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"But Somehow it Was Only Television": West German Narratives of the Fall of the Wall in Recent Novels and their Screen Adaptations

East Germans have long been criticised for harbouring a feeling of *Ostalgie*, a nostalgia for their old, Socialist state, but only recently has it become apparent that many west Germans obviously experience a similar sense of loss and longing for a seemingly simpler time before reunification. The texts that express these feelings tend to focus on the fall of the Wall as the pivotal point of change in German post-war history. Typically the characters in these books deny the significance and impact of this major political event and strive to reduce its importance, at best to a minor television moment. This attitude can be observed in the novels *liegen lernen* and *Herr Lehmann* and in their film adaptations. Despite having been accused of indulging a feeling of *Westalgie*, a closer analysis reveals that they are in fact deliberately provocative and challenge eastern and western stereotypes. In addition the films find ways to transport the books' ironic narrative to the screen, and they also reinforce the authors' implicitly critical attitude towards their characters' political apathy by portraying the fall of the Wall in ways different to the books. The films react to the provocation voiced in the novels and function like an intertextual commentary as they integrate the opening of the border into a meaningful context for the protagonists and restore it to its historic importance.

The last few years have seen the publication of a number of novels, autobiographical narratives and non-fiction accounts that look back on Germany in the 1980s. Critics already speak of a "nostalgia boom of the eighties".¹ This trend, which seems to have been started by Florian Illies's *Generation Golf*² - an ironic portrait of his contemporaries linking the allegedly consumerist attitude of this generation to Volkswagen's launch of their Golf model in 1974 - can also be observed in recent film releases, such as Benjamin Quabeck's *Verschwende deine Jugend* [Waste Your Youth]³ and Hendrik Handloegten's *Paul Is Dead*,⁴ both set in West Germany in the early eighties. As Reinhard Mohr, himself the author of *Generation Z*,⁵ recently remarked in *Der Spiegel*, there generally seems to be "a wave of sentimental memories" passing through Germany, indicating a need for "collective recollection".⁶

It can be assumed that this development has in some ways been triggered by the political and social changes that Germany has undergone in recent years, in particular by the process of unification and its repercussions. The generation which experienced the fall of the Wall as young adults is now looking back on its childhood and youth. This is happening on both sides of the former border, and *Generation Golf* was swiftly followed by similar publications dedicated to the experience of growing up in the GDR - soon dubbed "Generation Trabant" by critics.⁷ Jakob Hein's *Mein erstes T-Shirt* [My First T-Shirt],⁸ Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder* [After the Wall]⁹ and Claudia Rusch's *Meine freie deutsche Jugend* [My Free German Youth]¹⁰ all present themselves as largely autobiographical accounts of East German adolescence.

This process of looking back and reviewing one's youth, which currently seems ubiquitous in both the German literary scene and the cinema, is necessarily different for east Germans than for their west German counterparts. In the rapid process of unification east Germans were subjected to drastic changes in their way of life and experienced a "profound displacement".¹¹ In addition to having to cope with the introduction of a different socio-political system and the inherent "strain of transformation"¹² they witnessed the "systematic devaluing"¹³ of their GDR past as part of a condemnatory discourse, dominated by the west. Accordingly, the integration of the five new *Länder* into the existing Federal Republic has been perceived by many in the east as a form of "colonisation".¹⁴ The people in the east feel "governed by foreign lords"¹⁵ and treated as "second class Germans."¹⁶

Confronted by a western verdict, which dismisses the GDR as "criminal, inefficient, ugly and a failure",¹⁷ and subjected to "a government-enforced memory politics that has reduced the socialist past to a totalitarian interval which is best forgotten",¹⁸ east Germans contend with this "demonisation of the GDR"¹⁹ and try to bridge the "gulf that has opened between the experience of everyday life in the GDR and the characterisation of the GDR in the official discourse of the post-*Wende* republic".²⁰ They reject this discourse, which is to some degree dominated by the debate surrounding the East German secret service *Stasi* and the involvement of many ordinary citizens in its extensive spy network,²¹ as defamatory and try to compensate for this new "absence of a past"²² that has been created by the "politics of amnesia about the socialist past".²³

The much quoted and often criticised²⁴ phenomenon of *Ostalgie*, a "nostalgia for the East",²⁵ for "its emblems and products",²⁶ is as much a defiant answer to this process of devaluation as it is a reaction to the fundamental changes east Germans have had to deal with. It represents "a productive self-empowerment of east Germans after the transformation crisis"²⁷ and has inspired a number of literary and cinematic works.

Particularly for the younger east German generation, who witnessed the *Wende* as children or adolescents, and for whom the debate surrounding the *Stasi* is of less relevance than for their parents, the re-evaluation of their youth is shaped by the "melancholic memory of what had been lost as the GDR went under".²⁸ The review of the recent past is for them an attempt to regain their lost childhood, which presents itself in the shape of a country that suddenly vanished,²⁹ as Jana Hensel explains:

Yesterday's [...] heroes are gone and since our childhood has been locked up in that nameless museum, there are no words left to describe them. And because the museum also has no address, I don't even know where to go find them.³⁰

Hensel, born in 1976, relates with some bitterness that whilst the east Germans of her generation "have been forced to assimilate into a foreign culture that's grown up on their native soil",³¹ their west German counterparts can return to their parents' house and find "everything just as they remember it".³² Polemically she adds that the west Germans of her generation who did not have to deal with the many deep changes she experienced "took a long time getting used to the fact that [the chocolate bar] Raider had changed its name to Twix".³³

Thomas Brussig, himself the author of two east German coming-of-age novels, *Helden wie wir* [*Heroes Like Us*]³⁴ and *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee* [*At the Shorter End of Sun Alley*],³⁵ confirms Hensel's view when he comments on the memoirs by west German authors of his generation:

I believe that these authors have a different point of departure when they take stock in their works. For them, what is today, represents only an extension of what used to be, and what is largely still valid now. There was never any rupture, only a change in fashions and trends, and for 16 years the country even had the same federal chancellor.³⁶

These statements suggest that the Kohl government was successful with its "'business-as-usual' approach to unity"³⁷ and that the west did not experience the *Wende* as a transformation.

However, this verdict is brought into question by the evidence of a strong western "need to assure themselves of their own personal history".³⁸ Since nostalgia occurs primarily in times of crisis³⁹ or in the aftermath of revolutions⁴⁰ and can be understood as "a longing for continuity in a fragmented world",⁴¹ this western 'memory boom' seems to indicate that west Germans ultimately recognised the "illusion that unification meant business as usual"⁴² for what it was. Reunification marked the end of both the GDR and the old federal republic. As Rudy Koshar rightly remarks: "There is a sense of a break, of a coming to an end of West Germany as well as of East Germany."⁴³

Taking into account Svetlana Boym's observation, that the phenomenon of nostalgia represents a "rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress",⁴⁴ it seems hardly surprising that west Germans should now begin to cultivate a counter movement or a complimentary phenomenon to *Ostalgie*, and indulge in a sentimental remembrance of the old federal republic. Life in West Germany before the *Wende* was significantly shaped by the political immobility of the Cold War and, as Susanne Leinemann points out, the "feeling of stagnation" which "enveloped the country when Helmut Kohl was re-elected"⁴⁵ in 1986. West Germany in the 1980s offered the "clear borders and values" nostalgics long for.⁴⁶

Florian Illies has referred to the 1980s as a "gigantic continuous loop"⁴⁷ and believes them to be "definitely the most boring decade of the 20th century":⁴⁸ "Everybody was relatively well off, you were hardly afraid any more and when you turned on the television you would always see Helmut Kohl",⁴⁹ he remarks. He also notes his generation's "strange affinity to the retrospective",⁵⁰ combined with "the longing to preserve the status quo"⁵¹ and the need "to know what belongs where".⁵² According to Illies the young people of the 1980s, his so-called "generation Golf", did not wish to escape the "stagnation" lamented by Leinemann. Instead they now long for a return to the "life in the continuous loop"⁵³ and compensate this unattainable goal by "celebrating their own childhood"⁵⁴ and its memory in books and films. "It seems that after the wave of *Ostalgie* we can now expect a wave of *Westalgie*",⁵⁵ commented Christiane Hoffmans in *Welt am Sonntag*.

