

POST-GDR MEMORY—CULTURAL DISCOURSES OF  
LOSS AND ASSERTION IN REUNIFIED GERMANY

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

When considering the blockage of a nuanced GDR memory within post-unification discourses, the historical moment of 1989 can be understood as a moment of loss for East Germans. While post-unification scholarship has addressed questions of GDR identity and generational memory in other post-1989 contexts, there is a surprising lack of scholarly work that discusses loss across different Eastern German generations that share the same historical moment of collapse and loss - 1989.

In this dissertation, I divide the various Eastern German generational engagements with loss and assertion after 1989 into four chapters. Each generation forms a different discursive constellation: melancholic mourning: (Christa Wolf - chapter one), ambivalence (Lutz Rathenow and Thomas Brussig - chapter two), reappropriation (Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein - chapter three), and nostalgia/anti-nostalgia (Andrea Hanna Hünninger and the GDR museum - chapter four). Age and social position at the time of rupture fostered different perspectives regarding the experience of loss.

My examination uses a case study approach to investigate trends. Taking each author individually and analyzing the process of dealing with loss in their works to other generational approaches, new insights into post-GDR memory studies are provided. Although this study analyzes only Eastern German literary productions and museal constructions, it provides insights into the development of culture in unified, post-1989 Germany and into questions of where culturally mutable notions of East German identity fit into the processes by which a collective sense of German identity is shaped in the post-unification period.

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## Introduction

Der DDR-Verlust provoziert grundsätzliche Anfragen an die eigene Identität, das entwertete Leben läßt Fragen nach dem Wert des Lebens überhaupt auftauchen.<sup>1</sup>

Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Das gestürzte Volk: Die unglückliche Einheit*, 1991

Im Jahr 1989 standen sich die Deutschen längst in Fremdheit gegenüber. So stelle ich es mir vor, am Anfang muss doch kaum mehr als Fremdheit zwischen Ost und West gewesen sein. Verlegenheit. Unsicherheit und vielleicht auch Misstrauen. Für uns wäre es viel eher an der Zeit gewesen, erst einmal nach Gemeinsamkeit zu suchen. Das hätte Jahre gedauert. Stattdessen ließen wir uns lieber auf eine Vergangenheit verweisen, mit der uns selber nichts verband, an die die meisten keine Erinnerung hatten, gar nicht haben konnten.<sup>2</sup>

Jana Hensel, *Achtung Zone: Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten*, 2009

Ostalgic and similar practices reveal and contest at a particularly dynamic historical moment official master narratives of a united Germany by proposing an alternative vision of “Germanness”—of eastern German particularism and Eigen-Sinn. In this sense, they reveal much about the process of transition itself.<sup>3</sup>

Daphne Berdahl, 1999

Between 1989 and 1990, a West German narrative of democratic victory began to position the GDR as a second dictatorship.<sup>4</sup> Eastern German responses to this new narrative reveal a discourse around a sense of loss and devaluation experienced by East Germans during this period as well as a development of an Eastern German counter memory to the new

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<sup>1</sup> Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Das gestürzte Volk: Die unglückliche Einheit* (Munich: Knauer, 1991), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Jana Hensel, *Achtung Zone: Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten* (Munich: Piper, 2009), 15-16.

<sup>3</sup> Daphne Berdahl, “(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no.2 (1999): 205.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of two “schools of commentary” on the GDR past, see for example, Konrad H. Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR,” *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 3-5. According to Jarausch the first school sees the GDR as a repressive state (*Unrechtsstaat*) with no democratic legitimacy (in other words as a second German dictatorship): “The theoretical foundation of this indictment rests on revived totalitarian theory which sees most Nazi mechanisms of repression repeated in the ostensibly anti-Fascist GDR” (4). The second school considers the GDR as a “failed experiment” which “seeks to recover the noble aims of socialism from the debris of its admittedly imperfect realization” (noble aims such as welfare provisions, inexpensive healthcare, free child care, equality in employment between men and women) (4). Jarausch cites as an example of the first school, Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED Staat: Partei, Staat und Gesellschaft 1949-1990* (Munich: Karl Hanser Verlag, 1998). Jarausch’s position towards the GDR past, situated along with others such as Jürgen Kocka at the *Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung*, lies somewhere in between these two polar views of the GDR past. Jarausch argues for “[. . .] analyz[ing] the dictatorial character of the GDR comparatively, but at the same time acknowledg[ing] some of the normalcy of daily lives in the SED state” (ix). This is the position that I also take in this dissertation. The term “national narrative of democratic victory” is taken from Anke Pinkert, “Vacant History, Empty Screens. Post-Communist German Films of the 1990s,” *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 263-77.

hegemonic narrative of a formerly divided past.<sup>5</sup> In the “Ten Point Plan” released in November 1989, Helmut Kohl addressed the need for East Germans to change their political and economic system (i.e., take on that of West Germany) in order for unification to succeed: “Ich habe angeboten, unsere Hilfe und unsere Zusammenarbeit umfassend auszuweiten, wenn ein grundlegender Wandel des politischen und wirtschaftlichen Systems in der DDR verbindlich beschlossen und unumkehrbar in Gang gesetzt wird.”<sup>6</sup> Although in his speech, Kohl did not ask for a cultural change in notions of Eastern identity, real and imagined cultural differences between East and West would end up playing a greater role in the continued divided national imaginary, constituting the proverbial “wall in the head” of unified Germans. This dissertation examines post-unification literary texts by former East Germans as “counterdiscursive impulse[s]” that express “the possibility of a community different from that offered by the dominant culture.”<sup>7</sup> According to anthropologist Daphne Berdahl, such “oppositional modes of memory” allow for a reconsideration of “the domains in which history and memory are constructed and deployed.”<sup>8</sup> The literary productions analyzed in this dissertation perform such reconceptualizations by simultaneously accounting for the dictatorial character of the SED state and for the normalcy of everyday life experienced in personal relations in the GDR. This nuanced approach allows for an understanding of the heterogeneous nature of memory and history.

I have titled my approach to cultural discourses of loss and assertion after 1990 using the term “post-GDR memory” to emphasize how interests in the present shape memories of the past.

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<sup>5</sup> In this dissertation, the labels Eastern and Western German refer to Germans who were socialized in the respective systems, the former GDR and FRG, respectively, and in their aftermath associated with those geographic areas after 1990.

<sup>6</sup> “Rede von Bundeskanzler Helmut Kohl im Bundestag (“10-Punkte-Programm”), 28. November 1989,” *1961-1989/1990. Chronik der Mauer*, <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/index.php/de/Start/Detail/id/618085/page/25> (accessed September 20, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: “Other” German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), xii.

<sup>8</sup> See Berdahl, ““(N)Ostalgic’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” 205-06.

The use of “post” shows how discourses that emerged after the GDR have shaped GDR memory in the present. In the sense of oppositional narratives, which “reconceptualize the domains in which history and memory are constructed and deployed,” the GDR past is reimagined in the present both to contrast hegemonic interpretations of the GDR (loss) and to re-define a heterogeneous sense of Eastern identity (assertion). The past in the post-unification narratives assists in re-creating new meanings in the present. In this manner, this perspective signifies a presentist approach to memory. However, rather than implying a discontinuity between the past and present in my use of the term “post,” I intend to highlight the role that post-1989 identity discourse plays in influencing Eastern German memory of the GDR past.

A recent article in *Der Spiegel* reports an absence of Western German literary reflections in the present about the divided German past.<sup>9</sup> The article’s author calls for Western German authors, now twenty years after unification, to consider their role in the history of divided Germany, a responsibility that has been relatively ignored in post-unification Western German literature up to this point (according to the author). Taking this deficiency as a starting point, I construe my argument of reading post-unification Eastern German literature as a real and imaginary response to the loss of a presumably shared Eastern German cultural and historical past, which has been negated in discourse dominated by a West German narrative of the past. The Eastern German engagement with the GDR past is a productive process that opens up new understandings not only of the GDR past but also of present identity struggles in unified Germany. The reinsertion of a sense of an Eastern identity or a sense of “Easternness” into unified German cultural and literary practices after 1989 (through these counter-memory productions) allows for a contestation and negotiation of post-unification forms of memory. I appropriate the term “Easternness” in this study in the sense of an East Germanness, or an East

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<sup>9</sup> See Susanne Beyer, “Fast Vergessenes Glück,” *Der Spiegel*, March 9, 2009, 152-54.



German distinctiveness, as Paul Cooke discusses the new East German positioning in unified Germany—all to be understood as nonhomogeneous labels, as there is no singular Eastern entity or “Easternness.”<sup>10</sup> The use of such a nonhomogeneous label (“Easternness”) can be productive as it demonstrates explicitly the heterogeneous nature of memory and the need for a nuanced consideration of the GDR past and sense of Eastern identity in the present. However, this dissertation will mostly refer to this “Easternness” when discussing a sense of an Eastern identity (to be used as a shortened form for this notion). Looking at narratives from authors of different Eastern German generations as counterdiscursive responses which “express the possibility of a community different from that offered by the dominant culture” provides insight into the present memory contests of unified Germany.<sup>11</sup> These reimaginings, or reconstructions of the past, carve out a space of nuance and complexity with regard to the GDR past that is missing in post-1989 mainstream discourse—a discourse that even now, more than twenty years after unification, tends to slip into a portrayal of the East as the Saidian “other,” as an inferior group of “colonized” subjects.<sup>12</sup>

The above passage from Jana Hensel’s 2009 book *Achtung Zone. Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten* especially brings to light the complexity of German unification and of finding a shared sense of Germanness after 1989. Hensel’s reflection on the

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<sup>10</sup> See Paul Cooke, “Literature and the Question of East German Cultural Identity since the Wende,” in *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, ed. Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), 155.

<sup>11</sup> See Fachinger, xii. The term “memory contests” is from Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote, eds., *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990* (Columbia, SC: Camden, 2006). According to Fuchs, Cosgrove, and Grote, memory contests “[. . .] embrace the idea that individuals and groups advance and edit competing stories about themselves that forge their changing sense of identity” (2).

<sup>12</sup> For more on postcolonial approaches to unification by scholars, see Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005). In considering postcolonial approaches to unification, Cooke discusses Said’s notion of “other.” According to Cooke, Said argues that in Western literature the image of the Eastern world, the Orient, does not represent the actual “geographical space” of the East, but instead exemplifies the “colonialist feelings of superiority” of the West (11). Andreas Glaeser also looks at East German otherness but in a different fashion. Instead of examining otherness in terms of nation, class, gender, race and so forth, he argues for looking at categories of otherness in terms of work, morality, space, and the public/private divide. According to Glaeser, such an examination proves more productive in understanding identity formation and otherness between East and West Germany after unification. See Andreas Glaeser, *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany and the Berlin Police* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), x.

early East German response of repression and concession of the past in order to assimilate with the West gives insight into Eastern German expressions of an experience of loss after 1989.<sup>13</sup> After unification some Eastern Germans did not identify with or recognize the West German cultural and historical past as their own.<sup>14</sup> Hensel's explanation for this cultural division revolves around the argument that West Germans "dachten anders und redeten anders. Sie erwarteten andere Dinge vom Staat, sie wählten anders, sie bezogen sich auf andere historische Ereignisse. Sie hatten andere Filme gesehen, eine andere Musik gehört, andere Bücher gelesen. Sie griffen auf andere Erinnerungen zurück."<sup>15</sup> Although both nations shared the same past prior to 1945, after this date the East German cultural continuity diverged greatly from that of West Germany, becoming markedly different by the time of unification.<sup>16</sup> During the over forty years of division, East German intellectuals constructed an East German identity and ideological utopian

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<sup>13</sup> See for example, Evelyn Finger, "Freiheit ist auch die Freiheit der Jammerrossis. Warum der Mauerfall von vielen Ostdeutschen nicht als das große Glück empfunden wird," *Die Zeit Online*, November 5, 2009, <http://www.zeit.de/2009/46/Verpasste-Freiheit> (accessed March 5, 2013). This longing for the past and for the past of a divided Germany is not exclusive to East Germans. Many West Germans express such feelings of loss after 1989. See for example, Christian Bangel, "Westdeutsche, auch euer Land ist untergegangen," *Zeit Online. Zeitgeschehen*, November 9, 2011, <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2011-11/mauerfall-wende-kommentar>. Without citing any sources, Bangel writes: "Zwei Drittel der Westdeutschen sagten noch vor zwei Jahren, Deutschlands beste Zeit im 20. Jahrhundert sei die vor 1990 gewesen. Weniger als die Hälfte der Westdeutschen mag die Wiedervereinigung als einen Glücksfall für Deutschland betrachten – im Osten sind es zwei Drittel. Mehr West—als Ostdeutsche wollen die Mauer wieder haben."

<sup>14</sup> For more on the discourse about feelings of colonization with regard to East Germans immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, see for example, Dolores L. Augustine, "The Impact of Two Reunification-Era Debates on the East German Sense of Identity," *German Studies Review* 27, no.3 (October 2004): 563-65.

<sup>15</sup> Hensel, *Achtung Zone: Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten*, 23-24.

<sup>16</sup> For discussions of cultural, political, or historical differences in German identity between the two Germanies, see for example, Jost Hermand, "German Ways of Reappropriating the National Cultural Heritage: A Brief Overview," *Monatshefte* 84, no. 2 (1992): 183-92; Patricia Hogwood, "After the GDR:Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, no.4 (2000): 47-48; and Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald, "A Decade of Cultural Disunity: Diverging Discourses and Communicative Dissonance in 1990s Germany," in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 1-22. According to Hermand, owing to American occupation of West Germany and its influence through film and music, cultural differences between West and East developed during the Cold War. Hogwood argues that there are two different views regarding a divided German identity. One posits that the two Germanies developed distinct identities and the other claims that one German identity persisted during the years of separation—this view upholding the "legitimacy of unification by transfer" (48). Even in the area of language, some scholars argue that there are differences between East and West. In the introduction to their edited volume *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, Stevenson and Theobald give as an example the language used in job interviews after 1990, claiming that East Germans had to learn a new language for the "formal competitive interviews" used in the FRG that were not characteristic of the socialist system.

project, which was lost in the historical events of 1989. All that remained of the GDR past after 1990 were remnants or, as Eric Santner has termed these remains, “stranded objects” that would prevent closure in the present.<sup>17</sup>

David L. Eng and David Kazanjian’s productive melancholia provides a new understanding of the “stranded objects” employed in the process of mourning. In the book, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, Eng and Kazanjian suggest that “loss is inseparable from what remains, for what is lost is only known by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained.”<sup>18</sup> In remembering, or engaging, the past through the stranded objects, the subject brings “the past to memory” and opens up a “continuing dialogue with loss and its remains.”<sup>19</sup> Eng and Kazanjian write:

In this regard, we find in Freud’s conception of melancholia’s persistent struggle with its lost objects not simply a “grasping” and “holding” on to a fixed notion of the past but rather a continuous engagement with loss and its remains. This engagement generates sites for memory and history, for the rewriting of the past as well as the reimagining of the future. While mourning abandons lost objects by laying their histories to rest, melancholia’s continued and open relation to the past finally allows us to gain new perspectives on and new understandings of lost objects.<sup>20</sup>

Eng and Kazanjian suggest a new approach to melancholia, according to which melancholia through its perpetual engagement with loss, sustains a constant relationship with the past. This engagement can be viewed as positive and productive rather than simply as a regressive relation of the present to the past, since it opens up new spaces for memory. Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s notions of mourning as an “active and open relationship with history” that mediates a “hopeful or hopeless relationship between loss and history,” Eng and Kazanjian introduce a new understanding of an individual’s relationship to the past and how this attachment creates

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<sup>17</sup> Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Eng and Kazanjian, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Eng and Kazanjian, 4.

alternative meanings for the present.<sup>21</sup> According to Judith Butler, Benjamin's concept of mourning alters Freud's original ideas and allows for a "slide of mourning into melancholia," a process that in this dissertation is referred to as "melancholic mourning."<sup>22</sup> The works by former Eastern German writers after 1989 perform this continued dialogue with loss and, through this dialogue, reimagine a nuanced memory narrative of the divided German past. They bring the GDR past and the memories which shape that past into the on-going construction and negotiation of a collective memory of unified Germany. In this dialogue with loss, we can see the restorative function of various discourses and practices that contribute to a process of melancholic mourning and a new transition towards a cultural imagination that produces new productive nonhomogeneous notions of Eastern identity.

When considering the dissolution of the East German state and the blockage of a nuanced GDR memory or some sense of publicly valued GDR continuity within post-unification discourses, the historical moment of 1989 can be understood as a moment of loss for East Germans.<sup>23</sup> The various texts by former Eastern Germans after 1989 have responded to this disappearance of the GDR and the ensuing losses in different ways. To understand the modes by which members of different generations of former East Germans respond(ed) to this vacancy after 1989, this dissertation closely examines the central literary works produced by writers who have different experiences of loss and, thus, dissimilar relationships between loss and history. My analysis reveals that a discourse of loss and assertion are present in the generational textual responses to the public memory narrative of divided Germany; however in each generational

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<sup>21</sup> Eng and Kazanjian, 1, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Judith Butler, "Afterward. After Loss, What Then?" in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 471.

<sup>23</sup> In his poem *Das Eigentum* (1990), Volker Braun captures this sentiment of loss experienced by many East Germans in 1989—the poem reflecting the nature of Freudian melancholic loss—that although one experiences loss, he is unable to name what he has lost in the missing object. For more on melancholic reaction to the collapse of the GDR, see Charity Scribner, "Left Melancholy," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 458-66.

grouping the literary discourses produced respectively attest to, shape, and imagine different psychological responses to this absence of a nuanced GDR memory.

Although researchers have addressed questions of GDR identity and generational memory in other post-1989 contexts, no scholarly work has explored a discourse of loss across different generations—all sharing the same historical moment of collapse and loss in 1989, but depending on their age and social positioning at the time of rupture bringing different perspectives to their experiences of loss.<sup>24</sup> According to Wolfgang Emmerich, generational approaches to East German literature cannot be determined by biology (birth) but instead must be considered according to the time in which the writers compose a work.<sup>25</sup> This dissertation examines works by different East German generations all composed during the same period of post-unification (over the past twenty years). To determine distinct patterns in this discourse of loss and to investigate how the texts negotiate narrative and representational strategies to address the void associated with 1989, this study investigates the different generational narratives individually and comparatively.

In this dissertation, I divide the various generational engagements with loss after 1989 into different discursive approaches: melancholic mourning, ambivalence, reappropriation, and nostalgia/anti-nostalgia. Each of the four chapters deals with one generational and discursive constellation respectively. Chapter one provides close readings of melancholic mourning in post-1989 texts by Christa Wolf (born in 1929). Chapter two turns to texts by Lutz Rathenow and Thomas Brussig (born between 1950 and 1965), focusing on the ambivalence by which these authors evaluate the present and the past—providing a more nuanced picture of the East. Chapter three examines texts by Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein (born in the 1970s) as a

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<sup>24</sup> See for example, Dolores L. Augustine, “The Impact of two Reunification-Era Debates on the East German Sense of Identity,” *German Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (October 2004): 563-78 and Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani, eds., *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), 162.

consideration of a new discourse of Post-*Ostalgie* that creates a new language of the past from the perspective of Eastern Germans. The fourth chapter looks closely at a text by Andrea Hanna Hünninger (born in 1984) and at cultural representations of the East German past in the GDR museum in Berlin.

Within each generational narrative, I explore how the transition to unification is negotiated and imagined in the textual and cultural productions after 1989, reading the emotional symbols both culturally and socially against the process of unification. Except for the literary work of Christa Wolf, the books I analyze have been previously more or less overlooked by scholars.<sup>26</sup> Although Brussig is well-known for his bestsellers *Helden wie wir* (1995) and *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* (1999), his later books, *Leben bis Männer* (2001) and *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* (2007) have been given little scholarly attention.<sup>27</sup> While Rathenow was a well-known dissident writer before 1989, his later works, reflecting an Eastern counter-identity that is perhaps critical of the capitalist change, have also been generally overlooked.<sup>28</sup> Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder* (2002) and Jakob Hein's *Mein erstes T-Shirt* (2001) have received public and scholarly reception; however, owing to their recent publication dates, attention to their later works, *Achtung Zone: Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten* (2009), *Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* (2009), and *Wurst und Wahn* (2011), has been

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<sup>26</sup> For biographical works on Christa Wolf and her literary oeuvre, see for example, Jörg Magenau, *Christa Wolf: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: Kindler Verlag, 2002) and Gail Finney, *Christa Wolf* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999). For an overview of Christa Wolf's texts pre-1989, see Margit Resch, *Understanding Christa Wolf: Returning Home to a Foreign Land* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> For works that treat Thomas Brussig's earlier books, see Birgit Dahlke, "The Right to Melancholy. Narratives from the GDR by Younger East-German Authors of the Nineties," unpublished manuscript; Jörg Magenau, "Kindheitsmuster. Thomas Brussig oder die ewige Jugend der DDR," in *Aufgerissen: Zur Literatur der 90er*, ed. Thomas Kraft (Munich: Piper Verlag, 2000), 39-52; and Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: "Other" German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (Montreal; London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> For discussions of the Prenzlauerberg sub-culture scene and dissident writers, see Uwe Wittstock, *Von der Stalinallee zum Prenzlauerberg: Wege der DDR-Literatur 1949-1989* (München: Piper, 1989) and Karen Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

greatly lacking to this point.<sup>29</sup> Again, some of the texts may have been studied individually but this dissertation provides new insights into post-GDR memory by developing a comparative approach to the various generational engagements with the GDR past and by focusing on how these texts written over the course of twenty years reflect on the extensive and complicated transition process following the political unification of East and West in 1990. As the title of this dissertation (“Post-GDR Memory—Cultural Discourses of Loss and Assertion in Reunified Germany”) suggests, the work of memory is a complex process. According to Peter Homans, loss, memory, and mourning are all closely linked: “Like mourning, memory is deeply implicated in loss. Freud’s theory of mourning is principally a theory of loss, and both are implicated in memory. Furthermore, [. . .] loss is the loss of the past.”<sup>30</sup> Before examining 1989 more closely as a historical moment of loss, the following section will elaborate more fully on the conceptual use of generation in this study.

### **Concept of Generation**

Examining the generational narratives from a post-1989 perspective, I compare the three generations across the same time span and in relation to the same historical moment of change, 1989, and posit that the works share an overall oppositional narrative among the different generational groupings. This opposition underscores the mutable structuring of an over-arching common Eastern German literary discourse of loss and assertion. The kind of losses and the mechanisms by which the texts respond to and negotiate the losses, however, are different in each generation. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani, the editors of a book on generation

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of Hein and Hensel’s earlier works, see for example, Susanne Ledanff, “Neue Formen der ‘Ostalgie’—Abschied von der ‘Ostalgie’? Erinnerungen und Kindheit und Jugend in der DDR und an die Geschichtsjahre 1989/90,” *Seminar* 43, no. 2 (May 2007): 176-93 and for a discussion of Hensel’s *Zonenkinder*, see Tom Kraushaar, ed., *Die Zonenkinder und wir: Die Geschichte eines Phänomens* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Peter Homans, “Introduction,” in *Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century’s End*, ed. Peter Homans (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 31.

and German culture, express the difficulties in using the concept of generation to investigate questions of German identity. They indicate that the concept can be useful if the researcher defines how she uses the notion of generation and if she then examines how the “generational construct provides answers to shifts in contemporary German culture.”<sup>31</sup>

For this project, I explore generations using both Mary Fulbrook’s notion of social generations and Sigrid Weigel’s view of generation as a symbolic form. Neither views generation as a reference to a clear-cut “era” configured by specific dates and biological succession (grandparent-parent-child). Weigel’s approach considers the “concept and narrative of ‘generation’ as a symbolic form [. . .] a cultural pattern for constructing history.”<sup>32</sup> According to Weigel, earlier approaches to generation used time as a marker of generation (biological succession). In contrast, her suggested approach to understanding generation is more symbolic, since it groups individuals through mechanisms other than time, such as technology or media (e.g., Facebook generation), as the uniting factor.<sup>33</sup> For example, Weigel uses the label “Berlin Generation” coined by Heinz Bude in his book *Generation Berlin* to emphasize geography as the potential indicator of a generational category.

Fulbrook looks at generation in the sociological sense. For Fulbrook, social generations are groups of individuals brought together by age-related concerns. There can be many social generations simultaneously, but each has different age-related concerns that group them into a generational cluster (not chronological in the biological sense of succession). This notion of generation (similar to Weigel’s symbolic form) considers how particular age groups respond to and “are shaped by the times, and in turn affect the times through which they live.”<sup>34</sup> According to Fulbrook social generations are groups of individuals born within a certain time period and

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<sup>31</sup> Cohen-Pfister and Vees-Gulani, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Sigrid Weigel, “Generation as a Symbolic Form: On the Geneological Discourse of Memory since 1945,” *Germanic Review* 77 (2002): 265.

<sup>33</sup> Weigel, 264.

<sup>34</sup> Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships*, 6.



who “have characteristics in common by virtue of common experience at a particular life stage, particularly in periods of radical political and social change.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, a combination of Fulbrook’s and Weigel’s approaches best allows for an examination of post-GDR literature across three generations, as these “generations” are not clear-cut eras of time, showing successive genealogy (grandparent-parent-child) and they all experienced the same period of social change in 1989. I use Weigel’s concept of generation as a symbolic form to investigate the various responses within a social generation. While there is some sense of chronological succession present in the ordering of generation, the generational approach here does not look at the generations as they relate to each other per se (memory to a post-memory), but instead investigates how the various social generations relate to the experience of 1989.<sup>36</sup>

While a great deal of scholarship looks at the succession of generations and how the family narrative uncovers the ways historical events affect a family and, thus, reflect society over time, I examine the various responses within the different generations of former East Germans to the same historical moment of 1989.<sup>37</sup> For my categorization of former East German generations, I follow and build on Wolfgang Emmerich’s categorization of East German generations, adding a third generation for Hensel, Hein, and Hünninger. In *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, Emmerich discusses the difficulty of looking at generation in terms

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<sup>35</sup> Fulbrook, 7.

<sup>36</sup> The context of Eastern German generational discourse and memory is unique, as the various generations considered here have all experienced this original loss of 1989, and so there is no “pure” memory-post memory constellation yet to consider. Although as I suggest in chapter 4, the emerging generation of the “*Diktaturkinder*” (those born from 1984-89) does reveal insights into post-memory discourse and normalization of the GDR past.

<sup>37</sup> For the treatment of family narrative in reading literature of the GDR, see for example, Julia Hell, “At the Center an Absence: Foundationalist Narratives of the GDR and the Legitimatory Discourse of Antifascism,” *Monatshefte* 84, no.1 (Spring 1992): 23-45. For a treatment of the concept of family narrative post-1989, see for example, Caroline Schaumann, “From Father, from Son: Generational Perspectives in Christoph Hein’s *Mama ist gegangen* (2003) and Jakob Hein’s *Vielleicht ist es sogar schön* (2004),” in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture*, ed. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 225-44. Schaumann uses the daughter-father and son-mother relationship, respectively, and, thus, does not concentrate on “the transmitted legacy from fathers [. . .],” but rather she focuses on “expanding narrow definitions of father-son literature and family novels” (241).

of biology and suggests labeling generation in terms of breaks of historical and societal experiences (similar to Weigel and Fulbrook):

Zumal am literarischen Wandel in den späten 70er und 80er Jahren bewahrheitet sich, daß die Generationenabfolge nie nur biologisches Faktum ist, sondern auch und vor allem eine Angelegenheit des Umbruchs von historischen und gesellschaftlichen Erfahrungen. Zunächst unverbindliche, "Generationslagen" verdichten sich über gemeinsame Schlüsselerfahrungen zu "Generationszusammenhängen" oder sogar zu "Generationseinheiten", die wesentlich zu "historischen Dynamik" beitragen—so Karl Mannheim schon 1928.<sup>38</sup>

Emmerich divides the literature of the GDR into two generations. The first generation consists of those writers in the GDR who were adherents of antifascism and who shared the historical experience of WWII and the period of *Aufbau*. According to Emmerich's comprehensive category, this first generation includes those born around the turn of the century (Bertolt Brecht, Anna Seghers, Johannes R. Becher, and Arnold Zweig); those born before the 1920s (Hermlin, Stritmatter); those born in the 1920s (Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller); and those born from the 1930s until 1950 (Rainer Kunze, Christoph Hein).<sup>39</sup> The second generation is comprised of those authors born after 1950, the "*Hineingeborene*" or "*unvermischte DDR Produkte*" (Rathenow and Brussig), who are "[. . .] Nicht-mehr-Einsteigern, die gegen das realsozialistische Spießertum rebellieren, [. . .]."<sup>40</sup> The third generation, which is not discussed by Emmerich in his book on literary history of the GDR, will refer in this dissertation to those East Germans who were born in the Soviet occupied "zone" in the 1970s, spending the first half of their lives in the GDR and the second half in unified Germany (Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein).<sup>41</sup> The last "generation" is more

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<sup>38</sup> Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 403.

<sup>39</sup> See Emmerich, 403-409 for a discussion of generations in the GDR. Attesting to the complexity of generational groupings, Emmerich refers to GDR generations differently in other works, labeling Anna Seghers as the first generation and Christa Wolf as a second GDR generation. See Wolfgang Emmerich, "Die Literatur der DDR," *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2008), 520. See also Wolfgang Emmerich, "Status Melancholicus. Zur Transformation der Utopie in vier Jahrzehnten," *Die andere deutsche Literatur: Aufsätze zur Literatur aus der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 177

<sup>40</sup> Emmerich, 407. For more on this generation of the *Hineingeborene*, see Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 401-17.

<sup>41</sup> The label "Zone" is a classification term used by West Germany (and allied occupying forces) when referring to the occupied zone of the GDR during the period of separation.

complicated to situate within my approach for examining generations, as this group of East Germans is only a few years apart in age from the members of the third generation and, thus, are more of a cohort cluster on the verge of becoming a generation.<sup>42</sup> According to Mary Fulbrook, cohort clusters (situated within particular social generations) are “members of particular cohorts [social generations] which 'stick out' in the historical record, groups of people born within a few years of each other who tend to play a highly visible historical role in some way with striking difference in their outlooks and actions from those born a few years earlier or a few years later.”<sup>43</sup> In their relation to 1989 and loss, the texts of this emerging generation (cohort cluster) reveal different responses than those of the third generation born eight to thirteen years earlier.

With this nuanced approach to generation, I examine Eastern German generational responses not simply in terms of generational chronology, but rather as symbolic narratives, which are all, if in different ways, engaged with remembering the GDR past and reacting to loss, resulting from political and social changes, after 1989. Within each generation there are, of course, multiple symbolic forms, or narratives, that respond to the changes in 1989, as memory is not homogeneous, but rather heterogeneous. I have, therefore, identified a dominant pattern, or a symbolic form, that seems representative of each generation and that allows for greater insight into an overall counter-discourse to the hegemonic memory narrative of unified Germany. These categories are not successive in regards to the original experience of loss, i.e. one generation experiences the event and each subsequent generation is farther from the “original” event and, thus, possesses a post-memory, or a memory that is inherited from the original generation (there is no biological succession from original experience). The key factor to my use of generational narratives, then, is the manner in which individuals (born roughly around the same time) react to

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<sup>42</sup> As Hünninger is eight to thirteen years younger than the authors of the third generation (Jana Hensel is eight years older than Hünninger, Jakob Hein, thirteen), one could consider this new cluster as an emerging generation, however not quite enough time has elapsed for it to be considered a new generation.

<sup>43</sup> Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships*, 7.

the same political and cultural changes occurring after 1989 and how their past experiences of loss shape this response.

Generation is a framework by which to describe and produce the shared experience of individuals born roughly in the same period. The authors of the first generation, such as Christa Wolf, who were born under fascist Germany and had a personal investment in building the socialist state, belong to the periodization of *Kriegskinder*. Members of the second generation, such as Thomas Brussig and Lutz Rathenow, were born in the GDR around the time of the erection of the Berlin Wall (in the years shortly before and after) and experienced the GDR (both the authoritarian state apparatus and the normalcy of daily life) during their formative years, falling into a periodization of *Mauerkinder*. The authors of the third generation, such as Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein, were born in the GDR in the 1970s and were around the age of twelve to eighteen when the Berlin wall fell. Grouped here as *Wendekinder* (or as Hensel calls them more suggestively “*Zonenkinder*”), they have lived half their lives in the socialist state but their formative years were experienced in democratic, post-1989 Germany. Members of the cohort cluster of this third generation (an emerging fourth generation) were born in the mid-1980s and were too young at the time of the fall of the wall to have memories other than the early years in kindergarten, but perhaps precisely because of that disconnection this generation has labeled itself “*Diktaturkinder*,” echoing the normative discourse about the GDR in the media.<sup>44</sup>

Authors of each generation have had a different reaction to the disappearance of the GDR.

Applying Weigel’s “concept and narrative of ‘generation’ as a symbolic form” this dissertation

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<sup>44</sup> The terms *Kriegskinder*, *Mauerkinder*, *Wendekinder* / “*Zonenkinder*” and “*Diktaturkinder*,” respectively, serve as labels to place the writers in a period of shared, formative experience. In that sense, these labels not only describe but also produce a particular generational constellation. I use these specific terms in order to emphasize how the experience of each generation is affected by a particular historical event and its aftermath that took place during the formative period of childhood and youth. These respective experiences and their aftermath shape important processes of generational identification, which, in turn, impact how each generation responds to the collapse of the GDR. For my examination of generation in the first and second chapters, however, also I use descriptive terms already established in East German scholarship, such as critical writers/members of the East German intelligentsia (first generation) and *Hineingeborene* (second generation).

demonstrates that these generational responses to the loss of 1989 are indeed constructing history and memory.<sup>45</sup> In this way, these divergent Eastern German memory narratives engage in a dialogue with loss, allowing for a nuanced approach to the GDR past and a better understanding of an Eastern identity evolving in unified Germany that goes beyond the normalizing focus on either Western victory or *Ostalgie*.<sup>46</sup> Looking at textual responses to loss uncovers an assertion of flexible notions of a sense of an Eastern identity that cannot merely be reduced to *Ostalgie* and, therefore, gives insight into the complexity of East German identity constructions in post-unification Germany. Textual productions by former East Germans after 1989 productively explore feelings of loss without relying on the reductive labeling of East German memory as merely *Ostalgie*—which, according to anthropologist Dominic Boyer, is not a symptom of East German nostalgia but rather a symptom of a West German need for a utopia:

I [Boyer] mean *utopia* in the sense that it is a naturalizing fantasy that creates an *irrealis* space, literally a “no place,” in which East Germans’ neurotic entanglement with authoritarian pastness allows those Germans gendered western to claim a future free from the burden of history. The very powerful and diverse *Ostalgie* industry of unified Germany reflects the desire of its West German owners and operators to achieve an unburdened future via the repetitive signaling of the past-obsession of East Germans.<sup>47</sup>

My examination of oppositional discourse considers *Ostalgie* a normalizing discourse that these narratives challenge. The contested notion of *Ostalgie* mirrors this divergent memory of the GDR past. In its simple understanding, *Ostalgie* is considered as “nostalgia for the East” (nostalgia for the GDR past) which has been witnessed in recent years in the “[. . .] revival, reproduction, and commercialization of GDR products as well as the ‘museumification’ of GDR

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<sup>45</sup> Weigel, 265.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Fox discusses a paradigm shift in GDR literary studies after 1989 and argues for such a nuanced approach to (re)reading literature of the GDR that does not follow the typical binary approach of GDR writers either composing state literature or oppositional works. Instead, he argues after 1989, the writers and their works must be examined through “more differentiated models of ideological analysis” and not Cold War categories of East/West, dissident/non-dissident, and left/right, for example (292). See Thomas C. Fox, “Germanistik and GDR Studies: (Re)Reading a Censored Literature,” *Monatshefte* 85, no.3 (Fall 1993): 284-94.

<sup>47</sup> Dominic Boyer, “*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” *Public Culture* 18, no.2 (Spring 2006): 363.

everyday life.”<sup>48</sup> However, as Dominic Boyer suggests, *Ostalgie* is more a sign of West German utopian longing than of an East German nostalgia for the past. According to Boyer, *Ostalgie* provides a place for West Germans to “claim a future free from the burden of history.”<sup>49</sup> In this manner, *Ostalgie* shows a longing for some simplistic notion of the past devoid of history—a way to free themselves [Western Germans] from complexity and nuances of history. Therefore, these alternative textual responses offered in this dissertation help shape new Eastern German histories of the GDR and of unification, a construction of an East German social and cultural past that has been overlooked in post-1989 media discourse, which has privileged a predominantly Western German historical memory narrative.<sup>50</sup> These counter-discourses provide a language in which an alternative GDR past can be considered (and remembered).

### **Historical Moment of Loss—1989**

As the changes in 1989 occurred very rapidly, many experiencing these events were left in a state of numbness at times, often, in disbelief of what was happening. In her book *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany*, Julia Hell describes the historical moment of 1989 as one of non-comprehension. Although Hell does not equate the moment of 1989 to the traumatic effects of 1945, she does highlight the similarities of the social situations after each historical event in terms of loss: “In certain respects, the historical moment of 1989 resembled the situation after 1945, when Germans experienced the utter destruction of Nazi Germany and its social disorganization as a loss of social structures and

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<sup>48</sup> See Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” 193.

<sup>49</sup> Boyer, 363.

<sup>50</sup> For more discussion on West German dominance after 1989 in the historicization of the GDR, see for example, Daniela Dahn, *Wehe dem Sieger! Ohne Osten kein Westen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2011). Dahn calls into question the blanket labeling of the GDR as a totalitarian state—as the second German dictatorship. In this ordering of the GDR as such, Dahn argues that the reappraisal of the past must be considered in the outcomes of the legal proceedings after each dictatorship, which shows in the end that the GDR cannot be reduced to the same historical categorization as the Third Reich (164). According to Dahn, doing so would be a belittlement of the atrocities of National Socialism (170).

social identity.”<sup>51</sup> After the collapse of the GDR in 1989, a “‘hole’ in the social-symbolic order” was created allowing new symbolic structures of the West to enter.<sup>52</sup> The social structures and social identity of the GDR were dismantled after unification. While scholars Julia Hell and Anke Pinkert consider the historical moment of 1989 and its traumatic “effect of noncomprehension,” the authors are careful to note that the two regimes of Nazi Germany and the GDR should not be equated as they often are in totalitarian discourse.<sup>53</sup> However, as Pinkert argues, the two historical moments of 1945 and 1989 do share an “absence of a robust critical public sphere, in which complex and conflicting feelings of loss related to a delegitimized and ultimately undesirable state could be addressed without lapsing into regressive forms of nostalgia or modes of shaming.”<sup>54</sup> After 1989 many East Germans have lost the notion of a presumably shared and valued historical past. A sense of public shaming and devaluation fostered in the immediate post-1989 years and still reverberating today more than twenty years later (as observed in the controversies surrounding Christa Wolf’s memorial service in 2011) has produced a counter-response that has turned to remembrances of a vanished past and reappropriations of a once strong, collective identity.<sup>55</sup> This counter-response manifests in an overall later turn to post-

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<sup>51</sup> See Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 253.

<sup>52</sup> Hell, 253.

<sup>53</sup> My approach to reading loss in these texts follows Anke Pinkert’s reading of post-1945 cinema in East Germany in her book *Film and Memory in East Germany*. Pinkert suggests examining post war cinema through “historically more mutable and affectively charged modes of loss” instead of using a discourse of trauma exclusively, as trauma discourse involves one of a “universalizing implication of victimization” and limits analysis to psychological discourse only (8). Pinkert’s approach allows for an examination of German loss after WWII without equating the experience of German victimization to that of the Jewish experience, and this is the perspective (“historically more mutable and affectively charged modes of loss”) from which I examine loss in post-1989 Eastern German works. See Anke Pinkert, *Film and Memory in East Germany* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 6-9. Pinkert takes the term “effect of non-comprehension” from Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies*, 253.

<sup>54</sup> Pinkert, 16-17.

<sup>55</sup> After 1990, former writers of the GDR who were once heralded by the West as oppositional voices writing within the oppressive socialist state were revealed to have been Stasi informants (Sascha Anderson, Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller) and, thus, experienced such public shaming. These authors once considered oppositional voices to the state were then reclassified as state voices placing them into a new paradigm for literary evaluation of their works (Fox)—that negated everything they wrote during the GDR by evaluating their works strictly on political criteria (as state conformists) instead of basing literary criticism of their works on aesthetic criteria. The controversy over Christa Wolf’s *Was bleibt* started the *Literaturstreit* of 1990, but as William Collins Donahue argues, Wolf’s involvement as

*Ostalgie* as uncovered in the responses by the third generation. Following 1989, the literary and cultural sphere, at least to a certain degree, became a supplementary public sphere in which the discontinuity of socialist East Germany was negotiated and allows an imaginary where a new post-unification Eastern German identity could be constructed without nostalgic recollections of the GDR past reduced to mere *Ostalgie*.

In reading Eastern German literature after 1989 as a response to the disappearance of the GDR and as an engagement with loss, one must first understand the concept of the imagined “center” and how this “center” relates to constructions of an Eastern German identity of loss. In *Post-Fascist Fantasies*, Julia Hell applies Claude Lefort’s “fantasy of social homogeneity” as a way “to understand totalitarian mass politics as a highly modern form of symbolic politics, relying on elaborate strategies to make the fantasy of the social cohere around the figure of the leader.”<sup>56</sup> Although the post-unification texts do not fantasize about a socialist “center” revolving around a leader, they do reveal nostalgic imaginaries of a past identity and valued continuity, associated with the socialist society (social security, employment, home, intimacy) and perceived to be absent in democratic post-1989 Germany. Such Eastern German engagement with the past

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an IM (Informeller Mitarbeiter) was not the cause for this conflict, but instead the way that the two divided nations dealt with the GDR past after 1989 was the cause. Both nations were still trapped in the political binaries of the Cold War and, thus, only viewed works through an ideological lens and not through one of aesthetics. And in reading works through an ideological lens, the writer was either a state dissident or a state author. See Fox, “Germanistik and GDR Studies: (Re)Reading a Censored Literature” and William Collins Donahue, “‘Normal’ as ‘Apolitical’: Uwe Timm’s *Rot* and Thomas Brussig’s *Leben bis Männer*,” in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 181-94. Additionally a sense of devaluation was felt by ordinary people of the GDR (not members of the literary intelligentsia) who were replaced in their jobs by West Germans after the *Wende*. See Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives*, 459. Fulbrook also quotes former East German, Nina Benedict, who in 1990 wrote about her experience of devaluation. See Nina Benedict, *Böse Briefe über Deutschland*, letter of 22 November 1990 (Schkeuditz: GNN-Verlag, 1993), 58. For more on the controversies surrounding Wolf’s memorial service, see for example, Arno Wiedmann, “Nimm alles nicht so schwer,” *Berliner Zeitung* (online), December 14, 2011, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/beerdigung-von-christa-wolf-nimm-alles-nicht-so-schwer-10809150.11303988.html> (accessed May 17, 2012) and Irina Liebmann, “Ein hundertjähriger Krieg,” *Berliner Zeitung* (online), December 16, 2011, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/tiefe-graben-ein-hundertjaehriger-krieg.10809150.11314154.html> (accessed May 17, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies*, 6-7. Claude Lefort writes that in totalitarianism, the society is uniform and that in such a homogenous society the people are also seen to be in the image of the leader’s body. This is the notion of the “People as One” (297). Lefort suggests this view of the socialist state as a unified society, i.e., the people as being one and in the image of the state leader, a fantasy of social homogeneity.



reflects a nuanced historicization of the GDR past (Konrad Jarausch, Jürgen Kocka) that considers the heterogeneous nature of society, both in the GDR and in unified Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Reflecting this heterogeneity, the generational responses to the GDR past range from ones that melancholically and nostalgically reflect upon the “failed socialist experiment” to ones that critically remember an oppressive, totalitarian society to others that demonstrate the grey areas characteristic of a dictatorship, as Jarausch suggests—all providing a more complex picture of the East than what is present in mainstream discourse.

Following 1989, the symbolic center of the GDR, which revolved around the notion of the “people as one” and around “a[n imaginary] conception of society as essentially homogeneous and unified,” was left vacant—as East Germany quickly became part of a new unified Germany.<sup>58</sup> In 2006, the *Palast der Republik*, the parliamentary seat of the GDR and, thus, symbol of the GDR past, was, after years of debate, torn down and erased from the city landscape of Berlin and even more importantly from the public memory of unified Germany.<sup>59</sup> The demolition of this structure illustrates this symbolic vacancy of things “Eastern,” as even

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<sup>57</sup> See Konrad Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR,” in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 3-16. Jarausch discusses the problem of defining the GDR simply either as a totalitarian society which portrays GDR society as homogeneous (Meuschel) or as a positivistic failed socialist experiment which results in nostalgic remembrances. Instead he suggests recovering “the various shades of grey, characteristic even of life under a dictatorship” (5). He argues for looking at totalitarian aspects but also at the contradictions within such a society—characteristic of the heterogeneous nature of society. One such nuanced conceptualization of the GDR in the volume is from Jürgen Kocka, who revisits and defends his earlier assertion from 1993 that the GDR was a modern dictatorship. In his classification of the GDR as a modern dictatorship, he steers away from those who categorize the GDR as a totalitarian dictatorship such as the Stalinist USSR or National Socialist Germany, where there was excessive inhumanity and extreme terrorization of its citizens. While the GDR was different from such terror regimes it was still very different from liberal democracies through its “systematic violation of human rights and citizens’ rights, the open or thinly veiled rule of a single party with power restricted to a narrow circle of leaders as well as the hegemonic claims of an institutionalized society”—activities similar to the above regimes (18). In explaining why the GDR was a modern dictatorship, Kocka lists modernizing elements of the GDR in the social, economic, and cultural spheres, such as the advanced GDR social welfare system with no unemployment, free childcare, and family planning. See Jürgen Kocka, “The GDR. A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship,” in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 17-26.

<sup>58</sup> Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies*, 27. Hell is referring to 1946, but her notions apply also to 1989.

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion on the symbolism of choosing to reconstruct a building of the German past (Hohenzollern Stadtschloss) in the space where the Palast der Republik stood instead of creating a new structure that would look towards a unified German future, see Christoph Seils, “Stopt das Stadtschloss!” *Die Zeit Online*, November 28, 2008, <http://pdf.zeit.de/online/2008/49/wiederaufbau-stadtschloss-berlin.pdf> (accessed August 6, 2012).

architectural structures have been removed by a new democratic society based on individualism and fragmentation, the antithesis to the conceptualization of a more uniform socialist society that was represented in the *Palast der Republik*.<sup>60</sup> To supplement this absence, post-unification writers of the former East Germany engage in various imaginings of this center and continue a dialogue of loss in the present with the remnants of the past. Some continue to focus on, and defend, the imaginary utopian GDR to reconstitute this central ideal (Wolf). Some recreate a memory of the resistance to the controlling State “core” in their reflections on the GDR past and on unified Germany (Rathenow and Brussig in their narrative of ambivalence). Some neither celebrate nor challenge the imagined lost center, as illustrated by writers in the third generation (Hensel, Hein), whose works revolve around reappropriation of “Easternness” rather than around the lost “center” itself. The representative text of the third generational cohort cluster (Hünniger) and the museal exhibits at the GDR museum in Berlin engage with the “center” in their project of normalizing the GDR past—neither exclusively resisting nor reappropriating the past, but instead showing indifference (Hünniger) or a desire to commercialize the past (GDR museum in Berlin).

Using a psychologically inflected lens, this dissertation reads the traces of loss found in the post-1989 literary discourses produced by former East Germans with the aim of uncovering the effects of the collapse of the GDR upon cultural constructions of the past and present in unified Germany. Paying particular attention to psychological modes of remembering, e.g. nostalgia, melancholia, mourning, displacement, and ambivalence, I provide insights into discussions of loss and reappropriation generated after 1989 by former East German writers, which ultimately move beyond the language of trauma in response to the collapse of socialism. Although this study only analyzes Eastern German literary productions and museal constructions,

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<sup>60</sup> For a discussion of the role of ruins in the present, see Julia Hell and Andreas Schönle, eds., *Ruins of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). In the introduction to the edited volume, Hell and Schönle discuss the role that ruins play in preserving (and constructing) a culture’s historical continuity (5-6) as well as in “call[ing] into question the legitimacy of the social order” (8).

it provides insights into the development of culture in unified, post-1989 Germany and into questions of where culturally mutable notions of East German identity fit into the processes by which a collective sense of German identity is shaped in the post-unification period.

### **Conflicting Cultural/Historical Narratives (GDR and FRG)**

The transition to the new Germany has been complicated owing to the two different historical narratives of the GDR and FRG. In the years immediately following unification, American and German scholars discussed the future of German unification, offering various perspectives regarding its realization.<sup>61</sup> Some suggested that with a more integrated and multicultural Germany, the differences between East and West would slowly fade away, aiding in the process of unifying Germany.<sup>62</sup> Now twenty years later German media continue to engage in public evaluation of the unification process, revealing that German unification may not have been as easily achieved as once was believed, even though many of these suggestions for successful unification have come into effect. Germany has become a normalized country in the sense of Helmut Kohl's definition of political normality—i.e., not sticking out or being singular.<sup>63</sup> However, as the last chapter of this dissertation will indicate the project of normalizing the GDR past is also a complicated matter. Although Germany has achieved normality within the domestic and international political spheres, it has not achieved normality with regards to its past. In the sphere of foreign policy, Germany does not “stick out” from other Western countries such as America, France, or Great Britain as it has participated in international military missions such

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<sup>61</sup> See for example, the collection of essays in Friederike Eigler and Peter C. Pfeiffer, eds., *Cultural Transformations in the New Germany: American and German Perspectives* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993).

<sup>62</sup> See Joyce Mushaben, “Citizenship as Process: German Identity in an Age of Reconstruction,” in *Cultural Transformations in the New Germany: American and German Perspectives*, ed. Friederike Eigler and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993), 42-63.

<sup>63</sup> In his vision of Germany shortly after unification, Helmut Kohl responded with: “[. . .] things will normalize. That's the most important thing for us, that we become a wholly normal country, not 'singularized' in any question [. . .] that we simply don't stick out [. . .].” See Serge Schmemmann, “Kohl, the Man for the German Moment,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 1990.

as the ones in Kosovo and in Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup> Since the 1990s Germany has served in a leadership role in the EU. Domestically, Germany is no longer a divided nation but now a united nation with economic problems similar to other Western powers with social market economies. However, in its relationship to its past, Germany is singular with regards to other countries as the passage from Jana Hensel, quoted earlier, suggests. Literary representations and media discourse reveal that the desired German unification has not been fully achieved. (Germany is still divided, even if only culturally and “in the heads” of Germans.) A mutually respectful, reciprocal integration of the two different pasts, of the GDR and the FRG, has not been realized. Instead, we find conflicting cultural constructions in the various representations of the GDR past, as seen in the manufactured *Ostalgie* which conflicts with and also capitalizes on East Germans’ memory of their past.

During the years of German separation from 1945-89, the two nations of the FRG and the GDR established two separate cultural and historical narratives to deal with the Nazi past.<sup>65</sup> East Germany dealt with the past by assigning responsibility to West Germans—equating the West (capitalism) to fascism. The anti-fascist foundational narrative of the GDR focused on East Germans as inheritors of the communist resistance to fascist Germany (the West).<sup>66</sup> In contrast, West Germans assigned guilt both to themselves (the second post-war generation in West

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<sup>64</sup> Here, I am using Brockmann’s notions of German normalization in the domestic and international spheres and Germany’s relation to its past. See Stephen Brockmann, “‘Normalization’: Has Helmut Kohl’s Vision Been Realized?” in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 17-30.

<sup>65</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch, “The Presence of the Past,” *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 25-60. Jarausch writes: “Bent on proving that it was the better anti-fascist Germany, the GDR had represented itself as the fulfillment of the dreams of the Communist resistance, widespread in working-class circles. Interested in the continuity of national traditions, the FRG had instead celebrated the officers, bureaucrats, and trade union leaders who tried to assassinate Hitler in July 1944” (49). See also Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> See for example, Georgi Verbeek, “Confronting the Nazi Experience in the GDR,” in *Germany after Unification: Coming to Terms with the Recent Past*, ed. Gert-Joachim Glaeßner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 67-86, and J.H. Banks, “Political Anti-Fascism in the German Democratic Republic,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no.2 (April 1997): 207-17.

Germany, the 68ers, which confronted the German Nazi past of the parents) and to the East (the “other”).<sup>67</sup> During this time, cultural and political discourses in both countries relied on the “other” German nation upon which to transfer any feelings of guilt, thus forming dichotomous FRG and GDR continuities. Unification delegitimized the historical and cultural continuity of the GDR. As “losers” in the ideological war between socialism and capitalism, the GDR national narrative was erased from the post-unification master narrative or, better, repurposed as dictatorial deviation, affirming the continuity of a West German “national narrative of democratic victory.” Binary simplifications of the GDR as totalitarian and the FRG as democratic often equate the GDR to the Third Reich, supporting a West German narrative after 1989 in public discourse.<sup>68</sup> In these generational dialogues with loss, which counter mere *Ostalgic* modes and provide new “no places” (Boyer) in which to engage with the GDR authoritarian past on Eastern German terms, a differentiated memory of the East German past is possible—a memory that can counter the simplistic binaries of totalitarian/democratic, dissident/non-dissident, and so forth.

## Layout of Dissertation

For my examination of generational approaches to loss after 1989 by former East German writers, I have chosen a case study approach to investigate trends. By taking each author individually to analyze the process of dealing with loss in their works and comparing these

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<sup>67</sup> See Boyer, “Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” 368-69.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR 1945-1989* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992) and “Überlegungen zu einer Herrschafts- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 5-14. Meuschel’s notions on the GDR (following totalitarian theories), do not leave room for exploring the forms of resistance within the GDR society, i.e., for the complexity of GDR social reality. For a discussion of the complexity of GDR social reality which argues for a nuanced relationship between politics in the GDR (i.e., the level of the state) and the culture of everyday (i.e., the agency of the ordinary individual in influencing state policy), see for example, Katherine Helena Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008). For a discussion of political resistance within the GDR in the 1980s, see for example, Mary Fulbrook, “Popular Discontent and Political Activism in the GDR,” *Contemporary European History* 2, no.3 (November 1993): 265-82. Mary Fulbrook suggests the need to reconsider the view of the East German subject as the obedient subject and of the absence of resistance in the GDR: “The extent of disobedience, and of political expressions of discontent, is far greater than previously imagined” (265).

responses to other generational approaches, this dissertation provides new insights into post-GDR memory studies. In this examination, I consulted primary works, newspaper articles, interviews and secondary literature on these post-unification works by former East Germans and uncovered certain patterns in response to loss that support an overall trend in oppositional discourse.

Drawing on Daphne Berdahl's approach to understanding *Ostalgie* as a positivistic posturing to negotiate a GDR historical memory, I explore generational texts to expose "oppositional modes of memory" with regard to the absence of the GDR.<sup>69</sup> I have organized this dissertation on post-GDR memory into four chapters in order to examine generally such oppositional modes of memory and identity discourse of former East Germans after 1990. The responses of the first, second, and third generations share an overall resistance to hegemonic discourses of the GDR past, however, the cohort cluster of the third generation reveals one of indifference.

In chapter 1, I examine texts of the first generation, which reveals an age-group (social generation) transitioning to a new unified Germany, in which personal pasts of critical dissidence as well as of an idealized utopian vision have been negated in public discourse. Looking at six post-1989 textual productions of Christa Wolf as a case study for this generational response ("Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992" [1994], "Begegnungen Third Street" [1995], *Medea* [1996], *Leibhaftig* [2002], *nuancen von grün* [2002], and *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* [2010]), the first chapter shows the struggle by the first generation to let go (mourn) the connection to a utopian socialism. Although Wolf's autobiographical texts treat more the process of transitioning to the new Germany, her questions of a West German negation of the GDR past follows the idea of marginalized literature that reconceptualizes the way in which "history and memory are constructed."<sup>70</sup> By reading her post-unification works through

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<sup>69</sup> Berdahl, "'(N)Ostalgie' for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things," 192-211.

<sup>70</sup> Berdahl, 205-06.

the lens of melancholic mourning, readers can trace the process of transitioning and of letting go of the past for this first generation.

Chapter 2 focuses on the textual responses of the second generation that, in contrast, use the mode of ambivalence as a means to negotiate historical memory by employing strategies of repetition or re-presentation. Following Berdahl's notion of a productive *Ostalgie* that understands "historical memory as an ongoing process of understanding, negotiation, and contestation," the second chapter traces discourses of loss in the post-unification textual and visual productions of Lutz Rathenow and Thomas Brussig to uncover an overall narrative of ambivalence towards unification and the GDR past.<sup>71</sup> Similar to the melancholic mourning of the first generation, the discourse of ambivalence also indicates a duality in response to loss, which allows for critical and contemplative reflections on the past as well as on the present.

