

Working Upon the DDR and Stasi Past: The Role of Humor in Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* and Paralanguage in Eyal Sivan's *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and Sebastian Dehnhardt's

Das Wunder von Leipzig

By

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ABSTRACT

German history during the 20th century was extremely complex—containing numerous events that can be labelled horrific and traumatic. The horrors and traumas of WWII forced Germans to actively address their country's National Socialist pasts by taking responsibility for their roles, creating a national memory about the Nazi atrocities and implementing the reparations program, the *Wiedergutmachungsabkommen*, with the newly formed nation of Israel. The social theorist Theodor Adorno wrote in his 1959 essay “*Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?*” about three subtly nuanced terms: *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*, *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* and *Vergangensheftbewältigung*, in which he addresses the various ways that Germany was dealing with traumatic events from this National Socialist past. Adorno specifically demanded a constant renegotiation of the past or *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* because it is the only way forward, through which people remember the horrors and atrocities of the past and work towards not allowing those events to occur again.

This thesis applies the theoretical framework set forth by Adorno to explore efforts to engage the DDR and Stasi past after the Fall of the Wall and reunification. Specifically, it examines the concept of *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* and demonstrates how Thomas Brussig's satirical novel *Helden wie wir*, and two documentary films *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and *Das Wunder von Leipzig* are examples of working upon this DDR and Stasi past. More specifically, the utilization of humor in the novel and the paralanguage modifications in the films provide insight to the feelings and emotions that individuals had about their pasts in the DDR. It is through this expression

of emotion and feelings while writing and speaking about the past, which serves as the immediate moment when individuals actively working upon their pasts.

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Chapter 1

When addressing and examining German history in the 20th century the obvious questions always arise, has Germany come to terms with its past and how has the German population come to terms with its past? The long examination of Germans' individual and national responsibility for its National Socialist and Holocaust past has primarily engaged the segment of Germany's population which was generationally connected to the events of 1933-45. It is only recently within academic scholarship that efforts have been made to understand how Germans of Turkish or other ethnic or multicultural heritage engage with historical events in Germany not of their making. The examination of the German Nazi past, focuses on ethnic Germans, because they are the ones responsible for the horrors of the Holocaust and will therefore, engage very differently with the past compared to first or even second generation Germans, whose families arrived from other countries, such as Turkey, during the post-war period. For these Germans there is no real connection to the Nazi past, because a majority of their families immigrated to Germany during the *Wirtschaftswunder* of the 1960s and 1970s. This question about the German past is and has primarily been focused on the Nazi past and less often focuses on the East German past.

The parallels between the Nazi and the communist East German past are numerous; however, they are by no means equal, due to the horrendousness of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime. The similarities present themselves in the oppressiveness of its citizenry by each respective regime, the continual fear of either being arrested or possibly dying at the hands of either the SS or the Stasi, and the lack of economic and political freedom. The totalitarian rule of both Nazi Germany and the

communist DDR creates a schism between individuals by implementing a system of fear and terror. Riadh Abed (2005) stated:

the totalitarian regime relies on the loneliness of the individual; a reality that it actively promotes through its policy of atomization of society into isolated (ineffectual) individuals, its imposition of a state ideology and its systematic use of terror (...) Totalitarian regimes systematically destroy trust between individuals by rendering every citizen, a potential informer for the state. They also suppress civil society, thus stifling any prospect of spontaneous collective action by individuals in defense of their collective interests, however mundane and innocuous.

It is the utilization of these tactics, which creates a link and bond for sufferers of totalitarianism and creates an opportunity to examine how these victims work upon their unique pasts, to ensure that they do not have to relive those situations again.

In the case of the East German past, working upon the past requires an examination of the traumatic experiences through a finer set of lenses because there is no way to fully equate the experiences of East Germans to those experiences of the victims of the Third Reich. This is not meant to minimize the suffering which occurred in the DDR, but to many West Germans, who had to critically and honestly work upon their Nazi past, those East German experiences were not as significant.

The differing approaches to the Nazi past greatly aids in explaining why some East Germans worked diligently at addressing issues of the East German past. It was an opportunity for former East Germans to immediately start addressing the traumas

incurred during the forty-year history of the DDR. The immediate post-Wall period was a complicated time in the newly reunified Germany, where two countries with very unique and distinctive histories post-1945 had to work diligently at re-establishing not only political and economic connections, but also uniting different social and cultural memories since the end of WWII. Therefore, it was difficult to immediately examine the Stasi and DDR past, but in 1995 the German government, as well as German citizens started critically examining, analyzing and actively working upon the East German past. During this period the German government worked diligently at creating a national memory of the DDR through the conversion of the infamous Stasi prison, *Hohenschönhausen*, into a national memorial and by holding individuals, like the last leader of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) Egon Krenz, accountable for the crimes committed by the East German state.

The transition to an establishment of a unifying collective/cultural memory of the DDR began in the mid-1990s with literary works like *Helden wie wir*, where former East Germans were able to not only write about the experiences, but also their feelings towards the old East German regime for the first time. Early works such as this paved the way for other works, such as the films *Das Leben der Anderen*, *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and *Goodbye, Lenin*, that were released during the 2000s and are much more complex, because critically important issues like the role of the East German government, and the role of the Stasi are presented, but a perceived nostalgia about the DDR can also be ascertained.

Nostalgia is a natural byproduct of East German memory work, which led to the creation of the term *Ostalgie*. This term is utilized to specifically refer to aspects of

nostalgia in regards to the East German past and is a blending of the term nostalgia and *Ost*. For those people that miss and idealize the past, even with the pain that it may have caused and they combine it with a pop cultural fascination for the period by many young, artistically inclined people, it then presents an opportunity to capitalize off of the past.

Steven Zeitchik (2003) wrote:

Granted, some *Ostalgie* is ironic, a new generation's reflexive need to find value in what its parents despised. But more often it is wistful, a Panglossian re-imagining of how it used to be, and perhaps even how it might, in some small sense, be again. After all, at least back then everyone had a job. There are, say experts, plenty of reasons for all this: anti-Americanism, entrepreneurial opportunism and demographics, to name a few. When you take a younger generation that doesn't know and mix it with an aging generation that doesn't want to forget, it makes for a powerful combination — especially when that older generation harbors both memories and anger.

Examples of *Ostalgie* are prevalent in many aspects of German society and culture. In Berlin it is quite common to find stores that sell DDR memorabilia, like miniature Trabants or t-shirts with East German symbolism, and then there are films like Leander Haußmann's *Sonnenallee* which dramatize life in the DDR and there are things such as the *Ost-Ampelmännchen*, which can be found in many cities in the former DDR and even Berlin because they hold a cultural significance.

Ostalgie is not viewed with reverence by many people because of the cruelties of the East German regime. For some this idea of remembering and idealizing the DDR

past is akin to whitewashing the past. Anna Funder, whose book *Stasiland*, tracks the lives of former Stasi officers in the reunified Germany, calls the idea of *Ostalgie* “grotesque, a dangerous whitewashing of the regime's cruelty. Did we have movements in the 1960's singing songs about how great the Nazis were and all the roads they built? (qtd. in Zeitchik, 2003)". Nonetheless the DDR past and *Ostalgie* provide an avenue to actively work upon this traumatic past.

The forty years of a divided Germany were and are a crucial part of German history in the 20th century, because a once proud and powerful nation had been split into two radically different countries. West Germany would become the envy of much of the world due to its dynamic economy, strong political system and open society. Whereas East Germany was the antithesis, it was ruled by an oppressive and repressive regime, its economy was weak and its citizens possessed limited freedoms.

The East German experience was a difficult one for many people because the communist regime ruled by fear and intimidation. The government created a complex network of informants coupled with the infamous *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* or Stasi, where ordinary citizens were always under threat of being arrested or worse, if they dare say anything that would oppose the state. It was within this environment of fear and intimidation, that the Stasi obtained its reputation for being not only abusive, but also in some cases murderous. This reputation created an environment, where a collective memory about the Stasi and the DDR was formed.

The concept of collective memory is complex and has nuanced meanings depending on who defines it. Friedrich Nietzsche and Jan Assmann both defined the concept of collective memory; however, they had slightly different definitions of the

concept. The definition that Nietzsche provided focuses on the survival of the human species, where he states that, “[for] the survival of the species, humans must find a means by which to maintain their nature consistently through generations. The solution to this problem is offered by cultural memory, a collective concept...” (Assmann, 1995).