These allegedly 'westalgie' books and films enjoy a significant success on the current market clearly because they meet the expectations of an audience that "is fixated on everything retro".⁵⁶ Created against the background of Germany's current social and economic problems - i.e. written "from a crumbling plateau, from a time of crisis" - they fulfil the "need to reassure oneself"⁵⁷ felt so strongly in west German society. Significantly most of these works deal in some shape or form with the fall of the Wall, the event that put an end to the old federal republic, and can therefore be called "*Wende* novel[s] from a western perspective".⁵⁸

Two recent popular novels, Sven Regener's *Herr Lehmann [Berlin Blues]*⁵⁹ und Frank Goosen's *liegen lernen* [learning to lie],⁶⁰ which have both been successfully adapted for the big screen,⁶¹ belong to this group. They both seem to confirm Illies's verdict that the generation which was growing up in the 1980s share a "love of the superficial",⁶² and an attitude towards politics and history which is "devoid of emotion".⁶³

Both the films and the novels they are based on, have been criticised for what Peter Körte calls "turning one's own unspectacular youth into material for fiction".⁶⁴ Whilst critics have accused *liegen lernen*'s director Hendrik Handloegten of "having wasted his talent" in making Frank Goosen's unpalatable "*Storyquark*" into a film,⁶⁵ the actress Heike Makatsch, born in 1971 and herself a member of 'generation Golf', published an enthusiastic review of the film in *Der Spiegel*, claiming she felt "caught out" by it and

recognised herself in it.⁶⁶ This statement again emphasises the extent to which these works fulfil a primarily self-assuring function - almost regardless of their literary quality.

In *Herr Lehmann* the reader follows the protagonist in the weeks immediately preceding the opening of the border. Like many of the books that focus on the 1980s *Herr Lehmann* is a "coming-of-age story".⁶⁷ However, the main character Frank Lehmann, a bohemian vagabond,⁶⁸ is in fact long past his teenage years and demonstrates the phenomenon of an "extended adolescence"⁶⁹ typical of these books - and characteristic of the modern nostalgic in general.⁷⁰ Helmut Hermes, the protagonist in *liegen lernen*, similarly strikes the pose of the "permanent teenager".⁷¹ In Regener's book the original German title of the novel already hints at this issue. Recently Frank's friends and colleagues have started addressing him as "Mr. Lehmann" - "because word had got around that he would soon be thirty".⁷² His imminent birthday on 9 November 1989 forms the hidden "gravitational centre" of the novel: "The day of the fall of the Wall is also the day when Herr Lehmann's idle existence must come to an end."⁷³

Regener begins his novel with a symbolic episode to express the fact that the protagonist lives at the end of an era. Early in the morning, walking home from work in one of Kreuzerg's many pubs Herr Lehmann's path is crossed by a threatening dog that will not let him pass. This animal re-appears sporadically throughout the book and the film. The figure of the dog traditionally symbolises "transience" and "the coming to an end"⁷⁴ in many cultures. Herr Lehmann may not know it yet, but his life as an "FRG avoider"⁷⁵ is about to end. He "meanders through Berlin's nightlife in the weeks just before the fall of the Wall",⁷⁶ leading an "insular existence"⁷⁷ in the Kreuzberg scene which will die with - or at least be radically transformed by - the *Wende*.

Herr Lehmann enjoys the fact that he escaped his old life as an office worker in the north of Germany and that his parents in Bremen are "two national frontiers and several hundred kilometres away".⁷⁸ Unlike them he is comfortable with the political 'state of emergency' that has become normality in 1980s West Berlin. On the other hand he has never really left home. He regularly keeps in touch with his mother by phone, and his substantial consumption of Beck's Bier from the Bremen brewery also forms a tie with his home town. When he falls in love with Katrin, "the beautiful chef",⁷⁹ who works in one of his favourite pubs, it is characteristic that the object of his affection also comes from near Bremen. Katrin's voluptuous, maternal figure is equally significant. When "the woman he loved and the woman who was his mother"⁸⁰ meet, they get on brilliantly and immediately start exchanging recipes for roast pork. At one stage Herr Lehmann even directly compares Katrin to his mother⁸¹ and inadvertently emphasises Katrin's role as a mother substitute.

His unhappy love affair with Katrin aside, throughout the novel the reader witnesses Herr Lehmann "gliding undramatically through his own existence".⁸² His life is essentially an extended interim state. He is a "barman without ambitions",⁸³ who rejects discussions about his alleged lack of a purpose in life by making mockingly philosophical and linguistic remarks about the word *Lebensinhalt*.⁸⁴ In contrast to the unsuccessful artists and eternal students who frequent the pubs of Kreuzberg, biding time and waiting for their big break, Herr Lehmann does not even pretend to have any goals in life. When asked if he is a student, he decisively answers "certainly not".⁸⁵ He "likes everything to stay the same"⁸⁶ and always hopes that "tomorrow will be roughly like today"⁸⁷ - but then history intervenes.

Helmut Hermes in *liegen lernen* shares Herr Lehmann's need for "some things to stay the way they've always been".⁸⁸ Helmut also rejects life as a responsible adult. Unlike *Herr Lehmann*, which ends with the fall of the Wall, Helmut's story stretches over the entire

period his namesake Helmut Kohl was in office,⁸⁹ but in a similar way to Herr Lehmann, who emotionally never really left Bremen, Helmut is stuck in his experiences of the early 1980s. This attitude is exemplified by his relationship to his first love. He can never forget his first girlfriend Britta, the daughter of artistic parents who raised her in the spirit of the 1968 student rebellion and whose liberal sexual behaviour and alternative lifestyle deeply impressed Helmut with his bourgeois *Ruhrgebiet* upbringing. As a man who does not like change and at the same time tries to avoid commitment, Helmut reluctantly drifts from one girlfriend to the next and never manages to rid himself off his fixation for Britta, who dumped him when he was 16. Throughout his life he stays in his hometown, turning from school pupil into university student, from postgraduate student into lecturer, without showing much evidence of inner development.

Goosen's novel comments on Helmut's life journey through the eighties and nineties mainly through the means of atmospheric name dropping. Lists of brand names, fashion accessories, contemporary television personalities and references to pop music replace descriptions and account for a "strangely lifeless"⁹⁰ quality in the writing. The adaptation by Handloegten, who had already proven his aptness for a meticulously faithful reconstruction of the early 1980s in his screen debut *Paul is dead* visualises in the film what is only quoted and hinted at in the book. This lends a strong nostalgic quality to the film but it also emphasises the extent to which Handloegten is more interested in form than in content. Consequently he has been criticised for "reducing his reappraisal of the eighties to a faithfully reconstructed film set, lovingly chosen decor and the right choice of pop records".⁹¹

However, Handloegten's superficial treatment of life in the 1980s only corresponds to the shallow way it is described in Goosen's novel which flippantly compares the making of life changing decisions to the process of choosing a chocolate bar at the super market till - also mentioning "Raider" as the now elusive chocolate treat of the 1980s.⁹² This superficial attitude and somewhat cynical approach to life is similar to Herr Lehmann's habit of "constantly engaging in discussions with himself or linguistic debates with others",⁹³ with the effect of deflecting from the subject in question, for instance when he ponders on his relationship with his ex-girlfriend:

Her name was Birgit, and she'd 'gone with him', or however one chose to describe it, for about two weeks. At least, that was what Herr Lehmann had thought, whereas she had announced, when the two weeks were up, that they'd never really 'gone with' each other [...]. 'Going with' - that was what she used to call it, Herr Lehmann remembered, and a pretty questionable turn of phrase it was, when you came down to it.⁹⁴

These "endless monologues and attempts to clarify his thoughts" must be regarded as a strategy to avoid intellectual debates and seem to provide evidence of Herr Lehmann's shallow personality, but they also have to be recognised as "the hero's verbal quest for orientation".⁹⁵ Like Helmut in *liegen lernen* Herr Lehmann is trying to make sense of the world and "get a grip of the chaos".⁹⁶ His 'emigration' from Bremen to Kreuzberg is more than just an escape strategy "to avoid a society centred on performance and achievement",⁹⁷ his conscious decision to limit his life to only one district of West Berlin - bohemian Kreuzberg, which he hates to leave even if it is only to go shopping in adjacent Neukölln⁹⁸ - is taken in an attempt to make his world comprehensible and manageable. As the destiny of Herr Lehmann's "best friend Karl"⁹⁹ illustrates, who suffers a nervous breakdown half way through the novel, even in the Kreuzberg of the late 1980s life is not

as simple as it may seem. Not surprisingly Herr Lehmann makes a point of not getting involved in potentially confusing political issues.