Rathenow's texts (*Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall* [2005]; *Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten* [2006]; and *Der Liebe Wegen* [2009]) show ambivalence towards the present, maintaining the position of the dissident who critiques societal ills.<sup>72</sup> Brussig's texts (*Leben bis Männer* [2001] and *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* [2007]) reveal ambivalence towards the GDR past, providing a more nuanced picture of the past than his earlier post-unification texts. In this narrative of ambivalence, the texts offer counter-discursive responses to the hegemonic memory narrative.

The third chapter explores the memory work of the third generation and presents a response of reappropriation towards the past. Using the form of personal memoir, the early texts (Hensel's *Zonenkinder* [2002] and Hein's *Mein erstes T-Shirt* [2001]) reflect questions of identity and of belonging in unified Germany, while later works (Hensel's *Achtung Zone* [2009])

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<sup>71</sup> Berdahl, 205.

<sup>72</sup> See David Cooper, *Wer ist Dissident* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1978), 5. South African psychiatrist, David Cooper, writes that it is the role of intellectuals, "wo immer sie sich befinden mögen, die Dissidenz zum Ausdruck zu bringen, [. . .]."

and Hein's *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* [2009] and *Wurst und Wahn* [2011]) reveal new negotiations of a post-unification identity—a reappropriation of a sense of Eastern identity. These later narratives work as counter discourses to the hegemonic discourse in German media, which often portrays the East negatively. In this chapter, I show how third generation narratives contest the past by rewriting the East German experience, particularly in regard to the West German narrative constructed after unification. The new GDR history does not merely reflect positively on the past; it actively reappropriates “Easternness” in a directly contentious response to a devalued experience in contemporary Germany. Nostalgia is viewed, in this manner, as a productive mode for East Germans to negotiate a GDR historical memory.

In the fourth chapter, I examine post-GDR memory discourses of nostalgia/anti-nostalgia in order to evaluate the national project of normalizing the GDR past. Museums and literature both carve out a space of differentiation for a post-unification sense of an Eastern identity and, thereby, contribute to a productive process of normalization. Hünninger's text (*Das Paradies: Meine Jugend nach der Mauer* [2011]), which serves to illumine this emerging generation of the “*Diktaturkinder*,” shows a new relationship of indifference (anti-nostalgia) to the remains of the GDR past—to those stranded objects. In this manner, her book aligns with the project of normalization. In contrast, the GDR museum capitalizes on this connection to remains (consumer-*Ostalgie*).

While the first three generational responses indicate an overall counter-discursive approach to the hegemonic memory narrative, the last response of anti-nostalgia by a newly emerging fourth generation, demonstrates an ambivalent relationship of indifference toward the GDR past. This anti-nostalgic response indicates a turn in post-GDR memory. For the earlier generational responses of melancholic mourning and ambivalence, age and historical distance seem to be key to successful reconceptualization of the past and reinterpretation of the present—



allowing for final release of attachment (first generation) and for critical reflection (second generation). The first two generational responses use melancholia and ambivalence as productive modes to engage with the past. The last two responses of reappropriation (third generation) and anti-nostalgia (emerging fourth generation) indicate a re-focus of attachment onto the present and onto questions of identity in unified Germany. My observations on this emerging fourth generation open up further avenues for research in the complicated transition process following the political unification of East and West.

## Chapter 1

### First Generation (*Kriegskinder*): Discourse of Melancholic Mourning

Von niemandem werde ich mehr um Rat gefragt, meine Erfahrungen, mein Wissen und meine Kenntnisse zählen—wie bei so vielen—auch bei mir nicht mehr!  
Nina Benedict, *Böse Briefe über Deutschland*<sup>73</sup>

The overcoat of Dr. Freud, fiel mir ein. Ich wünschte, er könnte mich schützen. Im Gegenteil, sagte Sally. Er ist doch dazu da, dir deinen Selbstschutz wegzuziehen.  
Christa Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 2010<sup>74</sup>

These words from Nina Benedict, an Eastern German contemporary of Wolf, underscore this first generation's response of loss to the GDR, i.e., to both the loss of the socialist state itself and to the loss of a personal identity imagined within the parameters of the vanished society.<sup>75</sup> The telling words from Wolf's protagonist in *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* indicate the process this generation must undertake to mourn and work through this loss—i.e., they must confront the object of desire and the melancholic connection to it (necessary steps in the process of transitioning to a new Germany). In this chapter, I use the modes of mourning and melancholia in the Freudian sense.<sup>76</sup> According to Freud, mourning is “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as

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<sup>73</sup> Nina Benedict, *Böse Briefe über Deutschland*, “Ich über mich...Dresden am 30.11.90” (Schkeuditz: GNN Verlag, 1993), 62. Benedict worked for thirty years in the GDR as an employee of the Tax office (*Finanzamtmitarbeiterin*).

<sup>74</sup> Christa Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 203.

<sup>75</sup> As outlined in the introduction, the first generation of former East Germans is made up of those writers of the GDR who supported the foundational narrative of antifascism and who shared the historical experience of the Third Reich, WWII, and the postwar period of *Aufbau* in the GDR. According to Wolfgang Emmerich, this first GDR generation consists of the following: Those born from around the turn of the twentieth century (Brecht, Seghers); those born before the twenties (Hermlin); those born in the twenties (Fühmann, Wolf); those born after the thirties until 1950 (Kunze). See Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), 162, 403-09. For this chapter, the term first generation will refer specifically to the critical writers of the GDR often referred to as the East German literary intelligentsia—i.e., those writers who participated in the literary legitimization of the GDR foundational narrative of antifascism after 1949, such as Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, Erwin Strittmatter, but who experienced the Third Reich as young men and women or as children and who, thus, were often regarded as “naiv Begeisterte oder als Mitläufer” with the Nazi system. See also Wolfgang Emmerich, “Status Melancholicus. Zur Transformation der Utopie in vier Jahrzehnten,” *Die andere deutsche Literatur: Aufsätze zur Literatur aus der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 177.

<sup>76</sup> For a discussion of the mode of melancholia for this generation, see Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*.

fatherland, liberty, and ideal, and so on.”<sup>77</sup> Instead of grieving the lost object (i.e., releasing attachment), melancholic individuals do not release their attachment to the lost object. In the years immediately following unification, many East Germans who were supporters of the SED state, worked in state offices, or held positions at universities were replaced. In essence, a past GDR identity was erased.<sup>78</sup> This exchange of elites not only left many former East Germans unemployed but also forced them to be retrained in other skills, often learning jobs that were downgrades from positions held in the GDR.<sup>79</sup> Benedict’s lamentation of her loss of identity and self-worth after 1990, which she experienced as a now *former* Tax Office employee, stands as emblematic for this generational narrative of melancholic mourning, which allows for new engagements with the GDR past—not possible in the mode of mourning by itself. Through melancholic engagements with loss, new insights into the past are imaginable.

This chapter examines six of Wolf’s literary texts during the twenty years after unification (“Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992“ [1994], “Begegnungen Third Street” [1995], *Medea* [1996], *Leibhaftig* [2002], *nuancen von grün* [2002], and *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* [2010]) through the lens of psychoanalysis to gain a greater understanding of the struggle by this generation to let go of the over forty-year connection to a utopian socialism as well as to an identity as a critical voice. Using the literary productions of Wolf after 1989 as a case study representative for this first generation, I investigate her texts for insights into how writers who advocated the third-path between socialism and capitalism as an alternative to unification reacted to the loss in 1989 and to the subsequent public negation of a discredited

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<sup>77</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia (1917),” *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 164.

<sup>78</sup> For a discussion of the exchange of elites in East Germany as a form of colonization, see Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), 1-26. For an account of professionals losing their positions after 1990 due to political activities and cooperation with the *Stasi* during the GDR, see also Joachim Nawrocki, “Der Professor und die Stasi,” *Die Zeit Online*, March 14, 1997, [http://www.zeit.de/1997/12/Der\\_Professor\\_und\\_die\\_Stasi/seite-1](http://www.zeit.de/1997/12/Der_Professor_und_die_Stasi/seite-1) (accessed December 10, 2012).

<sup>79</sup> For more on unemployment in the former East Germany after 1990, see for example, Dagmar Sakowsky, “Arbeitslosigkeit im vereinten Deutschland,” *Deutschland Archiv* 27 (February 1994): 118-29.

literary past. According to Konrad Jarausch, through their opposition to unification, East German intellectuals “suffered a disastrous loss of authority and public esteem. [. . .] critical voices that had brought hundreds of thousands out into the streets in October 1989 were virtually ignored a year later.”<sup>80</sup> By reading Wolf’s works through the lens of melancholic mourning, her texts allow for a reconceptualization of the way “history and memory are constructed and deployed.”<sup>81</sup> As a creative and productive process, melancholia “generates sites for memory and history, for the rewriting of the past as well as the reimagining of the future.”<sup>82</sup> Wolf’s narratives revolve around protagonists who employ various strategies to maneuver through and negotiate loss after 1989, exhibiting an overall transition from melancholia to mourning (letting go) of the idealized utopian project of socialism.<sup>83</sup> In this reflective mode of melancholic mourning, these texts insert into the public memory narrative the difficulties of transition that this first generation must traverse—working, at the same time, against such reflections that reduce an engagement with the GDR past to mere *Ostalgie*. I specifically look at displacement, nostalgia, and melancholia as strategies and modes uncovered in the process of mourning a lost imagined socialist past, paying also close attention to modes of self-reflection that were hindered by the public *Literaturstreit* in the immediate years after unification.<sup>84</sup>

Regarding the melancholic, Freud writes that the individual shows “[. . .] a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and

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<sup>80</sup> Konrad Jarausch, “The Double Disappointment: Revolution, Unification, and German Intellectuals,” *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*, ed. Michael Geyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 286.

<sup>81</sup> Berdahl, “(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 205.

<sup>82</sup> David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>83</sup> Anke Pinkert’s concept of the pleasure of fear in Christa Wolf’s *Kindheitsmuster* inform my approach to melancholia in Christa Wolf. See Anke Pinkert, “Pleasures of Fear: Antifascist Myth, Holocaust, and Soft Dissidence in Christa Wolf’s ‘Kindheitsmuster,’” *The German Quarterly* 76, no.1 (Winter 2003): 25-37.

<sup>84</sup> For more on Wolf’s reaction to the public debate during this time, see for example, Thomas Anz, ed., “*Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf*,” *Der Literaturstreit im vereinigten Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1995), 237-40.

culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” or an overall fall in self-esteem.<sup>85</sup> Wolf’s early texts after 1994 (“Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992” [1994], “Begegnungen Third Street” [1995]) exhibit positive strategies of displacement in an attempt to cope with a melancholic response to loss and grief after the public *Literaturstreit* in 1990 negated the writer’s sense of identity as a legitimate East German dissident intellectual. This response of loss gains an added dimension when one considers Andreas Huyssen’s suggestion that the attacks on Christa Wolf in the media developed into a second historians’ debate as such, which in its claim of the failure of intellectuals also at the same time questioned the legitimacy of the GDR cultural past: “But at issue again is a selective and self-serving apportioning of guilt, as well as the erasure of the past, this time that of the predominant culture of the two German states from 1949 to the present. As one of Wolf’s critics [Ulrich Greiner] put it: ‘This is no academic question. He who determines what was also determines what will be.’”<sup>86</sup>

In *Medea* (1996), Wolf’s work written upon returning from her stay in the US from 1992-93 (her time of self-imposed exile and displacement), we uncover both a productive nostalgic mode of remembering the past as well as a continued employment of displacement showing the continued attachment to the GDR past by this generation. Her later work, *Leibhaftig* (2002), exhibits a regression into modes of melancholia, her protagonist embodying the difficulty this generation has in placing attention onto a new object and showing that this cathexis from the imagined socialist past can only be completed through an outside intervention at that point. In *nuancen von grün* (2002) the protagonist reveals at first a melancholic disposition to the past but

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<sup>85</sup> Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia (1917),” 165.

<sup>86</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “After the Wall,” *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 51. Huyssen is citing Ulrich Greiner, “Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik,” *Die Zeit* 45, November 2, 1990. For more on the *Literaturstreit*, see Huyssen, 37-66. What started out as a critique by two editors with *FAZ* (Frank Schirrmacher) and *Die Zeit* (Greiner) about Wolf’s *Was bleibt* turned into a public discussion with writers, who also felt implicated in the attacks by these editors, such as Heiner Müller, Stefan Heym, and Volker Braun coming to Wolf’s defense. The focus of the attack on Wolf was regarding the timing of the book’s publication and her role as state writer in the GDR, but the greater debate focused on the role of aesthetics and politics (ideology) in literature. (This will be discussed below in the chapter)

then contemplates an escape into nature as a way to ameliorate grief, even excising feelings of pain and loss, thus, finding a way to release and mourn the past. Wolf's final work, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010), exhibits a more complete process of mourning—the protagonist has let go of the desire to desire and shows a recuperative mode of remembering the past which recognizes the individual need to examine and accept the guilt and pain associated with actions or inactions taken during the GDR against real-existing socialism. The individual no longer needs nature as a space for escape, but finds this space for self-reflection in the self. While doctors in *Leibhaftig* had to perform the cure to her illness by excising the wound, the protagonist in *Stadt der Engel* lets go of the troubling attachment herself, owing to the outlook on life that age affords. This last text by Wolf emphasizes the need to release the past, as the conversation between the protagonist and her accompanying angel Angelina reveals: “Müßte ich jetzt nicht eine große Schleife fliegen? sagte ich. Zurück auf Anfang? Mach doch, sagte sie [Angelina] ungerührt. Und Jahre Arbeit? Einfach wegwerfen? Warum nicht?”<sup>87</sup> Only age keeps the protagonist from starting a new path and from focusing on something completely new and different. But the new perspective on life that age and historical distance provide allows her to let go of obsessing over the past and live in the present.

Exploring feelings of devaluation experienced by former Eastern Germans whose biographies and ideological foundations were negated after unification, anthropologist Dominic Boyer asserts that a hegemonic view of the GDR past (i.e., the West German view of the Cold War) dominates the memory narrative of the GDR after 1989.<sup>88</sup> He bases this assertion on the monopoly control of German mass media by West Germans, which has led to the continued portrayal of “eastern Germany as ‘the other Germany’ within, depicting East Germans in

<sup>87</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 414.

<sup>88</sup> See for example, Dominic Boyer, “Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” *Public Culture* 18, no.2 (Spring 2006): 361-81. Mary Fulbrook also discusses feelings of devaluation by Eastern Germans after 1990. See Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 459.

variously subtle and overt ways as culturally ‘more German Germans’ with inclinations toward xenophobic intolerance and authoritarian obedience.’<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Daphne Berdahl’s study of the question of identity in an East German border town also uncovered Eastern German experiences of devaluation by the West following unification. More important than these feelings of devaluation, however, was a shared sense of loss of their East German identity.<sup>90</sup> One such loss experienced was that of a sense of Eastern identity borne out of a shift from the frequent face to face interaction with neighbors in an exchange-economy (GDR), which had been the means by which business had been conducted for so many years—to a new political and economic system that they now had to learn to negotiate. In such an exchange economy, each neighbor helped the other neighbor in an area of expertise, unlike in the new system.

These experiences of devaluation and personal negation highlight this first generation’s relationship to the GDR past in the new unified Germany after 1989—one of loss and transition. As with many of this generation, Wolf’s biography, laden with abrupt life changes and ensuing losses, greatly influenced her commitment to the project of socialism.<sup>91</sup> Wolf’s own personal experience of fascist Germany helped her refine her understanding of the world and of socialism after 1945 as the hopeful counterpoint to the shameful fascist German past. In the first years after World War II, East German intellectuals, returning exiles such as Anna Seghers, Bertolt Brecht, Johannes R. Becher, and Arnold Zweig, participated in laying the foundation for the “other Germany”—that Germany which, unlike West Germany, presumably did not have a fascist

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<sup>89</sup> Boyer, “*Ostalgie* and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” 372.

<sup>90</sup> Berdahl explored sentiments of Eastern German devaluation during her year of ethnographic research in the German border town of Kella from 1990-92. Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>91</sup> Born in 1929 in Landsberg an der Warthe in present day Poland (then Prussia), Wolf grew up in Nazi Germany under fascism; then in 1945 at the age of sixteen, her family was forced to leave the former Prussian lands, moving to Mecklenburg in the sector of Soviet occupied German; and then in 1990, after the unification of the two Germanies, she remained in Germany, residing in Berlin until her death in 2011. Wolf had personal connections with many of the leading socialist thinkers in the early years of the GDR. She studied under Hans Mayer at the University of Jena, working under his supervision on her *Diplomarbeit*, and she later worked as a research assistant under Anna Seghers for the German Writers’ Union, for which Seghers served as president from 1952-78. For detailed background information on Christa Wolf, see Gail Finney, *Christa Wolf* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999).

legacy.<sup>92</sup> The East German anti-fascist identity positioned the socialist state as the better German state, one built upon communist heroes, who were victims of fascist (Nazi) Germany. The citizens of the GDR formed the resistance to Nazi Germany and were, thus, heirs to an anti-fascist legacy.<sup>93</sup> The literature of these early years was one that legitimated the new East German state.<sup>94</sup> This constructed and imaginary foundation of anti-fascism served as the grounding ideology in the works of this first generation—works that helped build up this socialist identity in the *Aufbau* period of GDR literature.

Wolf's commitment to the socialist Germany of the GDR (to utopian thinking) influenced her approach to the newly unified Germany, where Eastern Germans became second-class citizens pushed out of the seats of political, intellectual, and economic authority (owing to the exchange of elites) they once held and that had given them a sense of self-worth and public recognition.<sup>95</sup> Their ideological vision was not only negated but it was also often ignored. Although writers of this first generation (such as Wolf, Volker Braun, Heiner Müller, and Franz Fühmann) were invested in the good that socialism could provide its people, such as employment, free child-care, and so forth, starting in the 1960s, they were not uncritical of the

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<sup>92</sup> These writers, the founding proponents of antifascism, also make up the first generation of East German writers (see footnote 3). For more on this generation of GDR authors, see Wolfgang Emmerich, "Die Literatur der DDR," *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2008), 520. See also, Wolfgang Emmerich, "Status Melancholicus. Zur Transformation der Utopie in vier Jahrzehnten," *Die andere deutsche Literatur: Aufsätze zur Literatur aus der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 177.

<sup>93</sup> See Josie McLellan *Antifascism and Memory in East Germany: Remembering the International Brigades 1945-1989* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 2-3. For more insight into the anti-fascist foundation, see also Georgi Verbeek, "Confronting the Nazi Experience in the GDR," in *Germany after Unification: Coming to Terms with the Recent Past*, ed. Gert-Joachim Glaeßner (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 67-86, and J.H. Banks, "Political Anti-Fascism in the German Democratic Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no.2 (April 1997): 207-17.

<sup>94</sup> See Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). In her book Clark discusses the literary system of the Soviet Union and of socialist realist exemplars (or canonical works) established by the congresses of the Soviet Writer's Union between 1932 and 1934. These works were to be used as "guided works" to help future authors write new novels to support the socialist ideal.

<sup>95</sup> In an interview in *Neues Deutschland* Daniela Dahn used this term "second class citizen" to describe the status of Eastern Germans in unified Germany: "Und auch Ostdeutsche sind bei bestimmten Ansprüchen bis heute vor dem Gesetz nicht gleich. Zweitklassigkeit zu spüren, ist schwer zu ertragen." See Hans-Dieter Schütt, "Einmischung! Veränderung! Publizistin Daniela Dahn und Pfarrer Friedrich Schorlemmer über Ost, West und die Rolle zwischen den Stühlen," *Neues Deutschland* January 12, 2012, <http://www.neues-deutschland.de/artikel/215388.einmischung-veraenderung.html> (accessed October 15, 2012).



SED state.<sup>96</sup> Particularly after 1989, these writers focused on assessing how well the GDR had played its role in producing viable social change during the over forty years of its existence. According to Wolfgang Emmerich, these East German authors (Müller, Arendt, Kunert, Wolf, Fries, Braun, and Plenzdorf) had already begun in the 1960s to withdraw from the official socialist discourse: “Wesentliche Teile der DDR-Literatur lösen sich (natürlich mit Vorläufern wie Heuchel oder Johnson) seit Mitte/Ende der sechziger Jahre von der Funktion, den politischen Offizialdiskurs zu bestätigen und entwerfen Literatur als Gegentext, als Subversion des Leitdiskurses.”<sup>97</sup> By appropriating a subversive writing style in their texts, these authors worked within the socialist system to condemn the doctrine of “sozialistischen Realismus,” especially after the Prague Spring of 1968.<sup>98</sup> Through manipulating the dominant discourse, these authors expressed instead a utopian vision for a humanistic socialism.

On November 4, 1989, just five days before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Wolf showed her renewed commitment to an adaptation of the socialist utopian project when she, along with fellow East German authors Stefan Heym and Volker Braun, gathered at the Alexanderplatz in East Berlin, to rally their fellow East Germans to help improve the present socialist state before

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<sup>96</sup> These “critical writers” in the GDR used the realm of literature (an alternative public sphere) to express dissent against the SED state (but still adhering to the state censor), since there was not a public sphere in which concerns could be raised. See Patricia Herminhouse, “The ‘Critical’ Novel in the GDR,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. Graham Bartram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 218-31. See also Anke Pinkert, “Pleasures of Fear: Antifascist Myth, Holocaust, and Soft Dissidence in Christa Wolf’s ‘Kindheitsmuster,’” *The German Quarterly* 76, no.1 (Winter 2003): 25-37. Already in the sixties, writers such as Christa Wolf, Günter de Bruyn, Fritz Rudolf Fries, Erik Neutsch, and Erwin Strittmatter treated the question of subjectivity in the GDR, i.e., that society has a responsibility to the individual (in contrast to literature of the early fifties that positioned the individual as a hero who is to uphold society—to dedicate life to the socialist cause). In the seventies, this societal criticism continued in the works of Volker Braun and Heiner Müller, for example. In the eighties writers such as Erich Loest in his work *Durch die Erde ein Riß. Ein Lebenslauf* and Franz Fühmann in *Der Sturz des Engels. Erfahrungen mit Dichtung* also dealt with the realities of “real existing socialism” in the SED state. Many of the critical writers left the GDR in the seventies and eighties (Sara Kirsch, Jürek Becker, Monika Maron, Wolfgang Hilbig, Uwe Kolbe) after the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 revealed that Honecker’s lifting of taboos had not been fulfilled. See Wolfgang Emmerich, “Die Literatur der DDR,” *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 511-51.

<sup>97</sup> Emmerich, “Status Melancholicus. Zur Transformation der Utopie in vier Jahrzehnten,” 180.

<sup>98</sup> Emmerich, 180.

losing it completely.<sup>99</sup> The utopian socialism envisioned by these writers would not depend on the capitalistic materialism of the West but would champion anti-fascist and humanistic ideals to revive and alter the GDR state at the brink of collapse.<sup>100</sup> Prior to 1989 these authors had already supported an alternative, more humane socialism, that would carry out reform but would still leave the socialist state of the GDR intact, which would produce, in their minds, a utopian version of the “real-existing” socialism.<sup>101</sup> In the period between the fall of the Berlin Wall and unification on October 3, 1990, these writers continued to support the notion of a third-path, a reform of socialism, as an alternative to German unification.<sup>102</sup> According to Stephen Brockmann, these authors regarded the events of the fall of 1989 not as the end to the GDR state,

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<sup>99</sup> Wolf was one of the signers of the *Aufruf* from November 26, 1989, in which the supporters of this third possibility for a socialist GDR called on fellow citizens to endorse it by signing. In *Für unser Land*, they laid out two options. Either fellow East Germans could work to keep the sovereignty of the GDR state with a focus on improving human rights in the socialist state, such as peace, justice, and freedom for every person or they could accept the state to be taken over by the economic and political system of the FRG, through economic pressure and other unbearable conditions: “Entweder können wir auf der Eigenständigkeit der DDR bestehen und versuchen, mit allen unseren Kräften und in Zusammenarbeit mit denjenigen Staaten und Interessengruppen, die dazu bereit sind, in unserem Land eine solidarische Gesellschaft zu entwickeln, in der Frieden und soziale Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit des einzelnen, Freizügigkeit aller und die Bewahrung der Umwelt gewährleistet sind. Oder wir müssen dulden, daß, veranlaßt durch starke ökonomische Zwänge und durch unzumutbare Bedingungen, an die einflußreiche Kreise aus Wirtschaft und Politik in der Bundesrepublik ihre Hilfe für die DDR knüpfen, ein Ausverkauf unserer materiellen und moralischen Werte beginnt und über kurz oder lang die Deutsche Demokratische Republik durch die Bundesrepublik Deutschland vereinnahmt wird.” See Christa Wolf, “Für unser Land,” *Reden im Herbst* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1990), 170-71.

<sup>100</sup> For more on Christa Wolf’s struggles with unification between the years 1989 and 1991, see William Rey, “Christa Wolf: Vor und nach der Revolution,” *Monatshefte* 84, no.3 (Fall 1992): 260-73. West German authors also expressed concern that with unification, the more culturally German of the two Germanies, would be absorbed into a Western, Americanized culture of the FRG with its uncontrolled consumerism. According to Stephen Brockmann, some West Germans were concerned after 1989 that “[. . .] the fall of East Germany would mean the end of any culture specifically German and the implication of all of Germany in the general international cultural leveling associated with America.” Stephen Brockmann, “A Third Path?,” *Literature and German Reunification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 60. In the book *In einem reichen Land*, Günter Grass writes about the current state of unified Germany in 2002 and its fall into a consumption culture, and in a type of appeal such as Wolf made in 1989, he asks of all German citizens to resist downgrading themselves to simple consumers. He ends the book with the statement: “Als Schriftsteller habe ich mir den Blick für Verluste und minimale Veränderungen aller Art bewahrt. Das mögen entschwundene Möbel oder verrutschter Zimmerschmuck sein: So hängt in Deutschland, dem reichen Land, der Hausseggen schief; die vererbte Truhe, in der unser soziales Gewissen lagerte, ist verschwunden.” See Günter Grass, Daniela Dahn, and Johano Strasser, eds., *In einem reichen Land: Zeugnisse alltäglichen Leidens an der Gesellschaft* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2002), 631.

<sup>101</sup> In her pre-unification works, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968), *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979), *Kassandra* (1983), and *Sommerstück* (1989), Wolf already expressed feelings of loss for the socialist dream.

<sup>102</sup> Christa Wolf gave a speech at the Dresden Staatsoper on February 27, 1994, in which she addresses her frustrations about the way unification proceeded. She addresses the futility she and others experienced in the fight for including an East German voice in unification. See Christa Wolf and Jan van Heurck, “Parting from Phantoms: The Business of Germany,” *PMLA* 111, no.3 (May 1996): 395-407.

but instead as “simply the overthrow of post-Stalinist structures of domination and the victory of democratic socialism.”<sup>103</sup> Instead of their utopian vision for a reformed socialist GDR, the reality of unification in 1990 was more of a dystopia for this first generation, with notions of an East German identity being absorbed into the West German narrative of nationhood. The forty-year commitment to a utopian socialist project was then negated in 1990 when the GDR was incorporated into the Federal Republic of Germany. As “losers” of the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism, the GDR’s national narrative, supported by the East German intelligentsia despite their criticism of the state, was erased from the new unified Germany. After unification, the narrative of unified Germany took on a West German narrative—a “national narrative of democratic victory.”<sup>104</sup>

This dystopia of unification left the East German intelligentsia unconvinced that East Germans (or the East German state) would be able to maintain their old identifications in the newly reconfigured Federal Republic of Germany, as many former Eastern Germans sought acceptance by their new Western colleagues and neighbors in the early years of unification. As Brockmann writes, for these authors, “the new freedom of literature [writing without censorship] had come at the price of a perceived loss in political and social significance.”<sup>105</sup> The identity as a critical writer was no longer relevant. The reduction of the GDR by West German intellectuals and by public institutions (for example, in the media and in museum exhibitions) to an authoritarian *Unrechtsstaat* have supported public discourse that both positions the GDR/FRG pasts in binaries of dictatorship/democracy and of dissident/non-dissident, while upholding

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<sup>103</sup> Stephen Brockmann, “A Third Path?,” 48.

<sup>104</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, I take this term “national narrative of democratic victory” from Anke Pinkert, “Vacant History, Empty Screens. Post-Communist German Films of the 1990s,” in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 263-77.

<sup>105</sup> Brockmann, 50.

cultural discourses of winner and loser after 1990.<sup>106</sup> As a result, writers of the East German literary intelligentsia (who had been praised for their critical voices within the oppressive socialist state) found themselves, after 1989, in a new territory of public reproach, which was strikingly different from their positions in the GDR. As a critical voice in the GDR, Christa Wolf experienced a shock in 1990 when she was publicly criticized by Frank Schirrmacher and Ulrich Greiner in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit*, respectively, for publishing her book *Was Bleibt?* after 1989 (since it had been written in 1979). This initial finger-pointing led to what later became known as the *Literaturstreit*, which questioned Wolf's GDR identity as a critical literary voice.<sup>107</sup> Only two years later, Wolf found herself caught up in another public controversy, after it was revealed that she had served as an informal *Stasi* informant from 1959-62. In an interview in *Der Spiegel*, Wolf addresses the inappropriate response by the media in

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<sup>106</sup> See for example Konrad H. Jarausch, Hinrich C. Seeba, and David P. Conradt, "The Presence of the Past: Culture, Opinion, and Identity in Germany," *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 54-55. These three scholars lay out three approaches to the GDR past: 1) the GDR as a repressive regime, *Unrechtsstaat*, an approach that disputes "everything East German and [makes] the demand for its replacement with superior Western practices" 2) the GDR as "noble experiment"—an approach whose proponents reject "comparisons with the Third Reich as oversimplifications and insist on the progressive aspirations of the socialist tradition while simultaneously distancing themselves from the excesses of its faulty implementation" and 3) a "differentiated view of the GDR" that avoids making negative or positive imaginations of the past, rather considering the GDR as "a set of irresolvable contradictions between admirable and deplorable traits."

For more on the reductive reading of East German authors after 1990 through such an ideological lens (writer considered as either a state dissident or a state author) see for example, Thomas C. Fox, "Germanistik and GDR Studies: (Re)Reading a Censored Literature," *Monatshefte* 85, no.3 (Fall 1993): 284-94. For a totalitarian view of the GDR, often equating the GDR to the Third Reich, see for example, Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR 1945-1989* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), and "Überlegungen zu einer Herrschafts- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 19 (1993): 5-14.

<sup>107</sup> See Ulrich Greiner, "Mangel an Freigefühl," *Zeit Online. Zeitgeschehen*, June 1, 1990, <http://www.zeit.de/1990/23/mangel-an-feingefuehl> (accessed August 30, 2012) and Frank Schirrmacher, "'Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens stand-halten.' Auch eine Studie über den autoritären Charakter: Christa Wolf's Aufsätze, Reden und ihre jüngste Erzählung 'Was bleibt,'" *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 2, 1990. Both reduce Wolf to a *Staatsdichterin*. For a discussion of the *Literaturstreit*, see Stephen Brockmann, "Introduction: The Unification Debate," *New German Critique* 52 (1991): 3-30. See also Konrad H. Jarausch, Hinrich C. Seeba, and David P. Conradt, "The Presence of the Past: Culture, Opinion, and identity in Germany," *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 52-54. They discuss the media discussions in the early years of unification (1990-1993) that focused on the *Stasi* and the role of the East German elite in upholding the socialist state. Lothar de Mazière (CDU leader), Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, and Sascha Anderson were revealed as informants and the Gauck Office (Federal Deputy Office for Secret Service Documents) was created to handle *Stasi* files. Jarausch, Hinrich, and Seeba also discuss the Bundestag's special inquiry into the SED-state carried out in 1993. This commission (*Enquêtekommission*, comprised of legislators and historians) heard prominent figures of the GDR defend their actions as leaders in the state apparatus.

reducing her life's work to this one period and not considering her development as a critical voice against the SED state. When asked about her response to the public debate in Germany in 1992, Wolf emphasized that what upset her was:

[. . .], dass man [sie] nur auf diesen einen Punkt festlegte, dass man [ihr]e Entwicklung nicht sah und es nicht einmal für nötig hielt, sich kundig zu machen, was es da sonst noch an Akten gab [. . .]. Journalisten, denen die Täterakte sofort zugänglich gemacht wurde, hätten sich ja auch für meine Opferakte interessieren können. Aber das war nicht gefragt. Man wollte nicht meine Entwicklung darstellen, die in den sechziger Jahren und danach dazu geführt hat, dass ich observiert wurde. Das hat mich fassungslos gemacht.<sup>108</sup>

In Wolf's eyes the media confined her past to these three years and ignored her literary contributions after 1962.

Examining Wolf's works through a feminist lens, scholarship in the late 1980s and early 1990s commend her literary break with socialist realism in the GDR (although in the media, Wolf did not receive praise in the debates of the early 1990s).<sup>109</sup> In the early twenty-first century, there is a new approach to reading Christa Wolf's pre-1989 productions which considers the ambivalence in Wolf's position as a critical writer. In her 2003 article "Pleasures of Fear: Antifascist Myth, Holocaust, and Soft Dissidence in Christa Wolf's 'Kindheitsmuster,'" Anke Pinkert introduces the notion of soft dissidence for the group of critical GDR writers that included Wolf. Pinkert introduces the term soft dissidence, or symbiotic dissidence, to describe these critical writers who at once legitimized and challenged the state.<sup>110</sup> She writes of Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* that it "engenders a soft dissidence that avoids challenging antifascism as a discourse of power. This is not to say, however, that the text hides its increasing doubts about the

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<sup>108</sup> Susanne Beyer and Volker Hage, "Wir haben diese Land geliebt," *Der Spiegel*, June 14, 2010.

<sup>109</sup> For a discussion of Wolf's later works as a literary break with socialism through the feminist voice, see Julia Hell, "Critical Orthodoxies, Old and New, or the Fantasy of a Pure Voice: Christa Wolf," in *Contentious Memories: Looking Back at the GDR*, ed. Jost Hermand and Marc Silberman (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 65-101. Hell pushes the feminist reading of Wolf that looks at the relationship between Marxist discourse and feminist critique further to an examination of voice in Wolf's texts to reveal the relationship of the symbolic body (the "cultural discourse centered around the Anti-fascist Father") to the past (70).

<sup>110</sup> Pinkert takes the term "symbiotic dissidence" from Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

legitimacy of the GDR's ideological project."<sup>111</sup> The soft dissidence in Wolf's texts provides a public critique of the state that departs from her earlier unquestioned support of the socialist project. Although some scholars after 1989 have attempted to rewrite her role as a critical writer during the GDR, I argue that Wolf's textual productions after 1989 continue the soft dissidence that she exhibited in the GDR as a critical writer—at once towards a hegemonic rewriting of the East German past, but also towards her own legitimacy of the GDR's ideological project (her protagonists' self-questioning of their lives).

With a psychoanalytical reading in mind, I attempt to provide a nuanced understanding of the ways in which Wolf's post-unification works address this generation's experience of loss after 1989. Following Pinkert's argument, I suggest that Wolf's projects after 1989 continue engendering a soft dissidence now directed toward unification and its negation of the imagined socialist utopia Wolf and her fellow GDR critical writers engaged in—an ideological project to which they dedicated their literary careers (even by critically examining and possibly abandoning it in the 1980s). However, Wolf's protagonists, at the same time, question their enduring attachment to the ideological project (for example, in her later texts, *nuancen von grün* and *Stadt der Engel*). Wolf's texts do not overtly challenge unification but they do challenge the legitimacy of the hegemonic memory narrative of the GDR past that marginalizes modes of a more distinctly Eastern identity. Through this resistance, her texts give credence to the principles of the utopian socialism, often negated in the public sphere, that she and others of her generation imagined possible during the GDR. At the same time these post-unification narratives validate a negated literary personal past of the critical writer. In reading Wolf's works as oppositional memory narratives of GDR affirmation that challenge the fictions of a hegemonizing post-unification Germanness, I follow Matti Bunzl's work on the use of the *fin-de-siècle* by Jews in present-day

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<sup>111</sup> See Anke Pinkert, "Pleasures of Fear: Antifascist Myth, Holocaust, and Soft Dissidence in Christa Wolf's 'Kindheitsmuster,'" 25-26.

Austria to conceive of a “sense of ethnic self.”<sup>112</sup> Wolf’s works show resistance to accepted West German interpretations and reductions of the GDR past.<sup>113</sup> In the process of mourning the loss of past identifications, however, her last works reveal a final letting go of this melancholic connection to this lost utopian socialism. Wolf’s post-unification texts are in essence still utopian narratives that focus on the challenges of achieving the utopian imaginary—showing the “dream of reaching it [the utopian project].”<sup>114</sup> A final release (i.e., letting go of the attachment to this utopian imaginary) is uncovered in her last work, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*.

Drawing on Judith Butler’s approach to loss, I interpret the process of dealing with the past uncovered in Wolf’s post-unification works in this chapter as “melancholic mourning.” Butler uses Walter Benjamin’s *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* to explain the concurrent relationship of these two modes. She explains that mourning and melancholia cannot be understood exclusively in Freudian terms of succession and distinction (one occurring before the other, indicating a linear process) but should, instead, be viewed as both simultaneous and successive responses to loss (not a linear process).<sup>115</sup> According to Butler, in discussing the

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<sup>112</sup> I am taking my approach to Wolf’s works as oppositional (resistive) memory narratives from cultural anthropologist Matti Bunzl’s use of “fin-de-siècle Vienna by present day Austrian Jews” as a counter-memory or resistive memory narrative to the “hegemonizing Austrianness” in present-day Austria. Bunzl postulates that using fin-de-siècle as an “imagined moment of Jewish cultural efflorescence affords contemporary Austrian Jews the resistive potential required to sustain an affirmative sense of ethnic self.” See Matti Bunzl, “Counter Memory and Modes of Resistance: the Uses of Fin-de-Siècle Vienna for Present-Day Austrian Jews,” in *Transforming the Center, Eroding the Margins: Essays on Ethnic and Cultural Boundaries in German-Speaking Countries*, ed. Dagmar C.G. Lorenz and Renate S. Posthofen (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998), 174.

<sup>113</sup> See for example Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR 1945-1989* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1992), 10. Meuschel belongs to the group of theorists on totalitarianism who simplistically equate the GDR to other totalitarian systems (such as the Third Reich), categorizing the GDR as an *Unrechtsstaat*, without considering the various forms of resistance within the state.

<sup>114</sup> See Frederic Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 95. About utopian literature, Jameson writes: “What human relations might be without commodification, what a life world without advertising might look like, what narratives would model the lives of people empty of the foreign bodies of business and profit—such speculations have been entertained from time immemorial by Utopian fantasists and lend themselves to at least an a priori, external, and purely formalistic characterization. We can, in other words, say what a properly Utopian literature might look like even if we are utterly incapable of writing one ourselves” (74).

<sup>115</sup> Judith Butler, “Afterword. After Loss, What Then?” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 467-473.

response of mourning, Walter Benjamin compares it to the lining of a dress that is mostly hidden from the outside but is felt by the wearer: “Mourning is likened to an ‘interior’ region of clothing that is suddenly, and perhaps with some embarrassment, exposed, not to the public eye, but to the flesh itself.”<sup>116</sup> Benjamin’s metaphor of the dress and its inner lining corresponds to Christa Wolf’s metaphor of the Freudian coat employed in her last work *Stadt der Engel*—a work of mourning. The coat, which has served to protect the protagonist from the outside public, i.e., from embarrassment owing to exposure of the self, has also at the same time kept the protagonist from self-examining and criticizing her past (*Selbstbefragung*). This absence of self-examination encourages a melancholic attachment. It is only through deconstructing the inner lining of the coat, which has protected her and kept her from facing the pain of the past, that the protagonist finally faces the fear of public denunciation and probes into her inner secrets—“*Den unvermeidlichen Schmerz nicht fürchten.*”<sup>117</sup> The lining exposes the self to the self—forcing the individual to confront the past (i.e., reconceptualize the way history is constructed). This final text, which repeats passages from Wolf’s earlier texts, “Begegnungen Third Street” and “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” indicates at once a kind of attachment to the past and a working through of the past in this act of self-questioning. This strategy mirrors the simultaneity of mourning and melancholia present in the process of letting go. The melancholic attachment allows for the probing into the earlier fears that were displaced.

As Wolfgang Emmerich contends, Wolf’s generation had an experience of loss in 1989 associated with utopia: “Die Utopie wurde, was ihre wörtliche Bedeutung sagt: ortlos.”<sup>118</sup> This chapter explores the overall process of melancholic mourning, which characterizes this generational response to loss. Within this process, I uncover four different modes on the route to

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<sup>116</sup> Butler, 470.

<sup>117</sup> Christa Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 271-72.

<sup>118</sup> Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 458.



fully letting go: displacement, nostalgia, melancholia, and then mourning. However, this process is not always linear, with one response following the next, as Butler points out with the simultaneity of the two modes of mourning and melancholia, but variants of different modes are at play in all the texts to changing degrees. In these variants, there is still a dominant mode in each text and in the overall pattern in the process of melancholic mourning.

### **Displacement**

In her article “After the GDR: Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany,” Patricia Hogwood advances the notion that Eastern Germans after 1989 express a post-communist identity owing to the lack of interest from “the FRG state to promote a separate east German identity” within unified Germany.<sup>119</sup> Not all East Germans agreed that a rejection of the SED (concluding with the fall of the Berlin wall) state implied a “full and unquestioning acceptance of the FRG regime and accompanying values.”<sup>120</sup> Accordingly, “various expressions of distinctive eastern German identity” began to develop after 1989, Hogwood argues, laying out the following four manifestations: 1) “third way” socialism; 2) *Trotzidentität* (identity of contrariness); 3) *Ostalgia* (a combination of *Ost* and nostalgia); and 4) “Ossi” Pride.<sup>121</sup> Wolf’s literature in the early years after unification reflects the Eastern German position of contrariness to the realities of unification and towards the feelings of inferiority projected onto them by the

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<sup>119</sup> Patricia Hogwood, “After the GDR: Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, no. 4 (2000): 55. Hogwood, using R. Rose and E. Page’s “German Responses to Regime Change: Culture, Class, Economy or Context,” explains that there are two major views towards a divided German identity and that, depending on which view one accepts, unification is either taken as successful or unsuccessful: “The first is that each of the Germanies developed a separate identity, marked by the prevailing norms and values of its alliance partners. The alternative view is that one identity persisted, effectively defined in terms of the shared history and cultural heritage of the Germans. This identity was upheld and further developed by the FRG and provided a “reference culture” for the GDR” (47). Hogwood is citing Richard Rose and Edward Page, “German Responses to Regime Change: Culture, Class, Economy or Context?” *West European Politics* 19, no. 1 (1996): 1-27.

<sup>120</sup> Hogwood, 48.

<sup>121</sup> Hogwood, 45-68.

Western German media in the immediate years after unification and through the exchange of elites.

Through displacing such feelings of being overtaken by the West onto the cultural and historical conflicts in the United States, Wolf's two short stories ("Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992"[1994], "Begegnungen Third Street" [1995]) evidence an unconscious working through of loss. In "*Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf.*" *Der Literaturstreit im vereinigten Deutschland*, Thomas Anz communicates some of Christa Wolf's remarks in 1991 from the program *Deutsche Fernsehfunk* regarding the public debates of the *Literaturstreit*: "Von den zum Teil erlogenen, erfundenen und die Fakten falsch zusammensetzenden Polemiken fühle sie sich gegenwärtig stark beeinträchtigt in ihren eigenen Versuchen einer schonungslosen Selbstbefragung. Wie schon früher in der DDR bestehe jetzt für sie die Gefahr, die heftige Kritik von anderen zu verinnerlichen und dadurch die Eigenständigkeit der Selbstkritik zu verlieren."<sup>122</sup> In displacement, the individual avoids directly confronting loss and instead shifts her desires onto another more acceptable object, and, thus, disengages from grief. With a response of displacement the individual prevents a working through of loss of the actual lost object (i.e., a process of *Selbstbefragung*). Nevertheless, by expressing consciously through displacement in these texts that which is unconsciously repressed, the author begins to undertake a process of working through the loss associated with the experience of 1989. The modes of displacement found in these early texts indicate a productive step towards overcoming loss; i.e., displacement as a strategy to overcome sentiments of grief, as a defense mechanism used in the immediate reaction to loss.

Wolf's self-imposed exile to the US provided a new literary space onto which unconscious expressions of loss, after realizing the third path was no longer possible, could be

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<sup>122</sup> Anz, ed., "*Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf.*" *Der Literaturstreit im vereinigten Deutschland*, 239.

displaced and worked through, making conscious that which is repressed or which is not yet known to the individual. As Freud writes, the melancholic individual does not know what it is he has lost in the object, only that he has lost the object.<sup>123</sup> The initial strategy of displacement serves as the first step towards “naming” a specific loss or to being able to understand exactly what it is that had been lost when the GDR vanished (a necessary step in the mourning process). In “Begegnungen Third Street,” Wolf’s protagonist expresses the futility of the utopian project of the first generation:

Und wann ist mir klargeworden, daß auch wir noch, meine Generation, die wir Anfangs in stolzer Unfahrenheit so sicher waren, jene freundliche Menschengemeinschaft noch zu erleben, für die wir uns ja einsetzen wollten, daß auch wir noch unter das Verdikt fallen würden; daß auch wir bestimmt waren, in den Untergang jenes Experiments mit hineingerissen zu werden, an dessen Verwirklichung wir schon lange nicht mehr glaubten.<sup>124</sup>

In the early years of unification, a separation from the utopian socialist ideal was nevertheless difficult, even though many of this generation had already understood that it would never be realized.

Although Wolf and others of her generation proposing a third path conceded to a unified sense of “Germanness,” they did not understand this to be defined solely by norms upheld in the FRG—at the time of unification. The mode of displacement provides a space for expressions of dissatisfaction with the new system of materialism and market driven decisions where some members of the first generation could still sustain an identity as a critical voice, continuing to challenge through soft dissidence. Wolf’s use of language in her short stories during this period of self-imposed exile expresses the resistance (*Trotzidentität*) to distinctive elements of western culture and Western dominance in unified Germany at the time. Through allegorical language,

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<sup>123</sup> Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” *Collected Papers*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic, 1959), 4:155.

<sup>124</sup> Christa Wolf, “Begegnungen Third Street,” *Hierzulande Andernorts: Erzählungen und andere Texte 1994-1998* (München: Luchterhand Verlag, 1999), 21.

her texts (“Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992” and “Begegnungen Third Street”) sustain a division, allowing for an expression of a separate sense of Eastern identity and for a displacement of feelings of loss and grief. Through the written word, Wolf’s protagonists speak that which is unspeakable for Eastern Germans at this time post-unification, i.e., that which is not known to them at this point. Instead of using language as an element to join two groups that share a cultural past, characteristic of the *Kulturnation*, these texts of displacement resist the hegemonic discourse of the recently unified nation.

### **“Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992”**

In a 1991 correspondence with Wolf, Jürgen Habermas raised concern over the process of unification and stressed the importance of support from the East German intelligentsia for a smooth transition.<sup>125</sup> It was soon after this correspondence with Habermas that Wolf applied for a nine-month research stay in America as a Visiting Scholar at the Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities in Santa Monica (1992-93). Her short story “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992” serves as an important transition piece in the process of mourning the lost utopian GDR. In her text the protagonist not only displaces her feelings of loss after 1989 onto the US-Native-American history of oppression, but she also scrutinizes the American capitalist culture as a preview for what awaits people from the East in unified Germany: “[. . .], daß ich jetzt hier bin, im Paradies, immer wieder, wenn ich meiner Lage inne werde, Anfällen eines Gefühls durchdringender Unwirklichkeit ausgesetzt? Flucht? Das wäre zu billig. Oder will ich mal nachsehen, wie es denn in seinem Innern beschaffen ist, das Paradies, das uns allen

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<sup>125</sup> Christa Wolf, “The Leftover Baggage of German History. Correspondence with Jürgen Habermas,” *Parting from Phantoms*, trans. Jan van Heurck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 110, 112.

bevorsteht?“<sup>126</sup> Wolf’s allegorical treatment of the US-Native-American dichotomy for the relationship between Eastern and Western Germans after unification reflects the positions of many Eastern Germans in the early years of unification, who felt that East Germany had been taken over by the West.<sup>127</sup> Through the displacement of the US-Native American past, Wolf inserts a discourse of colonization into post-unification cultural discourse that contests the Western narrative of democratic victory.

In her diary entry from September 27, 1992, the protagonist relates a recent trip up the California coast with a German friend who is visiting the US.<sup>128</sup> The German friend, Martin R., is a West German from Stuttgart who moved to Dresden after unification to lead a famous institute in that city, as she explains. Martin R.’s biography harks back to the replacement of East German intellectuals by West Germans during the exchange of elites. On their day excursion, the two visit a Spanish mission, which belonged to Mexico until New Mexico and California were sold to the US. The two look at pictures of the Native-Americans who were Christianized by Spanish monks in the 1600s and were thus given new rules to abide by after Spanish colonization. In the information at the mission, the Native Americans are described as being content, but according to the protagonist the photos show the opposite: “Wir sahen die Zeugnisse, die belegen sollen, daß die Indianer ‘content’ waren über ihre Bekehrung zum Christentum; aber das frühe Foto eines missionierten Indianers zeigt den alles andere als zufrieden, im Gegenteil, grimmig.”<sup>129</sup> The autobiographical protagonist identifies these rules by the colonizers as draconian: “Wir lasen von den drakonischen Strafen, die von den Christen an den Heiden

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<sup>126</sup> Christa Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou: Texte 1990-1994* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994), 236.

<sup>127</sup> For a discussion of the “colonization” of East Germany, see Wolfgang Dümcke and Fritz Vilmar’s *Kolonialisierung der DDR* (Münster: Agenda Verlag, 1996), 12-21 and Paul Cooke’s *Representing East Germany since Unification*, 1-20.

<sup>128</sup> In her fictionalized diary, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, Wolf wrote a diary entry for this day, September 27 every year from 1960 until 2000. This dissertation looks at one day in 1992. See Christa Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr 1960-2000* (Munich: Luchterhand, 2003).

<sup>129</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 238.

vollstreckt wurden: Hand ab für Diebstahl, Bein ab für Fluchtversuch.”<sup>130</sup> Wolf’s retelling of both Spanish colonization and US treatment of the indigenous Native-American population allegorizes East German sentiments towards West German colonization of East Germany in 1990. This allegory functions as displacement in that it allows for a disengagement from grief.

The protagonist’s displacement does not end with the new rules, but by exposing the materialistic obsession of the Spanish colonizer, she brings attention to East German interpretation of the changes after 1989 as one of takeover by the West. After finding Columbus’s captain’s journal, she is amazed at his obsession with gold. This Spanish materialism allegorically signifies the view that capitalist West Germany was also obsessed with material goods and consumerist values—those attributes that the proponents of the third path socialism wanted to keep from adopting. The protagonist’s observation recalls the appeal in November 1989 in which Wolf and others communicated that “[. . .] ein Ausverkauf unserer materiellen und moralischen Werte [. . .]” would result if East Germans chose unification. Here, Wolf’s text appears to overlook that East Germans themselves were also intrigued by the appeal of Western goods, an issue she returns to in her final novel *Stadt der Engel* (2010). In this earlier short story, the protagonist calls attention to the disproportionate use of “*Gott*” or “*Unser Herr*” by Columbus in comparison to “*Gold*.” In his captain’s log, Columbus wrote the word “*Gott*” or “*Unser Herr*” only fifty-one times; but the word “*Gold*” he used one hundred thirty-nine times.<sup>131</sup> Wolf’s unnamed protagonist expresses that present acknowledgements by the church of past guilt do not change the destruction of the Native-American culture and of the eradication of the Native-American tribes caused by colonialism. Through the Native-American past, the protagonist articulates a dissatisfaction with the new unified German economic system and contests hegemonizing narratives assessing the materialistic FRG past as superior to the GDR.

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<sup>130</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 238.

<sup>131</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 238.

In a conversation about the exchange of East German elites with her West German friend, the question arises whether she considers this exchange of elites as part of the legitimacy of colonization or as feelings of revenge by the “*Sieger*”: “[Er fragte mich], ob ich die Auswechslung der Eliten zu den Gesetzmäßigkeiten der Kolonialisierung rechne; ich sagte ja, und er fragte, ob ich dahinter Rachegefühle der Sieger vermute; ich sagte, ein oft dahinter unbewußtes Bedürfnis nach Rache könne mit im Spiel sein.”<sup>132</sup> Wolf’s protagonist answers that “die Auswechslung der Eliten gehöre nun mal zu den allerältesten und unabdingbaren Herrschaftsstrategien jeder neuen Macht; daß die bisherige politische Elite abserviert wurde, sei ja selbstverständlich.”<sup>133</sup> She concedes that such replacement of power naturally occurs in a winner/loser dichotomy as the one that transpired after the dissolution of the GDR, especially since there was no economic elite in the GDR. However, the protagonist expresses reservation at how decisions were made about academics after 1990 in East Germany, who were replaced because of the “einsetzenden West-Ost-Verteilungskämpfen.”<sup>134</sup> In this dialogue with her Western German friend, Wolf’s protagonist speaks for those academic professionals in the years of the *Wende* who were let go from their university positions because of their commitment to socialism under the GDR regime. According to Paul Cooke, “three quarters of GDR university academics lost their jobs” in the exchange of academic elites.<sup>135</sup> They were dismissed not because of ability but because of their real and/or perceived involvement with the SED state.

The observations made by the protagonist during her time residing in Los Angeles towards the negative side of capitalism elucidate further sentiments of dissatisfaction with

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<sup>132</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 239.

<sup>133</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 239-40.

<sup>134</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 240.

<sup>135</sup> See Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, 3. Cooke is citing from Thomas Ahbe, “Deutsche Eliten und deutsche Umbrüche: Erfolg und Verschwinden verschiedener deutscher Elite-Gruppen und deren Wertepositionen,” *Deutschland Archiv* 2 (2003): 191-206. See also Daniela Dahn, *Westwärts und nicht vergessen: Von Unbehagen in der Einheit* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1997), 12. According to Daniela Dahn, one million East Germans were affected in the *Eliterestitution*.

unification by this generation. While sitting in the lounge at the Getty-Center, the protagonist reads an interview with the American sociologist, Amitai Etzioni, who stresses the importance of a welfare policy to keep the US system from collapsing:

Die Bindungslosigkeit—auch in der Familie—sei eine der Hauptursachen für das amerikanische Drogenproblem; es gebe keine Lehrlingsausbildung; die Arbeitsmoral und die Qualifikation der amerikanischen Arbeiter seien erschreckend niedrig; ihren verschwenderischen way of life könnten die Amerikaner sich nicht mehr leisten; er [the American sociologist] fürchte, die riesigen Defizite in der Sozialpolitik könnten dazu führen, daß die amerikanische Gesellschaft auseinanderfalle.<sup>136</sup>

The protagonist's perhaps all too obvious displacement of the conflicts associated with German unification onto the US—Native-American past and on the ills of American capitalism serve as evidence that Wolf's generation was not ready to shift into, and in fact resisted, a new economic and political system of unified Germany, in the first years after 1989. Instead, her protagonists were in a phase of displacement, beginning tentatively to work through loss but overall perpetuating a state of melancholia and attachment to utopian thinking.

### **“Begegnungen Third Street”**

Similar to Wolf's “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” which provided a literary sphere for a critical view of unification as a takeover, Wolf's “Begegnungen Third Street” continues this engagement with unification through its play with language. Reading the title “Begegnungen Third Street,” readers are already confronted with images of California, and Los Angeles in particular, and with an unsettling feeling about language since the title is both in English and in German.<sup>137</sup> Regarding the difficulty in performing a self-questioning amidst negative criticism in the public sphere, Wolf's protagonist in this short story explains:

Nun ist ja Schreiben ein Sich-Herarbeiten an jene Grenzlinie, die das innerste Geheimnis um sich zieht und die zu verletzen Selbstzerstörung bedeuten würde, und es

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<sup>136</sup> Wolf, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992,” 242.