Assmann on the other hand provided a more complex definition of cultural memory:

We define the concept of cultural memory through a double delimitation that distinguishes it: 1) from what we call “communicative” or “everyday memory,” which in the narrower sense of our usage lacks “cultural” characteristics; 2) from science, which does not have the characteristics of memory as it relates to a collective self-image. For the sake of brevity, we will leave aside this second delimitation which Halbwachs developed as the distinction between memory and history and limit ourselves to the first; the distinction between communicative and cultural memory (1995).¹

Assmann clearly focuses on the need for a collective memory, which includes a very important aspect which is the “communicative” or “everyday memory”. Assmann stated that, “‘communicative memory’ is characterized by its proximity to the everyday”, meaning that all of the individual interactions that people have on a daily basis form individual memories, which become part of a larger collective memory. Assmann

¹ “Maurice Halbwachs.” Britton, Dee. "What Is Collective Memory?" *Memorialworlds*. N.p., 27 June 2012. Web. 29 Mar. 2016. Maurice Halbwachs was the first sociologist to utilize the term “collective memory” and his work is foundational when studying topics related to societal remembrance. Halbwach’s main argument was that all individual memory was constructed within societal institutions and structures. Furthermore, he claimed that it is only possible to fully understand individual private memories through a group context, such as families, nation-states and organizations.

contrasted cultural memory from communicative memory by the distance that it maintains from the everyday interactions of those individual memories. He states further:

Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these “figures of memory” (1995).

It is the combination of communicative memory and cultural memory, which formulate collective memory. In regards to the East German past, any and all works, be they literary texts, films, plays or from other mediums, assist in formulating a collective memory about the DDR and its controversial and abusive history. Furthermore, the publication of cultural memories plays a critical role in what the philosopher Theodor Adorno wrote diligently about in the context of the National Socialist past--actively working upon the past to ensure that past atrocities, crimes and abuses of the past do not occur again.

With my thesis I want to analyze and apply Adorno’s theoretical framework of ‘working upon the past’ to the East German past and examine how the documentary films *Das Wunder von Leipzig--Wir sind das Volk* (2009), *Aus Liebe zum Volk* (2004) and the satirical novel *Helden wie wir* by East German born author Thomas Brussig (1995) portray individuals working upon their East German pasts. These works utilize unique perspectives, which not all former East Germans can relate with, when examining the complex, multidimensional and personal issues of the past, because these experiences heavily influence the emotions and feelings associated with those events.

The documentary film *Das Wunder von Leipzig* presents numerous individuals who actively participated during the *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig in 1989. The individual that presents a unique perspective due to his active role in the demonstrations is the protester, Uwe Schwabe, who gives very poignant interviews throughout the documentary. Through an analysis of the paralinguistic features of his speech we are able to watch an individual actively work upon his own past. We are also able to gain a better understanding of his feelings and emotions of not only his role in the *Montagsdemonstrationen*, but also his life in the DDR.

In *Aus Liebe zum Volk* we are presented with a narrator on his last day as a Stasi officer before official German reunification. Specifically, we are able to hear his struggle in his monologue through the various uses of paralanguage, such as tone, pitch, etc. Furthermore, we are able to dissect his monologue and analyze his feelings and thoughts about the DDR and his role within the Stasi. Couple this together with the snippets of interrogations and interviews and we clearly see a man that is coming to terms with not only the East German past but also with his role.

Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* centers around a protagonist who believes that he and he alone was responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall. The protagonist specifically recollects his memories from birth in 1968 until the fall of the wall and does so by utilizing satire to come to terms with his past in the DDR. The author uses extremely vulgar language, sarcasm and exaggeration to express his disdain not only for the regime, but also for the Stasi and the intellectuals/dissidents who did not do enough to bring down the regime.

Each of these works center on protagonists who are coming to terms with their own past in East Germany. However, they do so in uniquely different ways due to the fact that they come from distinctive elements of East German society, a member of the infamous Stasi and ordinary East German citizens. They provide an outlet for people to come to terms with their own East German past, one through the utilization of humor and the other through documentary films.

The memories of the repressive East German regime and the cruelties committed by the Stasi are evoked through different avenues, such as humor in narrative and paralanguage in documentary film because they elicit emotions, which allow people to work upon their unique pasts. Only when the memories are pulled from the past into the present are people able to critically examine past events, diagnose the root cause and create an environment where people are able to continually renegotiate the East German past in hopes of preventing previous horrors from occurring again. The scholar and critical theorist Theodor Adorno began to examine West German political policies implemented during the 1950s, along with the role of memory in context of the National Socialist past because he felt that the West German government was closing the chapter on the Nazi atrocities too quickly -- primarily due to a lot of pressure from the U.S., France and the United Kingdom during the Cold War -- and doing enough to continually work upon the past, so that the victims and the atrocities are not forgotten. Establishing a national and ultimately a collective memory, a combination of communicative and cultural memories, requires a near constant examination and analysis of the past.

Examining the East German past through Adorno's lens of *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* limits the works which are able to be analyzed because not every East

German had the same experiences. For many ordinary East Germans, the cruelties afflicted by the DDR regime and the Stasi were not directly felt. Rather the experiences that are presented in the works, *Helden wie wir*, *Das Wunder von Leipzig*, *Aus Liebe zum Volk*, present unique experiences of a former Stasi officer and opponents of the regime. In regards to the East German and Stasi past, any and all works, be they literary texts, films, plays or other mediums, not only assist in formulating a collective memory about the DDR and its controversial and abusive history, but they are vehicles, which allow people, who had similar experiences to the individuals in these works, to actively work upon their collective and individual pasts.

Chapter 2

To help understand the ways in which Theodor W. Adorno's critical thinking about memory work and representation can be useful for examining how the Stasi and DDR past serve as points of discussion in these works by Brussig, Sivan, and Dehnhardt, it is important to briefly discuss the context in which Adorno produces these ideas. With the end of WWII, a fractured and politically divided Germany had to face both the repercussions for its role in the war and the atrocities that were committed by the Nazi regime and the traumatic reality that they were responsible for allowing those crimes to occur. The post-war period in Germany was an intense, emotionally daunting and difficult time, which required that those responsible be brought to justice and which promoted an honest and brutal self-evaluation about how and why the atrocities committed during the Third Reich were allowed to occur.

During the post-war period many crucial events occurred not only in Germany, but around the world, which were instrumental in ensuring that the perpetrators were held accountable and that the victims and their families were able to move forward with their lives one small step at a time. One of the first steps in holding the perpetrators liable was through the Nuremberg Trials headed by the International Military Tribunal (IMT), which charged 24 "major" war criminals for crimes against humanity and crimes against peace, between October 18, 1945 and October 1, 1946 (ushmm.org, 2016). The trials occurred in the immediate aftermath of the war, while the memories of those vicious atrocities and crimes were still fresh and center of mind. The timing of these trials so soon after the end of the war accomplished several vital tasks. First, it demonstrated not only to the victims and their families, but also to the rest of the world, that the

perpetrators of these heinous crimes would be brought to trial. Secondly, it provided a psychological avenue for both the victims and the Germans to be able to start coming to terms with the horrors of the war and for paving a way to slowly move forward. However, due to the immediacy of these trials, they were neither fully welcomed by Germans nor the survivors. In the case of the perpetrators, it was perceived as the victors placing an *ersatz* judgment on the entire German population. For the survivors, the postwar period was extremely difficult because they were still fighting for survival, while at the same time trying to put the shattered pieces of their lives back together.

Building on these events were the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which took place from December 20, 1963 to August 19, 1965. In the course of the trials 24 defendants were charged under German law for their roles during the Holocaust (Fulford, 2005). The trial was headed by Hessian State Attorney General Fritz Bauer and, even though the trials attracted a lot of publicity in Germany, Bauer considered the trials an enormous failure, due to the way in which the media portrayed the defendants (Fulford, 2005). The accused were portrayed as such grotesque heinous monsters, which allowed ordinary West German citizens to distance themselves from those past atrocities committed by an aberrant few and in turn not feel any moral guilt about Auschwitz. This was in contrast to the Nuremberg Trials, where the memories of the Nazi atrocities were fresh in people's minds and therefore ordinary Germans were not able to separate themselves from the Nazi perpetrators because they were culpable in allowing the vicious regime to reign. Bauer clearly stated his disappointment with the trials because it perpetuated the "wishful fantasy that there were only a few people with responsibility...and the rest were merely terrorized, violated hanger-ons, compelled to do things completely contrary to their true

nature” (Fulford, 2005). The idea that ordinary citizens were able to distance themselves from the horrors of the past by simply neglecting those events was and is delusional, but it is much easier to suppress memories than it is to work through those memories.

By the time the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials started in the mid-1960’s the East German regime had viewed the prosecution of former Nazis as a concluded chapter of the previous decade and viewed Hitler and the Nazi atrocities as a purely West German problem (Wollheim Memorial, n.d.). Furthermore, the DDR regime worked diligently at creating and maintaining the facade that East Germans were antifascists who fought against the Nazis, and they employed an impressive propaganda campaign to perpetuate this facade. It wasn’t until after the Fall of the Wall in the mid 1990’s that the East German dissident and author Jurek Becker contradicted this claim in a 1994 *Die Zeit* article where he stated:

“The DDR, [...] from its first hour on, was living with a lie. It invented a history that never took place—its first ancestors allegedly were the German antifascists. Moreover, there existed no Führer. Of course, there was talk, even quite a lot of it, of the Nazis’ crimes, but those were the crimes of the others. Fascism had nothing to do with us, the people of the DDR, we had miraculously gotten rid of the facts. Films about the Nazi era were always films about the antifascist resistance movement; school lessons about the Nazi era were not lessons about our most recent past, but always dealt with the misdeeds of these terrible aliens, whom we, the

antifascists, had vanquished with some help from the Red Army. Of the 10,000 antifascists that there may have been in Nazi Germany, 8 million alone live in the DDR (p.58).

