two nouns: “Selbst” and “Befriedigung” – the “self” and “fulfillment” or “pacification.” The implication here is that the act of masturbating is an act of self fulfillment, but there is another way in which one can read into the definitions of the dismantled word. “Pacification” is a synonym for “peace” and is derived from the noun “to pacify” which means:

1. *trans.* **a.** To bring (a country, people, etc.) to a state of peace. Also: to impose peace upon; to subdue.
- b.** To render (an enemy or other hostile agency) friendly or benign; to propitiate, conciliate; to appease.
- c.** To restore (contending parties) to a state of friendly relations; to reconcile (one person or party) *with* or *to* another. Also *intr.*: to arrive at a reconciliation or a peaceful resolution. Now chiefly *S.E. Asia*.

d. To calm or quell (disorder or conflict); to put down or suppress (an uprising, rebellion, etc.).

2. trans. a. To alleviate the distress or agitation of (a person or animal); to soothe, placate; to mollify. Also (occas.) *intr.* (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

As such, “Selbstbefriedigung” not only refers to reconciliation, it also implies a sort of reclamation of peace or perhaps justice as well as submission. With these definitions in mind, the act of masturbation in *Helden wie wir* becomes less of an act of perversion and more of an act of liberation. Klaus’ perversion is simultaneously a reflection of the perversion of the state, while at the same time, a response to and liberation from this perversion: “Damit meint Uhltscht, daß er den kleinbürgerlichen DDR-Sozialismus durch seine sexuelle Selbstbefriedigung überwunden hat” (Zachau, “Das Volk jedenfalls war’s nicht!” 390).

Klaus’ masturbates to restore peace to the GDR; Klaus’ “Selbstbefriedigung” functions in the same way as Brussig’s writing in that they both exercise the demons of East Germany and through Brussig’s words and Klaus’ emissions, their relationship with the GDR is inverted: the state is reduced to a state of submission and the oppressor becomes the oppressed.

Klaus’ patriotic perversions continue to progress through the latter half of Brussig’s novel and through Brussig’s description, he illustrates how “sexuelle Repression gehörte mit zum täglichen Instrument der Sozialisation” (Zachau, “Das Volk jedenfalls war’s nicht!” 390). It becomes Klaus’ duty to not only masturbate in preparation for the day he receives his official assignment to retrieve the *Mikrofische* (*Mikrofische*) from the NATO Minister (*Helden wie wir* 176), but to explore other sexual perversions in the name of saving Socialism all together. Klaus learns that *IM Individualist* might in fact be a *Hühnerficker*, which more likely refers to the character of *Individualist* than his hobby. But in the style characteristic of Klaus Uhltscht, he takes the moniker literally and makes it his mission to understand the enemy

better by understanding and mastering his deeds – namely, by fornicating with under-aged poultry carcasses himself (*Helden wie wir* 239). Klaus also sees that the Socialist economic plan of selling political prisoners to the West has an expiration date and intends to find some way to market his sexual perversions for Socialist profit.

Klaus' sexual liberation finally comes at the end of the novel. On November 4th, 1989, Klaus stumbles upon the protest taking place at *Alexanderplatz*. Outraged by the “Lagerfeuerfühle” (*Helden wie wir* 288) of Christa Wolf's speech, whom he mistakes for Jutta Müller, the famous East German figure skating trainer, Klaus attempts to make his way to the podium to clear up the “Sozialismus Hokuspokus” (*Helden wie wir* 288). But on his way to the microphone, Klaus is too distracted to see the cautionary sign and broom at the head of the stairs and trips. He falls down the stairs and seriously injures himself. Klaus is rushed to the hospital where he undergoes an operation to repair the damage that was done to his penis. This combination of events is what leads to the drastic amplification of the size of Klaus' manhood. Markus Symmank writes that leaving the tunnel after the accident which enlarged his penis was Klaus symbolically exiting the womb into the world and he likens it to Oskar Mazareth's *rite de passage*, his fall down the stairs (185). But unlike the fall down the stairs in *Der Blechtrommel*, which is located at the beginning of the novel, Klaus' fall comes at the end of *Helden wie wir* (Magenau 45).

The operation Klaus needed after his fall had an unpredictable effect when mixed with the secret serum injected into his veins to save Honecker's life, and Klaus' penis grew. The protagonist never gives the exact dimensions of his newly over-proportioned penis, but it earns him the awe and envy of all his attending doctors and quite an audience. True to his mother's character, Lucie tracks her son down and immediately demands to see his penis,

but upon viewing his genitals with which she had become so familiar, she is sent into shock and from her silence, Klaus gets the impression that due to his massive member, he is no longer the son of Lucie Uhltscht or Socialism.

3.5 The Pervasive Subversive

Helden wie wir is a parody of many of Germany's most sacred traditions. First of all, the novel is a twist on the German *Bildungsroman*. Instead of recounting the development of a young man into his adulthood, Brussig recounts the development of his protagonist's perversion and the tale of how his penis essentially changed the world. Brussig also parodies the East German literary tradition and attacks the work of Christa Wolf in a number of satiric assaults (*Helden wie wir* 180-185, 304-313). However, *Helden wie wir's* most apparent parodic offensive is on the German way of remembering the GDR. Brussig's novel is essentially a satire on East Germany and how we typically think about its history, talk about its people and teach it in our classrooms. It is important to note that Brussig's parody of the GDR does not manifest itself as a mockery of the former citizens of East Germany or the way they lived before 1989 and even today. *Helden wie wir* parodies the only version of GDR that existed after the fall of the Wall. Basically, *Helden wie wir* inverts the Western concept of what the GDR was and who the East Germans were, which according to popular media, Western textbooks and course packs on East Germany history, was defined by the GDR's Socialist ideology, the twisted systems and perverse policies and not the individuals themselves. Because it wasn't obvious how the people of the former GDR resisted and subverted their own political system, Brussig's parody of the Socialist state subverts the East German government on behalf of his country in hindsight. In *Sonnenallee*, Brussig accomplishes this by illustrating how the citizens of East Germany did not unanimously support the SED and in *Helden wie wir* he uses satire, allegory, parody and blatant mockery in the tradition of Rabelais' carnival laughter.

Stephan Neuhaus notes that Brussig's *Helden wie wir* became an immediate success for two reasons. The first was that its central theme was the GDR and the second was located in the graphic nature of the novel's exploration of the sexual development of its protagonist (Neuhaus 158). This chapter aims to illustrate how the two are intrinsically linked.

The primary manner in which Brussig's parody of the East German state manifests itself is in the perversion of his main character, Klaus Uhltscht. Bremer writes that the "Sexualität des Protagonisten ein förwährender Spiegel der gesellschaftlichen Zustände in der DDR [ist]" (33). In the tradition of Günter Grass, Thomas Brussig uses perversion to help come to terms with the past.

Thomas Brussig's novel *Helden wie wir* (1995) depicts the intersection of private, or psychosexual, life of its protagonist and the historical changes in East Germany's recent past. As a post-unification novel written by a formerly GDR novelist, it undertakes an examination of the mechanisms of repression in the private sphere in order to explore the officially sanctioned repressions associated with that now-collapsed state. The novel shows how the prohibitions governing the protagonist's home life paralleled the apparently absurd ideological prohibitions of the GDR. (Prager 983)

In Grass' *Der Blechtrommel*, his protagonist Oskar Matzerath refuses to grow up in a world dominated by National Socialism. Thus at the age of three, he throws himself down the stairs and ceases to mature beyond that point. Grass uses Oskar's sexual perversion as one means of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and in writing *Helden wie wir*, Brussig takes a page out of Grass' Nobel Prize-winning novel and with an even more difficult name to pronounce, he uses Klaus' perversion to overcome Germany's Socialist past, where political oppression becomes synonymous with sexual repression.

In an interview with Barbara Felsmann, Brussig says: "Der Typ wird ja pervers. Man hat ja immer vom pervertierten Sozialismus gesprochen, und ich wollte unbedingt die sozialistische Perversion aufzeigen." But in order to locate the parallels between Klaus' and the state's

perversion, we must take a closer look at how Klaus' private life reflects the East German political public sphere. Klaus' existence is from the start a political one and he immediately establishes a link between his individual life story and the larger political history of the GDR:

While his pregnant mother had been vacationing in a small village in the Erz Mountains, her fetal son, the soon-to-be protagonist, panicked when troops and tanks were passing by the village in the direction of Prague to crush the democratic uprising. As a result, he ruptured the amniotic sac to enter what he calls "a political world." (Fröhlich 22)

The novel recounts a number of instances where Klaus' life intersects with German politics on a larger level. Klaus was born during the Prague Spring on August 20, 1968. The novel begins with an account of the tanks rolling by his family's hotel and into the Czech Republic while his mother is in labour. Klaus, who via a secret serum injected into his veins and a blood transfusion, also claims to be the savior of dying Honecker, whose sickliness represents East German political instability,

An allegorical interpretation of the meaning of several of Brussig's characters showed how the Uhltscht family operates on a symbolic level representing different political eras in Germany's history. But Klaus' political associations extend beyond his interaction with his parents and a closer reading of Klaus' sexuality provides the reader with greater insight into Brussig's criticism of the GDR. Fröhlich writes that Klaus' moral corruption "appears as the grotesque reflection of the state of society" (26) and that his sexual immorality parallels the state's political immorality (26). Through tracking Klaus' perversion, we can see one East German citizen's critique of the country he grew up in. And in reading Klaus' adventures and laughing at Brussig's penile parody, each reader also becomes a critic of the East German state. It not only becomes clear that the effort of writing *Helden wie wir* was an act of political subversion, through the tradition of Rabelais' carnival laughter, so is the act of reading it.

Tanja Nause emphasizes that Klaus' character is not an individual, but rather the symptom of an entire generation's repression – Klaus' life story is comprised of the elements of millions of other life stories (164). Matthias Matussek stresses that “Brussig zeigt diesen Uhltscht als Jedermann, und darin entfaltet er seine unglaubliche Wirkung” (210). In Brussig's novel, sexual perversion isn't an affliction for Klaus alone. Klaus' parents also exhibit their own variety of sexual abnormalities, which ultimately result in Klaus' perversion. Lucie Uhltscht is uptight and frigid. She utterly refuses to recognize the naturalness and need for sex and intimacy. Her inherent awkwardness with sex can be seen in its pronunciation, “Sechs” (*Helden wie wir* 58), and her abnormal obsession with her son's penis. Upon the discovery of Klaus' first erection, she chastises him for touching himself – even though he insists he didn't – instead of acknowledging that erections are a real and natural part of male adolescence (*Helden wie wir* 68). The one discussion the family has on the male sex organ gives Klaus an unrealistic impression of the appearance of the average penis (*Helden wie wir* 57), which later develops into a penis-envy complex. Lucie Uhltscht's prudishness results in Klaus' twisted sense of sexuality regarding what is sexually normal and sexually deviant. Secondly, as a representation of both East Germany's sexual and political ideologies, Lucie Uhltscht furthers the connection between the novel's metaphorical treatment of political oppression as sexual repression. Lucie's influence on her son's sexuality is emblematic for the political oppression the Socialist state exercised on its own children – namely, the citizens of East Germany.

Eberhard Uhltscht, on the other hand, according to Klaus sitting at his father's deathbed, always hid his testicles from his son: “Ich schlug die Decke zurück und sah mir das an, was er immer vor mir versteckte: seine Eier” (*Helden wie wir* 268). Only by Klaus squeezing his testicles for twenty seconds, an act he claims his father was guilty of for twenty years (*Helden*

wie wir 268), does Klaus finally resolve his issues with his father. Essentially, he comes to terms with his father by oppressing him physically much like Eberhard Uhltzsch had emotionally and politically. Once again, sexual organs are Klaus' means of political liberation. The act of Klaus crushing his father's testicles is Klaus' way of overcoming his father's legacy as well as that of German fascism in order to begin his pursuit of parental and political autonomy.

The sexually explicit nature of Brussig's novel initially created some resistance (Prager 984). Margrit Fröhlich, for example, described Brussig's novel as a "grotesque-satirical revision of the historical events revolving around the fall of the Berlin Wall" which "disputes altogether the power of civic protest that East Germans demonstrated in the fall of 1989" (27). But an exploration into the novel's narrative of sexual deviance and perversion illuminates the intimate connection between the psychosexual and the historical (Prager 985) as well as much of Brussig's political satire. In an interview with *Focus on Literatur*, Brussig states:

Ich wußte, daß ich einen politischen Roman mit sexuellen Mitteln schreiben wollte. Dazu muß ich natürlich politikfähige sexuelle Metaphern finden. Und da hat es immer die Redewendung gegeben vom pervertierten Sozialismus. Und ich habe das wörtlich genommen und gesagt, ich möchte die sozialistischen Perversionen entwickeln. ... Auf jedem Fall war es mir wichtig, daß er irgendwann pervers wird. (Straubel, Szabo and Wendtorf 55-56)

In aligning Klaus' sexual perversion with the fall of the Wall, Brussig makes the suggestion that the state of East Germany was itself perverse and that it was the state's perverse operations that led to the country's demise. Ultimately, it is argued that it was the people of East Germany and their faltering support that resulted in the ruin of the GDR, but the irony in Klaus' claim that it was *his penis* that opened the Iron Curtain not only ridicules the process, it makes it laughable, thus it also returns the emphasis of the act of defiance to the

real heroes – the everyday day heroes – those “Helden wie wir.” But the title of Brussig’s novel can also be read as light sarcasm.

Brussig macht in *Helden wie wir* den Fall der Berliner Mauer zu der Tat eines einzelnen und dieser ist nicht einmal ein wirklicher Held, der sich durch offene politische Opposition in der DDR hervorgetan hätte. Er ist eine peinliche Gestalt, ein kritikloser, ein sexuell Perverser und Stasi-Mitarbeiter. Indem Brussig die Darstellungen das als ‘friedliche Revolution’ bezeichneten Volksaufstandes, der zum Ende der DDR führt, in seinem Roman ironisiert und lächerlich macht. ... Damit degradiert Brussig in seiner Fiktion den Aufstand des Volkes in der DDR zu einer Farce und setzt sie den offiziellen Versionen eines gewaltsamen Volksaufstandes entgegen. (Bremer 54)

In *Helden wie wir* heroism is neither unattainable nor conventional. The heroes of East Germany are not heroes because of their roles in the revolution of 1989. The novel actually criticizes the inactivity of East German political protest and the ineffectiveness of the GDR’s “political” literature. Brussig illustrates how East German heroism is a contemporary endeavour and how it is the recounting of one’s true history – even if that history is morally questionable – that results in East German heroism. Thus in his novel, it becomes clear that the act of admitting one’s failures and discussing one’s inadequacies is the sort of heroism needed when confronting the history of the GDR.

Chapter 4: Literary and Cinematic *Postalgie*: United We Remember

Since East Germany's demise, two very different ways of remembering its history have emerged. History books and documentary film alike consistently depict the GDR in terms of its political atrocities and two documentaries screened at the 56th annual *Berlinale* in 2006 are perfect examples of this style of remembering. *Jeder schweigt von etwas anderem...* (2006) is a documentary directed by Marc Bauder and Dörte Franke, interviewing four families who lived in the GDR and were affected by the state's political censorship policies, each consequently spending time in an East German prison. The second documentary, *Katharina Büllin – und ich dachte ich wär' die Größte* (2005), directed by Marcus Welsch, is the story of an East German volleyball player whose team won silver at the 1980 Olympics. The documentary is about the irreparable and irresponsible actions taken by the East German government to further their athletes' success through devastating experimental drug therapy and hormone injections. These documentary films illustrate a very real and horrific aspect of living in the GDR, but it's not a very pleasant way to remember your childhood if you grew up in former East Germany. Paul Cook writes:

In the years since the state's demise, the focus of popular examinations of the period of history has been, almost exclusively, on its insidious structures of control, and in particular the role of the *Stasi*. The result of representing the GDR as nothing but a 'Stasi state' has been the growing alienation many ordinary East Germans feel due to their conception that the actual experience of everyday life in the East has been devalued and ignored. (160)

In his article on the *Ostalgie* phenomenon, Dominic Boyer quotes an East German friend discussing her feelings on her East German identity:

You get a strong feeling when you listen to how West Germans interpret our history that it was all shit back then. Therefore, by extension, you are covered in this shit as well. Moreover, it doesn't even fit with your own knowledge of your past – there are good and bad things about any

society, it was a complete life in the GDR. The psychic cost of enduring such criticisms is tremendous. (25)

The associations with the former GDR made by popular media do not create a positive image with which the population of former East Germany would want to identify. In “Wir sind nostalgisch, weil wir Menschen sind,” Brussig explores the plight of East Germany’s post-unification identity: “...nach der ehrlichen Freude und Erleichterung über den Gewinn der bürgerlichen Freiheiten [began das DDR-Volk] schon etwas wie Scham zu empfinden.” Thus to counter the dominant historical perspective taken in remembering the East German past, namely in terms of its political atrocities, a second manner of remembering developed – *Ostalgie*, nostalgia for everything East German.

Ostalgie has been a topic under much academic scrutiny the past ten years and while intellectual opinion differs depending on the individual’s position to the GDR (Sadowski-Smith 1), its rise in popularity cannot be disputed. Most of this discourse has focussed on German literature and only more recently have film analyses been included in formal explorations of *Ostalgie*. Essays upon essays have been written on contemporary novels remembering and re-remembering the former GDR. The abundance of East German kitsch that has appeared in German novelty stores indicates that since the fall of Socialist Germany a similar fascination amongst the former East German population has been developing. Paul Cook notes the appearance of GDR theme parks and the re-launching of several GDR consumer brand products (157); Leonie Naughton remarks that by the new millennium, there were over 300 websites devoted to *Ostalgie* (20) and at the end of the summer of 2003, DDR-Shows began airing on German television (Ahbe 7). There are regular meetings for *Trabi*-owners (Hell 912) and a resurgence of stores on *Schönhauserallee* selling old East German furniture and appliances. But it wasn’t until director Leander Haußmann and writer

Thomas Brussig teamed up that similar sentiments began to appear on the big screen.

Sonnenallee, directed by Haußmann and written by Thomas Brussig appeared as a novel and film in late 1999 and the cinematic adaptation of Brussig's 1995 novel, *Helden wie wir*, directed by Sebastian Peterson, was released a month after *Sonnenallee's* premiere. In 2005, Brussig and Haußmann teamed up again to release their second film together, *NVA*, but this time Haußmann authored the novel, which was published shortly after the film's release.