<sup>137</sup> Wolf is alluding to the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica California.



ist auch der Versuch, die Grenzlinie nur dem wirklich innersten Geheimnis zuzuerkennen, und die diesen Kern umgebenden, teils mit ihm zusammenhängenden anderen ‘Geheimnisse’, die oft nur Peinlichkeiten, schwer einzugestehende Verfehlungen sind, nach und nach von dem Verdikt des Unaussprechlichen zu befreien, also nicht Selbstzerstörung, sondern Selbsterlösung zu betreiben.<sup>138</sup>

The same passage is slightly modified in her later work of mourning, *Stadt der Engel* (2010)—modifications are italicized:

Nun ist ja Schreiben ein Sich-Herarbeiten an jene Grenzlinie, die das innerste Geheimnis um sich zieht und die zu verletzen Selbstzerstörung bedeuten würde, aber es ist auch der Versuch, die Grenzlinie nur *für das* wirklich innerste Geheimnis zu *respektieren* und die diesen Kern umgebenden, *schwer einzugestehenden Tabus nach und nach* dem Verdikt des Unaussprechlichen zu befreien, also nicht Selbstzerstörung, sondern Selbsterlösung. *Den unvermeidlichen Schmerz nicht fürchten.*<sup>139</sup>

In this added last sentence, Wolf’s later work acknowledges the pain in writing about inner secrets, but at the same time reminds the reader that this is a necessary reflection towards self-realization (a “process of liberation”) and should not be feared.<sup>140</sup>

As in many of Wolf’s works, allegory is also employed in Wolf’s “Begegnungen Third Street.” In the situation of the protagonist’s friend, Tony (renamed as Sally in *Stadt der Engel*), readers can interpret an allegory for the sustained connection to utopian socialism after 1989 by this generation. Tony is still fixated on the loss of her estranged ex-boyfriend, a loss which she refuses to work through. Tony is suspended in an emotional state between being with her ex-boyfriend (who no longer shares his previous feelings of love—he is no longer that person, i.e., object, that he was in the beginning of the relationship) and moving on, just as many writers of this first generation found themselves in the early years of unification in a melancholic state of attachment to the object of utopian socialism, which validated a personal biography. The

<sup>138</sup> Christa Wolf, “Begegnungen Third Street,” 29.

<sup>139</sup> Christa Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 271-72.

<sup>140</sup> This role of language in freeing oneself from the past resonates with what Wolf calls Cassandra’s recollection of her personal story—that of a “process of liberation, in which she [Cassandra] has freed herself from all beliefs, including (first and foremost!) her own” (129). Like Cassandra, through recounting her story, Wolf can achieve “the highest degree of self-realization possible” (129). See Margit Resch, *Understanding Christa Wolf: Returning Home to a Foreign Land* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 129. Resch is citing Christa Wolf, *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays*, trans. Jan van Heurck (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1984), 90.

protagonist describes this emotional place in which her friend finds herself at the moment as residing in a “*Druckkammer*”:

[. . .], manchmal kommt der Umschwung schnell, you know, über Nacht, du wachst auf und bist frei, really free, you understand, aber Tony kann mich nicht hören, sie ist noch in der Druckkammer, sie sagt, immer habe sie gedacht, wenn es ihr einmal passiere, werde sie großzügig sein können zu dem Mann, der sie verlasse, doch das könne sie nicht, nein, sie könne es nicht, sie müsse Schuldgefühle ausnutzen bis auf den Grund, verstehst du, er hat alles, was er sich wünscht, Geld, eine junge schöne Frau [. . .] ich [Tony speaking] habe mich immer danach gerichtet, was andere von mir wollten [. . .].<sup>141</sup>

The text only thinly veils that Tony allegorically embodies the first generation’s position of memory of the GDR. Tony’s boyfriend stands for the utopian socialist imaginary, whose leaving (her moment of loss) brings forward a realization that he was not the man she had imagined him to be (here, recognition of the foundational absence of the love relationship); however she cannot move past this loss and only remains in the *Druckkammer* of regret trying to figure out what she did wrong instead of accepting his true self. She is in a depressive melancholic state making self-accusations that are sub-consciously aimed at her boyfriend. Tony does not know how to continue without her absent boyfriend, around whom she had orchestrated her entire life. Instead of seeing herself as free, the protagonist can only fixate on her ex-boyfriend and what he does. While an allegorical reading of this passage also has limits (for example, the boyfriend still lives and, thus, cannot be equated to the erased GDR state), the passage symbolizes the first generation’s difficulty, if not refusal, to re-situate its relationship to the GDR past—residing in a *Druckkammer*.

These two texts of displacement, “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992” and “Begegnungen Third Street,” exemplify the first stage in transitioning to a new object, unified Germany, for this first generation. Wolf’s *Medea* continues in this language of displacement, employing the strategy of allegory, but *Medea* also indicates a productive nostalgic mode of

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<sup>141</sup> Wolf, “Begegnungen Third Street,” 8.

remembering. Instead of using allegory to displace feelings of grief, Wolf's *Medea* utilizes allegory to assert an Eastern memory alternative into the present memory discourse.

### **Nostalgia: *Medea* (1996)**

Using Hogwood's four manifestations of an East German post-communist identity, I situate Wolf's re-reading of *Medea* as a reflection of the *Trotzidentität* and nostalgic positioning of former East Germans towards the GDR. An approach focusing on *Medea* as an allegorical reading of unification and of an expression of a sense of Eastern identity is productive when one considers the time the text was conceived—public media at this time (in the early nineties) focused on Wolf's role as an IM (*Informelle Mitarbeiter*) and on Wolf as scapegoat (*Sündenbock*)—similar to her protagonist Medea's role as scapegoat in Corinth for all societal ills. Gail Finney's description of the IM files as “the Stasi's version of information” underscores the complexity that the IM files played in the public debates surrounding Wolf in the early nineties, which ignored Wolf's development after 1962.<sup>142</sup> Although Marie-Luise Ehrhardt disputes reading *Medea* as a mere allegory for the East-West conflict, I contend that an allegorical consideration of *Medea* does lend itself to a critical inquiry into unification as carried out in the literary sphere in the mid/late nineties.<sup>143</sup> Owing to the earlier public accusations in the media (surrounding the publication of *Was Bleibt* and the revelation of her *Stasi* IM file), as well as to the public reduction of books or films in the nineties to mere *Ostalgie*, an allegorical reading of Wolf's *Medea* (1996) can be productive in evaluating it as a critical treatment of unification—a criticism that Wolf could not voice directly in the hostile public sphere at this time.

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<sup>142</sup> See Finney, *Christa Wolf*, 120.

<sup>143</sup> Marie-Luise Ehrhardt, *Christa Wolfs Medea—eine Gestalt auf der Zeitengrenze* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2000), 7-8.

In “Kassandra to Medea” Wolf explains that after the *Wende* the question of *Sündenböcke* in society led her to begin researching the topic of Medea: “Warum brauchen wir immer noch und immer wieder Sündenböcke. In den letzten Jahren, nach der sogenannten ‘Wende’ in Deutschland, die dazu führte, daß die DDR von der Bühne der Geschichte verschwand, sah ich Grund, über diese Fragen nachzudenken.”<sup>144</sup> From the beginning of her research on Medea, Wolf saw her as a figure standing on the borderline between two different value systems, “verkörpert durch ihre Heimat Kolchis und ihren Fluchtort Korinth—eine Grenze, die leicht zum Abgrund werden kann, wenn die Betroffene nicht beriet oder nicht fähig ist, sich den neuen Verhältnissen anzupassen, [. . .].”<sup>145</sup> Reading Wolf’s *Medea* as a text of reflective nostalgia aids in better understanding this first generation’s process towards transitioning to the new Germany and in understanding the psychological dimensions that literary texts ascribe to the loss experienced by Eastern Germans.

Wolf refers to the *Medea* project in Los Angeles (1992-93), although the text was not published until 1996.<sup>146</sup> In Wolf’s short story “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September, 1992,” readers discover that the story of Medea was to be dealt with later, “ich müßte also, um diesen Haß [Medea’s hate in Euripides’ version] zu erklären, die Geschichte [of Medea] neu aufbrechen.”<sup>147</sup> In Wolf’s *Medea*, the protagonist of the same name a Colchian (East Germany) refugee in Corinth (West Germany), could be viewed as the embodiment of East Germans coming to terms with a sense of loss in the new Germany, the new home of capitalistic Federal Republic of Germany. The protagonist’s critical reflections on her past indicate a move toward productive nostalgia.

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<sup>144</sup> Christa Wolf, “Von Kassandra zu Medea,” *Hierzulande Andernorts: Erzählungen und andere Texte 1994-1998* (München: Luchterhand, 1999), 165.

<sup>145</sup> Wolf, “Kassandra zu Medea,” 167.

<sup>146</sup> Christa Wolf, *Medea. Stimmen* (München: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1996). Wolf’s nine-month stay at the Getty Center in Los Angeles was granted to support her new project—a feminist rewriting of the Medea story.

<sup>147</sup> Wolf “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September, 1992,” 244.

In this productive mode of nostalgia, Wolf's *Medea* reveals a more direct Eastern German truculence (*Trotzigkeit*) to unification. Rebelliousness towards West German stereotypes of the East and nostalgic remembrances of a positive GDR past characterize this new manifestation of a sense of Eastern Germanness. In a survey from the late nineties, seven out of ten East Germans agreed that they enjoyed more freedom of expression after 1990 in the newly unified Germany; however, they also said they were dissatisfied with the distribution of wealth in general.<sup>148</sup>

Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer have argued that in reconstructing the past through the lens of nostalgia, that which is absent in the present can be supplemented through nostalgic reflection. Drawing on Hirsch and Spitzer's notion of a positive relationship to the past that nostalgia can afford, Wolf's *Medea* demonstrates a nostalgic reconstruction of the past, which provides that which is lacking in the present, i.e., a literary sphere where discussion of disillusionments with unification can be engaged without writers being reduced to nostalgic daydreamers longing for a totalitarian regime.<sup>149</sup> Hirsch and Spitzer explain that nostalgic memory can be "[. . .] seen more positively, as a resistant relationship to the present, a 'critical utopianism' that imagines a better future."<sup>150</sup> This "critical utopianism" recalls Fredric Jameson's utopian narrative, i.e., showing the "dream of reaching it [utopia]" through nostalgic reflection on the past. In their article "'We Would not have come without you' Generations of Nostalgia," Hirsch and Spitzer write that, in nostalgic remembrance, "the absent is valued as somehow better, simpler, less fragmented, and more comprehensible than its alternative in the present."<sup>151</sup> For Hirsch and Spitzer such nostalgic memory can be viewed rather positively, as it provides a space for the "resistant relationship to the present, a 'critical utopianism' that imagines a better future" but also

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<sup>148</sup> Statistisches Bundesamt, *Datenreport 1999*, 602-08.

<sup>149</sup> Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, "'We Would not have come without you' Generations of Nostalgia," *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 253-76.

<sup>150</sup> Hirsch and Spitzer, 258.

<sup>151</sup> Hirsch and Spitzer, 258.

resists incorrect revisions of GDR history.<sup>152</sup> Wolf addresses this Western revisionism of hers and of others' role in the opposition during the events of 1989 in her "Zwischenrede" (a speech given at a ceremony awarding her an honorary doctorate from Universität Hildesheim, 1 January 1990):

Der 4. November auf dem Berliner Alexanderplatz—der Punkt der größtmöglichen Annäherung zwischen Künstlern, Intellektuellen und den anderen Volkssichten—war keineswegs, wie westliche Reporter es staunend sehen wollen, das Zufallsprodukt eines glücklichen Augenblicks. Es war der Kulminations- und Höhepunkt einer Vorgeschichte, in der Literaten, Theaterleute, Friedens- und andere Gruppen unter dem Dach der Kirche miteinander in Kontakte und Gespräche gekommen waren, bei denen jeder vom anderen Impulse, Gedanken, Sprache und Ermutigung zu Aktionen erfuhr. Seit Jahren hatte die bewußt in Opposition stehende Literatur sich bestimmte Aufgaben gestellt: Durch Benennen von Widersprüchen, die lange Zeit kritisches Bewußtsein zu erzeugen oder zu stärken, sie zum Widerstand gegen Lüge, Heuchelei und Selbstaufgabe zu ermutigen, unsere Sprache und andere Traditionen aus der deutschen Literatur und Geschichte, die abgeschnitten werden sollten, lebendig zu halten und, nicht zuletzt, moralische Werte zu verteidigen, die der zynischen Demagogie der herrschenden Ideologie geopfert werden sollten.<sup>153</sup>

In her text, Wolf keeps the East German "*Sprache und Tradition*" alive and resists its erasure from German literature and history.

With the attack in the German media on Wolf in the nineties for her role as IM with the *Stasi* from 1959-62, Wolf found herself without her previous position of respect for her narrative and critical voice (revisionism of her past), just as her character, Medea, found herself in the new land of Corinth, without respect for her gift of "sight" from the Corinthians. Medea describes herself in the beginning of the novel as possessing the gifts of second sight and of healing:

Ich habe diese Frau an Kreons Seite zum erstenmal gesehen, Mutter, mit jenem Zweiten Blick, den du an mir bemerkt hast. Ich wehrte mich bis zum äußersten, bei diesem jungen Priester in die Lehre zu gehen, lieber wurde ich krank. Jetzt erinnere ich mich, das war die Krankheit, während der du mir meine Handlinien zeigtest, der Priester hat später scheußliche Verbrechen begangen, er war nicht normal, da sagtest du, das Kind hat den zweiten Blick. Er ist mir hier fast abhanden gekommen, manchmal denke ich, die

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<sup>152</sup> Hirsch and Spitzer, 258.

<sup>153</sup> Christa Wolf, "Zwischenrede," *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou: Texte 1990-1994* (Köln: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1994), 18.

krankhafte Furcht der Korinther vor dem, was sie meine Zauberkräfte nennen, hat mir diese Fähigkeit ausgetrieben.<sup>154</sup>

As a writer in the GDR, Wolf brought news to the East German people and even forewarned of the demise of the GDR in *Kassandra* (1983). Margit Resch argues against critics of Wolf that say she, as a writer, supported the authoritarian regime of the GDR through her silence. Resch, instead argues that “[t]hrough the metaphor of Troy [in *Kassandra*] Wolf clearly predicted the demise of the GDR under the system of the SED. Eumelos and his security force represent the GDR’s Ministry of state Security (*Stasi*) [. . .],” and in this allegory, Wolf voices criticism and resistance.<sup>155</sup> Through soft dissidence in her text, Wolf criticizes the SED state. In *Kassandra*, Wolf’s protagonist as seer could perceive the truth [the future], but her curse was that no one would believe her, echoing the critical voices like Wolf in the GDR, who warned, in November 1989, of the ills of unification and whose gift of voice was publicly rejected in the debates of early unification. Since being in the new home of Corinth Medea has lost her gift of second sight just as Wolf lost her position of critical voice after unification. Similar to Wolf and other former East German writers in the public sphere in unified Germany who were devalued after 1989, so too is Wolf’s protagonist, Medea, devalued in her new homeland of Corinth.

Helen Bridge argues that in both *Kassandra* and in *Medea*, Christa Wolf creates an alternative myth to the accepted “historical” Greek versions, written from a male perspective.<sup>156</sup> Bridge points out that while both are alternative myths, the form of each varies. *Kassandra* is written from the perspective of one voice, from that of *Kassandra*, while *Medea* is comprised of

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<sup>154</sup> Wolf, *Medea. Stimmen*, 18-19.

<sup>155</sup> Resch, 126. Resch also points out that Wolf develops in this allegory also the criticism of the nuclear arms race between the East and the West (122). For more on *Kassandra*, see for example, Margit Resch, “Books are Deeds,” *Understanding Christa Wolf: Returning Home to a Foreign Land* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 119-37.

<sup>156</sup> Helen Bridge, “Christa Wolf’s *Kassandra* and *Medea*: Continuity and Change,” *German Life and Letters* 57, no.1 (January 2004): 35.

six different voices.<sup>157</sup> About this polyphonic narrative in *Medea*, Bridge writes: “We are presented with different psychologies, motivations and behaviours, but with a fundamental agreement about what actually happened.”<sup>158</sup> In this new Medean myth, constructed by multiple voices, Wolf provides a vision for a unified Germany that allows polyphonous memory constructions of the divided German past, assigning equal weight to Eastern and Western German memories. According to Bridge, the multiple voices in *Medea* have different versions of the events, but they all still come to a consensus. In this way, *Medea* is a new utopian literature that accounts for the heterogeneity of memory in unified Germany. Various voices are heard in order to uncover a shared past—their versions of the events are neither ignored nor belittled.<sup>159</sup>

In the relationship between Medea and Glauke, readers gain a closer understanding of the nostalgic mode of memory and its resistance to the present. In her article “August 1961: Christa Wolf and the Politics of Disavowal,” Charity Scribner examines the Freudian idea of fetishism in Christa Wolf’s *Medea*. For Scribner, the fetish of the dress that Medea gives Glauke represents the denial of knowledge—the fetish “embodies the expression ‘but still.’”<sup>160</sup> Scribner takes this phrase “but still” from Octave Mannoni, French psychoanalyst and author. This expression of “but still” indicates the subject’s position of knowing something but at the same time still believing something else. Glauke “knows” the truth about the city’s founding lie, which revolves around the murder of her sister that was covered up, “but still” believes another truth. Glauke’s response is similar to that by members of Wolf’s generation, who “know” the truth of their German past (i.e., have been exposed in the present to West German “truths” about the GDR past and to the idea of the anti-fascist foundation as a myth), but are still unwilling, after unification,

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<sup>157</sup> Bridge, 35.

<sup>158</sup> Bridge, 36.

<sup>159</sup> Wolf’s *Medea* has been criticized as a “pale repetition” of *Kassandra* (34). See Bridge, 33-43 for more on the reception of *Medea*. Bridge argues that the “psychological exploration of myth in *Medea*” evidences a change in Wolf’s approach to individual responsibility in history (33).

<sup>160</sup> Charity Scribner, “August 1961: Christa Wolf and the Politics of Disavowal,” *German Life and Letters* 55, no.1 (January 2002): 65-66.



to accept any other truth about their Germany.<sup>161</sup> In *Stated Memory*, Thomas Fox examines East German responses to the Holocaust and argues that the GDR saw that by disconnecting itself from capitalist West Germany it “[. . .] had effected a clean break with fascism and the German past.”<sup>162</sup> The anti-fascist foundation of the GDR, which was based on a legacy of communist resistance, overshadowed questions of East German complicity with the Nazi regime. Although this “truth” about the foundational myth of the GDR was clear already in the GDR, Wolf and others carried on the “but still” fetish of the utopian possibility that the founding fathers had envisioned with the new East German state in the foundation of anti-fascism. Medea embodies the “process of liberation” to free herself from her own beliefs.<sup>163</sup> With Medea’s help Glauke tries to face the lie upon which Corinth was based, just as many texts by Eastern German intellectuals after 1989 showed an attempt at confronting the myth of anti-fascism upon which the GDR was founded—resisting the present revisionism of the GDR past. In *Medea*, at the same time, Wolf gives voice to Eastern German authors, who found it difficult to express more directly sentiments of loss after 1989 with regard to this utopian ideal and a better future.<sup>164</sup>

In her lament on the lost utopia of Colchis, Medea articulates for Wolf’s generation feelings about the loss of the ideal of what the GDR could have been. The people of Colchis, who are angry at having followed Medea to Corinth, whisper at the marketplace of a Colchis that has never existed and accuse Medea of having betrayed them:

Wenn sie auf dem Platz in ihrem Viertel, in dem sie sich ein Klein-Kolchis eingerichtet haben, das sie gegen jede Veränderung abdichten, ihre Köpfe zusammenstecken und in den Geschichten, die sie sich zuraunen, ein wundersames Kolchis erstehen lassen, das es

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<sup>161</sup> For a very informative overview of West and East German post-1945 historiography (in particular, the anti-fascist foundation of the GDR), see for example, Thomas C. Fox, *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1999).

<sup>162</sup> Fox, 9.

<sup>163</sup> Resch, 129. Wolf actually refers to Cassandra with this phrase, but this “process of liberation” applies also to Medea here.

<sup>164</sup> Volker Braun writes of this loss of utopia in his poem *Das Eigentum* (1990): “Was ich niemals besaß wird mir entrissen. Was ich nicht lebte, werd ich ewig missen.”

auf dieser Erde niemals und nirgends gegeben hat. Es wäre zum Lachen, wenn es nicht so traurig wäre, schrie ich Lyssa an. Du siehst nur, was du sehen willst [. . .].<sup>165</sup>

This passage harks back to those former East Germans who no longer regarded unified Germany as the paradise that East Germans had imagined West Germany would be during their years of oppression in the GDR. In this *Klein-Kolchis*, the Colchis refugees have separated themselves from the new home of Corinth and instead tell great stories of the past in Colchis, of *ein wundersames Kolchis* [. . .], *das es auf dieser Erde niemals und nirgends gegeben hat*. They resist the present. Even though some realize the past was not the utopian home but instead an imaginary utopia, they still have a positive memory of it—of the imaginary utopian Colchis. By forming this *Klein-Kolchis*, they have resisted integration into the new land. They have not given up their past, *but still* are holding on to their utopian ideal. Wolf addressed this need, in 1990 in her “Zwischenrede,” for such utopian thinking and for not allowing a lived past and ideal to fade away from public discourse in the new Germany:

Wer wird es auf sich nehmen, Widerspruch anzumelden gegen bestimmte menschliche Konsequenzen eines Wirtschaftssystems, dessen Segnungen verständlicherweise jetzt von den meisten herbeigesehnt werden. Auch mag—kaum wage ich es jetzt auszusprechen—ganz allmählich ein Bedürfnis nach einem utopischen Denken wieder wachsen, das sich aus dem Alltagsleben heraus entwickeln müßte, nicht aus der Theorie. Kurz: Die Literatur wird leisten müssen, was sie immer und überall leisten muß, wird die blinden Flecken in unserer Vergangenheit erkunden müssen und die Menschen in den neuen Verhältnissen begleiten.<sup>166</sup>

Wolf’s comment speaks to the German memory contests after 1989. Literature has the role of providing the multiple perspectives of memory that are absent in the “official” record.

In its nostalgic reconstruction of the past, of the utopian ideal, *Medea* indicates a step towards letting go of the past. While *Medea* allegorically treats the shaming resulting from the accusations charged against Wolf and others of the literary intelligentsia of the GDR (as scapegoat) in the first years of unification, it provides an avenue for Wolf to address Western

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<sup>165</sup> Wolf, *Medea. Stimmen*, 69-70.

<sup>166</sup> Wolf, “Zwischenrede,” 21.

revisionism of the ideological project of the GDR. This “resistant relationship to the present” (Hirsch and Spitzer) allows for a utopian perspective now positioned towards the future, instead of getting mired in melancholic recollections of a lost, imagined utopian past. A productive relationship to the past is uncovered in *Medea*, but the process of mourning has not been completed. Interestingly, before this process of mourning becomes more productive in Wolf’s final text, *Stadt der Engel*, Wolf’s book *Leibhaftig*, published six years after *Medea*, uncovers a more regressive relationship to the GDR past—indicating the non-linear relationship of the mourning process.

### **Melancholic Inability to Mourn: *Leibhaftig* (2002)**

Wolf’s text written a decade after unification reveals a protagonist who attempts working through the past, but when she ultimately fails, her separation from the past must be performed by an outside force, i.e., the connection to the past must be cut out surgically, allegorized through the removal of an abscess on the protagonist’s body. *Leibhaftig* begins with an anonymous protagonist beset with stomach pain and high fever in an ambulance on her way in 1988 to an East German hospital, and the story continues tracking her stay in the hospital while doctors try to find a cure for her illness, originally manifested as appendicitis. In contrast to the role of illness (feverish moments) in *Medea* which help the protagonist uncover the truth, Wolf’s use of illness in *Leibhaftig* can be viewed as a medium through which she recalls and works through past GDR memories. As Uwe Wittstock argues Wolf has already used the metaphor of sickness in her earlier works as coded messages from the body to the head, which tries to avoid self-questioning: “Es [Erkrankungen] waren und sind für sie [Wolf] so etwas wie verschlüsselte

Botschaften des Körpers an den denkfeigen Kopf.”<sup>167</sup> Through illness the individual gains understanding of herself. The health condition of the protagonist mirrors that of the GDR in 1988 (that of a degenerating state) as well as the condition for those committed, if critical, socialists, who, in the events leading up to 1989, would need to separate themselves from that imaginary socialism in order to avoid endless melancholia after 1989. Through the protagonist’s dreams, either under anesthesia or simply arising from her feverish state, readers follow the memory work and the ensuing coming to terms with the lost utopian socialist past and the absence of the anti-fascist foundational myth of the GDR.

In her article “Illness as a Metaphor: Christa Wolf, the GDR, and Beyond,” Carol Anne Costabile-Heming argues that Wolf employs the metaphor of illness in a positive way and, thus, through sickness, the protagonist will be able to let go of her past. Costabile-Heming regards *Leibhaftig* as “the logical next step in her [Wolf’s] confrontation with the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Indeed, this time, she appears to bid farewell to the past.”<sup>168</sup> I agree with Costabile-Heming in her assertion that Wolf, in *Leibhaftig*, seems to “bid farewell to the past.” However, the word “seems” is the key terminology here. The metaphor of illness in *Leibhaftig* actually shows that Wolf’s text serves a deeper function than just bidding farewell to the past. The text shows both the on-going difficult struggle with letting go and the difficulty the individual has in deeper inspection of the self, here, more specifically the attachment to the project of utopian socialism and the regrets accompanying a failed ideological dream.

Costabile-Heming’s analysis of Wolf’s metaphor of illness in *Leibhaftig* underscores the project of mourning that I put forth in this chapter. Costabile-Heming writes that “[. . .] the protagonist hints at the root of the infection, its namelessness. Only when the infection receives a

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<sup>167</sup> Uwe Wittstock, “Die Botschaft des Körpers,” *Welt Online*, February 23, 2002, <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article375703/Die-Botschaft-des-Koerpers.html> (accessed December 12, 2012). Wittstock is referring to Wolf’s earlier works, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* and *Kindheitsmuster*.

<sup>168</sup> Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, “Illness as a Metaphor: Christa Wolf, the GDR, and Beyond,” *Symposium* 64, no. 3 (2010): 203.

name (like a baptism) can the protagonist consciously fight against it and heal herself. The fact that her illness remains nameless at this point symbolizes that the protagonist is not quite ready to confront her fears directly.”<sup>169</sup> Costabile-Heming’s examination of the role that naming plays in healing supports Wolf’s earlier comments regarding an interruption in *Selbstbefragung*. Owing to public criticism in the early nineties, her generation was unable to perform the necessary *Selbstbefragung*—without a self-questioning, the individual cannot reach an understanding of her past. Astrid Köhler argues that in *Leibhaftig* “[. . .] wenn sich in der Protagonistin ‘allmählich (. . .) die Einsicht herausgeschält (hatte), daß man nur entweder sich selbst aufgeben konnte, oder das, was sie ‘die Sache’ nannten (L, S. 158), dann ist damit nicht nur die aus dem DDR-Slang bekannte ‘Sache des Sozialismus’ gemeint. Es steckt darin die Frage nach dem Umgang mit Utopien überhaupt.”<sup>170</sup> The protagonist’s sickness is the result of coming to terms with this loss in utopia—with naming what has been lost. Wolf’s protagonist shows the struggles to name the specific loss after 1989, i.e., to figure out, as Freud writes of the melancholic, “what it is she has lost” in the lost object of an imagined socialist utopia (or even in utopian thinking itself) and that she has a right to mourn the loss.

The protagonist of *Leibhaftig* has not achieved the peace that the protagonist in Wolf’s last book *Stadt der Engel* demonstrates. In *Stadt der Engel*, in a conversation with the protagonist, her guardian angel explains that it does not matter if she committed her life to an erroneous project (i.e., an erroneous ideological concept), but instead what matters was the intentions behind the dedication and dream: “Wäre es möglich, daß ich um einen banalen Irrtum so sollte gelitten haben? Angelina erklärte kategorisch, das spiele keine Rolle. Gemessen

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<sup>169</sup> Costabile-Heming, 212.

<sup>170</sup> Astrid Köhler, “Christa Wolf. Was ist das Dieses Zu-sich-selber-Kommen des Menschen?” *Brückenschläge: DDR-Autoren vor und nach der Wiedervereinigung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2007), 43.

würden nur Gefühle, keine Tatsachen.”<sup>171</sup> Similar to Costabile-Heming, Stephan Maus underscores the role of the unnameable in Wolf’s *Leibhaftig* as well: “Denn natürlich geht es von nun an darum, dennoch Zeugnis abzulegen von einer Reise in das Reich des Unsagbaren. Christa Wolf stellt sich die Aufgabe, das schwer Formulierbare zu benennen und lädt damit auch den Leser ein, sie an diesem Anspruch zu messen.”<sup>172</sup> *Leibhaftig* is a melancholic introspection into the GDR past and into the role the individual played within it. As Maus writes, the protagonist’s sickness in *Leibhaftig* is due to a “chronischer Nabelschau.”<sup>173</sup> The melancholic has internalized her energies, refusing to place her focus on another object, and in this state the individual becomes hollow (like the protagonist’s abscess) and exhibits low self-worth—identifying even more with the object and questioning an erroneous dream instead of mourning the loss of utopian imaginings (“bidding farewell to the past”).

According to Julia Hell, “*Leibhaftig* thematizes ruin and decay—the decay of a protagonist, of her body, of her state and of a narrative form.”<sup>174</sup> Wolf repeats the decay of the GDR state in 1988 through the decaying body of the protagonist in her story *Leibhaftig*; however, I argue that in Wolf’s narrative, although we find representations of the protagonist’s decaying body, the protagonist, an East German, cannot be healed without the aid of emergency room doctors who cut out the abscess. She metaphorically cannot let go of the object (the desired (im)possible utopian socialism) on her own. Rather than the metaphor of decay, it is a metaphor of extraction that functions as the interpretive framework for the text’s engagement with the past. Using illness as a metaphor or as a psychosomatic symptom is nothing new to Wolf or literature

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<sup>171</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel*, 413.

<sup>172</sup> Stephan Maus, “Kassandra im Kernspintomographen,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, March 20, 2002.

<sup>173</sup> Maus, 5.

<sup>174</sup> Julia Hell, “Loyal Dissidents and Stasi Poets, Sascha Anderson, Christa Wolf, and the Incomplete Project of GDR Research,” *German Politics & Society* 20, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 86.

in general.<sup>175</sup> The utopian dream was an identity marker for the writers of this generation and after 1989 this dream was negated. The more the newspapers and other media outlets attached this generation to the failed ideological project of the GDR, the more it would identify with this project (or internalize the medial projection being associated with it). The metaphor of sickness exemplifies this inner struggle with letting go of the utopia they invested their lives for and replace it with a new idea—dealing with unresolved conflicts, “unbewältigte Konflikte.”<sup>176</sup> The GDR afforded a space for potentially realizing a utopian socialist state, even if actualizing this vision had by the writers’ own admission become less and less likely after Wolf Biermann’s expatriation in 1976.<sup>177</sup> The protagonist’s sickness in *Leibhaftig* shows a melancholic confrontation with the outcome of this dream—still not realizing that the hope that utopian thinking and dreaming affords has been lost. The lost object has been internalized into the protagonist, into her body, and has formed an abscess, slowly destroying her body.

Three years after publication of *Leibhaftig*, in a 2005 interview with the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, Wolf was asked the question, “Wann haben Sie von der DDR Abschied genommen?” In this interview, Wolf addresses her feelings of pain/grief that she had in 1968 towards the loss of the GDR that she had envisioned. She expresses that she reexperienced this “*Phantomschmerz*” again after unification, that is, the pain of having had something and then losing it, but still feeling the pain after the object’s absence:

Der letzte Zeitpunkt, die DDR mit Reformen wirklich zu verändern, wäre im Jahr 1968 gewesen. Aber dann haben die Russen den Prager Frühling niedergeschlagen. Es war vorbei. Nach der Wiedervereinigung stellte sich kurz eine Art Phantomschmerz ein, unter

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<sup>175</sup> Illness has been utilized as a metaphor in literature for centuries. In her *Illness as a Metaphor*, Susan Sontag, however, argues against such use of sickness as a metaphor for problems in society. See Susan Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1977).

<sup>176</sup> Michael Opitz and Carola Opitz-Wiemers, “Tendenzen in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1989,” *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2008), 668.

<sup>177</sup> See Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 254.

anderem deshalb, weil ich die Abqualifizierung der DDR einzig unter dem Begriff Diktatur als zu undifferenziert empfand. Aber auch dieser Schmerz ist vergangen.<sup>178</sup>

With the presence of phantom pain (caused by public discourse), it is difficult for the subject to realize the object's absence and to mourn its loss. Only through the realization of a specific loss (i.e., the impossibility of the socialist imaginary) can the individual "cut off" herself from this loss and overcome the pain, even if only a phantom pain. In this interview three years after *Leibhaftig*, Wolf addresses the role that time plays in the ability to realize pain. In experiencing this pain, loss subsides and the individual eventually responds more relaxed to past accusations and disavowals regarding a lived past.

Wolf's protagonist, who has to have abscesses cut out of her flesh in order to survive, symbolizes at once the excising of the utopian dream and the forgiving of the self (for the consequences of having held onto the utopian socialism for so long during the GDR) that these writers have to perform to truly begin with the politics of mourning of the GDR and end the state of melancholia. Wolf writes: "Die Patientin fragt Kora [her anaesthesiologist], ob der Chefarzt, der Professor, sich wohl bewußt ist, daß er sie beschädigt, ihr ins Fleisch schneidet, zu Heilungszwecken, gewiß, das Bösartige aus ihr herausschneidet, weil sie selber es nicht schafft, sich seiner zu entledigen."<sup>179</sup> The protagonist's realization mirrors former East Germans who must let go of their utopian dream (and of feelings of guilt for holding onto the socialist utopia as writers within the GDR amidst acts of oppression by the SED state) to survive in unified Germany, although *someone else* must cut it out of them. Unlike her works that exhibited feelings of displacement and nostalgia during the nineties towards the utopian object, Wolf's work now shows a melancholic reaction of self-reproach exhibited by her protagonist towards the object of the past. Only through an outside force, or cure, can she be healed of her illness.

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<sup>178</sup> Kammertöns, Hanns-Bruno und Stephan Lebert, "Bei mir dauert alles sehr lange," *Zeit Online*, September 29, 2005, <http://www.zeit.de/2005/40/Wolf-Interview> (accessed December 10, 2012).

<sup>179</sup> Christa Wolf, *Leibhaftig* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2009), 127.



Otherwise she will stay endlessly attached to the wished for utopia and her role within that imaginary—a lost utopia that through the phantom pain experienced after unification indicates a continued presence.

In the process of mourning, the subject successfully separates herself from the object or ideal, that is, she realizes that the lost object is different than herself and can then let go. Unlike her earlier post-1989 works, Wolf's *Leibhaftig* does not fetishize the object of socialism, a defense mechanism employed by the ego to combat feelings of anxiety after loss. Rather her protagonist's struggle with illness exposes the incomplete separation of the libido by former East Germans from the object of socialism. The object of utopian socialism has not been recognized as different, i.e., recognized for its flaws or for incapability to be realized, and still presents itself as able to provide for the self. Thus, the subject remains in the pleasure of melancholia with the coded message of sickness the only means to convince the individual of any inadequacy of the lost/absent object. The protagonist's health deficiencies reflect the absence of economic, political, and social health not only in the 1988 GDR but also in unified Germany in 2002.<sup>180</sup> The doctor explains to the protagonist why she feels so sick: "weil Ihnen wichtige Stoffe fehlen...Magnesium fehlt, Calcium. Eisen. Phosphor. Zink. Alle Mineralien. Wir müssen Sie erst allmählich wieder aufbauen."<sup>181</sup> Just as the protagonist's body is failing, so too is the utopian hope for Eastern Germans in the unified Germany of 2002—the socialist imaginary is fading away from ever becoming a reality in any form. In this manner, *Leibhaftig* reveals the dystopia of unified Germany as seen through the eyes of the East German literary critical writers.

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<sup>180</sup> Former Western Germans who are now dissatisfied with the neo-liberal, capitalist *Marktwirtschaft* of twenty-first century Germany lean towards the old *Sozialstaat* of the Federal Republic during the 1970s. Günter Grass not only discusses this present dissatisfaction with the economic situation in Germany in the *Nachwort* in the collection of essays *In einem reichen Land*, but he also calls to task the constitution of the FRG, which exclaims the equality of all men, the "Wohl der Allgemeinheit," which, for some, is not being realized in unified Germany. See *In einem reichen Land: Zeugnisse alltäglichen Leidens an der Gesellschaft*, 629.

<sup>181</sup> Wolf, *Leibhaftig*, 23.

In her socialist realist works before 1989, Christa Wolf often used the trope of illness to portray the protagonist's real condition of health after years of "real" socialism working against the healthy body of the "socialist hero." At the 1991 annual conference of the German Cancer Society Wolf presented a lecture entitled "Cancer and Society," in which she revealed her personal thoughts on disease. In her lecture, Wolf discussed the importance of looking at the "Why" of an illness instead of just at the "What," citing the work of Viktor von Weizsäcker, who felt it was necessary to ask the questions, "Why at this time and why in this way?" when addressing a patient and the disease.<sup>182</sup> In *Leibhaftig*, Wolf's protagonist attempts to uncover the reasons for the failings of the socialist state, the "why," while her doctors try to diagnose her illness—focusing on the "what." In this examination of the "why" the text focuses on an attempt at exploring the self—the self-realization that Günderrode already refers to in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979) and that the auto-biographical protagonist mentions in "Begegnungen Third Street" (1995).<sup>183</sup>

Margit Resch expresses that writing for Günderrode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is "a form of self-realization, and thus, it is life sustaining" and that sickness carries with it the means to heal—but "it is merely a question of will to activate either one, the illness or the remedy."<sup>184</sup> The protagonist's feverish illness in *Leibhaftig* provides her the avenue to remember past events but also indicates the decision the protagonist must make—to either activate the illness or the remedy, i.e. either to let go or continue attaching energy to that utopian ideal. Through sickness the protagonist shows the unconscious inner conflict of trying to "name" what has vanished—what exactly East Germany lost by joining West Germany. Through illness, the protagonist

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<sup>182</sup> Christa Wolf, "Cancer and Society," *Parting from Phantoms*, trans. Jan van Heurck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 103.

<sup>183</sup> Wolf, "Begegnungen Third Street," 29.

<sup>184</sup> Resch, 117, 110.

begins the journey of *Selbstbefragung* (the mourning process to be accomplished in her later work, *Stadt der Engel*).

Combining Wolf's concerns with understanding an individual's state of mind during illness and the necessity for the patient to have hope in order to be able to overcome the illness, one could also view Wolf's desire for a third path as the hope that is to sustain the first generation during the sickness of melancholia, suffered after 1989 in unified Germany—holding onto utopian thinking. But this hope for a realization of the socialist Germany of the third path in unified Germany in some modified manner (or from a new memory perspective on the GDR past which would allow her generation the identity as critical voice) keeps her and others of the East German intelligentsia from accepting or supporting another version of a social-democratic, unified Germany, leaving her and others to continue in the mode of melancholic sickness. This response resounds with what Wolfgang Emmerich writes of the melancholic:

Von der Trauer unterscheidet die Melancholie als “krankhafte Disposition” aber, daß das verlorengegangene Liebesobjekt “durch eine halluzinatorische Wunschpsychose” festgehalten wird: anders gesagt: daß der Melancholiker den Verlust des Objekts seiner Begierde (in diesem Fall eines Ideellen, des utopischen Sozialismus) nicht wahrhaben will. [. . .] Die Folge ist nach Freud, möglicherweise, eine “außerordentliche Herabsetzung des Ichgefühls”; eine tiefe Kränkung, die sich im schlechtesten Fall in Ressentiment verwandelt. [. . .] Statt sich der Realitätsprüfung zu stellen, zieht sich das frustrierte Ich auf sich selbst zurück und sichert seine Bestände.<sup>185</sup>

Christa Wolf and others dedicated to humanistic socialism of the third path need this narrative of utopian socialism (which justifies their socialist past) to hold on to for survival after unification.

Wolf's *Leibhaftig* represents a regression to a mode of melancholia in the early 2000s. The generation of authors of the East German literary intelligentsia has not accepted the why of the “cancer” or illness yet—instead it must be cut out of them by an outside source. The regression toward a melancholic disposition reveals that the process of self-realization and of mourning is never linear, but upholds Judith Butler's notion of the simultaneity of melancholia and mourning.

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<sup>185</sup> Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 460.

The last lines of *Leibhaftig* leave readers wondering what Wolf is trying to say about unified Germany, a sense of Eastern identity, and unified German cultural memory of the GDR past. In the last two lines, the protagonist's husband tells her that she should not cry: "Du sollst ja nicht weinen." She then responds, "Das, sage ich, steht auch in einem Gedicht."<sup>186</sup> This line is also found in the late romantic composer Gustav Mahler's third symphony, whose text is adapted from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806), poems collected by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano. Of the romantic writers, Margit Resch writes that, unlike their predecessors who "were still able to live in a 'utopia,'" the romantic writers experienced only opposing dualities and had to deal with alienation from society.<sup>187</sup> According to Resch, these romantic writers, in order to cope with alienation and frustration at not being able to "infuse reality with the spirit of the imagination, and [ . . . ] make their disillusionment heard," chose to escape into "other worlds: exile, insanity, illness, death."<sup>188</sup> Already during the GDR, Wolf drew on romanticist texts and writers (for example, *Kein Ort.Nirgends* and *Der Schatten eines Traumes*). The romantics dealt with the issues of self-expression and of reconciling the contradictions of life that writers in East Germany also found themselves attempting to reconcile although with difficulty in the public sphere owing to the external interference of the SED state. According to Resch, Wolf's *Kein Ort.Nirgends* is a "great prolepsis completing the poetic image of continuity, kinship, and shared pain between the early Romantics, to whom she [Wolf] alludes as 'precursors,' and the artists of the late twentieth century, whose fate is implied in the last sentence [of *Kein Ort.Nirgends*]."<sup>189</sup> Here in *Leibhaftig*, Wolf's return to romanticist writers indicates a certain impasse in the process of working through loss. In this repetition, Wolf's text hides behind the romantic writers and

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<sup>186</sup> Wolf, *Leibhaftig*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 178.

<sup>187</sup> Margit Resch, 107.

<sup>188</sup> Resch, 107.

<sup>189</sup> Resch, 109.

avoids the probing into her inner secrets, avoiding the *Selbstbefragung* her protagonist calls for in “Begegnungen Third Street.”<sup>190</sup>

Just as the writers of German romanticism retreated into nature and art, so too does Wolf’s protagonist in her next work retreat into nature in order to overpower present feelings of loss and letting go of the internalized libido (the melancholic identification with the object of utopian socialism). This retreat into nature hints at a new phase in the mourning process—by transferring the focus onto another object, nature, the individual enters into a productive completion of the mourning process—a step towards facing the “*unvermeidlichen Schmerz*” which will be experienced in confronting and freeing the self from the “*Unaussprechliche*.”<sup>191</sup> By retreating into nature, there is still a resistant relationship to the present (and to a completed *Selbstbefragung*), but the individual finds a healthy solution to the melancholic loop in the otherworld of nature.

### **Process towards Letting Go: *nuancen von grün* (2002)**

Wolf’s later work, *nuancen von grün* (2002), a mixture of text and photos of nature, returns to the question of what remains of the GDR in unified Germany from the perspective of more than a decade after the changes in 1989, i.e., what remains of a socialist, anti-consumerist Germany, which aimed at more equality and security for all. In the last portion of the book, which is a type of epilogue and which Wolf signs with her name and date as indication of authorship, Wolf allows readers to draw parallels between her text and her position towards the GDR in 2002. Interestingly, this book was published the same year as *Leibhaftig*, serving

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<sup>190</sup> For more on the relationship between writers in the GDR and writers of the romantic period, see Annette Firsching, *Kontinuität und Wandel im Werk von Christa Wolf* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1996). According to Firsching, literature in the GDR in the 70s began to explore the period of romanticism for its consideration of the function of literature in society (126-27). “Schreiben, das bedeutet für Kleist wie für Gunderrode, den in der Realität nichterfüllbaren Wünschen und Träumen literarisch zur Existenz zu verhelfen” (130).

<sup>191</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel*, 271-72.

perhaps as a continuation in the melancholic mourning process after the illness has been excised. Remedy has now been selected over illness, owing to an outside force (i.e. from the doctors excising the abscess). Now, in *nuancen von grün*, energies turn to nature—a retreat away from ideological connections—similar to the romanticist writers who retreated into nature to escape the opposing dualities of self and society.

Through her protagonist in *nuancen von grün* Wolf intimates the futility of her generation of critical writers who dedicated their lives to literary activism and fighting for an ideal. She wonders whether another career path would have been better:

War es nicht falsch, sogar lächerlich, ihre Zeit derartig zu verschwenden. Sollte man nicht, anstatt den Ofen abzuwischen, die Sätze notieren, die einem im Kopf herumgingen. Andererseits: Wieso sollten die Sätze wichtiger sein als ein sauberer Ofen. Und hatte sie nicht, dachte Ellen, in den letzten ein, zwei Jahrzehnten einen großen Teil ihrer Zeit falsch angewendet.<sup>192</sup>

While reading *nuancen von grün*, astute readers of Wolf's works cannot help recalling images and passages from Wolf's *Sommerstück* and "Juninachmittag" (1965), in which she already treated the trope of nature as a place for escape from disillusionment and for self-questioning.<sup>193</sup> Jan in *Sommerstück* questions his life and career as well, wondering if he should have become a "forest warden, living with nature rather than with books, [. . .]."<sup>194</sup> Margit Resch argues that Wolf's summer home in Mecklenburg, which was a retreat away from the city of Berlin, served as a space of inner exile where she could work through the "painful emotions of stalemate and official suppression."<sup>195</sup> According to Resch, these places of escape in nature were places where

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<sup>192</sup> Christa Wolf, *Nuancen von grün* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2002), 11 and Christa Wolf, *Sommerstück* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1989), 22.

<sup>193</sup> See, Margit Resch, "Idyll and Catastrophe," *Understanding Christa Wolf: Returning Home to a Foreign Land* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 141. About "Juninachmittag," Resch writes: "Within the skillful framework of the garden idyll and the sinister provocations from the outside, the narrator contemplates this mundane world and her own role in it" (51).

<sup>194</sup> Finney, 117.

<sup>195</sup> Resch, 138.

Wolf and other colleagues could “‘preserve their integrity’ and ‘think themselves free.’”<sup>196</sup> The summer home was a “free space.”<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, the above passage from *nuancen von grün* was originally in *Sommerstück* and then repeated word-for-word over twenty years later in *nuancen von grün*. Unlike the repetition in *Leibhaftig* which indicated a regression into melancholia, the repetition here of an earlier passage, in which the protagonist performs a self-questioning, into a more recent text focused on self-examination, serves as a step forward in the process of mourning. The repetition indicates a working through of the past and of past actions/inactions. The escape to nature now provides a space for the protagonist to “think herself free” from the attachment to utopian thinking.

After reading Wolf’s personal remarks at the end of *nuancen von grün*, readers can only wonder if Wolf regrets having spent so much time fighting for an ideological utopia through the written word:

‘Ins Grüne’ fliehen, zu schwärmerischer Naturbetrachtung etwa? In Stille und Ruhe, die nur dort noch zu finden waren? Einen Rückzug unternehmen, Politik und also Einmischung in gesellschaftliche Prozesse meiden? Resignieren? Sich abfinden? Das nun gerade nicht. Aber manches andere ist nicht ganz von der Hand zu weisen. Eine Sehnsucht nach Ruhe wird man wohl in diesen Texten finden, einen Wunsch, sich nach Phasen der Erschöpfung in der Natur zu regenerieren. Natürlich kamen wir nicht zurück in verlorene Paradiese. Die Austreibung aus dem Paradies hatte endgültig und für alle stattgefunden.<sup>198</sup>

This reflection expresses acceptance of the final chapter on utopia but demonstrates the desire to still be involved in societal and political concerns and not lose a place as a critical voice.

Wolf regards the role of nature in *nuancen von grün* differently than in her earlier works. In her pre-1989 work *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979), Wolf employed the metaphor of nature as well, as the space, or rather, the means through which the individual could question her subjectivity in

<sup>196</sup> Resch, 138.

<sup>197</sup> Christa Wolf, *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* (Köln: Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1994), 214, quoted in Margit Resch, “Idyll and Catastrophe,” *Understanding Christa Wolf: Returning Home to a Foreign Land* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 138.

<sup>198</sup> Wolf, *Nuancen von grün*, 155.

the GDR and realize the meaning of existence. Here, nature is the new utopia for Wolf's generation. It is not a place for self-reflection in the sense that her pre-1989 works used nature as a means to contemplate the individual's place in society. Unlike in *Sommerstück*, where the retreat into nature was a space for Wolf's protagonist to come to terms with her guilt regarding (at least implicitly) her involvement with the *Stasi* and with the "self-indulgences" of the East German intelligentsia during the GDR, the idyll of nature in *nuancen von grün* is used instead as a space for escape for the individual in unified Germany.<sup>199</sup> Gail Finney provides a productive reading of *Sommerstück* by pointing to an analogy between Wolf and Russian playwright, Chekhov. Finney argues that reading *Sommerstück* through its references to Chekhov brings out the "gap between intention and action."<sup>200</sup> In this application of analogy, according to Finney, Wolf implicitly treats her *Stasi* involvement: "By revealing—through the analogy of Chekhov—the dark underside of their apparent rural idyll, she strives to come to terms with her own personal guilt and with that of the East German intelligentsia at large for injustices perpetrated by their regime."<sup>201</sup> Unlike the application of nature in *Sommerstück* to deal implicitly with the past, nature in *nuancen von grün* is explicit in its usefulness to serve as a space to focus energy and to begin a process of letting go of past.

Wolf uses nature after 1989 as a position from which she can remember her past with *Gerechtigkeit* and to escape to a place where she can rest and not be questioned as to her role as a voice of political dissent in the GDR. Notably, even by foregrounding this attempt to retreat from any kind of public blame and finger pointing, the connection to the past project is still in a

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<sup>199</sup> Finney, *Christa Wolf*, 118. Finney argues that *Sommerstück* focuses on the "apolitical nature of life in the country" and that through the intertextual reference to the Russian playwright, Chekhov, Wolf is striving to come to terms with her own guilt and that of other members of the East German intelligentsia.

<sup>200</sup> Finney, 116. Finney writes: "Reading the novel through the lens of its references to the Russian playwright [Chekhov], both direct and indirect, illuminates the nature of its cultural criticism and thus highlights Wolf's implicit response to the questions that were to arise in the controversy around *Was bleibt?*" (115). *Sommerstück* was written around 1982-83 and *Was bleibt* was originally written in 1979.

<sup>201</sup> Finney, 118.



way part of the text in its rejection of a confrontation with the past. Overall, however, through this retreat into nature, object libido is cathected from the old object of fixation and placed on the new object of nature. In this decision to retreat to another, seemingly idyllic, restful place instead of taking on the past in all its complexity, Wolf's text shows a move closer to the needed *Gelassenheit* to truly let go of the past, even if this comes at the price of an increased state of isolation.

### **Productive Mourning/Letting Go: *Stadt der Engel* oder *The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010)**

Wolf's last work, *Stadt der Engel*, reads as a final response to, and working through of, the inner secrets that the protagonist in "Begegnungen Third Street" refers to:

Nun ist ja Schreiben ein Sich-Herarbeiten an jene Grenzlinie, die das innerste Geheimnis um sich zieht und die zu verletzen Selbsterstörung bedeuten würde, und es ist auch der Versuch, die Grenzlinie nur dem wirklich innersten Geheimnis zuzuerkennen, und die diesen Kern umgebenden, teils mit ihm zusammenhängenden anderen 'Geheimnisse', die oft nur Peinlichkeiten, schwer einzugestehende Verfehlungen sind, nach und nach von dem Verdikt des Unausprechlichen zu befreien, also nicht Selbsterstörung, sondern Selbsterlösung zu betreiben.<sup>202</sup>

According to Thomas Anz, Christa Wolf's response in March 1991 in *Zeitschleifen*, (broadcast with the *Deutsche Fernsehfunk*) to the attacks against her in the public media surrounding what later became known as the *Literaturstreit* stressed the paralyzing effect of such public denunciation on the author's "*Selbstbefragung*" and "*Eigenständigkeit der Selbstkritik*."<sup>203</sup> In essence owing to public criticism, the author could not carry out the necessary self-reflection and questioning needed in those immediate years of unification and instead retreated away to protect herself.

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<sup>202</sup> Wolf, "Begegnungen Third Street," 29.

<sup>203</sup> Anz, ed., *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf.* "Der Literaturstreit im vereinigten Deutschland," 239.

Wolf's *Stadt der Engel* performs the journey of *Selbstbefragung* that was suspended owing to those public attacks—this suspension manifesting itself in the various responses of displacement, nostalgia, and melancholia on the way to a final response of mourning. The return to and alteration of the earlier material from “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992” and “Begegnungen Third Street” in her last work indicates this process. In “Begegnungen Third Street,” there is no mention or explanation of what Tony (the friend who is obsessed with loss and who resides in the *Druckkammer*) has learned from her residence at a nunnery. In *Stadt der Engel*, Wolf recycles and repeats this story of Tony dedicating almost an entire page to her revelations. In this work of mourning, the friend, now named Sally (not Tony), realizes that in order to overcome her loss, she has to get to know herself (*selbst kennenzulernen*) instead of focusing on her ex-husband (on the object). Sally realizes that the key to finding her way out of the *Druckkammer* lies within herself and not with others. The protagonist in *Stadt der Engel* works through the paralyzing “*Besessenheit von ihrem Verlust*” that was left unaccomplished in “Begegnungen Third Street.”

The various encounters while in the US at the Getty-Center aid the protagonist now in this process of “looking inside” the *overcoat of Dr. Freud* that shields her from delving into her inner secrets. In Wolf's novel, the overcoat serves as a type of fetish that protects the protagonist from outside criticism (a *Schutzhülle*) and at the same time it suggests a blockage of *Selbstkritik* that must be worked through in order to mourn the past. The purpose of the overcoat of Dr. Freud is not to protect but, similar to the lining of the dress in Benjamin's metaphor of mourning, the inner lining of the overcoat is to aid the individual in the process of mourning, i.e., aid in performing a self-questioning that no longer allows for the internalization of what others assign (here, referring to Wolf and others of her generation of East German critical writers who were publicly attacked and assigned an identity of complicity in the nineties for their action or inaction

during the GDR). At the core of this absence of *Selbtskritik* is the nature of the “blinde Fleck” in oneself and in society, which does not allow for multiple memory perspectives, but instead supports and protects the hegemonic version of the past: “Jede unserer modernen Gesellschaften, die auf Kolonisierung, Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung begründet seien, müsse, um sich ihr lebenswichtiges Selbstbewußtsein zu erhalten, bestimmte Teile ihrer Geschichte ausblenden und sich möglichst viele Teile ihrer Gegenwart schön lügen. Aber eines Tages bricht alles zusammen, wenn man sich der Realität nicht stellt, [. . .].”<sup>204</sup>

In *Stadt der Engel*, the protagonist revisits her different pasts (Third Reich, GDR) and her complicity in the past, giving many of the previous quotations from earlier works now in new variations or with new perspectives to show the process of mourning. On the last page of the book, the protagonist finds the freedom from the past that the protagonists in her earlier post-unification works had been searching for (and avoiding). Age and historical distance now allow the outlook of *Gelassenheit*—no longer concerning oneself with what others (the public) voice and believe. The protagonist now releases her attachment to the past (*Selbstbefragung*) and departs on a journey with no planned direction. Flying above Santa Monica and Malibu in a dream, she asks her guardian angel, Angelina:

Müßte ich jetzt nicht eine große Schleife fliegen? Sagte ich. Zurück auf Anfang? Mach doch, sagte sie [Angelina, her guardian angel] ungerührt. Und Jahre Arbeit? Einfach wegwerfen? Warum nicht? Das Alter, Angelina, das Alter verbietet es. Angelina hatte zum Alter kein Verhältnis. Sie hatte alle Zeit der Welt. Sie wollte ihren Leichtsinn auf mich übertragen. Sie wollte, daß ich diesen Flug genoß. Sie wollte daß ich hinuntersah und, abschiednehmend, mir für immer einprägt die großzügig Linie der Bucht, den weißen Schaumrand, den das Meer ans Ufer spülte, den Sand streifen vor der Küstenstraße, die Palmenreihen und die dunklere Bergkette im Hintergrund. Und die Farben. Ach, Angelina, die Farben! Und dieser Himmel. Sie schien zufrieden, flog schweigend, hielt mich an ihrer Seite. Wohin sind wir unterwegs? Das weiß ich nicht.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel*, 108.

<sup>205</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel*, 414-15.

This passage at once begs the question of whether the protagonist wants to simply return home to Germany or return home to the earlier utopian thinking and start over—or perhaps choose a new path in life as Ellen in *nuancen von grün* wondered. Although the destination is left open, the protagonist is clearly following an unhampered life, which signals a release for this first generation. Now that she is aging, the protagonist realizes that what she has written will be that which remains of her after she dies. In a discussion with her husband on the phone, she ponders life's legacy: "Ist dir eigentlich klar, daß der ganze Inhalt deines Kopfes mit verlorengelht, wenn du stirbst?—Freilich. Außer dem, was du aufgeschrieben hast. Ach. Dieser Bruchteil. Es scheint dich nicht zu stören.—Ich denke nicht andauernd daran.—Ich schon, seit kurzem. [. . .]. Wir werden älter."<sup>206</sup>

*Stadt der Engel* is the last word by Wolf to those critics of her generation of East German intelligentsia who stayed in the GDR instead of emigrating after 1976. This telephone conversation leads the protagonist to recall a few sentences later in the text the demonstration at the Alexanderplatz in the fall of 1989 and her role, as a writer in the peaceful protest. In recalling that day, the protagonist repeats the phrase "KEINE GEWALT" twice, reminding readers of the peaceful protests that brought an end to the GDR: "Und das Wunder, daß die Losung KEINE GEWALT im ganzen Land, von jederman befolgt wird."<sup>207</sup> Wolf's use of this recollection addresses those detractors of her generation of critical writers, accused of not having shown "hard" resistance during the GDR. There is no longer a need to escape to nature to "think themselves free" as in *nuancen von grün*. They now can "think themselves free" wherever (and, more importantly, in the public sphere). The passage defends the soft resistance of GDR writers whose role as critical voice influenced the peaceful demonstrations in the autumn of 1989. In

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<sup>206</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel*, 410-11.