Becker argues that the DDR leadership attempted to minimize and even completely remove any link to the Nazi atrocities because East Germany would have to actually address those atrocities, which is much more difficult than just burying the past.

However, the amount of national and international attention that the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials garnered through the knowledge that Germans were prosecuting other Germans for their roles during the Holocaust, prompted the DDR leadership to influence the first Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, by including an accessory prosecutor, Friedrich Karl Kaul and an expert witness Jürgen Kuczynski (Wollheim Memorial, n.d.).

Prosecutor Kaul's primary objective during the Trials was perpetuating East Germany's antifascist propaganda campaign by creating a link between the evils of capitalism and fascism. In his 2006 book focused on the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials historian Devin Pendas writes:

If Nazism was, as East Germany's official position insisted, an expression of monopoly capitalism and if, further, that same capitalism continued to dominate the Federal Republic, then West Germany was, if not a full-blown fascist regime, at least perpetually at risk of becoming one. The DDR, meanwhile, by virtue of its official anti-fascism, was thereby posited as the only true home of German freedom and "real" democracy (Pendas, 2006).

In order to accomplish this objective Kaul had to link Big Business with the atrocities that occurred at Auschwitz, because there was no mention of their roles in the atrocities. Therefore, the East German press zeroed in on the synthetic rubber plant in the satellite camp of Monowitz owned by IG Farben because they utilized concentration camp workers to build their rubber plant and company executives were subsequently put on trial during the Nuremberg Trials². Kaul worked diligently to push the court to allow Kuczynski as a witness, because they would be able to continue perpetuating the East German propaganda campaign against West Germany. The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials were influential throughout the two Germanys--in the DDR because it allowed the propaganda campaign to continue and in the Federal Republic because it allowed West Germans to keep working upon their past.

THEODOR ADORNO: WORKING UPON THE PAST

The German philosopher and member of the Frankfurt School, Theodor W. Adorno witnessed these trials and wrote from the perspective that discussing the past openly and honestly was crucial for keeping the atrocities of the Third Reich, more specifically the atrocities of Auschwitz, center of mind. He maintained that it was important to constantly work upon that past through education, so that the complex

² "I.G. Farben." I.G. Farben. Wollheim Memorial, n.d. Web. 3 Mar. 2016. The concern known as "Interessengemeinschaft Farbenindustrie AG" was founded in 1925. It was an affiliated group of German chemical companies that were active in various branches. Until 1945, I.G. Farben was one of the world's largest chemical and arms manufacturers. In the Nazi era, I.G. Farben worked closely with the government of the Reich. After the defeat of the German Reich, the conglomerate was broken up (decartelized) by the Allied occupying powers. In 1947, in the I.G. Farben Trial in Nuremberg, the top managers of the concern were indicted for crimes.

events that led to Auschwitz would not happen again. Adorno, clearly frustrated with how easily people had pushed the memories of Auschwitz aside, stated in his 1966 essay "Education After Auschwitz:"

Yet the fact that one is so barely conscious of this demand, to constantly work upon the atrocities of Auschwitz and the questions it raises shows that the monstrosity has not penetrated people's minds deeply, itself a symptom of the continuing potential for its recurrence as far as people's conscious and unconscious is concerned (1966).

He demands critical self-reflection through education by the very people who supported the perpetrators, where "the roots must be sought in the persecutors, not in the victims who are murdered under the paltriest of pretenses" (Adorno, 1966). There are two areas which he focuses on in terms of education:

first children's education, especially in early childhood; then general enlightenment that provides an intellectual, cultural and societal climate in which a recurrence would no longer be possible, a climate, therefore, in which the motives that led to the horror would become relatively conscious (1966).

Education provides an avenue along which the traumas of the past are no longer repressed; but rather are actively worked upon, so that the atrocities of the past are not forgotten, in order to prevent such events from happening again.

In 1968 the Nazi past resurfaced during the *68er-Bewegung* (German student movement), due to the fear that the West German government had become too

authoritarian and hypocritical, which evoked traumatic memories of the Third Reich. Additionally, university students were fighting back against meager living conditions and other important issues of the time, such as the demand for more democracy, addressing Germany's Nazi past and the role that many of the students' parents played during that era. Finally, another major component of the student movement was reducing the influence that the extreme right-wing was beginning to have on the government and in limiting freedom of the press. Most of this fear stemmed from the fact that many former Nazis and former members of the NSDAP occupied many government positions in the 1950s and the early 1960s, including the then Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger. Furthermore, the formation of the ultranationalist, conservative National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) in 1964, began gaining more and more votes and political influence. A precursor to the 1968 clash, was the 1966 "sit-in" at the Free University of Berlin, where university administrators and government officials passed a measure when students were on summer vacation to limit study time in order to churn out future workers faster to help re-stabilize a struggling economy (Bergmann, n.d.). When students returned from vacation they quickly protested, not only in Berlin but at universities across the entire country. It was during this period that the trajectory of West Germany and its past changed, as West Germans began to really examine the past and the memories associated with it.

When reminiscing about memories from the past, people remember times of joy, sorrow, pain, excitement as well as guilt and horror. These recollections range from individual memories, such as the birth of a child or the death of a parent, to collective national memories, such as the Holocaust. These memories can span months, years or

decades and they can crucially influence society, as well as the individual. In the West German case, the 20th century presented itself with numerous unique memories, none more influential than the recollections of the Third Reich. Theodor W. Adorno wrote numerous pieces about German memory of its Nazi past during a very emotionally tumultuous time when perpetrators were put to justice, the German public had distanced itself from its past and the younger student generation came of age and demanded that Germany come to terms with its past. In his 1959 essay “*Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?*,” Adorno wrote about three subtly nuanced terms: *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (working through the past), *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (working upon the past) and *Vergangensheftbewältigung* (mastering the past), that he used to describe the different phases of collective German guilt.

Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit does not mean literally working through the events of the past. Rather it means that a chapter from a negative point in time in the past gets closed and when possible even erased from memory (Adorno, 1968). This gives the impression that one has to hastily work through an unpleasant experience while hoping for forgiveness and in turn causing forgetfulness, not in an absolute sense, but rather in the sense of mastering certain aspects of the past and being able to move on from those events. Jeffrey Olick connected Adorno’s theories with political events in post-war Germany, and according to him this process of *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* occurred in West Germany from 1946 to the beginning of the 1960s, when the West German government wanted to solve problems from the past, and resulted in such political achievements as: more federalism, increased focus on human rights, a reparations program for Israel and the limitation of powers of the President (1998). Konrad

Adenauer's government worked to push these problems hastily to the back of the mind because it was under the impression that it would be easier to distance itself from the guilt and responsibility associated with the Nazi atrocities of the Third Reich. By swiftly working through the events of the past it becomes very easy to not only reduce the enormity of the atrocities, but to forget them altogether. However, this does not solve the fundamental problems, which instead are propelled to the back of the mind where they are able to fester and able to reappear at later moments.

According to Adorno *Vergangensheitlebewältigung* is a phase through which events of the past are rapidly worked upon, so that the past associated with those events can be mastered in the hope that it can be removed from memory (1968). In Olick's work he discusses the *Vergangensheitlebewältigung* of the Nazi past beginning in the mid 1970's when Walter Scheel was the West German Chancellor and in many aspects is still visible today (1998). Helmut Kohl, the former West German Chancellor, felt it was vitally important that Germany be viewed as a "normal nation" with its own unique and impressive highs and lows in its collective history just like every other country. He was convinced that Germany had come to terms with its past because they had established memorials and monuments to ensure that the German people would always keep the memories of the Nazi past in their minds (1998).

Kohl's attempt demonstrates how important it was for people from his generation to close the door to the Third Reich's past, in order not to have to experience the guilt of the past on a daily basis. Adorno's arguments seem to contradict Kohl's sentiments, because he thought that it was impossible to close the door on the National Socialist past:

One wants to break free of the past: rightly, because nothing at all can live

in its shadow, and because there will be no end to the terror as long as guilt and violence are rapid with guilt and violence; wrongly, because the past that one would like to evade is still very much alive, National Socialism lives on, and even today we still do not know whether it is merely the ghost of what was so monstrous that it lingers on after its own death, or whether it has not yet died at all, whether the willingness to commit the unspeakable survives in people as well as in the conditions that enclose them (1959).

Removing horrible memories from the past is something that all people strive to do because this allows them to come to terms with what happened. However, in the case of Germany the past has not been mastered, not because they have not done enough to address the issues Nazi of the past, but because the atrocities of the Nazi past were so atrocious that it is inconceivable to break away from the past. Adorno strongly believed that the atrocities of the Holocaust, at the hands of the Nazis, were so horrendous that mastering the past and forgetting those atrocities would be impossible. Therefore, Kohl's goal of mastering the past and believing that Germany is a normal nation, similar to all others, cannot be true because the memories of the Third Reich are forever etched into the German psyche.