Ironically, Herr Lehmann, who is living "in the shadow of the Wall",¹⁰⁰ and Helmut Hermes, a student of history, politics and German literature, both show a marked indifference to political developments in general and the German question in particular. As a teenager Helmut travels to Berlin on one of the government funded school trips that were very common in the 1980s. In the divided city this boy from the far west of Germany is faced with the Wall as an actual, physical object for the first time. He ascertains once and for all that the Wall is definitely not a "temporary barrier",¹⁰¹ and he is traumatised when threatened by a border guard with a gun. This episode irrevocably shapes his experience of the border between the two Germanies. In later years Helmut sees no need to question the permanence of the division between East and West. When the unexpected political changes in the East are beginning to take place - a process which even the disinterested TV junky Helmut cannot completely ignore - he treats history as a mildly boring form of reality TV and observes the unfolding events without any sign of emotion:

A lot of people did not want to stay in the other Germany. With carrier bags in their hands they climbed the fences of some embassy or other and stayed there. I pushed crisps into my mouth and asked myself why these people did not at least have proper suitcases.¹⁰²

Neither do Herr Lehmann's friends and colleagues consider the situation in the East a topic worthy of discussion. When his parents talk to him about the protest demonstrations he says: "It doesn't have any bearing on life in West Berlin. We aren't affected in the least."¹⁰³ Characteristically and ironically only Karl, who is suffering from mental illness, states: "We need to devote more time to the east".¹⁰⁴

When the Wall actually comes down the main characters in both novels still react with equanimity and try to treat this important incident, whenever possible, as a non-event. Herr Lehmann reacts to the news and his colleague Sylvio's half-hearted suggestion "We ought to take a look" by saying: "Let's drink up first, though".¹⁰⁵ Helmut shows a similar composure, asking his girlfriend: "Another piece of melon?"¹⁰⁶ before turning off the news and putting on a pre-recorded videotape. To Helmut - and many of his compatriots¹⁰⁷ - the political developments only seem to be happening on television and are distinctly distant:

I turned on the television. The Wall everywhere. People were sitting on the Wall. [...] Nobody was getting shot. [...] A man in a thick Saxon accent said that all this was amazing. And still there was no shooting. Well, that was all quite remarkable, but somehow it was only television. [...] When I looked out of the window I saw the same cars and the same people. [...] Maybe it was "amazing" for the man from Saxony. As far as I could tell most people in my street were at most scratching their balls.¹⁰⁸

What Helmut sees on television does not conform to his concept of the Wall as an insurmountable barrier where people get shot if they rebel or misbehave. Interestingly however he does not attempt to correct his idea of the Wall in view of the events. Instead he reacts with a detached disbelief. He then goes on a second trip to Berlin but not to see the changes up close and to assure himself of the unfolding events. The reason for his journey is to see Britta, the unforgotten love of his teenage years whom he still idolises to an increasingly absurd degree, and who, as he has recently learned, now lives in the city: "Britta. Of course she was in Berlin. She had probably opened the Wall. Who else had so

much power?"¹⁰⁹ His reunion with Britta, who has left her parents' converted farmhouse for a mundane flat in the conservative middle class district of Wilmersdorf is disappointing. However, even after Helmut discovers that Britta was also having an affair with his best friend Mücke, when she was going out with him, and even though she openly shows that she is not interested in him anymore, Helmut is not prepared to change his idealised image of her. In the meantime the political events continue to unfold in the background. Even in Berlin itself the opening of the Wall does not become real for Helmut who firmly remains in his detached position: "People talked about what was happening. Everybody knew it from TV. I couldn't join in the conversation."¹¹⁰ Both the fall of the Wall, which he experiences "as a disinterested bystander",¹¹¹ and the reunion with Britta, which strangely fails to disillusion him about her callous personality, are missed opportunities for Helmut who in the end returns to the *Ruhrgebiet* and quietly continues his unspectacular life.

After the *Wende* Helmut spends another eight uneventful years in deepest west Germany during which time he alarmingly starts to resemble and act like his bourgeois father.¹¹² Only when his girlfriend Tina becomes pregnant does Helmut, after going through a deep personal crisis, finally reluctantly accept life as an adult. For Herr Lehmann, however, the fall of the Wall has more immediate consequences. He is in a pub drinking when the news spreads. Characteristically Haußmann's adaptation here departs from the book and, despite the vicinity of the Wall, in the film the characters witness the event first on a tiny black and white television screen. A good while later Herr Lehmann listlessly walks to a nearby checkpoint. He is disappointed by what he sees: "People were crossing the border on foot, quite peacefully, one after another, and going on their way. There's no real atmosphere, thought Herr Lehmann."¹¹³

Despite this dispassionate reaction, the fall of the Wall is the (anticlimactic) turning point of the plot in *Herr Lehmann*. It puts an end to Herr Lehmann's previous existence. He realises that Kreuzberg as he knows it will soon be "a lost country"¹¹⁴ and that the time has come "to make a completely fresh start".¹¹⁵

The ostentatious equanimity with which the fall of the Wall is greeted in these two novels and their screen adaptations shows that this major political event clearly "means very little to the West German heroes".¹¹⁶ Since both Herr Lehmann and Helmut are to a large extent meant to be typical representatives of their generation, the apathy they show when confronted with the most important historical occurrence of their time "raises the question as to whether this disinterest in the events that preceded the opening of the Wall may have been a common attitude in West Germany and particularly in West Berlin".¹¹⁷ Characteristically the *Wende* is hardly mentioned in Illies' *Generation Golf*¹¹⁸ - a fact which seems to support this theory. Similarly Jana Hensel talks about a west German friend who displays an attitude, which closely resembles that of Helmut and Herr Lehmann, when he tells her that "the whole *Ostscheiß*, or 'East bullshit,' as he put it, really got on his nerves. [...] Even on the night that the borders had first been opened, he'd have preferred to watch the spectacle on TV rather than live on the streets".¹¹⁹ With regret Susanne Leinemann comments on her West German generation's lukewarm reactions to the fall of the Wall in the West:

But this event was so incredible. It should have shaped all of us who were there. At the very least. In fact it should have transformed us - in the west, too. [...] 1989 was the hour of our generation. But we did not seize it. [...] I was walking around, I was there, I saw, I heard - and yet the feeling kept creeping up on me that I was observing a strange happening from the outside. A distance remained, as if the igniting spark had not quite jumped across. [...]

I was happy to be there but a part of me remained quite cool and detached.¹²⁰

These observations reflect a strong emotional disengagement from the events and even seem to indicate a desire to control them by confining them to the television screen.

This suggests that western readers of novels like *Herr Lehmann* and *liegen lernen* are expected to recognise themselves in the apathy the characters display when confronted with the opening of the Wall and identify with the characters. At the same time this identification is made impossible by the dialogue which in parts is exaggerated to the extreme and borders on farce: "The Wall is open." "Oh, shit."¹²¹ This clearly indicates that - despite its seeming realism - the casual way in which Herr Lehmann accepts the opening of the Wall at the end of the book is in fact "intended as a provocation".¹²² The realisation that *Herr Lehmann* is obviously designed as an "anti *Wende* novel"¹²³ should not distract from the author's ironic, and therefore critical, treatment of the protagonist and his approach to life and to politics.