<sup>207</sup> Wolf, *Stadt der Engel*, 411.

answer to her laborious self-questioning, the literary word and the writer's role within the public sphere in the GDR *did influence* the end to the SED state.

## Conclusion

In her post-unification works, (“Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992“[1994], “Begegnungen Third Street” [1995], *Medea* [1996], *Leibhaftig* [2002], and *nuancen von grün* [2002]), Wolf's protagonists attempted unsuccessfully to reconstruct reality with utopian imaginations. Instead of releasing the attachment to utopian thinking and to a past identity as a critical voice, these early narratives demonstrate a response of displacement and internalization of the lost object, allowing outside forces, to prevent the individual's self-questioning of the past. In *Stadt der Engel* (2010) we find a final release of this attachment to the past—no longer expressing and internalizing the opinions of the public and of others. Due to age and historical distance, the preoccupation with concerns of the twentieth century, i.e., the dualities of fascism/antifascism, socialism/capitalism, society/individual, and so forth, has abated for Wolf's protagonist in her final work, *Stadt der Engel*. Although Wolf's last work exhibits a final response of release, her earlier post-unification works do not follow a linear process towards this end. Instead, as Wolf's post-unification works reveal, the process of melancholic mourning is both simultaneous and successive. Variants of the different modes—displacement, nostalgia, melancholia, and mourning—are at play in all of her texts to different degrees. Given this simultaneity, her works demonstrate an overall response of melancholic mourning by the first generation to loss after 1989, uncovering also the complex, heterogeneous nature of the process of engaging with the past and of memory itself.

## Chapter 2

### Second Generation (*Mauerkinder*): Discourse of Ambivalence

Homecoming does not signify a recovery of identity; it does not end the journey in the virtual space of imagination. A modern nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home, at once.

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 1995<sup>208</sup>

Perhaps the most universal symbol of GDR production is the *Trabant* (*Trabi*), a small fiberglass car that was manufactured in the VEB Sachsenring Automobilwerke in Zwickau, Germany, from 1957 until 1990. Only eight months after the fall of the Berlin Wall on July 25, 1990, construction of this GDR mass-produced automobile ceased, signaling the passing of the GDR era. The remaining *Trabis* after 1990 became symbols for the failures of East German industry. Over the last decade, however, more and more *Trabis* have been spotted in cities across Germany, illustrating what some scholars term a new appropriation of meaning for the old, undervalued GDR product, which has attained a sort of cult-status among *Ostalgs* in post-unification Germany.<sup>209</sup> Signifying this new symbolic value given to the *Trabi*, the firm *IndiKar* located in Zwickau has recently announced the production of a new environmentally friendly *Trabi* to be marketed by 2012 as a “city car” for potential buyers.<sup>210</sup> This improved version (still in the same shape as the original car) suggests a need to affirm a newly imagined Eastern German identity, inflected by things Eastern—asserting a sense of Eastern German particularism into

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<sup>208</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 50.

<sup>209</sup> See Daphne Berdahl, “Go, Trabi, Go!?: Reflections on a Car and its Symbolization over Time,” *Anthropology and Humanism* 25, no. 2 (2001): 131-41. Berdahl analyses the symbolic significance of the *Trabi* after 1989 and sees this ongoing interest in the car as revealing more than just *Ostalgie*—it reflects the overall process of unification and commemorative acts of memory after 1989. For more on *Ostalgie* and resurgent interest in East German material objects after 1989, see for example, Jonathan Bach, “‘The Taste Remains’: Consumption, (N)ostalgia and the Production of East Germany,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 545-65.

<sup>210</sup> See “Ein himmelblauer Trabant...,” *Tuchführung, das unabhängige Campus-Magazin der TU Chemnitz* 10 (2009): 7. This article was a part of a series of articles highlighting the city of Chemnitz (former Karl Marx Stadt in the GDR) and the surrounding area and the changes over the twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall. The new model will have an electric motor with solar battery power that will allow the car to run for 250 kilometers before needing to recharge.

post-unification Germany.<sup>211</sup> Anthropologist Daphne Berdahl explains this “business of *Ostalgie*” and the ways in which GDR products re-appropriate meaning “the second time around”:

Now stripped of their original context of an economy of scarcity or an oppressive regime, these products largely recall an East Germany that never existed. They thus illustrate not only the way in which memory is an interactive, malleable, and highly contested phenomenon, but also the processes through which things become informed with remembering—and forgetting—capacity.<sup>212</sup>

This re-assertion of meaning and re-presentation of the past, as seen in the recent renewed interest in, and modification of, old Eastern consumer goods and here specifically in the new and improved *Trabi*, indicates that the GDR past cannot be reduced to a single homogeneous memory narrative. Instead, the process of German unification is complicated, as revealed through the ambivalent post-unification narratives of individuals who were born in the GDR in the years between 1950 and 1965 and who grew up within the socialist state. In this chapter, this generation is referred to as the generation of the *Hineingeborene*.<sup>213</sup> The textual productions of this second generation of former East Germans reflect the complexity of post-unification memory struggles in inserting an Eastern German voice into the collective German identity, highly influenced by Western German cultural traditions.

Berdahl sees the act of re-producing and re-presenting East German consumer items as an essential part of the transition process of unification.<sup>214</sup> Through this re-presentation which provides an oppositional mode of memory, new insights into the complexities and the “workings

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<sup>211</sup> See Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 205. On this newly imagined and oppositional Eastern German identity manifested in reproduced Eastern consumer goods, Berdahl writes: “Ostalgic and similar practices reveal and contest at a particularly dynamic historical moment official master narratives of a united Germany by proposing an alternative vision of ‘Germanness’—of eastern German particularism and *Eigen-Sinn*” (205).

<sup>212</sup> Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” 198.

<sup>213</sup> The second generation of the *Hineingeborene* is comprised of those authors born after 1950 in the GDR. For more on this generation of the *Hineingeborene*, see Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literatur Geschichte der DDR*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), 401-17.

<sup>214</sup> Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” 205.

of hegemonic memory-making” in unified Germany can be discovered.<sup>215</sup> This second generation’s ambivalent relation to the GDR past reflects above all the overarching need by all three former East German generations to engage in a dialogue of loss with regards to a pre-1989 GDR identity (now retrospectively often imagined by many in post-unification discourse to have been a cohesive unifying experience). Although each generational narrative in this dissertation reflects a different discourse of loss regarding the GDR past, they all reflect a continuity of resistance towards revisionist post-unification discourses of the GDR past, albeit with different narratives (first generation—narrative of melancholic mourning; second generation—narrative of ambivalence; third generation—narrative of reappropriation; and the cohort cluster of the third generation—narrative of nostalgia).

The overarching narrative of ambivalent reflection as uncovered in the texts of the second generation provides a contrast to that of Christa Wolf’s first generation. At the same time they differ from those memory narratives of other Eastern Germans of the same age-related group of the *Hineingeborene*, who like Daniela Dahn construct either a melancholic memory of the past like that of the first generation or like Constantin Hoffmann support a West German memory narrative of socialist oppression for the GDR.<sup>216</sup> As is characteristic of memory in general, it is more difficult to see a homogeneous memory narrative in the texts of this generation compared to the texts by the first generation of East German intelligentsia, which could be partly due to the

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<sup>215</sup> Berdahl, 205-06. This term “oppositional mode of memory” is from Daphne Berdahl. According to Berdahl, an “[o]ppositional mode of memory refers to subjugated modes of memory”—these are non-hegemonic configurations of official history.

<sup>216</sup> Narratives provided by authors of the first generation (chapter 1) maneuvered through the various stages in attempting to overcome the experience of loss after 1989—first displacing any feelings of loss, then remembering the GDR past nostalgically, then melancholically, and finally releasing the attachment towards the lost imagined GDR utopian state. For a discussion of melancholy for writers of the East German intelligentsia (first generation) after 1989 see for example, Wolfgang Emmerich, “Status Melancholicus: Zur Transformation der Utopie in der DDR-Literatur,” *Literatur in der DDR: Rückblicke*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Spec. issue of *Text + Kritik: Zeitschrift für Literatur* (1991): 232-45.



nature of community and experience in the GDR.<sup>217</sup> After 1989 such an imagined homogeneous community centered around the socialist collective (as is generally perceived to be the case in the GDR) is no longer experienced in a post-GDR community, but instead many heterogeneous discourses and narratives arise that oppose “the very idea of a ‘stable’ text” or, in other words, a unified sense of one’s history.<sup>218</sup> Because of this lack of homogeneity of memory, the psychological modes for remembering the GDR past are manifold in the works by members of this generational group. The writers of the second generation do not share a similar ideological objective as did the writers of the first generation in the early years after 1945, i.e., that of building up the foundational narrative of anti-fascism. Instead members of this second generation were born into a new GDR after the pivotal events of 1954 and 1968. Political and cultural events in this period affected and influenced members of this age-related group differently. This chapter deals only with texts by those second generation writers whose literary productions after 1989 remember and “re-present” the GDR past specifically to highlight the ambivalent and heterogeneous nature of memory.

To explore the re-presentational constructions of identity associated with the second generation, I analyze post-unification works by Lutz Rathenow and Thomas Brussig. The two authors, partly owing to when they were born, manifest this ambivalence differently in their works. As Rathenow was born earlier in this *Hineingeborene-Generation*, he was more active as

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<sup>217</sup> Karen Leeder’s *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR* provides insight into why the narratives of the first generation of former East Germans resemble a more homogenous community of experience and memory than those of the following generations. According to Leeder, in the GDR the concept of a heterogeneous socialist collective was not possible, as any diversity of opinion would “jeopardize both the image of the successful and homogeneous socialist collective, but also the fluent or organic progress towards a Communist future.” Multiple experiences and relationships to the socialist state were not publicly accepted during the forty years of the GDR (even if, of course, they existed in reality). The state and its people, unified through the symbolic body of the state leader, was considered to be one unified collective—of identical beliefs in all spheres—private and public. See Karen Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 22 and Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

<sup>218</sup> Leeder is equating “text” to a person’s identity, work, and history. She is taking this connection from Volker Braun’s text “Nachruf” in which he writes, “Und unverständlich wird mein ganzer Text.” See Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR*, 3.

a writer in the GDR than was Thomas Brussig, who was around twenty-four when the Berlin Wall fell (Rathenow was thirty-seven). Because of his age, Rathenow had already established an identity of dissidence in the GDR. Rathenow was arrested twice by the age of twenty-eight for his literary works, reflecting this oppositional political positioning.<sup>219</sup> As a former GDR dissident, Rathenow's post-unification works (*Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall* [2005]; *Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten* [2006]; and *Der Liebe Wegen* [2009]) critically and reflectively respond to the political and cultural changes brought about by the events of 1989—thus, continuing a position of dissent even in unified Germany. As the South African psychiatrist David Cooper explains in his work, *Wer ist Dissident*, it is the role of intellectuals, “wo immer sie sich befinden mögen, die Dissidenz zum Ausdruck zu bringen, d.h. sich gegen die unterdrückenden Kräfte, die es in ihren eigenen Gesellschaften gibt, durch Worte und durch Taten aufzulehnen, die auf einer adäquaten Kenntnis der internationalen Realitäten gründen.”<sup>220</sup> Dissidence in Rathenow's post-unification works is directed toward the outcome of unification, i.e., to the economic and cultural changes of Eastern German places and values after 1989.

The collapse of the socialist state in 1990 also marked an end to the object upon which Rathenow and his fellow GDR dissidents had focused so much of their energies during the period of division. I argue that the absence of an identity of dissidence after the fall of the GDR is the reason why his works after 1990 reflect a return to this GDR identity by showing a resistance to a post-unification social world and by exposing the negative sides of unification just as his works exposed the negative sides of the socialist state during the Cold War.<sup>221</sup> Rathenow's continued

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<sup>219</sup> Because of his collaboration with a dissident literary group at the University of Jena after the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976, Rathenow was arrested and ex-matriculated. In 1980, after the publication of his book *Mit dem Schlimmsten wurde schon gerechnet* in West Germany, he was arrested once again.

<sup>220</sup> David Cooper, *Wer ist Dissident* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1978), 5.

<sup>221</sup> The term social world is from Mary Fulbrook. Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). She uses the term to elaborate on her

mode of dissidence exposes the lack of an oppositional memory toward the GDR past. His works show both the positive and negative outcomes of unification after twenty years of West German influence on Eastern political, economic, and cultural institutions. Rathenow's works exemplify the inquiring nature of the GDR dissident who has to sensitize himself towards social problems in a new society, similar to those East Germans who emigrated to West Germany during the Cold War division of Germany. Although Geoffrey Davis in his article "'Bloß kein Berufs-Dissident werden!': Zum Phänomen der DDR-Literatur in der Bundesrepublik," focuses mainly on the state dissident in the GDR and not on the dissident members of the Prenzlauerberg sub-culture art scene, his observation of these state dissidents such as Christa Wolf and Stefan Heym does give insight into the nature of the dissident in a new system.<sup>222</sup> About Wolf Biermann's first "West German" text after expatriation by the GDR, Davis writes that the former state dissident living then in the BRD (in a sense in exile from the GDR) had to make "Versuche, sich für bundesrepublikanische Probleme zu sensibilisieren—die ersten Schritte auf der Suche nach einer neuen Thematik."<sup>223</sup> I argue that this attempt to find a new focus for writing within the new system exemplifies the essential nature of Rathenow's post-unification texts—a mode of critical reflection.

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notion of social generation. For Fulbrook, the social generation is the time through which a person lives and in which one interacts with others. Inside this "time" one is influenced by "age-related conflicts (rather than conflicts rooted in class, race, religion, gender, or other relevant attributes): for example, over life-style, leisure pursuits, sexuality, mutual duties and responsibilities relating to the care of the young or the old, and so on)" (6). The social world is the space in which individuals negotiate these common challenges facing their social generation such as economic depression, war, repression by dictatorial power, or radical social policies that interfere into their private lives.

People of different ages react differently based on life-experiences to certain problems arising in their social world.

<sup>222</sup> Let me make a distinction between the dissident literature of Wolf and that of the GDR dissidents like Rathenow. State dissidents such as Wolf and Heym voiced criticism but still worked within the constraints of the socialist state—upholding the state and its right to existence. Rathenow and his fellow members of the sub-culture art scene of Prenzlauerberg, on the other hand, expressed dissent toward the existence of the socialist state and any notion of reform.

<sup>223</sup> Geoffrey V. Davis, "'Bloß kein Berufs-Dissident werden!': Zum Phänomen der DDR-Literatur in der Bundesrepublik," in *Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler and Egon Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), 241. Davis also gives the example of GDR "exile" writer Thomas Brasch who wrote that the same societal concerns that confronted him in the GDR also confronted him in his new home of the BRD: "Ich mache hier für mich die enorm wichtige Erfahrung, daß viele der Erscheinungen, die ich in der DDR für DDR-typisch gehalten habe oder für spezifisch sozialistisch, mir jetzt wiederbegegnen: der Drang zur Reflexion etwa, der Mangel an Humor, die Abwehr gegen vieles, was den allgemeinen Normen nicht entspricht [. . .]" (241).

In his text, *Gewendet. Vor und Nach dem Mauerfall*, Rathenow writes of the dissident who, after 1989, longs for the past of rebellion: “Da ist der Dissident, der ständig gegen seinen Staat rebellierte und der sich nun nach Stunden des konspirativen Kämpfes zurücksehnt, während er die Formulare ausfüllt, die seine bildungspolitische Tagesarbeit begleiten. Immerhin hat er eine Arbeit, die er für wichtig halten kann, auch wenn sie ihn tief im Herzen langweilt.”<sup>224</sup> This statement from Rathenow fifteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall reflects the loss of a GDR identity of dissidence, which many East Germans such as Sasha Anderson, Gerald Zschorsch, Uwe Kolbe, and other members of the Prenzlauerberg sub-culture art scene embraced in the socialist state.<sup>225</sup> The dissident has a duty to confront societal ills in the new democratic state after 1989. Only a few pages later, Rathenow reveals why many of his generation respond to the present unified Germany (and towards the GDR past) with ambivalence: “Vielleicht haben viele in der DDR die Bundesrepublik zu sehr zur Utopie gemacht, um heute wirklich mit ihr klarkommen zu können.”<sup>226</sup> His post-unification texts which re-present past places in the GDR show the positive and negative changes over time in post-unification Germany. In one of Rathenow’s pictorial juxtapositioning of the past and the present in *Gewendet*, readers are confronted with such social change after unification. In the picture representing a pre-unification East Berlin, a drunken man is passed out in front of a store entrance. In the textual commentary

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<sup>224</sup> Lutz Rathenow and Harald Hauswald, *Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten* (Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2006), 3.

<sup>225</sup> For more on dissident writers of the Prenzlauerberg sub-culture art scene, see for example, Uwe Wittstock, *Von der Stalinallee zum Prenzlauerberg. Wege der DDR-Literatur 1949-1989* (München: Piper, 1989), 227-70 and Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literatur Geschichte der DDR*, 4th ed. (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), 396-434. Rathenow was one of the members of this group who stayed in the GDR even after being arrested in 1980—but published his works with West German publishing houses. Sasha Anderson left the GDR in 1986 for West Berlin and Uwe Kolbe moved to West Berlin in 1987 with a visa issued by the East German government. See Wittstock, 232. See also Robert von Hallberg’s *Literary Intellectuals and the Dissolution of the State: Professionals and Conformity in the GDR*. In his book von Hallberg gives insight into critical writers of the GDR as well as insight into the dissident writers of the Prenzlauerberg sub-culture art scene. Specifically as representative of this nonconformist literary scene of the GDR in the eighties, he examines the case of Sascha Anderson (whom he personally knew and interviewed for his book) who after 1989 was revealed to have been a Stasi informant. Robert von Hallberg, *Literary Intellectuals and the Dissolution of the State: Professionals and Conformity in the GDR*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>226</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 7.

on the picture of the same store front post-unification (which is now bombarded with commercial advertisements), Rathenow raises the question of whether the store owner now after unification would have the compassion to let a drunk man sleep off his hangover in front of his store:

“Derselbe Laden fünfzehn Jahre später. Das Angebot hat sich beträchtlich erweitert, der Hauptgewinn, der beim Lotto winkt, hat sich vervielfältigt, und der Inhaber würde mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht zulassen, dass ein Betrunkener vor seiner Ladentür liegt.”<sup>227</sup> In the GDR, Rathenow’s criticism of society made him a dissident. Now, in a democracy, he is a critical mind reflecting upon societal problems.<sup>228</sup> Rathenow discusses the reflective nature of his post-unification works: “In der gelähmten DDR-Gesellschaft war Beschleunigung etwas Subversives, in der labyrinthischen Beschleunigungsgesellschaft ist eher das Innehalten, Meditieren, Reflektieren oppositionell. So musste sich die Art meines Schreibens verändern, wollten Harald Hauswald und ich die subversive Sicht nicht aufgeben.”<sup>229</sup> Rathenow’s reflective, and at times ambivalent, narratives about post-unification society after 1989 indicate this new representation of the East (a memory narrative critical of both post-unification Germany and of the GDR), but they also display a reconciliation with the new topic of writing in post-1990 Germany and with a general lost GDR identity of dissidence.

While Thomas Brussig’s treatment of the GDR in the early nineties ranged from modes of melancholia to confrontations with the parent generation (the anti-fascist founding fathers of the GDR) and his own generation, his two recent works, *Leben bis Männer* (2001) and *Schiedsrichter Fertig* (2007), evidence a new positioning toward the pre-1989 social world, at times defending those who did not perform acts of resistance in the public sphere in the GDR.

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<sup>227</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 99.

<sup>228</sup> In a 1996 interview with *Deutsche Welle* editor Werner Herzog, Rathenow even says that he finds disobedience better than conformation. See “Schriftsteller im Gespräch. Interview mit Lutz Rathenow,” *Deutsche Welle*, May 1996, [http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,2432843,00.html?maca=de-podcast\\_zeitreise-schriftsteller-5224-xml-mrss](http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,2432843,00.html?maca=de-podcast_zeitreise-schriftsteller-5224-xml-mrss) (accessed March 13, 2013).

<sup>229</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 81.

Brussig's later post-unification texts do not reflect ambivalence towards the present as do Rathenow's texts, but instead suggest attitudes of ambivalence towards the pre-1989 social world of the GDR past—providing a more nuanced picture of the East. In this consideration of the past, Brussig's protagonists resemble the modern nostalgic who is homesick and sick of home at the same time—they are ambivalent (see quote at the beginning of chapter). Like Rathenow's post-unification texts, Brussig's texts do not present a typical, clear-cut nostalgic mode of memory, as the protagonists are not longing for a lost home. However, because they are using the past home to reflect on the present, I argue for reading their works through the lens of reflective nostalgia. Reflective nostalgia permits the modern nostalgic, who is both critical and contemplative, a position of ambivalent reflection on the past and on the present and, thus, allows for an examination of changes in memory of the GDR past.

In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym lays out two forms of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. As reflective nostalgia, on the one hand, focuses on the journey home in literary form, rather than on an actual return to, or restoration of, home, the past can be used to examine the state of the present, and, particularly, the relationship between past, present, and future. Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, focuses on an actual return home, to a reconstruction of the national past to cure present anxieties and questions of belonging. Boym writes:

What drives restorative nostalgia is not the sentiment of distance and longing but rather the anxiety about those who draw attention to historical incongruities between past and present and thus question the wholeness and continuity of the restored tradition...restorative nostalgia has no use for the signs of historical time—patina, ruins, cracks, imperfections.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 44-45.

Reflective nostalgia is “enamored of distance, not of the referent itself” and provides a mode that encourages reflective considerations of the GDR past and of unified Germany.<sup>231</sup> Home is not idealized and longed for—the *distance that shows the changes over time* is idealized, however. In reflective nostalgia, there is no longing to restore a lost past: the past is instead a lens through which one can reflect on the present as is seen in Brussig and Rathenow’s texts that draw attention to “historical incongruities between past and present.”<sup>232</sup> Boym’s notion of reflective nostalgia provides a lens through which to read Brussig’s and Rathenow’s narratives to uncover how they produce textual meanings, recognizing nostalgic remembrances as a much-needed mediation between past and present. Such nostalgic reflection which focuses on the changes over time (on reflection) and not on a longing for the past (traditionally understood in nostalgic remembrances) are similar to Andreas Huyssen’s notion of urban palimpsests, which help the individual imagine past alternatives to the present: “But an urban imaginary in its temporal reach may well put different things in one place: memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is. The strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses, and heterotopias.”<sup>233</sup> The ambivalent reflection facilitated by this original nostalgic reflection addresses the previous simplifications of the East German past to Cold War clichés in dominant discourse.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Boym, 50. Boym is citing Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 145.

<sup>232</sup> Boym, 44-45.

<sup>233</sup> See Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7. Huyssen discusses the role that the past played in the past and that it now plays in the present. Unlike the role that the past played in the nineteenth century nation states, for example, i.e., to legitimate a state in order to aid the country and its people in looking towards a shared future, the role of the past now (in the present twentieth and twenty-first century) serves to aid in reflection on the present (not to draw on national similarities and shared historical events) which will then help move the state towards the future.

<sup>234</sup> For more on such clichéd language that puts East-West into simplistic binaries, see Frederike Eigler, “Jenseits von Ostalgie: Phantastische Züge in ‘DDR-Romanen’ der neunziger Jahre,” *Seminar* 40, no. 3 (September 2004): 192; Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, “The new Germany on the Screen: Conflicting Discourses on German Television,” in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 2000); Michael Brie, “The Difficulty of Discussing the GDR,” in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 13. Understanding the Past—Managing the Future: The Integration of the Five New Länder into the Federal Republic of Germany*, ed. Margy Gerber and Roger Woods (Boston: University Press of America, 1994), 1-

### Authors: Background, Similarities, Differences

In following Karen Leeder's bifurcation of the Prenzlauer Berg sub-culture art scene into two factions, the political and the aesthetic (Lutz Rathenow and Sascha Anderson as leaders of the two groups, respectively), I have chosen also to focus on two very different types of authors from this *Hineingeborene*-Generation: one the very political Rathenow, a former GDR dissident writer, who presently serves as *Sächsischer Landesbeauftragter für die Stasi-Unterlagen*, and Thomas Brussig, who is known for his humorous literary satire and was not a member of East Berlin's literary sub-culture of the Prenzlauerberg art scene.<sup>235</sup> Although Rathenow was a member of this underground art scene, his pre-1989 texts were, despite also being aesthetically rebellious, more politically focused. Only beginning his literary activity after unification, Brussig's earlier works have gained much scholarly attention since 1990 (*Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* [1999], *Helden wie Wir* [1995]), while Rathenow's body of work and Brussig's later works (*Leben bis Männer* [2001] and *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* [2007]) have been much overlooked by scholars.<sup>236</sup> Writers such as Sascha Anderson, Uwe Kolbe, and Durs Grünbein, who were more active in the aesthetic faction of the Prenzlauerberg art scene, have received considerably more attention than Rathenow for their works before and after 1989, possibly owing to the fact that their writings are thought to have greater literary merit.<sup>237</sup> A case

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23; and Peter Bender, *Unsere Erbschaft: Was war die DDR-was bleibt von ihr?* (Hamburg: Luchterhand Verlag, 1992).

<sup>235</sup> For more on the two factions of the Prenzlauerberg art scene, see Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR*, 36.

<sup>236</sup> Although not much scholarly attention has been given to Brussig's *Leben bis Männer* and *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, Williams Collins Donahue has looked into the apolitical dimensions of Brussig's *Leben bis Männer*, situating Brussig's work in a category of literature showing a normalization of German politics after 1989. See Williams Collins Donahue, "'Normal' as 'Apolitical': Uwe Timm's *Rot* and Thomas Brussig's *Leben bis Männer*," in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 181-94. For Donahue, apolitical indicates a "reconfiguration of the political" in the sense that literature after 1989 is no longer "bound by the Cold War politico-cultural agenda." Although Brussig's text does not reveal a Cold War agenda (making it apolitical and thus normalized), his text still reveals difficulties in modern societies in coming to terms with the GDR past.

<sup>237</sup> See for example, Ruth J. Owen, *The Poet's Role: Lyric Responses to German Unification by Poets from the GDR* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001). Owen argues, for example, for reading Grünbein's poetry "without reference to other



study approach that closely analyzes overlooked works of two very different authors of the same generation demonstrates that the concept of the narrative of ambivalence can be more generally applied to this generation of former East German writers. In summary, examining these overlooked texts provides additional insight into the project of unification and can allow us to evaluate better its impact on those born in the GDR (*Hineingeborene*) in the early years of the socialist state as well as upon those born after the construction of the Berlin wall. Merely reducing their post-1989 literary contributions into categories of nostalgia and melancholia does not adequately portray post-unification GDR memory struggles.

Born in Jena in 1952, Rathenow became actively engaged in the sub-culture of the Prenzlauerberg art scene, which wanted to free literary language from political and socialist propaganda and the adaptation and double-speak of earlier East German writers such as Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, and Volker Braun.<sup>238</sup> Feeling that these authors took positions either for or against socialism in their works, the writers of the Prenzlauerberg art scene strove to leave the interpretation of meaning to their readers. These writers developed a new language that, ironically, was criticized originally in both the East and the West as being too artistic and not political enough. As Wittstock writes of these dissident writers, "...ihre größte Angst ist es, in 'die sprache der sprachregelung' zu verfallen, die 'kollektivlüge der herrschenden sprache' zu übernehmen."<sup>239</sup> Therefore, these writers did not use any of the political or stereotypical terms of socialist misinformation in their texts, but instead broke away from boundaries and taboos by

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ex-GDR poets" thus separating Grünbein's pre-1989 poetry from that of his fellow Prenzlauerberg poets such as Anderson and Schedlinski and freeing him of any Stasi-connections or criticism during the *Literaturstreit* of the early nineties. See also Alison Lewis, *Die Kunst des Verrats. Der Prenzlauerberg und die Staatssicherheit* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2003).

<sup>238</sup> Although I am not specifically focusing on Harald Hauswald whose pictures accompany Rathenow's texts, his biography should also be addressed. Hauswald was born in 1954 in Radebeul (Sachsen) and has worked as an independent photographer in Berlin since 1978.

<sup>239</sup> See Wittstock, *Von der Stalinallee zum Prenzlauerberg. Wege der DDR-Literatur 1949-1989*, 227-28. The quotations in single quotation marks with lower case lettering are cited by Wittstock from Egmont Hesse, ed., "Sprache & Antwort," *Stimmen und Texte einer anderen Literatur aus der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1998), 116.

creating a new aesthetic of language. Rathenow is considered the leader of the political literary faction of the Prenzlauerberg underground.

Because he was born in Berlin in 1964, several years after the construction of the wall, Brussig does not have a biography of upheavals characteristic of the political dissident Rathenow. After completing an apprenticeship in construction (*Baufacharbeiter*) in 1984, Brussig was then able to complete his *Abitur* in 1990. Because of this very different biography in the GDR, Brussig's works exhibit different conflicts and difficulties in reaction to the political rupture of 1989. In contrast to Rathenow, Brussig's works use the past as an imaginary construct in which to re-present for today's reader, the ambivalent reality of the GDR past. His early textual productions, in the immediate years after unification, use irony and humor to give readers insight into the struggle for an East German collective memory.<sup>240</sup> Centered on working through the past, these texts raise questions regarding individual guilt and responsibility for the existence and continuation of the socialist state until the fall of the Berlin wall. This use of irony ameliorated the effects of early nostalgic and melancholic post-1989 Eastern German texts that depicted the GDR as a past to recover and relive—to restore.<sup>241</sup> Such half-ironic Ostalgie writers were reacting against the nostalgia, depicted in films and TV shows such as “Die Ostalgie-Show” on ZDF, “Ein Kessel DDR” on MDR, “Die ultimative Ost-Show” on Sat 1, and “Die DDR-Show” on RTL, in the years after 1990.<sup>242</sup> This ironic tone disappears in his later texts where the sport of soccer serves as a metaphor for German unification, mirroring the complexities of the nation

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<sup>240</sup> As Boym points out, reflective nostalgia allows for an ironic and humorous reflection of the past. See Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 49.

<sup>241</sup> Brussig responded to the *Ostalgie* phenomenon in an interview with the *Berliner Zeitung* with the following: “Ich war lange Zeit ein Gegner der DDR-Nostalgie, weil die dazu benutzt wurde, sich der nötigen Auseinandersetzung nicht zu stellen. Aber ich glaube mittlerweile, dass Nostalgie ein normales menschliches Empfinden ist. In der Erinnerung wird jede Vergangenheit schön und warm und heimlich-- Opa fand auch den Ersten Weltkrieg prima...Es liegt nicht an der DDR, sondern in der Natur des Erinnerns, dass die DDR plötzlich so viele gute Seiten hat.” See Silke Lambeck, “Herr Brussig, was halten Sie von Nostalgie? Der Schriftsteller über Heimat, trügerische Erinnerungen und den glücklichsten Moment im Leben,” *Berliner Zeitung*, November 6/7, 1999, <http://www.thomasbrussig.de/Seiten/Interviews/inte6.htm> (accessed December 28, 2012).

<sup>242</sup> I am taking the term “half-ironic Ostalgie” from Birgit Dahlke. See Birgit Dahlke, “The Right to Melancholy. Narratives from the GDR by Younger East-German Authors of the Nineties,” (unpublished manuscript).

and of the individual's struggle with coming to terms with the GDR past in a new way. Instead of humor serving as a tool through which to question public imaginations of the past (nostalgic imaginations), the metaphor of soccer now serves as a means to voice an oppositional mode of memory. In the sport of soccer, there are no replays or recalls of referee decisions, but instead, the referee has complete power and the crowd has none—this one voice overrules the majority. Through this conditioning (knowing that the referee decides everything), the players know to test the referee's boundaries at the beginning of the game to see what the referee will be like in his later calls. The sport of soccer provides a new tool to question public imaginations of the past—to question those imaginations that do not allow for understanding how individuals tested the boundaries of the socialist system. The more recent texts *Leben bis Männer* and *Schiedsrichter Fertig* thus aid in gaining a more nuanced understanding of East German complicity.

Highlighting currents in present post-GDR memory, a number of television stations have produced shows that remember life in, and reflect on, the GDR. Aired in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and of unification day, these programs reveal a continued interest in the German media in remembering, albeit with a different approach (i.e., now one of reflection). On October 2, 2011, the German (Sachsen) television station MDR aired “Damals nach der DDR.”<sup>243</sup> Cultivating a greater sense of reflective nostalgia, this 1 ½ hour program interviewed seven Eastern Germans (former *Ministerpräsidenten*) about their lives before and after 1989. The *Ministerpräsidenten* for the Eastern German states during the period from 1989-2002 also gave their personal reflections on the state of things in Germany twenty years after unification. Those interviewed presented ambivalent positioning in their remembrances of things during the GDR—remembering both positively and negatively. This work of nostalgic reflection and re-presentation signifies a sharp departure from the

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<sup>243</sup> See “Damals nach der DDR,” *ARD*, October 2, 2011, [www.mdr.de/damals](http://www.mdr.de/damals). This website page now includes a new page for a DDR dictionary as well as other pages for DDR quizzes on TV shows or cars.

sentimentalized memory of the GDR noted in the programs in the preceding paragraph and in films like *Good Bye Lenin!* This reflective nostalgia works against “historical numbing” by introducing ambivalence.<sup>244</sup> This shift toward ambivalence is critical in understanding the ways in which former East Germans of the second generation think about their past in the present. Analysis of the ambivalence depicted in the reflectively nostalgic works of Rathenow and Brussig is the key to understanding German unification successes and failures.

### **Lutz Rathenow**

Rathenow’s ambivalent post-unification texts/photos reveal, on the one hand, an experience of loss with regard to a position of dissidence and of rebelling against a state. This reaction is one of a political activist—no matter what type of ideology is in power. The political activist always tries to bring injustices to light. The true political activist can never be secure in complacency. Karen Leeder writes of the dissident as follows: “for where on one level the ‘security’ (the ambivalence is already there) of regulated schemes and patrolled boundaries provides an anchor for identity and meaning—even, perhaps especially, in opposition to those boundaries, on another level that security can become crashing and silencing imprisonment.”<sup>245</sup> The GDR political dissident worked against homogeneity, which would not allow for multiple communities and experiences. This performance of GDR dissidence continues after 1990 in Rathenow’s literary productions—just not exclusively now towards the GDR, but rather towards post-unification Germany (which he labels the “schöne neue Warenwelt”) and its capitalistic

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<sup>244</sup> I am citing Anke Pinkert who uses this term “historical numbing” to describe recent German films depicting the war and the immediate postwar past that present a German victimhood and block out “historical responsibilities in favor of more intimate, often sentimentalized points of view.” See Anke Pinkert, *Film and Memory in East Germany* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 7. She explains the necessity to explore “counterforces” that work against such “historical numbing.” For this approach to history, Pinkert cites Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History: Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), 40.

<sup>245</sup> Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries*, 5.

dimensions.<sup>246</sup> Although the oppressive political state of the GDR no longer exists, the oppressive materialistic new Germany does in its absence, as these pictorial re-presentations reveal. He alludes to this incongruity in his juxtaposition of a picture of an apartment building in the Prenzlauerberg district of Berlin from 1984 (somewhat run-down and in need of renovation) with the same apartment building, now renovated, in 2005. Twenty years later this run-down East German district has become one of the trendiest neighborhoods of Berlin and the apartment costs reflect this new side of this former East German spot. Those who used to live here in the GDR can not afford to live in this same area now in unified Germany: “An kaum einer anderen Stelle hat sich die ehemalige DDR so stürmisch gewandelt wie in Prenzlauerberg...wo es sich früher alternative lebte—wie hier in der Ackerstraße sind die Wohnungen luxussaniert und von den ehemaligen Bewohnern nur noch wenige zu finden.”<sup>247</sup> In the new system of capitalism, the writer is slowly recovering his dissident voice and his lost position of confrontation before 1989.

Harald Hauswald’s pictorial works as well as Rathenow’s texts, which contrast texts and pictures from the pre-1989 GDR with those from post-1989 unified Germany, re-produce and re-present objects and pictures from the East. However, these visual images in Rathenow’s works are still not the real past, but merely re-presentations of the past.<sup>248</sup> These productions create an imaginary GDR in order to comment on the present unified Germany. Rathenow’s pictorial and textual works at times “re-present the center” (the imaginary coherency of the GDR), but at other times they re-evaluate the present. Julia Hell writes: “With post-democratic totalitarianism, we see the reemergence of an attempt to revitalize the body’s *symbolic* function and to *re-present the center*”—an idea that is somewhat similar to Daphne Berdahl’s notion of the symbolic function

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<sup>246</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 3.

<sup>247</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 21.

<sup>248</sup> For the rest of this dissertation, the two works by Hauswald and Rathenow will be referred to sometimes simply as Rathenow’s text as he “authors” and “directs” this reportage, consisting of Hauswald’s photographs and Rathenow’s texts.

of the *Trabi*, which re-presents, or re-asserts an Eastern Germanness.<sup>249</sup> But what is interesting is what this textual and pictorial re-presentation of the past reveals for unified Germany and the contestation of German public memory.

Following Pierre Nora and his notions of remembering, we can say that Rathenow's texts, which accompany Harald Hauswald's photos, become public sites of GDR remembrance. Nora writes of the recycling character of memory:

For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial—just as if gold were the only memory of money—all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications.<sup>250</sup>

Rathenow's and Hauswald's texts, *Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall* and *Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten*, produce exactly this kind of recycling of meaning of which Nora writes and which blocks the work of forgetting the GDR past.

In his article "Freud and the Semiotics of Repetition," Robert Rogers discusses the significance of the recycling character of memory and, more specifically, the significance of "repetition with difference."<sup>251</sup> On the significance of repetition (for him in relation to Freud's repetition-compulsion), he writes:

Considered as signification, repetition is always informational because it is not random. Repetition is always representation and re-presentation is always representation. [. . .] As such, the repetition provides a signpost on the avenue to self-knowledge. But this form of repetition is not pure repetition. It is not sameness. It is a similarity within a field of difference. It is the recognition of both the similarity *and* [his emphasis] the difference which enables the analyst to avoid counterproductive kinds of repetition in the future.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany*, 28-29.

<sup>250</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History. Les Lieux des Mémoire," *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring 1989): 19.

<sup>251</sup> Robert Rogers, "Freud and the Semiotics of Repetition," *Poetics Today* 8, no.3/4 (1987): 584.

<sup>252</sup> Rogers, "Freud and the Semiotics of Repetition," 584.

This re-presentation of photos and texts in Rathenow's works gives meaning to the past in the present. This repetition of the past with difference signifies meaning in the present and aids in turning focus towards a shared future, post-unification, which includes other memory perspectives of the GDR past. In his work, *Gewendet* (2006), photos of spaces in the GDR (streets, cafes, buildings) are juxtaposed with photos of the same spaces after 1989—evidencing a discourse of “repetition with difference” which highlights an ambivalent relationship of the pre-1989 social world to the post-unification social world. In the other two books (*Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt* [1987] and *Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall* [2005]), the same pictures are “literally” repeated (or left out) and published under a new title, with some new text additions, English translation, and a few new photos. The book *Ost-Berlin* (2005) was originally published in 1987 in West Germany (as *Berlin-Ost*) and since then, the text has been reworked and previously unpublished photos have been added in the later 2005 edition of the book. Rathenow informs readers that this new edition of the book is different from the original 1987 edition because of its new title, format, layout and photos. However, the added, previously unpublished photos are still ones taken in the 1980s—re-presenting a pre-1989 GDR social world in post-unification Germany. In the 2005 edition of *Ost-Berlin*, Rathenow writes that he wanted to republish this book since a) it was not available in 1987 in the East as it was only published in the West and b) because this new publication will open up a new space for discussion and memory of the GDR past.<sup>253</sup> There is no English translation of the texts in the 1987 edition but in the 2005 edition everything is translated into English. From the title it seems that the intended audience for the 1987 edition was exclusively a West German audience, whereas the intended readership for the 2005 edition is an international one, as even its complete title is given both in English and in German (*Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall/Life before the Wall fell*). This re-

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<sup>253</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Gewendet*, 5-9.

presentation stands in contrast to his book, *Gewendet*, which juxtaposes pictures of a pre-1989 East Berlin with those of a post-1989 Eastern Berlin—showing the changes over time.

Hauswald's pictures show the "sign of historical time," and, thus, do not allow for a response of restorative nostalgia. The pictures of sites in the former Eastern part of Berlin pre- and post-1989 highlight these "scars of history" and a passing of time instead of trying to restore the past. They show change over time—whether it is positive or negative change is left to the viewer. Such ambivalent writing was typical of the GDR dissident. Creating "Assoziationsräume" so that readers could make their own associations and generate their own meanings out of the text was characteristic of the dissident writer of the sub-culture Prenzlauerberg art scene. Regarding the role of dissident literature, Wittstock writes: "Eingezwängt in eine geschlossene Gesellschaft, kommt es diesen Autoren [Prenzlauerberg dissident writers] vor allen Dingen darauf an, mit ihren Texten Assoziationsräume zu schaffen, die frei sind von jeder Bevormundung und die verschüttete Phantasie des Lesers herausfordern."<sup>254</sup> By showing both sides of change, positive and negative, readers are allowed, and encouraged, to form their own meanings about unification and questions of identity in unified Germany—a continuity in form for Rathenow and for critical writing after 1989. Through this ambivalence the past dissident nature of the GDR underground can resurface and the old GDR identity of dissidence and polarization can be experienced again. The "lost" dissident identity is then actually not lost (like Bhaba's colonial subject's identity), but rather is, through this productive ambivalence (my term), in a continual process, similar to Stuart Hall's transformation process of cultural identities.<sup>255</sup> After unification, instead of playing with

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<sup>254</sup> See Wittstock, *Von der Stalinallee zum Prenzlauerberg: Wege der DDR-Literatur 1949-1989*, 229.

<sup>255</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*, 103. I take my term productive ambivalence from Paul Cooke's application of the term "productive hybridity" from Stuart Hall in order to explain the relationship of East Germans to the new space of unified Germany. Cooke suggests, for the case of East Germans after 1989, that instead of using "Bhaba's image of a potentially provocative 'hybrid' subject, which can have a destabilizing function, we start to find examples of Hall's 'productive' identity formation" (110-21). In the colonized relationship there is a



language, Rathenow adds an extra element into the “*Assoziationsraum*” by playing with photographic images of places in East Germany before and after 1989.

***Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall***

Rathenow’s unique pairing of text with actual photos helps make this recycled *lieu de mémoire* effective as a counter-memory to those textual productions that perform any *ostalgic* rewriting of the socialist past, presenting a positive memory of the socialist state. At the same time they also serve to resist the hegemonic mode of memory of post-unification discourse.<sup>256</sup> Through their images and texts, Rathenow and Hauswald use pre-1989 photos to confront those who ostalgotically revise history, and, with the post-1989 photos, they also challenge a hegemonic historical memory narrative of the GDR as solely an authoritarian and oppressive regime—a cultural memory that negates the East German historical and cultural past, which included the positive, private everyday experiences.

In the introductory essay at the beginning of the 2005 edition, Rathenow attempts to explain the choice for the new title (*Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall/Life before the Wall fell*), which is different from that of the 1987 edition, *Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt*, whose intended audience were people residing in West Berlin and in the FRG. Rathenow writes in this new 2005 introduction: “Wir liebten Ost-Berlin und lehnten die Regierung ab, die es als Hauptstadt eines 1949 neu gegründeten Staates ansah. Insofern sind Text und Fotos gleichzeitig

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sense of ambiguity between the colonized and the colonizer resulting in a reaction of ambivalence to both the present and the colonized individual’s past. Cooke explains that “in certain aspects of east German culture, and indeed even during moments of such defiant ‘writing back,’ we also find a more ambiguous relationship amongst easterners both to the west and to their own past experience of living in the GDR”(17). He asserts that through this ambiguity the “very metaphor of colonization itself” can be treated, and this is a productive form of hybridity for the colonized individual (17).

<sup>256</sup> See for example, Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald, “A Decade of Cultural Disunity: Diverging Discourses and Communicative Dissonance in 1990s Germany,” in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 1-22, for more on divergent memory discourses in post-unification Germany.

Beleg einer lustvoll gelebten Ost-Identität und Ausdruck oppositionellen Verhaltens gegen den Staat.”<sup>257</sup> This sentence reveals best the ambivalence toward the GDR past. The photos not only serve to resist public positioning of East Berlin as merely the capital of the socialist GDR, but they also serve as proof in post-unification German public discourse that there was such a thing as a happily experienced sense of Eastern identity pre-1989. In the following one hundred twenty five pages, the author allows readers a glance into his life in East Berlin in 1987 and in the years before 1987. However, a closer look at both editions shows that, throughout the 2005 edition, readers encounter omissions and additions to the 1987 edition. Through this “repetition with difference” readers critically reflect on the GDR past and on the project of unification—the goal of the true dissident who in any regime has a critical mind towards injustices, whether political, economic, or cultural.

One passage that invites readers to reflect on the project of unification by observing what is left out or re-presented in the text/photo is on the realities of “apartment squatting” and of “apartment hunting” in the GDR. Rathenow writes of his friend, Hauswald, who after secretly moving to Berlin in the late seventies, had then secretly moved into an unoccupied apartment (“leer stehende Wohnung”). Hauswald then exchanged this apartment for a better one at the next chance. In the 2005 edition, Rathenow uses the verb *eintauschen* to describe this method of choosing a new living space, “diese erstbeste Bruchbude bei nächster Gelegenheit gegen eine günstigere Bleibe eintauschen.”<sup>258</sup> In the 1987 edition, this passage reads: “Und diese erstbeste Bruchbude bei nächster Gelegenheit mit einer günstigeren Bleibe zu wechseln. Und das so lange, bis man sich heimisch fühlt.”<sup>259</sup> Not only has the verb *eintauschen* (2005) been changed from *wechseln* (1987), but the last sentence has been omitted from the 2005 edition. In the 1987

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<sup>257</sup> Harald Hauswald and Lutz Rathenow, *Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall* (Berlin: Jaron Verlag, 2008), 5-6.

<sup>258</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, 29-30.

<sup>259</sup> Harald Hauswald and Lutz Rathenow. *Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1987), 26.

edition, one changes apartments until one feels at home, “heimisch.” In the 2005 edition, the need to feel “heimisch” is absent, reflecting an unconscious sentiment that a sense of home will not come about in the present Berlin of unified Germany, or perhaps the omission refers to the post-1989 sentiment of an impossibility of feeling at home in the GDR. Rathenow does not specify those ambiguous meanings for readers, but rather leaves the interpretation open.

Rathenow’s text presents the ambivalence of unification and addresses the aspects of life in the GDR as compared to reality for Eastern Germans in unified Germany. Through such an omission, his text raises the question whether unified Germany has become home to Eastern Germans.

The image of the vacant and dilapidated apartment building on Knaackstraße (page 34 in *Ost-Berlin*) also conveys to readers the reality of “apartment squatting” that occurred during the GDR, which many third generation Eastern Germans, and, of course, Western Germans, cannot fathom as having been a reality for the older generation of East Germans. Through his text, Rathenow apprises readers of the reality of the picture. Instead of only the viewer filling in what the picture leaves out, Rathenow also fills in what has been omitted. In this sense, Rathenow assists his audience, through his textual commentary, in a confrontation with the present even though he casts matters from a position of ambivalence. Rathenow continues to expose the reality of the difficulties of obtaining an apartment legally in the GDR, and more importantly obtaining an apartment that was in appropriate living conditions—which resembles the political dissident of the GDR who wrote about the failures of the socialist regime. For those former East Germans, who, in reaction to present political and economic situations in Germany, begin remembering socialism of the GDR in a positive light, Rathenow provides a counter example here which showcases the real situation of scarce commodities in the GDR, whether consumer goods or apartments, during the real existing socialism of the past.

In contrast to such confrontational passages, in other portions of the book, this element of political dissidence is absent. Later in the second section of the two books (1987 and 2005 editions) readers are introduced to Bertram, a friend of the protagonist who had left East Berlin for West Berlin ten years earlier (around 1977). In the passage on page 60 of the 2005 edition which describes Bertram's visit to East Berlin, omissions from and additions to the 1987 edition are found. In the 1987 edition Rathenow writes about the freedom of speech that one has in the West. On the streets in the US, one can speak openly in contrast to the situation in the GDR, where one can only speak freely in the private sphere, i.e., in one's own apartment. The 2005 edition reads in this way:

Bertram tells me about himself. Ten years ago he had taken great pains to become a genuine "Westie" [Rathenow uses "Westie" and not "Wessi"] instantly. Practiced High German, free of dialect, concealed his origins. The conformity was all too successful. He had almost forgotten why he had wanted to leave, what he had left behind. Unbelievable how previously important things fade away so quickly. A year with bouts of depression, when they passed, it seemed the past was extinguished as well.

*I talk with him as if he were someone I knew well. We stroll to a bus stop. The closeness between us grows with the onset of darkness* [this italicized portion is absent from the 1987 edition and has been added to 2005 edition]. His helpless self-assurance has vanished, [. . .]. Bertram's arguments suddenly seem credible, by no means formulated capriciously and snappily. Our Berlin looks more like Berlin than the West sector. But there's less life on the streets here. That's played out behind the scenes. A different relationship to the public realm stands behind this. I nod.<sup>260</sup>

The 1987 edition reads:<sup>261</sup>

Bertram tells me about himself. Ten years ago he had taken great pains to become a genuine "Westie" instantly. Practiced High German, free of dialect, concealed his origins. The conformity was all too successful. He had almost forgotten why he had wanted to leave, what he had left behind. Unbelievable how previously important things fade away so quickly. A year with bouts of depression, when they passed, it seemed the past was extinguished as well.

His helpless self-assurance has vanished. . . Bertram's arguments suddenly seem credible, by no means formulated capriciously and snappily. Our Berlin looks more like Berlin than the West sector. But there's less life on the streets here. That's played out behind the

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<sup>260</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, 59-60.

<sup>261</sup> I am using the English translation from the 2005 edition and adding the portions from the 1987 edition, which are in German.

scenes. A different relationship to the public realm stands behind this. I nod. *Ein Amerikaner erklärte: in den USA seien Menschen auf der Straße gelöst und kontaktfreudig, dagegen verbissen und geschäftig in ihren Wohnungen. In der DDR sei es genau umgekehrt* [omitted from the 2005 edition—in German only since there is no English translation in the 1987 text].<sup>262</sup>

In the 2005 edition, the positive memory of resistance in the GDR as played out in the private sphere is absent. This resistance is found in the 1987 edition, but not in the present memory work, which is recycling a space of memory and at the same time repeating it with a difference that now forgets this narrative of resistance of the GDR—this identity of resistance. In the post-unification German memory narrative of the GDR, this reflection of resistance by East Germans is often overlooked, and Rathenow's text with its "repetition with difference" reveals this unconscious memory reconstruction and omission performed in literary productions of Eastern Germans post-1989. The 2005 edition rewrites the East German memory narrative and has the "Easterners" (the protagonist in the text) acting like "Westerners" (Bertram in the text), possessing an outgoing manner, unlike in the 1987 edition. The protagonist, an East German himself, is outgoing and open as the Americans are described to be in the 1987 edition. This passage from the 2005 edition reflects the language of the literary dissident of the Prenzlauerberg art scene who did not want to give one set of meaning to his work, but instead wanted to leave the appropriation of meaning to the reader. Rathenow leaves the memory work to the reader to decide where to position the GDR past. In the passage from 2005, being East German is portrayed no differently from being Western in the 1987 edition. He has "written back" to his own 1987 text and changed the meaning of being East German, bridging perhaps stereotypical differences brought about by Cold War clichés.

In addition to its role as a place of memory for later generations to view the real existence of everyday life twenty years ago in the GDR, the photos also serve as a revenant, showing the

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<sup>262</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt*, 71.

impossibility of bringing back the past for those who desire this return. As Marianne Hirsch writes: “Photography’s relation to loss and death is not to mediate the process of individual and collective memory but to bring the past back in the form of a ghostly revenant, emphasizing, at the same time, its immutable and irreversible pastness and irretrievability.”<sup>263</sup> By evidencing the reality of the socialist state, that is, the reality of shortages of apartments and consumer goods, as well as restrictions on travel and on personal freedoms, Hauswald’s photos (and Rathenow’s text) support a memory work that avoids getting caught up in the restorative nostalgia phenomenon of shows like “Die Ostalgie-Show,” “Ein Kessel DDR,” “Die ultimative Ost-Show,” and “Die DDR-Show” that reveal a desire to return to the GDR past. However, these recycled places of memory allow a space for a re-assertion and negotiation of the meaning of being East German. The new post-unification text, by recalling this lost identity into the collective post-unification German memory narrative, shows a start toward transitioning to a new, unified German identity. This productive ambivalence is a step in the project of unification—in coming to terms with the losses of 1989 (whether they be the loss of a dissident identity or of an imagined GDR) and overcoming feelings of being taken over by West Germany in 1990.

***Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten.***

As the title, *Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten* (2006), indicates, Hauswald and Rathenow wanted their text/photos to encumber any nostalgic re-writing of GDR history. But at the same time, the text/photos are to show the realities of unification. Through the pictorial evidence, Rathenow and Hauswald write that they want to illustrate how things have “turned” in former East Germany since the times under an authoritarian regime. About their collaboration, which officially records and shapes the realities

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<sup>263</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “Mourning and Postmemory,” *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20.

of unification, Rathenow writes: “Die Dinge aufzuschreiben oder zu fotografieren heißt auch, sich später schwerer betrügen zu können.” He emphasizes the importance of photos in the project of remembering the past: “Wer die Gegenwart nicht nur betrachten will, dem helfen die Fotos, sie [die Vergangenheit] zu erkennen.”<sup>264</sup> At the end of the book (last page of the book, not numbered), the photographer Hauswald comments on to the role of displaying before and after photos of Berlin in this *lieu de mémoire* in the attempt to prevent people from forgetting:

Die Gegenüberstellung von Vorher und Nachher soll erinnern helfen—und Sprüchen wie “Es war ja nicht alles schlecht!” entgegenwirken. Ich fühlte mich eingesperrt und wurde beobachtet. Wir lebten in einer künstlichen Welt, wie unter einer Käseglocke. Das Leben ist für mich nicht leichter geworden seit der Maueröffnung—doch ich fühle mich wesentlich freier, und das ist das Entscheidende.<sup>265</sup>

Through Hauswald’s photos and Rathenow’s accompanying texts, readers, both former East and West Germans, can best perform their own investigation of the present conditions in unified Germany. The book, which mixes text and image as a palimpsest of space, contrasts the past to the present, which at first glance has erased the past, but at second glance only better accentuates the alternative imaginary for those who are disenchanting with “real-existing” unification and who are coming to terms with questions of finding aspects of an Eastern German identity amidst the present rewriting of their lived pasts.

In his book *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Andreas Huyssen writes of this alternative imaginary that puts “different things in one place: memories of what there was before, imagined alternatives to what there is. The strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses, and heterotopias. The center of Berlin and its reconstruction after unification provide a key example for the workings of such an

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<sup>264</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Gewendet*, 3

<sup>265</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Gewendet*, last page, not numbered.

imaginary.”<sup>266</sup> In *Gewendet*, Rathenow attempts to provide a documentation of the past and present—his text and images serving as historical evidence of the past and as social commentary on the present. He views this evidence as the crucial piece in keeping others from forgetting and cheating themselves by looking on their past in an exclusively positive way. His ambivalent work, which presents both positive and negative aspects of unification, provides a neutral documentation of the past, without unequivocally voicing one position, while at the same time showing evidence of change in former East Berlin over the last twenty years.

Structurally, the book is divided into six sections with two to four pages of text at the start of each section followed by photos illustrating the differences between the pre-1989 and post-1989 GDR. The six sections are titled *Mauern* (6 pages of photos); *Hinterlassenes* (26 pages of photos); *Verschwundenes* (22 pages of photos); *Provinzielles* (10 pages of photos); *Aufbrüche* (24 pages of photos); and *Aussichten* (13 pages of photos). The section *Hinterlassenes* (Remnants) specifically investigates which traces of the past, erasures, losses, and heterotopias can be found in Hauswald’s images and in Rathenow’s texts.