In contrast to the other two terms *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* deems that the problems of the past are constantly brought to the present, so that the factors that created the opportunities for the rise of National Socialism and anti-Semitism can be analyzed to ensure that they do not occur again. According to Olick the phase of *Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit* occurred in Germany from the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's because the

younger generation wanted to grapple with the problems of the Nazi past to ensure that the policy failures of the early 1960's were not repeated (1998). It was during this process that Germany was able to take full responsibility for its past and become the avant-garde of progressive morality. This is a continual process which requires critical self-reflection and requires that the criminality of the past always gets pulled into consciousness in order to remember the victims. Therefore, Adorno's demand in his earlier essay "Education after Auschwitz" is pivotal because he appeals to the German people to constantly negotiate and renegotiate the Nazi past, so that Germans are able to continually access present events, where they are able to draw parallels to the events that allowed the Third Reich to rise to power. By consistently linking the past and the present, Germans are able to ensure that the atrocities of Auschwitz and the Third Reich remain within memory.

By constantly working upon the memories of the past, younger generations are able to learn about how past atrocities were made possible and are able to draw parallels to present conditions, which have the possibility of leading to similar atrocities. The hope is that the lessons learned from the past are able to be applied to the present, so that when governments or politicians begin to restrict freedoms, alienate and demonize minority groups, and become more nationalistic, people are able to step in and prevent atrocities from occurring.

The lessons from Adorno and his appeal to continually work upon the memories of the past should not and cannot only be applied to the horrors of Auschwitz and the Third Reich. The evocation of past horrors and atrocities are able to be applied to other examples around the globe, many of which may not live up to the heinousness of WWII,

but are nonetheless just as important. Another such German case is the impact of both the East German (DDR) regime and the Stasi and how they committed their own atrocities, which have scarred many people and those victims are now coming to terms with their past and Germany as a unified country has to come to terms with the DDR past as well. Scholars have taken Adorno's lessons to heart and started examining the East German and Stasi past by analyzing literature and film during the post-*Wende* period in hopes of coming to terms with this aspect of the German past.

Two of the most prominent films of the post-*Wende* period, which scholars have examined in terms of coming to terms with the DDR and Stasi past are Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen* (2005) and Wolfgang Becker's *Goodbye, Lenin!* (2003). Both of these films dramatize the lives of East Germans both before and after the Fall of the Wall; however, they prioritize different aspects of DDR society.

Michael Bernstein wrote in the journal *Film Quarterly*:

In Becker's film, the paradox revealed is that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the arrival of capitalism make life in a reunified East Germany nearly identical to its former Communist existence. In *The Lives of Others*, the chief irony arises from the fact that two characters most devoted to the ideals of Communism -- a state-sanctioned playwright and the Stasi agent assigned to spy on him -- find themselves compelled by personal integrity to revolt against the state (2007).

The films provide viewers some nostalgic aspects of DDR society, but the primary focus centers on the overbearing government restrictions on freedoms and the Stasi's

overbearing and intrusive spying program and the individuals that stand up to them.

Bernstein further stated that “both films are examples of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, of coming to terms with Germany’s past” because they addressed vital aspects and complaints of East German society (2007).

In the last 25 years Germans in the reunified Germany have arrived at a spatiotemporal moment where authors, film directors and others that want to examine the problems of the East German past, are able to do so through literary works and films without the fear of reprisal. Thomas Brussig’s novel *Helden wie wir* and the documentary films *Das Wunder von Leipzig* and *Aus Liebe zum Volk* are examples of works that allowed people to deal with the DDR past. More specifically, these works present readers and viewers with various perspectives of the Stasi and the East German regime, along with the people that opposed them and helped topple the Berlin Wall.

In *Helden wie wir* the author mocks the role of the Stasi through extreme and perverse satire, while in the documentary film *Aus Liebe zum Volk* viewers are presented with a former Stasi officer on his last day reminiscing on his career, unregretful of the things that he did while working in the Stasi. Finally, in *Das Wunder von Leipzig* viewers are able to hear from the protesters and others who either marched during the *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig in 1989 or witnessed these events first hand. All three of these works present an unprecedented perspective, where readers and viewers are able to glean insight into the Stasi and DDR past and are able to utilize these sources as a way to continue working upon the past.

Helden wie wir demonstrates a unique perspective through which one can analyze the satirical and perverse humor to determine the author’s thoughts and feelings about

reunification and his experiences in the DDR. While both documentary films center on German reunification, they present two completely different perspectives in which one is able to analyze the use of paralanguage by the films' respective protagonists -- a former Stasi officer in *Aus Liebe zum Volk*, and the protester Uwe Schwabe in *Das Wunder von Leipzig* in order to ascertain the thoughts and feelings they both harbor about their role in the DDR. Such analysis, when coupled with critical self-reflection, allow the DDR past to awaken in the consciousness, whereby the collective can ensure that the events which led to the DDR do not occur again.

Chapter 3

Official reunification of the two Germanys on October 3, 1990 put Germany back into the international public eye and along with it came questions about the German past. Reunification reunited the country politically, economically, socially and culturally, but it also brought forty years of oppressive and repressive East German communist history into the limelight. The early years after reunification did not see many people examining the DDR or the Stasi past because everyone was still trying to figure out the best way to integrate both countries into one. 1995 signaled a change in dealing with East German history and it was a moment when the German government, as well as German citizens started analyzing, examining and coming to terms with the DDR and Stasi past.

The German government took some monumental steps during 1995 to address some of the major questions concerning the former DDR. One of those questions addressed was who should be held accountable for any of the abuses sanctioned by the former East German regime. One such individual was the last leader of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) Egon Krenz, who was arrested in 1995 for the killing of 550 East Germans and ultimately sentenced to six-and-a-half years' imprisonment for his role. This was the newly unified German government's attempt to demonstrate to the world that they were going to do the things necessary to hold people responsible for atrocities and crimes committed by the former East German state.

Additionally, in 1994 the unified German government also converted the infamous Stasi prison, *Hohenschönhausen*, into a public memorial, which would provide survivors of that prison a path to come to terms with their DDR and Stasi past. By

creating memorials and holding people accountable for their wrongdoings the new German government was jumpstarting a national memory about the East German past. It was during this time that many former East Germans started to publish novels, memoirs and autobiographies about their pasts and experiences within the old regime, and these works were their ways of coming to terms with their pasts and dealing with their individual memories of the DDR and the Stasi.

Thomas Brussig's 1995 novel *Helden wie wir* about his own experiences behind the Wall is one such work. Brussig focused his writing on the East German regime and the Stasi and utilized several forms of humor to degrade, embarrass and present the former East in a negative light. Authors utilize humor in their literary works for numerous reasons and it is through this usage that the emotions and feelings that the authors have about the topic are revealed. Writers and comedians employ various types of humor such as satire, parody, slapstick and foul language to express their feelings and emotions about a subject. Often times humor is used as a mechanism to hide a person's true feelings because they had terrible experiences in the past and they have not been able to overcome those experiences.

Superiority and incongruity theories involving humor are often linked with satire, irony and sarcasm and they are associated to their own unique feelings. When individuals utilize satire or sarcasm to express feelings about past experiences, they are actively bringing those memories back to the present, which allows them to work upon those past events. The usage of humor says a lot about a person because there is always a reason for what is being said. E.M. Dadlez describes this link:

Superiority theories ally humor principally with ridicule and the

employment of one's own superiority in pinpointing the foibles or weaknesses of another. Incongruity theories link humor to the defeat of expectations, to a clash or dissonance that is enjoyable rather than distressing or confusing. Irony and sarcasm, of course, always present us with a dissonance between literal and intended meanings, fitting the story put forward by incongruity theorists. And irony and sarcasm frequently figure in ridicule, moral criticism, and other expressions of contempt, much as superiority theorists from Plato to Hobbes might suggest (2011).

Dadlez vigorously supports the notion that humor can evoke emotions and feelings, especially feelings such as contempt and anger. It is also vitally important to note that humor is frequently used as moral criticism of repressors because it allows critics to voice their opposition against both repressive governments and repressive political systems.

This is also supported by Dadlez:

As superiority theory will have it, humor can elicit from us attitudes of contempt for the possessors of certain traits or the doers of certain acts by allowing us to compare ourselves with such persons and to find them wanting. As incongruity theory suggests, humor can startle us into the adoption of perspectives that can sometimes present new notions of moral salience (2011).

There are many examples of humor, such as Thomas Brussig's satirical novel *Helden wie wir*, where contempt and anger over the DDR's role are voiced. Additionally, there are jokes that were told during the existence of the DDR, which are funny but are criticisms

of the regime. The first joke that comes to mind is: How did an Ossi compass function? One lays a banana on the Wall and where a piece was bitten off was the East (Schibilla, 2015). The second joke that comes to mind is: Why were there no bank robberies during the DDR era? Because one had to wait 15 years for the getaway car (Schibilla, 2015). Both of these jokes take direct aim at the lack of access to the international community and the corresponding free market capitalism and the restrictiveness of the East German government.