Herr Lehmann's relationship with Katrin ultimately breaks down because of his inflexible attitude and his scepticism about the future. Travelling to East Berlin to take care of some family business for his parents Herr Lehmann is caught trying to smuggle Western currency across the border and is sent straight back to West Berlin instead of meeting up with Katrin in the East as they had planned. Katrin consequently leaves him for "Kristall Rainer", one of the punters in Herr Lehmann's pub, who has been following her around for weeks. "At least he made it across the border",¹²⁴ she says, defending her decision and implicitly criticising Herr Lehmann for his insular West Berlin lifestyle. Significantly Rainer is a computer specialist while Herr Lehmann, as well as Helmut Hermes, with their backwards approach to life, fail to realise the future importance of computers. For Helmut, IT specialists have "the status of pitiable madmen"¹²⁵ and Herr Lehmann emphatically stresses that he "could not conceive of anything more boring and perverse, dreary and unglamorous than being a computer technician".¹²⁶

The protagonists' unawareness of current trends that will shape the future form one dimension of the novels' ironic quality. The use of irony is central to the narration in both novels, and the comedy of the books largely stems from the distance between the narrator and the characters. Regener uses a third person narrator who tells Herr Lehmann's story from a strictly personal perspective: The narrator remains invisible as a person, everything is related from the point of view of the protagonist, only situations in which Herr Lehmann is present are described, the reader gets to know the main character's thoughts. Normally this narrative technique produces an "impression of immediacy"¹²⁷ and minimises the distance between the character and the narrator as well as the distance between the character and the reader. Regener's narrator, however, produces a different effect by continuously referring to his protagonist as "Herr Lehmann". By using this formal address, which the character vehemently rejects,¹²⁸ the narrator assumes a stand-offish position. The novel also displays an interesting lack of narrated monologue. Throughout the book Regener gives his readers an insight into Frank Lehmann's innermost thoughts and feelings but he always inserts a distancing "thought Herr Lehmann" when relating the many self-discussions and inner musings of his protagonist.¹²⁹ In combination with the pervasive "laconic vein"¹³⁰ of the narrative this achieves to some degree a mildly distanced attitude which at the same time still generates "sympathy for the protagonist"¹³¹ and has prompted critics to praise Regener for succeeding in creating a "sentimental laconism".¹³²

The narration in Goosen's *liegen lernen* also has a strongly ironic quality. The many overt references to a typical 1980s childhood and youth invite readers of Goosen's generation to

a nostalgic identification with Helmut, the first-person narrator. But at the same time he is characterised as a not very likeable person of dubious morals. Without a vision or convictions of any kind Helmut drifts through life. His antics are nonchalantly related in paratactic sentences and a strictly descriptive narrative style devoid of any reflections on Helmut's behaviour or decisions. The first person narrator's shallow attitude toward relationships is further characterised by his use of cheap jokes in pivotal situations. After Helmut's girlfriend Gisela catches him in bed with their flatmate Barbara, she starts to question him: "'Do you love her then?' 'No.' 'And what about me?' 'No idea. Do you love her?'"¹³³ Helmut does not seem too concerned about his moral misbehaviour. He rejects the responsibility for his actions and in one of the few comments on his behaviour says laconically: "I knew I was an arsehole but I did not know what I should do about it."¹³⁴ Confronted with this attitude the audience is implicitly expected to criticise Helmut and to distance themselves from him.

This pervasive presence of irony in both books, which above all is used to implicitly criticise the protagonists' apathetic reaction to the fall of the Wall, represents a challenge for the filmmakers who adapted the novels for the screen. The adaptations deal with this problem in different ways. Both films try to translate the authors' ironic attitude towards their characters into the medium of film. Handloegten made a classic choice in deciding to retain Goosen's first-person narrator and use traditional voice-overs by Helmut to comment on the action.¹³⁵ Haußmann was confronted with the more difficult task of transferring Regener's subtly ironic attitude towards his anti-hero to the screen. One of the director's strategies was to create a contrast between form and content by choosing a wide screen format for a film which mainly takes place in cramped pubs. Haußmann tells the unspectacular story of a man who tries to live a quiet life and prefers to be left in peace in epic Cinemascope.¹³⁶

In addition to turning what could be termed a 'narrow' story into a wide screen film Haußmann and Charlotte Goltermann, who was responsible for the musical concept of the film, carefully produced a diegetic soundtrack that often acts as an ironic commentary. Unlike Handloegten who reinforces the nostalgic quality of *liegen lernen* by actually playing the 1980s pop songs that are mentioned in the book, Haußmann anachronistically uses music from other decades and even includes a number of songs that were written post 1989. As Goltermann emphasises in an interview contained on the DVD, most of them relate to Herr Lehmann's general state of mind and quite accurately mirror his feelings. However, the distance between Herr Lehmann's strictly mid-1980s cultural tastes¹³⁷ and the use of 1990s songs is noticeable, as is the irony when Herr Lehmann's tragic relationship break-up with Katrin is accompanied by the song "Bella ciao". When the end of the film has Herr Lehmann slowly coming to terms with the fall of the Wall and its effects on his life, "I will survive" is playing in the background and again provides an ironic commentary.

It is this decidedly ironic approach to the 1980s in general and the protagonists' struggles in particular that prevents these films from being purely nostalgic. As Peter Körte has rightly remarked "these films aren't glossy enough to be nostalgic".¹³⁸ Both the novels and their adaptations do not merely reconstruct an attitude from 15 years ago, they also criticise it. These works clearly want to achieve more than just to "evoke collective sighs of recognition".¹³⁹ At the same time Michael Althen's accusation that *liegen lernen* and other films "never go where it hurts"¹⁴⁰ is not unfounded. These stories are not as blindly nostalgic as some critics claim, but they prefer to reconcile rather than accuse. In fact, by implicitly criticising Herr Lehmann's and Helmut's indifference towards the political

changes in the East the novels and their adaptations strive to bring the east and the west closer together.

At first it seems surprising that east German authors such as Brussig should speak of "reliving their own memories",¹⁴¹ when reading *liegen lernen*. *Herr Lehmann's* east German director even claims that *Herr Lehmann* is all about things he knows well¹⁴² and Haußmann provocatively adds: "Suddenly people said to me: 'But you're from the east.' So what?"¹⁴³ However, this appropriation of supposedly 'westalgie' memories by an east German audience is already implicitly present in the novels which reveal the differences between east and west to be a psychological construct. Immediately after the fall of the Wall the old characteristics that used to be assigned to the east and the west become doubtful and almost interchangeable. Helmut's former school friend Mücke whose *Spätaussiedler* parents moved to West Germany from Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and who now lives in West Berlin is "taken for an Ossi [east German]"¹⁴⁴ and given money by benevolent westerners. In Regener's novel *Herr Lehmann's* formerly East German colleague Sylvio joins in a discussion of Michael Anderson's film *Logan's Run*¹⁴⁵ and makes the confusing and almost absurd comment: "I know that film. I saw it on West German TV when I was still in the east."¹⁴⁶ The confusion about what is eastern and what is western becomes an ironic issue in both novels.

The films continue this blurring of boundaries on a different level by casting the west German singer Tim Fischer as Sylvio in *Herr Lehmann* and by having the east German actor Florian Lukas play the part of Mücke in *liegen lernen*. Already in his first film *Sonnenallee* [Sun Alley]¹⁴⁷ which can in many respects be regarded as a precursor and "counterpart"¹⁴⁸ to *Herr Lehmann*, Haußmann achieved a subversive effect by deliberately casting well-known west German actors in the roles of socialist figures of authority: Margit Carstensen portrays the school's head mistress and Detlev Buck stars as the ABV [district policeman]. In *Herr Lehmann* Haußmann uses the same method to demonstrate the possibility of reversing authority and power structures by casting Brussig as an East German customs officer. This way he draws attention to the fact that the fixed ideas about east and west are losing their validity and reinforces their deconstruction. Another example of this technique is Haußmann's use of Steffi Kühnert (who played an *FDJ* youth leader in *Sonnenallee* and is probably best known to audiences as one of the leads in Andreas Dresen's *Halbe Treppe*, set in Frankfurt an der Oder) as a drunk who announces the opening of the border to Herr Lehmann, Sylvio and other punters in a West Berlin pub. This strategy of opening up categories is particularly powerful and used to great comic effect in the case of Karsten Speck whom Haußmann casts against the grain in more than one way. Speck, the East German TV entertainer and ladies man plays "Leder-Uschi" [leather pansy]¹⁴⁹ Detlev who throws Herr Lehmann and his friends out of his gay bar in West Berlin. In a similar way to Haußmann, Handloegten challenges the audience's expectations and pursues a playful approach to the familiar east/west categories and characteristics throughout his film. This is reflected in the choice of his two leads, Fabian Busch as Helmut and Susanne Bormann as Britta, who were last seen as a couple playing East German high school students in Dresen's TV movie *Raus aus der Haut* (1997). Both films use their casting as a tool to mirror and reinforce the way in which the novels question the validity of east-western differences.¹⁵⁰ In that respect they remain close to the novels and convey the same meaning using methods that only film offers.