Cinematic *Ostalgie* is a fast-developing genre of film and it can be argued that the films of Brussig and Haußmann are its finest examples (Frey 17).

Ostalgie remembers day-to-day life in the GDR, but focuses on the niceties of living in the Socialist state rather than on the problems. It thematizes the sharp separation between past and present (Ahbe 7) and has become a means of mediating the two. The media often use “*Ostalgie*” as a derogatory term and attribute it to a desire to rebuild the Wall and return to the old system. To many of its critics, *Ostalgie* is considered “nothing more than a form of selective amnesia that sees the former East German state through rose-tinted spectacles, idealising it as a land uncontaminated by capitalism's vicious individualism” (Cook 157).

Claudia Sadowski-Smith's exploration of *Ostalgie* provides an in depth analysis of its critics:

Thorsten Becker and Wolfgang Hegewald reiterate the dominant view of *Ostalgie* in united Germany, which characterizes it as a useless sentiment for an irretrievable temporality and/or a longing to return to a totalitarian system. Similarly, American observer Richard S. Ebenhade has dismissed *Ostalgie* as the “ever more powerful forgetting” (84). This characterization repeats the post-structuralist characterization of nostalgia. According to cultural critic Susan Stewart, nostalgia functions to avoid discussions of current problems in favour of constructing a more idyllic past that never existed. (1)

Lastly, Michael Jürgs strongly criticizes East Germans for their nostalgic take on the history of the GDR and assesses *Ostalgie* as begging the question: “Kann es sein, dass euch [Ossis] die Rolle des beleidigten Opfers so gut gefällt, dass ihr sie nicht mehr aufgeben wollt?” (168).

But these are all wholly Western perspectives and in order to understand the phenomenon of *Ostalgie*, one has to take an approach that orients itself within East Germany, too. Looking solely at Western conceptions of *Ostalgie* ignores its function in society today as well as many of the more complicated features of Socialist reality, "...which allowed for the negotiations of mutual concessions by both the state and its citizens" (Sadowski-Smith 1).

Under the Socialist regime, citizens were not permitted to voice dissent openly and a strong tradition of what Daniela Dahn refers to as "interior dissent" and Svetlana Boym calls "minor everyday dissents" developed (Sadowski-Smith 1). "[E]ven though the East German revolution of 1989 was initiated by East German dissidents, it could never have succeeded without the support of the masses who finally turned their interior dissent into open political activism" (Sadowski-Smith 1). Before political discordance came to its pinnacle in the 1989 revolution, it was an internal struggle and without these private radicals turning their dissent public, the fall of the Berlin Wall could not have occurred. Sadowski-Smith asserts that this tradition of interior dissent has been transferred into the sentiments behind *Ostalgie* (1).

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the first step to unification was taken and shortly thereafter, West and East became one country. Although they had been operating under two very different political systems for the previous 40 years, the construction of a Germany not divided by Walls or politics seemed hopeful. Under the Socialist system, many East Germans, especially within the youth generation, had dreamed of adopting a Western way of life. Unfortunately, capitalism was not all they had hoped for and as the SED had always warned, with capitalism came its worst outcome, unemployment. In some parts of former East Germany, a quarter or more of the population suffered unemployment (Brussig, "Wir sind nostalgisch") and by 1999, one in every five East Germans was unemployed (Hudson).

Ehrhart Neubert quotes the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* guestbook, where one citizen of former East Germany wrote a comment that also spoke for many of his former comrades: “Was nützt mir die Freiheit, wenn ich keine Arbeit habe?”

With the unification of Germany, all that was associated with the East was seen as substandard. Everything from East German technology to East German breeds of dogs and the East German welfare system was viewed as inferior and condemned to have contributed to a dysfunctional society (Naughten 19). Thus the 1990s witnessed the systematic erasure of everything East German: GDR national industry was privatized, monuments glorifying the regime were dismantled and the welfare system that had previously protected East German citizens was decimated or eradicated (Naughten 19). Many East Germans were fundamentally disappointed with unification. They realized that capitalism had gone far beyond their initial desire for Socialist reform without Socialism’s abolishment (Sadowski-Smith 2) and that it didn’t meet their still East German needs. With the East German disillusionment of unification, former citizens of the GDR gave up attempts to assimilate and began once again to search for a distinctly East German identity (Sadowski-Smith 3). According to Claudia Sadowski-Smith, East German disappointment with Westernization manifested itself in what capitalism does best – shopping – and the purchase of East German products that before the fall of the Wall were part of everyday life (3). *Ostalgie* was therefore a response to the inadequacies of living in a Western society and as David Hudson writes, *Ostalgie* emerged as “more a matter of lifestyle than ideology.”

Through Brussig’s texts, *Ostalgie* takes on new meaning and exhibits features that go far beyond simply remembering an idealized East Germany that never truly existed. In fact, it can be argued that Brussig’s novels *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* aren’t *Ostalgie* at all; rather

Helden wie wir and *Sonnenallee* are part of a *Wendeliteratur* movement developing both independently of and cooperatively with *Ostalgie*. This movement thematizes aspects of East German nostalgia as well as incorporates several additional elements that contribute to Brussig's text's subversive and unifying qualities. This is the post-*Ostalgie* literary and cinematic phenomenon, which I refer to as *Postalgie*.

A superficial reading of Brussig's novel *Sonnenallee* leads to the conclusion that because it incorporates many elements that define the phenomenon, it is *Ostalgie*. But in fact, *Sonnenallee* is such a quintessential example of *Ostalgie* that it becomes an exploration of the trend. Paul Cooke suggests that Brussig's examination of *Ostalgie* goes so far as to deconstruct the concept of itself (Cooke 158). In my interview with Thomas Brussig, he commented that *Sonnenallee* wasn't so much an attempt at writing an *Ostalgie* novel, rather a response to it (Personal Interview) and in his brief essay on East German nostalgia Brussig states that writing *Sonnenallee* was an investigation into nostalgia (Brussig, "Wir sind nostalgisch"). *Sonnenallee* not only excels as a study of *Ostalgie*, Brussig's text also succeeds in subverting the phenomenon. This is achieved both through the text's ever-present *Postalgie* as well as through the narrative structure: "Die Distanz der auktorialen Erzählinstanz zum Berichteten verhindert zudem ein Abgleiten in schwämerische Ostalgie" (Donat 117). According to several interviews with the author and director, Brussig's novel and Haußmann's cinematic adaptation had two goals: namely, to make West Germans jealous that they never grew up in the East (Maischberger, "*Sonnenallee*: Eine Mauerkomödie" 22), but also, as Brussig comments in an interview with *Die Wochenpost*, to shake East Germans out of the *Ostalgie* phenomenon (Felsmann).

It is crucial to note that the novels and cinematic adaptations of *Helden wie wir*, *Sonnenallee* and *NVA* are not remembering a GDR *without* its political atrocities; rather they illustrate that East Germany was more than its Socialist government and secret police and as *Sonnenallee's* publicity information reads: “Es wird Zeit, daß man darüber spricht, was die DDR noch war außer Mauer, Stasi und Zentralkomitee” (Cook 160). Brussig’s comedic narratives of life in the former GDR parody East Germany’s governmental systems and institutions in such a way that they reconstruct contemporary notions of growing up under Socialism. Through this reconstruction, Brussig’s texts return and restore a distinctly East German identity to the residents of the former GDR that unification destroyed and post-unification ignored. At the same time, Brussig’s *Postalgie* assists in the development of a new shared German national identity that incorporates both East and West German histories.

The question, then, is not whether or not *Ostalgie* is accurate or appropriate or even realistic. Haußmann said that in his direction of *Sonnenallee*, he never intended for his portrayal to be realistic (Maischberger, “*Sonnenallee*. Eine Mauerkomödie” 12) and Brussig disclosed in an interview with *tip* magazine that his book is “überhaupt nicht präzise” (Gunske and Poser). Although Brussig and Haußmann both acknowledge that their depiction of the GDR is not necessarily a realistic one (Personal Interview), this chapter will examine the image of the GDR propagated by Brussig’s *Postalgie* and its effects on the construction of German identities – both specifically East German and nationally.

One important difference between *Ostalgie* and *Postalgie* is that *Ostalgie* has often been conceptualized and orchestrated by West Germans (Boyer 21). The two most famous *Ostalgie* hits in the last ten years were *Super Illu* and *Goodbye Lenin!*. *Super Illu* is a magazine produced by Bavarian publishing house Burda Verlag and was, according to Hubert Burda, created to

help ease the East German transition into their new way of life (Boyer 22). Similarly, *Goodbye Lenin!* was a West German project with both the director and co-writer originating from Westphalia and Cologne respectively (Boyer 23).

Several other authors have also remarked on the inaccuracy and inauthenticity of the *Ostalgie* phenomenon. Christof Dieckmann notes that traditional *Ostalgie* is insufficient and that one can't identify with the *Ostalgie*-Shows because "der wirkliche Osten war mündlich; man sucht ihn vergebens im Star- und Klamottenfundus eines staatshörigen Fernsehfunks" ("Honis heitere Welt" 202). Alexander Osang marks the offensiveness of the DDR-Shows, which he emphasizes are filmed in the West: "Die Grenzen zwischen Ostgast und Ostprodukt sind fließend" ("Zu Gast," 212). Brussig writes that "Ostalgie gibt's nicht erst, seitdem das Fernsehen sie entdeckt hat" ("Der Brechreiz ist ein aktueller") and notes the role of the West in the production and dissemination of *Ostalgie*: "...diese Ostalgie-Shows [sind] auch der Ausdruck eines schlechten West-Gewissens und einer vermurksten deutschen Einheit" ("Der Brechreiz ist ein aktueller"). And Stefan Berg makes the observation that East German identity is in fact a West German endeavour:

Doch die Ost-Identität ist ein West-Produkt, da sie vor allem von Westdeutschen gesehen und benannt wird. Es sind die West-Beobachten des Beitrittsgebietes, die eine Ost-Identität beschreiben und die Ostdeutschen darauf festlegen. (52)

Lastly, in his essay "*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany," Dominic Boyer writes that *Ostalgie* does not exist at all (18), noting that it is often the West Germans that are more fascinated by the GDR than the East Germans (21). Haußmann makes a similar observation in his interview with Sandra Maischberger saying that in the filming of *Sonnenallee*, it was the West Germans that were more pedantic in terms of the authenticity of the film (Maischberger, "Interview").

In his article “Der Brechreiz ist ein aktueller,” Brussig explores how contemporary notions of *Ostalgie* are incorrect. According to Brussig, what audiences consider *Ostalgie* and what he writes are completely different concepts. He maintains in his brief essay addressing East German nostalgia that there is a big difference between the statements “es war nicht alles schlecht” and “es war eigentlich ganz gut” (Brussig, “Wir sind nostalgisch”). Along the same lines, to clarify this same sort of misunderstanding suffered by many nostalgic East Germans, Henryk M. Broder quotes Peter Sodann repeating the “berühmte Lösung” (Sattler) in his article “Wir lieben die Heimat:” “Niemand will die DDR wieder haben. Aber keiner will sie sich nehmen lassen” (64). The disparity between looking at the GDR nostalgically and not wanting to return to a Socialist existence is thematized in the difference between *Ostalgie* and *Postalgie* and where *Ostalgie* can sometimes be perceived as a marketing ploy, *Postalgie* is political and an attempt to address the misinterpretation of East Germany’s former citizens nostalgically recalling their history.

The *Postalgie* of Thomas Brussig’s texts counters the typical historical perspectives taken when discussing the GDR. It confronts the process of remembering in terms of its negative connotations as well as *Ostalgie* and in doing so, restores East German pride in their history: neither is the East German *Heimat* degraded by focusing solely on the state’s political atrocities as the media has, nor dismissed through *Ostalgie*’s unrealistic version of nostalgia. Brussig’s comedic narratives remember the GDR with a positive emphasis, but importantly, they don’t neglect to illustrate the negative aspects of living under a Socialist political system and this is where *Postalgie* functions in countering conventional modes of remembering East Germany. Lastly, Brussig’s *Postalgie* is about individuals. Much like the distinction between *Ostalgie* and *Postalgie*, Christof Dieckmann differentiates between *Ostalgie* and what he refers to as “dumme Ostalgie:”

Ostalgie beendet eine Enteignung. Sie beharrt auf persönlicher Geschichte, auf unverkürzter Biografie. Den Doktrinen der Großhistorie ruft sie ein heiteres Aber zu. Dumm wird Ostalgie, wenn sie Ironie und Individualität verliert, wenn sie selber doktrinär wird, lügt und tüncht und Kollektiv-Identität behauptet, wo das einzelmenschliche Gewissen sprechen musste. Autoritäts-Sehnsucht, Stasi-Vergessenheit, Blauhemd-Partys, das ist dumme Ostalgie. ("Honis heitere Welt" 203)

Dieckmann deems *Ostalgie* insufficient and calls for individual stories to transcend the dominant discourse. Socialist ideology thought in terms of the whole society, in terms of "we." Brussig's *Postalgie* relates the stories of individual East German citizens and attempts to stimulate further story-telling in return. *Helden wie wir* explores the failures of its protagonist as a human being and addresses his individual modes of resistance. In these accounts of failure, rebellion and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Brussig aims to inspire others to tell their stories (Brussig, "Wir sind nostalgisch", Straubel, Szabo and Wendtorf).

Also erschuf ich einen Helden, der in der Ich-Form über sein Versagen tatsächlich spricht, und zwar mit unerhörter Offenheit. ... Doch mein Held spricht nicht nur mit ungehörter Offenheit über sein Versagen - nein, sein Versagen (seine Dummheit, Feigheit und seine Verblendung) übersteigt auch alles, was es in der DDR an Versagen gegeben hat. Ich hatte die Hoffnung, daß ein solches Buch dem begeisterten Leser (weil lachendem Leser - das Buch ist über weite Strecken eine kraftvolle Komödie) zeigt, daß eine ehrliche Konfrontation mit dem eigenen Versagen »reinholt«. Diese Karthasis gönnte ich zumindest meinem Helden. Und ich dachte: Wenn der Leser spürt, daß selbst dieser Held, der eine äußerlich betrachtet, sehr, sehr lächerliche Figur ist, wenn der also über sein Versagen reden kann, obwohl dieses Versagen das des Lesers übersteigt - ja, warum soll dann auch nicht der Leser ermuntert fühlen, sich endlich auch mit seinem Versagen zu konfrontieren? ("Wir sind nostalgisch")

Essentially, if Klaus can tell his tale of failure and perversion and Micha can recount his first love and adolescent rebellion, then perhaps the rest of East Germany will begin to tell their stories of failure and heroism. Joachim Gauch asserts: "Nur – von Trümmern, Fehlern und besonders eigener Schuld kann man sich nicht befreien, wenn man die Fehler und die Schuld anderer thematisiert" (51). Like Dieckmann claims, the future of East German history is in individual stories and Brussig's *Postalgie* takes that sentiment to heart.

In Haußmann's foreword to *Sonnenallee: Das Buch zum Farbfilm* he writes: "Fünfundfünfzig Jahre hat sich das ganze Volk diesem System widersetzt, ohne daß es dies bemerkt hätte" (7).

In writing *Sonnenallee*, the screenplay for *NVA* and *Helden wie wir*, Brussig's intention was to present the heroes of East Germany. These heroes, who Haußmann identifies as not particularly spectacular, were heroes despite their ordinariness, "wie du und ich" (7).

Sonnenallee, *Helden wie wir* and *NVA* illustrate unconventional heroism and how the population of East Germany subtly resisted and rebelled against their government on a daily basis. Klaus Uhltzsch of *Helden wie wir* falls the Berlin Wall with his penis and then talks about it; Henrik Heidler of *NVA* sleeps with the daughter of Colonel Kalt and defies the rules and regulations of the *Nationale Volks Armee* and Micha Ehrenreich and his friends of *Sonnenallee* opt for political exile in rock and roll music.

In the 1990s, the storytellers of unification changed, and Paul Betts argues that through *Ostalgie* East Germans took over the production and dissemination of their own history (734). *Ostalgie* is more than simply an escapist defence mechanism (Betts 734) and as Sadowski-Smith writes, *Ostalgie* represents an East German opposition to the notion and reality of a unified Germany. Although it may appear to be requesting a return to the East, perhaps it is only trying to illustrate the need for the reform of united Germany's capitalist methods (5) as well as a reconstitution of Germany's national identity. In Brussig's texts, what Jens Bisky suggests to be true of *Ostalgie* is even more accurate of *Postalgie* – that it is not about revolution but of new beginnings (118). *Postalgie* responds to this need for the re-evaluation of Germany's national identity. Perhaps *Sonnenallee* is an attempt to resurrect the concept of a "third way," but this time, it is not in terms of ideological directions. The "third way" or Brussig's *Postalgie* is the call for a new national identity that is neither distinctly East nor West, but united.

Before 1989, East and West Germany defined themselves in opposition to each other, each claiming a break with the Nazi past on one side of the Wall and continuity on the other:

In the West, the GDR could become an instantiation of German “authoritarian traditions” that threatened a return of dictatorial terror to Germany. Meanwhile, in the East, the FRG represented German cultural qualities of aggression and intolerance honed by the imperialist imperative of international capitalism. The citizenry of each Germany was depicted by the opposing state alternately as being “more German” in their authoritarian proclivities and as being relatively innocent victims of a criminal regime. In both cases, the “truly” forward-looking Germany defined itself in opposition to the backward glance of the other Germany. For each Germany, the other represented the national-cultural past against which its ideal national futurity could be measured. Neither Germany, in the end, made sense without the other. (Boyer 14)

When the Wall fell, this definition collapsed with it and so did the East-West perception of each other. Evelyn Finger writes that the West understood the East far better when Germany was divided:

Wer erinnert sich denn heute noch an die gefühlte Einigkeit der achtziger Jahre, als ostdeutsche Bücher bei westdeutschen Lesern keinerlei Verständnisschwierigkeiten hervorriefen? Christa Wolfs *Kassandra* hatte in der Bundesrepublik eine verkaufte Auflage von 415.000, Christoph Heins *Drachenblut* fast 120.000. Stefan Heym, Irmtraud Morgner, Maxie Wander wurden ähnlich problemlos rezipiert wie die ausgewiesenen, übergesiedelten Literaten Wolf Biermann, Erich Loest, Reiner Kunze. Als die Mauer noch stand, kam es sogar vor, dass man sich »drüben« besser verstanden fühlen konnte als im eigenen Land: Peter Weiss wurde von DDR-Funktionären hofiert, während Heiner Müllers *Prometheus*-Text nur von seinem Westverlag vollständig (inklusive der Masturbationsszene) gedruckt wurde.

