

Susanne Rinner  
Dissertation Abstract

***Erinnern und Erzählen: Die Darstellung der Studentenbewegung und des  
Nationalsozialismus in der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1989***

This thesis contributes to the discourse on memory by examining literary representations of the memories of the 1968 German student movement in novels published after the fall of the Berlin wall (1989) and German unification (1990). Through a close reading of the novels *Frühstück mit Max* by Ulrike Kolb (2000), *Der Vorleser* by Bernhard Schlink (1995), *Eduards Heimkehr* by Peter Schneider (1999) and *Rot* by Uwe Timm (2001) I argue that the narrators' memories of their own involvement in the student movement are connected to the memories and postmemories of National Socialism, thus forming an intricate layering of Germany's contested past in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The novels employ a variety of narrative features, including genre, point of view, the construction of duality between different narrative temporalities, in order to shed light on the links between remembering and forgetting, storytelling and silence. Additionally, the novels place the memories of the protest of the sixties against the Nazi past and the way that past was dealt with after 1945 through stories of love between the generations and between descendants of victims, perpetrators, bystanders and onlookers. Thus, the narrators as former members of the student movement not only confront their own biographies but, through the telling of their own stories of love, emphasize the importance of their former claim "the personal is the political". These contemporary novels not only contribute to the discourse on memory, but also to the discourse on the political, social and historical dimensions of the literary realm. By remembering and looking back, these novels stress the importance of a continuous engagement with the past, as well as point to the importance of a discourse of the past for the present. In particular, these novels point to failing attempts to construct one identity or to base identity on clearly defined, permanent criteria rather than allowing identity formation to be an ongoing, fluid, transformative and transforming process. The novels support this view not only through the construction of diverse, pluralistic and at times self-contradictory literary figures and narrators but also through the constant play of remembering, forgetting and self-reflective storytelling.