This may explain why critics have felt that the film versions of *Liegen lernen* (script by Handloegten) and *Herr Lehmann* (script by Regener) do not take enough risks and are all too "faithful adaptations"¹⁵¹ of the novels. However, in one important point both films depart from the novels: they create endings that roughly follow the descriptions in the book

but at the same time introduce some significant changes. The fall of the Wall and its treatment are central to these changes.

In both the novel and the film of *liegen lernen* Helmut finally accepts his girlfriend Tina's pregnancy and is forced to face up to the fact that Britta, the love of his life, has been reduced to a "phantom"¹⁵² - with the film providing a more convincing confrontational scene than the book.¹⁵³ However, the question remains unanswered as to why Helmut should suddenly be ready to give up his existence as "an irresponsible, sexdriven arsehole who is incapable of commitment"¹⁵⁴ in favour of family life with Tina. It is largely unclear as to why Tina of all people should be the right woman for him. The film closes this gap with an additional scene. Its significance is emphasised by the fact that it occurs twice and almost functions as a frame to the film's narrative. Handloegten uses it towards the beginning of the film and returns to it at the end. When Helmut first meets Tina she asks him: "Where were you on 9 November 1989?"¹⁵⁵ He answers: "I was there, in Berlin, on top of the Wall, at the Brandenburg Gate."¹⁵⁶ Helmut's voice-over commentary then explains: "But that was not true. On that particular night I was lying in bed with a woman, watching a video."¹⁵⁷ It is only when the scene is used the second time that the audience hears Tina's unimpressed answer: "Come on - don't give me that shit".¹⁵⁸ At the end of *liegen lernen* Helmut has not given up his indifference to politics but at least he has found a woman who sees through him and will not be "impressed by transparent lies".¹⁵⁹ Helmut has finally stopped chasing Britta who in his mind was connected to his adolescence and has found a woman with whom he can start a family because she can relate to his experiences as an adult, in particular to the fall of the Wall and his reaction to it. The opening of the border which has little bearing on Helmut's life in the book is given a much more dominant position in the film when ironically Helmut's disappointing nonchalance towards this major event in German history helps him to finally grow up and find a suitable partner.

Similarly, the adaptation of *Herr Lehmann* reacts to the provocation of the novel, which portrays the opening of the border simultaneously as a historic rupture and a trivial event. In his interpretation of the story Haußmann provides the definitive filmic version of the fall of the Wall. Recent publications on the theory of literary adaptation have emphasised the intertextual nature of the complicated relationship between book and film and have analysed adaptation as a form of literary commentary.¹⁶⁰ In *Herr Lehmann* the film reacts to the fact that in the novel "the event of the century, the East German revolution, is so conspicuously absent until the penultimate chapter of the book that this gap develops a strong dynamics in the consciousness of the reader".¹⁶¹ The film juxtaposes the deliberately unspectacular and anti-climactic turning-point in Herr Lehmann's life as described in the novel with a colourful happening. In a camp finale that seems like a follow-on from the collective dance and peaceful uproar next to the Wall in *Sonnenallee*, all the characters, surrounded by lots of people from the west and the east, with Trabant cars sounding their horns, gather at the Wall which - in a speeding up of events emphasising the stylisation of this iconic scene - is already being pulled down. Thus the film departs from the novel by replacing the conspicuous void which the fall of the Wall represents in the book with a big celebration. This significant change results in a much more open criticism of the protagonists' complacent and disinterested attitude towards the *Wende* than the book provides and has to be understood as the director's intertextual comment on the novel.¹⁶²

It can be concluded that the current trend in German cinema and in popular novels to look back to the 1980s in a nostalgic manner reflects an attempt to fight the feeling of "loss and unreality"¹⁶³ that has been experienced since the end of the Cold War, and it has produced

"pictures of a vanished country on both sides of the Wall".¹⁶⁴ In the east the people's need to reassure themselves of their almost forgotten every day experiences in the GDR has produced the phenomenon of *Ostalgie*. But the west is nostalgic in its own way for the old federal republic and tries to play down the importance of the fall of the Wall as a "historic break [...] which also shaped western biographies".¹⁶⁵ Authors who are mourning the loss of the old FRG and have caught themselves and their generation with a politically incorrect indifference towards the *Wende* and its events, position the fall of the Wall as a blind spot at the centre of their works. This is the case of *liegen lernen* and *Herr Lehmann*. The screen adaptations of both books take on this provocation. These films provide an intertextual answer to the novels by integrating the fall of the Wall into a meaningful context in *liegen lernen*, and by replacing the seeming non-event of the opening of the Wall in the novel *Herr Lehmann* with a full-on celebration in the film. Therefore both films vehemently deny the lack of meaning appropriated to the fall of the Wall by the protagonists and restore it to its rightful place in German history. At the same time the films reinforce the way the perceived differences between east and west are treated as a construct in the books by mirroring this in their casting which challenges the audience's expectations. In doing so they strive for a conciliatory smoothing of differences and – even more so than the books – defy a purely 'westalgie' interpretation. In their own way these films attempt to bridge the gulf between east Germans who cling to a country they have lost and west Germans who feel less than enthusiastic about the effects of reunification by re-emphasising the importance of the fall of the Wall for Germany as a whole.