Interestingly, incongruity is often incorporated in the analysis of humor, because people many times are amused by things that do not meet the expectations of what is normal or what is expected. John Morreall provided a great example when he wrote:

If I am watching a movie in which a character falls into a swimming pool fully clothed, for example, then I may laugh simply in enjoyment of the incongruity of this event. But if I dislike my neighbor for the way he flaunts his wealth, and I see him fall into his pool in his new \$500 suit, I may laugh harder, enjoying both the incongruity and his suffering (1983).

With this quote one can see how the relationship between life experiences can make a situation or event much funnier. Although enjoyment of humor alone makes people laugh, incongruity is simultaneously reinforced by the enjoyment of something else. Morreall supported this claim:

The enjoyment of someone's suffering, or the expression of pent up feelings, however, never constitute humor, as the superiority and the relief theories of laughter might lead us to believe. By themselves, these other kinds of enjoyment are not kinds of humor even though they may issue in

laughter. It is the enjoyment of incongruity that is both necessary and sufficient for humor; no other kind of enjoyment is either necessary or sufficient for humor (1983).

From the enjoyment of incongruity one can thereby deduce, that a satire about an entire system will be funny, especially when people are aware of the cruelties and crimes that a government has committed. It can therefore be expected that Thomas Brussig's satirical novel *Helden wie wir* will be very funny because people are knowledgeable about how brutal and repressive the East German government and the Stasi were.

As previously mentioned, the usage of humor allows people to learn a lot about how someone feels about a particular topic or a government. There are numerous types of humor that authors and comedians utilize to voice their thoughts and opinions. In my opinion satire and sarcasm are great examples, where one is able to express their deepest feelings about a topic. For example, in *Helden wie wir* Thomas Brussig utilizes a combination of satire, sarcasm and foul language to evoke his feelings about his past in the former DDR.

SUMMARY OF *HELDEN WIE WIR*

Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* is a satirical novel about life in the DDR and the Stasi. The story is told through the life experiences of the fictional Stasi agent Klaus Uhltscht. His experiences center on his perverse sexual actions, his career as a member of the Stasi and how he thinks that he is personally responsible for the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The author's primary focus in this fictional novel is to present the Stasi as a group of politically indoctrinated, perverse idiots, who would accuse and arrest people for

unsubstantiated reasons. The story's satirical characters portray the Stasi as outright laughable, even though they had a lot of power. Additionally, many complaints about the Stasi, about the former East German government and about life in the DDR are evoked by Brussig.

To voice his complaints Brussig utilizes different types of humor, such as satire, parody and offensive language. Klaus constantly uses foul language as he tells his story and it begins at the outset of the novel when he says, "The story of the Wall's end is the story of my penis" (Brussig, 5). The usage of foul language is a symbolic slap in the face of the conservative DDR government and society because the public utilization of such language was not supported. A considerable portion of the book is dedicated to Klaus' repressed sexuality and it is asserted by Klaus when he claims, "I considered myself to be one of the most perverted individuals on the face of the globe" (Brussig, 46). The continued use of perverse language was very funny, because this was quite unexpected since the Stasi and the East German government had the reputation of being overly conservative, strict and repressive.

The novel's satirical tone is also evoked through the language that the characters employed. The DDR government, and especially the Stasi, is presented as ridiculously awful because the author wanted to bring the crimes and cruelties of the former East German regime and Stasi to the present. As Klaus begins to tell us his experiences the differences between the indoctrinated Stasi ideals and the abuses committed by the Stasi become clear. Klaus' entire career goal was to be a successful Stasi agent; however, he was quickly disappointed by the type of work that he was doing. His resentment led to his decision to write a perverted book to demonstrate to the East Germans that he had the

skills and abilities to be successful. It is in this book, where he describes numerous perverted activities, such as having sex with chickens and masturbating on socialism. The Stasi activities described by Klaus give the impression that all members of the repressive regime were just as perverted as he was. This perverted portrayal of the Stasi is very exaggerated because of the brutality that they inflicted on the people of the DDR.

Thomas Brussig's usage of humor in *Helden wie wir* shines a very negative light on the Stasi, due to his own negative experiences under the pressure and repressiveness of the State and the loathsome reputation that the Stasi had. In order to dehumanize the organization and its members the author had to employ extreme language and satire, because he wanted to distance himself from his past. Brussig's use of humor is very interesting and funny because it is so drastic, which made it quite simple to figure out the negative feelings that the author had for the DDR.

OTHER INTERPRETATIONS OF *HELDEN WIE WIR*

Scholarly interpretation of the novel focus on various themes, such as complaints about intellectuals, women and *Ostalgie*, undermining socialist ideals with the perverse body and depleting Stasi manipulation and misuse of language. These topics address complaints of the DDR government and society, which people could not voice during the existence of the repressive regime because it prevented any form of opposition or public discourse on such topics.

One such analysis of the book focuses on Brussig's criticisms of East German intellectuals, women and *Ostalgie*. More specifically it focuses on the use of satire in the

novel to highlight the lack of integrity of these DDR intellectuals. According to Jill Twark:

In attacking East Germans who adhered to the socialist ideology, he also targets intellectual wannabes who, like Klaus, aspire to immortal fame by being "geistvoll" (...) Klaus would gain fame for himself both as an intellectual and as a catalyst who altered the course of European history (2007).

The exaggerated priority of self-importance by intellectuals is evident in this critique and it seems like Thomas Brussig thought negatively of them because they did not do enough to combat the regime. One of Twark's primary arguments is that Brussig's novel is meant to direct criticism at intellectuals like Christa Wolf because she had the voice to push back against the DDR government, but in Brussig's mind she did not do enough to oppose them.

Another analysis focuses on the undermining of socialist ideals with images of the perverse body. This examination centers on Brussig's criticism of the false social norms, because they were established by the East German state in order to control the people. Brussig utilized foul and offensive language and body images in order to defame and degrade the DDR. According to Twark:

Brussig uses Klaus's body as a means to subvert the DDR state's authority (...) Only after Klaus's body itself is transformed can he later escape fully from this physical and mental entrapment (...) When he recovers from the operation to find his penis in its enlarged form, he gains the self-confidence to open the Berlin Wall (2007).

In order to distance himself from the societal norms established by the DDR, Brussig had to use such language because they symbolically enslaved their people to keep them obedient.

A third analysis focuses on depleting Stasi manipulation and abuses of language. In this analysis Brussig's criticism against the Stasi and its abuses against the people of East Germany are examined. Klaus is presented as a helpless, pitiful and inferior man who was protected by the Stasi:

I'm protected, guided and led, I do not have to wander naked through the windy world. Someone holding his hand over me. Whatever happens-- I am lifted (Brussig, 1995).

These words present a vulnerable and helpless man in search of emotional support because he did not receive it at home. Through this figure's portrayal one is able to determine that the East German regime would go to great lengths to ensure that its citizenry felt helpless and powerless. Brussig's presentation of Klaus's actions are naturally, extremely over exaggerated because he wanted to hammer down the fact that the East German people were helpless.

These analyses are examples of the numerous interpretations that one can deduce from the book's main character. Additionally, these analyses bring specific aspects of the DDR past to the present and therefore are examples of what Adorno called working upon the past (*Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit*). More specifically, the novel *Helden wie wir* provides an example of Adorno's theory, but instead of coming to terms with aspects of the Nazi past, Brussig is working upon his East German past.

VERARBEITUNG DER VERGANGENHEIT AND HELDEN WIE WIR

In my opinion the novel presents Brussig's way of working upon the past and he did it creatively by utilizing humor to bring his feelings about the DDR to the present. More specifically, he employed satire, sarcasm and foul language to degrade and humiliate the role of the Stasi and the East German government due to their brutality and repressive nature. Additionally, the regime was known to do anything possible to keep control, such as spying on people, recording telephone conversations and much more to ensure that people would not protest or oppose the state. There are copious examples throughout the book, where one is able to detect Brussig's feeling about his experiences in the DDR.

One such example occurs at the very beginning of the story, and depicts Klaus talking about his childhood indoctrination into DDR society. While speaking about his third school year Klaus points to one such instance where this indoctrination was played out, "...when we acquired a new headmaster who held that leisure activities were worthwhile only if pursued on a team basis, and, since participation in team activities was statistically recorded, made it his objective that one hundred per cent of his pupils should engage in them" (Brussig, 1995). This is a condemnation of both the *Jugendweihe* and the *Wehrkunde*, two events in which both children and teenagers were required to participate. This required indoctrination was insurance for the repressive regime, which wanted to guarantee that its citizens would become oppressed followers of an idealistic regime. Additionally, I think that this was Brussig's intention because he wanted to emphasize how horrible it was to manipulate the people. Repressive regimes utilize these

tactics to convey fear and limit cooperation among dissenters, because they wanted to prevent any opposition movements that could potentially arise.