Although Rathenow and Hauswald’s book confronts viewers with the GDR past, it also, at the same time, problematizes the question of East German identity in the present. In the section *Hinterlassenes*, Rathenow highlights the uniqueness of German unification as Eastern Germans “sacrificed” their identity for unification as opposed to other Eastern Bloc countries during this time of political changes. He writes:

Doch viele Leute waren es nicht, die zur staatszersetzenden Empörung beitrugen, als dies noch riskant war—und alle mussten sich auf die rasch mutierenden Resultate der politischen Entwicklung einstellen. Der bald absehbare Einigungsprozess beschleunigte und bremste die selbstbewusst vorgenommene Auflösung der DDR gleichermaßen. Dieser Staat besaß einfach eine Sonderperspektive und ging seinen eigenen Weg. In einer Zeit, in der jede Nation um ihren eigenen Staat kämpft, in der es von Separatistenbewegung nur so wimmelt, hat er sich zugunsten der Deutschen Einheit

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<sup>266</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7.



aufgegeben. Die Bevölkerung gab Ansätze einer eigenen Identität bewusst auf, um sich in Bundesdeutsche zu verwandeln. Und zwar mehrheitlich nicht, um die bundesdeutsche Republik zu verändern, sondern um sie als Erfolgsmodell eins zu eins nachzuerleben.<sup>267</sup>

This paragraph responds to the early post-1989 discourse about the notion that East Germany had been “colonized” by West Germany in 1990, although Rathenow points out that East Germans chose this route to assimilation.<sup>268</sup> While these questions of colonization had also been investigated by the utopian idealists of the first generation of East German intelligentsia after 1989, Rathenow’s ambivalent portrayal of unification problematizes the issue of progress after 1989 for East Germans and whether Eastern Germans, in their haste to unify, sacrificed more than state autonomy for the West German lifestyle. Hauswald addresses the sacrifices for unification in his personal reflection on the use of pre-1989 and post-1989 photos in *Gewendet*: “Wo einige Fischkutter lagen, sieht man heute vor lauter Yachten keinen Hafen mehr. Erinnern wir uns noch, wie wir lebten, wie wir uns fühlten? Damals Grenzgebiet, nur mit Passagierschein zu betreten, heute entscheidet das Bankkonto, wer hier Urlaub macht. Damals überall hohle Parteiparolen, heute werden wir mit Werbung überschüttet.”<sup>269</sup> Limitation on travel in the GDR was due to state interference; now it is due to money. One is still not free to travel in capitalism due to financial constraints. Although Hauswald brings to light the role that money plays in the capitalist FRG, he, at the same time, expresses that this photo book with text is to serve as a means to remind people of the reality in the GDR and to work against people who now nearly twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall say “Es war ja nicht alles schlecht.”

One such example from *Gewendet*, which illustrates the ambivalent and reflective relationship between past and present, is found on page 24 in the section *Hinterlassenes*, with photos showing the progress made post-1989 in run-down areas of the GDR. On this page,

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<sup>267</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 14.

<sup>268</sup> For more on East German sentiments of colonization after 1989, see Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*.

<sup>269</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Gewendet*, last page, not numbered.

viewers first see the image of an Imbiss Buffet from 1986, and then underneath the image, they observe the same fast food stand fourteen years later in 2000, converted into what appears to be a fast-food stand influenced by the West, with Coca-Cola signs everywhere. On the other side of the page, readers find a second location in Berlin, a dead end from 1983 juxtaposed with the same dead end in 2000. Rathenow's accompanying text to the photos of these two places questions the progress of unification: "Das Rondell am Hintereingang zum S-Bahnhof Schönhauser Allee ist frisch gepflastert und mit Pflöcken versehen—aber hat sich dadurch die Lebensqualität erhöht? Der Kiosk an der Dänenstraße ist heute bunter—doch hat sich das Stadtbild dadurch verbessert?"<sup>270</sup> Rathenow does not answer his question immediately, but rather he leaves it for readers to answer. But through revisiting the past, his text gives reflection, and thus meaning, to the present, and at the same time, presents an oppositional mode of memory. By investigating present "improvements" his opposition provides new reflections onto the past.

In another juxtaposed constellation of presentation and re-presentation, Rathenow hints at his answer to his previous question on progress through unification, although still leaving it ultimately up to the viewers and their own memories to decide whether the commercial progress on Hackescher Markt should be considered positive or not. Readers are to decide if capitalism has made things better. As a critical voice, he uses his words to raise questions and to make people reflect. He contrasts two pictures of Hackescher Markt, one taken in 1987 and the other in 2005. The S-Bahn station in 1987 is labeled by Rathenow as simply a "reiner Nutzbau," but then, almost twenty years later, this same spot is labeled as a "Touristen-Auftrieb."<sup>271</sup> One could see this change as negative, since the local Berlin culture is swallowed by a tourist culture; or one could see this change toward a more commercial usage as a move in the direction of progress.

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<sup>270</sup> Hauswald and Rathenow, *Gewendet*, 24.

<sup>271</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 32-33.

Nevertheless, the pictures prevent a work of forgetting and force one of reflection in twenty-first century unified Germany.

In another section, Rathenow juxtaposes two pictures which seem to support a positive view towards unification.<sup>272</sup> The courtyard of Prenzlauerberg that he displays here from 1983 stands in stark contrast to the same courtyard after unification, with its green trees and side-walked paths—clearly evidencing an improvement. Describing the picture from 1983, he writes: “Das ist kein Nachkriegsbild—sondern so sah es wirklich in der Endphase der DDR an bestimmten Punkten Berlins aus.” The courtyard looks run down and very similar to pictures of post-1945 bombed Berlin. The picture from 2005 he describes as follows: “Derselbe Hof gut zwanzig Jahre später. Die Wohnungen sind renoviert, das Umfeld ist grüner, sauber und adrett.”<sup>273</sup> This comparison of the two pictures seems to evince a positive view towards the project of unification. But then in true Rathenow style he questions such change/progress in his textual commentary on the following page, which accompanies two other before and after photos of a different space in Berlin, “Das bröcklige Alte wurde vom schönen Neuen ersetzt. Oder das gemütliche Alte vom sterilen Neuen?”<sup>274</sup> This comment illustrates the negative side of the renovation of buildings after 1990, conveying how this renovation pushes out the old inhabitants from their apartments in Prenzlauerberg, for example, as they can no longer afford the newly renovated luxury apartments.<sup>275</sup> His re-presentation reveals that progress made available after unification does not always bring something better.

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<sup>272</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 16-17.

<sup>273</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 16-17.

<sup>274</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 18.

<sup>275</sup> Rathenow and Hauswald, *Gewendet*, 21.

***Der Liebe Wegen: Ein Wende-Buch mit zwei Vereinigungsgeschichten***

In his children's book, *Der Liebe Wegen* (2009), Rathenow continues to examine the project of unification, although this time without photos.<sup>276</sup> *Der Liebe Wegen* ("für aufgeweckte Kinder vorgerückten Alters" according to the inside book flap) contains two stories that "meet in the middle"—literally. One story, "Das unerwartete Glück," begins on one side of the book from pages 3-21. Then readers must flip the book and the other story, "Spieglein im Gesicht," begins on the other side of the book, also counted from pages 3-21. The two meet in the middle on page 21. With one story written before 1989 ("Spieglein im Gesicht") and the other written after 1989 ("Das unerwartete Glück"), this children's book literally illustrates the method of "repetition with difference" and reflects the state of unification and the negotiation of the multiple meanings of being Eastern German in unified Germany. The pre-1989 story "Spieglein im Gesicht" mirrors the fairy tale Snow White. In the story written before unification, the princess lives in what is described as a nasty land with no color and no happiness. At her father's, the king's, orders, the kingdom could not have any color since, after the death of his wife, he could not bear any color or happiness. Unlike the queen in the traditional Snow White fairytale who desires to be the most beautiful in the kingdom, this princess, who becomes queen upon her father's death, longs instead to love herself above everything in her state. She believes it to be foolish and vain to love herself more than everything in the world, but finds it acceptable to love herself above all in her misguidedly arranged state: "Sich mehr als alles in der Welt zu lieben, hielt sie für dumm und eitel. Aber sich mehr als anderes in einem töricht eingerichteten Land zu lieben, darin sah die Königen eine Konsequenz vernünftigen Denkens."<sup>277</sup> Already readers make connections to the GDR past. In the GDR, the head of state was the center of society and represented the identity of

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<sup>276</sup> Rathenow returns to the genre of children's book. In 2006, Rathenow published the children's book *Ein Eisbär aus Apolda*.

<sup>277</sup> Lutz Rathenow, "Spieglein im Gesicht," *Der Liebe Wegen: Ein Wende-Buch mit zwei Vereinigungsgeschichten* (Regensburg: Buntehunde, 2009), 9.

the regime, taking on almost supernatural powers.<sup>278</sup> The princess then begins to look into mirrors to see and kiss her reflection until one day she falls into a mirror. After breaking the mirror, she decides to look into a well to be able to see her reflection, until she almost falls into the well and nearly drowns. From this moment on she decides to compel all her subjects to make their eyes available to her so she can see her reflection in them. Her subjects freely volunteer for this job, but she is not satisfied with any of the eyes until one man, a simple farmer, is brought before her. In contrast to the other subjects who desire to be the eyes through which the queen can see her reflection, this man refuses to be used to such an end: “Fünf Männer schleiften den Mann herein. Er gab seinen Widerstand auf und sah die für alles Verantwortliche an. Etwas trotzig, interessiert, leicht spöttisch, ein wenig überrascht.”<sup>279</sup> The queen looks into his eyes and cannot stop looking at her reflection and does not allow him to close his eyes. She agrees to allow him to close his eyes only if he reveals his “secret” to her. He begins:

“Wie Ihr Euch auf andere Art noch besser erkennt...Tretet näher!” Und die Frau schritt ganz nah heran und blickte den Mann an. Der küsste sie auf den Mund. Und die Königin schloss...für längere Zeit...die Augen.<sup>280</sup>

Through his kiss she lets go of her obsession with herself and is ready to consider other objects. She is no longer the narcissistic queen only concerned with her needs and seeing herself in others’ eyes. By requiring him to keep his eyes open so she could see her reflection, she makes him obedient (even using the soldiers to control him). But the farmer, through his peaceful disobedience (resonating with the peaceful revolution in the fall of 1989—*Wir sind das Volk*), undermines the queen’s position of control (the socialist state).

The post-1989 story, produced almost twenty years after “Spieglein im Gesicht,” has a re-presentation of the relationship of the queen and this man, providing insight into present unified

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<sup>278</sup> See Hell, *Post Fascist Fantasies*, for more on the identity of the body politic in pre-democratic societies (medieval and early modern societies) and the imaginary of homogeneity through the ruler.

<sup>279</sup> Rathenow, “Spieglein im Gesicht” 19.

<sup>280</sup> Rathenow, “Spieglein im Gesicht” 21.

Germany. In the post-1989 story, “Das unerwartete Glück,” the young farmer boy does not change the life of the lady as he did in the pre-1989 work. Instead the lady tries unsuccessfully to save the man, who is described as exceedingly vain. In this re-presentation of the pre-1989 story, the man, “Der Fahrer,” is portrayed as a materialistic man who drives a car in the “mittleren Wagenklasse” and who, in his moment of avoiding the lady on the street, thinks about his haircut and the hairdresser who only two hours earlier praised his hair. He is the foolish and vain one in this post-1989 story. As he steps out of the car (he is described as a prince stepping out of the car) and sees her, he begins to have chest pains and no longer thinks about his perfectly styled hair. As she sees him for the first time, she has a feeling of connection to the man, “[. . .], und hatte sofort das merkwürdige Gefühl, mit diesem Mann verbunden zu sein. ‘Für immer,’ [. . .].”<sup>281</sup> The man falls down from pain and she runs to him:

Sie sprang auf ihn zu, beugte sich über Mister unbekannt, der gerade von den Menschen zu den Toten gewechselt war. Kniete vor ihm, fühlte erst den Puls und küsste dann seinen Mund. Lange und intensive. Sie rieb ihre Hand an seinem Brustkorb, wie das bei einer Mund-zu-Mund-Beatmung notwendig war. Schneewittchen—das umgekehrte Rollenspiel.<sup>282</sup>

In this post-1989 re-presentation of the original pre-1989 story, the man’s apprehension of the lady’s existence causes him to have a heart attack from which her kiss cannot save him as the kiss from the farmer saved the queen from her self-obsession in the pre-1989 story. In the pre-1989 story the young man’s kiss does “save” the queen, who previously had only accepted her reality of society to reflect in her eyes. Her subjects all were to see and, thus, believe the things she wanted them to believe—they were to make her the center of society. The queen in the earlier pre-1989 story who sees only herself in the eyes of others and not other objects (post-1989 story) is now in the post-1989 story the object that this man sees in front of him. He is confronted with

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<sup>281</sup> Rathenow, “Das unerwartete Glück,” *Der Liebe Wegen: Ein Wende-Buch mit zwei Vereinigungsgeschichten* (Regensburg: Buntehunde, 2009), 13.

<sup>282</sup> Rathenow, “Das unerwartete Glück,” 16.

a reality that he literally cannot live with. This re-presentation provides a literary imaginary for working out transitions of unification and reflects discord in the unification process. In the pre-1989 story the woman, representing East German leadership, accepts a new object, the young man's view of the world (a view different from that of the socialist state or of the leader as the body politic). However, in the story after 1989, the man (perhaps representing West Germany) cannot survive her glance, which is a different perspective than his.<sup>283</sup> He dies when he is confronted with her existence that calls his into question. He cannot exist if she exists. If this story is read allegorically, unified Germany can only exist if Eastern Germans suppress their existence. However, true to the role of the literary dissident who points out the ills of the state but does not propagandize a personal view for readers, Rathenow's text leaves meaning open for interpretation, showing continuity in narrative style with his pre-1989 works.

While the mode of ambivalence towards the changes over time and towards the GDR past in Rathenow's books reflect a discovery of a lost dissident voice and of new topics in the present, the mode of ambivalence in Brussig's works uncovers a different voice. Instead of dissidence towards the present, his books reveal a tone of reconciliation with the past. Rathenow uses the past and observed changes over time to reflect on the present. Brussig uses the GDR past to reconcile changes to memory occurring over time.

### **Thomas Brussig**

Previous scholarship on early works by Brussig, such as *Helden wie wir*, *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenalle*, and *Wasserfarben*, place his narratives into various categories of post-GDR memory, ranging from a category of "victim remembrances" (Dahlke) to one of confrontation

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<sup>283</sup> For more on gendered notions of East (female) and West (male) Germany in media portrayals, see Susan S. Morrison, "The Feminization of the German Democratic Republic in Political Cartoons 1989-90," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 25, no. 4 (Spring 1992): 35-52.

(Magenau) to one of opposition (Fachinger).<sup>284</sup> Petra Fachinger situates Brussig's *Helden wie wir* in the category of marginalized German literature and aptly labels *Helden wie Wir* as a postcolonial picaresque, a genre characterized by "its critical and subversive potential, the alienation of its protagonist from society, and, in some cases, its erotic overtones."<sup>285</sup> Fachinger sees Brussig's work as a satire of "the unification process, the corruption of that state's political system [GDR], as well as life in the free-market society."<sup>286</sup> Dahlke asserts that the Eastern German writers of the 1990s (Brussig included) have the right to remember their past with melancholia, rather than to look back on their GDR past with a consciousness of guilt. This memory positioning is somewhat similar to that of Jörg Magenau who argues that Brussig's protagonists are not mired in guilt, but rather, speak out about their individual action or inaction in the GDR. For Magenau, the protagonists do not exactly have a "consciousness of guilt." Magenau, in contrast to Dahlke, does not view Brussig's protagonists as victims, but rather as subjects taking responsibility for what they did or failed to do in resistance to the GDR. Magenau discusses Brussig's early works as mirroring to a certain extent the public and collective memory work of the GDR, with *Wasserfarben* (1991) representing the early protection phase (*Schonung*), *Helden wie Wir* (1995) representing the phase of dispraise (*Schmähung*), and then *Sonnenallee* (1999) representing the phase of glorification (*Verschönerung*).<sup>287</sup> The later books, *Leben bis Männer* and *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* then, I would argue, continue this mirroring of the public and collective memory work of the GDR laid out by Magenau, with the most recent works representing a last phase of ambivalent reflection (*Spiegelung*). Instead of

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<sup>284</sup> See Birgit Dahlke, "The Right to Melancholy. Narratives from the GDR by Younger East-German Authors of the Nineties," (unpublished manuscript); Jörg Magenau, "Kindheitsmuster. Thomas Brussig oder die ewige Jugend der DDR," in *Aufgerissen. Zur Literatur der 90er*, ed. Thomas Kraft (Munich: Piper Verlag, 2000), 39-52; and Petra Fachinger, "(Post)colonial Picaresque: Kerstin Jentzsch and Thomas Brussig," *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: "Other" German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (Montreal; London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 33-45.

<sup>285</sup> Fachinger, 13.

<sup>286</sup> Fachinger, 12.

<sup>287</sup> Magenau, "Kindheitsmuster. Thomas Brussig oder die ewige Jugend der DDR," 45.



questioning responsibility for and excusing oneself for the GDR, these later texts show an ambivalent relation to action or inaction in the GDR, highlighting the gray areas for evaluating the GDR past. Two interviews with Brussig illuminate this latest phase of reflection.

In the first interview with *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Brussig again responds to the “*Ostalgiewelle*” and to the interest in the everyday by Eastern Germans; however, this time his comments evidence a different memory relation to the GDR past:

Früher war es immer schöner, das trifft auf alle Zeiten und alle Gesellschaften zu. Der Mensch ist nun mal so konstruiert, auch der, der aus der DDR kommt. Die Ostalgie erscheint deshalb so seltsam, weil hier etwas auseinander fällt: Das, was das Volkserinnern ausmacht, und die offiziöse Beschäftigung mit dem Staat. Weil sie sich nicht an den Alltagsphänomenen entlang arbeiten, kommen Historiker oder Juristen zu einem völlig anderen Urteil als die Menschen in ihren Lebenserzählungen. Der Stasi-Knast in Hohenschönhausen war eben für die meisten Ostler nicht Alltag.<sup>288</sup>

Although, in this comment, Brussig reveals frustration at the absence of an oppositional mode of GDR memory in present post-unification German memory discourse (one that allows for a positive memory of the history of everyday life in the GDR—*DDR Alltag*), he, however, still does not want the oppressive realities of the GDR, given all of the romanticizing of the positive everyday aspects of life there, to be forgotten in public memory discourse. In his expression on ambivalence, Brussig reflects the influence that time has on one’s memory of the past. Post-GDR memory is not clear-cut and homogeneous. It is neither solely nostalgic nor exclusively confrontational. Nostalgic discourse has at its foundation the re-creation of the imaginary of home, which was the socialist GDR or the everyday life experienced in the private sphere during the GDR. Paul Cooke writes that such nostalgic responses towards the GDR occur when there is a “shift away from a totalitarian paradigm towards one that focuses on more mundane, everyday aspects of life,” which is what Brussig’s later texts carry out with their reflection on everyday life

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<sup>288</sup> Ludger Schulte and Kurt Röttgen, “Wir nehmen doch alle irgendetwas,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 14/15, 2007, <http://www.thomasbrussig.de/Seiten/Vielerlei/Wir%20haben%20doch.htm> (accessed from Thomas Brussig’s personal website, [www.thomasbrussig.de](http://www.thomasbrussig.de))

in the GDR.<sup>289</sup> I assert that through the metaphor of soccer, Brussig's latest works (*Leben bis Männer* and *Schiedsrichter Fertig*) show a re-presentation of the GDR past that addresses the absence of reflection in public memory discourse of unified Germany—which is not homogenous but rather consists of manifold memory narratives. These later texts are neither nostalgic nor are they as accusatory and ironic in tone as his earlier ones; rather, they show a more forgiving tone to past East German generations than do the early works privileging a mode of contempt (*Verschmähung*).

In the second interview, from 2004 in *The International Herald Tribune*, Brussig declared that his book *Wie es leuchtet* (2004) would be his last book about East Germany.<sup>290</sup> However, through the metaphor of soccer, deployed in the two books *Leben bis Männer* (2001) before this interview and in *Schiedsrichter Fertig* (2007) after this interview, a negotiation of the losses of the GDR can be found, showing that the questions of an Eastern sense of German identity and of the GDR past have not been concluded for Brussig. His later texts do not take the reader back to the GDR to try and restore the past, but rather, through the metaphor of soccer, the texts provide the reader a space for a consideration of the lost past and of the established present.

The connection between soccer and unification is not singly reserved for my analysis of how Brussig's textual productions reflect the project of unification. Brussig himself makes the connection between soccer and its social dimension in general. In 2005 Thomas Brussig founded the German national soccer team comprised of German authors (*die deutsche Nationalmannschaft der Autoren*). With soccer serving as a bridge to connect the two cultures (of Germany and Turkey) and to overcome differences, the German authors' national soccer team and the Turkish authors' national soccer team met to play a soccer tournament on September

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<sup>289</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*, 104.

<sup>290</sup> See Judy Dempsey, "East Germans Ambivalent 15 Years after Fall of Berlin Wall," *The International Herald Tribune* (online), November 8, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/08/international/europe/08cnd-germany.html?pagewanted=print&position=&r=0> (accessed December 28, 2012).

2009. The article “Nationalelf der Autoren. Mehr als Fußball” highlights that soccer was only in the background and that the authors “setzten vielmehr auf politische und gesellschaftliche Themen.”<sup>291</sup> In addition to playing the match, the players/authors, German and Turkish, read from their recent novels and the Turkish authors visited German schools to talk about their country, helping to bridge the cultural gaps between German and Turkish culture. With this real-life application of soccer serving as a bridge between two cultures, the relevance of the soccer metaphor in understanding the unification of East and West German cultures in Brussig’s novels becomes plausible.

Throughout his book *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, readers are constantly confronted with soccer allusions to the GDR. Brussig’s protagonist, Uwe Fertig, who is a soccer referee, explains the importance of a good soccer referee having a clear line: “Als Schiedsrichter ist man zu Spielbeginn immer in der Rolle eines Lehrers, der neu an der Schule ist, während die Spieler in der Rolle der Schüler sind. Wenn ein Spiel beginnt, erwarten die Spieler sehnsüchtig den ersten Pfiff, sie erleben ihn geradezu. Denn auch die Spieler wollen wissen, welche Gangart erlaubt ist.”<sup>292</sup> The protagonist, Uwe Fertig, explains that the referee has unquestioned authority and that this is what is most important in soccer. The crowd, which is comprised of multiple voices and opinions and, thus, characteristic of a democracy, cannot rule the soccer field. This multiplicity of opinion would bring about chaos on the soccer field. However, typical of soccer, the players try to elude the referee’s eye when breaking the rules to help advance their team to score, resonating with the private dissidence in the GDR that tested the system within the system.

Before a closer reading of *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, it is important to view it with *Leben bis Männer*. Both texts, *Leben bis Männer* and *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, center on court cases shortly

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<sup>291</sup> See Jürgen Schmieder, “Nationalelf der Autoren. Mehr als Fußball,” *sueddeutsche.de*, September 17, 2009 <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/nationalelf-der-autoren-mehr-als-fussball-1.41534> (accessed October 13, 2011).

<sup>292</sup> Thomas Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* (St Pölten-Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 2007), 37.

after unification. Using their experience of soccer during the GDR, the protagonists bring understanding to the court cases in the first years after the fall of the wall. Brussig's protagonists in these two books take the side of the defense both literally in the courtroom and metaphorically in GDR memory, unlike the situation in his earlier works in which his protagonists metaphorically "take the side" of the prosecutor, confronting those who did not accept responsibility for personal action and inaction in the GDR (Wolf's generation). In *Schiedrichter Fertig*, the protagonist represents his insurance client for the side of the defense and in *Leben bis Männer*, the protagonist serves as a "witness" to the defendant's action as a border guard in the GDR (one of his soccer players). This change in perspective from an emphasis on individual guilt of former East Germans to a recognition of the complex role that the socialist state played in the development of its people reflects an opening toward more nuances in post-unification German memory discourse.

The shorter novel, *Leben bis Männer* (2001), echoes the "cathartic release" of earlier nostalgic films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* or *Sonnenallee* and of the nostalgia craze of the nineties.<sup>293</sup> However, *Leben bis Männer* allows a variant form of cathartic release in that it allows a position of understanding for the constructors of the socialist state that is much different from that of his earlier works that foregrounded discourses of complicity—reflecting the hegemonic, West German historical memory that focuses on the oppressive aspects of the GDR. The narrative structure of *Leben bis Männer* parallels that of *Helden wie wir*. Both start with recollections of the past. *Helden wie wir* begins with the protagonist's, Klaus's, monologue interview, in which he discloses his life in the GDR to a reporter. As in *Helden wie wir*, the unnamed trainer in *Leben bis Männer* also starts the narrative in an interview type of monologue

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<sup>293</sup> Daphne Berdahl discusses the "cathartic release" of the film *Good Bye Lenin!*. She notes that this film's success could be attributed to the distance in time to the fall of the wall and that now people could mourn the lost state. See Daphne Berdahl, "Good Bye Lenin! Aufwiedersehen GDR," in *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille (New York: Berghahn Books, 200), 181.

by telling his story of coaching and of his relationship to Heiko, one of his players who readers later find out is tried in the *Mauerschützenprozesse*.<sup>294</sup> The protagonist explains his role as a soccer trainer in the GDR, moving with Heiko and his other players throughout the various levels of club soccer from childhood to adult teams, *Kinder-Knaben-Schüler-Jugend-Junioren-Männer*. Because of his role as a trainer, he boasts of understanding more about loyalty (which is essential to understanding Heiko's action as a border guard) than the female judge since she lacks any knowledge of the sport. Her deficiency in soccer experience makes her incapable of ruling appropriately on any action taken on the East-West German border by Heiko. As a soccer trainer who understands the rules and ways of soccer, only he can understand Heiko's action on the border during the GDR, and thus Heiko should not be judged by a woman who neither understands soccer nor anything about following authority, as a soccer referee and coach could.

To illustrate how soccer and authority complement each other, Brussig's protagonist explains the sport of soccer and how it is an absurd game. Relating the history of soccer, he tells how in 1867 a group of a dozen men gathered together on a Sunday morning to make a goal with a ball but on that day decided to use only the feet instead of the hands—a most unusual and *abnorm* sight for the first spectators of soccer, he explains.<sup>295</sup> The protagonist tries to enlighten readers about the uniqueness of soccer and explains: “Aber wer mit Fußball aufgewachsen ist, wer also quasi ins Perversenhafte hineingeboren wurde, will ich mal sagen—der hatte doch überhaupt keine Chance mehr, das abnorm zu finden.”<sup>296</sup> The sport of soccer, as a perversity that only those who grow up playing the sport and watching it on TV can understand and appreciate as a game, can be considered a metaphor for the struggles between East and West after 1990. East Germans who grew up (as *Hineingeborene*) in socialist East Germany (like those

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<sup>294</sup> These were the trials in the early years after 1990 against former East German border soldiers.

<sup>295</sup> Brussig, *Leben bis Männer*, 81-82.

<sup>296</sup> Brussig, *Leben bis Männer*, 82.

boys who grew up playing soccer) did not see the “abnormal” that dominates the unified German historical and cultural memory narrative of the GDR after 1989—influenced by Western Germans after 1990.

In one passage, the protagonist’s consoling comments to Heiko during the court trial reveal the complexity of Eastern and Western understanding of each other’s past. In the text, Heiko is accused, after 1989, of having killed an East German trying to escape the GDR. As a border guard this was Heiko’s duty and the protagonist reminds Heiko of this fate determined for East German border guards and that he, Heiko, did not shoot the boy by choice, but rather simply followed authority, as a good soccer player does in the game.<sup>297</sup> The trainer reminds him of the way things were during the GDR and that just as the player is conditioned in soccer to follow the orders of the coach, so too were the people of East Germany conditioned to follow the orders of state superiors. He instructs Heiko that they did not choose this system, but that it was just the way things were: “Heiko, hab ich zu ihm gesagt, wir haben uns diese Welt nicht ausgesucht. Ist nicht deine Schuld und auch nicht meine, daß die Welt so ist.”<sup>298</sup> Heiko was just following orders, just following the rules of the “game” when he shot someone trying to escape East Germany. Through the metaphor of soccer, Brussig allows for a new consideration of the GDR socialist past—one that permits a new assessment of East German complicity and highlights the complexity of post-GDR memory discourse.

In the later story, *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* (2007), the protagonist, Uwe Fertig, a soccer referee and an insurance representative, stands on both sides of a lawsuit, however still representing this new “defense” of the complicit East German (embodying the mode of ambivalence). His girlfriend has died in an operation, and he blames the doctor’s arrogance for

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<sup>297</sup> Serving in the military was compulsory for East German boys and Heiko decided to serve on the border as a border guard so that he could stay in the city and continue playing on the soccer team with his trainer and friends.

<sup>298</sup> Brussig, *Leben bis Männer*, 88.

her death. Ironically, however, the protagonist is also the insurance representative with whom the doctor has his malpractice insurance. He is in an ambivalent position in the courtroom. Thus, in court, Uwe Fertig is now in a sense on both sides of the soccer field (offense and defense)—as boyfriend and plaintiff who is suing the doctor for malpractice as well as in the role of the defendant, representing the doctor, his client. To follow the soccer metaphor, the protagonist is in the role of both soccer teams on the field, waiting for a decision by the referee, or here the judge, who must have a “clear line” to be a good referee. Although Fertig is normally in the role as judge when refereeing for soccer, here he must wait as the player must wait and hope that the judge has a “clear line” for making her court ruling (again a female judge).

As with the narrative structure and perspective of *Leben bis Männer*, Uwe Fertig tells his story in *Schiedsrichter Fertig: Eine Litanei* almost as if he were giving an interview to a court reporter. As he walks into the courtroom, he questions the infallibility of man (“Irren ist menschlich”), thinking of the unconvincing sayings that people say to comfort others in bad times. Considering his present position of being on both sides of the court case, he reminisces about his neutral role as a soccer referee, who should have no bias for one team over another. He explains:

Auf beide Seiten zu stehen ist nicht das gleiche wie auf keiner Seite zu stehen, dachte ich, aus dem Gerichtsgebäude tretend, es ist etwas grundsätzlich anderes. Auf zwei Seiten zu stehen, das kann ich überhaupt nicht, darin fehlt mir die Übung, während ich mit dem anderen, dem Auf-keiner-Seite-Stehen, einen Namen gemacht habe. Auf keiner Seite zu stehen, unparteiisch zu sein, und das auf hohem Niveau, ist ein gefragtes Talent.<sup>299</sup>

As with the doctor whose actions during surgery cannot later be reversed, when Fertig is a referee, his calls in the game, too, are final. Whether the decision is infallible does not matter—it is still final and cannot be changed, no matter how much the stadium of spectators scream at him.

The protagonist explains: “Niemand kann die Entscheidungen eines Schiedsrichters rückgängig

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<sup>299</sup> Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, 9.

machen. Nicht einmal er selbst. Das Zauberwort heißt Tatsachenentscheidung.

Tatsachenentscheidung bedeutet, daß ich als Schiedsrichter, ich allein, durch meine Entscheidung anzeige, was stattgefunden hat. Ich schaffe damit Tatsachen.”<sup>300</sup> In his calls, the referee creates facts.

According to the protagonist a soccer referee is condemned as anti-democratic and old-fashioned: “Ein Schiedsrichter wird als etwas zutiefst Unmodernes und Antidemokratisches verachtet.”<sup>301</sup> Shortly after highlighting such public disdain for the dictatorial soccer referee who “creates facts” (*Tatsachen schaffen*), the protagonist comments that if people wanted a democracy in the sport of soccer they would need to abolish the soccer referee, who stands for one voice and no compromising—an antithesis to democracy.<sup>302</sup> As he explains, in a democracy everyone has rights, but in a soccer game no one has rights. Neither players nor the trainers nor the many spectators can do anything to change the ruling of the referee. On the surface, the protagonist, in his reflection, seems to reject the multiplicity of voices in a democracy, because they often bring about inaction—nothing gets decided. For him, the crowd of people in a democracy (much as in a soccer stadium) is incompetent in making difficult decisions. There is only debate and talk about things that need to be changed. The referee (a single voice) is the best qualified to make any ruling (as long as he has a clear line): “Mag sein, daß es eine Kompetenz der Menge gibt. Für mich ist die Menge inkompetent. Wenn dreißigtausend Leute, die achtzig Meter oder noch weiter weg sind, ‘Hand’ schreien, gibt es keine Kompetenz der Menge.”<sup>303</sup> The referee, he explains, is trained in how to make such quick and accurate decisions that the crowd cannot make. However, as Fertig explains, such a consideration of the absolute power for the referee is erroneous. Such absolute power, Fertig argues, is “checked” by the democratic

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<sup>300</sup> Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, 32.

<sup>301</sup> Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, 32.

<sup>302</sup> Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, 31-33.

<sup>303</sup> Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, 34.



system—the two are interconnected and complement each other. Democratic elements are still present in this assumed absolute power. Democracy does not challenge the absolute authority of the referee but instead advocates it, albeit the referees must comply with regulations or requirements of the system to continue practicing their trade. In democracy, the absolute power of the referee is “checked” not only through compulsory referee training seminars (*Schulungen, Weiterbildungen, und Begutachtungen...*) but also by observers at the game who react to his calls.<sup>304</sup> Through the complexity of the referee, Brussig’s text challenges post-GDR memory discourse that reduces the GDR past to simplistic binary notions.

The unquestioned and justified authority of the soccer referee in this text draws attention to the state of democracy in unified Germany and raises the issue of the absent “clear line” (in democratic and unified Germany), where everything seems to be allowed. The metaphor of soccer highlights the benefits of having a “referee with a clear line” to make decisions amongst its multiple voices, but at the same time the metaphor of soccer also gives insights into the authoritarian nature of the SED state in which Heiko (*Leben bis Männer*) lived and performed his duties as a border guard following orders. Fertig’s, perhaps ironic, reflections both question the simplistic reduction of the GDR to a negative, oppressive regime of orders (*Leben bis Männer*) and also demonstrate ambivalence towards the past.

Similar to *Leben bis Männer*, the dictatorial nature of the referee uncovered in *Schiedsrichter Fertig* offers insight into the role that the socialist state played in conditioning its people. The players (GDR citizens) had to follow the decision by the coach or the referee (the state) during the game, accepting the authority of the position. However, just as in the game of soccer, the people eluded the “eye” of the state apparatus, performing dissidence in the practices of everyday life in the GDR. The tone of ambivalence in *Schiedsrichter Fertig* towards present

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<sup>304</sup> Brussig, *Schiedsrichter Fertig*, 35.

reconstructions of the GDR past allows for a nuanced representation of the past that avoids extremes of the GDR as either a repressive regime or as a “failed experiment.”

### **Other post-GDR memory responses of the second Generation**

The previous pages presented the memory response of ambivalence for the second generation, but as mentioned earlier, there are other memory responses to the lost GDR within the heterogeneous discourses produced by this generation—melancholia and confrontation, for example. The first, the response of melancholia (similar to the response of the first generation), can be found in the works of Daniela Dahn, who best exemplifies the response of melancholia, or more precisely put—of left melancholia, as Walter Benjamin termed it.<sup>305</sup> Dahn is a German journalist and author who has written several non-fiction works reflecting on the unification of East and West Germany, a reflection that results in a melancholic discourse of the past. As a student of Christa Wolf’s, it is not surprising that Dahn also subscribes to the utopian socialism that the first generation of East German intelligentsia believed achievable. At a literary seminar in Berlin in summer 2009, where she read from her new book *Wehe dem Sieger! Ohne Osten kein Westen*, Dahn even opened her talk with the statement that during the GDR she always wanted to live in a democracy but never wanted to live in capitalism—evoking similar sentiments expressed by Christa Wolf.<sup>306</sup> In this revealing statement Dahn identified herself with Wolf’s generation, which desired a Germany with aspects of socialism and democracy but not capitalism; and more importantly she identified herself with those still in a state of melancholia after 1989 and in a state of longing for an imagined utopian GDR socialism. In some respects, Dahn and others who gave voice to her generational narrative of left melancholia seem to be attempting to reestablish

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<sup>305</sup> Wendy Brown, “Resisting Left Melancholia,” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 458.

<sup>306</sup> Daniela Dahn, Reading for the Max Kade/ Loyola College Summer Seminar, *Deutschland 20 Jahre nach der Wende: Lesungen und Diskussionen mit deutschsprachigen Autoren*, Berlin, July 28-30, 2009.

the anti-fascist (anti-capitalist) foundational myth of the GDR in their statements against capitalism in unified Germany. In her book *Wehe dem Sieger!*, Dahn articulates that capitalism needed (and still needs) socialism to survive. According to Dahn, the two ideological systems need each other as competition and as a moral check. In capitalism (or in a *soziale Marktwirtschaft*) free of the ideological battle against socialism as was found during the Cold War, there is now no entity that serves as a moral check on those who control the system, i.e., the banks, the large manufacturers, the controllers of the stock markets. There is no pressure on these conglomerates to look after the worker or more simply put on the “*anderen*” as Dahn calls those not in positions of power in a social free-market economic system. Of this “Yin-Yang” relationship between socialism and a *soziale Marktwirtschaft*, Dahn writes that “erst mit dem sogenannten sozialistischen Weltsystem entstand die soziale Marktwirtschaft, und auf den Exitus des Realsozialismus folgte ihre Erosion.”<sup>307</sup> Quoting former CDU-*Arbeitsminister* Norbert Blum, Dahn adds further clarification to this interrelated relationship: “Im Ost-West Konflikt war der Sozialstaat Teil unserer Legitimationsgrundlage. Wir mussten beweisen, dass wir sozialer sind als der Sozialismus. Der Sozialismus ist tot, und jetzt glauben manche Arbeitgeber, sie könnten Hausputz halten.”<sup>308</sup> For Dahn, without the East (socialism) there is no requirement for the West to have to justify itself as a state that concerns itself with the needs of its people. According to Dahn, capitalism (a *soziale Marktwirtschaft*) can now exist without any check and balance arrangements.

Similar to Dahn, Constantin Hoffmann’s text *Ich musste raus, 13 Wege aus der DDR* (2010) also does not reveal the mode of ambivalence as found in the works of Rathenow and Brussig, but rather exhibits the hegemonic post-GDR memory work of the West and of unified German memory discourse. Having left the GDR in 1981, Hoffmann’s position on its past

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<sup>307</sup> Daniela Dahn, *Wehe dem Sieger! Ohne Osten kein Westen* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2011), 21.

<sup>308</sup> Daniela Dahn, 21. Dahn citing *Berliner Zeitung*, August 10, 2004.

resembles more a West German memory narrative of the GDR, confronting nostalgic romanticizing of the country. There are no ambivalent passages regarding the GDR past or the present unified Germany—no reflection or support for a nuanced consideration of the past, but rather indicting ideological sentiments towards the East German state. His work reads like an accusatory document, verifying the atrocities of the GDR that the West German memory narrative entertains of it. Although Constantin Hoffmann’s documentary text provides a *lieu de mémoire* that “block[s] the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial,” it does not attend to the inconsistencies in hegemonic memory.<sup>309</sup> His work does not allow for positive personal memories of dissidence in the GDR or recognition of the complexities of the private, everyday experiences in the GDR. In his docu-style book, Hoffmann gives accounts of peoples’ successful escapes from the GDR, even using their real names and actual photos, with each vignette focusing on the same following aspects: 1) the individual’s decision to leave the GDR, 2) the escape, and 3) then either the return to the GDR after 1989 or life in the West after 1989. His vignettes read like history lessons, with facts and dates and footnotes to sources, to serve as confrontational material for those who romanticize the GDR past in the present. At times, he even includes pictures of the various individuals’ *Entlassungsscheine aus der DDR, Identitätsbescheinigungen zur Ausreise aus der DDR, or Anmeldung für ein Auto* in the GDR. These photos and documents confront readers with the reality of the GDR, i.e., that people would leave their families and lives in the GDR to live in the West and risk death to achieve freedom. In Hoffmann’s forward to his book, he has over ten footnotes, citing various sources on the GDR and the Berlin Wall. Already on the second page, he provides facts about the GDR and on the large number of people who fled from it. He writes:

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<sup>309</sup> Nora, “Between Memory and History. Les Lieux des Mémoire,” 19.

Doch am 13. August 1961 bauten die Genossen mit Rückendeckung der sowjetischen Besatzungsmacht die Mauer. Der Westen hielt still. Bis dahin waren rund 2,7 Millionen Menschen aus der DDR geflüchtet [citing Stefan Wolle]. Bis zu ihrem Ende verließen noch einmal fast eine Million Ostdeutsche die DDR, davon rund 300.000 ungenehmigt [citing Rainer Eckert and Stiftung Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen]. Zwischen 1961 und 1988 überwandten 40.101 Menschen die Sperranlagen zur Bundesrepublik und zu Westberlin [citing Hans-Herrmann Hertle]. Gut 70.000 schafften es über andere sozialistische Länder. Einige Zehntausend kehrten von Besuchsreisen in die Bundesrepublik nicht zurück [citing Stiftung Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen].<sup>310</sup>

By providing these statistics, he resists any denial of the history of the Berlin wall and life in the GDR, especially for those Eastern Germans who are now rewriting the past and remembering nostalgically the GDR amid economic anxieties in present unified Germany.<sup>311</sup> However, in the demonstration of the GDR as repressive, Hoffmann's book does not indicate the critical reflection on the heterogeneous and complex nature of memory, which is present in the mode of ambivalence.

## Conclusion

While responses of melancholia and confrontation are relevant and could be used in addressing memory discourses after 1989 for the chronological *Hineingeborene* generation, the ambivalent narratives by Lutz Rathenow and Thomas Brussig provide a more nuanced, even contradictory, reflection on post-GDR memory. The two writers, Rathenow and Brussig,

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<sup>310</sup> Constantin Hoffmann, *Ich musste raus. 13 Wege aus der DDR* (Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2010), 8-9. In these five sentences he cites the following resources as evidence. 1. Stefan Wolle: *Aufbruch in die Stagnation—Die DDR in den sechziger Jahren*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Bonn 2005, S. 19; 2. Rainer Eckert: *Was stimmt? DDR—Die wichtigsten Antworten*. Verlag Herder. Freiburg 2007, S. 94.; 3. *Die Vergessenen Opfer der Mauer*. Stiftung Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, S. 27.; 4. Hans-Herrmann Hertle: *Die Berliner Mauer. Monument des Kalten Krieges*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Bonn 2007, S. 57.; 5. *Die Vergessenen Opfer der Mauer. Flucht und Inhaftierung in Deutschland 1961-1989*. Stiftung Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, S. 31.

<sup>311</sup> Hoffmann's book has received a lot of positive attention in the media: See *Gegen Vergessen und Verdrängen der Diktatur in der DDR 1949-1989*, <http://www.mauerfall-berlin.de/start/b%C3%BCcher-flucht-ausreise/ich-musste-raus/> (accessed March 13, 2013). This is an internet site dedicated to not letting the past be forgotten. See also Benjamin Brückner, "Ich musste raus" - 13 Geschichten. Constantin Hoffmanns Fluchtgeschichten aus der DDR, *Die Berliner Literaturkritik*, June 3, 2010, <http://www.berlinerliteraturkritik.de/detailseite/artikel/ich-musste-raus.html> (accessed December 10, 2010).

remember the socialist past in their literary productions after 1989 in different ways; however, they both employ re-presentation, showing the patina of time. Their ambivalent narratives, more than any of the other generational narratives, expose the difficult and heterogeneous nature of post-1989 memory. Through ambivalence these narratives contrast the simplistic binary categorizations of the GDR/FRG pasts, evidencing the fallacies in earlier totalitarian interpretations of the GDR past by presenting also the private, everyday sphere of the GDR. Both Brussig's and Rathenow's works represent and address the ambivalent sentiments in the transition process of German unification—transitioning from one “center” (a symbolic center of homogeneity) to another “center” (a symbolic center of the heterogeneity) and remind us of the role that time and distance play in memory. These two authors and their re-presentations or repetitions with difference reflect this generation's politics of memory and its transition to unification with a new center and new historical and cultural continuity, illustrating at the same time the complexities of memory in this process.

### Chapter 3

#### Third Generation (“Zonenkinder”): Discourse of Reappropriation

“Bei euch...” Wo waren diese Leute denn in diesem Augenblick? Bei sich? Und dann strahlte dieser matte Glanz in den Augen meines westdeutschen Gegenübers auf. Diese leicht feuchten Pupillen, die mir verrieten, daß meine neue Bekanntschaft fest davon überzeugt war, einen Bernstein gefunden zu haben. Gleich würde er mich in seinen Setzkasten stellen, noch einen Blick auf mich werfen, und dann würde ich einstauben. Vorher käme natürlich noch der Echtheitstest. “Stimmt’s, die Leute aus dem Osten schütteln einem die Hand bei der Begrüßung. Das weiß ich doch. Stimmt’s, im Osten waren die Freundschaften besser. Ist doch so.” Was soll man darauf antworten. Es gibt keine Antworten auf diese Fragen. Außerdem bin ich doch kein ausgestopfter Affe, der sich die letzte Laus vom Pelz klauen läßt.

Frank Rothe, “Der Dinosaurier im Bernstein. Ich, das Überbleibsel aus einer implodierten Galaxis” (2000)<sup>312</sup>

The above quotation from Frank Rothe highlights the on-going contests in post-1989 memory discourse and especially underscores the struggles of this third generation of “Zonenkinder” (born in the 1970s) to find and express a voice within public discussions dominated by Cold War clichés of the East.<sup>313</sup> According to Svetlana Boym when a collective

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<sup>312</sup> Frank Rothe, “Der Dinosaurier im Bernstein. Ich, das Überbleibsel aus einer implodierten Galaxis,” in *Das Buch der Unterschiede: Warum die Einheit keine ist*, Jana Simon, Frank Rothe, and Wiete Andrasch (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2000), 53.

<sup>313</sup> As discussed in the introduction, the third generation is often referred to as “Zonenkinder,” a term associated with this generation since the publication of Jana Hensel’s *Zonenkinder* in 2002. The term “Zonenkinder” is based on Hensel’s own self-labeling of her generation, which in itself is a construction produced by her and does not speak for the entire generation; however, the term does situate her age group in a particular space and time. Therefore, I have employed this descriptive term, as this chapter investigates the search for a cultural positioning performed by this generation in unified Germany. As such the term “Zonenkinder” indicates a cultural generational positioning similar to the concepts *Kriegskinder*, *Mauerkinder* or *Wendekinder*. The term “Kind” in itself invokes the sense of generational relations—here as a third generation (grandparent-parent-child) of GDR generations. For more on reductionist language of Cold War clichés of the fifties, see Frederike Eigler, “Jenseits von Ostalgie: Phantastische Züge in ‘DDR-Romanen’ der neunziger Jahre,” *Seminar* 40, no. 3 (September 2004): 192; Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, “The New Germany on the Screen: Conflicting Discourses on German Television,” in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 2000), 23-42; Michael Brie, “The Difficulty of Discussing the GDR,” in *Studies in GDR Culture and Society 13. Understanding the Past—Managing the Future: The Integration of the Five New Länder into the Federal Republic of Germany*, ed. Margy Gerber and Roger Woods (Boston: University Press of America, 1994), 1-23; and Peter Bender, *Unsere Erbschaft: Was war die DDR—was bleibt von ihr?* (Hamburg: Luchterhand Verlag, 1992). Eigler discusses such continuation of Cold War clichés after unification with comparisons of the unjust system of the GDR to that of Nazi Germany, “Gleichsetzungen der ‘Unrechtssysteme’ des DDR-Sozialismus und des Nationalsozialismus”(192). Meinhof looks at three events/commemorations as portrayed in German media: 1989 (fall of the Berlin Wall), 1994 (5-year anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall), 1999 (10 year anniversary) to examine how such reductive discourse plays a role in constructing German identity after 1989. According to Meinhof the events of 1989 are pictured as euphoric and the camera serves as an objective viewer. In contrast, according to Meinhof, the media coverage for the other two dates is not as objective, with commemoration of *Pogromnacht* falling into the same media message commemorating the fall of the wall (26). In this way, the image of the GDR regime is equated to that

begins to disappear, members of the vanishing community start becoming aware of what they will be missing and, thus, memory narratives often start focusing on a return to the absent past.<sup>314</sup> What Boym posits in *The Future of Nostalgia* speaks to the nature of cultural memory. In his seminal work, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Jan Assmann argues that through the act of writing or “handing down of meaning,” a certain constructed memory within a culture can stretch “[. . .] beyond the limitations of its original time and its original mode of communication, just as the individual memory can extend beyond the range of present consciousness.”<sup>315</sup> For Assmann, in the recollection of the past, the past “cannot have disappeared completely” and any reference to the past “must indicate some kind of characteristic difference from today.”<sup>316</sup> In other words, time influences the nature of how the past is recalled and reconstructed in the present. It is this “characteristic of difference” that exemplifies the memory narrative of the third generation now twenty years after unification. The post-unification texts (*Achtung Zone* [2009] by Jana Hensel, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* [2009] and *Wurst und Wahn* [2011] both by Jakob Hein) reveal a new relation to and reconstruction of the GDR past (a characteristic difference) different than that uncovered in the earlier post-unification texts of this third generation.

This chapter shows that the early texts by Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein (*Zonenkinder* [2002] and *Mein erstes T-Shirt* [2001], respectively) critically reflect on the experience of loss, of the GDR past and, more specifically, of a sense of Eastern identity, resulting from this generation’s response of assimilation in the early period of unification. Hein’s text, *Mein erstes*

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of the Third Reich, a regime of terror. Michael Brie examines the question of West German history serving as the history for unified Germany and looks at how this history reduces GDR society with terms such as “unjust regime, totalitarian society, SED Dictatorship.” He argues that abuses of power occur in democratic societies, states of law (*Rechtsstaaten*), as well. Peter Bender, a West German journalist, suggests that the Western image of the GDR in unified Germany has reverted back to the image dominant during the division of the two Germanies.

<sup>314</sup> See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books: New York, 2001), 54.

<sup>315</sup> Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8.

<sup>316</sup> Assmann, 18.



*T-shirt*, uses irony as a strategy to express reflections on loss and Hensel in *Zonenkinder* employs the mode of nostalgia (participating in the phenomenon of *Ostalgie*) to comment on notions of loss for the third generation of the “*Zonenkinder*.” Each of these early responses (*Mein erstes T-Shirt* and *Zonenkinder*) makes the case for and indicates a newly emerging affirmative voice. This voice will be articulated more fully in the later texts of reappropriation (*Achtung Zone* [2009] by Jana Hensel, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* [2009] and *Wurst und Wahn* [2011] both by Jakob Hein), which offer an overall performative recasting of the meaning of things Eastern. As this chapter argues, the reactions of nostalgia and irony, as uncovered in the early reflective texts on assimilation (*Zonenkinder* [2002] and *Mein erstes T-Shirt* [2001]), were necessary responses in the process of this generation to discover and assert a new discourse of reappropriation—a discourse that moves beyond *Ostalgie*.

In her earliest post-unification memory work, *Zonenkinder* (2001), Jana Hensel responds to this need to embark on remembering the GDR past and a sense of Eastern identity lost in the process of assimilation and, more specifically, on recalling the absent East German community in the present. In an interview with Tom Kraushaar, Hensel explains that she wrote *Zonenkinder* in order to fill a void in post-1989 German memory discourse after Florian Illies’s *Generation Golf* came out in 2000: “Das Buch [*Zonenkinder*] sollte einen Nerv treffen, schließlich gab es eines [ein Buch] dieser Art noch nicht. In der Nachfolge von *Generation Golf* wurde im Feuilleton unglaublich viel über die Probleme und Nöte, Zwänge und Prägungen dieser Generation geschrieben, dabei fiel niemandem auf, dass da das halbe Land nicht vorkam. Und in diese Lücke hinein habe ich mein Buch geschrieben.”<sup>317</sup> Still years after unification the stigmas of

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<sup>317</sup> Tom Kraushaar, “Die Normalität des Ausnahmezustands. Ein Gespräch mit Jana Hensel,” in *Die Zonenkinder und wir: Die Geschichte eines Phänomens*, ed. Tom Kraushaar (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004), 94. See also Sascha Michel “Generation Trabbi: Symposion ‘Bücher ohne Bilder’ des Literaturhauses,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 18, 2003. Michel also stresses that Hensel situates *Zonenkinder* as an East-German counterpart to Florian Illies’s *Generation Golf* and argues that *Zonenkinder* contributes to constructing a sense of identity for Eastern Germans.

things East German exist and are being perpetuated in the media.<sup>318</sup> (A more detailed examination of media discourse will be undertaken below in the section on reappropriation.) Many of the cultural institutions in the early years of unification that publicly "worked through" the GDR past, such as museums, foundations, memorials, and academic conferences, dealt with the negative and oppressive history of the GDR, examining the reductive *Täter-Opfer* dichotomy.<sup>319</sup> And it is this stereotypical and narrowly defined representation of the GDR past (accepted and appropriated in the early period of assimilation) that this generational memory narrative of reappropriation now contests. Out of the absence or distortion of an East German past in public discourse, the earlier reflective narratives on assimilation emerged. While these narratives were still somewhat defensive in their reevaluation of East German identity, they were also an important stepping stone for later stories. Owing to a lost sense of Eastern identity during the period of assimilation, narratives of reappropriation have developed more recently, indicating a reimagining of both the GDR past and a more distinctly Eastern identity in the present. Here, the works of the third generation create "new beginnings" out of the previous "break in continuity or tradition."<sup>320</sup> This chapter shows how the later texts of writers from the third generation of the former GDR (*Achtung Zone* [2009], *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* [2009] and *Wurst und Wahn* [2011]) engage in a return to an imagined community of the GDR in order to reinsert a confident voice into the present memory discourse of unified Germany, which has been dominated in the media by hegemonic discourse, involving Cold War clichés and division.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> For a discussion of stereotypes in the German media, see for example, Thomas Ahbe, "Die Ost-Diskurse als Strukturen der Nobilitierung und Marginalisierung von Wissen. Eine Diskursanalyse zur Konstruktionen der Ostdeutschen in den westdeutschen Medien-Diskursen 1989/90 und 1995," in *Die Ostdeutschen in den Medien: Das Bild von den Anderen nach 1990*, ed. Thomas Ahbe, Rainer Gries, and Wolfgang Schmale (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009), 59-112.

<sup>319</sup> For example, Stiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur, *Stasi Prison at Hohenschönhausen, Stasi Headquarters in Normannenstrasse*, and the many border museums.

<sup>320</sup> Assmann, 18.

<sup>321</sup> Mary Fulbrook addresses a post-1989 Eastern German interest in an imagined and "newly constructed pre-1989 social world," which aids in redefining an "eastern German 'self'" (440). See Mary Fulbrook, "Turning Points,"

The above remark by Hensel, often labeled the mouthpiece of her generation, reflects the memory work of this third generation, one of uncovering an ostensibly absent and “truer” version of the East German past, which would not only negate “false” West German constructions of the GDR but also provide a new language for East Germans other than (N)*Ostalgie* (which was characteristic of the early reflective texts on the period of assimilation). Hensel’s later book *Achtung Zone* approaches the loss of a presumably “truer” East German past still with more defensive and obstinate discourse than found in Hein’s later texts. Regarding this East German difficulty in finding a new language to rediscover the past, Hensel wrote in 2009: “Dabei haben sie [East Germans] es nicht geschafft, aus den Denkmustern jener Sprache, die ihnen stets die Vergangenheit als Vergleichsgegenstand zitierte, auszubrechen. Sie blieben sich darin treu. Sie erfüllten die Erwartungen. [. . .] Aber dem Osten fehlt eine Sprache für die Gegenwart.”<sup>322</sup> In *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany, and the Berlin Police*, Andreas Glaeser argues that Western Germans allochronize their relationship with the East as a narrative of development, that is, in their speech they often discuss the East in terms of the past. The East is regarded as inferior to the West—as backward and catching up to the advanced West. This position recalls the early German films of the nineties that comically portrayed the Eastern “catch up” mentality.<sup>323</sup> In referring to the East in terms of the past, Western Germans look back at “their own past/easterners present” and, in this language of distance, emphasize differences.<sup>324</sup> According to Hensel’s passage above from *Achtung Zone*, East Germans are still negotiating this pattern of

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*Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 439-460.

<sup>322</sup> Jana Hensel, *Achtung Zone* (München: Piper Verlag, 2009), 43.

<sup>323</sup> During this period of assimilation, German films depicted the East German as having to catch up to be as advanced as the West. See for example, Roger F. Cook, “Good Bye, Lenin!: Free-Market Nostalgia for Socialist Consumerism,” *Seminar* 43, no. 2 (May 2007): 206. According to Cook, films of the early nineties (Peter Timm’s *Go Trabbi Go* [1991], Wolfgang Büld’s *Das war der wilde Osten* [1992], and Detlev Buck’s *Wir können auch anders* [1993]) produced by Western directors often comically portrayed this Eastern “catch up” mentality, and only in the later *Ostalgie* films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) did the perspective of filmmaking change from this earlier “catch up” mentality to one of critical evaluation towards unification.