- ¹ [Ein Achtziger-Jahre-Nostalgie-Boom] Gerda Wurzenberger: Wann wird ein Mann zum Mann? *Liegen lernen* – eine ernst gemeinte deutsche Komödie. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. 17 October 2003. P. 45. Unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.
- ² Florian Illies: *Generation Golf. Eine Inspektion*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2001.
- ³ Sebastian Quabeck (director), Ralf Hertwig / Katrin Richter (script): *Verschwende deine Jugend*, Claussen + Wöbke (production) 2003. Dvd: Constantin film 2004.
- ⁴ Hendrik Handloegten (director / script): *Paul Is Dead*, X-Filme (production) 2000 [not released on dvd or video].
- ⁵ Reinhard Mohr: *Generation Z oder von der Zumutung, älter zu werden*. Berlin: Argon 2003.
- ⁶ [Eine Welle sentimentaler Erinnerungen geht durchs Land [...]. [Es] werden vor allem die siebziger und achtziger Jahre in kollektiver Rückbesinnung beschworen.] Reinhard Mohr: Soundtrack eines Soziotops. *Herr Lehmann*, Leander Haußmanns Romanverfilmung, ist Milieustudie und Männerfilm. In: *Der Spiegel*. 29 September 2003. P. 152.
- ⁷ Claus-Ulrich Bielefeld: Generation Trabant. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 13 November 2001. P. 18.
- ⁸ Jakob Hein: *Mein erstes T-Shirt*. München / Zürich: Piper 2001.
- ⁹ Jana Hensel: *Zonenkinder*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 2002. English edition: Jana Hensel: *After the Wall. Confessions from an East German Childhood and the Life that Came Next*. Translated by Jefferson Chase. New York: PublicAffairs 2004.
- ¹⁰ Claudia Rusch: *Meine freie deutsche Jugend*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2003.
- ¹¹ Daphne Berdahl: "(N)Ostalgie" for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things. In: *Ethnos* 64 (1999). Pp. 192-211, here: p. 202.
- ¹² [Transformationsbelastungen] Thomas Ahbe: Ostalgie und die Lücke in der gesellschaftlichen Produktion von Erinnerungen. In: *Hochschule Ost* 10 (2001). Pp. 143-157, here: p. 147.
- ¹³ Berdahl: p. 195. See Claudia Sadowski-Smith: Post-Cold War Narratives of Nostalgia. In: *The Comparatist*. 23 (1999). Pp. 117-127, here p. 122.
- ¹⁴ [Kolonialisierung] Thomas Ahbe: Ostalgie als Selbstermächtigung. Zur produktiven Stabilisierung ostdeutscher Identität. In: *Deutschland Archiv*. 30 (1997). Pp. 614-619, here: p. 614.
- ¹⁵ [Von fremden Herren regiert] Ahbe: *Ostalgie und die Lücke*, p. 148.
- ¹⁶ [Deutsche zweiter Klasse] Ahbe: *Ostalgie und die Lücke*, p. 147.
- ¹⁷ [Der Befund der verbrecherischen, ineffizienten, häßlichen und gescheiterten DDR] Thomas Ahbe: Zwiespältige Bilanz. Über Ostalgie und ihre Gründe. In: *Universitas*. 54 (1999). Pp. 339-351, here: p. 350.
- ¹⁸ Claudia Sadowski-Smith: *Post-Cold War Narratives of Nostalgia*, p. 122.
- ¹⁹ [Dämonisierung der DDR] Ahbe: *Zwiespältige Bilanz*, p. 339.
- ²⁰ [Riß, der sich zwischen der Alltagserfahrung in der DDR und der Beschreibung der DDR im Offizialdiskurs der Nachwende-Republik auftut] *Ibid.*, p. 350.
- ²¹ See Claudia Sadowski-Smith: Post-Cold War Narratives of Nostalgia, p. 122.
- ²² [Vergangenheitslosigkeit] Ahbe: *Ostalgie als Selbstermächtigung*, p. 618.
- ²³ Claudia Sadowski-Smith: *Ostalgie: Revaluing the Past, Regressing into the Future*. In: *GDR Bulletin*. 25 (1998). Pp. 1-6, here: p. 3.
- ²⁴ See Leander Haußmann: Es kam dicke genug. In: *Der Spiegel*. 8 September 2003. P. 220.
- ²⁵ Berdahl, p. 192.

- ²⁶ [Eine irgendwie sentimentale Rückwendung zur DDR, ihren Emblemen und Produkten] Ahbe: *Zwiespältige Bilanz*, p. 339.
- ²⁷ [Eine produktive Selbstermächtigung der Ostdeutschen nach der Transformationskrise] Ahbe: *Ostalgie als Selbstermächtigung*, p. 619.
- ²⁸ Rudy Koshar: The Shock of "It Was": Memory and German Unification. In: Gaines Post (ed.): *German Unification: Problems and Prospects*. Cambridge: Claremont 1992. Pp. 5-25, here: p. 15.
- ²⁹ See *After the Wall*, p. 27. *Zonenkinder*, p. 33.
- ³⁰ *After the Wall*, p. 16. [Unsere Helden von damals leben schon lange nicht mehr, und weil unsere Kindheit ein Museum ohne Namen ist, fehlen mir die Worte dafür; weil das Haus keine Adresse hat, weiß ich nicht, welchen Weg ich einschlagen soll, und komme ich in keiner Kindheit mehr an.] *Zonenkinder*, p. 25.
- ³¹ *After the Wall*, p. 42. [Wie ich waren auch sie bemüht, sich dauerhaft in einer Fremdheit einzurichten, die sich auf dem Boden des Heimatlandes ausbreitete] *Zonenkinder*, p. 45.
- ³² *After the Wall*, p. 15. [Alles noch [...] an seinem Platz] *Zonenkinder*, p. 23
- ³³ [Sie hätten lange gebraucht, sich daran zu gewöhnen, dass Raider nicht mehr Raider, sondern irgendwann Twix hieß]. *Zonenkinder*, p. 23 This reference is missing in Chase's translation.
- ³⁴ Thomas Brussig: *Helden wie wir*. Berlin: Volk und Welt 1996.
- ³⁵ Thomas Brussig: *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee*. Berlin: Volk und Welt 1999.
- ³⁶ [Sicher haben diese Autoren andere Voraussetzungen beim Herstellen ihrer Bilanzliteratur: Für sie ist das Heutige nur eine Verlängerung des Damaligen, das mehr oder weniger ungebrochen gültig ist. Eine Zäsur gab es nie; nur einen Wechsel der Moden und Trends, und 16 Jahre lang wechselte nicht einmal der Bundeskanzler.] Thomas Brussig: Liebe zu Zeiten der Kohl-Ära. In: *Der Spiegel*. 29 January 2001. Pp. 169-170, here: p. 169.
- ³⁷ Koshar, p. 23.
- ³⁸ [Verstärkten Bedürfnis, sich der eigenen gelebten Geschichte zu versichern] Michael Althen: Verwinde deine Jugend. Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgespannter: Hendrik Handloegten verfilmt Frank Goosens Roman *Liegen lernen*. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. 4 September 2003. P.35.
- ³⁹ Michael Rutschky: Wie erst jetzt die DDR entsteht. Vermischte Erzählungen. In: *Merkur* 49 (1995). Pp. 851-864, here: p. 851.
- ⁴⁰ See Svetlana Boym: *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books 2001, p. XVI.
- ⁴¹ Boym, p. XIV.
- ⁴² Koshar, p. 11.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ⁴⁴ Boym, p. XV.
- ⁴⁵ [Denn mit der Wiederwahl Helmut Kohls überzog ein Gefühl der Stagnation das Land.] Susanne Leinemann: *Aufgewacht. Mauer weg*. Stuttgart / München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt 2002, p. 51.
- ⁴⁶ Boym, p. 8.
- ⁴⁷ [Gigantische Endlosschleife] Illies, p. 16.
- ⁴⁸ [Mit Sicherheit das langweiligste Jahrzehnt des 20. Jahrhunderts] Illies, p. 15-16.
- ⁴⁹ [Es ging allen gut, man hatte kaum noch Angst, und wenn man den Fernseher anmachte, sah man immer Helmut Kohl.] Illies, p. 16.
- ⁵⁰ [Merkwürdigen Hang zur Retrospektive] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
- ⁵¹ [Sehnsucht [...] nach Konservierung des [...] Status quo] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
- ⁵² [Daß klar ist, was wohin gehört] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