Brussig’s *Postalgie* is once again offering the East German perspective textually.

Consequently, his work functions not only to assist former West Germans in understanding the East German plight, but also to clear up the misunderstanding of *Ostalgie*.

Deshalb denke ich, dass das Buch tatsächlich geeignet ist, dieses deutsch-deutsche Missverständnis ein bisschen aufzuhellen. Ich hoffe, dass die Westler verstehen lernen, dass die Ostdeutschen, wenn sie sich an die DDR gerne erinnern, diesen Staat trotzdem nicht wiederhaben wollen. Den Ostdeutschen muss dagegen klar werden, dass die Erinnerungen an die DDR nicht dazu geeignet sind, Tagespolitik zu machen. (Gunske and Poser)

In his novels, Brussig integrates East Germany's history into West Germany's peripheral vision and as a result, his work promotes the mutual understanding lost with the fall of the Wall.

In keeping with the origins of *Ostalgie*, Brussig's texts function to restore East German pride and return a distinctively East German identity to its East German audience. But as *Postalgie*, Brussig's work also assists in the development of a new shared German national identity, incorporating narrative techniques and themes to unify the East and West instead of dividing them. Where *Ostalgie* reinforces the difference between the population of the former East and the population of the former West, *Postalgie* emphasizes the similarities. Despite the fact that *Sonnenallee's* ambiance is still distinctly East German, Brussig incorporates unifying elements to illustrate that East Germans grew up in much the same way their West German counterparts did, thus normalizing the East German experience for his West German audience. Brussig's texts reconstitute the East German experience for both East and West German audiences so that East Germans might see how they subtly resisted the authorities and West Germans may observe how East Germany was not unanimously supportive of the SED and Socialist tedium. Thus the new country can re-evaluate its German identity, which remains predominantly Western, to incorporate both East and West histories, creating a new common united German identity.

Helden wie wir, *Sonnenallee* and *NVA* illustrate that despite obvious political differences, those who grew up in the West and those who grew up in the East are not fundamentally different because the process of growing up is itself similar. Brussig translates the East German experience into a visual language that can be understood by everyone, thus normalizing it (Cooke 156). His work demonstrates that many of the typical experiences faced by youth

growing up in Europe, be it in the West or East, are not defined by the borders within which these experiences occurred and that this is a means of unification rather than division. All three narratives recount the trials and tribulations of growing up and each male protagonist experiences several of the same things that many boys coming of age undoubtedly will – both under Socialism and capitalism, thirty years ago and today. Micha Ehrenreich, Klaus Uhltscht and Henrik Heidler are each dealing with love for the first time and fumbling through their first sexual encounters. Brussig uses narratives of youth and coming of age to illustrate that despite political differences, teenagers were running around, falling in love, getting into fights and listening to music on both sides of the Wall.

Sonnenallee illustrates that in East Germany, young people were listening to Western rock music and through the film's rock and roll narrative, Brussig shows that Germany's youth population was united through rock music prior to the fall of the Wall. He also illustrates how rock music was a very real part of day-to-day resistance in the GDR and its use as a narrative structure illustrates to East German audiences how the youth of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s very quietly protested the East German state by turning up the volume to their record players.

Several other elements of Brussig's *Postalgie* unify East and West in hindsight and play into the creation of a common national German identity. Dietrich Schwanitz identifies comedy as one of the key cultural indicators of a democracy (Brockmann 35). He writes that in order to deal with difference, people need a sense of humour and thus humour is a prerequisite for tolerance. Comedy, he continues, didn't develop in the Third Reich and the GDR because there was no separation between politics and morals. Disagreements were therefore settled by the state, not the people (Brockmann 35-36). Thus the characteristic comedic elements of

Brussig's *Postalgie* are his attempt to democratize East Germany, in hindsight. Brussig's use of comedy once again resurrects East Germany in an atypical fashion to unify East and West in memory.

Brussig's comedy also counters GDR hypermoralism. By giving East Germany a sense of humour, both historically and to deal with its history, Brussig incorporates the democratic element of comedy to suggest that the citizens of the GDR privately had the personal freedoms the West had publicly. But these liberties were located behind closed doors – within East German families in criticisms of the state and amongst friends in jokes and pranks played on the local police.

However, *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* use comedy in two different ways, resulting in two different political statements. The humour in *Helden wie wir* is established through ironic inversion of East German stereotypes and a parody of the systems of the GDR. Instead of highlighting the day-to-day resistance of East German citizens, it functions as an exploration of the GDR's mechanisms of oppression, disarms the *Stasi* with laughter and illustrates how talking about one's failure is its own variety of heroism. Through the parody of East German stereotypes and literature, Brussig caricatures the politics of the GDR and in satirizing the East German state, he is doing publicly what so many did privately before 1989 and subverts the system – in hindsight.

One last function of comedy in Brussig's *Postalgie* is located in the cinemas and screening rooms of his novels' cinematic adaptations. Here, in the dark rooms of German theatres, Brussig uses comedy to further bridge the gap between East and West Germans and just as Schwanitz observes that humour is the key to tolerance and resolving disagreements, in the

cinema, Brussig's comedy becomes a tool to have *Ossis* and *Wessis* resolve their differences and unite through laughter.

Sonnenallee, *Helden wie wir* and *NVA* restore the day-to-day experiences of the GDR to their East German viewers, while normalizing the East German experience for their West German audience and subverting the system in hindsight. They also reinstate East German pride for the East German way of life by illustrating that the citizens of the former GDR were not unanimously supportive of their government and demonstrate some of the subtle yet powerful and sometimes ridiculous ways in which East Germans resisted and rebelled against the GDR authorities. Lastly, Brussig's literary and cinematic *Postalgie* assists in the construction of a common German national identity by recalling elements of the East German adolescence. Brussig's texts illustrate to both former East and former West German audiences that their childhood experiences were exclusive to neither the East nor the West. Instead, they demonstrate that the coming of age tales recounted in Brussig's narratives were common throughout not only divided Germany over a decade and a half ago, but also in united Germany today. Through the narratives of his *Postalgie*, Brussig constructs a common point of reference from which we can recontextualize German national identity. Brussig's use of comedy, parody and rock and roll suggest that Germany's unified population might be able to rehistoricize their individual identities to develop a common identity based on the unifying factor of growing up, rather than on the dividing factor of differing political systems. In doing this, Brussig's texts give his audiences the physical and conceptual space to look around, laugh at themselves and realize that maybe *Ossis* and *Wessis* aren't so fundamentally different after all: "West lernt, Ost erinnert, West lacht, Ost, nunja, lächelt" (Franke).

Chapter 5: *Sonnenallee*: Remembering and Re-rendering the East German Past

... man erinnert sich gerne. Die Erinnerung ist ein Zug am Menschen, der die Vergangenheit schön färbt. Das, was nicht so schön war, vergißt man. Erinnern ist doch das Gegenteil von Merken. (Maischberger, "Interview")

Thomas Brussig's novel *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* was published in August 1999 to accompany the release of Leander Haußmann's film *Sonnenallee*, which opened on the fiftieth anniversary of the Germany Democratic Republic, October 7th, 1999. Brussig approached Haußmann with *Sonnenallee's* story and the idea of making an East German comedy and the two wrote the screenplay together (Maischberger, "Interview")⁴, for which they were awarded the Screenplay Prize of the Federal Government. Unlike the novel and film version of *Helden wie wir*, the literary and cinematic adaptation of *Sonnenallee* can be approached simultaneously. The two worked in tandem and despite the fact that Haußmann made many alterations in the storyline during the shooting process, the novel and film were considered part of the same project rather than separate endeavours (Haußmann, "Es kam dicke genug" 220).

Brussig's two most successful novels approach the subject of the GDR in completely different ways. Brussig states in an interview that "*Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* wirkt wie ein Gegenprogramm zu *Helden wie wir*" (Gunske and Poser). But despite their dissimilarity, in terms of *Postalgie*, they function best when examined together. In contrast to *Helden wie wir*, *Sonnenallee* was intended to be "eine liebevolle Abrechnung mit der DDR," one which Brussig could only have written after *Helden wie wir*: "...als [er] seine Wut über den anmaßenden Widerspruch von Sein und Schein mit den [sic.] *Helden wie wir* herausgeschrien

⁴ Most of the literature written on both the film and the novel *Sonnenallee* can be found on the internet, either in German newspaper and magazine archives or through Brussig's own website. Consequently, many of the works cited in this chapter will not have any pagination indicated.

hatte” (Grohmer). In *Sonnenallee*, Brussig and Haußmann approach the subject of East German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* nostalgically as opposed to the grotesque satire of *Helden wie wir*. Brussig uses his characters to represent specific East German demographics and with his depiction of life in the GDR, he illustrates how an entire generation of East Germans rebelled against the state.

Similar to the narrative disparity between Brussig’s novel *Helden wie wir* and Sebastian Peterson’s cinematic adaptation, Brussig’s literary version of *Sonnenallee* is more political than Haußmann’s film. Where Haußmann’s film dwells on music in the GDR as a form of resistance, Brussig’s novel expands on the concept of unconventional dissidence. It deals with the more delicate and less visually communicable aspects of East Germany’s daily subversion, scripting what Andreas Nentwich calls the “[z]ärtliche Poesie des Widerstands” and exploring what Seán Allan refers to as “heroism of the ordinary” (“east-west relations” 113).

Through a greater intimacy with *Sonnenallee*’s characters, Brussig’s novel highlights individual resistance on a much broader scale than Haußmann’s film. The film focuses primarily on how music in general functioned as a means of political rebellion and dissidence, while the novel explores each character’s individual means of resistance. In turn, as each character personifies a distinct personality – the philosopher, the hippy, the lover, the artist and the soldier. Through the depiction of the subtle rebellious natures of Micha, his friends and family, Brussig examines the channels of resistance for various East German youth.

The next two chapters will explore how rock music was a popular means of political subversion adopted by a large part of East German youth. But as Brussig’s novel illustrates, music was only one form of subtle dissidence and each of his characters rebel against the

state in different ways. Mario and his existential girlfriend use philosophy to counter East German ideology (*Sonnenallee* 81) and examine the Wall in terms of the different philosophical reactions to it (*Sonnenallee* 76). Wuschel's love for American and British rock and roll places him in opposition to Socialism and his black market purchases are outright illegal. Bernd, Micha's brother, rebels against the government by sabotaging the voting procedure held in his squadron (*Sonnenallee* 114). While discussing Mario's arrest at the border train station, the narrative explores how the process of learning a foreign language is a rebellious act.

Es war vielleicht eine Art, Fernweh auszudrücken. Oder eine Art Trotz:
Wenn wir schon nicht dorthin fahren können, lernen wir eben die Sprache.
Wer auf sich hielt, verkündete, er lasse seinen Kindern eine zweisprachige
Erziehung angedeihen. ... Es ging nicht nur darum, die Sprachen zu lernen,
sondern auch, Kontakte mit allen zu kriegen, die dort wohnten, wo wir nicht
hinfahren durften. (*Sonnenallee* 124)

Returning to the idea of sex as a place of personal freedom Brussig explores in *Helden wie wir*, Miriam rebels against East German authority by simply kissing West Germans: "Und irgendwie muß sie doch spüren, daß die ihr eben nicht alles verbieten können. Und wenn sie sich mit Westlern knutscht, dann gibt ihr das so ein Gefühl, daß die nicht alle Macht über sie haben..." (*Sonnenallee* 145).

Furthermore, Micha's family only feigns their support for the Party. Outwardly, the Kuppisch-Ehrenreich family is the picture of Socialist domesticity. Micha's mother pronounces her son's name "Mischa" instead of "Micha" to give it more of a Russian quality and makes every attempt to get him into the *Rotes Kloster* (*Sonnenallee* 130-133). But the reader learns that Doris secretly found the missing passport of a West German citizen and instead of handing it over to the police, she spends the first two-thirds of the narrative preparing for her escape to West Berlin (*Sonnenallee* 98-99). With her costume ready, Doris makes her way

to the border, but soon realizes that a life in West Germany is not what she really wants and returns to her family. Doris's decision is emblematic for the conclusion come to by many East German citizens who desired drastic change. Initially, it was thought that the answer was in leaving East Germany, but like Doris, after November 9th, 1989, East Germans realized that despite the GDR's political problems, they couldn't change which side of the Wall felt like home.

The Kuppisch-Ehrenreich family also subscribes to the East German *ND* newspaper, but Micha's father refuses to read anything other than the *BZ* (*Sonnenallee* 36, 40). The narrator alludes to the common practice of keeping the mailbox so full that the *ND* spills out to give impression of solidarity. But these efforts are purely superficial and when their son makes the highly contentious statement "Ras, dwa, tri – Russen wer'n wir nie!" (*Sonnenallee* 133), Micha's parents react with pride rather than shame. Despite their appearance, the Kuppisch-Ehrenreich family are not loyal to the SED. Rather, they, like many East German citizens, are simply reacting to the constant fear of their exposure by their *Stasi-Nachbar* (*Sonnenallee* 35).

In the former GDR, dissidence manifested itself in many forms and as suggested by Brussig and Haußmann's project, was often veiled in adolescent pastimes. In his review of the novel, Claus-Ulrich Bielefeld writes that *Sonnenallee* is a narrative of the "Lebensgefühl der kleinen Rebellion" and describes the necessity of such subtle resistance.

...in einer Gesellschaft, in der das Prinzip der Konsumfreiheit und des easy going herrschen, kann schnell alles langweilig werden; in einer Gesellschaft, in der alles grau und nichts erlaubt ist, gerät schon ein kleiner Scherz zu einem Akt des Widerstands, entsteht Spannung, wenn man den tumben ABV verarscht. Ein Paradox: Je grauer der Alltag, desto auffallender die kleinen Regelverstöße. (Bielefeld)

Although each character's "kleine Regelverstöße" are important, the act of quiet dissidence is most significant in the character of Micha, whose dominant means of rebellion are his *Tagebücher*. Through his journals, Micha essentially rewrites his own past.

Micha's journals are fabricated entries that document his fictive dissident thoughts from childhood onwards. They were written to pull Miriam out of a spell of depression inspired by the bleakness of the East German state (*Sonnenallee* 147). Sean Allan remarks that Micha "embarks on a process of 'remembering' in which he quite literally rewrites his own identity and with it, his attitude to the GDR" ("east-west relations" 115). Micha's endeavour is symbolic of the desire felt by many citizens of former East Germany to shed new light on their history by reshaping their pasts. Traditionally, this has been seen as an act of *Ostalgie*, which as a sort of symbolic resistance (Berdahl 137) remembers the GDR solely in terms of its niceties, but often at the expense of East Germany's real history. Brussig's literature takes a different approach and Micha's journals operate as a metaphor for Brussig's *Postalgie* as well as his whole oeuvre. Micha's journals demonstrate how rewriting one's own history is a form of resistance. This in turn illustrates how *Postalgie* not only functions in returning East German pride to the former citizens of the GDR, for Miriam's depression is lifted instantaneously; it also acts as subversion in hindsight. Thus what Daphne Berdahl claims true for *Ostalgie* – that it is about reclaiming a devalued self (137) – is even more accurate when discussing Brussig's *Postalgie*.

This act of rewriting the past, and the subversion associated with it, is maintained throughout the novel on a second level and the novel itself is exemplary of this practice of re-rendering one's history. Mechthild Küpper writes in her review of the novel, "[d]urch das Schreiben schaffen sich Brussigs Protagonisten eine Gegenwelt zur DDR." Even on the first

page, Brussig's novel begins to rewrite East German history. He conjures up the meeting between Stalin, Churchill and Truman, during which they divided the city of Berlin, and portrays the main point of contention between East and West as the ownership of *Sonnenallee* (*Sonnenallee* 7). Like *Helden wie wir*, *Sonnenallee* is the reevaluation of East Germany's political history, but this time it is through the subtle resistance of a group of teenage boys. Similar to Sean Allan's assessment of the history portrayed in *Good Bye Lenin!*, Haußmann's film also "macht besonders darauf aufmerksam, dass Geschichte niemals nur aus Tatsachen und Fakten besteht, sondern dass die Beschäftigung mit der Vergangenheit fast immer mit den Bedürfnissen der Gegenwart Hand in Hand geht" ("*Good Bye, Lenin!*" 56). Brussig's narrative is a collection of fantastical stories from the Eastern end of *Sonnenallee* and these narratives become their own version of East German history. As Claus-Ulrich Bielefeld writes, *Sonnenallee* tells "eine DDR-Geschichte in Geschichten." With his novel, Brussig is once again attempting to create a variety of East Germany mythology. But unlike *Helden wie wir*, where Brussig writes the legend of the fall of the Berlin Wall, *Sonnenallee's* collective memory is a compilation of what would become urban legends and hearsay – essentially modern mythology – that rewrite the history of the GDR in terms of the East German everyday experience and the private resistance of its individual citizens.

Anke Westphal refers to one of these myths in her review of Brussig's novel, "Die DDR als Hippie-Republik."

Am Anfang war nicht das Wort, sondern ein Gemüseladen. Er krönte jene Ecke Ostberlins, an der Neukölln auf Treptow traf und die Sonnenallee auf der Baumschulenstraße endete. Im kleinen Gemüseladen bediente eine unglücklich wirkende Frau, während ihr Mann, immer eine Helmut-Schmidt-Mütze auf dem Kopf, die schweren Kisten stemmte. Wenn zu Pfingsten, Ostern und Weihnachten dicke, glänzende Westautos in größerer Zahl den Grenzübergang Sonnenallee passierten, um in die Baumschulenstraße einzubiegen, wurden sie von der Gemüsefrau laut bewundert. "Sehen die nicht schön aus!" rief die vor Schmerzen mürrische Frau, den Blick wie

abwesend in die Ferne gerichtet. Vom Westen hat die Frau dann nicht mehr viel gehabt; kurz nach dem Fall der Mauer starb sie an Krebs, und ihr Mann gab den Laden auf.

Westphal uses the structure of biblical mythology to reevaluate the founding narratives of the GDR. *Sonnenallee* contradicts the official mythology of the Socialist origin, which Julia Hell describes as founded on the anti-fascist hero and the origin of Socialism in the family (915-916). As Elmar Krekeler writes in his article “Die Legende von Micha und Miriam,” *Sonnenallee* tells the story of “wie es wohl war:”

Damals in der Tanzschule im Schatten der Mauer, damals mit dem Westonkel, damals mit der Rockmusik, damals mit dem Gemüseladen am Grenzübergang, der irgendwann nur noch DDR-Devotionalien verkaufen durfte, aber weiter Gemüseladen hieß. Damals, als man ständig in der Gefahr lebte, schon durch Dumme-Jungen-Streiche sein Leben zu versauen oder auch mal von Grenzschildern angeschossen zu werden. Es fühlt sich so an, wie es wohl war. Es riecht so. Und es ist doch irgendwie putzig.