<sup>324</sup> Andreas Glaeser, “Times Ajar,” *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany and the Berlin Police* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 150, 147.

thought that presents the East as being several decades behind the advanced West. The East has not yet claimed a language of the present, which would put them as equals to the West. These texts of reappropriation, however, indicate a move towards claiming this language of the present.

In the process of remembering, the literary productions in this generational narrative of reappropriation reveal a new relationship to the GDR past not found in works of the other post-GDR memory narratives (of the first and second generations, for example). Instead of melancholic or ambivalent narratives about the absent past (or victim narratives of a totalitarian or authoritarian GDR state employing Cold War clichéd language), the writers of this third generation reinsert the GDR past into public discourse without such “mere” nostalgic or melancholic tones.<sup>325</sup> Their texts of reappropriation attest to a new imaginative investment in restoring an Eastern sense of identity in the present—insisting on greater multiplicity and coexistence of identity narratives within a space where things Eastern seem publicly rejected. At the same time, in reissuing the relation between East and West, these narratives of reappropriation offer a performative recasting of identity.

Drawing on Eve Sedgwick’s queer performativity, I argue that Eastern German performativity in the texts of reappropriation also can be considered as a “strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma.”<sup>326</sup> The distinctions between East and West in the critical narratives on assimilation placed things Western as superior to devalued Eastern cultural objects, which I argue fulfills the role that Sedgwick assigns to shame in the process of shaping relational strategies between self and others.<sup>327</sup> The later narratives of reappropriation revise (i.e., reissue) the previous relational

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<sup>325</sup> Daphne Berdahl employs “‘mere’ nostalgia” as a descriptive term for how this interest in GDR products, rituals and cultural celebrations is being viewed and “dismissed in popular, political, and academic discourses.” See Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 192.

<sup>326</sup> Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 61.

<sup>327</sup> Sedgwick, 62.

strategy with regard to the West, continuing a performative recasting already begun in the critical works on assimilation but now (more than twenty years after the fall of the wall) reissue through a stronger, more confident voice. These later texts about the GDR past and about a sense of Eastern identity in the present aid in a reparative discourse about East German socialization that re-owns a lost and often negated past community, imagined or real.

In her book *Achtung Zone* (2009), Hensel explains that the earlier phenomenon of *Ostalgie* resulted from the fact that many East Germans did not focus attention on the present, but instead concerned themselves solely with the past, thus getting stuck in a regressive mode of nostalgia: “Aber viele Menschen im Osten haben sich auf die Vergangenheit eingeschworen, ließen sich auf sie einschwören. Sie schenkten der Gegenwart kaum mehr Beachtung. Beharrlich beschäftigten sie sich mit einer Zeit, die vorbei ist, ohne die damals gemachten Erfahrungen ins Heute zu übersetzen.”<sup>328</sup> Assmann informs of the necessity to recall the past in the present in order to reconstruct the past: “Anyone who during today fixes his eyes on tomorrow must preserve yesterday from oblivion by grasping it through memory. This is how the past is constructed, and this is the sense in which we can say that the past comes into being when we refer to it.”<sup>329</sup> The strategy of *Ostalgie*, Hensel admits, was useful in commenting on unification earlier, but it does not allow for reconciliation in the present: “[*Ostalgie*] war der Versuch der Ostdeutschen, ihr Unbehagen an der Gegenwart zu formulieren, ihre Kritik an den Zuständen im wiedervereinigten Deutschland in Worte zu fassen. Ihrem Unbehaustsein im Heute Ausdruck zu verleihen, wenn man so will.”<sup>330</sup> In this passage from *Achtung Zone*, Hensel reflects on this need and usefulness of the response of *Ostalgie* to express discontent with the present in unified Germany. I argue that Hensel’s participation in *Ostalgie* in *Zonenkinder* aided in a reflective

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<sup>328</sup> Hensel, *Achtung Zone*, 42.

<sup>329</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, 17.

<sup>330</sup> Hensel, 42.

critique of East German assimilation, which was necessary in uncovering a confident Eastern German voice in the later discourse of reappropriation—a new form of post-*Ostalgie*. In this process of identity formation, we find a strategy of “Ossi” pride (Eastern pride), the fourth manifestation of the “various expressions of distinctive eastern German identity” suggested by Patricia Hogwood. In her article, “After the GDR: Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany,” Hogwood lays out four manifestations of a “distinctive eastern German identity” (‘third way’ socialism, *Trotzidentität*, *Ostalgie* [a combination of *Ost* and nostalgia] and “Ossi” pride.<sup>331</sup> This “Ossi” pride is a reaction to Western stereotypes—in an attempt to rename these negative stereotypes into positive attributes and to contrast these positive characteristics with negative ones of the West, such as greed and materialism.

Writers of the previously discussed generational narratives (see chapters 1 and 2) represented an attempt to work through the loss of a GDR identity—related to the literary intelligentsia and dissidents, respectively.<sup>332</sup> The third generation of Eastern German writers, in contrast, has had a different orientation of the self, or rather, a different relationship to a GDR identity than their parents or grandparents. The configuration of the term “*Zonenkinder*” gives insight into the unique problem of identity construction for this generation. Unlike the parent generation (“die der sechziger Jahre” or “die ‘echte’ DDR Generation”) or the next generation (“unsere Nachfolger”), Hensel explains that the “*Zonenkinder*” generation is “in einem ungeklärten Übergang, und es sieht so aus, als taugten [ihr]e Jahrgänge zu eindeutigen Studienergebnissen nicht viel.”<sup>333</sup> Instead of moving from one “*Raum*” (GDR) to another

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<sup>331</sup> Patricia Hogwood, “After the GDR: Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, no. 4 (2000): 45-68.

<sup>332</sup> On loss experienced by the first generation of former East Germans (Wolf), see for example, Mary Fulbrook, “Living through the GDR,” in *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the East German State since 1989*, ed. Nick Hodgin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester, NY: Camden, 2011), 201-20. She explains that this generation has to “reevaluate the whole of their lives” after 1989, leaving them with an existential crisis. Having invested so much of their lives in the building up of the socialist state, many feel as if their lives may have been lived in vain (212).

<sup>333</sup> Hensel, *Zonenkinder*, 155- 56.

“*Raum*” (unified Germany) after 1990, members of her generation, who have lived half their lives in the GDR and the other half in the newly unified Germany, actually found themselves in another “*Raum*” after 1989—a transition space that is neither here (GDR) nor there (unified Germany)—where they search for a sense of self.<sup>334</sup> The GDR did not disappear for them nor did they accept a new place either after 1989. Instead they remained, and remain still, in a separate zone created by themselves:

Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik war einfach noch nicht verschwunden. Sie hatte mit dem Fall der Mauer nicht, wie viele glaubten, ihren Hut genommen, sie war nicht weggegangen und hatte die Menschen an den nächsten, schon vor der Tür Wartenden abgegeben. Sie hatte sich nur verwandelt und war von einer Idee zu einem Raum geworden, einem kontaminierten Raum, in den freiwillig nur der einen Fuß setzte, der mit den Verseuchungen Geld verdienen oder sie studieren wollte. Wir aber sind hier erwachsen geworden. Wir nennen diesen Raum, fast liebevoll, die Zone. Wir wissen, dass unsere Zone von einem Versuch übrig geblieben ist, den wir, ihre Kinder, fast nur aus Erzählungen kennen und der gescheitert sein soll. Es gibt hier heute nur noch sehr wenig, was so aussieht, wie es einst ausgesehen hat. Es gibt nichts, was so ist, wie es sein soll. Doch langsam fühlen wir uns darin zu Hause.<sup>335</sup>

This self-reflexive engagement with the immediate years after unification characterizes the mode of remembering the past performed by the early texts of Jakob Hein and Hensel (*Mein erstes T-Shirt* [2001] and *Zonenkinder* [2002]). Whereas the term “Zone” indicates a new type of spacio-temporality of transition, the use of “Kind” implicitly makes readers think in terms of generation

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<sup>334</sup> Angelika Bammer discusses this problem of identity with regards to the displaced person. She writes: “Identity is ineluctably, it seems, marked by the peculiarly postmodern geography of identity: both here and there and neither here nor there at one and the same time.” See Angelika Bammer, “Introduction,” *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xi-xx. Jana Simon and James Nixdorf in *Das Buch der Unterschiede: Warum die Einheit keine ist* also write about living in between the two spaces of East and West. James Nixdorf chooses to label himself a “Wostler”: “[...] ein Zwischenkind. Nicht mehr Ost, noch nicht West” (210). Jana Simon also questions where she belongs in unified Germany: “Ich überlege heute noch oft, wo ich hingehöre. Bin ich eine Ostlerin? Eine westliche Ostlerin oder eine östliche Westlerin? Die Grenzen haben sich verschoben. Ich weiss es nicht mehr. Ich gehöre wie schon vor der Wende nirgendwohin, habe mich irgendwo zwischen den Systemen verirrt”(27). See Jana Simon, “Madame Ceaușescus Schuhe. Über das Scheitern einer Ost-West Beziehung,” in *Das Buch der Unterschiede: Warum die Einheit keine ist*, ed. Jana Simon, Frank Rothe, and Wiete Andrasch (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2000), 13-28 and James Nixdorf, “Globusrutschen bis Timbuktu. Die Angst vorm großen Ähneln,” *Das Buch der Unterschiede: Warum die Einheit keine ist*, ed. Jana Simon, Frank Rothe, and Wiete Andrasch (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2000), 205-14.

<sup>335</sup> Jana Hensel, *Zonenkinder* (Rowohlt: Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 2002), 155. For this study of this third generation, I will appropriate her label of “*Zonenkinder*” as well. It should be noted that accepted understanding of the term “*Zonenkinder*” would be children of the *Zone*, i.e., the Soviet occupation zone (or the GDR).

and in terms of this generation's connection to the past. This erasure of the term "Kind" by Hensel in her later post-unification work, *Achtung Zone* (2009), moves the concentration from the past to the present, i.e., to this transition space in which history and memory can be reimagined and in which they search for the new language of the present—the language that places them as equals to the West.

A closer look at these strategies of reflection—a critical consideration of the period of assimilation in the early 1990s—can help explain the onset of a new post-*Ostalgie* ("Ossi" pride) with the later texts of this third generation.<sup>336</sup> While in Hensel's *Zonenkinder* the past serves as the avenue to provide insights into her generation's reflections on the period of assimilation (thus, performing the attempt, through *Ostalgie*, to express discontent for the present), the past in Hein's *Mein erstes T-Shirt* (2001) functions to comment ironically on those West German perceptions of East Germans as well as on Eastern German identity denial in the period of assimilation. The period of assimilation was the interval immediately after unification during which many Eastern Germans attempted to assimilate Western German cultural conventions (dress, consumer behavior, and so forth) to integrate better into the newly unified Germany. Unlike Hensel's openly appropriated nostalgic tone in *Zonenkinder*, Hein uses the cloak of irony to work through this period of Eastern German assimilation into Western culture after unification. In reading Hein's *Mein erstes T-Shirt* as a critical reflection on East German assimilation, one must understand his text in its global context. On the surface Hein's text performs a memory recollection of a childhood in the GDR but within these recollections, memories of the West fall unconsciously into hegemonic memory discourse of superiority. In this manner, his early text

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<sup>336</sup> These two contingent categories of Assimilation and of Reappropriation echo the three phases of DDR-Nostalgie of Eastern Germans as proposed by cultural historian Dietrich Mühlberg in his "Vom langsamen Wandel der Erinnerung an die DDR." For more on the three phases of DDR-Nostalgie (*Umbruchphase*, *Ernüchterung*, and *Reaktionen auf eine anhaltende Stagnation*), see Dietrich Mühlberg, "Vom langsamen Wandel der Erinnerung an die DDR," *Kulturation- Online.Journal für Kultur, Wissenschaft und Politik* 1/2003, [http://www.kulturation.de/ki\\_1\\_text.php?id=11](http://www.kulturation.de/ki_1_text.php?id=11) (accessed February 2, 2012).



seems to affirm an Eastern sense of inadequacy (characteristic of assimilation) but through the use of irony his text also criticizes sentiments of assimilation that feed into this rhetoric of the West as better and more advanced. In contrast, the later texts by Hensel and Hein published two decades after unification (*Achtung Zone*, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, and *Wurst und Wahn*), articulate and perform the new discourse of reappropriation, i.e., an affirmation of the positive features of a publicly negated past as opposed to a response to loss per se. Things Eastern are re-cast with new meanings.

It is important to note that the writers of the third generation articulate their more positive and confident assertion of East German identifications from an imagined position on the periphery of the cultural sphere. In her examination of marginal writers in Germany during the 1980s and 1990s, Petra Fachinger explains that these authors:

[. . .] share an oppositional and counterdiscursive impulse through which they express the possibility of a community different from that offered by the dominant culture. Such resistance [in marginal literature] manifests itself in a process of deconstructing the binary structure of a centre and margin, rather than replacing the centre [as is characteristic of postcolonial theory]. Rewriting [in minority literature] thus entails a constructive moment that stresses the importance of agency, and may even anticipate solutions to potential cultural conflicts.<sup>337</sup>

The texts *Achtung Zone* (Hensel), *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* and *Wurst und Wahn* (Hein) are not quite deconstructing the binary structure of center/margin nor are they replacing what is presumed to be at the center. Instead, they are engaged in a more partial, small-scale process of renaming what the dominant discourse had earlier determined as Eastern. These later texts now carry further the resistance that began with the reflective narratives that responded to the early period of assimilation (*Mein erstes T-Shirt* and *Zonenkinder*). The authors using the

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<sup>337</sup> Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: "Other" German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), xii. According to Fachinger, both postcolonial and minority theories look at the notion of a literature that positions itself in opposition to the hegemonic, dominant center. Petra Fachinger articulates that oppositional discourse as that found in minority literature "has its theoretical foundation in postcolonial criticism concerned with anticolonialist textual resistance" (5).

strategy of reappropriation twenty years after reunification do not write back to West German or American literature as, according to Fachinger, marginalized East German authors of the second generation such as Thomas Brussig and Kerstin Jentsch did earlier on, but instead the texts of this third generation write back to their earlier own literature which critically responded to the loss of the GDR past experienced during the period of assimilation (*Mein erstes T-Shirt* and *Zonenkinder*). Through a new, more affirmative, approach to GDR objects and rituals, these later counterdiscursive texts explore and assert notions of an East German specificity. Drawing on Fachinger's approach to literary works by marginalized German writers in the 1980s and 1990s, I expand this notion of the periphery to the third generation in order to investigate their response of reappropriation.

The reconstruction of an East German cultural past through these literary texts of the third generation suggests an engagement with efforts to mend the break in an imagined sense of community and continuity for Eastern Germans after 1989.<sup>338</sup> The stage of assimilation, particularly crucial for the generation of the "*Zonenkinder*," was necessary for the eventual mode of reappropriation to develop among this generation of Eastern Germans. This assimilation in the early years of unification, characterized by the adaptation of Western perceptions of Eastern identity, produced a discontinuity with previous GDR generations and initiated instead during this time a connection to West Germans of the same generation. In response to continued negative representations of things Eastern in the media (for example, presentation of the GDR as

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<sup>338</sup> See Ernst Schulin, "Absage an und Wiederherstellung von Vergangenheit," *Speicher des Gedächtnisses: Bibliotheken, Museen, und Archive 1*, ed. Moritz Csáky and Peter Stachel (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2000), 23-39. Drawing on Schulin's research on the need to reconstruct tradition and history after breaks in history, I suggest that such a need for a reconstruction of the past is surfacing among this third generation. Schulin gives many different social breaks in time: the Reformation, the French Revolution, the fall of the Soviet Union. Taking the French Revolution and the ensuing *Restaurationszeit* as examples, he explains this need for communities and individuals to reconstruct the past. In the midst of *Revolutionszeit* (end of the *Ancien Regiem*) in France at the end of the eighteenth century many art works, and sculptures were destroyed and historical recording was halted. This denial of the past (*Absage*) was then naturally followed by a restoration period (*Wiederherstellung*), the *Restaurationszeit* in history, with certain "saved" and restored documents, art objects, as well as memoirs finding their way into museal and archival spaces of memory in France.

*Unrechtsstaat*), a response to rename and reconnect to the East German past has occurred as evidenced in this second stage of reappropriation, in which this third generation reestablishes a link with other former Eastern German generations. Through this mode, which reconnects this generation to the imagined pre-1989 cultural traditions of an East German community, these later texts present a new investment into identity modes that no longer offer defensive excuses for expressions of a “distinctive eastern German identity.” Instead, the later texts now determine and label what it means to be East German through a more directly articulated, unapologetic voice. Through this deliberate performance of “Ossi” pride—a tone of opposition develops.

In analyzing texts by Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein as representative “case studies,” I show that this generational narrative of reappropriation in each case follows two stages of transitioning towards a coexisting unified German memory discourse. Hensel and Hein are particularly relevant for the analysis of the identity performance of the third generation since they both produced early literary works that consider assimilation, i.e., the vanishing sense of Eastern German identity, and then later novels (appearing at the same time again) that reassert a disappearing Eastern German identity. The texts reveal an Eastern German search for a space of existence within the hegemonic discourse of unified Germany.

Objects and rituals play a crucial role in the later texts with regard to the writers’ attempts to bring the past back into the present. Performing the work Assmann calls cultural memory, the objects and rituals that distinguished Eastern and Western modes of identification in the reflective narratives of assimilation now coexist as legitimate partners in creating a more heterogeneous German memory.<sup>339</sup> Now in the texts of reappropriation, the generation of the “*Zonenkinder*” assert the same right, as the corresponding Western German *Generation Golf* of Illies, to recall their childhood memories (consumer goods and rituals)—without their childhood memories of

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<sup>339</sup> Assmann, 6.

the GDR reduced to mere nostalgic musings for the totalitarian SED state or socialism. While earlier Hensel insisted that she recalled her childhood past precisely because such narratives are apolitical and refer to a time of innocence, the later texts reflect a new discourse of empowerment, expressing and performing a right to be proud of a sense of Eastern identity—not just recalling the past, but now inflecting it with new positive meaning.<sup>340</sup>

Jakob Hein and Jana Hensel, through their oppositional discourse of reappropriation, become archivists as such by introducing a new narrative about the past into the cultural memory discourse of unified Germany. In her book from 2009, *Achtung Zone*, Hensel explains that representations of the past that are produced by the media and historians, juxtaposed with the experience of one's own family members, allowed the earlier phenomenon of *Ostalgie* to develop. According to Hensel the historical and medial negation of the East German past has caused this need by her generation now in the present to recall and reconstruct the past.<sup>341</sup> Thus, these texts of reappropriation serve as *lieux de mémoire*, that is, as an archive of counter narratives that emerges in place of the fading memory of the GDR in public discourse.<sup>342</sup>

In this narrative of reappropriation, the past is no longer mourned or repressed in order to take on the new object of unified Germany, but instead the newly imagined/reimagined Eastern identity and past is recalled and inserted into public literary discourse, reclaiming the absent

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<sup>340</sup> Hensel claims that, through recalling childhood in her books, there is no risk of confusing the political and private, which many nostalgic shows after 1990 have conflated, within the constellation of GDR memory: "Wenn ich nur von Kindheit spreche, meine ich die unschuldige Zeit, in der man sich eben noch nicht klar ist, in welchem System man lebt, inwieweit man Mitverantwortung trägt oder schuldig wird." See Tom Kraushaar, "Die Normalität des Ausnahmezustands. Ein Gespräch mit Jana Hensel," 106.

<sup>341</sup> See Beth Linklater, "Narratives of the GDR: What Parents tell their Children," in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (St. Martin's Press: New York, 2000), 23-42. Linklater discusses that Eastern German children and parents describe the GDR in ways that conform to the media image of the GDR past.

<sup>342</sup> In his "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," French historian Pierre Nora distinguishes between *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory such as the archive, museums, film) and *milieu de mémoire* (real environments of memory), the former being a subjective and particular memory (mediated representation of the past) and the latter being a living and objective memory. See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989): 7-24. Additionally, Nora writes that *lieux de mémoire* are between history and real memory: "If we were able to live within memory, we would not have needed to consecrate *lieux de mémoire* in its name" (8).

community of the GDR. Through reappropriating and using the objects and rituals that often divide East and West but now with a distinctively empowered East German voice, Hein and Hensel form a new space in their texts of coexistence—healing the rift at once between generations of the East (first, second, and third) and the corresponding Western *Generation Golf*. The new discourse of reappropriation created by this “*Zonenkinder*” generation commences a new period of post-*Ostalgie*—of reappropriation that allows for, and demands, multiplicity and coexistence in a heterogeneous German memory discourse through the “expression of a distinctive eastern German identity” (Hogwood).<sup>343</sup>

### **Critical Reflection on Assimilation—*Zonenkinder* (2002)**

Hensel’s *Zonenkinder* (2002) is a type of memoir chronicling the autobiographical protagonist’s memories of her life before and after the *Wende* in order to reflect on Eastern identity. Her reflections from ten years after unification provide insight into present Eastern German struggles with negotiating a sense of Eastern identity within unified Germany (as a transition piece to reappropriation). Drawing on already established generation books of the West, such as Florian Illies’s *Generation Golf* (2000), Hensel’s *Zonenkinder* mimics Illies’s narrative voice of “we,” which, according to Tom Kraushaar, would not have been so controversial had her narrative not suggested that it spoke for an entire generation, using “wir.”<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> Hogwood, 45-68.

<sup>344</sup> For more on *Zonenkinder*, see for example, Susanne Ledanff, “Neue Formen der ‘Ostalgie’—Abschied von der ‘Ostalgie’? Erinnerungen und Kindheit und Jugend in der DDR und an die Geschichtsjahre 1989/90,” *Seminar* 43, no. 2 (May 2007): 176-93. For more on media discourse on Illies’s *Generation Golf*, see for example, Hans-Peter Bartels, “Wühlen im Kinderparadies,” *Spiegel Online*, February 21, 2000, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-15737766.html> (accessed October 2, 2012).

See also, Günter Kaindlstorfer interview with Florian Illies, “Harald Schmidt ist der große Erzieher unserer Generation,” <http://www.kaindlstorfer.at/index.php?id=226> (accessed February 13, 2012). (first published in *Tagesanzeiger* Zürich, July 19, 2000 and *Der Standard*, Wien, August 5, 2000) and an interview with Florian Illies by Günter Gaus: “Wir wollen nicht mehr mitlaufen,” *FAZ.net*, July 13, 2003, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/generation-golf-2-wir-wollen-nicht-mehr-mitlaufen-1118002.html> (accessed February 13, 2012). See also “Florian Illies: Generation Golf zwei: Rezension von Günter Kaindlstorfer,” *Günter*

Kraushaar writes: “Dass in Jana Hensel’s Erinnerungen der Charakter der DDR als Unrechtsstaat keine hervorgehobene Rolle spielt und dass sie die neunziger Jahre als eine Phase der Anpassung an westdeutschen Lebensstil beschreibt, wäre wohl kaum so brisant, hätte Jana Hensel dabei nicht suggeriert, für eine Gruppe, eine Generation zu sprechen.”<sup>345</sup> Moritz Baßler reasons that it was the unique experience of 1989 that affected such an uproar by former East Germans towards Hensel’s use of “we” and position as speaker for all Eastern Germans:

Ein zweiter wesentlicher Unterschied zu Illies liegt in der Bedeutung des Epochenwechsels von 1989. Über ihn muss Hensels “Wir” immer wieder hin und zurück, während es bei Illies eine solche Zäsur, wie gesagt, gar nicht gibt: Was war, war gut und ist es immer noch. Bei Hensel hingegen muss das, was war, erst mühsam wieder rekonstruiert werden, und das, was davon allenfalls “übrig geblieben” ist, hat mit dem eigenen Selbst nichts mehr zu tun.<sup>346</sup>

In *Zonenkinder*, Hensel’s protagonist expresses the need for her generation in those early years to integrate more with Western Germans of their same age than with fellow East Germans: “Unsere Generation verbindet mit ihnen [the preceding GDR generation] nicht viel mehr als die geographische Herkunft. Mit gleichaltrigen Westdeutschen fühlen wir uns wohler.”<sup>347</sup> In these first years many East Germans of the third generation perceived more similarities to their Western counterparts and began an attempt to bridge cultural differences between East and West, albeit often unsuccessfully, as Hensel’s protagonist relates regarding clothing choices: “Denke ich an diese Zeit [the immediate years after unification] und betrachte Bilder unserer Jugend,

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*Kaindlstorfer. Journalist*, ed. Günter Kaindlstorfer <http://www.kaindlstorfer.at/index.php?id=286> (accessed February 13, 2012).

<sup>345</sup> Tom Kraushaar, Vorwort, *Die Zonenkinder und wir: Die Geschichte eines Phänomens*, ed. Tom Kraushaar (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004), 7-8. In a very public debate on Hensel’s *Zonenkinder* on amazon.de, her book was both praised and criticized. Those who praised it felt that her book spoke for their pasts that they had so long repressed. Those who criticized her book felt that she was speaking erroneously in this tone of melancholy for their personal experiences after 1989 and appropriating experiences of assimilation that they themselves did not experience. One reader writes, “Es ist eigentlich schade, was jeder ‘Westdeutsche’ nach dem Lesen des Buches über unsere Generation denken muss. Dabei sind viele interessiert an dem, wie es ‘vorher’ war [ . . .].” See Tom Kraushaar, ed., “Melancholie und Strudel. Aus der Amazon-Debatte,” in *Die Zonenkinder und wir: Die Geschichte eines Phänomens* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004), 88-93.

<sup>346</sup> Moritz Baßler, “Die ‘Zonenkinder’ und das ‘Wir.’ Ein Nachwort,” in *Die Zonenkinder und wir: Die Geschichte eines Phänomens*, ed. Tom Kraushaar (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004), 115.

<sup>347</sup> Hensel, *Zonenkinder*, 158.

wird mir schlecht. Unsicher, etwas verschreckt und immer unpassend gekleidet schauen wir in die Kamera. Unser Blick verrät, dass wir doch eigentlich nur alles richtig machen wollten. Aber es gelang nicht.”<sup>348</sup> Her protagonist, speaking for a collective “we,” expresses collective jealousy for those East Germans ten years younger who are comfortable with, and have mastered, Western German fashions (see “*Diktaturkinder*” of chapter 4) and, therefore, have integrated more easily into the new Germany, unlike her generation, which still was attempting to master dressing in the Western style at their age: “Mitte der Neunziger, wir waren mittlerweile fünf Jahre im Westen, hatten wir noch immer nicht gelernt, uns richtig anzuziehen. Jeder sah sofort, wo wir herkamen.”<sup>349</sup> Hensel, using the plural, speaks for an entire generation, who may or may not have shared her memory (mimicking hegemonic discourse that assumes a homogeneous “we” as well).

In one of the protagonist’s recollections of a dinner shared with friends, Hensel addresses the desire to assimilate and be part of the “*Wir-Gefühl*” that her Western European friends shared with each other because they all had shared childhood memories different from her East German ones. The protagonist recalls a night at a friend’s apartment in Marseilles about six years after the *Wende*. The group of friends, Italian, French, and Austrian, all remember nostalgically a favorite cartoon from their childhood—“The Smurfs,” as well as various other favorite films and film characters such as the Lord of the Rings, Pippi Langstrumpf, Donald Duck, and Asterix and Obelix. However, the protagonist cannot share in these fond recollections of their past since they are not similar to her own. She wants to talk about Alfons Zitterbacke, the *Zauberer der Smaragdenstadt*, “Timur und seinen Trupp, Ede und Unku, den Antennenaugust und Frank und Irene”—all East German characters from her childhood.<sup>350</sup> But no one else in the apartment can

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<sup>348</sup> Hensel, *Zonenkinder*, 60.

<sup>349</sup> Hensel, 60.

<sup>350</sup> Hensel, 26.

recall these with her since they all grew up under a different system. In order to fit in, she does not speak of her memories, but instead listens to her friends as they recall a collective cultural history different from hers.<sup>351</sup> From the perspective of time (ten years), the protagonist's reaction emphasizes this third generation's sentiment of frustration, of lamentation, of having to be complicit with their Western friends' histories and, thus, silence their own East German cultural past in the early years of unification. Because her friends were all familiar only with Western cultural traditions, she was forced to be silent about her own East German experiences: "Ich überlegte, was ich stattdessen mit meiner Kindheit anfangen konnte, in welches Regal ich sie stellen oder in welchen Ordner ich sie heften könnte. Wie ein Sommerkleid war sie anscheinend aus der Mode geraten und taugte nicht einmal mehr für Partygespräch."<sup>352</sup> Things East German had no place in her new world.

Hensel's text also emphasizes the role that Assmann asserts objects play in memory recall. Expanding on Halbwach's notions on space and social memory, Assmann writes:

Another spatial element is the world of objects that surround or belong to the individual—his "entourage matériel" that both supports and contributes to his identity. This world of objects—tools, furniture, rooms, their particular layout, all of which "offer us an image of performance and stability" (1985b, 130)—also has a social dimension: its value and its status symbolism are both social factors (Appadurai, 1986). The tendency toward localization applies to every form of community. Any group that wants to consolidate itself will make an effort to find and establish a base for itself, not only to provide a setting for its interactions but also to symbolize its identity and to provide points of reference for its memories.<sup>353</sup>

As everything disappeared and changed overnight for the generation of the "*Zonenkinder*," it is difficult to recall into memory forgotten experiences and rituals without "points of reference." Hensel spends the first eight pages of her book recalling old practices of childhood in the GDR such as collecting papers to recycle, attending *Leistungssport* training in the morning before

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<sup>351</sup> Hensel, *Zonenkinder*, 25-26, 18.

<sup>352</sup> Hensel, 26.

<sup>353</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, 24-25.



school, and attending *Pioniernachmittag* on Wednesday afternoons at 4:00 in her *Halstuch* and *Käppi*. These practices, which were to impress upon a child the duty of being a good citizen of the GDR, disappeared overnight for her: “Überhaupt waren sie auf einmal verschwunden, diese ganzen pädagogischen Berufsgruppenspiele, die aus uns eine sozialistische Persönlichkeit machen sollten und mit denen wir uns in unseren Kinderzimmern als Konstrukteure, Ingenieure, Kosmonauten, Lehrer oder Verkehrshelfer auf eine ziemlich klare Zukunft vorbereitet hatten.”<sup>354</sup>

These practices, which were a central part of her life for the first thirteen years, suddenly disappeared. This generation’s foundation and cultural continuity were dismantled and repressed so that they might integrate better into Western society. It is this absence of imagined belonging that emerged overnight in 1989 that has led to a desire among East Germans of this generation to find a space of belonging in the present—a place where being Eastern does not feel like a curiosity in a museum collection or an extinct dinosaur, as Frank Rothe explains (see quotation at beginning of chapter).<sup>355</sup>

Unlike her Western German friends who proudly showed their parents around the university campus and brought them to meet their friends, the protagonist and her Eastern German friends hid their parents from their lives and from their Western German friends:

Unsere Eltern waren nicht wie ihre [her Western German friends’ parents]. Natürlich gingen wir mit ihnen ins Theater oder ins Restaurant, aber allein. Vor unserem wirklichen Leben versteckten wir sie, denn davon hatten sie nichts erlebt, dafür konnten sie uns keine Tipps geben, und nachts um vier riefen wir auch lieber andere Leute an. [. . .] Unsere Eltern wussten nicht, wie hoch die Miete unserer Wohnungen wirklich war, wie viel das Mietauto für den Umzug gekostet hatte, das wir PDS gewählt hatten. Weil wir Gysi mochten, und wie teuer der letzte Urlaub in Italien gewesen war. So wie wir sie vor unsrem Leben versteckten, so versteckten wir auch unser Leben vor ihnen.<sup>356</sup>

For the protagonist, the “*Zonenkinder*,” who are seen as the children of the “*Verlierer*,” do not want to stay that way in the eyes of Western Germans; they have to navigate the chasm between

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<sup>354</sup> Hensel, *Zonenkinder*, 20.

<sup>355</sup> See Frank Rothe, “Der Dinosaurier im Bernstein. Ich, das Überbleibsel aus einer implodierten Galaxis,” 52-64.

<sup>356</sup> Hensel, 65-67, 72.

the past and the present. The “*Zonenkinder*” situate themselves somewhere between being the children of the losers of the Cold War and defending their parents’ action or inaction during the years of the Cold War and in the GDR.<sup>357</sup> The protagonist tries to enlighten readers as to why many in her generation did not share their problems and lives with their parents or why they did not invite them to dinner with West German friends and their parents. She explains that “*Zonenkinder*” still feel an emotional bond with their parents and, at the same time, pity them for not having had the freedoms that they have been able to enjoy in unified Germany: “Wir griffen unsere Eltern nicht an. Wir stellten keine Fragen nach historischer Schuld oder Ähnlichem. Das Einzige, was wir taten: Wir verteidigten unsere Eltern. Wir wichen nie von ihrer Seite, sondern blieben da bis zum letzten Augenblick, so als gälte es, einem kleinen Bruder beizustehen.”<sup>358</sup> The silence seems to serve as an aid in easing the parental transition to a new Germany. But to succeed in unified Germany an inscription into a narrative of West German continuity was necessary, as the above passages critically expose. In order to succeed, a sense of Eastern specificity had to be repressed.

Although Hensel’s text often presents a protagonist who, characteristic of the restorative nostalgic, would like to return to her childhood home, her protagonist knows that this return is impossible, just as certain recapturing of memories of the past is impossible for her Western German friends who return to their hometowns after twenty years. Although Hensel’s protagonist understands the similarity to Western Germans, her protagonist makes a distinction between this loss of home and changes for Eastern Germans:

Eine ganze Generation entstand im Verschwinden. Deshalb sind Veränderungen in unserem bisherigen Leben stets Abschiede, immer Brüche und nie Übergänge gewesen. Es bleibt die Hoffnung, dass sich das eines Tages ändern wird, selbst wenn uns bewusst

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<sup>357</sup> See for example, Ina Merkel, “From a Socialist Society of Labor into a Consumer Society? The Transformation of East German Identities and Systems,” in *Envisioning Eastern Europe: Postcommunist Cultural Studies*, ed. Michael D. Kennedy (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 55-65, for a discussion of the West being viewed as winners in the battle between ideologies of the Cold War.

<sup>358</sup> Hensel, 77.

ist, dass auch kein Westdeutscher, wenn er heute sein Heimatsort betritt, dort alles wie vor dreißig Jahren vorfindet. [. . .] Das einzige Kontinuum unseres Lebens aber mussten wir selbst erschaffen: Das ist unsere Generation. Nur die Erfahrungen der letzten zehn Jahre und alle Freunde, die sie teilen, bilden unsere Familie.<sup>359</sup>

This passage indicates the emerging more fully affirmative response of Hensel's later text of reappropriation, *Achtung Zone*. The protagonist accepts these changes to objects of her childhood and originally sees the need to forget them, but through being confronted with the space now used for the same purpose in unified Germany, she must experience the past like any child wanting to feel a connection to the past, that is, to home in the past. Literary theorist, Cathy Caruth, argues that the experience of a historical trauma may not be felt until after the event itself has been repressed. She writes that "the historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all."<sup>360</sup> As Caruth argues, through the forgetting of the loss (or in my argument the forgetting of a "truer," more historically complex, GDR past amidst West German media depictions and literary works that solidify stereotypes), a new experience of the past, one that is more authentic and nuanced, can be uncovered.

Only in forgetting the past (and assimilating into Western German projections of the past and present) can the protagonist later experience what she has lost in the rupture of 1989 and the period of repression that followed. In other words, adapting Western perceptions of the East (a period of discontinuity with the GDR past and Eastern sense of identity) was necessary for the second strategy of reappropriation to emerge (a new period of imagined continuity with the GDR past). Hensel's *Zonenkinder*, through its strategy of *Ostalgie*, critically reflects on the forgetting/repressing of the GDR past that her generation performed in the period of assimilation.

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<sup>359</sup> Hensel, 160-61.

<sup>360</sup> Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History," in *Yale French Studies: Literature and the Ethical Question*, Number 79, ed. Claire Nouvet (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 187.

Much of Hensel's book reads like the experience of a child who has repressed her memories for a long time, and then finds herself drawn to recall them:

Es fällt uns nicht leicht, uns an diese Märchenzeit zu erinnern, denn lange wollten wir sie vergessen, wünschten uns nichts sehnlicher, als dass sie so schnell wie möglich verschwinden würde. [. . .] Heute, mehr als zehn Jahre später und nach unserem zweiten halben Leben, ist unser erstes lange her, [...] Ich möchte wieder wissen, wo wir herkommen, und so werde ich mich auf die Suche nach den verlorenen Erinnerungen und unerkannten Erfahrungen machen, auch wenn ich fürchte, den Weg zurück nicht mehr zu finden.<sup>361</sup>

Her recollections fulfill this public cultural perception of the nostalgic East German longing for the socialist GDR past; however because of her assimilation (and resulting repression of GDR memories), a new form of nostalgia arises in this critical reflection—one that focuses neither on mere restorative or reflective modes of remembering the past but instead on transforming the past into a workable (acceptable) Eastern memory within unified German discourse—allowing for a later response of reappropriation.<sup>362</sup> Through this repression and then later recollection of the loss of 1989 (albeit recollections that still convey these mediated cultural differences between East and West), the memory work allows for a new mode of reappropriation. From this new post-*Ostalgie* positioning of the self, or of “Ossi” pride, as Hogwood terms it, a new narrative of literary opposition surfaces on the German literary scene. (I will return to this response of reappropriation by Hensel in *Achtung Zone*, after I discuss below Hein's text, *Mein erstes T-shirt*, also as a reflective narrative on the loss of a sense of Eastern identity in the process of assimilation)

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<sup>361</sup> Hensel, 14.

<sup>362</sup> See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 44-45. In her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym lays out two forms of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. As reflective nostalgia focuses on the journey home in literary form rather than on an actual return to, or restoration of, home, the past can be used to examine the state of the present and, particularly, the relationship between past, present, and future. Restorative nostalgia, on the other hand, focuses on an actual return home, to a reconstruction of the national past to cure present anxieties and questions of belonging.

### Critical Reflection on Assimilation—*Mein erstes T-Shirt* (2001)

As with Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder*, Jakob Hein's *Mein erstes T-Shirt* (2001) also constructs a reflective narrative on loss experienced in the process of assimilation by recalling a past before and immediately after unification. Using various GDR consumer objects and rituals as items that jar specific memories of his childhood under socialism, the protagonist recalls various memories, ranging from around the age of eight until his late teens (the time of the fall of the wall). By reflecting on past GDR cultural rituals and consumer objects, Hein's text represents an East German space of shared socialization, which at the same time supports both the differences between an East and West German cultural past as well as questions the negative Western image of the GDR (and Eastern German acceptance of such images) through his use of irony. In his first post-1989 text, *Mein erstes T-Shirt*, Hein's protagonist echoes at times the public opinion of the GDR in unified Germany—i.e., as an *Unrechtsstaat*. Using a tone of irony, the protagonist recalls Western objects as coveted images for a child growing up in the GDR. Similar to Hensel's appropriation of Illies's "we," Hein's early text deploys Illies's parodistic tone in his critical examination of this period of assimilation. According to Michael Pilz, Illies "wertete die Sicherheit der Jugend in Kohl'schen Achtzigern durch Ironie auf, die zugleich die neue Wehmut überdeckte."<sup>363</sup> Hein uses parody to reevaluate the Eastern German desire to be more Western in the early period of unification. By situating Western goods in a position of consumer superiority, his text can be read as underscoring his generation's connection to West German goods during the GDR (and after unification) and to the image of West German superiority in consumer production. According to Susanne Ledanff, Hein's text performs the fetishizing of everyday objects as in Florian Illies's *Generation Golf* (e.g. Playmobil), but at the same time, through parody, it is also a humorous attack on the West German consumer culture:

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<sup>363</sup> Michael Pilz, "Generation Zone," in *Die Zonenkinder und wir: Die Geschichte eines Phänomens*, ed. Tom Kraushaar (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2004), 44.

Was für Illies das Playmobil war, ist für Hein das “Knackdreieck,” ein nerviges, knackende Geräusche produzierendes Blechgerät. Im Rückblick auf die Entwicklung der Konsumgesellschaft dient das primitive Spielzeug als Beispiel für eine glückliche Kindheitserinnerung, aber wohl auch dazu, einen Seitenhieb auf die Humorlosigkeit des westlichen Konsumfetischismus zu formulieren. Die Antwort des Ostens hierauf lautet: “Wir führen bis heute ein glückliches und erfülltes Leben, Knackdreieck und ich” (Hein 72).<sup>364</sup>

Hein’s protagonist asserts that his childhood memory is just as valid as Illies--his *Knackdreieck* was just as good as Illies’s *Playmobil*.

In discussing the film *Good Bye Lenin!* Roger F. Cook argues that the emotional connection to GDR consumer goods in the film serves a “double dynamic.”<sup>365</sup> In this “double dynamic” the nostalgia for Eastern goods “stir[s] the desire for the brands of the GDR and disrupt[s] the logic of Western product appeal,” which, according to Cook, “suggests resistance to the hegemony of the West.”<sup>366</sup> Through this resistance to the hegemony of the West in “terms of product choices and mass merchandising,” Hein’s narrative “both contest[s] and affirm[s] the new order of a consumer market economy.”<sup>367</sup> Western goods in Hein’s text (a reflective narrative of loss experienced in the process of assimilation and of emphasizing Western consumer superiority) are used as means to question Eastern assumptions of Western goods as more advanced. At the same time, his text supports and, through irony, challenges the Eastern “catch up” mentality as portrayed in the early German films after unification.<sup>368</sup>

Whether Hein’s protagonist idealizes Western “Heilmittel gegen Akne” or a “Disco für unter sechzehn” or whether he talks about his friends who are interested in the Western bands Wham, A-Ha, or the Cure, the West serves as an unreachable and desired place. Hein’s choice of irony for this recollection of the past allows for a present critique of unification and, specifically,

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<sup>364</sup> Ledanff, “Neue Formen der ‘Ostalgie’—Abschied von der ‘Ostalgie’? Erinnerungen und Kindheit und Jugend in der DDR und an die Geschichtsjahre 1989/90,” 179-80.

<sup>365</sup> Cook, “Good Bye, Lenin! Free-Market Nostalgia for Socialist Consumerism,” 213.

<sup>366</sup> Cook, 214.

<sup>367</sup> Daphne Berdahl, “(N)ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 64, no.1 (1999): 206.

<sup>368</sup> Cook, 206.

of East German consumption practices without risking the offense that Hensel's text *Zonenkinder*, appearing one year later, caused. Under the cloak of irony, Hein calls to task, through the experiences of his protagonist, his generation's own past idealization of Western consumer goods during the GDR as well as the negation of self that his generation of Eastern Germans after unification participated in as a part of the larger project of assimilation. Jana Simon (Christa Wolf's granddaughter) refers to these West German goods during her life in the GDR as "die Waren [ihr]er Träume" and communicates how after unification this new freedom to access and purchase these goods of her dreams led her to fall into a buyer frenzy, purchasing more items than she needed just because she could.<sup>369</sup> This *Konsumrausch*, as she calls it, characterizes the Eastern obsession for things Western after unification (and before), regardless of need or the quality. The excessive consumption (performed in the process of assimilating) ironically simulates the materialistic quality of the Western German "Generation Golf" that Florian Illies parodies and contests in his text. Illies underscores his generation's material obsession by contrasting his "Generation Golf" to the previous 68er generation, which concerned itself with political, environmental, and social issues instead of which shirt or car to buy or how long to work out in order to have a perfect body (all outward expressions of identity for this "Generation Golf"). Unlike the 68ers who demonstrated against war, the only demonstration, according to Illies, that the "Generation Golf" considers participating in would be the Love Parade: "Die Love Parade ist die einzige Demonstration, zu der unsere narzißtische Generation noch in der Lage ist."<sup>370</sup> While the "Generation Golf" works out and buys more name-brand items, the "Zonenkinder" bear a double burden in unification, navigating the new system for both themselves and for their parents.

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<sup>369</sup> Simon, "Madame Ceauşescus Schuhe. Über das Scheitern einer Ost-West Beziehung," in *Das Buch der Unterschiede: Warum die Einheit keine ist*, ed. Jana Simon, Frank Rothe, and Wiete Andrasch (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2000), 13, 23.

<sup>370</sup> Florian Illies, *Generation Golf: Eine Inspektion* (Berlin: Fischer Verlag, 2009), 165.

In the second-to-last vignette in *Mein erstes T-Shirt*, “Wie es damals wirklich war,” Hein's protagonist relates “the true story” of how the GDR came to an end, although with irony. This ironic recollection mirrors that of Brussig's Klaus in *Helden wie wir*, who explains that the true reason for the fall of the wall was due to his perverted blood, which was transfused to Honecker. In the vignette, Hein's protagonist relates a childhood memory of a class trip to the “Gedenkstätte der Kommunisten Ziegenhals” (the place where communists and socialists met during the Third Reich to organize resistance against the fascists). After breaking away from his classmates, the protagonist overhears some men (Helmut Kohl, George Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Gerhard Schröder) talking behind a closed door. He asks them why they are there, and they reply, “daß du in einer besseren Welt lebst,” which supports the political discourse of the West as superior—a better world than the GDR. The protagonist responds that he cannot imagine a better world than the one in which he lives, and then they begin to entice him with consumer goods of the West that the East did not have such as “MB-Spiele, Hanuta, Walkmans mit Radio.”<sup>371</sup> These consumer goods do not initially convince the protagonist that life would be better elsewhere until they entice him with free beer if he comes to their world. His agreement to help (dressing up as Günther Schabowski, who orders the wall to be opened without any casualties) could be considered an emulation of the East German decision after 1989/90 to join the political and economic system of the FRG in order for unification to succeed in accordance with Helmut Kohl's presentation in his Ten Point Plan (no casualties in the peaceful regime change).<sup>372</sup> The wall is opened and then Hein's protagonist ironically relates, “an dieser Stelle übernahm die

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<sup>371</sup> Hein, *Mein erstes T-Shirt*, 141.

<sup>372</sup> Günther Schabowski was the SED party leader for East Berlin who announced incorrectly in a press conference on November 9, 1989, that the border between East and West Berlin would be open immediately for travel—this was not the case. This announcement caused large numbers of people to storm the border that night, leaving the guards the opening of the border as the only option for control. For some, his misstep is the reason for the fall of the Berlin Wall. See also “Rede von Bundeskanzler Helmut Kohl im Bundestag (“10-Punkte-Programm”), 28. November 1989,” *Chronik der Mauer 1961-1989/1990*, <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/index.php/de/Start/Detail/id/618085/page/25> (accessed October 2, 2012).



kleine verschworene Gemeinschaft, der ich in der Gedenkstätte Ziegenhals über den Weg gelaufen war. Sie hatten all ihre Versprechungen gehalten, mit Hanuta, Inhaberschuldverschreibungen und auch Freibier. Wirklich gut, daß alles so gekommen ist.”<sup>373</sup> A tone of irony is difficult to overlook in this passage. In his selling out for material goods, the protagonist at once blames Eastern Germans and Western Germans for having taken advantage of Eastern Germans in the early years of unification. This statement reminds readers of the unsuccessful appeal by leading East German writers and intellectuals on November 26, 1989, which called on GDR citizens to resist the pressure to be taken over by the economic and political system of the FRG.<sup>374</sup> In essence this was a warning against the enticing power of materialistic goods. Although *Mein erstes T-Shirt* plays on Cold War clichés, through Hein’s irony, readers can still uncover the protagonist’s process towards finding a voice that emulates East German identifications. The voice in the later texts of Hein and Hensel reacts to the “selling out” of the East by the East in the early years of assimilation (and already during the GDR) and inserts into public discourse a non-apologetic voice of confidence and pride in being from the East.

### **Reappropriation—Media Discourse on East Germans**

In her more recent post-1989 memory work, *Achtung Zone. Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten* (2009), Hensel writes of the need to bring into public discourse a new kind of Eastern German memory work regarding the GDR past that is less influenced by hegemonic discourses prevalent in the public media. She writes:

Nicht nur in den Jahren vor der deutschen Einheit, sondern auch in den Jahren danach haben die Ostdeutschen sehr andere Erfahrungen gemacht als die Westdeutschen. Ungerechterweise erscheinen sie in ihrem Anderssein häufig als defizitär. Sie werden als Gruppe von Menschen beschrieben, die es noch nicht geschafft hat. Die noch nicht so

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<sup>373</sup> Hein, 141.

<sup>374</sup> See Christa Wolf, “Für unser Land,” *Reden im Herbst* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1990), 170-171.

geworden ist, wie man es sich wünschte. Es ist an der Zeit, die durch die Idee des Defizitären dominierte Darstellung der Ostdeutschen zu beenden. An die Stelle einer Außensicht muss eine genuin eigene Beschreibung treten. Aus unserer Mitte. Mit unserem Blick. Nicht länger wie durch fremde Augen.<sup>375</sup>

The quotation from Hensel highlights the new mode of remembering the GDR by this third generation—that of reappropriation. The image of the East German as “*defizitär*” as portrayed in dominant public media and political discourse after 1990 is corroborated by the number of Eastern Germans serving in top positions in unified Germany. In his article “Ossifreie Zone. Angela Merkel und Joachim Gauck—zwei Ausnahmen. Deutschlands Eliten sind westdeutsch und wollen so bleiben,” Steffen Mau writes that even though two top positions in Germany are filled by former East Germans, Joachim Gauck and Angela Merkel, most top leadership positions in the German military, and 70% of the positions in Eastern German universities and in judicial courts in the former Eastern states are occupied by West Germans.<sup>376</sup> According to Mau, out of the thirty-seven generals and admirals in the *Bundeswehr* not one is East German although half of the Germans serving in Kosovo and Afghanistan are Eastern Germans; out of sixteen judges on the constitutional court, not one is from the East; and out of Dax-listed companies in Germany only one CEO is from the former East Germany.<sup>377</sup> This deficiency in East German

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<sup>375</sup> Jana Hensel, *Achtung Zone: Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten* (München: Piper, 2009), 21.

<sup>376</sup> Steffen Mau, “Ossifreie Zone. Angela Merkel und Joachim Gauck—zwei Ausnahmen. Deutschlands Eliten sind westdeutsch und wollen es so bleiben,” *Spiegel Online*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.zeit.de/2012/16/P-Ostdeutsche-Elite> (accessed 2 Oct. 2012).

<sup>377</sup> Mau, “Ossifreie Zone. Angela Merkel und Joachim Gauck—zwei Ausnahmen. Deutschlands Eliten sind westdeutsch und wollen es so bleiben,” *Spiegel Online*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.zeit.de/2012/16/P-Ostdeutsche-Elite> (accessed 2 Oct. 2012). See also Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald, “A Decade of Cultural Disunity: Diverging Discourses and Communicative Dissonance in 1990s Germany,” in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 2000), 1-22. This edited volume on Germanness in the first decade after unification examines counter-hegemonic discourses for post-unification Germany. In the introductory chapter Stevenson and Theobald put forth various criticisms for the “handling process of convergence of the two Germanies” (3). One such criticism was of the media treatment of early unification issues and media focus on the *Stasi*. They suggest that such media focus helped turn these East-West differences into stereotypes, which then turned into the *Ostalgie* wave as well as resurgent interest in communist parties of the East such as the PDS.

representation in top leadership positions in unified Germany highlights the prejudicial depictions of East Germans in the media as lacking.

In her article, “Das Bild der ‘Ostdeutschen’ im öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehen,” which investigates media representation of East Germans from 1987-2005, Julia Belke asserts that certain characteristics are considered by the media in their representation of East Germans:

Der Frage ‘Wer ist Ostdeutsche?’, wurde anhand von Sprache, Kleidung, Verhalten, Arbeit, Auto oder Wohnung in den Medien nachgegangen. Dabei wurden ganz spezifische Merkmale ‘herausgearbeitet’, die “den Ostdeutschen” kennzeichnen sollten. Immer im Vergleich zu den Westdeutschen wurden die Ostdeutschen als “Zu-Spät-Gekommene und Anfänger in der Konsumgesellschaft, als gutmütige Hinterwäldler, die ihr Herz auf der Zunge tragen, ihre Gefühle nicht verbergen und das Leben der Einheimischen bestaunen und bewundern “beschrieben.” [. . .] Die Medien bedienen sich medialer Stilmittel, wie ausdrucksstarken Symbolen, aussagestarken Schlüsselwörtern oder Metaphern.<sup>378</sup>

This medial negotiation leads to stereotypical categorization of East Germans as old-fashioned, lazy, unproductive members of society that rely on government assistance or participate in antiestablishment, right-wing political or social organizations.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Julia Belke, “Das Bild der ‘Ostdeutschen’ im öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehen,” in *Die Ostdeutschen in den Medien: Das Bild von ‘den Anderen’ nach 1990*, ed. Thomas Ahbe, Rainer Gries, and Wolfgang Schmale (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009), 136. The middle part of this quote, Belke cites from Thomas Ahbe and Manuela Tesak (“Zu-Spät-Gekommene und Anfänger in der Konsumgesellschaft, als gutmütige Hinterwäldler, die ihr Herz auf der Zunge tragen, ihre Gefühle nicht verbergen und das Leben der Einheimischen bestaunen und bewundern “beschrieben”). See Thomas Ahbe and Manuela Tesak, “Die ersten 50 Tage: Bilder von den Ostdeutschen in westdeutschen und österreichischen Printmedien im Herbst 1989,” in *HMRG Historische Mitteilungen der Ranke-Gesellschaft* 18 (2005): 255.

<sup>379</sup> For more on the portrayal of East Germans as right-extremists in the media, see for example, the study from Julia Belke, “Das Bild der ‘Ostdeutschen’ im öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehen,” in *Die Ostdeutschen in den Medien: Das Bild von ‘den Anderen’ nach 1990*, 135-80. Belke looks at TV broadcasts of the ARD political show KONTRASTE from 1987-2005 and contends that before 1997 East Germans were portrayed in this program as victims (positive portrayal) of the GDR, but after 1997 a new victim-type (“Opfer-Typ”) was constructed by this TV show. She gives as one example the construction of the right-extremist (in former East Germany) as being a victim of the “Zwangskollektivierung in der DDR,” which did not teach its people how to deal with people different from themselves. In essence, the GDR education system is the cause for their right-extremist leanings (166). For more on medial discussions of Eastern Germans, see also Markus Brauck, “Die Reality-Falle” *Spiegel Online*, October 19, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/0,1518,druck-656022,00.html> (accessed February 5, 2012) and Harald Staun, “‘Frauentausch’ mit Folgen. Vom Umtausch ausgeschlossen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Feuilleton*, January 1, 2009, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/2.1756/frauentausch-mit-folgen-vom-umtausch-ausgeschlossen-1756850.html> (accessed February 5, 2012). For a recent article on right extremism in the East in the media, see for example, Sabine Rennefranz, “Uwe Mundlos und Ich,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 31, 2011, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/magazin/rechtsextremismus-uwe-mundlos-und-ich,10809156,11369068.html> (accessed February 5, 2012).

Surrounding the death of Christa Wolf on December 1, 2011, this East-West struggle and the question of national identity were brought even more to the surface of public discourse. In his article in the *Berliner Zeitung*, Arno Wiedmann frowned on the lack of appropriate Western German representation at the funeral of Wolf, an icon of East German literature. Wiedmann asserted that this disrespect for Wolf only highlighted the fact that Germany is still not one unified society but that it rather consists of parallel societies.<sup>380</sup> East German author Irina Liebmann criticized the inability by German artists and authors to move past the ideological battle between left and right that has persisted in Germany for the last hundred years and which even upon the death of an iconic author, accords no one due respect. Of this divisive rhetoric and thinking present in Germany twenty years after the fall of the wall, she writes: “Darum darf der Feind auch verächtlich behandelt werden, er verdient keinen Respekt, seine Leistung ist keine Leistung oder nur unter Bedingungen, die diktiert werden von dem, der die Macht hat, den Status, die ‘Deutungshoheit.’”<sup>381</sup> Had the memorial service been for a Western German, the attendance response may have been different. Such divisive thinking perpetuates the sentiment of East Germans as *defizitär* and supports the fragmentation of unified Germany.

In a September 2010 article in *Die Zeit*, Hensel addresses the absence of accurate representation of the East in public media, arguing that the Western media has defined for Eastern Germans what it means to be Eastern. A media sensation with her first post-1989 book, *Zonenkinder*, Hensel may sometimes be questioned as a reliable Eastern German voice of neutrality with regards to post-unification Germany; however, she still presents in this article compelling arguments for a stronger Eastern presence in German media positions:

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<sup>380</sup> Arno Wiedmann, “Nimm alles nicht so schwer,” *Berliner Zeitung* (online), December 14, 2011, [http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/beerdigung-von-christa-wolf--nimm-alles-nicht-so-schwer-\\_10809150,11303988.html](http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/beerdigung-von-christa-wolf--nimm-alles-nicht-so-schwer-_10809150,11303988.html) (accessed May 17, 2012).