- ⁵³ [Leben in der Endlosschleife] Illies, p. 133.
- ⁵⁴ [Zelebriert [...] die eigene Kindheit] Ibid., p. 194.
- ⁵⁵ [Nach der Ostalgie-Welle steht uns jetzt also eine Westalgie-Welle ins Haus.] Christiane Hoffmans: Kultur-Highlights. In: *Welt am Sonntag*. 7 September 2003. P. 80.
- ⁵⁶ [Gepusht vom Interesse eines auf Retro abonnierten Publikums] Daniel Haas: Viel Bier, wenig Dramatik. In: *Spiegel Online*. 1 October 2003. <<http://www.spiegel.de>>
- ⁵⁷ [Von einem bröckelnden Plateau, aus einer Krisenzeit; Bedarf nach Selbstvergewisserung] Peter Körte: Verwende deine Jugend. In *liegen lernen* und *Herr Lehmann* geht das deutsche Kino auf Spurensuche in den achtziger Jahren. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*. 31 August 2003. P. 23.
- ⁵⁸ [Wenderoman aus westlicher Sicht] Verwirrt, träge und verliebt. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. 11 August 2001. P. V.
- ⁵⁹ Sven Regener: *Herr Lehmann*. Frankfurt am Main: Goldmann 2003. English edition: Sven Regener: *Berlin Blues*. Translated by John Brownjohn. London: Secker & Warburg 2003.
- ⁶⁰ The title of Goosen's book is taken from the first stanza of Robert Gernhard's *Katzengedichte* [Cat Poems], itself a parody of the East German propaganda slogan: "Von der Sowjetunion lernen heißt siegen lernen." [To learn from the Sowjet Union is to learn how to be victorious.] In his poem Gernhardt expresses the view that learning how to win from a cat means learning how to lie down and be as passive as possible - a strategy which Helmut seems to follow to the letter. See Robert Gernhardt: *Gedichte 1954-1994*. Zürich: Haffmans 1996, p. 283.
- ⁶¹ Hendrik Handloegten (director / script): *liegen lernen*, X-Filme 2003, dvd: Warner Home Video 2004. Leander Haußmann (director), Sven Regener (script): *Herr Lehmann*, Boje/Buck (production) 2003, dvd: Universal Pictures 2004. I am grateful to the production company Boje/Buck for supplying me with a VHS-copy of the film before the dvd was released.
- ⁶² [Liebe zum Oberflächlichen] Illies, p. 27-28.
- ⁶³ [Emotionslos] Ibid., p. 121.
- ⁶⁴ [Wie man die unspektakuläre eigene Jugend als Material der Fiktionen verwendet] Körte.
- ⁶⁵ [Sein Talent [...] verschwendet] Ob er's will oder nicht: Jeder Mann hat eine Britta im Kopf. In: *Stuttgarter Zeitung*. 4 September 2003. P. 34.
- ⁶⁶ [Ertappt und wiedererkannt] Heike Makatsch: Hör den Regen fallen. In: *Der Spiegel*. 1 September 2003. P. 150.
- ⁶⁷ [Coming-of-age-Geschichte] Leander Haußmann in an interview with Fritz Göttler: Der Zirkus ist wieder da. Leander Haußmann, der "Lehmann" und die Freiheit im Kino. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 1 October 2003. P. 14.
- ⁶⁸ [Vagabundierende[r] Szeneheld] Mohr: *Soundtrack eines Soziotops..*
- ⁶⁹ [Ausgedehnten Adoleszenz] Haas.
- ⁷⁰ See Boym, p. 53.
- ⁷¹ [Der Dauerjugendliche] Haas.
- ⁷² *Berlin Blues*, p. 1. [Weil sich herumgesprachen hatte, daß er bald dreißig Jahre alt werden würde] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 5.
- ⁷³ [Worauf der Film zustrebt, worin er sein Gravitationszentrum findet, das ist der 9. November 1989. Der Tag des Mauerfalls ist auch der Tag, an dem sich Herrn Lehmanns müßiggängerische Existenz überholt hat.] Christina Nord: Experimentexistenzen, verpisst euch! Wenn Kreuzberg ausschaut wie in Babelsberg entworfen: Leander Haußmann hat Sven Regeners Roman *Herr Lehmann* verfilmt. *Taz*. 2 October 2003. P. 29.

- ⁷⁴ [Symboltier des Übergangs [...] eines Zu-Ende-Gehens] Manfred Lurker: Der Hund als Symboltier für den Übergang vom Diesseits in das Jenseits. In: *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 35 (1983). P. 132-144, here: p. 139.
- ⁷⁵ [BRD-Vermeider] Markus Schneider: Die Wehmut der BRD-Vermeider. The man who was there: Mit seinem Roman *Herr Lehmann* hat Sven Regener unbeabsichtigt die Kreuzberg-Nostalgie befeuert. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 10 November 2001. P. 11.
- ⁷⁶ [Ein Mäandern durch das Berliner Nachtleben kurz vor dem Mauerfall] Haas.
- ⁷⁷ [Inseldasein] Körte.
- ⁷⁸ *Berlin Blues*, p. 13. [Einen Abstand von zwei Staatsgrenzen und einigen hundert Kilometern] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 19.
- ⁷⁹ *Berlin Blues*, p. 41. [Die schöne Köchin] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 50.
- ⁸⁰ *Berlin Blues*, p. 149. [Die Frau, die er liebte, und die Frau, die seine Mutter war] *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- ⁸¹ See *Berlin Blues*, p. 110. *Herr Lehmann*, p. 127.
- ⁸² [Dieses letztlich höchst undramatische Gleiten durch die eigene Existenz] Haas.
- ⁸³ [Der Zapfer ohne Ehrgeiz] Thomas Steinfeld: Aber dann, aber dann: Kreuzberger Hosenträger sind lang. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 17 August 2001. P. 15.
- ⁸⁴ See *Berlin Blues*, p. 45. *Herr Lehmann*, p. 55.
- ⁸⁵ *Berlin Blues*, p. 55. [Keinesfalls] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 66.
- ⁸⁶ [Lehmann hat es gern, wenn alles so bleibt, wie es ist.] Michael Althen: Kreuzberg kann sehr alt sein. Der MTV-Moderator Christian Ulmen glänzt in Leander Haußmanns Verfilmung von Sven Regeners Roman *Herr Lehmann*. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. 1 October 2003. P. 39.
- ⁸⁷ [Die Hoffnung, der morgige Tag möge ungefähr so sein wie der gerade vergangene] Mohr: *Soundtrack eines Soziotops*.
- ⁸⁸ [Daß manche Dinge so blieben, wie sie immer gewesen waren] Frank Goosen: *Liegen lernen*. München: Heyne 2002, p. 263.
- ⁸⁹ See Brussig: *Liebe zu Zeiten der Kohl-Ära*, p. 169.
- ⁹⁰ [Merkwürdig leblos] Gerrit Bartels: Wie die Westalgie das Laufen lernt. In: *taz*. 4 September 2003.
- ⁹¹ [Die Aufarbeitung der 80er beschränkt sich bei ihm letztendlich auf einen stimmigen Set, liebevolles Dekors und die richtige Auswahl der Musikplatten.] Norbert Raffelsiefen: Blond, belesen und wunderschön. In: *General-Anzeiger*. 4 September 2003. It is worth noting in this context that - judging by the audio commentary on the dvd - Handloegten obviously knows where to find original drinks cans from the 1980's but mistakenly believes *Die Physiker* [*The Physicists*] to be a play by Max Frisch.
- ⁹² See *Liegen lernen*, p. 27. See also Illies, p. 16. Rusch even dedicates a small chapter to "A room full of Raider" [Ein Zimmer voller Raider], *Meine freie deutsche Jugend*, pp. 86-89.
- ⁹³ [Pausenlos in Selbstgespräche oder sprachkritische Debatten verstrickt] Steinfeld.
- ⁹⁴ *Berlin Blues*, p. 55. [Ihr Name war Birgit gewesen, und sie war ungefähr zwei Wochen lang mit ihm gegangen, oder wie immer man das nennen sollte, dachte Herr Lehmann, jedenfalls hatte er das geglaubt, wohingegen sie nach diesen zwei Wochen behauptet hatte, sie wären überhaupt nie richtig zusammengewesen, [...] so hatte sie das genannt, zusammensein, dachte Herr Lehmann, sie hatte immer zusammensein gesagt, auch eine zweifelhafte Wortwahl, wenn man mal so darüber nachdenkt, dachte Herr Lehmann.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 66.
- ⁹⁵ [Verbale Orientierungssuche des Helden] *Verwirrt, träge und verliebt*.
- ⁹⁶ [Das Chaos in den Griff bekommen] *Liegen lernen*, p. 218.