Instead, *Sonnenallee* proposes that the GDR was founded on *Gemüseladenfrauen* and music. Haußmann’s approach to “das Atlantis linker Utopie” (Bielefeld) is more realistic than that of the formal history of the GDR and he develops an East German mythology that is based on individuals rather than ideology, that excludes Socialist politics and incorporates the East German everyday experience.

The aesthetic of *Sonnenallee* compliments many of the ideas Brussig and Haußmann explore.

The two are quoted in numerous articles saying that East German realism was neither a priority, nor their intent:

Wenn man genauer hinguckt, wird man sehen, daß der Film vollkommen unrealistisch ist. Das Dekor, die Straße - das sieht alles gebaut aus. Ich liebe das auch. Ich finde es total langweilig, wenn sechs Intellektuelle in einem Raum sitzen, miteinander reden und so tun, als ob sie Manfred Krug wären. Ein unangenehmer Gedanke, daß man versucht, diesen vollkommen unrealen Zustand, in dem wir damals gelebt haben, realistisch zu machen. Dann wird es langweilig. Dann wird es Fernsehspiel. (Maischberger, “Interview”)

The film's anti-realistic aesthetic signals the nonrealistic quality of the film's rewriting of the history of the GDR and emphasizes the tension between East Germany in memory and East Germany in formal history. According to Andreas Webber, this aesthetic also functions to subvert the *Ostalgie* phenomenon.

By insisting on its anti-realistic aesthetic at every turn, the film controls the uncritical pleasures of nostalgia and mockery that it might seem to purvey and that attracted negative comment in many of the reviews of the film. *Sonnenallee* at once trades in 'Ostalgie', the fetishistic nostalgia for the trappings of GDR culture that has developed to industrial proportions over recent years, and subverts it as a method of appropriate of the past. (9)

Essentially, Weber's suggestion can be read to support this chapter's claims that that film's anti-realistic aesthetic helps develop Brussig and Haußmann's cinematic *Postalgie*.

With *Sonnenallee*, Haußmann and Brussig also contradict the East German state's mandated aesthetic. By incorporating a variety of anti-Socialist realism in its depictions of characters as well as in terms of cinematography and set design, *Sonnenallee* confronts the Socialist ideology aesthetically. In an assessment similar to that of *Helden wie wir*, neither Brussig's novel nor Haußmann's film further the goals of Socialism in any way. In fact, *Sonnenallee* is a movement away from East Germany's ideology. Although, in the tradition of Socialist realism, *Sonnenallee* focuses on some social issues, ironically, the societal concern in Brussig's narrative is Socialism itself. And instead of concentrating on the working class and society as a whole, *Sonnenallee* examines the restlessness of youth and the individual.

Another element to the text's anti-realism is the time period in which the narrative is set. *Sonnenallee* takes place sometime in the 1970s because according to Haußmann, "die DDR war eigentlich immer in den Siebzigern" (Maischburger "Interview"). Taking the film so far out of the contemporary context gives it a sort of timelessness such as in a fairytale.

Furthermore, as Seán Allan suggests, "focusing on the 1970s allows the filmmakers to

explore the collective memories of a generation of GDR citizens whilst avoiding the need to address the vicissitudes of German-German political developments [sic.] during the late 1980s” (“east-west relations” 113). The soundtrack also complements *Sonnenallee’s* timelessness by featuring music from before, during and well after the 1970s. According to Sean Allan, the film’s fantastic quality and timelessness set up by the narrative, set design and soundtrack play a pivotal role in the characters’ exploration and definition of their sense of self-identity (“east-west relations” 115). In terms of the text’s assistance in the East German search for identity, a second parallel can be made. The narrative’s placement out of time aids in the construction of an East German sense of identity out of its nation-state of reference.

Micha’s overarching assessment of his life in East Germany highlights the discrepancy between what we remember and what history records, an idea Daniela Berghahn refers to as *Sonnenallee’s* counter-narrative to the “official master narrative of socialism” (87). According to Berghahn, this statement alludes to the “conflation of memories of the GDR with memories of the experience of first love and youth” that “legitimizes a nostalgic idealization of the GDR, which ultimately paves the way for a normalization of the GDR’s totalitarian legacy. In other respects too, *Sonnenallee* promotes the project of normalization” (96).

Brussig’s novel and Haußmann’s film essentially contribute to the cultural memory of East Germany, but instead of emphasizing a historically “accurate” perspective, the texts promote the telling of individual stories and urban legends. Jean E. Godsall-Myers writes that “[d]urch die Verbindung des Faktischen mit dem Persönlichen werden Impulse transportiert, die eine Identifizierung durch Erinnerung und Emotionalisierung herstellen, ohne das Risiko informativer Überfrachtungen einzugehen, wie sie leicht durch Dokumentarfilme entstehen können” (143).

Shortly after the release of *Sonnenallee*, charges were laid against the film production team. Help e.V., an organization that advocates the rights of political victims, took issue with the film's supposedly blatant disrespect for the citizens of former East Germany (Cooke 157). *Spiegel Online* summarizes the debate and quotes the official accusations three months after the film's release:

Er [Haußmann] beleidigt die ehemaligen DDR-Bürger, weil er eine Gruppe junger Leute tanzen lässt, und zwar 'vor der Mordmauer – aber nicht etwa nach dem Fall der Mauer, sondern zu Zeiten, als diese Mauer blutige Alltagsrealität war'. ("Strafanzeige gegen Haußmann")

However, the film is not an attempt to degrade the very real issues that faced political prisoners and Brussig broaches a similar subject in his interview with Maischberger.

Mir ging es darum, die DDR als Kulisse zu benutzen. ... Die DDR hinterläßt nichts, außer der Mauer und der Tatsache, daß sich eine ganze Gesellschaft so gegen ihre eigenen Interessen organisiert hat. Keiner wollte die Mauer, trotzdem hat es sie immerhin 28 Jahre gegeben. Aber sonst hinterläßt die DDR ja keine monströsen Fragen, wo man wirklich genau sein muß. Da darf man sich entfernen, ohne moralische Bedenken. Der DDR ein Museum bauen? Eher dem eigenen Erwachsenwerden. Meine Kindheit hat in der DDR stattgefunden. Das macht die DDR nicht besser. Aber ich erinnere mich trotzdem gerne an die Kindheit. ("Interview")

Sonnenallee is an attempt to redevelop and reinstate a distinctly East German identity based on growing up and the East German youth experience. Haußmann explores this search for identity in his article "Es kam dicke genug" and states: "Wir waren offenbar auf ein Grundbedürfnis gestoßen: die Sehnsucht, ein bisschen Identität zurückzubekommen" (220).

Although the novel's political tale is denser than the film's, Haußmann's *Sonnenallee* received far more attention than Brussig's novel. It was hailed as the most successful film of the year and essentially all academic literature and media writing on the *Sonnenallee* project have focused almost exclusively on Haußmann's cinematic adaptation. In his article on post-unification cinema, Webber remarks that "[f]ilm has played a fundamental role in fashioning

Berlin's image and cultural self-understanding throughout the twentieth century and not least in the Post-*Wende* years" (1). The emerging genre of post-unification East German cinema functions as the mythological, cultural and historical foundation from which East Germans are beginning to understand themselves and their past.

As *Der Spiegel* pointed out on the fiftieth anniversary of the GDR: "Zehn Jahre sind eine Ewigkeit" but "[z]ehn Jahre können zu kurz seine, um aus Geschichten Legenden zu stricken, die der Westen schon lange besitzt" ("Alles war so, alles war anders"). It has become the responsibility of contemporary narratives to create the East German legends and mythology that the citizens of the former GDR long for, and Brussig's fantastic stories of life growing up in the shadow of the Berlin Wall aim to fill what Andreas Huyssen refers to as the physical and ideological voids of Berlin:

Berlin is a city at once of monumental sites of memory, past structures that remain present and can continue to act as memorial, and of emptied spaces, sites of removal or displacement, what Andreas Huyssen (1997) has called the voids of Berlin. These voids at once physical and ideological, also correspond to those spaces that may have buildings and life in them but are effaced from the city in its representative sense: hidden places where alternative cultural meanings are produced. Both the voids and the hidden spaces have the potential to act as counter-sites to the official sites or realms of the city's memory. The empty spaces of the cityscape can thus become a medium for coming to terms with and drawing attention to traumas past and present. The films under review here are interested at once in the memories attached to Berlin, not least the filmic memories, and in exposing the sort of past and present experience that has been and continues to be elided by the mass or official narrative of twentieth-century Berlin. (Weber 2)

Weber continues to examine post-unification film in terms of how it produces "active counter-images, alternative footage, to what we might call *Wiedervereinigung: ein Film aus Deutschland* – the official version of Unification" (Weber 2). Therefore, as Owen Evans suggests, the commercial success of films portraying the East in opposition to contemporary notions of the GDR can be read as "meaningful contributions to the coming together of

both sides that was promised during the *Wende*, whilst simultaneously making international audiences more aware of contemporary issues in Germany” (74).

The last two paragraphs of *Sonnenallee* strongly accentuate this project’s perspective on memory.

Wer wirklich bewahren will, was geschehen ist, der darf sich nicht den Erinnerungen hingeben. Die menschliche Erinnerung ist ein viel zu wohliger Vorgang, um das Vergangene nur festzuhalten; sie ist das Gegenteil von dem, was sie zu sein vorgibt. Denn die Erinnerung kann mehr, viel mehr: Sie vollbringt beharrlich das Wunder, einen Frieden mit der Vergangenheit zu schließen, in dem sich jeder Groll verflüchtigt und der weiche Schleier der Nostalgie über alles legt, was mal scharf und schneidend empfunden wurde.

Glückliche Menschen haben ein schlechtes Gedächtnis und reiche Erinnerungen. (156)

Brussig emphasizes how the memories of the citizens of former East Germany are sometimes distinctly different from reality, but underlines how the disparity is irrelevant. Ultimately, Brussig writes that the act of remembering and rewriting one’s past through memory is an important part of human existence:

Jeder Mensch empfindet nostalgisch, oder fast jeder Mensch. Und fast jeder Mensch erinnert sich gern. Die Ostdeutschen haben keine andere Vergangenheit als ihr Leben in der DDR, alle Menschen, die im sowjetischen Machtbereich aufgewachsen sind, haben keine andere Vergangenheit als die des Totalitarismus. Das Objekt unserer Erinnerungen kann nur jene unschöne Zeit sein. Aber verblüffend und wunderbar zugleich ist, daß die Erinnerungen das Erlebte immer schön erscheinen lassen. Mein Opa will ja auch den ersten Weltkrieg klasse gefunden haben. Im Vorgang des menschlichen Erinnerns wohnt heimlich das Beschönigen, und selbst bei einem so umkämpften Thema wie das Erinnern an den Totalitarismus läßt es sich nicht ausquartieren. Erinnern ist nicht merken, nicht festhalten ... Wir sind nostalgisch, weil wir Menschen sind. (“Wir sind nostalgisch”)

Essentially, *Sonnenallee* is not *Ostalgie* because the term coined by comedian Uwe Stiemle (Ahbe 7) now carries so many negative connotations. Brussig’s *Postalgie* is trying to rid the negativity from not only remembering East Germany’s past, but also from the act of remembering itself.

... dieses Buch [ist] überhaupt nicht präzise. Es wird da immer so ein Gewölk erzeugt, so ein gut duftender Nebel. Aber wenn ich mich genauer ausgedrückt hätte, wäre es eben keine Nostalgie mehr gewesen. In dem Buch geht es nicht darum, wie die DDR war, sondern darum, wie man sich heute an sie erinnert. Und ich habe während des Schreibens herausgefunden, dass Erinnern und Vergessen keine Gegensätze sind, sondern Hand in Hand gehen. Die Erinnerung ist wie ein seelisches Organ, das die Vergangenheit verdaut und uns hilft, mit dem, was war, ganz gut leben zu können. Es gibt Menschen, die haben in einer furchtbaren Ehe gelebt und heben sich trotzdem noch die Liebesbriefe auf. (Gunske and Poser)

Sean Allan writes that “the film reminds us (humorously) of the way in which memory and the construction of personal and political histories are conditioned by the needs and desires of the present” (“east-west relations” 115). Brussig’s narrative is a necessary re-rendering of East Germany history that attempts to fulfill the need for the development of a distinctly East German identity today. “What’s at stake in the film is not conventional politics, but rather the subjective realities of the youthful protagonists and the role of fantasy in their quest for self-identity” (Allan, “east-west relations” 116).

Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the GDR, Anke Westphal comments in her review of Brussig’s novel that “[v]ielleicht hat es die DDR ja auch nie gegeben. Nicht wirklich, jedenfalls nicht so, wie man sie aus historischen Untersuchungen oder Romanen kennt.” Her statement is not too far from the truth, for in looking at either historical analyses *or* depictions of East Germany in novels, neither suffices and therefore neither exist as single authentic representations of East Germany. This discrepancy is highlighted in Micha’s journal writing:

The irony of these sequences is twofold: on the one hand, it arises from the obvious discrepancy between the rebellious attitude of Micha’s adolescent reflections and the (alleged) age of the ‘diarist’ recording them: “Today we learned the last letters. At last I can write an important word that I’m always thinking – shit!”; but on the other, it derives from the discrepancy between Micha’s actual childhood experiences and his *post hoc* construction of an [sic.] childhood dogged by state oppression that he has not in fact experienced. (Allan, “east-west relations” 115)

In order to understand the GDR completely we need what Christine Peitz calls a “historischer Kompromiss” (“Sonnenallee, Schattenarmee”). Brussig comments on this very idea in his interview with *tip* magazine:

Ich bin ja nun ein sehr moralischer Mensch. (lacht) Deshalb denke ich, dass das Buch tatsächlich geeignet ist, dieses deutsch-deutsche Missverständnis ein bisschen aufzuhellen. Ich hoffe, dass die Westler verstehen lernen, dass die Ostdeutschen, wenn sie sich an die DDR gerne erinnern, diesen Staat trotzdem nicht wiederhaben wollen. Den Ostdeutschen muss dagegen klar werden, dass die Erinnerungen an die DDR nicht dazu geeignet sind, Tagespolitik zu machen. (Gunske and Poser)

Essentially, through the combination of memory *and* public or official history, through literature and cinema’s exploration of East German day-to-day experiences *as well as* the factual historical and political perspectives provided by documentaries, we can begin to understand the complicated past, present and perhaps even the cultural and mythological future of the former GDR.

5.1 *Rock statt Marx:* Rock and Roll Narratives in *Sonnenallee*

...Moralisten und Stromaufwärtskrawler, Literaten, Rocker, Jazzler, Tramps, der Geist, wenn schon der Körper hier bleiben musste, die Grenzen der DDR überflog. (12)

Sonnenallee offers several fascinating elements of *Postalgie*, but this chapter will primarily focus on American and British rock and roll and specifically the role it plays in illustrating the means and effects of subtle day-to-day resistance in the GDR.

Leonie Naughton writes that “in the context of unification, film functions as means of rewriting the past and redefining or consolidating cultural identity” (22). This is arguably the founding principle behind Brussig and Haußmann’s *Sonnenallee*. Naughton observes that with unification, the people of West Germany inherited the past of their East German neighbours, but had no interest in retaining it for it was a history that neither belonged to the German Federal Republic, nor one they could relate to (21). She continues by saying that the East Germans, on the other hand, felt that they were becoming assimilated into a West-defined “German Identity” instead of being allowed to take a common role in creating a new post-unification founding mythology (21). *Sonnenallee* is the resolution to this conflict between recovering the East Germany past while countering the negative discourse that surrounds formal GDR history and constructing a *common* identity that despite East and West differences, is based on unifying factors. Through his youth narrative told from the East German perspective, Haußmann restores a positive image of the East German day-to-day and by using a cultural language that West Germans would understand, namely that of rock and roll, he normalizes the East German experience for *Sonnenallee*’s West German audience (Cook 156).

According to Richard Langston, music figures importantly in many fictional and autobiographical accounts of the revolutionary era in Germany (185). He cites that this soundtrack to youthful rebellion mainly pertains to the student movements of the late 1960s, but in terms of the East German revolution, music and memory are also often interconnected. In their film *Sonnenallee*, Brussig and Haußmann reflect this idea of musical accompaniment to political movement in both the film's narrative and soundtrack.

It's immediately apparent that music figures very importantly in Haußmann's film and this chapter will argue that it is crucial for interpreting Brussig and Haußmann's *Postalgie*.

Through rock music, *Sonnenallee* illustrates that despite the Socialist dictatorship and strict censorship laws, East German youth found their individual freedom in British, American and West German rock and roll; that to some degree unification occurred on a musical level far before the fall of the Wall and that through *Sonnenallee's* rock and roll narrative and soundtrack, Brussig and Haußmann have provided *Ossis* and *Wessis* alike a point of reference from which to relate to daily life in former East Germany.

Sonnenallee's rock and roll narrative operates on a number of levels, but its most obvious proclamation illustrates how music is a tool of political subversion. Rock and roll was a very real part of day-to-day resistance in the GDR (Dieckmann "Küche" 15) and *Sonnenallee's* use of music as a means to undermine the East German state is an attempt to change the dominant historical perspective. The East German cliché expounded by literature and media alike is that of unquestioning political obedience. The stereotype continues with the idea that the citizens of the GDR were perpetually watched by their *Stasi* neighbours until they were thrown in prison. *Sonnenallee's* rock and roll narrative confronts these clichés and effectively illustrates one subtle yet powerful way in which the youth of East Germany resisted the

state's authority. Instead of exhibiting a unanimous support for the party, the characters of Haußmann's film demonstrate a "willingness to conform" (Woodgate) and music functions as their tool to distance themselves from the political system while remaining immersed within it (Woodgate). Through Brussig and Haußmann's use of rock and roll as a tool to subvert the political system (in hindsight), they counter common stereotypes to reconstruct the image of the GDR as a state whose inhabitants *were not* unanimously supportive of their oppressive Socialist system. In this manner, *Sonnenallee's* opening scene can be read as a common way in which East German youth quietly rebelled against Socialist authority.