<sup>381</sup> Irina Liebmann, “Ein hundertjähriger Krieg,” *Berliner Zeitung* (online), December 16, 2011, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/kultur/tiefe-graeben-ein-hundertjaehriger-krieg.10809150,11314154.html> (accessed May 17, 2012).

In den Führungsetagen der überregionalen Printmedien sind Ostdeutsche praktisch nicht zu finden. Fünf von sechs Mitgliedern der Geschäftsleitung des RBB stammen aus Westdeutschland. Beim MDR sind sowohl der Intendant als auch die beiden Chefredakteure Westdeutsche. Betrachtet man die *Berliner Zeitung* als einzige ostdeutsche Zeitung mit überregionalem Anspruch, so kann es als Erfolg gelten, dass dort zu Monatsbeginn der erste Ostdeutsche in die Chefredaktion berufen wurde.<sup>382</sup>

Hensel, in her *Achtung Zone*, continues this investigation into the way public media presents accounts of the GDR past and the *Wende* and how the media affects an Eastern German social (or communicative) memory of the past. About this hegemonizing effect of the media on Eastern German memory she explains: “Alles fließt ineinander, alles ist von allem beeinflusst. Das Individuelle und das Kollektive, das persönlich Erlebte und das medial Vermittelte. [. . .] Die Wirklichkeit findet in den Medien statt.”<sup>383</sup> According to Hensel, it has become difficult to distinguish between “documented” official history and the undocumented personal and familial memories that are not represented in the media. (This mixing of “documented” historical history and undocumented familial memories will play a role in the response of indifference to the GDR past, uncovered in the narrative of the *Diktaturkinder*, see chapter four).

### **Alternative Approach to Reconstructing History**

In their discourse of reappropriation, the later texts by Hensel and Hein (*Achtung Zone* [2009], *Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* [2009] and *Wurst und Wahn* [2011]), represent an alternative approach to reconstructing the German histories proposed by Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer. This new approach would uncover the multiple histories of the German people instead of just looking exclusively at the single national German history or at the processes of

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<sup>382</sup> See Jana Hensel, “Wir sind anders. Warum die Wirklichkeit des Ostens es so selten in die Medien und also in den Westen schafft,” *Die Zeit Online*, September 23, 2010, <http://www.zeit.de/2010/39/Osten-Medien> (accessed February 9, 2012).

<sup>383</sup> Hensel, *Achtung Zone*, 44.

nation-building.<sup>384</sup> The texts of both Hein and Hensel contrast the conventional historical narrative frame of Germany as a monolithic state and, thus, reflect the new approach to reconstructing German histories after 1989 suggested by Jarausch and Geyer. These texts, from an imagined position on the periphery of the cultural sphere, break apart the conventional Western German (“documented”) historical narrative of the German state by reinserting an Eastern German private, social memory narrative into the public memory narrative of unified Germany. Through representing the GDR rituals and everyday experiences in these narratives, “the foundational past [is kept] alive in the present, and this connection to the past provides a basis for the identity of the remembering group.”<sup>385</sup> A counter-hegemonic memory narrative emerges to complement a publicly recorded national history of divided Germany up to this point, as I will show in the close readings of the texts below.

Through the oppositional texts authored by the third generation of former East German authors who had initially resisted a public literature of the GDR after 1989, a sense of Eastern German identity is inserted into German cultural memory. While most scholars agree that an “inner unity” of the two Germanies with regard to basic law and democracy has been achieved, some argue that a distinctive Eastern German identity is nevertheless materializing in post-1990 Germany. According to Jonathan Grix, Paul Cooke, and Lothar Probst, this emergence is due neither to nostalgia for the SED and other socialist apparati of the GDR nor to a sense of disappointment with unification after 1990, but rather it is due to a loss of “close interpersonal

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<sup>384</sup> German historians Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer suggest that an alternative approach to the established method of recording German history, which is based on historical political moments of rupture such as 1918, 1933, 1945, and 1989 or on economic events such as 1923, 1929, 1948, and 1990, should be considered (17). In essence using this alternative approach of Jarausch and Geyer, a separate East German cultural history recorded from the perspective of individual memory narratives needs also to be considered when discussing a German history. They argue for “shifting the narrative frame from a history of Germany as a state to the histories of Germans as a people”(18). See Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Rethinking a Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 16-18.

<sup>385</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, 38.

social relationships in a new environment.”<sup>386</sup> In Hein’s later post-1989 works (*Achtung Zone*, *Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* and *Wurst und Wahn*), instead of serving as a contrasting entity to the FRG as in the early critical discourse in response to assimilation, the divided past constitutes merely a backdrop for recollection of the everyday (personal histories), with the socialist state apparatus, or ideology, playing a secondary role in the recollection of the past. In Hensel’s *Achtung Zone*, the socialist apparatus does play a role in the treatment of the hegemonizing effect of the media on East German memory (i.e., distinguishing between “documented” history and personal memories as examined in the function of the Stasi in constructing history). The new narrative of reappropriation recalls lost qualities of the GDR that are antithetical to those considered positive in the West and construes a supposedly truer, more authentic Eastern German self after a period of taking on the “false self” of the East as portrayed in Western German media after 1990.<sup>387</sup>

### ***Achtung Zone* (2009)**

In describing her own book, Hensel explains that *Achtung Zone* is divided into two parts: the first part consists of essays “[. . .] die sich mit eher abstrakten Fragen beschäftigen,” and the second part consists of three “[. . .] Reportagen, die die Geschichten von konkreten Individuen erzählen.”<sup>388</sup> Hensel explains that *Achtung Zone* confronts the inaccurate medial memory taken on by many Eastern Germans in the years immediately after unification—a memory that

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<sup>386</sup> Jonathan Grix, “Introduction to East German Political and Cultural Distinctiveness,” in *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, ed. Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), 4-5. He is citing Lothar Probst, “Transition from Community to Society?” *New Perspectives on the Old GDR and the Young Länder*, ed. Laurence McFalls and Lothar Probst (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 209-220.

<sup>387</sup> I am using the term “false self” from D.W. Winnicott, “Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self,” *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: International UP Inc., 1965), 140-52.

<sup>388</sup> Alexander Weinlein, “Wo Bleibt meine Erinnerung?,” *Das Parlament*, <http://www.das-parlament.de/2009/42-43/PolitischesBuch/27551328.html> (accessed September 20, 2012).  
Jana Hensel: *Achtung Zone*, Resenzensionen, *Perlentaucher.de*, <http://www.perlentaucher.de/buch/jana-hensel/achtung-zone.html> (accessed September 20, 2012).

supported a stigmatization of the East: “Die Menschen aus dem Osten haben ihre Sprachlosigkeit gegen die Sprache aus den Medien eingetauscht.”<sup>389</sup>

In the essay portion of *Achtung Zone*, Hensel follows the nature of resistance that Christa Wolf and others who signed the appeal on November 26, 1989 performed in calling on their fellow East Germans to reform the GDR and keep it from being absorbed into the FRG. Hensel petitions her generation to change from assimilating a Western German identity (or from nostalgically remembering the GDR past) to now reappropriating a set of Eastern identifications in the present:

Es wird zukünftig an uns liegen, die Geschichte der deutschen Einheit nicht länger und immer wieder als eine Geschichte der Anpassung erscheinen zu lassen. Weil diese im Kern zu einer Demütigung führt. Uns Ostdeutschen aber fehlt heute der Mut, uns selbst anders zu erklären. Viel öfter werden noch wir zu anderen gemacht, macht man uns zu anderen. Und den Westdeutschen fehlt der Wille, uns anders sein zu lassen. Es liegt an uns, wir müssten uns als die anderen erklären. Darin jedoch sehen wir keinen Sinn. Bisher jedenfalls nicht. Aber das kann sich ändern. Das muss sich ändern.<sup>390</sup>

According to Hensel, Willy Brandt’s quotation “Nun wächst zusammen, was zusammengehört” does not speak of the reality of reunification.<sup>391</sup> Hensel requests an Eastern German reappropriation of the “other” that has been assigned to them by Western Germans. In the mode of reappropriation, the sense of distinctiveness or of “otherness” is cast through the lens of an Eastern German identity instead of from Western Germans.<sup>392</sup> According to Thomas Ahbe, during the forty years of separation, the two Germanies developed more cultural differences than

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<sup>389</sup> Jane Hensel, *Achtung Zone*, 46.

<sup>390</sup> Hensel, *Achtung Zone*, 30.

<sup>391</sup> Hensel, 15. For more on Willy Brandt and his famous quote, see for example, Uwe Aulich and Claudia Fuchs, “Jetzt wächst zusammen, was zusammengehört,” *Berliner Zeitung*, December 12, 2009, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/-jetzt-waechst-zusammen--was-zusammengehoert-.10810590,10685862.html> (accessed October 27, 2012).

<sup>392</sup> Paul Cooke uses the term “east German distinctiveness” to describe the response by Eastern Germans with nostalgia and defiance after years of repressing an East German identity. See Paul Cooke, “Literature and the Question of East German Cultural Identity since the Wende,” in *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, ed. Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), 155.



many had understood or accepted in the early years of reunification.<sup>393</sup> East Germany identified itself as a worker's society in contrast to the bourgeois society of West Germany.<sup>394</sup> Ahbe, thus, argues there was no homogeneous notion of German identity after 1990 but rather there were constructions of two more distinctly Eastern and Western German identities. As an example of the differences between Western and Eastern German identity, he presents the work of political scientist, Wolf Wagner, who in his book *Kulturschock Deutschland: Der zweite Blick*, discusses various cultural differences between Western and Eastern Germans. According to Wagner, West Germans view East Germans as old-fashioned, unable to work alone (as opposed to the independent West German employee), whiny, and distrustful of mobility in the job (viewing one who leaves his company as incompetent), which for Western Germans is considered a "Zeichen von hoher Qualität."<sup>395</sup> Hensel's text contests both these perceived negative East German cultural differences and the absorption of the Eastern identity into a Western one.

In her book *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, and Performativity*, Eve Sedgwick introduces the strategy of "reissue" used by Henry James for "dramatizing and integrating shame, in the sense of rendering this potentially paralyzing affect narratively, emotionally, and performatively productive."<sup>396</sup> Hensel's "reissue" of the story of Mühe-Gröllmann, and more specifically, the shame of this public controversy, serves as a means to productively negotiate the inaccurate/ideologically tainted "official" memory of the GDR. Instead of continuing the hegemonic discourse of *Täter-Opfer* and of accusing the earlier GDR generations as some post-1989 texts have, Hensel's text opens up a new language of empathy for previous GDR

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<sup>393</sup> See Thomas Ahbe, "Competing Master Narratives: *Geschichtspolitik* and Identity Discourse in Three German Societies," in *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the German State since 1989*, ed. Nick Hodgkin and Caroline Pearce (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 221-49.

<sup>394</sup> Ahbe, "Competing Master Narratives: *Geschichtspolitik* and Identity Discourse in Three German Societies," 224-25.

<sup>395</sup> See Ahbe, "Competing Master Narratives: *Geschichtspolitik* and Identity Discourse in Three German Societies," 227-28. See also Wolf Wagner, *Kulturschock Deutschland: Der zweite Blick* (Hamburg: Rotbuch Verlag, 1999), 127-36.

<sup>396</sup> Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, 44.

generations.<sup>397</sup> For example, Hensel's dedication of over sixty pages of her book to retelling the story of Jenny Gröllmann and her husband Ulrich Mühe (both actors in the GDR and, thus, recipients of state privileges) highlights the role of "memory contests" in the public sphere, as both had conflicting memories of a shared personal past.<sup>398</sup> In this narrative of reappropriation that focuses on healing discontinuities, Hensel's example of Gröllmann and Mühe contests the hegemonic memory that simplifies the GDR biography to either *Täter* or *Opfer*, which was appropriated in early years of assimilation by this generation.

While promoting the film *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006), Mühe told reporters that his wife was at one time an IM (informant) for the *Stasi*, all of which, he argued, could be proven from her *Stasi* file. Outraged at this accusation, Jenny Gröllmann, represented by a lawyer from Gregor Gysi's law firm, took her husband to court to demand that he stop speaking publicly about her being an informant for the *Stasi*, which she claimed had falsified her file. (She argued that the fact there was no signature from her in her file proved that she was not a *Stasi* informant). As Hensel further communicates, during this legal process, the validity of the *Stasi* files was called into question by Gröllmann. With the aid of her friends, Gröllmann uncovered inconsistencies within her *Stasi* file to prove that the written record was not accurate as to her informant status: "Dieselben zeitlichen Überschneidungen können laut Vorstellungsbuch noch vier weitere in den Akten vermerkte Treffzeiten belegt werden. Damit ist auch für den Anwalt widerlegt, dass die

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<sup>397</sup> Recent academic scholarship has examined victim narratives, such as the documentary film *Jeder schweigt von etwas anderem* (2006). This film, from Marc Bauder (born in Stuttgart) and Dörte Franke (born in Leipzig but left the GDR at the age of five when her parents were bought by the West) relates a narrative of victimization by the *Stasi* from a personal biography of a victim, as in the case of Franke, whose parents were arrested by the *Stasi*. See for example, the recent article by Laurel Cohen-Pfister, "No Questions asked: Intergenerational Silence in *Stasi* Victim Families; *Jeder schweigt von etwas anderem* (2006)," in *Generational Shifts in Contemporary German Culture*, ed. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Susanne Vees-Gulani (Rochester, NY: Camden, 2010), which focuses on such binaries of good-evil and victim-perpetrator in this film.

<sup>398</sup> The term "memory contests" is from Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote, eds., *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse since 1990* (Columbia, SC: Camden, 2006). The editors explain that memory contests "[. . .] embrace the idea that individuals and groups advance and edit competing stories about themselves that forge their changing sense of identity" (2).

Angaben in den MfS-Unterlagen der Wahrheit entsprechen.”<sup>399</sup> Through the story of Jenny Gröllmann and Ulrich Mühe, Hensel calls attention to the slow process of change from such Cold War victim/perpetrator binaries persisting over fifteen years after unification as well as to a misconception about the accuracy of the subjective historical record (*Stasi* Archive)—this record being the means used to call personal biographies into question, as seen in the Mühe-Gröllmann affair.

In the article “Reading and Writing the Stasi File: On the Uses and Abuses of the File as (Auto)biography,” Alison Lewis questions the subjectivity of the *Stasi* victim file. According to Lewis, the victim files can be considered as “hostile biography,” as, even if rhetoric in the file was not necessarily expressing animosity, “the political and bureaucratic purpose of the file writing was always hostile.”<sup>400</sup> In this manner, the files, or “documented” historical documents, fall into what Dominick LaCapra calls texts that supplement “reality.”<sup>401</sup> When considering the *Stasi* files as biographical narratives, written from the perspective of others who see their subjects as dissidents (and, thus, inflect truths based on their perspective and purpose of writing the *Stasi* file), one can understand why Hensel dedicated over sixty pages to the case of Mühe and Gröllmann in her investigation.

Such binaries of victim/perpetrator or guilt/innocence are impossible when recording and recalling the “official” GDR past, as undocumented personal memory also forms a historical account of the past. Adding another layer to the questionable “truth value” of the *Stasi* file outside of that of the perspective of the “biographical” observer/author (i.e., the *Stasi* employee), Hensel examines the memory contest between two individuals of a “shared” past. Gröllmann’s personal memory of her GDR past contested that of the “official” *Stasi* record, but Mühe’s

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<sup>399</sup> Hensel, *Achtung Zone*, 116.

<sup>400</sup> Alison Lewis, “Reading and Writing the Stasi File: On the Uses and Abuses of the File as (Auto)biography,” *German Life and Letters* 56, vol. 4 (2003): 377-97.

<sup>401</sup> Lewis, 383. As Lewis informs, LaCapra “has argued that all historical documents—even police reports—ought to be read not simply as sources for facts, but as texts that ‘supplement or rework ‘reality’”.”

personal memory of his wife in the GDR supported it. In the case of Gröllmann and Mühe, each had a personal memory of the GDR past (specifically Mühe's memory of Gröllmann's alleged cooperation with the *Stasi* as informant), which for one (Mühe) was supported by the "official" *Stasi* documents, but was rejected by the other (Gröllmann) as mere subjective documentation from unreliable and biased sources—the file as a fictionalization of her life. Additionally, as both Gröllmann and Mühe were complicit with, or at least privileged by, the system in some way or another (as public figures, actors, who enjoyed special perks from the state), their story illustrates the difficulty in assigning blame/guilt and in reducing the GDR to an oppressive state with clear lines between victim and perpetrator that has been supported in media discourse.<sup>402</sup>

In this section on Mühe and Gröllmann, Hensel also relates an interview she conducted with Henry Hübchen (a former East German actor, who remained in the East after unification) about the two actors. He reminds her of the "*Gedankenlosigkeit*" and "*Bösartigkeit*" by former East German elites such as Mühe who label others as *Stasi* informants but who do not speak honestly about the many advantages that they enjoyed, such as travel privileges or Western cars. Unlike Mühe, Hübchen admits that he profited from his elite position: "Ich habe mich sehr wohl mit der Macht eingelassen. Ich war auch ein Staatskünstler."<sup>403</sup> By presenting the story of Gröllmann and Mühe, which highlights a negotiation of victim and perpetrator categories, Hensel discloses the need for a process of change in unified German memory discourse. In his criticism of the film *Das Leben der Anderen*, Hübchen explains: "Die Figuren sind ihm zu schematisch in Gut und Böse eingeteilt, die Atmosphäre, die der Film transportiert, stimmt für ihn mit der DDR-

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<sup>402</sup> For articles which present Gröllmann as *Stasi* IM or as perpetrator, see for example, "Stasi-Vorwürfe. Gröllmann war IM und wusste es nicht," *Spiegel Online*, April 28, 2006, <http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/stasi-vorwuerfe-groellmann-war-im-und-wusste-es-nicht-a-413507.html> (accessed October 2, 2012) and Ray Furlong, "The Actor's Wife and the Stasi Files," *BBC News Online*, May 11, 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from\\_our\\_own\\_correspondent/4758933.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4758933.stm) (accessed October 2, 2012). Furlong writes: "The German media has largely taken Mr Muhe's side, crediting both him and the film with at last focusing attention on the dark truth about the East German police state."

<sup>403</sup> Hensel, 120-21.

Realität der 80er-Jahre nicht überein.”<sup>404</sup> Hensel’s inclusion of Hübchen’s perspective on the simplification of life in the GDR to reductive categories of good and evil allows for a reissuing of Mühe’s personal use of Gröllmann’s *Stasi* file in the public sphere while promoting his film, which caused public shame for Gröllmann. Hensel’s text reissues Mühe’s complicity with the system as actor, making him no less guilty of cooperation with the state than Gröllmann, who may or may not have informally cooperated with the *Stasi* as an informant. Underlying Hensel’s treatment of the Mühe-Gröllmann affair is a tone of frustration both at the ease of stigmatizing after 1989 by simply mentioning a name in connection with the *Stasi* and at the need to reduce people in the GDR to either victim or perpetrator, using simplistic notions of innocence and guilt.<sup>405</sup> Although Gröllmann and Mühe fostered this controversy themselves, the nature of the *Stasi* file as hostile biography (written from biased perspectives and still considered as “documented” history) allows them to use the complicated GDR past in such a way. Notably, the public blaming, and shaming, still continued in the media after Gröllmann’s and Mühe’s death, only now placing Mühe as perpetrator—who allegedly used this personal story to promote his film.<sup>406</sup> A year after her death from cancer, Gröllmann’s former partner, Thomas B. Goguel wrote

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<sup>404</sup> Hensel, 119-20.

<sup>405</sup> For narratives of *Stasi* oppression (victim-perpetrator binary), see for example, Hubertus Knabe’s *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen: Stasi-Häftlinge berichten* (Berlin: List, 2007), *Die Täter sind unter uns: Über das Schönreden der SED-Diktatur* (Berlin: List, 2008), and *Die vergessenen Opfer der Mauer: Inhaftierte DDR-Flüchtlinge berichten* (Berlin: List, 2009) with Jessica Steckel; Birgit Schlicke’s *Gefangen im Stasiknast: Tagebuch einer politischen Gefangenen im Frauenzuchthaus Hoheneck* (Lage: Lichtzeichen Verlag, 2009); and *jeder schweigt von etwas anderem*, directed by Marc Bauder and Dörte Franke, Bauderfilm, 2006.

<sup>406</sup> In his book *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany and the Berlin Police*, Andreas Glaeser argues that post-1989 discussions on the *Stasi* have continued the myth of power that the *Stasi* created for itself during the GDR. Of interest is the position of many Eastern police officers after unification who felt that those public officials who worked with the *Stasi*, such as Manfred Stolpe, did more good than bad and that their decision to cooperate with the *Stasi* was a utilitarian decision for the good of their people. These East German officers find fault with those civil rights activists who after 1990, were against allowing former *Stasi* collaborators to serve in any public service positions—and, thus, drawing inaccurate clear black-white lines of guilt-innocence (280). See Andreas Glaeser, *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany and the Berlin Police* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

an article for the book *Rufmord und Medienopfer: Die Verletzung der persönlichen Ehre*, in which he tells another side to Mühe's slander campaign in 2006.<sup>407</sup>

**Hein: *Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* (2009) and *Wurst und Wahn* (2011)**

While Hensel's *Achtung Zone* establishes a case for a legitimate reappropriation of a new more distinct sense of Eastern identity in the public sphere and for questioning "documented" history, Hein's two texts negotiate this process in literary form. The West still plays a role but not one of polarization and separation between Eastern German generations as found in the earlier works of this generation such as *Zonenkinder* and *Mein erstes T-Shirt*. Instead, the West serves as an "other" through which Hein's protagonists reissue (i.e., render productive) earlier responses of shame to Eastern German identifications after assimilation.

In his review of *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, Winfried Stanzick brings attention to the universality of Hein's story that crosses East-West cultural borders: "Ohne das Leben in der DDR in einer spezifischen Weise zu bewerten, erzählt er [Hein] in 'Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand,' wie sein Alter Ego Sascha seine Jugendjahre in der DDR verbringt. [. . .] Jakob Hein hat mit viel Humor und Situationskomik eine Jungmännergeschichte geschrieben, wie sie so oder ähnlich auch außerhalb der DDR spielen könnte."<sup>408</sup> In its universality, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* creates an engagement with a sense of Eastern identity that accommodates for a multiplicity in meanings. It constructs a bridge between

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<sup>407</sup> See Thomas B. Goguel, "Filmpromotion mit Kollateralschäden. Der Fall Gröllmann/Mühe," in *Rufmord und Medienopfer: Die Verletzung der persönlichen Ehre*, ed. Thomas Schuler and Christian Schertz (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2007), 123-37. The book in general lays the case for a new media that should take more efforts to thoroughly research and avoid spreading rumors in journalistic pieces. In this particular article, Goguel presents Gröllmann as media victim, by claiming that Mühe's accusations of Gröllmann were all too convenient to come out around the premiere of the film. For a review of Goguel's article which questions his impartial presentation of Mühe's motives for publicly discussing his wife's Stasi activities in 2006 (Goguel was Gröllmann's partner), see for example, "Die verlorene Ehre des Ulrich Mühe," *Die Welt Online*, January 14, 2008, <http://www.welt.de/kultur/article1552547/Die-verlorene-Ehre-des-Ulrich-Muehe.html> (accessed October 10, 2012).

<sup>408</sup> *Kundenrezension, Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, [www.amazon.de](http://www.amazon.de) (accessed September 20, 2012).

Eastern and Western sets of identifications. Hein's text illustrates this slow process of moving from a reflective narrative of loss responding to the process of assimilation to a narrative of reappropriation (assertion) as East-West distinctions are still present in this memory work. However, the East-West contrasts employed in this later text serve more to show similarities between East and West than to showcase differences. In this narrative of reappropriation, Hein's reissuing of the East and the West creates a new more hybrid sense of identity for Eastern Germans (one that is at once assimilated and Eastern—but that is not an extreme of either).

In the text, for example, the protagonist emphasizes the influence that the Western film "Beat Street" had on him as a youth and that more important than the plot was the similarity that the Bronx and the break dancers in the West (US) had with him in the GDR: "Viel wichtiger waren die grellbunten, illegalen Graffiti an den Wänden, die illegalen Klubs in leer stehenden Wohnungen, natürlich die Musik und der Breakdance!"<sup>409</sup> This subversive youth culture of breakdancing in the US (West) provides here a point of similarity and not of contrast that positions the West as ideologically and culturally superior. Breakdancing is as much an Eastern practice for him as it is Western among youths in the eighties in the two Germanies. Just as breakdancing in the US was considered a part of the subversive youth culture, so too was the break dance and punk scene in the GDR for its youths.<sup>410</sup> Instead of a teenager watching breakdancing on TV and dreaming of performing this dance in the free West Germany, Hein's protagonist appropriates this subversive dance into his imagined East German community in the GDR. Breakdancing is part of his identity as a punkster.

Hein's book reminds his generation and the German public in general that the two pasts of the GDR and the FRG for this age group had actually more similarities than differences—both

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<sup>409</sup> Jakob Hein, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* (Berlin: Galiani, 2009), 20.

<sup>410</sup> In *Schlecht Englisch kann ich gut: Eine freie deutsche Jugend*, Bürger Lars Dietrich recalls his childhood in the GDR and the rebellious role that breakdancing played for him there in the GDR. See Bürger Lars Dietrich, *Schlecht Englisch kann ich gut: Eine freie deutsche Jugend* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009).

were looking to the US for cultural cues. This drawing of similarities between East and West does not serve the same function as in the texts that critically reflected on assimilation. Here Hein is showing that East Germans had their own specific subversive groups that were independent of East-West ideology and independent of trying to be like West Germany. Instead both Germanies developed this interest in breakdance from the US at the same time. In his text, breakdancers in the GDR are portrayed as just trying to be different from other East Germans within the East German community in the GDR.

At the core of Hein's narrative is a binary between Poppig (trendy) and Punk (nonconformist). The only role that the West plays in the narrative is a neutral, materialistic one. Simplified binaries of *Rechtsstaat* (state of law) and *Unrechtsstaat* (state without law) that support preconceived comparisons between the Third Reich and the GDR are not present.<sup>411</sup> In the GDR, as Hein's protagonist explains, there were two scenes: the Band scene (those in the Punk scene who drank beer and were "gegen das System") and then all the others (the trendies).<sup>412</sup> Those of his age in *Mein erstes T-Shirt* who listened to Western music are now labeled (negatively) as trendies in *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*. He has renamed the status of Western consumer goods, which are now uncool or passé (trendy). Hein's protagonist describes himself as the cool *Einzelgänger* (loner) who does not listen to Western music or drink *Coca Cola* like the others but, instead, is a punkster—the exact opposite of those mainstream "trendies." He explains: "Ich ging davon aus, dass die meisten jungen Leute spießige, angepasste Popper waren, die spießige, angepasste Chartmusik hörten und dazu Cola tranken."<sup>413</sup> Although he feels superior as a punk, he does not try to missionize the "trendy"

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<sup>411</sup> For a discussion of these concepts and the dangers of equating the GDR to an *Unrechtsstaat*, see Howard J. De Nike, *German Unification and the Jurists of East Germany: An Anthropology of Law, Nation, and History* (Mönchengladbach: Forum Verlag Godesberg, 1997), 35-42.

<sup>412</sup> Jakob Hein, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, 58.

<sup>413</sup> Hein, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, 79.



others to listen to his music or wear punk clothes as he does. Instead, he accepts their differences, as he relates:

Natürlich dachte ich auch darüber nach, sie gewissermaßen zu missionieren. Vorstellung von wahrer Schönheit und vom wirklich Guten durch kleine Geschenke nahezubringen. Es hat wohl viele Gründe, warum ich das nicht tat, warum ich nicht einmal den Versuch unternahm. Einerseits hielt ich ein solches Unternehmen für aussichtslos. Es könnte Jahre dauern, bis sich unsere Vorstellungen von gutem Geschmack angeglichen haben würden—was aus meiner Sicht natürlich bedeutete, dass Jana meinen Geschmack übernehmen würde. Wir würden Rentner sein, bevor sie verstand, was gute Musik war. Außerdem versuchten wir [Punks] niemals, jemandem von unserem Geschmack zu überzeugen. Zwar verlachten wir all die Idioten, die die falsche Musik hörten und die falschen Klamotten trugen, aber wir versuchten auch nie, sie eines Besseren zu belehren.<sup>414</sup>

The presumably more authentic East German as portrayed by Hein's protagonist represents the antithesis of the negative West German picture of the East in the media as xenophobic (as intolerant of others who are different).<sup>415</sup> The protagonist does not try to force others to accept his ways, but instead he accepts them as they are.<sup>416</sup> This positively reimagined picture of the open-minded, tolerant East German subject is inserted into the German narrative and stands against the stereotype of the intolerant East German. A new notion of an Eastern sense of identity is asserted.

In this tolerant identity of the punkster (nonconformist), the protagonist reflects an emerging hybrid sense of identity. While he asserts that he is a punkster (and not a trendy), he admits that he is not an authentic punkster as Tier (a punk character in the book), who is described as having “zahlreiche Narben im Gesicht.” The protagonist explains: “Aber ich war nicht konsequent genug für Dreck, Gestank, eine Ratte als Haustier und einen Schulverweis.

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<sup>414</sup> Hein, 89.

<sup>415</sup> See for example, Dominic Boyer, “Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,” *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 361-81 for more on the role of the media in perpetuating such East German stereotypes.

<sup>416</sup> This rhetoric reminds readers of the postcolonial approach scholars have taken towards German Unification, i.e., viewing East Germany as being the colonized, and West Germany, the colonizer. For more on this approach, see for example, Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2005).

Dafür schämte ich mich.”<sup>417</sup> He is not ready to give up all of the advantages of a trendy identity. Although he takes on aspects of the punkster identity, he is actually not one, but merely performs the features he chooses. He calls the punkster his “Vorbilder.” He desires to be able to carry this identity to its extreme, but finds himself unable to do so. In this performance, the protagonist is neither the extreme of punkster nor that of trendy, but instead he is a healthy embodiment of both, functioning harmoniously together in one individual. Such hybridity allows for a more open identity discourse that is not as defensively affirmative in tone as Hensel’s *Achtung Zone* but still allows for a recasting of a sense of identity for Eastern Germans.

Hein’s most recent text, *Wurst und Wahn* (2011), exemplifies best the complexities of post-1989 memory of the GDR and continues the commentary on extremes in hegemonic media, which focuses on distinctions between East and West. In *Der Tagespiegel*, Rebecca Schindler writes that Jakob Hein, in *Wurst und Wahn*, takes up a discussion of “Klischees und Vorurteile und schildert den Prozess vom Fleischesser zum Vegetarier und wieder zurück.”<sup>418</sup> The text is arranged as a police interview in which the protagonist, a meat-eater, pressured into becoming a vegetarian by his colleagues, tells his story about what brought him to the point of murdering the head of the meat producing entity “Fleisch und Wurstwaren Europa.” Considering Hein’s earlier post-unification books that treated the relationship between East and West and especially his book *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, which presented the case for a new hybrid sense of identity, it is unlikely that this examination of extremes in *Wurst und Wahn* stops at the humorous representation of choosing between meat-eating and vegetarianism. By reading Hein’s text as a parody of the period of assimilation (although here in the vegetarian/meat-eater constellation we find an extreme sacrifice of personal identity), readers can find insights into how

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<sup>417</sup> Hein, *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand*, 60.

<sup>418</sup> Rebecca Schindler, “Buchpremiere, Jakob Hein ‘Wurst und Wahn – ein Geständnis’ Der König der Tiere,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 25, 2011, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/buchpremierejakob-hein-wurst-und-wahn-ein-gestaendnis-der-koenig-der-tiere/4533026.html> (accessed November 24, 2012).

a new Eastern identity of “Ossi” pride is presented in unified German culture. Similar to Brussig who employed the metaphor of soccer in his most recent post-1989 texts (*Leben bis Männer* [2001] and *Schiedsrichter Fertig* [2007]) as a means for writing about loss, Hein, also, uses a metaphor to elucidate Eastern German assertion against previous sentiments of inadequacy in unified Germany. By deploying an allegorical mode that looks at extremes using meat-eaters and vegetarians, Hein’s text can avoid being categorized as another *Ostalgic* book and, thus, be read as a reflective piece on the struggle for identity in response to present hegemonic discourse.

His text juxtaposes meat eaters and vegetarians, which could serve as representations for East and West, respectively (if reading the text as a reissuing of Eastern German shame, resulting from negative images of the East in the media). Hein’s protagonist is depicted as a “trendy” who follows what is considered to be mainstream, in this case vegetarianism. He is the exact opposite of Hein’s protagonist in *Die Liebe ist ein hormonell bedingter Zustand* who prides himself on being a rebel. Of this desire to fit in, he explains to the policeman, “[es] war mir wichtig gewesen, nicht aus der Reihe zu tanzen, dabei zu sein,” a sentiment that is very similar to the push to integrate with the West in the early years of unification.<sup>419</sup> Although eating meat was as normal as breathing in air, as he explains, as soon as it became unfashionable and as soon as it was no longer allowed in society in the “Neue Vorschriften,” he stopped eating meat and became a vegetarian like everyone else: “Beides [eating meat and breathing] war für mich eine Selbstverständlichkeit, etwas, das ich täglich mehrmals tat und nie hinterfragte.”<sup>420</sup> Although eating meat was part of his identity, once the new law ruled against this practice, he decides to no longer identify himself as a meat-eater. This alteration of identity recalls the period of assimilation. As a meat-eater he felt like an outsider who was observed and ridiculed by others, even describing himself as a “Tier im Zoo” while eating his *Currywurst* at an *Imbiss* stand where

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<sup>419</sup> Jakob Hein, *Wurst und Wahn* (Berlin: Galiani, 2011), 9.

<sup>420</sup> Hein, *Wurst und Wahn*, 11.

vegetarians could observe him performing such a primitive act as a meat-eater before assimilating in to the vegetarian world.<sup>421</sup> He even recalls a sense of shame for fantasizing that a bottle of mineral water in the refrigerator was a bottle of sausage water (*Wurstschorle*). After cutting his lips from licking the bottle to get this taste of meat, he acts like an addict in a moment of “meat” intoxication: “Ich hatte mir die Zunge an der Kante verletzt, der Flaschenboden war blutig eingefärbt. Es war mein eigenes Blut, das mir so animalisch gut schmeckte. Als ich meine Frau auf dem Flur hörte, wachte ich plötzlich auf aus meinem Rausch.”<sup>422</sup> The intoxication recalls the response of *Konsumrausch* after 1989—showing the extremes resulting from deprivation and the denial of choice.

The protagonist explains that after a short time as a vegetarian he became aggressive, as this behavior (not eating meat) was against his nature: “Bisher war ich immer so ein friedfertiger, total unauffälliger Mensch gewesen [ . . . ].”<sup>423</sup> The request by his colleagues for him to stop talking about meat (his lost passion and identity label) in front of other vegetarians echoes the reception of East German nostalgia for the past during the nineties, labeling such nostalgic musings negatively in the public sphere as *Ostalgie*. The protagonist expresses frustration at this newly forced identity since by not eating meat he was going against what his ancestors had struggled to evolve from: “Meine Vorfahren waren nicht von den Bäumen herabgeklettert und hatten sich die Erde untern gemacht, damit ich mich jetzt wie ein Gibbon ernährte,” but more importantly, owing to a lack of needed nutrients he begins to look sickly, not his usual self.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Hein, *Wurst und Wahn*, 12. Frank Rothe, member of the “*Zonenkinder*” generation, discusses similar feelings to these of being an extinct dinosaur at parties after unification—as the curious East German object. See Frank Rothe, “Der Dinosaurier im Bernstein. Ich, das Überbleibsel aus einer implodierten Galaxis,” in *Das Buch der Unterschiede: Warum die Einheit keine ist*, ed. Jana Simon, Frank Rothe, and Wiete Andrasch (Berlin: Aufbau, 2000), 52-64.

<sup>422</sup> Hein, *Wurst und Wahn*, 27.

<sup>423</sup> Hein, 30

<sup>424</sup> Hein, 34, 43.

After two years of eating only fruits and vegetables, the protagonist in *Wurst und Wahn* finds that his vegetarian diet (i.e., his identity denial) has had catastrophic effects—his penis has fallen off. The doctor tells him: “Bei vegetarischer Mangelernährung reiche die Durchblutung einfach nicht für einen Penis aus, das sei eine ganz normale Nebenwirkung [of vegetarianism], ob mir das keiner gesagt habe.”<sup>425</sup> After having taken on a false identity of vegetarianism, which goes against his sense of self and of his meat-eating ancestry and everything that makes him who he is, he eventually loses sight of himself, of his manhood, as he explains, which caused this self-castration. The protagonist’s loss of identity, symbolized through his self-castration (“Ich hatte mich kastriert!”) by his denial of meat, resonates with sentiments of identity loss by East Germans shortly after unification.<sup>426</sup>

The protagonist blames the biased media for not reporting the facts about eating meat—recalling inaccurate and biased public media depictions of things Eastern in unified Germany. In an internet forum for meat-eaters, the protagonist comes into contact with a man, Bert Brühwürfel, who tries to give him the truth about vegetarianism, which he claims is presented falsely in the media and is supported by a conglomerate “aus gewaltbereiten Buddhisten, der Pharmaindustrie, der Waffenindustrie, der Ärztenverbände, der Pornoindustrie, der Gemüsebauern und natürlich dem Soja-Tofu-Industrie-Komplex.”<sup>427</sup> It is in the interest of the conglomerates that a stereotype of meat-eaters is publicized, resonating with hegemonic images of the East after unification. When the protagonist is confronted with the news that the head of “Fleisch und Wurstwaren Europa” was actually Tom Tofu, the biggest supporter of the vegetarian lifestyle on the internet and who provided encouragement to “his fellow vegetarians” in their refusal to eat meat, he snaps, killing Tom Tofu. His fellow vegetarian activist explains to him that: “Sein Weg

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<sup>425</sup> Hein, *Wurst und Wahn* 56.

<sup>426</sup> Hein, 56.

<sup>427</sup> Hein, 71.

[Tom Tofu/ Head of *Fleisch und Wurstwaren Europa*], Vegetarier zurück auf den richtigen Weg zu bringen [as future meat-eaters and rehabilitated vegetarians], sei es, ihren Vegetarismus so sehr zu beschleunigen, so unbarmherzig anzufachen, dass sie einfach zurückkommen müssen.”<sup>428</sup>

After hearing this truth about this conspiracy, which is continued in the media, he begins eating meat again and gains his strength and virility back. Through no longer denying his meat-eating identity, the protagonist regains his health. He accepts a multiplicity of identity: both vegetarian and meat eating.

Unlike the symbolic castration of the father in Brussig’s *Helden wie wir*, which shows the generational conflict between the generation of the anti-fascist fathers of the GDR and the *Hineingeborene*, the symbolic castration in Hein’s text illustrates a move towards generational reconciliation. Instead of the next generation being impotent because of parental action or inaction in the GDR as found in Brussig’s *Helden wie wir*, Hein’s text shows a discourse of empowerment on the level of the metanarrative—a discourse of reappropriation of identity. The protagonist, returning to his cultural past of eating meat, decides to be proactive and save others who have denied their pasts—“andere da herausholen.” Because of his negation of his parents’ legacy (meat-eating) he became impotent—through his self-castration. By sexualizing the protagonist’s rejection, or repression, of his cultural history (here of meat-eating) and having him become sick (as observed in his loss of weight and penis) due to this negation, Hein emphasizes the connection that exists in post-unification Germany between recognizing the modes of Eastern identification passed on by the previous generation and the well-being for this generation. Hein has his protagonist regain power, that is, his health and sexual function, by returning to his past or to his identity as meat eater.

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<sup>428</sup> Hein, 99.

In *Illness as a Metaphor*, Susan Sontag emphasizes the role that disease imagery plays in political discourse—as a discourse of power: “Modern totalitarian movements, whether of the right or of the left, have been peculiarly—and revealingly—inclined to use disease imagery. The Nazis declared that someone of mixed ‘racial’ origin was like a syphilitic. [. . .] Stalinism was called a cholera, a syphilis, and a cancer. [. . .].”<sup>429</sup> Hein’s use of the metaphor of sickness and disease allows for a critique of the Western discourse of power. In the counter-discourse of reappropriation, the dominant colonial discourse of the subject as the “sick-patient” has been appropriated and has now been turned onto the colonizer.<sup>430</sup> By appropriating the vegetarian lifestyle (that of colonizer), the protagonist (or “subject”) becomes sick. Taking on this foreign, or strange, lifestyle and denying his identity has negative effects on the protagonist. Instead, he must accept and assert his familial history of meat-eating. Through the protagonist’s reconnection to his past, Hein’s text reveals a tone of understanding or at least of identification with a shared past with previous East German generations. Instead of an *Auseinandersetzung* (face-off) with the former East German generations, these texts perform an *Auseinandersetzung* (face-off) with the master narrative of Western superiority which Eastern Germans accepted and supported through efforts to integrate quickly after 1990. At the same time, Hein’s humorous allegory on extremes, of vegetarianism and meat-eating, lends support to an approach to memory and identity constructions in unified Germany, which is a nuanced one that allows multiple perspectives of memory and a hybrid approach to an Eastern sense of identity.

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<sup>429</sup> Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 81-82.

<sup>430</sup> According to Christoph Ramm, the metaphor of illness can be found in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* when “he refer[s] to British and French interests in the ‘territory of the now terminally ill Ottoman Empire’ (Said, 1978).” See, Christoph Ramm, “The ‘Sick Man’ beyond Europe: the Orientalism of Turkey and Turkish Immigrants in European Union Accession Discourses in Germany,” in *Racism Postcolonialism Europe*, ed. Graham Huggan and Ian Law (Liverpool: Liverpool university Press, 2009), 103. Ramm is citing Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 220.

## Conclusion

In this new response of reappropriation, the texts by Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein provide a counter-discourse, which not only presents a memory different than that offered by hegemonic memory narratives of the divided German past, but also recasts a sense of Eastern identity in the present. An initial response of assimilation and the following period of critical reflection on loss, which occurred during the process of assimilation, were necessary for this new discourse of reappropriation to surface. Instead of negatively regarding Hensel's *Zonenkinder* as a participation in *Ostalgie*, this chapter argues for a consideration of her text, along with Hein's strategy of irony, as crucial responses in the process towards a new discourse of reappropriation (a response of assertion). As authors on the periphery of the cultural sphere, Hein and Hensel's later texts of reappropriation deconstruct the binary structure of the center, allowing for a nuanced approach to memory and identity.



**Chapter 4**  
**Discourses of “Normalization”:**  
**“Diktaturkinder” and the GDR Museum**<sup>431</sup>

Es gibt so viele verschiedene DDRs im Kopf, je nachdem, in wessen Gegenwart man sich befindet: Da gibt es das Stasiland, das Folterland, das Eingesperrt-Land, das Land, an dessen Grenze man erschossen wird, und es gibt die DDR, die kein Disneyland brauchte, weil sie selbst eines war, ein Traumland der kostenlosen Kindergärten, von mir aus. Traumland der orangefarbenen Tapeten, der einfachen Leute, des übersichtlichen Lebens. Traumland für Hineingeborene. Keine-Zukunftsangst-Traumland. Keine-Absturzgefahr-Traumland. Land der schöner gestylten Kaffeekannen. Traumland des Mitropa-Geschirrs.

Andrea Hanna Hünninger, *Das Paradies. Meine Jugend nach der Mauer*, 2011<sup>432</sup>

The above passage by Andrea Hanna Hünninger, born 1984 in Weimar, Germany (East Germany), and cohort of the third generation of former East Germans (self-labeling her age group as “Diktaturkinder”), speaks to the heterogeneous nature of social memory. As Hünninger’s passage illustrates, each individual has a particular memory of the divided German past influenced by a personal biography. A homogeneous collective memory for a unified Germany is, thus, impossible. In order to situate Hünninger’s text within GDR generations, I apply the notion of cohort clusters from Mary Fulbrook who explains them as: “members of particular cohorts [social generations] which ‘stick out’ in the historical record, groups of people born within a few years of each other who tend to play a highly visible historical role in some way with striking difference in their outlooks and actions from those born a few years earlier or a few years later.”<sup>433</sup> Hünninger’s use of the term “Diktaturkinder” to describe her age group of Eastern Germans reveals the influence that public discourse (and a Western German memory narrative of

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<sup>431</sup> In their edited book, Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke emphasize the highly contested nature of the term “normalization” and, thus, they choose to place quotation marks throughout the book to signify this contention. In this chapter, I also use quotation marks around this term to signify this contention as well. See Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, “Introduction,” in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 11.

<sup>432</sup> Andrea Hanna Hünninger, *Das Paradies: Meine Jugend nach der Mauer* (Stuttgart: Tropen bei Klett-Cotta, 2011), 199.

<sup>433</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7. (Jana Hensel is eight years older than Hünninger; Jakob Hein thirteen and, thus, Hünninger’s “Diktaturkinder” best falls under this category of cohort cluster that indicates a new emerging generation)

democratic victory) has had on the memory of those born a few years before the fall of the wall, as she has critically appropriated the post-unification label of the GDR as a dictatorship to

identify her own generation: “Man hält uns für Diktaturkinder, die schon im Kindergarten einen ganz enormen Knall bekommen haben: durch gemeinschaftliche Klogänge,

Stasikindergärtnerinnen, freilaufendes Viehzeug und kommunistische Propaganda, die uns die Birne praktisch bis oben hin vollgeschissen hat.”<sup>434</sup> As a member of a generational group born

too late to experience the system of socialism firsthand and also born as children to a generation that had *only* experienced the socialist state of the GDR until its demise in 1989

(*Hineingeborene*), this emerging cohort of “*Diktaturkinder*” on the brink of forming a new

generation of Eastern Germans reveals new perspectives into the post-1989 national project of normalizing the GDR past.<sup>435</sup> Shortly after unification in 1990, Helmut Kohl reintroduced the

notion of normalization. When asked about his vision for Germany in the next five to ten years, he stated: “[. . .] things will normalize. That’s the most important thing for us, that we become a

wholly normal country, not ‘singularized’ in any question [. . .] that we simply don’t stick out [. . .].”<sup>436</sup> Essential to this project of normalization was the notion of the GDR as the second German

dictatorship.

This chapter demonstrates, based on Hünninger’s book, that literature of the “*Diktaturkinder*” aligns itself with the national project of normalization by producing a new mode of anti-nostalgia, which neither recalls nor idealizes memories of the GDR past but instead recalls memories of a childhood during the early years of unification. Through the mode of anti-

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<sup>434</sup> Hünninger, 194.

<sup>435</sup> See Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2009). Emmerich uses the term *Hineingeborene* (to stand in contrast to that of the *Nachgeborene*) for those GDR authors who only knew the West through TV—“Sie waren in den Sozialismus ‘hineingeboren’ (mit dem Titel eines Gedichtbandes von Uwe Kolbe zu sprechen) und hatten keine Alternativen zu ihm erfahren können. Als sie erwachsen wurden, war dieser Sozialismus nicht mehr als ‘Hoffnung’ erkennbar, sondern nur noch als ‘deformierte Realität’ (H. Müller)” (404).

<sup>436</sup> See Serge Schmemmann, “Kohl, the Man for the German Moment,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 1990.

nostalgia towards the GDR past, this cohort shows indifference toward the issue of normalization of the GDR past and instead demonstrates a normalization of Easternness by now fitting in with the West instead of sticking out.<sup>437</sup> (However, through indifference, it supports normalization.) Appropriating the notion of the GDR as the second German dictatorship is not problematic for the “*Diktaturkinder*.” As any memory of the GDR is transmitted to them through forms of cultural memory (TV, films, museums), a GDR identity, or past, effects little influence on their identity construction as children of unified Germany. In contrast to this anti-nostalgic approach to the GDR past, I examine the GDR museum in Berlin as a divergent mode of consumer-*Ostalgie* that continues the discourse popularized in the TV shows and movies of the late nineties and early twenty-first century (which had already in the first place intended to capitalize on and shape a desire to present the practices of everyday life in the GDR in contrast to the negative and oppressive side of the public sphere).<sup>438</sup> The GDR museum in its early exhibits originally revealed a revisionist process of normalization, which was also simultaneously productive, by offering a new construction of the GDR past (history of the everyday in the GDR) that revised the accepted view of the GDR as a second German dictatorship, thereby creating a new positive, private sphere of the GDR for public consideration. However with the recent additions, the GDR museum now also presents the oppressive, authoritarian side of the public sphere. The museum no longer represents a productive/revisionist process of normalization but, through its commercialization, now projects a multifaceted process of normalization—emphasizing the role

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<sup>437</sup> I use the term “Easternness” in the sense of an East Germanness, or a sense of East German self-understanding, or of an East German distinctiveness, as Paul Cooke discusses the new East German positioning in unified Germany—all to be understood as nonhomogeneous labels, as there is no singular Eastern entity. See Paul Cooke, “Literature and the Question of East German Cultural Identity since the Wende,” in *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, ed. Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2002), 155.

<sup>438</sup> In 2003 after the success of the film *Good-bye Lenin!*, many German TV stations tried to capitalize on the *Ostalgie* craze with the television *Ostalgie*-shows. See for example: “Die DDR Show-von Ampermännchen bis Zentralkomitee,” September 2003, with Katharina Witt and Oliver Geißen (RTL); “Die ultimative Ost-Show,” August 2003, with Ulrich Meyer and Axel Schulze (Sat. 1); “Ein Kessel DDR,” with Franziska Schenk and Gunther Emmerlich (MDR); and “Ostalgie-Show,” with Andrea Kiewel and Marco Schreyll (ZDF). See “DDR-Revival-Ostalgie im Fernsehen,” *Stern.de*, August 28, 2003, <http://www.stern.de/kultur/film/ddr-revival-ostalgie-im-fernsehen-512223.html> (accessed December 7, 2012).

that capitalization/commercialization plays in the realm of cultural memory. Through these new exhibits, the museum can now appeal to multiple views of the GDR past by presenting both the public and private spheres of the GDR and, thus, attract more visitors. The notion of the GDR as a second German dictatorship, as well as the notion of a private everyday life in the GDR (which contests the generalization of the GDR as a dictatorship), are both presented in the museum. This multifaceted mode of normalization perhaps indicates a productive process that allows manifold memory perspectives.

While Hünninger's book records a turn in memory discourse by normalizing the GDR past through contesting sentiments of mere *Ostalgie* (by now exhibiting indifference to the GDR past), at the same time the GDR museum in Berlin, with its exhibits and commercialization, challenges and affirms the mode of *Ostalgie* by capitalizing on a contested GDR memory narrative. Ultimately, both approaches contribute to a potentially more productive process of normalization in which more nuanced and historically specific representations of the GDR emerge. Contrasting Hünninger's anti-nostalgic book *Das Paradies: Meine Jugend nach der Mauer* (2011) with the fascination on *Ostalgie* exploited by the GDR museums, this chapter examines developments in normalizing the GDR past two decades after the fall of the wall. While both responses within this normalization process work with distance to the GDR past, Hünninger's text side-steps nostalgic sentiments, revealing the tenuous nature of postmemory. Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up."<sup>439</sup> These partial memories are then transmitted to the next generation in ways that the "generation after" assumes them as their own. Because of the overall parental silence, Hünninger's protagonist

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<sup>439</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *POSTMEMORY.NET*, <http://www.postmemory.net> (accessed November 4, 2012).

lacks access to the GDR past, which is a remote space inaccessible except through mediated cultural memories, transmitted through film, TV, museums, and so forth. The absent “imaginative investment” through individual and familial communicative memory is not present in this publicly available mediated memory, where the past is only present through its remnants or foreign “stranded objects.”<sup>440</sup> The GDR museum capitalizes on nostalgic sentiments (*Ostalgie*) and specifically on Eastern German connection to the stranded objects of the past. The museum in its original exhibits from 2006 provided an alternative access to the GDR past than that of historical consensus, as GDR museum historian Stefan Wolle, himself a former East German, discloses in the 2012 GDR museum guide:

The historical consensus is both clear and in little need of revision. The GDR was a Soviet satellite held together by the grip of its security apparatus. The planned economy proved itself inferior to the free market and the generous social system was not only unsustainable but contributed to the collapse of the system as a whole. The regime was removed by a democratic mass movement in 1989 and the reunification with West Germany was endorsed by a large majority of East Germans. Many seek to use this consensus to “close the file” on the GDR. Yet to do so would leave many questions unanswered. The GDR was more than an artifice of ideology and power; it involved the lives of millions of people. Growing up in the GDR, they went to school, served in the “armed organs”, and worked, lived and raised families. Life in the GDR could be very happy away from the often distant politics and ideology.<sup>441</sup>

The museum, especially its early exhibits, capitalizes on this need to present a counter-memory to the hegemonic memory narrative of Western victory narrative, playing at the same time into the *Ostalgie* of the nineties manufactured by the media.

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<sup>440</sup> Eric Santner has coined the term “stranded objects” for those remnants from the past that sometimes prevent closure for individuals in the present—existing as ghostly reminders of a lost past. See Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>441</sup> Stefan Wolle, “Focusing on the Person,” in *GDR-Guide: A Journey to a Bygone State*, ed. Robert Rückel (Berlin: DDR Museum Verlag, 2012), 12-13.

## Normalization

In their edited book *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century* that presents various approaches to the post-unification process of normalization, Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke use the term normalization productively in order to describe Gerhard Schröder's and Joschka Fischer's (Red-Green coalition) economic and political policies of the late 1990s that viewed Germany "as an equal and respected partner for its western friends and allies."<sup>442</sup> In this equal partnership, the German state no longer would "stick out" from its allies. According to Cooke and Taberner, this view of normalization by Gerhard Schröder considered Germany to be "[a] modern, forward-looking country, mindful of its history but not obsessed with it" and with this new view of the past, Germans would have a "more normal, untroubled attitude towards 'being German.'"<sup>443</sup>

Taking Helmut Kohl's statement on what constitutes normalization for Germany, i.e., not being singular and not sticking out, Stephen Brockmann analyzes the "normality" of Germany politically and culturally. He examines the project of German normalization in three categories: domestic normality, international normality, and Germany's approach to its past and argues that in the first two categories, Germany has normalized.<sup>444</sup> In the third category, in contrast, Germany is still "abnormal" (i.e., sticks out).<sup>445</sup> According to Brockmann, in German domestic politics, the past no longer sticks out as it had prior to 1990: "Germany's achievement of normality is most obvious at the level of its internal domestic constitution as a nation. Prior to 1989-1990, Germany 'stuck out' as one of only a few divided nations in the world: Korea,

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<sup>442</sup> Taberner and Cooke, "Introduction," 9.

<sup>443</sup> Taberner and Cooke, "Introduction," 2.

<sup>444</sup> Stephen Brockmann, "'Normalization': Has Helmut Kohl's Vision Been Realized?" in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 17-30.

<sup>445</sup> Brockmann employs the term "abnormal" to contrast his use of "normal" in analyzing the project of German normalization. See Brockmann, 18.

Yemen, and Cyprus were three others.”<sup>446</sup> For Brockmann, the fact that Germany is no longer divided as two countries points to its normality. As for arguing normality in German international politics, Brockmann mentions the recent German involvement in international military missions such as in the Kosovo conflict in 1999 as well as in Afghanistan in 2001. This new militarized Germany is very different from the previous Germany which “stuck out” since it followed a policy of checkbook diplomacy compared to the military force of its Western allies—America, Great Britain, and France.<sup>447</sup>

As for the third area of cultural normalization (i.e., Germany’s relation to its past), in comparison to countries that can take pride in their past, Brockmann argues, Germany will always have Auschwitz in the foreground configuring its national identity and is, thus, singular and cannot be normalized since a normalization of the Nazi past would relativize the Holocaust.<sup>448</sup> Brockmann gives two revisionist approaches that have tried to achieve this normalization: 1) historicizing the Nazi past, i.e., placing it as not unique but similar to Stalinist atrocities and 2) placing Germans as victims of allied bombings or of expulsion from the Eastern German territories after WWII.<sup>449</sup> However, Brockmann explains that such approaches to normalizing the German past (the past of the Third Reich) cannot be successful, as the word Auschwitz attests to the singularity of the German case and, therefore, the German past must be considered “abnormal,” i.e., singular. However, the manner in which this singularity of the German past is commemorated is, according to Brockmann, “unique and unprecedented in the

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<sup>446</sup> Brockmann, 18.

<sup>447</sup> For more on the transformation of German foreign policy from checkbook diplomacy to participation in international military engagements, see for example, Franz-Josef Meyers, “Von der Scheckbuchdiplomatie zur Verteidigung am Hindukusch. Die Rolle der Bundeswehr bei multinationalen Auslandseinsätzen 1990-2009,” *Zeitschrift für Aussen- und Sicherheitspolitik* 3, no. 2 (2010): 201-222.

<sup>448</sup> Brockmann, 25-27.