A second example is Brussig's usage of foul and offensive language throughout the entire story, because one was not allowed to use such language when referring to the government. Free from reprisal by the East German regime or the Stasi, Brussig is able to freely express his views about the regime. It is through this expression of feelings about his East German past, where we are able to visualize Brussig actively working upon his past. The continual utilization of foul and offensive language further demonstrates, how angry and upset he is about his past. Klaus continually utilizes perverted and offensive language to voice his complaints about his life and describe his role as a member of the Stasi. A specific example for this is the description by Klaus of his perverted dreams and fantasies that he compiles in a book that he writes. It is in this book where he compares his life experiences with sexual acts like having sex with chickens. The utilization of such language by Brussig was done to try to shame the government and emphasize the blame that he places on the DDR government for the cruelties that it committed. Additionally, the pervertedness of Klaus gives the impression that all Stasi agents were just as perverted, which was not at all the case, but Brussig had to humiliate the Stasi.

Another example occurs after Klaus had his accident and had to have surgery on his penis. Throughout the story he continually speaks about his penis, as well as his sexual fantasies. However, his obsession with the DDR is linked to the size of his penis and it is the surgery that enlarged his member, which greatly contributed to his increased confidence. It is this change in self-confidence that ultimately allowed Klaus to finally

stand up and fight against the state. It is ridiculous to think that a change in the size of his penis would grant him the self-confidence to bring down an entire system. Brussig wanted to demonstrate that the only way to fight against an extreme government and system, which manipulated people, was through perverted satire and sarcasm.

Thomas Brussig utilizes humor in *Helden wie wir* to voice his feelings, frustrations and anger with the former East German government. As he vocalizes his emotions about his past the DDR past is drawn to the present, which allows the cruelties and crimes of the regime to be worked upon. Working upon the past is a continual process, which requires people to constantly work on issues from the East German past to ensure that the incidents that occurred during the DDR do not happen again. This novel is one of many that Brussig has written about the DDR and they have been progressively less demeaning of the East German regime.

VERARBEITUNG DER VERGANGENHEIT AND HUMOR

The utilization of humor in *Helden wie wir* is interesting, funny, satirical, perverse and exaggerated, whereby the author's various emotions are presented to the reader. The reader is bestowed with a main character, who exaggerates his role as a member of the vaunted Stasi and his life experiences, so that he can feel better about his own life. To better cope with the anger of his own life experiences in the DDR, Brussig employs the power of humor, which allowed him to express all of the things that he wanted to say during the reign of the East German regime, but was not able to.

Additionally, it is this portrayal of emotions through humor, which demonstrates how the author was able to come to terms with his past and bring those experiences of

living in East German society back to the present. It is for this very reason, that this novel is an example of Adorno's 'working upon the past', because traumatic events of the past should always be kept center of mind, so that they are not forgotten. This is supported by Adorno's premise that "The murdered are to be cheated out of the single remaining thing that our powerlessness can offer them: remembrance (1968)".

Powerlessness demonstrates the lack of power and control that people have about what occurred in the past. Therefore, it is necessary to constantly renegotiate the past, because it is the only way that both the survivors and the perpetrators are forced to remember the past. Overcoming events of the past can be achieved in numerous ways, such as the construction of memorials or guilt anniversaries; however, in this case humor was the method of choice to pull the terrible memories of the DDR past into the present, so that people are able to ensure that the torturous cruelties, which occurred do not happen again.

Chapter 4

Reunification of the divided Germany required that Germans, both from the East and the West, examine their unique pasts. In the West that meant coming to terms with and working upon the Nazi past. However, in the former East it meant examining the role and abuses of both the DDR regime and the Stasi. In the immediate aftermath of the Fall of the Wall in 1989 former East Germans stormed Stasi offices where they were able to access their Stasi files. These were unique files that the former Stasi kept on ordinary citizens to ensure that they would comply with and support the State. It was these files that gave many people the ability to come to terms with their individual pasts.

Furthermore, on October 3, 1990 the Stasi Records Agency or the *Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (BStU) was created to not only bring members of the former Stasi to justice for their crimes, but also to preserve the Stasi archives for future generations.

With the creation of the BStU Germans have been able to collectively work upon the East German past because they have been able to access the archives, where they have been able to gain a better understanding of the crimes and cruelties committed by the former Stasi and the corrupt and repressive regime. Additionally, it has also given researchers a better understanding not only about how the ordinary East German felt about their past, but also how members of the former regime and Stasi felt about their roles in DDR society. Coming to terms with and working upon the East German and Stasi past requires not only an analysis of works and opinions of the ordinary citizen, but also the thoughts and feelings of the perpetrators.

This is where the examination of different documentary films like *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and *Das Wunder von Leipzig--Wir sind das Volk* come into play. The film *Aus Liebe zum Volk* was made possible because of access to the files at the BStU and follows a Stasi officer on his last day as he reflects on his 20-year career. In the documentary *Das Wunder von Leipzig* viewers are presented with a completely different perspective, as the central focus of the film centers on the protesters during the 1989 *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig. Both of these films document very interesting and intriguing perspectives, where viewers are able to gain a better understanding for how the primary characters in the films really felt about their roles in East German society.

It has been said, that how something is said is more important than what is being said because a person's paralinguistic demonstrates what a person really is feeling (Samovar et al, 2010). The emotions that are elicited through voice modifications and qualities of speech when people speak about past events, perfectly demonstrate Adorno's concept of working upon the past, because these alterations in paralinguistic present how a person is dealing with past experiences. Imagine a person who is speaking about a happy experience in their life, like a birthday party, you would be able to immediately understand how a person felt about that experience, even if you were not able to see the person, because there are paralinguistic modifications in their speech, which lets listeners know that a person is happy. The same is true when people speak about traumatic or negative experiences from the past. A listener would be able to discern almost immediately how a person is feels about that situation.

The documentary films, *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and *Das Wunder von Leipzig*, viewers are able to witness characters actively renegotiating their past experiences in East

Germany through their paralanguage usage. In addition to the paralanguage usage, the films also allow viewers to work upon the past by being presented with narrators with various perspectives and opinions about the East German past. The filmmakers in *Aus Liebe zum Volk* through the utilization of archival Stasi film footage, offer viewers additional ways to work upon the past. Archival film footage, especially surveillance footage, is extremely compelling because it not only allows East Germans to fully grasp how controlling the regime was, but also to see how desperate the regime was to maintain control and that it was a mockery for the state to call itself a democracy, when it ruled through intimidation and fear.

In *Das Wunder von Leipzig*, the dissidents/protesters along with archival news footage from 1989 give insight to what life was like for the ordinary East German towards the end of the regime's reign and during the *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig. This connection to the ordinary East German provides another avenue for people to work upon the DDR past, because many East Germans had similar experiences during this time. The differences in experiences between the ordinary East German and members of the Stasi and the government, does not make them any less East German it just means that they have a different understanding and thoughts about the forty years of oppressive rule. Both films constantly keep the viewers abreast of the oppressive rule by interweaving narration with archival and reenactment footage that emphasizes the either the state spying on its citizens, cracking down on them violently and arresting them for not blindly abiding by the state's demands. The stories told by the Stasi officer and the dissidents/protesters present the differing perspectives and allow people from different

backgrounds to work upon their unique pasts because they are able to draw connections to the narrators and characters in the films.

Surely, everyone has been in a situation where someone was asked how they were doing and they responded that they were doing well; however, the person asking the question immediately noticed that something was wrong. The person responding more likely than not responded subconsciously and was not aware how they responded to the question. However, the responder's true emotional state was noticeable to the questioner through their use of tone, tempo, voice inflection and pitch. Such vocal cues give clues that people utilize on a daily basis to determine a person's emotional state or conclude how a person feels about something. Poyatos (2002) defines paralanguage as:

the nonverbal voice qualities, voice modifiers and independent utterances produced or conditioned in the areas covered by the supraglottal cavities (from the lips and the nares to the pharynx), the laryngeal cavity and the infraglottal cavities (lungs and esophagus), down to the abdominal muscles, as well as the intervening momentary silences, which we use consciously or unconsciously supporting, or contradicting the verbal, kinesic, chemical, dermal and thermal or proxemic messages, either simultaneously to or alternating with them, in both interaction and noninteraction (2).

Voice inflection and vocal cues are characteristics that accompany speech and contribute understanding to the interaction (Samovar et al, 2010). These same characteristics that provide additional information to an interaction can be analyzed to provide the

appropriate reaction. Paralanguage is comprised of numerous components, such as speech qualities, distinguishing speech features and vocalizations, that contain their own subcomponents. My analysis of the documentary films *Das Wunder von Leipzig* and *Aus Liebe zum Volk* centers on the paralinguistic components of tempo, pitch and volume and how these components are linked to emotions and feelings.

SPEECH QUALITIES

Speech qualities, such as timbre, resonance, intensity or volume, tempo, pitch (level, intervals, range), intonation range, syllable duration and rhythm, are the qualities that one can use to differentiate people (Poyatos, 2002). These fundamental principles are influenced by numerous factors, such as age, gender, where a person lives, etc. Poyatos wrote that speech properties, such as biological, physiological, psychological, socio-cultural, professional and the speaker's attitude often affect the speaker's voice quality (2002). It is the application of these characteristics, that one utilizes to determine what a person feels about something.