Sonnenallee begins with Micha recording onto tape the then forbidden song "Moscow" by the 1960s West German rock band Wonderland. He plays the recording for his friends, proudly declaring that it is "total kontra," but Micha is caught. The neighbourhood *ABV* (*Abschnittsbevollmächtigter*) approaches Micha's posse and interjects with: "na – was ist denn hier verboten?" They manage to convince him that not only is the song legitimate, but also that the term "verboten" is actually slang for "cool," thus turning this subtle act of defiance into flat out mockery. The subversive quality of the communal pretence lies in its disregard for GDR standard law and its open disrespect for East German authority, but the fact that forbidden rock and roll is Brussig's tool to undermine the former East German government ascribes both legitimacy and more significance to the act.

Due to the post-war prominence of American Forces Network (AFN), rock and roll not only became associated with Germany's liberation from National Socialism, it also became a second ideological option presented to the youth of East Germany. As Christoph Dieckmann suggests, amongst East German youth, political orientation became "Musik statt Marx" ("Küche" 15). He identifies American rock and roll as youth's political asylum from

the world in which they lived and observes that it was his generation's alternative to Marxism ("Küche" 15). Thus in *Sonnenallee*, rock and roll's importance can also be read as Brussig and Haußmann offering a new system of belief with which to associate the GDR and instead of Socialism being the centre of East German youth ideology, this belief system aligns itself to the rock and roll code of conduct. And despite the political stronghold and strict censorship laws that Socialist Germany is typically associated with, Brussig and Haußmann develop the image of a GDR where individual freedom does exist and where, as Dieckmann suggests, East German youth took their political liberties into the realm of rock and roll ("Küche" 15).

This idea of music as a tool for political subversion and rejection of state ideology goes back decades not only in Western history in general, but also in that of the GDR specifically.

Rock music has a controversial past all over the world and in the GDR, the associations with 1950s and 1960s rock and roll didn't disappear with the 1970s and 1980s. According to East German authorities, jazz and rock and roll were problematic both politically and socially.

These issues were not symptomatic of an actual dislike for progressive music; rather, according to Uta G. Poiger, they were contesting the moral, cultural and ideological essence the music embodied.

...when rock'n'roll emerged in the mid-1950s it was banned in the GDR because of its American origin: it was the era of the 'cold war' and East German politicians were in search of a socialist national culture, one which could articulate an *antifaschistische-demokratische Erneuerung* (anti-Fascist-democratic renewal). In this climate Western influences had to be rejected and rock'n'roll was seen as a symbol of capitalist decadence (Maas 1996, pp. 159ff.), another example of the 'cultural barbarism of American imperialism' (see Fröde, p. 63). (Maas and Reszel 267)

To East German authorities, rock and roll and Western American culture in general represented not only capitalism and American materialism, it also posed a challenge to labour, sexual and gender norms (Poiger 43). Counterintuitive to rock music's origins in

blues and jazz, which were derived from the frustrations and protest of the black underclass in the Southern United States, the GDR associated rock with capitalism and big business.

Durrani explores this idea and quotes Ernst Herman Meyer from his 1952 book entitled

Musik im Zeitgeschehen:

Der Jazz war einmal der Ausdruck lebendigen, großstädtisch-volkstümlichen Lebens von Negern und Weißen in den amerikanischen Südstaaten, nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg geschaffen als echte Kunstäußerung. Es wäre falsch, die im ursprünglichen Jazz enthaltene rhythmische Vitalität, die instrumentarische Farbigkeit, das Element der Improvisation und den Humor und Witz des Ur-Jazz zu verkennen, denn diese erfüllten echte Bedürfnisse der Werktätigen... Doch wurde der Jazz schon in sehr frühem Stadium von der amerikanischen Industrie ausschließlich zum Zweck des Profitmachens aufgegriffen und massenweise verbreitet. (147)

Poiger supports this assessment and states that even though German racism was supposedly defeated with National Socialism, the prevalence of this “negro music” (Poiger 43), which was described as “degenerate,” “decadent” and “inferior,” was seen as a contamination of the German identity (Poiger 43). The East German vocabulary used to describe contemporary music was very reminiscent of the National Socialist discourse the postwar generation was trying to escape. Thus according to Poiger, embracing rock and roll was also a way through which Germany’s youth distanced themselves even further from the Nazi values of their parents’ generation. Maintaining this tradition, American and British rock and roll became one way through which East German youth of the 1960s and 1970s aimed to disassociate themselves from their parents’ politics. Subsequently, the desire to escape all things that historically defined Germany identity and Germanness was visible in the popularity of imported music (Langston 184). Instead of becoming the enthusiastic party members their parents were first during National Socialism and then later under the GDR’s Socialist system, German youth ideology became centered around music. Langston writes that the German youth of the postwar generation literally used rock and roll to exorcise the

fascist element out of West Germany (185) and much the same could be said for the East. Thus the dominant position of rock and roll in films such as *Sonnenallee* is intended to paint a picture of East Germany's postwar generation rejecting the ideals and conventions of its authorities, many of which participated in the building and maintenance of the Third Reich, while also pushing away the wholly negative image linked with the GDR.

One band in particular figures well into this discussion of the politics of music, the Rolling Stones. As the prototype for hard rock and the longest surviving band in rock and roll history, the Rolling Stones were as pivotal in introducing rhythm and blues to the white youth generation of the 1960s and 1970s as they are in Haußmann's film. With their rebellious bad boy image and blatant disregard for the "establishment," the Stones are the perfect musical metaphor for *Sonnenallee's* political subversion.

Throughout the film, Wuschel is in search of the Rolling Stones' 1972 double album *Exile on Main Street* and although he does come close twice, it is an endeavour he never fully succeeds in. The first time he makes his black market album purchase, there is a power outage in the *Sonnenallee Grenzgebiet*. With the border guards frantic in the darkness and general confusion, Wuschel attempts to flee the busy street, but his escape looks suspicious and the local *ABV* shoots him. Ironically, the shot isn't fatal and instead of penetrating his skin, the bullet fractures the double album. The Rolling Stones essentially save Wuschel's life, but the price of sacrificing his much sought after forbidden music seems much higher. Metaphorically, this incident is significant and can be read as representative of how rock music sheltered East German youth from the chaos of the Socialist political system. The second time Wuschel gets his hands on *Exile on Main Street* occurs at the close of the film. Wuschel returns to *Sonnenallee* to find Micha and with the proclamation "Männer brauchen Musik,"

the two climb the stairs to Micha's apartment for a private listening party. Unfortunately, the album is a fake and what plays isn't even remotely reminiscent of American or British rock and roll.

In order to understand the metaphorical function of the Stones fully, a little historical background on the album is needed. *Exile on Main Street* was partially produced in the basement of the Rolling Stones' 1971 summer refuge in the South of France (Norman 424). The group was forced to leave their British home out of fear of bankruptcy due to their tax debts and Keith Richards rented a gothic chateau near Nice, where he and the band took up residence in June (Norman 412). Just as the Rolling Stones were then living in exile in France (on Main Street) and in the public eye, Micha and his friends are living in exile in East Germany on Sonnenallee. The fact that *Villa Nellescôte* was the former headquarters of the local Nazi SS during the Second World War ("Rolling Stones") adds more substance to the symbolism and Wuschel's relentless search. In his desperation for the double album, Wuschel is also expressing his desire for political asylum. The Stones' appropriation of the former Nazi headquarters becomes a testament to the defeat of the Third Reich and Wuschel's search becomes the desire for a similar conquest: the defeat of *his* political system at the hands of the rock and rollers that conquered National Socialism.

Haußmann's treatment of the Rolling Stones as an East German political symbol is filled with supplementary meaning. From the band's position in rock and roll history in general, it is apparent that the Rolling Stones played a vital role in political unrest around the Western world and their song "Street Fighting Man" is one example of their political position. But the Rolling Stones also figured prominently in the context of specifically German political upheaval. Although rock music was not necessarily as important to the figureheads of the

German student movement of the late 1960s as it was for the students themselves, it was recognized as political. Richard Langston discusses the political importance of the Rolling Stones in the Germany and comments on Rudi Dutschke's acknowledgement of the band's "association with the battle against false consciousness" (185).

Through British and American rock and roll music, Brussig and Haußmann counter the conventional image of the former GDR as a Socialist state without a legacy beyond its political beliefs and secret police, but they also are attempting to show how East and West Germany were unified on some level before unification. *Sonnenallee* illustrates that despite East-West political differences, children in the East grew up in a similar way to the children of the West and creates the image of a divided Germany that through its music transcended the Wall. Haußmann and Brussig use rock and roll to develop a previously unacknowledged unifying factor amongst the East and West German youth cultures and thus suggest that Germany's unified population might be able to recontextualize their relative histories in such a way that they can begin to redevelop their common identity based on the unifying factor of rock and roll rather than on the dividing factor of differing political systems. Thus *Sonnenallee* suggests that in the context of Germany, from the start and in the end, the East and the West were not inherently polar opposites.

The most obvious element of *Sonnenallee* that incorporates music is its soundtrack and Haußmann uses both diegetic and non-diegetic sound to further develop *Sonnenallee's* rock and roll narrative. Contemporary culture communicates on many levels, but among the most prominent is music. Soundtracks have become a market almost as important as the sale of the DVDs themselves and sometimes it is the track listing that strikes the audiences as unique, such as in musicals as well as the films *Wicker Park* and *Garden State*. There is also the

tradition of American musician biopic cinema, such as the recent Academy Award-winning *Walk the Line* or *Ray*, which use their lead characters and soundtracks to describe an era defined by its music. In the German context, directors like Wim Wenders and Tim Tykwer have been very influenced by rock and roll and their films' soundtracks resonate across the globe. The films produced by Haußmann and Brussig work on a similar level. Through their soundtracks, *Helden wie wir*, *Sonnenallee* and *NVA* use their music to recreate an era on screen. But although many of these songs were written during the period in question, the versions found on the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack are not the originals. These songs were rerecorded by contemporary bands and it is the cover versions of these now classics rock anthems that are used to create the film's atmosphere. In terms of the film's *Postalgie*, to add this ingredient of post-Wall musical talent and style complements the fundamental ideas Brussig and Haußmann are trying to develop. *Sonnenallee* already uses rock and roll music iconography to transcend the German divide and the cover versions of these famous rock and roll songs incorporate additional elements from pre and post-unification to unify the past and the present.

The soundtrack's ingredient of modernity develops an interesting perspective on the process of remembering. Ken Woodgate makes a significant comment on *Sonnenallee's* soundtrack in his article on music and memory. He points out that while *Sonnenallee's* soundtrack is able to evoke the 1950s era, it does not reflect it accurately. These covers in combination with original *Ostrock* tracks, songs written solely for the film by New Zealand song-writer Graeme Jefferies and others by more contemporary German bands, such as *Einstürzende Neubauten*, create an atmosphere of questionable authenticity. Thus Woodgate suggests that the music in *Sonnenallee* acts as a "figure of the process of recollection and its inaccuracies." He writes that *Sonnenallee's* music references the fact that memory is selective and employs ideas and

images of both the past and the present to construct itself. Once again, *Sonnenallee* succeeds in confronting the *Ostalgie* phenomenon to deconstruct it, but this time, it is through music.

In his article “‘Fight the Power’: the Politics of Music and the Music of Politics,” John Street discusses the relationship between music and political movement and cites the GDR as proof of their interconnectedness.

An intriguing case study is provided by Peter Wicke, who argues that rock musicians in East Germany came to provide an important catalyst for the collapse of the East German regime. He writes: ‘rock musicians were instrumental in setting in motion the actual course of events which led to the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of the GDR.’ (124)

Wicke’s argument is common throughout much of the literature written on rock music in the GDR and in their film, Brussig and Haußmann apply this concept quite literally. The closing of *Sonnenallee* is the film’s most powerful manifestation of the claim that rock and roll felled the Wall. When Wuschel realizes that his Stones’ album is a fake, he is profoundly disappointed. But Micha makes it immediately clear that it is not the actual music they seek, rather the rock and roll spirit behind the music – for which they don’t need the Stones’ double album. The two stand up on Micha’s bed, pull out their air guitars and start rocking out like they *are* the Rolling Stones. The song that begins to accompany their rock and roll spirit is “The Letter” sung by Dynamo 5, originally written and performed by the 1970s American rock band Box Tops and then famously covered by Joe Cocker.

Micha and Wuschel have transformed into the rock stars they have always dreamed of becoming and as they climb onto the balcony to continue to wail on their air guitars, a crowd gathers. The *ABV* drops his broom in resignation to the rock and roll spirit and the boys’ audience begins to dance. Like every rock star that has gone before him, Micha throws his t-shirt into the crowd and the two jump off the balcony. Andrew J. Webber comments:

“Micha and Wuschel enact their version of the leap from the window or balcony that is part of the traumatic history of the Wall” (15). In this moment, Micha with his brown dress jacket and Wuschel with his leather jacket and rock star sunglasses have *become* Mick Jagger and Keith Richards and they join the crowd in dancing towards the Wall. As the chorus of “The Letter” repeats the appropriate homecoming sentiment, the crowd of dancers confront the border guards who have no way to fend off their rock and roll spirit. The scene turns black and white, replicating the authenticity of documentary or news reel footage: the wall is open and the border crossing is deserted. Rock and roll has successfully fallen the Berlin Wall and as the camera keeps moving West, it remains focused on the East and the viewers eye lingers to observe *Sonnenallee* from the other side of the Wall, thus reminding us of a second unifying element that has always been there, the street of *Sonnenallee* itself.

5.2 *Ostroek* Rebellion

Der schädliche Einfluß solcher Musik auf das Denken und Handeln von Jugendlichen wurde grob unterschätzt. Niemand in unserem Staate hat etwas gegen eine gepflegte Beatmusik. Sie kann jedoch nicht als die alleinige und hauptsächlichliche Form der Tanzmusik betrachtet werden. Das Charakteristische all dieser Erscheinungen besteht darin, dass sie objektiv mit der Linie des Gegners übereinstimmen, durch die Verbreitung von Unmoral und Skeptizismus besonders die Intelligenz und die Jugend zu erreichen und im Zuge einer sogenannten Liberalisierung die Deutsche Demokratische Republik von innen her aufweichen wollen. (Honecker as quoted by Durrani 148)

According to Claudia Rusch, music was East Germany's most important medium: "Im Gegensatz zur Literatur war es unmöglich, sie fern zu halten. Bücher wurden einfach nicht gedruckt und die Einfuhr verhindert. Schluss. Aber Lieder via Äther waren unkontrollierbar. Sie kamen durch die Luft" (117). *Sonnenallee* accurately reflects this sentiment. Through its rock narrative and the American and British rock and roll featured on its soundtrack, the film offers one example of how the youth of East Germany used music to rebel against the state's authority. But there is another set of anthems of defiance found in the film's score. The prevalence of East German rock music, also referred to as *Ostroek* or *Beatmusik*, offers another layer to *Sonnenallee's* account of youthful revolution. These riffs and choruses of subversive counterculture complement the notion of rebellion the film's Western rock music propagates as well as enhance the legitimacy of *Sonnenallee's* rock and roll narrative of resistance.

As John Street's assessment of the connection between music and political movement states, the music of East Germany was "the product of politics, just as the politics was a product of music" (124). Street's claim coincides with the suggestions of many authors and musicians who assert that *Ostroek* helped fall the Berlin Wall. Dieter 'Machine' Birr and Peter Meyer from the *Pubdys* agree that rock music accelerated the *Wende* (Osang, "Beatmusik" 29) and Osman Durrani claims that "rock music played a not inconsiderable part in ensuring the

downfall of the regime that had tried so hard to curb it” (164). Durrani cites Václav Havel, who in a 1991 interview claimed that because of the strict censorship, East German resistance took advantage of many substitute outlets of expression and Havel explicitly identifies rock music as one of those alternative channels (Durrani 166). Quoting T. Mitchell and T. W. Ryback, Jolanta Pekacz argues: “...rock represented ‘probably the most widespread vehicle of youth rebellion, resistance and independence behind the Iron Curtain’ (Mitchell 1992, p. 187); and was ‘the realization of a democratic process’ there (Ryback 1990, p 233)” (41). Similar to the argument made by Christof Dieckmann, these authors also see rock music as a realm in which GDR youth took their political liberties – but in terms of *Ostroek*, it was simply harder to see. This chapter will discuss the subversive nature of East German rock music and how Brussig and Haußmann use *Ostroek* to deconstruct popular notions of the GDR.

In his *Rocklexikon der DDR*, Götz Gintze provides an in-depth historical analysis of the East German rock scene. He writes that until 1958 nearly twice as many artists from North America and Western Europe were featured on East German radio stations as musicians from the GDR and the Soviet Union (3). This, in addition to the fact that Western titles cost money, led to the creation of the *Anordnung über die Programmgestaltung bei Tanz- und Unterhaltungsmusik* on February 1, 1958 (Gintze 3). The directive decreed that at least sixty per cent of all music played in the GDR must be from either East Germany or other Eastern Block countries (Gintze 3). Gintze identifies this as an important step in the origin and evolution of East German rock music (3); however, *Ostroek* and *Beatmusik* were not yet contenders for the GDR airwaves. It wasn’t until much later that East German rock and roll was heard on the radio and unfortunately, the situation for the *Ostroek* music scene got worse before it got better. At the eleventh *Zentralkomitee* meeting in December 1965, which took

place only two months after the notorious incident in West Berlin, where 21 000 Rolling Stones' fans destroyed the *Waldbühne*, the SED banned *Beatmusik* all together (Maas and Reszel 268). Despite these contentious beginnings, the future of *Ostrock* began to look brighter by the late 1960s with *Amiga's* release of the first rock album performed by an East German band and by the 1970s, the success of rock music was officially acknowledged (Maas and Reszel 268). But even though *Beatmusik* was generally accepted, there were several ways through which the East German government controlled music production in the GDR. Georg Maas and Hartmut Reszel cite the need for government mediated paper documentation in order to perform publicly:

...every band (even amateurs!) needed an *Auftrittserlaubnis* ('performance permission', called *Die Pappe*, the 'paper-card', by the musicians themselves) to perform music publicly and to get the fee laid down on the permission card. Officially the card was handed out as a proof of musical quality, ... but refusal of the card was a simple and highly efficient means to keep musicians quiet who had fallen out of favour with the political establishment. (269)

In 1971, Erich Honecker succeeded Walter Ulbricht as leader of the SED. Under the authority of a relatively young fifty-nine year-old Honecker, the Socialist party became somewhat more liberally minded. Rock music, which was the "Sirenengesang des Klassenfeinds" advanced into an important "Faktor der Jugend- und Kulturpolitik" (Rauhut, "Am Fenster" 71). Censorship remained until the end of the GDR, but the criteria changed (Felber 116). Beards were permitted (Eberle 32) and blue jeans began to appear in shops (Durrani 150). During the 1980s, East Germany witnessed many improvements in the lives and careers of independent musicians and some of the leading Western rock bands were finally permitted to tour in the GDR (Durrani 163). In 1987, to celebrate the 750th anniversary of Berlin, Bob Dylan gave a concert (Günther 115) and in 1988, Bruce Springsteen played at *Wiesensee* (Durrani 163). As the end of the decade approached many rock festivals evolved into anti-government demonstrations and there was very little that

East German state could do to stop them (Durrani 163). On November 4th, 1989, 500 000 protesters gathered at *Alexanderplatz* and as Holm Felber cites, many of them were rock musicians (128). Five days later, on November 9th, 1989, the Wall fell.