<sup>449</sup> Brockmann discusses the two approaches to the “abnormal” German: 1) the “you too” defense that other countries have also been guilty of genocide (this is one of the approaches to German history headed by Ernst Nolte in 1986—which later came to be known as the *Historikerstreit*); and 2) the approach of German victimization—that Germans were forced out of Poland after the war and were victims of allied bombings. See Brockmann, 25-27.

history of nation-states. Germany is quite consciously trying to construct what Jürgen Habermas has called a post-conventional identity, one that will be based at least as much on the acknowledgement of national shame as on the celebration of national pride.”<sup>450</sup> Because of the historical singularity of Auschwitz, Germany is “well positioned to attempt the creation of a non-conventional national identity, an identity based as much on self-questioning as on self-affirmation.”<sup>451</sup> Although Germany cannot normalize its past, it can use it in a productive way to aid in letting go of the past.

In this chapter, I take Brockmann’s notions of German normalcy in German domestic and foreign policy (not sticking out) and of the post-conventional identity that acknowledges both shame and national pride and apply these concepts to the process of normalizing the GDR past as observed in the narrative responses of anti-nostalgia and consumer-*Ostalgie*. Hünninger’s anti-nostalgic book shows both rupture and mending with GDR memory, accepting the West German victory narrative, but at the same time defending parental feelings of shame. Her book allows for a productive sense of normalizing the GDR past in relation to her parents—both acknowledging shame and validating her parents’ past (and also accepting the status quo view of West German democratic victory as well). For the “*Diktaturkinder*,” the GDR is an inaccessible past and only plays a role simply in how they relate to their parents, post-1990. Therefore, the process of normalization for them is a complicated one, characterized by indifference. Relating more closely to West Germans of their own age group than to their parents, the “*Diktaturkinder*” view such questions of how to consider the GDR past as inconsequential and unimportant. The GDR past is not singular. Owing to a culturally inflected post-memory, a mediated memory, however, their relationship to their parents *is* singular. Through its capitalization on *Ostalgie*, the GDR museum also presents a complicated normalizing discourse that presents both the shameful

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<sup>450</sup> Brockmann, 27.

<sup>451</sup> Brockmann, 28.



negative GDR past (as authoritarian) and the private, positive GDR past. Through its consumer-*Ostalgie*, the GDR museum does not allow the past to aid in a productive process of letting go, but instead encourages a fetishization of the past, taking form in recent years after new exhibits and accoutrements were added.

### **Anti-Nostalgia**

Unlike the role that GDR material objects and rituals play in the texts of the third generation writers like Jakob Hein and Jana Hensel, the recollection of GDR objects and rituals by Hünninger's protagonist does not serve to carry forward a narrative of reappropriation of a sense of an Eastern German identity. In contrast, Hünninger's protagonist considers GDR objects and rituals such as *Pioniertücher* and the GDR national anthem not as national symbols and rituals that form an Eastern German national identity, but instead as foreign objects ("stranded objects") that she herself must look up on the internet to learn more about: "Ich weiß nicht einmal, welche Farbe die [Pioniertücher] haben, und bin zu faul, im Internet nachzuschauen. Wie das wohl war, mit einem Tuch und in so einer Gruppe mit Aufgaben und Hierarchie usw.?"<sup>452</sup> She has to look up the GDR national anthem on the internet as well: "Die Nationalhymne der DDR kenne ich nicht, sie hat etwas mit Ruinen zu tun. Ich könnte sie googeln. So sehr interessiert sie mich aber doch nicht. Ich bin mir sicher: Sie verspricht eine bessere Welt. Sie interessiert mich noch weniger."<sup>453</sup> These unfamiliar objects serve as "mediated forms of knowledge" that, according to Eva Hoffmann, impact one generation's relational experience to the previous generation. In discussing postmemory, Hoffmann explains: "But we [the "generation after"] did not see them [formative events of the twentieth century], suffer through

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<sup>452</sup> Hünninger, *Das Paradies: Meine Jugend nach der Mauer*, 193.

<sup>453</sup> Hünninger, 57. For a discussion of the role that symbols play in forming notions of a national identity, see Rolf Parr, "National Symbols and the German Reunification," in *Memory Traces: 1989 and the Question of German Cultural Identity*, ed. Silke Arnold-de Simine (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 27-54.

them, experience their impact directly. Our relationship to them has been defined by our very ‘post-ness’ and by the powerful but mediated forms of knowledge that have followed from it.”<sup>454</sup>

The word “post” implies a critical distance to the memory, stories and images of the previous generation.<sup>455</sup> Owing to parental silence, postmemory for the “*Diktaturkinder*” in this sense is a communicative memory transmitted almost exclusively through sources of cultural memory.

Through the silence of the parent generation, the GDR experience was not shared and passed on to the next generation, but instead, there was a break in a continuity of memory from one generation to the next. Therefore, participation in the communicative process of memory for the social group of Eastern Germans was ironically accomplished for this generational group by visiting museums, researching the GDR on the internet, watching old GDR films on MDR, and interactions with Western Germans. All of these possibilities offered a different GDR memory perspective from that of their parents.<sup>456</sup> The museums, google searches, films, and TV documentaries serve as those “mediated forms of knowledge” that supplement the parental silence. The GDR memory that is transmitted to this successive generation is accomplished not through the family but through “distant, adoptive witnesses,” leaving gaps in knowledge and possible discontinuities between generations.<sup>457</sup> In this way, the protagonist becomes an ethnologist who studies her cultural subject of the GDR.

These East German rituals are foreign practices and have little meaning to her, and in her view, the East German consumer goods serve as mere novelty items for West German tourists

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<sup>454</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 106. Marianne Hirsch quoting Eva Hoffmann, *After such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 25.

<sup>455</sup> See Hirsch, 106.

<sup>456</sup> For more on individual and collective memory, see for example, Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22-23. Assmann lays out Maurice Halbwachs’s notions on individual and collective memory to illuminate his notions on cultural memory.

<sup>457</sup> Hirsch, 107.

visiting the East.<sup>458</sup> Her family's favorite sausage, *Thüringerwurst*, as she relates, was hard to purchase after 1990 until it was desired by Western German tourists: “[. . .] es war nämlich nicht mehr so einfach, die eigenen Würste zu finden, jedenfalls eine Zeitlang, bis sie irgendwie plötzlich wieder verlangt wurden, vor allem von den Touristen.”<sup>459</sup> For the protagonist the GDR is “so weit weg wie das Inkareich Tawantisuyu.”<sup>460</sup> In her research on the GDR, the protagonist, similar to the ethnologist who tries to represent another culture, attempts to study and learn about this unfamiliar GDR past of her parents. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford explains that, “[e]thnographic work has indeed been enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities, and it continues to be implicated. It enacts power relations. But its function within these relations is complex, often ambivalent, potentially counter-hegemonic.”<sup>461</sup> From this perspective of a counter-discourse the ethnographic gaze of the protagonist becomes revealing for GDR postmemory. This distance allows her to have the position of indifference to nostalgic sentiments of the East German past.

Hünniger's use of East German objects in her text reflects a connection to others of her generation in the West and around the world who also did not live through the Cold War and in a divided Germany and who would also have to look these items up on the internet to understand the role they played in the private and public spheres of the GDR. Since the members of this cohort cluster only know the GDR through the media (objects and rituals of the GDR are as foreign to them as to Western Germans of the same age), they have no personal investment in either rejecting the GDR past (or the project of socialism) as bad or in defending the practices of everyday life in the GDR as good. However, owing to their parents' experience in the GDR, they

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<sup>458</sup> Hünniger, 141. At an auction event, the protagonist thinks a man has accidentally left his keychain lying around. He informs her that it is not his keychain, but instead a *Trabi-Schlüsselhänger*, for the guests to the *Schloss*. “Wird sonst viel gekauft. Vor allem junge Leute mit Turnschuhen. Aus Bochum und so.”

<sup>459</sup> Hünniger, 191.

<sup>460</sup> Hünniger, 61.

<sup>461</sup> James Clifford, “Introduction,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 9.

do express a need to reject the GDR past as exclusively oppressive in order to protect and defend their parents' biographies and GDR identities, which were negated after unification. Hünninger's protagonist explains:

Es ist geradezu befremdlich, wenn man sich seine ostdeutschen Eltern anschaut. Und dann empfindet man doch immer Mitleid. Weil wir uns selbst als Kinder des Kapitalismus schuldig fühlen und glauben, ihnen wurde etwas genommen und dass sie wahrscheinlich an einem Trauma leiden. Vermutlich ist das der Grund, weshalb viele junge Ostdeutsche die DDR verteidigen. Gehen Sie bitte einmal nach Halle, Leipzig, Eisenach, Brandenburg. Vielleicht nicht gerade in das bürgerliche Milieu, fragen Sie nicht den Zahnarzt oder den Rechtsanwalt, halten Sie sich an den Stadtrand, an die Trabanten, die das Stadtzentrum umkreisen. Oder noch besser: Werfen Sie einen Blick in die Dörfer. Fragen Sie mal junge Ostdeutsche, was sie von der DDR halten. Sie werden Ihnen dies sagen: "Es war nicht alles schlecht damals, schätze ich." Dieses "schätze ich", "glaube ich" oder "denke ich" bezieht sich dabei auf die Erkenntnis, nicht selbst am Ort gewesen zu sein.<sup>462</sup>

By not having experienced the system of socialism themselves (in their formative years), this generation's relationship to the GDR past and to a sense of an Eastern identity is directly related to their parents' experiences, which they only rarely hear about and which serve at times as counter-memories to the hegemonic narrative found in media and other mediated "forms of knowledge" that the protagonist has come into contact with during her research on the GDR past. The protagonist describes her upbringing as one carried out by "melancholische, ja depressive, eingeknickte, krumme, enttäuschte, beschämte, schweigende Eltern und Lehrer" (*Hineingeborene*), and because of the silence by her parents and teachers towards the GDR, she and members of her fellow generation have no personal connection to the GDR past.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Hünninger, 69-70.

<sup>463</sup> A study by researchers at the Freie Universität Berlin from 2005-07 illuminates the silence in schools on the topic of the GDR. The study, which questioned about 5200 school-aged children in 4 states in Western and Eastern Germany, found that the subject of the *SED-Staat* (GDR) was rarely taught in schools in the new *Bundesländer*. For those students in the new *Bundesländer*, any knowledge of the *SED-Staat* came from what they had heard in the family context from their parents or grandparents. For more on the Schröder *Studie* see Markus Flohr, "Ahnungslose Schüler DDR—ein Sozialparadies, keine Diktatur," *Der Spiegel Online*, July 25, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/schulspiegel/wissen/ahnungslose-schueler-ddr-ein-sozialparadies-keine-diktatur-a-567907.html> (accessed September 26, 2012). See also, for example, Deutz-Schroeder, Monika and Klaus Schroeder, *Soziales Paradies oder Stasi-Staat? Das DDR-Bild von Schülern: Ein Ost-West-Vergleich* (Stamsried: Verlag Ernst Vögel, 2008).

An Eastern identity is only present for her when non-East Germans make a distinction. When traveling, she and her friends do not “stick out,” as she explains: “Niemandem von ihnen [her Eastern German friends] werden Sie anhören können, dass er oder sie aus Weimar stammt. Unseren Heimatdialekt können wir alle längst nicht mehr.”<sup>464</sup> Their pronunciation is not singular or different from that of Western Germans, thus they cannot be placed in a particular region of East Germany. When revisiting her hometown in Weimar she is even assumed by the local Easterners to be a “Wessi” (West German), as she behaves in ways that they equate with those from the West. In one interaction, because she has ignored the hotel policy of not smoking in the room, the owners kick her out of the hotel, explaining: “Das können Sie in der großen Stadt vielleicht machen. Aber nicht hier. Nicht in Weimar. Wir sind klein. Wir sind vielleicht Osis. Aber geraucht wird hier nicht.”<sup>465</sup> The protagonist’s behavior shows what Easterners assume to be Western rudeness. Her assimilated cohort is the group of children whom Hensel’s protagonist envies in *Zonenkinder*, as these young Eastern Germans know already at an early age how to dress like Westerners and assimilate into unified German culture. Hensel writes:

Heute, wo wir erwachsener sind und man uns nur noch mit Mühe ansehen kann, wo wir ursprünglich herkommen, betrachte ich oft verschämt acht- bis zehnjährige Kinder in Ostberlin, Dresden oder Rostock bei ihren nachmittäglichen Reibereien auf den Nachhauseweg. Ihre geschmackssichere Kleidung lässt mich leicht erschauern und neidvoll an meine Kindheit denken. [. . .] Wie nur, um alles in der Welt, gelingt es ihnen, schon in so jungen Jahren wie richtige Westler auszusehen.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Hünigler, 195.

<sup>465</sup> Hünigler, 55. See also Andreas Staab, *National Identity in Eastern Germany: Inner Unification or Continued Separation* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1998) for more on East German *Ostalgie* in the nineties as a reaction to the hurts of unification which demeaned an East German identity.

<sup>466</sup> Jana Hensel, *Zonenkinder* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2002), 58.

Only because of continued West German or international categorization of the Eastern part of Germany in terms of Cold War rhetoric (in the media and in other forums of public discourse), do the “*Diktaturkinder*” even consider themselves as Eastern German.<sup>467</sup>

To illuminate this appropriated Easternness, the protagonist relates two anecdotes from her past. The first concerns her Eastern German friend’s experience as an intern in Cologne and the other an encounter with an Iranian man on a train. Upon informing his boss that he was already married in his early twenties, her friend’s West German boss replies stereotypically: “Das hat man so gemacht in der DDR, nicht wahr?” This assumption that marrying so young was typical of the GDR falls flat because David (her friend) was less than five when the wall fell and, thus, this conjecture about GDR customs really would not apply to him since he grew up in unified Germany.<sup>468</sup> In her encounter with an Iranian man on a train, the protagonist relates how, after performing the perfunctory small talk, he asks her where she was from and in response to her answer “Weimar,” he responds much to her surprise with “Dann bist du aus der DDR!” The protagonist finds such a response ten years after unification from someone outside of Germany amusing and that it shows that the wall still exists in the heads of the Western and international world. It exists for everyone but her generation of Eastern Germans: “Ich fand das sehr witzig, dass auf der ganzen Welt die DDR noch existiert in den Köpfen, nur in Ostdeutschland nicht, da gibt es die DDR nicht mehr.”<sup>469</sup>

Although she considers herself not to be from the GDR, her mother, paradoxically, in the early years of unification, did consider herself and her family to be from the GDR, thereby illuminating the contradiction of identity between East German generations: “Und was sind

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<sup>467</sup> For more on media depiction of East and West after 1990, see for example, Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, “The New Germany on the Screen: Conflicting Discourses on German Television,” in *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*, ed. Patrick Stevenson and John Theobald (St. Martin’s Press: New York, 2000).

<sup>468</sup> Hünninger, 63.

<sup>469</sup> Hünninger, 63.

wir?’ frage ich meine Mutter. ‘Wir sind natürlich aus der DDR’ sagt sie.”<sup>470</sup> The protagonist does not see Weimar as related to the GDR, unlike her mother and the Iranian visitor. The two instances with the Iranian man and David’s encounter with his West German boss reveal how such identities are imposed onto those of this generational cohort from the East and that Cold War rhetoric still divides Germany—although this distinction is in the heads of everyone else but the East Germans of this cohort cluster.

Hünniger’s protagonist recounts another space where “süßer Ideologietrash” presents the East in a stereotypical manner—printed in a travel guide from 1990 (published in West Germany):

Im Kapitel “1.2.5 Freud und Leid im Straßenverkehr” heißt es zu den Ampelphasen: “Es scheint, daß auch hier [East Germany] Ordnung und Gehorsam vor dem Prinzip Vernunft und freier Wille rangiert...” Das ist süßer Ideologietrash. Kalter Krieg. Es würde mich nicht wundern, wenn der Autor bald Dinosaurierknochen ausgräbt. Kalter Krieg, Dinosaurier, Gamaschen.<sup>471</sup>

West German stereotypes and Cold War rhetoric make any East-West distinctions for the “*Diktaturkinder*” after 1990. This emerging generation has successfully navigated the cultural divide after unification, as Hensel writes of this younger GDR cohort cluster in *Zonenkinder*. While this generational narrative of anti-nostalgia indicates a normalization of the GDR past, the outside Cold War rhetoric confronts them, creating a separate identity of Eastern as different, reminding them of their cultural “otherness” and thereby continues post-colonial discourses of East Germany as the Saidian “other”.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Hünniger, 189.

<sup>471</sup> Hünniger, 204.

<sup>472</sup> Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005), 28. The GDR is often seen as “a historical space through which the FRG could self-reflexively distance itself from the whole of Germany’s dictatorial legacy [Third Reich] and thereby confirm its democratic credentials,” as a type of Saidian “orient” for the FRG. In analyzing the East as a discursive space, Paul Cooke employs postcolonial theory—more precisely, Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. In his seminal work, Said argues that images of the Eastern world, the Orient, in Western literature do not represent the actual “geographical space” of the East, but instead exemplify the “colonialist feelings of superiority” of the West, with the East as the “weak partner for the West” (11). Said’s “other” provides a discourse to use in examining this positioning of the GDR past as different. In his book *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany and the Berlin Police*, Andreas Glaeser also looks at East German otherness but in a

Although parental silence has left a space for the “distant, adoptive witnesses” of people and things other than family to fill memory gaps, the protagonist does explain that part of the parental silence toward their public past is perhaps due to the inability of her own generation to confront the parents and to ask them questions. Her friend Jule addresses this gap in communication through the story of her stepfather who never talked about his past in the GDR and, then, after she asks him one question divulges everything: “Ich [Jule] musste nur einmal fragen und er hat alles sofort erzählt, es sprudelte richtig aus ihm heraus, 20 Jahre nix gewusst. Und dann kommt alles. Muss man immer erst fragen?”<sup>473</sup> Due to this general silence, there is no continuation of a sense of “Easternness” through a communicative familial and individual memory but instead this generation is more often confronted with the memory of the GDR as that which they see on TV, in museums, and in films—a public discourse often shaped by a West German narrative of democratic victory, which they then appropriate as their own.

As the protagonist’s father was a committed socialist and party member (her father’s father was even *erster Sekretär*), she questions the GDR of her parent’s memories since it is a place other than that seen on TV, leading her to distrust familial memory. The cultural memory narrative has been her generation’s connection to the GDR past, not the family communicative memory. Owing to parental silence about their personal past, she becomes complicit with the cultural memory narrative of democratic and free-market victory. Although she recalls times when her parents discussed ideological aspects of socialism in relation to their life during the early years of unification, she does not recall in-depth personal memories about her parents’ life under the SED state. Even though her generation only knows the GDR through what they

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different fashion. Glaeser examines how “otherness and sameness” is constructed among both Eastern and Western German police in Berlin after 1990. Glaeser expresses the importance for looking at otherness in different terms than merely nation, class, gender, race and so forth. Instead he argues that categories such as work, morality, space, and the public-private divide prove more productive in understanding identity formation and otherness between East and West Germany after unification. See Andreas Glaeser, *Divided in Unity: Identity, Germany and the Berlin Police* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), x.

<sup>473</sup> Hünninger, 182.



observe from their parents or on TV, they are, nevertheless, still labeled and categorized as East Germans by West Germans twenty years after unification. Because this generation feels guilty for what their parents missed, having grown up in a socialist state and then having to change careers after unification, many of her generation feel they must defend their parents, who claim that they did not know what was happening in the GDR. In a discussion as a young girl with her mother about whom her mother planned to vote for in the upcoming elections, her mother's response voices this naïveté that many Eastern Germans expressed after unification about not having known the extent of SED state control: "PDS könne sie [her mother] nicht wählen, sagt sie, als ich mich sehr darüber wundere, dass sie das nicht in Betracht zieht, und auch nie über PDS-Politiker spricht. 'Nach und nach kam das ja erst raus, wie groß die Zahl der Stasimitarbeiter war.' Sie habe das erst nach und nach erfahren, in der Zeitung gelesen, in der F.A.Z."<sup>474</sup> This generation witnesses the parental difficulty in assimilating and navigating a new life in unified Germany, which maintains the Western narrative of democratic victory—a narrative that the "*Diktaturkinder*" appropriate.

In the GDR, the protagonist's mother worked at a biological institute and held a doctorate. After 1989 during the exchange of elites, her mother lost her position and had to be retrained for a job in the building inspection office in Weimar. The protagonist's tone in relating these events and specifically her mother's retraining by a West German is not one of defiance against the changes that unification brought, i.e., against the exchange of elites and here the exchange of her mother and her career as a scientist. Instead, in this recollection of the early years of unification, her tone expresses the relationship of this generation to the parents—one of pity and guilt, for having all the opportunities in unified Germany that the parents did not have in the GDR.<sup>475</sup> In

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<sup>474</sup> Hünninger, 169.

<sup>475</sup> In *Frohe Zukunft: Leben nach der Wende*, Bianca Bodau treats this parental generation's sentiments of missing out on many opportunities owing to their GDR background. In one of the interviews, a man from Halle explains that

the text, Hünninger portrays, in a somewhat patronizing light, the West German trainer/insurance salesman, who is retraining the mother. He asks his class of East German professionals: “[. . .], wie sich das für Sie anfühlen muss. Na ja, herzlich willkommen in der BRD, also Deutschland.”<sup>476</sup> In his retraining program he gives his students tips as future workers in the new Germany such as: “...vergessen Sie bei all der Arbeit nicht, sich einmal selbst zu beschenken, [. . .] Einmal am Tag, heißt es ja, soll man sich etwas schenken: ein Nickerchen im Bürostuhl, ein Stück Käsekuchen oder ein Saunagang. Nun ... und was die Agrarreformen angeht...”<sup>477</sup> At this point, the protagonist’s mother, who was very active in agriculture in the GDR, takes her daughter’s hand and leaves the class, unable to hear such condescending opinions towards her past.

Hünninger’s cohort cluster does not view the GDR as a utopia of humanistic socialism as many of the *Hineingeborene* generation did. While waiting at the unemployment office with her mother shortly after unification, another lady in the waiting room tells the protagonist (around the age of five at the time) to be happy that she is a child, echoing Kohl’s “Gnade der späten Geburt.”<sup>478</sup> But the protagonist does not know what she is supposed to be happy about or if she is supposed to apologize for something that she knows nothing about:

Und da will man sich auch gleich entschuldigen für etwas, von dem man noch nichts weiß. Es gibt unzählige Dinge, die man nicht weiß, zum Beispiel ob ein Regenwurm weiterlebt, wenn man ihn in zwei Teile schneidet, wie eine Katze den Sprung von einer Mauer unbeschadet überleben kann oder wie Eiscreme hergestellt wird. Man weiß, dass

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he is jealous of his kids (who were born shortly before the *Wende* and, thus, have lived most of their lives in the FRG), who can study anything or travel anywhere, and who have endless possibilities—opportunities that he did not have in the GDR. See *Frohe Zukunft: Leben nach der Wende*, by Bianca Bodau. ARD. July 21, 2009.

<sup>476</sup> Hünninger, 49.

<sup>477</sup> Hünninger, 49.

<sup>478</sup> In a speech given at the Israeli Knesset on January 24, 1984, Kohl declared the advantage of his generation, who because of their late birth did not have the guilt of the Nazi past. (Although Kohl used this statement to support his notion of German normalization, the journalist Günter Gaus coined this phrase before Kohl and intended it differently.) See “Kanzler. Verschwiegene Enteignung. Wer erfand die Wendung von der ‘Gnade der späten Geburt?’” *Spiegel Online*, September 15, 1986, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13519977.html> (accessed October 13, 2012).

man es nicht weiß, das ist nicht schlimm. Man kann ja jemanden fragen, wie das geht. Schwieriger ist es, wenn man nicht weiß, was man nicht weiß.<sup>479</sup>

Because of her parents' silence on their public life in the GDR (although they do speak out against capitalism and unification in unified Germany), she does not feel connected to the socialist past and does not comprehend what life in the GDR was like, but still feels obligated to defend her parents' generation.

In her response to Julia Kristeva's observations on forgiveness, Ruth Klüger writes in "Forgiving and Remembering" that Kristeva ignores "a distinction between guilt, in the sense of an actual crime or sin that was committed, and guilt feelings."<sup>480</sup> As a member of a generation of postmemory, the protagonist's sentiments reflect Klüger's concept of "guilt feelings," both for experiencing after 1990 that which the parents could not experience in the GDR and for living after 1990 without guilt of a lived past (similar to Kohl's "Gnade der späten Geburt" referring to post-1945). While Hünninger's book reflects a complicated normalization of the GDR past through the response of anti-nostalgia (of indifference, neither solely revisionist nor productive but complicit with the West German narrative of democratic victory), the GDR museums evidence a different response of consumer-*Ostalgie* towards the normalization process.<sup>481</sup> This response of consumer-*Ostalgie* indicates that many Germans are still invested in the differences between the East and the West and that a single approach to normalization is not possible.

### **GDR Museum—Ongoing *Ostalgie***

In contrast to the anti-nostalgia of the "*Diktaturkinder*," which sidesteps nostalgia (by neither contesting nor affirming the past), the consumer-*Ostalgie* of the GDR Museum in Berlin

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<sup>479</sup> Hünninger, 31.

<sup>480</sup> Ruth Klüger, "Forgiving and Remembering," *PMLA* 117, no. 2 (March 2002): 311.

<sup>481</sup> I use anti-nostalgia in the sense of beyond nostalgia—beyond an investment in differences between East and West (perhaps more a mode of indifference in that Cold War distinctions or identity distinctions are inconsequential or meaningless).

capitalizes on nostalgia by both rejecting and supporting historically specific access to the GDR past. In her article “‘Normalizing’ the Past: East German Culture and *Ostalgie*,” Anna Saunders claims that while the political discourse in Germany promotes a concept of normality (unity), the cultural discourse in Germany over the last twenty years has promoted one of abnormality (division).<sup>482</sup> This division towards the GDR past, paradoxically, supports its normality. For Saunders, the first phase in the evolution of a sense of an Eastern identity after 1989 was one of rejection. In the early years, Eastern goods were discarded for things Western, for products that were considered to be of superior quality to those from the East. The second phase was one of a “defiance towards the West” due to disappointments in unification—a “*trotzige*” *Ostalgie*. The third phase was a new “Ossi” pride focusing on the practices of everyday life in the GDR, on the positive aspects of life in the GDR, which she claims allowed for the most recent development of consumer-*Ostalgie*, the fourth phase. Consumer-*Ostalgie* focuses on the commercialization and purchase of the GDR past, i.e., of East German symbols (“stranded objects”). One can purchase *Ampelmännchen* ice trays, *Ampelmännchen* cookie-cutters and T-shirts with this iconic GDR symbol (all easily available for purchase in *Kaufhof*, a German department store, for example); *Ost-Rock* CDS; GDR trivia games; or visit the many *Ostalgie* bars in Berlin.<sup>483</sup> This ongoing normalization of things Eastern has paradoxically been capitalized on in German TV through the

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<sup>482</sup> Saunders looks at the popular films *Sonnenallee* and *Good Bye Lenin!* and two popular autobiographical texts, *Zonenkinder* and *Meine freie deutsche Jugend*, to see the connection between normality and expressions of *Ostalgie*. Anna Saunders, “‘Normalizing’ the Past: East German Culture and *Ostalgie*,” in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 89-104. Saunders has divided this evolution of Eastern identity in a way similar to Scottish political scientist Patricia Hogwood; however, she does make a distinction in the first and fourth phases. See for example, Patricia Hogwood, “After the GDR: Reconstructing Identity in Post-Communist Germany,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, no. 4 (2000): 45-68. In her examination of East German identity in post-communist Germany, Hogwood suggests four means of East Germans expressing a “distinctive eastern German identity”: 1) the “third way” socialism in the period immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall; 2) a “Trotzidentität” or rebelliousness against Western elites who negated Eastern abilities; 3) *Ostalgie*; and 4) “Ossi” pride. This “Ossi” pride is a reaction to Western stereotypes—the attempt to rename these negative stereotypes into positive ones and to contrast these positive characteristics with negative ones of the West (greedy, materialistic).

<sup>483</sup> Saunders, 89.

recent establishment of the GDR archive on the German TV station ARD, where many TV shows and films from the GDR TV broadcasting service *DDR Fernsehfunk* (DFF), produced between 1952 and 1991, are now available for purchase online, just as are many West German films and TV shows produced during this period.<sup>484</sup> Although the singularity of the GDR past is available for purchase in these old movies and TV shows, they are available online just as any other West German film or TV show on the ARD website, evidencing the normalization of the divided past.

In archiving the practices of everyday life in the GDR, the exhibits of the GDR museum in Berlin and the consumer accoutrements surrounding the museum visit, such as the GDR restaurant, the gift shop, and museum rental options, ironically do not bring the GDR closer to the present but rather promote the GDR past as something removed, or even abnormal, as an “other” past of the Cold War, which now is upheld in this consumer *Ostalgie*.<sup>485</sup> The GDR museum in Berlin, which was established in 2006 with private funding, originally stood in contrast to those museums of the nineties, which dealt only with the victimization and oppression in the GDR, such as the *Stasi* Prison and the *Stasi* Headquarters, often considered by some as institutions which legitimated the West German takeover of East Germany in 1990. Interestingly, these institutions were started as foundations with funding from the German government.<sup>486</sup> The director of the *Stasi* prison, Hubertus Knabe, is a Western German whose parents fled the GDR in 1959, the year of his birth.

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<sup>484</sup> *DDR Archiv auf DVD* made available through ARD <http://www.ddr-tv.de/> (accessed September 26, 2012). (*Barfuß ins Bett, Draußen vor der Tür*, for example)

<sup>485</sup> The GDR museum can also be rented out for personal events. See <http://www.ddr-museum.de/en/portfolio/eventlocation/>.

<sup>486</sup> *ASTAK e.v.*, August 31, 2008, [www.stasi-museum.de/en/enverein.htm](http://www.stasi-museum.de/en/enverein.htm). According to their website, the Normannenstrasse Research and Memorial Center, which opened in 1994, was originally intended as a place for research: “Intention of the association is the encouragement of establishing a centre for collection, preservation, documentation, and exhibition of references and evidences, as well as theme-specific research.” According to the website on the museum’s history: “On the evening of January 15th in 1990 demonstrators took possession of the headquarters of the Ministry for State Security (MfS) in Berlin-Lichtenberg. The Berliner Bürgerkomitee (Berlin Committee of Citizens) started here the closure and disorganisation of the MfS. One week later the Zentrale Runde Tisch (The Central Round Table) decided that a memorial place and research centre should be established in the former House No. 1 in the Stasi-Headquarters. The new government of the GDR, formed after the elections on

In explaining the creation of the GDR museum in Berlin, Robert Rückel, museum director (West German), relates that he was approached by Peter Kenzelmann, a West German ethnologist, to construct a museum which showed both sides of the GDR past.<sup>487</sup> According to Rückel's explanation of the genesis of the GDR museum, the GDR museum can be considered a critical space for presenting the GDR past—by providing a counter-memory to the constructed national memory of Germany of the early nineties through museums such as the *Stasi* Prison at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen and the *Stasi* Museum, also known as the Normannenstrasse Research Center and Memorial. (In 2006 the GDR museum could be considered as supporting a productive process of normalization of the GDR past as dictatorship through its reworking of the accepted historical consensus). In the museums that were established in the early nineties shortly after unification, and which were financially supported by foundations, the daily life of GDR “citizens” was erased and absent, and a heterogeneity of memory was not accepted in cultural discourse in unified German. (In other words, the file on the GDR was closed, according to Stefan Wolle). These museums that focused on GDR oppression reflect the early period of East German identity formation—a rejection of things Eastern, an absence of “Ossi” pride. The *Stasi* prison at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen declares itself as the “key site in Germany for victims of communist tyranny,” a quite polarized vision of the GDR past than that provided by the chief historian of the GDR museum in Berlin, Stefan Wolle (former East German), who questions such a “closing [of] the file on the GDR.”<sup>488</sup> According to the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial's website (*Stasi* prison), the tours of the former prison are conducted by “former inmates [volunteer guides] who also relate the tour to their own experience in the remand prison. [. . .] Since our tour

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March 18th in 1990, made on May 16th a decision to establish the memorial place and research centre, but it was not realized as the responsible ministries were suspended when both states in Germany reunited.”

<sup>487</sup> Kenzelmann, who, when visiting Berlin with his girlfriend sometime after 1990, realized that there was no museum on the GDR, felt there needed to be a public space for this memory and for this transfer of memory to subsequent generations.

<sup>488</sup> Wolle, “Focusing on the Person,” 12-13.

guides were imprisoned for a variety of reasons during different periods of persecution, they provide an insight into a broad spectrum of political persecution in the GDR.”<sup>489</sup> In contrast to these museums from the nineties which construct a narrative of oppression and victimization (of “political persecution in the GDR”), the GDR museum in Berlin, which was started as a private initiative and is financed “solely through its visitors” and “owned” by private investors defies “this historical consensus” (Stefan Wolle) of the GDR past and, thus, participates in shaping GDR nostalgia—now presenting a history of the everyday in the GDR which allows an “Ossi” pride (however, the added exhibits amend this earlier productive process of normalization by presenting now as well a narrative of persecution).<sup>490</sup>

In the introduction to the museum guide from 2012, Rückel questions critics who accuse the museum of trivializing the GDR past and who feel any depiction of the GDR past other than that of victimization as too *ostalgic*: “How can seeking a broader perspective on a state be accused of trivialization? [. . .] Only through the juxtaposition of the positive (or supposedly positive [his words]) and negative aspects of the Socialist system can we hope to reach an adequate understanding of the German Democratic Republic.”<sup>491</sup> Rückel’s explanation reflects this heterogeneous memory of the GDR past. Some remember it positively and some remember it negatively and still some situate themselves in a space of ambivalence to the past. However, all

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<sup>489</sup> *Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen*, [http://en.stiftung-hsh.de/document.php?cat\\_id=CAT\\_232&special=0](http://en.stiftung-hsh.de/document.php?cat_id=CAT_232&special=0) (accessed November 1, 2012). According to the memorial’s charter, the history of the prison from 1945 to 1989 is to be researched “[. . .] supplying information via exhibitions, events and publications, and encouraging a critical awareness of the methods and consequences of political persecution and suppression in the communist dictatorship.” *Gedenkstätte Berlin-Hohenschönhausen*, [http://en.stiftung-hsh.de/document.php?cat\\_id=CAT\\_231&special=0](http://en.stiftung-hsh.de/document.php?cat_id=CAT_231&special=0) (accessed November 1, 2012).

<sup>490</sup> See Wolle, “Focusing on the Person,” 12-13 and the DDR Museum website, <http://www.ddr-museum.de/en/media/faqs/> (accessed June 7, 2012). The *Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR* in Eisenhüttenstadt, considered along with the GDR museum in Berlin to be one of the more scientific museums on the *DDR-Alltag*, receives financial support from the state agencies in Brandenburg. This leaves the GDR museum in Berlin in a unique position as one of the few GDR museums that are financed through profits—i.e., visitors. See website for *Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR* <http://akultur.minuskel.de/das-museum/foerderer/> for more on financial support.

<sup>491</sup> Robert Rückel, “A Warm Welcome,” in *GDR-Guide: A Journey to a Bygone State*, ed. Robert Rückel (Berlin: DDR Museum Verlag, 2012), 4-5. In addition to the GDR museum in Berlin, there are GDR museums in other cities throughout the former East Germany: Eisenhüttenstadt, Dresden, Pirna, Apolda, and Gelenau.

are valid memories to be presented and contested in the public sphere, reflecting the multifaceted process of normalization. However, as the founders of the GDR museum are both Western Germans (the chief historian, Stefan Wolle, is Eastern German, however), many questions arise as to the construction and purpose of the GDR museum: why did the need surface in 2006 to present a version of the GDR past counter to accepted historical consensus; was this interest in presenting both sides due to public interest and to the nature of ethnographic research, presenting an ambivalent and unprejudiced position of power relations; is the presentation of a positive history of everyday life in the GDR instead done out of desire for profit; and why were twelve new stations added recently which exhibit a contrasting narrative of oppression. These questions will be explored in the following pages.

A recent article in *Spiegel Online* echoes the interest in the consumer-*Ostalgie* of the GDR museum, which promotes a mythologized notion of the singularity of the GDR past (for a profit).<sup>492</sup> According to the article, as part of an initiative for investing in the Berlin district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf, a hotel has been constructed on the tenth and eleventh floor of one of the *Plattenbauten* (GDR pre-fabricated high-rise buildings, emblematic of the GDR). Although the hotel rooms are not decorated to look like rooms from the GDR (one room is in an English style and another is decorated in oriental style), both render an overnight excursion into the past of the GDR *Plattenbau*—the GDR past (experience of the *Plattenbau*) is present (and emphasized) in this experience. Social education worker and leader of the institute, Marina Bikádi, explains: “Auch Berliner wohnen ab und zu in den Pensionen, häufig sind es Paare, von denen ein Partner in einem Plattenbau aufgewachsen ist und dem anderen einen Eindruck von seiner Jugend

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<sup>492</sup> Marie-Charlotte Maas, “Berliner Pension 11. Himmel. Urlaub im Plattenbau,” *Spiegel Online*, July 10, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/reise/deutschland/pension-11-himmel-in-berlin-urlaub-im-plattenbau-a-841315.html> (accessed December 16, 2012).



vermitteln möchte.”<sup>493</sup> The novelty of the GDR past is packaged and sold as a consumer good just as in any other theme hotel or park (For \$42, one can stay at the GDR hostel, OSTEL, in Berlin-Friedrichshain, for example). Portraying the uniqueness of the GDR proves to be profitable in free-market unified Germany.

Similar to the *Plattenbau* hotel in Berlin, which sells the experience of everyday life in the GDR (and the GDR hostel, OSTEL), the GDR museum in Berlin also packages the GDR past as a commodity. While the GDR museum in Berlin has as its mission to provide a counter-memory narrative to that of the hegemonic narrative of oppression and surveillance of the early nineties, the museum has evolved from a space intended for its visitors to experience and learn about the GDR past into a commodification of the GDR past, echoing Anna Saunders’s consumer-*Ostalgie*, which focuses on consumer objects and everyday experiences. With this new consumer-*Ostalgie*, visitors (and for that matter anyone who has internet) can now buy the *Pittiplatsch* stuffed animal for 7 Euros as well as a miniature *Trabi* car, also for 7 Euros, a GDR game for 4 Euros, and so forth (all items seen in museum exhibits and on their website), and take them home to become a part of their material collections.<sup>494</sup>

Entering the GDR museum in Berlin, appropriately located in the former East Berlin sector at Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse 1, directly opposite the Berliner Dom and across from the former site of the *Palast der Republik*, the visitor is confronted with the sign: “Alltag eines vergangenen Staates zum Anfassen;” it is an interactive museum similar to the concept of a hands-on-museum. Using the choice of words to describe the history of everyday life in the GDR as that of “eines vergangenen Staates” (a bygone state) indicates a sense of extinction or expiration for this period of GDR history during the Cold War. For some of the younger

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<sup>493</sup> Maas, “Berliner Pension 11. Himmel. Urlaub im Plattenbau,” *Spiegel Online*, July 10, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/reise/deutschland/pension-11-himmel-in-berlin-urlaub-im-plattenbau-a-841315.html> (accessed December 16, 2012).

<sup>494</sup> *Pittiplatsch* is a toy puppet (character) from the iconic East German TV series *Sandmännchen*, which is still produced today (the TV series).

generation of Eastern Germans, the GDR is an extinct and unfamiliar place, as Hünninger points out in her book. According to the GDR museum website from 2012, 44% of its visitors are from the former West Germany; 24 % are from the former East. Even more interesting is that 53% of visitors are younger than twenty-nine. The majority of visitors either did not experience the GDR at all or were at most six years of age when the Berlin Wall fell—(those belonging to this cohort cluster; or they may be from West Germany or elsewhere).<sup>495</sup> From these statistics basically almost half of all visitors are from West Germany and most, either Western or Eastern German visitors, were too young to have experienced the Cold War separation of a divided Germany and, thus, have no previous personal experience of the divided German past (the bygone state), except through familial memories or social memory. Thus, the museum provides for its Western and international visitors a historical “record” of the GDR past and owing to gaps caused by parental silence, instructs this younger Eastern German generation on the forgotten GDR past (cultural memory).

The exhibits are not arranged according to a historical narrative but, instead, they are arranged as a biographical narrative, starting with childhood, then youth, and so forth, which stages, for the visitor, a recreation of an individual’s life experience in the GDR from birth to adulthood. Upon entering the museum, the visitor steps down into a structure resembling the *Plattenbau* (pre-manufactured buildings) of the GDR and into what appears to be a GDR apartment or lived, private space of the GDR—the side of the GDR that is not represented in historical consensus, according to Stefan Wolle. The first exhibit illustrates social education in the GDR and has pictures of children around the age of three or four sitting all in a row on little “kiddie” toilets, with “*kollektives Töpfchengehen.*” Written under the picture is an explanation of

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<sup>495</sup> According to Rückel, in 2009 an equal number of former East and West Germans visit the museum: about 1/3 of the visitors are former West Germans; 1/3 are former East Germans; and the remaining 1/3 are from other countries. Robert Rückel, e-mail correspondence with Rückel, July 2009.

how all children in GDR Kindergartens had to wait on the toilet until the last one finished. The next exhibits showcase childhood and teenage everyday cultural practices, such as participation in the *Jugendweihe* or *Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ)*, and popular childhood TV shows and toys. In these exhibits, visitors are invited to open drawers full of clothing and diaries and other objects typical for the GDR youth, i.e., blue *FDJ* shirts and other paraphernalia from the civic organizations for youth and children. Only a few stations further one encounters the various “state owned” East German products, which many Eastern Germans still use today twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Florena crème and Duett cigarettes, for example). In the exhibit on the GDR kitchen, a full kitchen is assembled with authentic wallpaper, mixers, cabinets, cookbooks, and other objects typical for kitchen use in the 1970s/1980s, which many Eastern Germans may still use in their kitchens today.

These stations are just a few of the exhibits included in the original GDR museum collection in 2006, which showcase the practices of the everyday in the GDR. However, in recent years, the museum has expanded to include more exhibits on the negative side of the GDR. (Only one station from the original 2006 museum collection focused on the oppressive GDR past, i.e., Stasi surveillance. Now *over twelve* stations exhibit the oppressive, public GDR).<sup>496</sup> This return to precisely that narrative of the GDR past, which Wolle claimed the GDR museum in Berlin contested, evidences the role that consumer-*Ostalgie* plays in the process of normalization. The GDR museum, with an almost equal number of exhibits focusing now on narratives of oppression and practices of everyday life in the GDR, attracts more visitors, appealing to multiple memories of the GDR past. The language of the museum headings in these stations added after 2012 supports the West German narrative of democratic victory:

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<sup>496</sup> Some of the new stations, for example: The Party, NVA (*National Volksarmee*), Interrogation, Prison, State, Ideology, The Border.

### Heading 1: “Activities”

...The secret to the GDR’s success in sports was its system of sports schools and selection. International success meant so much to *them* [my emphasis], *they* [my emphasis] resorted to doping their athletes.

### Heading 2: “The State”

Loyalty was not enough: the state was a jealous lover requiring constant reassurance. It forbade its citizens to consider the world and reacted to even constructive criticism with a heavy hand. It saw enemies everywhere.

### Heading 3: “Brother States, Happy Families?”

Even the ritual greeting between official visitors was characterized by a strange intimacy. The socialist “brothers’ kiss” was designed to show onlookers: our relationship is closer than that between capitalist countries. And it is not about profits, it’s based on humanity, love, and peace! This was just as dishonest as the rest of the talk about brotherhood. The Eastern bloc was held together by force—and everybody knew it.

Such singular language does not reflect the neutral gaze of the postmodern ethnologist, but instead now places the GDR into a hegemonic discourse of *Unrechtsstaat* (state without rights). The language promotes the GDR as the Saidian “other” of postcolonial discourse in the sense of being inferior and places the GDR past within public discourse as being different and troubled.

The East German experience (and consumer objects) sold at the museum signifies the need by some to fetishize desires of the past in the present—reflecting on the “what could have been” and “what could be”—and by others to connect to a shared past that has been forgotten in the present. This commodification of the GDR past (both in the entrance fee to the museum exhibit and in the commercialized objective accoutrements associated with the museum visit, i.e., GDR restaurant or GDR hotel stay and the online websites selling old GDR TV shows or other commodities) reflects the ongoing interest in *Ostalgie*. A recent article in *Der Spiegel Online* reports on a similar disneyfication of the city of Berlin.<sup>497</sup> Now tourists to Berlin can ride in a *Trabi* along the former route of the Berlin Wall: “‘Safari’ [the name of the company that gives the *Trabi* tours] guests are subjected to traffic checks by men dressed as officers of the former

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<sup>497</sup> Frank Hornig, “Darth Vader vs Death Strip. Berlin Wall sinks into Cold War Disneyland,” *Spiegel Online*, August 8, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/darth-vader-vs-death-strip-berlin-wall-sinks-into-cold-war-disneyland-a-778941.html> (accessed December 7, 2012).

East German police force. [. . .] they are also forced to exchange their euros for East German marks, which they can spend on such classic Socialist fare such as ‘Solyanka,’ a Russian soup, or an Eastern European version of ragoût fin.”<sup>498</sup> For “Safari” owner and former East German, André Praeger, his tours also do not trivialize the GDR, but instead represent the GDR in a different light. For him the *Trabi* is not a sign of oppression but instead of “deceleration.” This disneyfication of the divided German past, which is being capitalized on, endorses the normalcy of the GDR in unified Germany.

Through the museum experience and surrounding commercialization, the history of everyday life in the GDR is integrated into the national narrative of unified Germany as a piece of history that is “bygone” but which can be touched and experienced in the present, encouraging a fetishization of the past. In contrast, as a “depository of traditions,” the Open Depot at the Center for Documentation of Everyday Culture in the GDR located in Eisenhüttenstadt provides a venue for its visitors to lay to rest the GDR past.<sup>499</sup> The Open Depot is not a “fetishization of a deceased past” but instead is more a productive site for mourning the past.<sup>500</sup> Scribner explains the acquisition process at the Open Depot in which museum staff interview donors of old GDR objects questioning “not only about the provenance of the objects but also about the owners’ memories of the way they once lived with them or among them.”<sup>501</sup> By donating their personal objects to the Open Depot, they lay the past to rest instead of fetishizing it as practiced in the consumer-*Ostalgie* of the GDR museum in Berlin. (The Open Depot in contrast practices Brockmann’s notion of using the past as a productive way to aid in letting go.) The popularity of the GDR museum, which capitalizes on a fetishization (not letting go) of the past, evidences the

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<sup>498</sup> Hornig, “Darth Vader vs Death Strip. Berlin Wall sinks into Cold War Disneyland,” *Spiegel Online*, August 8, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/darth-vader-vs-death-strip-berlin-wall-sinks-into-cold-war-disneyland-a-778941.html> (accessed December 7, 2012).

<sup>499</sup> Charity Scribner, “Left Melancholy,” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 304.

<sup>500</sup> Scribner, 304.

<sup>501</sup> Scribner, 28.

continued public investment in the abnormality of the GDR past as part of the normalization project.<sup>502</sup> Now by presenting multiple narratives of the GDR past, the GDR museum capitalizes on consumer-*Ostalgie*.

## Conclusion

In contrast to the multifaceted normalization process of the GDR past as presented in the consumer-*Ostalgie* of the GDR museums, the normalization of the GDR past uncovered in Hünninger's book reveals a different process of indifference through anti-nostalgia. This anti-nostalgia shows an attempt neither to reconstruct nor to alter the hegemonic narrative about the GDR. The only connection to the GDR past for the "*Diktaturkinder*" is through their longing for parents to recover *their* past ideals, *their* identity in the present—towards finding a productive "more normal, untroubled attitude towards 'being German'" (in this sense embodying Schröder's notion of normalcy, although her own group embodies this notion of normalcy through its indifference to the past).<sup>503</sup> Hünninger's narrative rejects the tendency to regard the GDR past as merely oppressive but at the same time does not attempt to present a positive side of the GDR and instead remains indifferent. Although Hünninger's narrative remembers the GDR past as it affected her family in the early years of unification, her book reveals a new turn in memory discourse, that of anti-nostalgia. In its capitalization on the *Ostalgie* manufactured by the media in the nineties, the GDR museum also indicates a process towards normalizing the GDR past. By treating the GDR past as a commodity to be transmitted to later generations, the GDR museum evidences a multifaceted normalization—at once creating a new construction of the GDR past (history of the everyday in the GDR) but at the same time (in the later exhibits) endorsing the

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<sup>502</sup> The GDR museum was nominated for the "European Museum of the Year Award 2012" and since its opening in 2006, it has had over 1.5 million visitors. GDR Museum Website <http://www.ddr-museum.de/en/media/charts/> (accessed October 10, 2012).

<sup>503</sup> Taberner and Cooke, "Introduction," 2.

hegemonic narrative of the GDR as oppressive. This multifaceted approach signifies the heterogeneous nature of memory—a single accepted view of the past is not imaginable.

## Conclusion

What remains? What is at the root of my city and what is rotting it from within? That there is no misfortune other than that of not being alive. And, in the end, no desperation other than that of not having lived.

Christa Wolf, *Was bleibt*<sup>504</sup>

Although Christa Wolf's autobiographical protagonist raises these questions of identity and memory in the very last lines of *Was bleibt* (1990), which treats both surveillance by the *Stasi* and individual disappointments with the GDR, her questioning is emblematic as well for the following period of German unification. The protagonist's despondency at the very prospect of her biography being negated and ignored ("not having lived") underscores the counter memory discourses observed by Eastern German writers after 1990. In contrast to the positioning of the GDR shortly after the fall of the Berlin wall as a second German dictatorship, post-unification narratives by former East Germans have foregrounded a sense of loss and devaluation as well as assertion. In these oppositional responses to the collapse of East German social structures and identity configurations, which were replaced by Western ones after 1990, the post-unification narratives situate and reimagine the GDR past in the present.

Each generation develops different modes in the recollection of the lost past. In the narratives of the first generation, a mode of melancholic mourning reveals a non-linear process of mourning loss experienced by this generation after 1989. The re-reading of melancholia as productive considers the attachment to the past as a constructive state. Through this melancholic mourning, the texts of the first generation reconceptualize the way "history and memory are reconstructed and deployed" and create sites for memory and for reimagining the lost or negated

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<sup>504</sup> Christa Wolf, *What Remains and other Stories*, trans. Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorkian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 295.



personal and public GDR past.<sup>505</sup> The second generation, through the mode of ambivalence, critically reflects on both the past and present, demonstrating the self-questioning and reflection that the first generation (Wolf) displaced in the early years of unification. Appropriately, these reflective works of Rathenow and Brussig were also not composed until the second half of the unification period, shortly before Wolf finished her final work of mourning *Stadt der Engel* (2010). Through this reflective ambivalence, recollections of the past are productive for this generation's consideration of change over the twenty years of unification. The narratives of the third generation do not perform the same working through of the GDR past that the first generation completed, nor does it use ambivalence to reflect on changes over time. Instead their texts reveal a turn towards focusing on the present—now reimagining and asserting more distinctly Eastern discourses of identity in the present. The re-creations and re-imaginings of the past have transformed sentiments of loss into present responses of assertion. Instead of remaining attached to the past (first generation), or reflecting on the past and present (second generation), the texts of this third generation demonstrate a contentious positioning towards the present, searching for a language of the present that places Eastern Germans as equals to the West. (Hensel wrote of this need for a new language for her generation in *Achtung Zone*.<sup>506</sup>) In this new mode of assertion, nostalgia is regarded as a productive mode, which allows for reflection on earlier responses of assimilation with the West. Reflection on the past is necessary for an assertion of a sense of Eastern identity in the present. Similar to the third generation, the emerging fourth generation evidences also a present-oriented response. Through the mode of anti-nostalgia (indifference), the emerging fourth generation distances itself from the GDR past and expresses a normalization of “Easternness” by assimilating with the West and accepting the

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<sup>505</sup> Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 205 and David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds. *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>506</sup> Jana Hensel, *Achtung Zone* (München: Piper Verlag, 2009), 43.

hegemonic memory narrative produced by post-unification media. While narratives of the emerging fourth generation support the project of normalization, the GDR museum provides a counter-response. By presenting a nuanced representation of the GDR past (history of everyday life in the GDR and the oppressive nature of the SED state), the GDR museum participates in a productive process of normalization that inserts manifold memory perspectives into present cultural discourse. The complex mode of normalization emphasizes the nonhomogeneous nature of memory.

In their engagement with the past, the texts examined in chapters 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate a “writing back” to earlier works. In *Stadt der Engel*, Christa Wolf literally repeats passages from her earlier short stories, “Begegnungen Third Street” and “Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992” only now re-addressing, from a forgiving perspective, the self-questioning that her protagonist in the early stories displayed. Age and historical distance afford a confidence to publicly confront actions or inactions of the past and to let go of regrets and self-reproaches. Lutz Rathenow also repeats portions of his 1987 edition of *Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt* in his later 2005 edition, *Ost-Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, as well as recycles pictures from pre-1989 East Germany in his text, *Gewendet. Vor und nach dem Mauerfall: Fotos und Texte aus dem Osten* (2006). Through this repetition, his texts reflect on the present, providing critical assessment both of unification and of the GDR, which highlights the contingent nature of post-1989 memory. In the third generation, a literal repetition of earlier texts or images is not observed. However, the later works by Jana Hensel and Jakob Hein do “re-issue” the earlier relational strategy to the West, employed in the critical works on assimilation. The narratives of reappropriation offer a performative recasting of identity, reissuing earlier assimilatory perspectives on unification with a renewed sense of an Eastern identity. This generational narrative of reappropriation shows a transformative nature in the *Ostalgie* of the late nineties and

early twenty-first century—offering a new counter-memory narrative that reconfigures the meanings of “Easternness.” Through this reappropriation, the works infuse the new symbolic “center” of unified Germany with a sense of a lost Eastern identity. Through the repetitive and creatively altered elements, the authors underscore in their texts the nature of counter discursive narratives and the Eastern German position of writing from the cultural periphery. In these oppositional modes of memory that reconstruct and reimagine the past, the heterogeneous nature of German memory is emphasized and an Eastern German voice is inserted into the new symbolic structures of unified Germany, largely shaped by the West.

In contrast to the first three generations, the cohort cluster of the third generation (or an emerging fourth generation) shows a less oppositional discourse, indicating the role that age at the time of the experience of loss plays in the relationship to the past and towards a constructed and mediated sense of an Eastern identity. There is no repetition or “re-issue” found in this narrative of anti-nostalgia. Through the response of indifference (anti-nostalgia), this emerging fourth generation both supports the hegemonic narrative of Western victory but also, at the same time, demonstrates the nonhomogeneous nature of Eastern identity and of memory in general. This generational narrative of anti-nostalgia, as well as the narrative of reappropriation by the writers of the third generation, shows a pluralizing reconceptualization not only of the GDR past but also of a sense of Eastern identity in the present. While the emerging fourth generation views the GDR past indifferently, the GDR past still affects questions of identity for Eastern Germans of these later generations in the present, whether distinctions are made from within (reappropriation) or from outside (normative post-unification discourse).

As this project illustrates, the work of memory is a complex process. The turn in anti-nostalgic reflection for the emerging fourth generation indicates the important role cultural memory plays in the transmission and reconstruction of the past and its influence in the

transition process of unification. Perhaps due to the influence of media in the twenty-first century, the process of mourning/letting go of past attachments occurs more quickly for the later generations, which are influenced more by cultural memory than family communicative memory. In the technological age of the internet, the definition of social community will be reformulated, rendering questions of Eastern and Western identity perhaps inconsequential. Owing to the influence that the media and cultural discourses have had on identity construction for this emerging fourth generation of Eastern Germans (“*Diktaturkinder*”), the role of cultural memory on the postmemory of the later Eastern German generations, i.e., those Eastern Germans born in unified Germany, may be greater than the influence of heteropathic memory through familial or group relations. Marianne Hirsch argues that postmemory “is a form of heteropathic memory in which the self and the other are more closely connected through familial or group relations, for example, through what it means to be Jewish, or Polish.”<sup>507</sup> Because of the absence of communicative memory, members of this emerging fourth generation are further removed from the GDR past and from the sense of “what it means to be East German.” This distance allows a detachment to develop from the connection and feeling with other Eastern Germans (older generations) who experienced the GDR. In post-GDR memory studies, cultural memory may need to be considered more when evaluating the construction, or rather deconstruction, of a sense of Eastern identity in present reunified Germany.

By developing a comparative approach to the various generational engagements with the GDR past over the course of twenty years, this dissertation elaborates on the extensive and complicated transition process following the political unification of East and West in 1990. While scholars have examined the role of memory across family generations and, thus, examined

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<sup>507</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy,” in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 9.

communicative memory, no previous work has examined the implication of generational responses to the same historical moment of 1989 comparatively and individually. Unique to this historical moment and to later post-GDR memory is the role that age at the time of loss plays in attachment to the past. More than communicative memory, cultural memory serves to shape the memories of those younger Eastern Germans too young to actively remember the past. The examination of Eastern German responses to an experience of loss after 1989 provides insights into questions of where variable notions of East German identity fit into the processes of determining a collective sense of German identity in the post-unification period.

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