Timbre is a permanent pitch or voice register, which distinguishes people from one another (Poyatos, 2002). This is dependent on the length and thickness of the vocal cords, which is the reason why there are differences between men, women and children. Men usually have longer and thicker vocal cords, which correlates to slower vibrations and a deeper voice. On the contrary women and children typically have shorter and thinner vocal cords, which correlates to lower pitched voices (Poyatos, 2002).

Resonance is another permanent base quality of speech that one can notice in a person and may either be oral, nasal or pharyngeal (Poyatos, 1993). The perception of the

resonance is diverse and has several characteristics. For example, a very oral resonance creates a striking voice that can be identified as strong, resonant or rich (Poyatos, 1993). Such speech characteristics in males are considered positive because they demonstrate masculinity, health, ingenuity, etc., while these same properties are considered negative in women. These speech characteristics are considered masculine and unemotional in society. Whereas women are stereotypically represented as emotional and feminine in society (Poyatos, 1993).

Simply put, volume is how loud a person speaks. Additionally, one can assign words meaningful effects by increasing or decreasing the volume when someone is trying to place an emphasis on certain words (Poyatos, 1993). These effects can be assigned to a word, to a syllable or a whole sentence, but it depends on how you want to say something. For example, if you want to tell a person a secret, one speaks very quietly, in most cases, because one wants to avoid that other people hear this secret. On the contrary people can speak very loudly or yell when they want others to hear exactly what they are saying.

Tempo is how fast or slow a person says something. The speech rate is applied not only to whole sentences, but it is also applied to the whole speech of a person (Poyatos, 1993). Additionally, tempo can tell us a lot about people, such as when someone speaks slowly, it may demonstrate uncertainty in a prevailing position (Poyatos, 2002). In contrast, when someone speaks quickly, it can portray anger or eagerness (Poyatos, 2002). The variance in the meanings of tempo emphasizes that people must pay attention to the context of the sentence to completely understand what a person is trying to get across.

Poyatos (2002) writes that pitch represents the feature of paralanguage that can convey the most versatile information both in verbal and nonverbal communication (10). Changes in pitch have the capacity to give words multiple meanings, such as the English word "well" that can express surprise, contempt, anger, disappointment, etc., but the two things that can change the meaning are, context and pitch (Poyatos, 2002). That's why it is very important to pay attention to any changes in the pitch, because people are able to ascertain a lot about the feelings and the thoughts of the speaker.

Speech differentiators are features in speech that people have; however, they do not belong to the other speech qualities but they are very important properties in communication because they are either emotional or physiological responses, which would respond to the interaction (Poyatos, 2002). There are numerous reactions that belong to this concept, such as laughing, crying, whining, yawning or groaning (Samovar et al, 2010). In addition, these vocalizations provide a learned importance to the members of a particular culture, because every culture analyzes these vocalizations differently.

Speech vocalizations are sounds that are not words, such as 'shh', 'hmmm', 'mmmm'. Often times these vocalizations have no meaning and are used as substitutes for words (Samovar et al, 2010). Similar to the other aspects of paralanguage, vocalizations can report information about feelings of other people. In addition, these vocalizations may also mean that someone is paying attention, such as in Japanese culture, in which people hold their breath (noisily) to demonstrate restraint and concern and thereby show that they are actively participating in the conversation (Samovar et al, 2010).

HOW ARE PARALANGUAGE AND FEELINGS LINKED?

People are able to learn much more from nonverbal communication in an interaction, than what is said by someone. The nonverbal hints are learned from life experiences and passed down through the culture in which they live. These nonverbal cues are subconsciously internalized and the appropriate reactions are then used in future interactions. Bachorowski wrote, “Thus, emotion expressed through the vocal channel may depend in a complex way on the circumstances in which an emotional response occurs as well as on trait like differences in the experience of positive and negative emotional states” (1995). Bachorowski further states:

A comparison of the male subjects who reported experiencing negative emotions intensely and who reported experiencing negative emotions less intensely showed that the highest values of the examined acoustic variables occurred in the group that reported experiencing negative emotions intensely when they received failure feedback; values were lower for this group in the context of success feedback and for the group that reported experiencing negative emotions less intensely, regardless of the kind of feedback received.

In contrast, the values for the second group were lower independent of the type of feedback that they obtained. This shows that emotional experiences of men often influence future interactions with others. This is important to understand when analyzing the paralinguistic characteristics of characters in a film, because these paralinguistic features can have numerous meanings and these meanings may be different between two men.

SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM *AUS LIEBE ZUM VOLK*

The 2004 documentary film *Aus Liebe zum Volk* revolves around the last workday of a former Stasi Officer Major S., who recounts in very great detail the past 20 years of his life as a member of the Stasi. It is based on the autobiographical book, *Ausgedient*, by former Stasi officer Reinhardt O. Hahn. Filmmakers Audrey Maurion and Eyal Sivan link the Major's monologue with film footage from the Birther-Behörde Film Archive, which include snippets of Stasi training films, recordings of interrogations and everyday shots through the disturbing forty-year journey of DDR history (Sivan & Maurion, 2006).

This connection, together with the speaker's paralinguistic voice creates a special atmosphere, where one is able to understand and comprehend the Major's perceived feelings about his life in East Germany and his role as a Stasi officer, as the narration in the film dramatizes the autobiographical text, *Ausgedient*. Therefore, it is critical to understand that the narrator's paralinguistic is either a directorial choice or the actor's interpretation of the autobiographical text, and the reading of the film is based on this decision. In addition, throughout the entire film you can hear how the Major wants to avoid responsibility for his role in the Stasi, because he did not want to feel guilty about his role. In admitting and taking responsibility not only for his actions but those of the state, he would have to admit that what he did was wrong, which would de-legitimize his career as a Stasi officer. The mood and tone of the film was created by the directors, in order to portray the Major in this way, because they were attempting to humanize members of the Stasi. By humanizing the speaker, it makes it easier to relate with him, which in turn makes it easier to work upon the Stasi past.

PARALANGUAGE IN *AUS LIEBE ZUM VOLK*

The tone of the entire film is filled with many dark emotions such as grief, guilt, sadness, resignation and heaviness. This tone is supported by the Major's paralinguistic features in his speech in particular by its pitch, volume and pace. Throughout the film, the narrator speaks deliberately and slowly, his volume is extremely low and his pitch is also very low. In my opinion, these aspects of the speaker's paralinguistic characteristics in his voice demonstrate that he visualizes himself as guilty and sad, because he did not want to take any responsibility for his role as a Stasi officer.

At the beginning of the film the narrator said, "So at lunch time it is fixed. The 8th February is my day of discharge. The words of my department head are still ringing in my ears." With these words, it is argued that this is the last day of his job. He spoke very slowly and clearly, his pitch was very low and did not change throughout the entire film. In addition, the narrator also spoke very softly. His tone throughout the entire documentary came across as very sad and regretful, because his long career had ended and everything that he had worked towards was taken away from him. Typically, a low pitch and low volume indicates that a person is either sad or grumpy. It was at this moment, when I realized that the narrator was uncertain about his own past and the role that he played as a member of the Stasi. It looked as if he started to clarify his role as Stasi officer and was coming to terms with his Stasi past as the film progressed.

In a later scene the narrator says, "I was proud of the colorful design of manila folders." This initially confused me because it was unclear exactly what he was proud of. Was he being sarcastic due to the fact that the manila folders were so plain and they are a metaphor for his feelings about his plain and ordinary life and therefore needed to make

his life more exciting and dynamic? Or was he being a dedicated and loyal member of the Stasi, who wanted to portray himself as a tireless worker and lend credence to the power that the Stasi uniform gave him? This uncertainty was clarified in the next scene when it became clear that he was proud of his role as a Stasi officer. He stated that he made every effort to protect the DDR of traitors, enemies of the state and other dissidents. During these two scenes his tone and his paralinguistic features did not change and thus my initial conclusion of the feelings of the speaker about his Stasi past was supported. The Major's paralinguistic usage clearly demonstrated that he was guilty and sad about his East German past. From viewing the film, I believe that he has these emotions and feelings not because he is truly sorry or sad for his role, but rather that his life in a position of power and security was taken away from him.

SYNOPSIS OF *DAS WUNDER VON LEIPZIG*

The documentary film *Das Wunder von Leipzig- Wir sind das Volk* was released in 2009 and focuses on the events that eventually led to the *Montagsdemonstrationen* and the eventual Fall of the Wall. The primary focus of the film centers on the growth of the demonstrations in Leipzig from the beginning of the Summer in 1989 until October 9, 1989, when more than 70,000 demonstrators met in Leipzig to not only voice their complaints against the East German state but also to demand more freedoms. The filmmakers, Sebastian Denhardt and Matthias Schmidt, created a highly intense and moving film by utilizing a combination of footage from the actual weekly demonstrations in Leipzig, interviews with dissidents and participants of the demonstrations and reenactments of events that led to the ultimate demonstration on October 9, 1989.