Rock music in general has a strong tradition of subversive lyrics and political undertones world wide and the East German rock scene of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was no different. In this time of strict censorship it was rock music and its lyrics that sang loudest against the state. Günter Mayer comments on East German rock in his article “Popular Music in the GDR” published in the winter of 1984:

...rock has been and is a new quality in content and form, in the messages and in its multimedial representations as authentic expression of collective experience under conditions of urban life. Realized by young people in a new intensity, full of power and despair, of hopes and fear and, of course, of vitality and fun. Characteristic is the deep criticism of all forms of establishment in society and in music – what in turn always has been criticised by the establishment as aggressive and destructive. (151)

Durrani also discusses rock music’s perceived destructiveness in his article “Language and Subversion in GDR Rock Music.” He writes that popular music was considered a possible form of propaganda and was heavily scrutinized by East German authorities for subversive political or social content (146). In turn, East German musicians were forced to make their criticisms more subtle and complex. Durrani’s article looks at the recurring themes of rebellion within the rock music of the former GDR and explores the texts of a number of the songs featured on the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack.

As a result of the strict censorship enforced on all music being produced in and imported to the GDR, East German musicians grew to be very conscious of the repercussions incurred by obvious disparagement of the government. Musicians retaliated by becoming ever-more creative in their criticisms of the state, often retreating into myth and metaphor to discuss

social, political or ideological issues. John Street discusses how *Ostroek* evolved into an emblem of East German resistance and describes it as the result of three factors:

The first of these is that the state's repression of rock transformed into 'a medium of resistance which was more or less impossible to control'. The second thought is that musicians developed skill in encoding political discussion of society with metaphorical lyrics that the audience could then decode, a skill they themselves learned from reading between the lines of Communist propaganda. Thirdly, the musicians had power, partly as a result of their economic position. The more successful groups were under contract to West German companies and represented a valuable source of hard currency in a failing economy. In trying to counter this power, President Honecker attempted to create divisions within the GDR's rock community, but this strategy was seen for what it was, and in fact forged a closer alliance between fans and performers. (124)

Maas and Reszel write that "...state control meant opaque forms of resistance: as lyrics had to be in German and critical opinions had to be concealed, the poetry of GDR-rock was highly developed and the audience became used to reading between the lines" (269).

Through creative imagery, metaphor and other strategies *Ostroek* and *Beatmusik* were able to circumvent East German authorities and inspire their listeners by recounting narratives of myth and legend and using metaphors for freedom (Durrani 149, Osang, "Beatmusik" 28, "Musik der DDR"⁵). The *Sonnenallee* soundtrack reflects this sentiment using a very specific score. Musicians *Keimzeit*, the *Pubdys* and Nina Hagen played important roles in youth resistance in the GDR and in *Sonnenallee's* contemporary soundtrack their rebellious efforts are remembered, revered and vindicated.

The *Sonnenallee* soundtrack is organized into four sections. The first is entitled "*Sonnenallee West...*" and features the English rock music that appears in the film and is discussed in the previous chapter. This includes "Moscow" by Wonderland, Graeme Jefferies' remake of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" as well as the Rolling Stones, T Rex and Box

Top covers and the original music written for the film, mimicking a number of musical genres throughout British and American rock and roll history. The second section is entitled “*Sonnenallee Ost...*” and primarily features *Ostrock* from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. As with the film’s American and British rock and roll, Haußmann chose each East German track for one or more specific reasons. This chapter shall explore the East German music on the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack and seek to analyze its significance both in the GDR’s daily culture of resistance and in Haußmann’s film.

“*Sonnenallee Ost...*” is introduced by the song “Das Projektil” by *Keimzeit* and by looking at the band’s history and the song’s text, the motivation for its appearance is evident. In his essay “Das Wasser weiss selbst, wo es hingehört,” Kenneth Anders documents the history of the band. *Keimzeit* was formed by four siblings in 1979 and still exists today. The family grew up in Lütte and began making music together in their parents’ house when the youngest was only twelve. As time progressed, the siblings formed the core of the group and other musicians joined and left the band over time (143).

According to Anders, of all the East German rock groups to appear in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, *Keimzeit* was the only band to transcend the fall of the divide, emerge unscathed by unification and continue producing music successfully on both sides of the former Wall (150). Therefore, their significant position as the introduction to *Sonnenallee’s Ostrock* is one of unification. *Keimzeit’s* ability to overcome the GDR’s demise makes the group a representative of rock music that was unaffected by its East German status.

⁵ There is very little written on the rock music history of the GDR and even less on the individual groups. Therefore, I often had to rely on sources such as *Wikipedia* for my research.

Keimzeit is also known for their subtly political lyrics, which were often so complex that although they succeeded in averting the attention of East German authorities, their fans were also confused by their songs' dense metaphor:

Das Understatement resultierte aber auch aus den bunten Texten. Die Fans kannten jedes Wort auswendig, doch ein richtiges Bekenntnis konnte nicht daraus werden, dazu entzogen sie sich zu sehr ins Bildliche. Die politischen Botschaften der Band waren sublim: Keimzeit wusste, dass "die Ohren der Spitzel weit offen stehn," und immunisierte sich auf seltsam weise Art genauso gegen den Staat wie auch gegen allzu ideologisches Wahrnehmungen durch die Fans. (Anders 147)

Keimzeit's "Das Projektil" is a perfect example of such metaphorical complexity and subtle subversion. Looking at the song's lyrics, it is apparent that there is much more to the content of the song than the violent event described. The lyrics tell the story of a shooting, but the East German tradition of hidden meaning and the song's ambiguity begs for a deeper analysis.

Sie zielt auf ihn und drückt ab,
trifft ihn mitten in sein Herz.
Er denkt jetzt: Das war's.

Doch - tödlich getroffen - taumelt und stürzt
mit diesem Schuß, was bei einer jeden
großen Liebe zusammenbrechen muss.

Welch wundersam göttliches Projektil
traf von ihr geschickt genau sein Ziel.

Kein Wort und kein Laut -
doch dann unangekündigt der Knall.
Erst nicht -
dann doch, als sich der Rauch verzog.

Ein riesiges Loch in seiner Brust -
sie und er sind sich plötzlich bewusst:
Ihr Glück lag versteckt in diesem Schuß.

Welch wundersam göttliches Projektil
traf von ihr geschickt genau sein Ziel.

Traurig nur das eine -

es ist seine Geschichte, doch nicht meine.
(Keimzeit, “Das Projektil”)

At first glance, “Das Projektil” recounts a lover’s quarrel where only a bullet could find resolution, but many meanings could be read in the imagery surrounding this tumultuous relationship. The song could be a metaphor for the union between the political East and the political West; or perhaps the divided couple represents divided Germany and its inability to reconcile without violence; or even more specific still, the relationship could be a metaphor for the Cold War. The woman could represent Mother Russia and her inability to find political resolution with her lover in anything other than a bullet in the breast of the German Fatherland. One thing is for sure, the lyrics sing of violence and betrayal, two sentiments that are strongly tied to the former East.

In the end, the actual significance behind the “Das Projektil” is almost as irrelevant as the exact implication of the song’s imagery. The importance lies in the fact that “Das Projektil’s” ambiguity calls for deeper analysis and the strength of its symbolism lies its ability to provoke thought. *Keimzeit’s* metaphorical elusiveness introduces the manner with which all East German rock should be listened to – with a careful ear seeking to decipher the *Ostrock* secret code of subtle subversive meanings.

The second song featured in “*Sonnenallee Ost...*” is the *Pubdys’* “Geh zu ihr.” The *Pubdys* were the best known band in the GDR with a musical history that transcended the Wall. The *Pubdys* were one of three East German bands permitted to tour in the Federal Republic and they even ventured to North America (Mayer 153). Two vastly different presumptions have been made about the *Pubdys*. The first is that they were the ultimate in conformist music.

This was observed in a number of ways, the most superficial being the cutting of their long hippy hair (Durrani 150).

In the early 1970s, Honecker began an obvious attempt to domesticize rock music and the *Pubdys* were the first rock band to emerge with “state” approval (Durrani 150).

Consequently, their music was often referred to as *Staatsrock* (Helbig 6, Durrani 151).

Paradoxically, the *Pubdys* were also seen as political and their songs politically subversive. The *Pubdys*’ lyrics often retreated into myth and legend to discuss political and social issues counter to GDR ideology and as Dieter ‘Machine’ Birr recounts himself, they used metaphors “vom Fliegen und von Freiheit” (Osang, “Beatmusik” 28) to express their displeasure with the Socialist state. Their song “Ikarus” is a good example of where the *Pubdys* employed both of these methods.

The *Pubdys*’ song featured on the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack is a perfect example of *Ostrocks*’ use of the metaphor of flight. The *Pubdys*’ “Geh zu ihr” uses the image of a kite soaring into the unknown to inspire its listeners. Like in English, the word “steigen” or “to rise” has many connotations. Perhaps the *Pubdys* are suggesting that even though their listeners were tied to their country, they should find their freedom. This could either be in rising up against the GDR because the Socialist state can only hold the string of a soaring kite so long before it flies away or in finding liberation through sex. “Geh zu ihr” contains very strong sexual undertones and it has been widely acknowledged that sex was one way in which East German youth exercised their freedom.

Geh zu ihr und lass Deinen Drachen steigen.
 Geh zu ihr, denn Du lebst ja nicht vom Muß allein.
 Augen zu, dann siehst Du nur diese eine !
 Halt' sie fest und lass Deinen Drachen steigen.

Hey, hey Deinen Drachen !

Hey, hey, hey geh zu ihr !
 Hey, hey Deinen Drachen !
 Hey, hey, hey geh doch zu ihr !

Geh zu ihr und lass Deinen Drachen steigen.
 Geh zu ihr, denn Du lebst ja nicht vom Muß allein.

Hey, hey Deinen Drachen !
 Hey, hey, hey geh zu ihr !
 Hey, hey Deinen Drachen !
 Hey, hey, hey geh doch zu ihr !

Augen zu, dann siehst Du nur diese eine !
 Halt' sie fest und lass Deinen Drachen steigen !

Hey, hey Deinen Drachen !
 Hey, hey, hey geh zu ihr !
 Hey, hey Deinen Drachen !
 Hey, hey, hey geh doch zu ihr !
 (*Pubdys*, "Geh zu ihr")

"Geh zu ihr" is sung in the second person imperative and is demanding that, presumably, a boy go to his girl. No names are spoken, nor is a pronoun outside of "her" used. So the song could easily be interpreted as a command to every *Pubdys* listener. The chorus continues with "Geh zu ihr, denn Du lebst ja nicht vom Muß allein," which can be read as a criticism of East German state mandates and the Socialist expectation to live and sacrifice for the betterment of the whole community often at the expense of the individual. These ideas are also reflected in the film, in which "Geh zu ihr" was initially featured.

"Geh zu ihr" was originally written for the 1973 film *Die Legende von Paul und Paula*, directed by Heiner Carow. The song plays during the infamous bed scene, which underscores "Geh zu ihr's" sexual connotation. Like the song's lyrics, the film was also written by Ulrich Plenzdorf, with both of his texts maintaining the same sentiment: "Du lebst ja nicht vom Muß allein." *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* is considered to be amongst the most contentious films to have been released in the GDR. Although more controversial films were made, their

release was restricted. Somehow Carow's film made it through the censors and was the GDR's biggest cinematic hit. But despite its success, it was very nearly banned shortly after its release. Carow's film tells the story of Paul and Paula and how the bleakness of their lives led them to each other. It depicts a life very unlike that which was propagated by state propaganda and in this way subverted the political system. Even though Paul and Paula lead miserable lives, holding up the pretence that they are abiding by Socialist ideology, they find happiness in unconventional and controversial corners and in each other. Paul can't leave his wife because his company looks down on divorce and Paula is stuck working in a bottle return depot and grocery store that because of East German standards, serves more costumers than it can handle. *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* illustrates the real GDR and the misery that might have lived within its confines, but it also demonstrates how the people dealt with their circumstances and found happiness in unlikely places. Cinema like *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* illustrates how film makers used their medium to criticize the GDR by simply depicting it how they saw it and this film is particularly important because it made it through the censors.

By relating *Die Legende von Paul und Paula* to *Sonnenallee* through the *Pudbys* anthem of individuality, Haußmann associates his film with the controversial and subversive cinema of his DEFA predecessors. One critic even suggests that Haußmann's *Sonnenallee* is "Die Legende von Micha und Miriam" (Krekeler). Plenzdorf used his film to criticize the state and he employed its soundtrack to call his viewers to rise up against the establishment. Through "Geh zu ihr," Haußmann identifies his film as a similar form of resistance. This time, instead of using the *Pudbys'* song to inspire his viewers to fight back, Haußmann uses it to highlight his characters' resistance. Haußmann not only recalls the tradition of subversive

DEFA cinema, he illustrates his characters' defiance and demonstrates how the young men on the Eastern end of *Sonnenallee* were standing up against the state in their own ways.

Nina Hagen's "Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen" is the most memorable and meaningful song on the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack. Within its chorus, it succeeds in encompassing the sentiment of the entire film. "Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen" was Nina Hagen's entrance to the charts. It was produced in East Germany before her emigration to the West and has since been elevated to cult status ("Nina Hagen"). Although it was the melody that made Hagen famous, "Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen" was written by East Germany's most successful songwriter Kurt Demmler and composed by *Automobil's* keyboardist, Michael Heubach (Finger, "Unter Verdacht"). True to Socialism, it is a demonstrably communal effort.

Nina Hagen was born on March 11, 1955 in Berlin. Her mother was actress Eva Maria Hagen and her father, screenplay writer Hans Hagen. Hagen's parents separated when she was young and she and her mother moved in with the famous poet, song writer and intellectual figurehead of East German resistance, Wolf Biermann (Hintze 23). The "Mutter des Punks" was first discovered in her band *Automobil*. She quickly rose to fame in East Germany with her band becoming merely her accompaniment ("Nina Hagen"). In 1976, Wolf Biermann was invited to the legendary *Kölner Konzert* to perform. When he tried to return home, he found he had been "decitizenized" and his reentrance into East Germany was denied. A protest broke out over his refused return and among the protesters was Hagen ("Musik der DDR"). The state authorities didn't take the protest lightly and Hagen and her mother left for the West with their "approval" (Hintze 64). Essentially, Nina Hagen was expatriated (Durrani 164). This in itself makes Hagen a key figure in the soundtrack to

East German resistance, but in the context of Haußmann's film, the connection is also in her music.

By taking a closer look at the lyrics of "Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen," the significance of this specific song in the context of Haußmann's film is obvious. Although Evelyn Finger cites one suggestion that island holidays were metaphors for East Germany's Socialist dictatorship ("Unter Verdacht"), the song's message is more complicated. Hagen sings the story of two young lovers vacationing on *Hiddensee*, a five-star beach on the Baltic. The girl of the song is lamenting the fact that her companion neglected to bring colour film for his camera. Her worry is that with all her holiday photos in black and white, the true beauty of their time together – her in her bikini and her at the FKK – will be lost (Durrani 164).

Hoch stand der Sanddorn am Strand von Hiddensee
 Micha, mein Micha, und alles tat so weh
 Die Kaninchen scheu schauten aus dem Bau
 so laut entlud sich mein Leid ins Himmelblau

So böse stapfte mein nackter Fuß den Sand
 und schlug ich von meiner Schulter deine Hand
 Micha, mein Micha, und alles tat so weh
 tu das noch einmal, Micha und ich geh

Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen, mein Michael
 nun glaubt uns kein Mensch wie schön's hier war ha ha ha
 Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen, bei meiner Seel'
 alles blau und weiß und grün und später nicht mehr wahr

Nun sitz ich wieder bei dir und mir zu Haus
 und such die Fotos fürs Fotoalbum raus
 Ich im Bikini und ich am FKK
 Ich frech im Mini, Landschaft ist auch da - ja

Aber, wie schrecklich, die Tränen kullern heiß
 Landschaft und Nina und alles nur schwarzweiß
 Micha, mein Micha, und alles tut so weh
 tu das noch einmal, Micha und ich geh!

Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen, mein Michael
 nun glaubt uns kein Mensch wie schön's hier war ha ha ha

Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen, bei meiner Seel'
alles blau und weiß und grün und später nicht mehr wahr

Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen...
(Nina Hagen, "Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen")

Much like the girl's concern in the song, the film's transition from colour to black and white represents ways of remembering the GDR. Although, as Durrani points out, "the cheerful message is cleverly undermined by some interpolated 'ha-ha-ha-ing' at various points in the song, which [also] brings out the uniformity, greyness (and scarcities) of daily life in the Republic" (165); the song itself is a testament to the efforts of Leander Haußmann and Thomas Brussig and the banality of this domestic tragedy makes the sentiment all the stronger. *Sonnenallee* brings the colour of life in East Germany back into the memories of its audience, an idea reiterated in the headline of Christina Kuhl's *taz* review, which reads: "Schluß mit Grau! Die DDR in Farbe." It illustrates how the grey-scaled images of Western university course packs and history books have simplified the complex past of the GDR into shades of black, white and grey. What began as "[a]lles blau und weiß und grün" loses its meaning and becomes "nicht mehr wahr" in the black and white records of "official" history. Documentary images and newspaper clippings of formal history are insufficient in capturing the essence of familial life, relationships and the day-to-day in East Germany. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Nina Hagen discusses East German nostalgia:

Aus westdeutscher Perspektive ist die DDR wirklich nur dieser autoritäre, biedere Staat gewesen. Aber das ist eben die halbe Wahrheit. Viele Westler wissen nicht, was für irre Partys da abgelaufen sind. Ich habe mit meinen Freunden jedenfalls ganz verwegene Sachen gemacht: privates Kabarett, selbst geschriebene Operetten, die wir in irgendwelchen Wohnzimmern aufgeführt haben. Es gab phantastische Freaks in der DDR. (Beyer 204)

These moments of private history and of private memory are only retained in photo albums and holiday collages – in colour film and in *Sonnenallee*.

Ultimately, “Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen” is about the process of remembering. Andreas Webber discusses this element of the song’s lyrics in his article “Falling Walls, Sliding Doors, Open Windows: ”

The ‘Farbfilm’ turns to grey, to the ironic strains of the pop-song ‘Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen’, suggesting that the formal aesthetic of the film, the mode of fantasy it has constructed, is bound up with the uncertain reliability of memory; in the words of the song: ‘alles, grau und weiß und grün und später nicht mehr wahr’. (15)

Evelyn Finger’s article approaches the song’s theme in a similar manner. “Unter Verdacht” is the documentation of her trip to *Hiddensee* to discover the identity of Hagen’s Micha and uncover the photographic proof, “wider besseres Wissen.” Although in the end, the author learns from several sources, including the singer herself, that Hagen never actually vacationed on the Baltic, Finger’s thesis reads:

Nina sagt die Wahrheit, doch manche Leute glauben lieber an das Gegenteil.
Auf einer Insel passiert nicht viel, und wenn die vier Plagen
Schwatzhaftigkeit und Geheimniskrämerei, Lüsterheit und Bigotterie sich
eines Winterabends in der Hafenkneipe treffen, entstehen Gerüchte. Im
Laufe der Zeit wachsen sie an zu Legenden. (“Unter Verdacht”)

Sonnenallee is a snapshot of Micha Ehrenreich’s youth. Hausmann uses colour film to return the blue, white and green reality to the formerly black and white GDR, showing his audience that in East Germany “[war] nicht alles schlecht” and instead, as Nina Hagen sings in a song about her life in West Germany, the GDR was also “alles so schön bunt hier” (“TV-Glotzer”).

The final element of original East German music added to the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack is the *Chor des Pionier- und FDJ-Ensembles Halle’s* “Fröhlich sein und singen.” The song is among the more memorable *Pionierlieder* of the *Pionierorganisation Ernst Thälmann* and the *FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend)* (“Pionierorganisation Ernst Thälmann”) and for that reason, a part of the childhood of many East Germans. In his history of the GDR, Mike Dennis compiles an

interesting analysis of the Thälmann Pioneers and the *FDJ*. He writes that in the GDR, almost every pupil between the ages of six and fourteen belonged to the Thälmann Pioneers and approximately seventy-five per cent of the East German youth population between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five were part of the *FDJ* (204). Together, they had over 28 000 constituencies (1983) and were considered the country's second most important mass organization (204). The *FDJ* and the Thälmann Pioneers mediated their members' integration into adult life using an officially fixed program of school, vocational training, marriage, entry into the party and office-holding (204). According to Mike Dennis, the Thälmann Pioneers and the *FDJ* were "involved in controlling and disciplining rebellious pupils and students through denunciation and spying" (205). The purpose of the *FDJ* was to monitor and influence East German youth, but their success is questionable. According to a series of time-budget surveys, East German youth devoted very little time to political activities (206). Instead, young people spent much of their free time with friends, dancing and listening to music and it's important to note that this music was predominantly Western (206).

The inclusion of the *Chor des Pionier- und FDJ-Ensembles Halle's* "Fröhlich sein und singen" is interesting for several reasons. The choral melody takes East German viewers back to their childhood as well as their almost mandatory membership in the Thälmann Pioneers. The song wasn't simply a popular *Pioneerlied*, it was also the title of the Pioneers' magazine.

Fröhlich sein und singen,
 Stolz das rote Halstuch tragen,
 Andern Freude bringen,
 Ja, das lieben wir.
 Hallo, hört ihr die Fanfaren,
 Hört ihr unsre Lieder?
 Das sind wir!
 Fröhlich sein und singen,
 Ja, das lieben wir!

Unser Flammenzeichen
 Führt voran auf steilen Wegen.
 Thälmann wolln wir gleichen,
 Das geloben wir!
 Hallo, hebt die Fahnen höher,
 Denn die helle Zukunft,
 Das sind wir!
 Thälmann wolln wir gleichen,
 Das geloben wir!

Auf dem Wege weiter,
 Den uns die Partei gewiesen!
 Vorwärts, junge Streiter,
 Vorwärts, Pionier!
 Hallo, auf zu guten Taten,
 Denn den Sozialismus
 Bauen wir!
 Vorwärts, junge Streiter,
 Vorwärts, Pionier!
 (“Fröhlich sein und singen”)

Sung at a time of innocence, “Fröhlich sein und singen” reminds *Sonnenallee’s* viewers of the very subtle propaganda that was fed even to East German children and how such songs formed the East German perception of the Party. It reminds them how Socialist ideology was spoon fed to them at a time when they were unable to form their own opinions, alleviating some of the guilt that resulted in having to acknowledge their collaboration. It reminds them of how the state’s propagandistic methods reached into youth organizations comprised of six year-olds, tainting their afternoon sing-alongs. Lastly, it illustrates to *Sonnenallee’s* viewers how East German youth took the state’s tool of musical ideological indoctrination and made it their own tool of resistance many years later.

The addition of contemporary German music complements *Sonnenallee’s* soundtrack of rebellion. The *Neue Deutsche Welle* and the contemporary German music scene are represented through artists such as *Einstürzende Neubauten* and Graeme Jefferies and recall a different sort of German resistance: the resistance against government fabricated culture.

Osman Durrani writes that in some ways, the *Neue Deutsche Welle* stemmed from East Germany's music scene and cites Olaf Leitner's 1983 publication as his source (150). The emergence of German music in the German language in the GDR inspired West German artists of the 1980s to produce music and lyrics in their mother tongue. Leitner claims that the use of German lyrics in the Federal Republic can be traced to the *Pubdys* first West German tour in 1976. Holm Felber also discusses the inspiration that resulted from East German band's German lyrics: "Eine Innovation gab es jedoch, die das kleine Land zum Thema Rock & Pop beitrug: deutschsprachige Texte" (112). West German music labels had traditionally rejected German speaking rock music on principle and the principle was that they were German. Additionally, those same labels were even hesitant to sign German bands that did meet their condition of English lyrics (Peltner). It wasn't until Udo Lindenberg that West German rock music in the German language really began to emerge (Peltner). In an interview with *Rammstein*, the most well-known German band outside of Germany, the band gives credit to the music history of the GDR. For without *Ostroek*, *Beatmusik* and the GDR's requirement for German lyrics in general, *Rammstein* and German music in general would not have developed as they did ("Musik der DDR").

Lastly, the inclusion of *Ton Steine Scherben* on the *Sonnenallee* soundtrack once again points to the connection between music and political resistance. Jürgen Reiche writes that *Ton Steine Scherben* was the beginning of Germany's *Politrockers* and their song "Wir streiken" was an anthem not only for the RAF, but also for the whole Berlin squatting scene (157).

Als Identifikationsmedium einer rebellischen und frustrierten Generation war *Ton Steine Scherben* auch eine begehrte Plattform für die junge Partei Die Grünen, mit der sie nicht nur Bandmangerin Claudia Roth, die spätere Bundesvorsitzende der Grünen, verband. (Jürgen 157)

The addition of the West German *Ton Steine Scherben* reminds viewer that there was contention between music and politics across Germany and that the Federal Republic also needed music to start the revolution.

The inclusion of *Einströmende Neubauten* and Graeme Jefferies in *Sonnenallee* recalls the pivotal role East German rock played in the evolution of German music as a whole. *Sonnenallee's* soundtrack sings to the rebellious youth within all of us and reminds its listeners that the origin of the contemporary German-speaking music culture has some of its roots in East Germany. These roots held to German soil firmly and while flourishing under the pretense of Socialism, they were nourished by notions of resistance, independence and German unity.

Olaf Leitner stresses that ignoring the musical history of the GDR is just another indication of *Mauer im Kopf* (“Musik der DDR”) and recently, listening to *Ostrock* has been dismissed as an *ostalgic* endeavour. The Wall fell and immediately German music from the East and West alike appeared on GDR public radio. *Beat-Radio D* brought Veronika Fischer back to her original East German audience while playing the *Pubdys* and *Karat*. But it didn't last long and by the day of German unity, very few East German songs received radio play (“Musik der DDR”). Is it fair to the fans of *Beatmusik* and *Ostrock* that the media and cultural institutions of Germany have dismissed the music of their generation as a form of East German nostalgia? Leander Haußmann responds to this trend with his film *Sonnenallee* and replies with a resounding “no.” Through *Sonnenallee's* soundtrack and the East German rock anthems of the 1960s and 1970s, Haußmann is making a statement to his audience. He is saying that rather than unification, for East German culture, October 3rd, 1990 meant assimilation.

John Street asserts: “In thinking about the politics of music it is important to see how it comes to matter, both to the states that manage it and the citizens who enjoy it. The pleasures of music are part of its politics, not an incidental feature of them” (130). The state asserted that rock music was a capitalist tool utilized by the West to convert the East. But in reality, *Ostrock* was a means for the youth of East Germany to liberate themselves from the Soviet’s iron grip and the corrupt ideology of the Socialist party. Claudia Rusch declares “Musik stand für Hoffnung:” “Jeder Hit, der das Wort “frei” enthielt wurde im Herzen eines Ossi zum Protestsong” (117). With *Sonnenallee*, Haußmann gives *Ostrock* back to the citizens of former East Germany and with it, the soundtrack to the story of how they risked and exercised their political freedom. He reminds his viewers where the foundation of today’s German music might have originated and while he returns the idols of East German adolescence, Haußmann restores East German pride in their means of resisting the state on a daily basis: by picking up their (air) guitars and singing songs about Icarus, flight and freedom – or by simply listening to them.

Conclusion

Over the course of the last decade and a half, the cast of story tellers of the East German experience has evolved and changed drastically. Paul Betts writes that “where the original explosion of events was the province of politicians, diplomats, journalists, talk-show pundits, and documentary film teams” (732), analyses of the events that proceeded November 9th, 1989 and the demise of the GDR have moved into university classrooms, fictional literature and narrative film (732). The approaches to recounting the *Wende* have also been under construction and several modes of remembering have emerged. The first remembers East Germany in terms of its atrocities. It examines the East German Socialist government to highlight its fascist traits and identifies the horrific political hardships suffered by some East German citizens such as strict censorship and imprisonment and has resulted in the museumification of the GDR. The second style of remembering is embodied by the *Ostalgie* phenomenon and despite its positive emphasis, is ironically more contentious. This way of remembering East Germany recalls the private lives of many East German citizens, leaving the formal history of newspaper headlines, magazine articles and documentaries films by the wayside to resurrect GDR mindful of the niceties of living in a Socialist society. This phenomenon is as much a response to the former way of remembering as a symptom of a greater issue, the loss of a distinct East German identity. When the Wall fell and Germany united, it was not a unification of East and West as much as an annexation. West Germany appropriated the GDR and in doing so “forever severed East German history and memory” (Betts 735).

Brussig’s *Postalgie* is reuniting the formal history of the GDR with the memory of its individuals. With a multitude of approaches, Brussig’s texts explore the East German

experience, confronting specific contemporary issues. *Helden wie wir* is written as a burlesque pseudo-autobiographical account of how one East German youth felled the Berlin Wall. In the process of recounting his story, Brussig redefines the stereotypes we associate with the former GDR. Brussig's novel addresses the prevailing mode of remembering East Germany in terms of its Socialist politics and secret police and deconstructs these notions to illustrate that each East German citizen's experience was unique. *Sonnenallee*, on the other hand, brings to the fore the niceties of growing up in East Germany, but not at the expense of the facts of traditional history.

Brussig's *Postalgie* illustrates that the lives of the German citizens living on either side of the Wall were similar in several fundamental regards. He demonstrates that, to some extent, East German youth had the political freedoms in private that the West German youth had in public: "Die Erinnerung, daß die ehemaligen DDR-Bürger im SED-Staat viele der schönsten Stunden ihres Lebens verbracht haben – ganz privat and ohne Repressalien" (Pieper 46). Brussig demonstrates that despite political differences, rock and roll transcended the divide between East and West amongst the youth far before unification. *Sonnenallee* even suggests that music literally felled the Wall to unite Germany. With *Sonnenallee's* rock and roll narrative, Brussig offers a new belief system with which to associate the GDR. Instead of Socialism being the centre of the East German youth ideology, this belief system aligns itself to the rock and roll code of conduct. And despite the political stronghold and strict censorship laws with which Socialist Germany is typically associated, Brussig's *Postalgie* develops the image of a GDR where individual freedom does exist and where, as Dieckmann suggests, East German youth took their political liberties into the realm of rock and roll (15).

Brussig's texts explore East German nostalgia and demonstrate that even under strict Socialism, "nicht alles schlecht [war]:"

Etwas Nostalgie muß sein! 'Es war ja auch nicht alles schlecht in der DDR' – wohl wahr. Gut war, daß so viele nein zu Verrat gesagt haben, Feinde wie Freunde der DDR. Gut war, daß es so unterschiedlich Formen von Opposition gab über alle Jahrzehnte. Und daß wir – im Land des Gehorsams aufgewachsen – unsere Freibeit selber schufen – das vor allem war nicht schlecht! (Gauck 51)

But Brussig's texts also illustrate that East German nostalgia and *Ostalgie* are not synonymous. Through *Sonnenallee's* quintessential *Ostalgie* and *Helden wie wir's* unconventional approach to recalling the history of the GDR, Brussig's *Postalgie* subverts not only the Socialist system, but also the *Ostalgie* phenomenon.

In my interview, Brussig made it clear that his stories do not necessarily remember East Germany as it was for everyone (Personal Interview); rather, *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee* recount the stories of how he wants East Germany to be remembered and why it is important for the citizens of the former GDR to remember themselves as subtly subversive and quietly resistant. Brussig's *Postalgie* is creating a new mythology for the citizens of former East Germany and his texts reveal the untold legends and folklore of the GDR.

Der Sozialismus, so geht die Legende, bestand ja hauptsächlich aus fröhlichem Jugendleben. Hässliche Hosen, aber gewagte Dissidentenpartys. Wenig Freiheit, aber viel Sex. Eigentlich ein mustergültiges Zeitungsthema. Wenn man will, kann man es ohne große Mühe auch gesellschaftstheoretisch aufmotzen. (Finger, "Unter Verdacht")

Sonnenallee ends with the voiceover narration of its protagonist: "Es war einmal ein Land. Und ich hab' dort gelebt. Wenn jemand mich fragt, wie es war: es war die schönste Zeit meines Lebens, denn ich war jung und verliebt." The East Germany of *Sonnenallee* existed "once upon a time," not in reality – it is the East Germany of fairytales and mythology – but this doesn't diminish the importance of *Sonnenallee's* story. Like mythology with its fictitious

accounts, Brussig's *Postalgie* contains motifs and messages that are important to contemporary society. So important, in fact, that these tales of youth, rebellion and music, as with all myths, need to be remembered and repeated.

Brussig's *Postalgie* attempts to unify East and West Germany in hindsight as well as today. As Stefan Wolle writes: "Im besten Falle werden DDR and BRD so zusammengefügt, dass sie zwar durch einen Buchdeckel vereinigt sind, aber beziehungslos nebeneinander stehen."

Helden wie wir and *Sonnenallee* reevaluate the history of the former GDR to unite Germany, an endeavour which unification itself did not fully succeed in. Brussig's *Postalgie* suggests that Germany needs to redefine its cultural and collective memories to incorporate the histories of both the former East and former West; that the German national identity needs to be reevaluated to integrate a shared version of Germany's history and that remembering one's childhood nostalgically is not a crime, rather, it is part of being human (Brussig, "Wir sind nostalgisch").

In his interview with *taz* magazine, Brussig explained his moral motivation: "Ich habe nicht nur einen künstlerischen, sondern auch einen moralischen Anspruch. Eine Sehnsucht nach Gerechtigkeit empfinde ich schon" (Neubauer). Brussig's texts do not pretend that the problems between East and West have disappeared; rather, Brussig's novels acknowledge that although the Wall was destroyed, the issues and division that faced the citizens of former East and former West Germany in 1989 still exist today. With *Helden wie wir*, Brussig begins the debate that "wir Ostdeutschen uns und der Welt noch ... schuldig sind" (*Helden wie wir* 312) and with *Sonnenallee*, he makes his concluding argument:

Es war von vorn bis hinten zum Kotzen, aber wir haben uns prächtig amüsiert. Wir waren alle so klug, so belesen, so interessiert, aber unterm Strich war's idiotisch. Wir stürmten in die Zukunft, aber wir waren so was von gestern. Mein Gott, waren wir komisch, und wir haben es nicht einmal gemerkt. (Sonnenallee 153 – italics in original)

In his interview with Sandra Maischberger, Brussig relates his goal in writing *Sonnenallee*: “Ich habe ja immer gesagt, das soll ein Film werden, bei dem die Westler neidisch werden, daß sie nicht im Osten leben durften” (“Interview”). In the end, Thomas Brussig has done more than simply make West Germans jealous. Through his literary and cinematic *Postalgie*, he has made them understand.

Bibliography

- Ahbe, Thomas. *Ostalgie: Zum Umgang mit der DDR-Vergangenheit in den 1990er Jahren*. Thüringen: Landeszentrale für die politische Bildungsarbeit, 2005.
- Allan, Seán. "Ostalgie, fantasy and the normalization of east-west relations in post-unification comedy." *German Cinema since Unification*. Ed. David Clarke. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- . "Good Bye, Lenin!: Ostalgie und Identität im wieder vereinigten Deutschland." *German Foreign Language* 1 (2006): 46-59.
- Anders, Kenneth. "Das Wasser weiss selbst, wo es hingehört." *Bye Bye Lübben City*. Eds. Michael Rauhut and Thomas Kochan. Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2004.
- Assmann, Jan. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München [Munich]: Beck, 1999.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rebelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968.
- Barthes, Roland. "Myth Today." *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. London: Jonathan Cape, 1972.
- Berg, Stefan. "Die neue deutsche Sippenhaft." *Der Spiegel* 23 Sept. 1996: 51-53.
- Berghahn, Daniela. "East German Cinema after Unification." *German Cinema since Unification*. Ed. David Clarke. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Bidney, David. "The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution." *American Anthropologist* 52.1 (1950): 16-26.
- Betts, Paul. "Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture." *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 731-765.
- Beyer, Susanne. "In der DDR liefen irre Partys." *Der Spiegel* 9 Dec. 2002: 204-206.
- Bielefeld, Claus-Ulrich. "Die Mauer – eine Sittengeschichte: Thomas Brussigs zweiter Roman." *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 4/5 Sept 1999: n. pag. 20 April 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/sonnenallee/sz.htm>.
- Biermann, Wolf. "Wenig Wahrheiten und viel Witz." *Der Spiegel* 29 Jan 1996: 186-187. 10 May 2007 <www.spiegel.de/archiv/>.