This connection, which the directors utilize in the film, made it easier to be able to comprehend the feelings of the speaker and link them with the demonstrations of 1989, because people are able to put themselves into the situation and experience these chaotic moments again. Additionally, this linkage not only makes it easier for former East Germans to work upon their past experiences, but it also presents differing perspectives of the events of 1989. The most intriguing aspect of the film were the dissidents, Udo Hartmann and Uwe Schwabe, who spoke about their experiences and roles during the demonstrations. You can hear in their voices how excited, reflective, overwhelmed and scared they were about those events, because it would have been possible that the East German government, particularly the Stasi, would attack the dissidents for demonstrating against the regime. In this case they were fortunate that neither the Stasi nor the East German government violently cracked down on the protesters during the demonstrations.

PARALANGUAGE IN *DAS WUNDER VON LEIPZIG*

In *Das Wunder von Leipzig* the primary focus centers on the demonstrators; therefore, the majority of the interviews are with participants of the 1989 opposition movement. However, there are also numerous interviews with police officers, journalists, a Dutch movie director, members of the army and members of the former East German government. With so many characters in the film I decided to focus on the paralanguage of the dissident, Uwe Schwabe, because he played a crucial role during the *Montagsdemonstrationen*, by being a leader of the protesters and helping organize a covert filming of the demonstrations by a Dutch film crew. The tone of the whole film spans a wide range of emotions such as happiness, excitement, fear and relief. This is

supported by the paralinguistic features of Uwe Schwabe's speech, in particular by its pitch, volume and pace. Throughout the film, the narrator speaks very fast, his volume is extremely loud and his pitch is also very high. In my opinion, these paralinguistic aspects of speaker voice, present him as happy, relieved and anxious about his past.

One of the most effective and moving scenes of the film occurred after Uwe Schwabe was released after eight days in jail. He said sobbingly about his experience:

Wir haben dann von den Leuten eine Blume geschenkt kriegt, von denen die uns Wochen lang für uns gesorgt haben. Das wir an dach und dach statt finden und das nicht vergessen wird, dass wir im Knast sitzen. Und diese Blume hatte ich noch bis fünf Jahren getrocknet irgendwo hängen, also es war so toll das mit zu erleben, diese Solidarität, dass wir nicht im Knast sitzen und vergessen werden.

This was clearly an emotional moment for him, because he knew that this was a very important point in his life and he was very happy for the people who supported him. In addition, to what he said his paralanguage demonstrated that he was happy and excited about his experience because he spoke quickly, with a high pitch and also with a high volume. Furthermore, this was moment were it was clear that Uwe Schwabe was actively working upon his past, by discussing what it felt like to know that people kept him and other political prisoners center of mind during the traumatic experience of being jailed for eight days.

Later in the film Uwe Schwabe describes his experience when he met two members of the Dutch film crew at the airport. He had organized a meeting with a Dutch film crew, who was filming a documentary on beavers, so that they could take video

evidence of the abuses of the East German regime and expose these abuses not only to the West German media, but also the rest of the Western world. The emotions of this scene were completely different than at the beginning of the film, because here he was very excited and anxious to describe this experience. He recalls walking into the airport and meeting the film crew and they immediately asked to have the tape and Schwabe immediately gets worried, that they are being watched by the East German regime. They agree to meet in the bathroom where the video is passed from one stall to the next, which allows the Dutch to take the video out of the DDR. This situation was very dangerous not only for Schwabe but also for the Dutch, because it would have been possible for the Stasi arrest them.

His emotions throughout the entire film range from happiness, to outright enthusiasm and relief about his past experiences. This is evidenced not only by what was said, but also by the very high pitch, extremely fast and very loud tone of his voice. This emotional response to his role during the *Montagsdemonstrationen* was not unexpected, since he had a crucial role within the opposition movement. Additionally, I believe that this film gave Schwabe the opportunity to address his past and to pull his experiences back to the center of mind, which was clearly an emotional time for him.

PARALANGUAGE AND *VERARBEITUNG DER VERGANGENHEIT*

The utilization of paralanguage in both documentary films is very different from one another, and therefore different emotions and feelings are presented about the end of the East German regime. In *Aus Liebe zum Volk*, we are presented with a narrator who portrays himself as guilty and sad for his role as Stasi officer. However, I believe that he

is doing this only to avoid taking any personal responsibility for his role, because he wanted to shift responsibility of the crimes and abuses onto the state and the repressive system that it led. In contrast, in *Das Wunder von Leipzig* we are presented with a narrator who was a dissident during the *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig in 1989. The emotions and feelings that are depicted in this film are the complete opposite to the emotions that are represented in *Aus Liebe zum Volk*, because the two narrators come from different parts of East German society and government; therefore, their emotional responses to the movement to bring an end to the DDR are uniquely linked to their past experiences.

It is this portrayal of the range of emotions through the changes of paralanguage of the narrators, which demonstrates how the speakers grappled with their pasts and bring their experiences of DDR life back to the present. It is for this reason that these two documentaries are examples of Adorno's working upon the past, because the traumatic events of the past should always be kept center of mind, so that people will not forget the atrocities and crimes committed by the East German regime. This was in exactly what Adorno (1968) wrote about, "The murdered are to be cheated out of the single remaining thing that our powerlessness can offer them: remembrance." Only when we are truly powerless are we able to remember what occurred in the past, which allows us to actively work upon those past events. We can and must deal with the past in various ways, such as through the utilization of humor, but in this case paralanguage was used as a method to draw the DDR past forward.

Chapter 5

Our past experiences and the roles that we had in those events play a critical role in the way we process emotions and feelings associated with those events. People who sit in seats of power and control have a very different and unique memory of the past compared to the people who were being oppressed and abused by the elite. More specifically, members of the Stasi and the East German regime perceive the 40 years of the DDR very differently compared to the average East German citizen or dissident, who fought for more freedoms and access to the rest of the world. Perspective is critical when analyzing past experiences, for the simple fact that abusers and committers of crime, repression and oppression try to justify their reasoning and work at shifting blame away from individual responsibility to a corrupt regime or political system. When this occurs the memories and experiences of the victims are repressed and they become less relevant, which is exactly the opposite of what Adorno demands of us. When Adorno wrote “The murdered are to be cheated out of the single remaining thing that our powerlessness can offer them: remembrance (1968)”, he clearly demanded that we continually work upon the past to keep the memories of the past ever present in our consciousness, so that the environments and political situations that led to the establishment of abusive, corrupt and oppressive regimes does not occur again.

The processing of the past is a very urgent and critical process where people are able to work through traumatic events, so that they are able to better overcome those experiences. There is no single way in which people can overcome and work through their past, because the experiences of people are complex and multidimensional. Within this thesis, I examined how feelings and emotions of the Stasi and East German past are

evoked through humor in Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* and through the examination of paralanguage of a former Stasi Officer, Major S., and a protester, Uwe Schwabe who participated in the 1989 *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig, in the documentary films *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and *Das Wunder von Leipzig*. Furthermore, when the emotions and feelings are evoked, it is then that these individuals are actively working upon their pasts and keeping those past experiences and memories alive.

In Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* he utilizes humor, more specifically satire, sarcasm and offensive language to express his feelings, thoughts and criticisms about his DDR past. Dadlez made the connection that, "Irony and sarcasm, of course, always present us with a dissonance between literal and intended meanings, fitting the story put forward by incongruity theorists. And irony and sarcasm frequently figure in ridicule, moral criticism, and other expressions of contempt" (2011). Brussig is able to utilize the fictitious character Klaus Uhltscht to not only criticize and ridicule the former East German regime, but also to demonstrate his contempt for the way that they treated their own citizens. Klaus is the symbol of everything that is anti-Stasi and anti-DDR, because everything that he does and stands for, goes against the norms and what was expected of people in the DDR. It is evident through the utilization of metaphors and symbolism that Brussig was angry and contemptuous towards both the Stasi and the former East German regime, and is his way of working upon his own past.

The documentary films *Aus Liebe zum Volk* and *Das Wunder von Leipzig* also address the East German past, but in these films it is the paralinguistic characteristics of the narrator and a protester, Major S. and Uwe Schwabe, respectively, which evoke their feelings and emotions about their experiences and roles in the DDR. It is through this

evocation of emotions and feelings, where they are actively working upon the past. Furthermore, the Major and Mr. Schwabe are vehicles to demonstrate different perspectives and feelings, because they came from two different social classes and thus have differing thoughts and feelings about the Fall of the Wall and the DDR past. Due to the unique perspectives about the East German past, the documentary films are avenues for former East Germans of varying social and political backgrounds to be able to work upon the past.

The works which were analyzed and examined in this work are evidence that there is no single way to overcome traumatic experiences from the past. The experiences in these works are not common experiences, rather they are unique to former opponents of the State, former Stasi members and others that were directly impacted by the Stasi or the DDR regime. These are unique reflections of individual experiences, which are small components of a larger collective German memory, about the Stasi and DDR past. Furthermore, these works offer the victims and sufferers of the Stasi and the oppressive regime something which Adorno demanded: remembrance. Adorno's utilization of the term remembrance, not only focuses on collective memory, but it also focuses on individual memories, where people are able to work upon traumatic events from their pasts in their own unique ways. Whereas, memorials a national remembrance, but there is not always a personal connection to the events that memorials symbolize.

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