- Bisky, Jens. "Zonensucht: Kritik der neuen Ostalgie." *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 117 (2004): 117-127.
- Blum, Martin. "Remaking the East German Past: Ostalgie, Identity, and Material Culture." *Journal of Popular Culture* 34 (200): 229-253.
- Boyer, Dominic. "Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany." *Public Culture* 18.2 (2006): 1-32.
- Bremer, Ulrike. *Versionen der Wende*. Osnabrück: Rasch, 2002.
- Brockmann, Stephen M. "The Politics of German Comedy." *German Studies Review* 23 (2001): 32-51.
- Broder, Henryk M. "Wir lieben die Heimat." *Der Spiegel* 3 July 1995: 54-64.
- Brussig, Thomas. *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee*. Berlin: Volk & Welt, 1999.
- . "Der Brechreiz ist ein aktueller." 6 March 2007
<www.thomasbrussig.de/publizistik/ostalgie.htm>.
- . *Helden wie wir*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1998.
- . "Ich habe einen Traum." *Die Zeit* 28 Oct. 2004: n. pag. 6 March 2007
<www.zeit.de/archiv>.
- . "Wir sind nostalgisch, weil wir Menschen sind." 6 March 2007
<www.thomasbrussig.de/publizistik/sehnsucht.htm>.
- Casentino, Christine. "Autobiographisch grundierte Rückblicke auf die DDR nach der Jahrtausendwende." *Glossen: Eine internationale zweisprachige Publikation zu Literatur, Film, und Kunst in den deutschsprachigen Ländern nach 1945* 20 (2004): n. pag.
- Cohen, Percy S. "Theories of Myth." *Man* 4. 3 (1969): 337-353.
- Cook, Paul. "Performing 'Ostalgie': Leander Haussmann's *Sonnenallee*." *German Life and Letters* 56.2 (2002): 156-167.
- Dennis, Mike. *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic 1945-1990*. Don Mills: Pearson Education, 2000.
- Dieckman, Christof. "Honis heitere Welt." *Rückwärts immer: Deutsches Erinnerern*. Berlin: CH Links, 2005.
- . "Klaus und wie er die Welt sah." *Die Zeit*. 8 Sept. 1995: n. pag. 6 March 2007
<www.zeit.de/archiv>.

- . "Küche, Kammer, weite Welt." *Bye Bye Lübben City*. Eds. Michael Rauhut and Thomas Kochan. Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2004.
- Chor des Pionier- und FDJ-Ensembles Halle. "Fröhlich sein und singen." *Sonnenallee*. eastwest records, 1999.
- Donat, Sebastian. "Wende und Wandel: Thomas Brussigs *Helden wie wir* und *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* als Buch und Film" *Dogilmunbak: Koreanische Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 7 (1994): 105-120. 6 May 2007 <kcg.german.or.kr/kr/kzg/kzgtxt/94-07.pdf>.
- Durrani, Osman. "Language and Subversion in GDR Rock Music." *Finding a Voice*. Eds. Graham Jackman and Ian F. Roe. *German Monitor* 47. Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000.
- Eberle, Henrik. "Beamtenmief vom Feinsten." *Sonnenallee: Das Buch zum Farbfilm*. Ed. Leander Haußmann. Berlin: Quadriga, 1999.
- Eder, Franz. "Sexual Cultures in Germany and Austria, 1700-2000." *Sexual Cultures in Europe: National Histories*. Eds. Franz Eder, Lesley Hall and Gert Hekma. New York: Manchester University Press, 1999.
- Elis, Angela. "Ihr habt Angst vor der Einheit, Wessis." Spec. issue of *Der Spiegel* 26 April 2005: 170-171.
- Ewing, Jack. "Thomas Brussig/Germany: Comedy of Terrors." *Businessweek Online* 8 Nov. 1999: n. pag. 27 April 2007 <www.businessweek.com/1999/99_45/b3654020.htm>.
- Evans, Owen. "Taking Stock of the *Wende* on Screen: Michael Klier's *Ostkreuz* and Hannes Stöhr's *Berlin is in Germany*" *German Foreign Language* 1 (2006): 60-75.
- Finger, Evelyn. "Gefühlte Uneinigkeit." *Die Zeit* 29 Sept. 2005: n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.zeit.de/archiv>.
- . "Unter Verdacht." *Die Zeit* 6 March 2003: n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.zeit.de/archiv>.
- Felber, Holm. "'...no SEDisfaction': Rock über die Mauer." *Rock: Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*. Berlin: Links, 2005.
- Felsmann, Barbara. "Wer saß unten im System? Icke!" *Wochenpost*. (39) 21 Sept. 1995: 40-41. 6 March 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/interviews/wochenpost.htm>.
- Franke, Konrad. "Der Sieger der Geschichte: Thomas Brussig stellt vor: *Helden wie wir*." *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 11 Oct. 1995: n. pag. 15 Feb. 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/helden/sz.htm>.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 1963.

- Fröhlich, Margrit. "Thomas Brussig's Satire of Contemporary History." *GDR Bulletin* 25 (1998): 21-30.
- Gabler, Wolfgang. "Die Wende als Witz." *Literator*. 18 (1997): 141-154.
- Gauck, Joachim. "Einheit: Noch lange fremd." *Der Spiegel* 29 Sept. 1997: 46-51.
- Geisenhanslüke, Achim. "Abschied von der DDR." *DDR-Literatur der neunziger Jahre*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. *Text + Kritik* Sonderband IX/00. München [Munich]: Richard Boorberg, 2000.
- Grohmer, Ulrike. "Blick zurück im Frieden?." *Neues Deutschland*. 31 Aug. 1999: n. pag. 11 May 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/sonnenallee/nd.htm>.
- Gunske, Volker und Sven S. Poser. "Nachdenken über Thomas B." *Tip-Magazin* 21 (1999): n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/interviews/tip.htm>.
- Günther, Thomas. "Out of System: außer Kontrolle." *Rock: Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*. Links: Berlin, 2005
- Hagen, Nina. "Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen" *Sonnenallee*. eastwest records, 1999.
- . "TV-Glotzer." *TV-Glotzer*. Delta, 2004.
- Halpern, Ben. "'Myth' and 'Ideology' in Modern Usage." *History and Theory* 1.2 (1961): 129-149.
- Haußmann, Leander, ed. "Vorwort." *Sonnenallee: Das Buch zum Farbfilm*. Berlin: Quadrega, 1999.
- . "Es kam dicke genug." *Der Spiegel* 8 Sept. 2003: 220-221.
- Helbig, Florian. "Flüstern & Schreien: zwischen Rebellion & Repression: Punkrock in der DDR" *infraROT: Das politische Szeeneblatt für Dinslaken* 2: 6-7. <www.jusos-dinslaken.de/downloads>.
- Hell, Julia. "History as Trauma, or, Turning to the Past Once Again: Germany 1949/1989." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 96 (1997): 911-947.
- Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Hollmer, Heide. "Thomas Brussig." *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* 68 (2001): 1-8.
- Hudson, David. "Short End of the Street." *Spiegel Online* 6 Oct. 1999. 6 March 2007 <www.spiegel.de>.

- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Parody*. New York: Methuen, 1985.
- “hypermoralism.” *International Index and Dictionary of Rehabilitation and Social Integration. Terminologie de neuropsychologie et de neurologie du comportement*. Montréal: Les Éditions de la Chenelière, 1991. 14 May 2007 <www.med.univ-rennes1.fr/iidris>.
- “Ich bin die Wenderoman-Polizei.” *Der Tagesspiegel Online* 26 Sept. 2004: n. pag. 5 May 2007 <archiv.tagesspiegel.de>.
- Igel, Oliver. *Gab es die DDR wirklich? Die Darstellung des SED-Staates in komischer Prosa zur ‘Wende’*. Tönning: Der andere Verlag, 2005.
- Jeder schweigt von etwas anderem*. Dir. Marc Bauder and Dörte Franke. Bauderfilm, 2006.
- Jürgs, Michael. “Ihr habt Angst vor Freiheit, Osis.” Spec. issue of *Der Spiegel* 26 April 2005: 168-169.
- Katharina Büllin – und ich dachte ich wär’ die Größte*. Dir. Marcus Welsch. Marcus Welsch Produktion, 2005.
- Keimzeit*. “Das Projektil.” *Sonnenallee*. eastwest records, 1999.
- Krekeler, Elmar. “Die Legende von Micha und Miriam” *Die Welt*. 28 Aug. 1999: n. pag.. 11 May 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/sonnenallee/welt.htm>.
- Kühl, Christian. “Sex- und Substitutionsdrogen.” *taz* 7 Oct. 1999: n. pag. 25 May 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/filme/sonnen_taz.htm>.
- Küpper, Mechthild. “Sieben leere Patronen am Ende der Nacht: Die DDR als Schützenfest.” *FAZ* 12 Oct. 1999. 11 May 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/sonnenallee/faz.htm>.
- Lambeck, Silke. “Herr Brussig, was halten Sie von Nostalgie?” *Berliner Zeitung* 6/7 Nov. 1999: n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/interviews/berliner.htm>.
- Langston, Richard. “Roll Over Beethoven! Chuck Berry! Mick Jagger!” *Sound Matters: Essays on the Acoustics of Modern German Culture*. Eds. Norma Alter and Lutz Koepnick. New York: Berghahn, 2004.
- Lendanff, Susanne. “Die Suche nach dem ‘Wenderoman’ – zu einigen Aspekten der literarischen Reaktionen auf Mauerfall und deutsche Einheit in den Jahren 1995 und 1996.” *Glossen: Eine internationale zweisprachige Publikation zu Literatur, Film, und Kunst in den deutschsprachigen Ländern nach 1945* 2 (1997): n. pag.
- Maas, Georg and Hartmut Reszel. “Whatever Happened to...: The Decline and Renaissance of Rock in the Former GDR.” *Popular Music* 17 (1998): 267-277.

- Maischberger, Sandra. "Interview mit Thomas Brussig und Leander Haußmann." 6 March 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/interviews/sonnenallee.htm>.
- . "Sonnenallee – eine Mauerkomödie: Interview mit Leander Haußmann und Thomas Brussig." *Sonnenallee: Das Buch zum Farbfilm*. Ed. Leander Haußmann. Berlin: Quadriga, 1999.
- Magenau, Jörg. "Kindheitsmuster." *Aufgerissen: Zur Literatur der 90er*. Ed. Thomas Kraft. München [Munich]: Piper, 2000: 39-52.
- Matussek, Matthias. "Die Kunst der Groteske." *Der Spiegel* 16 Oct. 2006: 210.
- Mayer, Günter. "Popular Music in the GDR." *Journal of Popular Culture* 18 (1984): 145-158.
- Meinel, Reinhild. "Wie es wirklich war." *Wende-Literatur*. New York: Peter Lang, 1997.
- Mohr, Reinhard. "Die neuen Fast-Patrioten." *Der Spiegel* 11 Sept. 2000: 228-232.
- "Musik der DDR." *Wikipedia*. 1 Sept. 2006 <de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musik_der_DDR>.
- Nause, Tanja. "Post-*Wende* Literature and Cultural Memory: Moments of Recollection in Thomas Brussig's Novel *Helden wie wir*." *German Studies towards the Millennium*. Eds. Christopher Hall and David Rock. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.
- Naughton, Leonie. *That Was The Wild East: Film Culture, Unification and the "New" Germany*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Nentwich, Andreas. "Zärtliche Poesie des Widerstands." *Die Zeit* 39 (1999): n. pag. <www.zeit.de/archiv>.
- Neubauer, Michael. Interview with Thomas Brussig. "Gefeit vor Utopien." *Die Tageszeitung*. 5 Oct. 1998: n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/interviews/taz.htm>.
- Neubert, Eehart. "Der Ärger mit der Freiheit." *Der Spiegel* 4 Nov. 1996: 99-100.
- Neuhaus, Stefan. "'Erzählen ist total erotisch': Literature, Pleasure and Desire in Novels by Thomas Brussig, Uwe Timm and Ulrich Woelk." *German-language literature today: international and popular?* Eds. Arthur Williams, K Stuart Parkes and Julian Preece. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.
- Nijdam, Elizabeth. Personal Interview with Thomas Brussig. 14 Feb. 2007.
- Norman, Philip. *The Stones*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2001.
- Osang, Alexander. "Beatmusik – Staatlich gepflegt: Levi's, Springsteen, Coca-Cola und die Herbstrevolution im Osten." *Sonnenallee: Das Buch zum Farbfilm*. Ed. Leander Haußmann. Berlin: Quadriga, 1999.

- . "Zu Gast im Party-Staat." *Der Spiegel* 8 Sept. 2003: 212-219.
- Pan, David. "The Struggle for Myth in the Nazi Period: Alfred Baeumler, Ernst Bloch, and Carl Einstein." *South Atlantic Review* 65 (2000): 41-57.
- "parody, v." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Draft Revision Mar. 2005. Oxford UP, 2007. 15 May 2007 <www.oed.com>.
- "pacify, v." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Draft Revision June 2005. Oxford UP, 2007. 15 May 2007 <www.oed.com>.
- Peitz, Christiane. "Alles so schön grau hier." *Die Zeit* 4 Nov. 1999: n. pag. 10 May 2007 <www.zeit.de/archiv >.
- . "Sonnenallee, Schattenarmee: Wie NVA den Osten endgültig zum Märchen macht." *Der Tagesspiegel* 29 Sept. 2005: n. pag. 15 May 2007 <www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/archiv>.
- Pekacz, Jolanta. "Did Rock Smash the Wall? The Role of Rock in Political Transition." *Popular Music* 13 (1994): 41-49.
- Peltner, Arndt. "Radio-Goethe" Lecture at the University of Victoria, 2006.
- Pieper, Dietmar. "Wehre dich täglich." *Der Spiegel* 27 Dec. 1993: 46-49.
- Polz, Michael. "50 Jahre DDR: Alles war so, alles war anders." *Spiegel Online* 06 Oct. 1999: n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.spiegel.de>.
- Poiger, Uta G. *Jazz, Rock and Rebels*. Berkley: U of California Press, 2000.
- Prager, Brad. "The Erection of the Berlin Wall: Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* and the End of East Germany." *Modern Language Review* 99 (2004) 983-98.
- Puhdys. "Geh zu ihr." *Sonnenallee*. eastwest records, 1999.
- Rauhut, Michael. "'Am Fenster': Rockmusik und Jugendkultur in der DDR." *Rock: Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*. Berlin: Links, 2005.
- Rusch, Claudia. "Die Musik meines Vaters." *Rock: Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*. Berlin: ~~Ch~~ Links, 2005.
- Reiche, Jürgen. "'Die fetten Jahren sind vorbei:' Politik und Rockmusik." *Rock: Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*. Berlin: Links, 2005.
- "Rolling Stones." *Lyric Freaks*. 15 April 2006 <www.lyricsfreak.com>.
- Sadowski-Smith, Claudia. "Ostalgie: Revaluing the Past, Regressing into the Future." *GDR Bulletin* 25 (1998): 1-6.

- Sich, Daniel. "Die DDR als Absurditätenshow – vom Schreiben nach der Wende." *Glossen: Eine internationale zweisprachige Publikation zu Literatur, Film, und Kunst in den deutschsprachigen Ländern nach 1945* 21 (2005): n. pag.
- Sommer, Stefan. *Das grosse Lexikon des DDR-Alltags*. Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2003.
- Sonnenallee*. Screenplay by Thomas Brussig and Detlev Buck. Dir. Leander Haußmann. Delphi Filmverleih, 1999.
- Speicher, Stephan. "Ohne Tote." *Berliner Zeitung* 8 Feb. 1997: n. pag. 15 March 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/wasserfarben/berliner.htm>.
- Strachey, James, ed. Forword. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton, 1963.
- "Strafanzeige gegen Haußmann." *Spiegel Online* 27 Jan. 2000: n. pag. 6 March 2007 <www.spiegel.de>.
- Straubel, Timothy, Angela Szabo and Dirk Wendtorf. "Ich schreibe Bücher, die ich auch selber gerne lesen würde: Interview with Thomas Brussig" *Focus on Literatur* 5.1 (1998): 51-59.
- Street, John. "'Fight the Power': The Politics of Music and the Music of Politics." *Government and Opposition* 38.1 (2003): 113-130.
- Symmank, Markus. "Muttersprache." *Bestandsaufnahmen: Deutschsprachige Literatur der neunziger Jahre aus interkultureller Sicht*. Ed. Matthias Harder. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001.
- Weber, Carl. "A Picaresque Tale: East Germany's Last Act." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 65 (2000): 142-145.
- Webber, Andrew J. "Falling Walls, Sliding Doors, Open Windows: Berlin on Film after the *Wende*." *German as a Foreign Language* 1 (2006): pp. 22. 15 Dec. 2006 <www.gfl-journal.de>.
- Westphal, Anke. "Die DDR als Hippie-Republik" *die tageszeitung* 28/29 Aug 1999: n. pag. 26 April 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/sonnenallee/taz.htm>.
- . "Loch im Herzen, Stein auf der Brust" *die tageszeitung* 9 Nov 1999: n. pag. April 26 2007 <www.thomasbrussig.de/sonnenallee/taz2.htm>.
- Winkler, Heinrich August. "Teil 6 Deutsche Mythen: Ende aller Sonderwege." *Der Spiegel* 11 June 2001: 168-180.

Wolle, Stefan. "Waschputzis Wahrheit." *Die Zeit* 46 (2000): n. pag. 6 March 2007
<www.zeit.de/archiv>.

Zachau, Reinhard K. "‘Das Volk jedenfalls war’s nicht!’ Thomas Brussigs Abrechnung mit der DDR." *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 30 (1997): 386-395.

---. "Wie Amerika der DDR die Freiheit gab: Thomas Brussig’s *Helden wie wir* and *Sonnenallee*. *Glossen: Eine internationale zweisprachige Publikation zu Literatur, Film, und Kunst in den deutschsprachigen Ländern nach 1945* 19 (2004): n. pag.