- ⁹⁷ [Um der Leistungsgesellschaft zu entgehen] Jens Jessen: Nichts wollen, können, brauchen. Leander Haußmanns tapsige Literaturverfilmung *Herr Lehmann*. In: *Die Zeit*. 1 October 2003. P. 50.
- ⁹⁸ See *Herr Lehmann*, p. 19. *Berlin Blues*, p. 13. Brownjohn's English version misses the point when he translates "Karstadt am Hermannplatz, also im Grunde [...] Neukölln" as "some suburban warehouse". Herr Lehmann is in fact referring to a department store close to where he lives.
- ⁹⁹ *Berlin Blues*, p. 2. [Bester Freund] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰⁰ [Im Schatten der Mauer] Schneider.
- ¹⁰¹ [Vorübergehende Absperrung] *Liegen lernen*, p. 53.
- ¹⁰² [Eine Menge Menschen wollten nicht mehr in dem anderen Deutschland bleiben. Mit Plastiktüten in der Hand kletterten sie über die Zäune irgendwelcher Botschaften und blieben da. Ich schob mir Chips in den Mund und fragte mich, warum die nicht wenigstens richtige Koffer hatten.] *Liegen lernen*, p. 212.
- ¹⁰³ *Berlin Blues*, p. 151. [Das hat doch mit dem Leben in Westberlin nichts zu tun. Wir kriegen hier doch gar nichts davon mit.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 176.
- ¹⁰⁴ [Wir müssen uns mehr mit dem Osten beschäftigen.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 254. This sentence is missing in Brownjohn's translation.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Berlin Blues*, p. 246. ["Das sollten wir uns angucken." "Aber erst austrinken."] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 281.
- ¹⁰⁶ [Noch ein Stück Melone?] *Liegen lernen*, p. 222.
- ¹⁰⁷ Christine Ivanovic: Wende im Film? Vorläufiger Rückblick auf ein Jahrzehnt deutscher Einheit im Film. In: Volker Wehdeking (ed.): *Mentalitätswandel in der deutschen Literatur zur Einheit (1990-2000)*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt 2000. Pp. 225-235, here: p. 225.
- ¹⁰⁸ [Ich schaltete den Fernseher ein. Überall die Mauer. Auf der Mauer saßen Leute. [...] Es wurde niemand erschossen. [...] Ein Mann in breitem Sächsisch [erzählte], daß das alles Wahnsinn sei. Und noch immer wurde nicht geschossen. Na gut, das war alles schon sehr bemerkenswert, aber irgendwie war es nur Fernsehen. [...] Wenn ich aus dem Fenster blickte, sah ich die gleichen Autos und die gleichen Menschen. [...] Für den Mann aus Sachsen mochte es "Wahnsinn" sein. Soweit ich es beurteilen konnte, kratzten sich die meisten in meiner Straße allenfalls am Sack.] *Liegen lernen*, pp. 222-226.
- ¹⁰⁹ [Britta. Natürlich war sie in Berlin. Wahrscheinlich hatte sie die Mauer aufgemacht. Wer sonst hatte soviel Macht?] *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- ¹¹⁰ [Es wurde geredet über das, was passierte. Alle kannten es vom Fernsehen. Ich konnte nicht mitreden.] *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- ¹¹¹ [Als interesseloser Zaungast] Körte.
- ¹¹² Both keep their record collections in the basement where they can listen to their music and get away from their family, See *Liegen lernen*, p. 18, p. 286.
- ¹¹³ *Berlin Blues*, p. 246. [Ganz friedlich und einer nach dem anderen kamen Leute zu Fuß herüber und gingen dann irgendwo hin. Richtige Stimmung ist das nicht, dachte Herr Lehmann.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 282.
- ¹¹⁴ [Ein untergegangenes Reich] Althen: *Kreuzberg kann sehr alt sein*.
- ¹¹⁵ *Berlin Blues*, p. 249. [Was ganz anderes anfangen] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 285.
- ¹¹⁶ [Weil er den Westhelden so wenig bedeutet] Körte.
- ¹¹⁷ [Die Frage aufwirft, ob dieses Desinteresse an den Ereignissen, die der Maueröffnung vorausgingen, nicht eine in Westdeutschland und vor allem in Westberlin durchaus verbreitete Haltung war] *Verwirrt, träge und verliebt*.
- ¹¹⁸ See Illies, p. 25 and 176.

¹¹⁹ *After the Wall*, p. 38. [Dass ihm der ganze Ostscheiß, wie er sagte, ziemlich auf die Nerven gehe. Schon damals, in der Nacht des Mauerfalls, hatte er sich nur mit Mühe vom Fernseher lösen können, um zum nächstliegenden Grenzübergang zu laufen.] *Zonenkinder*, p. 43.

¹²⁰ [Dabei war das Ereignis doch so unglaublich: Es müßte uns, die wir dabei waren, geprägt haben. Wenigstens. Eigentlich müßte es uns verwandelt haben - auch im Westen. [...] 1989 war die Stunde unserer Generation. Aber wir machten sie uns nicht zu eigen. [...] Ich spazierte herum, ich war dabei, ich sah, ich hörte - und trotzdem beschlich mich immer wieder das Gefühl, als Beobachterin von außerhalb ein befremdendes Geschehen zu verfolgen. Es blieb eine Distanz, als ob der zündende Funke doch nicht ganz übergesprungen wäre. [...] Ich war glücklich, dabeizusein, aber ein Teil von mir blieb auch ziemlich cool und distanziert.] Leinemann, p. 8-9, 193-194.

¹²¹ ["Die Mauer ist offen." "Ach du Scheiße."] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 280. Brownjohn translates this rather mildly and misleadingly as "The Wall's open." "Well, I'll be..." *Berlin Blues*, p. 245.

¹²² [Als Provokation geplant] Schneider.

¹²³ [Anti-Wende-Roman] Philipp Gut: "Der Popstar als Autor." In: *Tages-Anzeiger*. 19 November 2001. P. 51.

¹²⁴ *Berlin Blues*, p. 206. [Der hat's nämlich wenigstens bis über die Grenze geschafft.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 237.

¹²⁵ [Den Status von armen Irren] *Liegen lernen*, p. 280.

¹²⁶ *Berlin Blues*, p. 101. [Er konnte sich nichts Langweiligeres, Abseitigeres, Öderes, Unglamouröseres vorstellen, als Informatiker zu sein.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 117.

¹²⁷ [Der Eindruck der Unmittelbarkeit der Darstellung] Franz K. Stanzel: *Theorie des Erzählens*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 4th edition 1989, p. 16.

¹²⁸ See *Herr Lehmann*, p. 6, 9, 42. *Berlin Blues*, p. 2, 4, [The third reference, which mentions the protagonist's dislike of being called "Herr Lehmann" and "du" is missing in Brownjohn's translation.]

¹²⁹ See *Berlin Blues*, passim, *Herr Lehmann*, passim. Unfortunately - as can be seen in the passage quoted above (note 94) - Brownjohn drastically reduces this in his translation, taking away some of the deliberate repetitiveness of the novel.

¹³⁰ [Lakonischen Ton] Schneider.

¹³¹ [Sympathie für den Protagonisten] Martin Krumbholz: Der Mensch als Nagetier. Sven Regeners Romandébut *Herr Lehmann*. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. 14 August 2001. P. 55.

¹³² [Das Kunststück einer gefühlvollen Lakonik] Gut.

¹³³ ["Liebst du sie denn?" "Nein." "Und wie ist es mit mir?" "Keine Ahnung. Liebst du sie?"] (*liegen lernen*, p. 153)

¹³⁴ [Ich wußte, daß ich ein Arschloch war, aber ich wußte nicht, was ich dagegen tun sollte.] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹³⁵ For a discussion of the problem of first person narrative in film see Jan Marie Peters: *The Lady in the Lake* und das Problem der Ich-Erzählung in der Filmkunst. In: Franz-Joseph Albersmeier and Volker Roloff (eds.): *Literaturverfilmungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1989. Pp. 245-258.

¹³⁶ See Göttler.

¹³⁷ Herr Lehmann's favourite film is Frances Ford Coppola's *Rumble Fish* from 1983, See *Berlin Blues*, p. 107-108. *Herr Lehmann*, p. 124.

¹³⁸ [Wären diese Filme nostalgisch, müßten sie intensiver glänzen.] Körte. Haußmann also insists: "These films are not nostalgic." [Es sind keine nostalgischen Filme], Ewa Hess:

"Nostalgie, Ostalgie. So ein Quatsch!" Leander Haußmann über die *Sonnenallee* und seinen Film *Herr Lehmann*. In: *SonntagsZeitung*. 26 October 2003. P. 55.

¹³⁹ [Viele kollektive 'Ahas' evozieren] Bartels.

¹⁴⁰ [Daß sie nie dorthin gehen, wo es weh tut] Althen: *Verwinde deine Jugend*.

¹⁴¹ [Wer *liegen lernen* liest, dem steigen die eigenen Erinnerungen auf.] Brussig: *Liebe zu Zeiten der Kohl-Ära*, p. 170.

¹⁴² See Hess.

¹⁴³ [Dann hieß es plötzlich, ich sei doch aus dem Osten. Na und?] Im Film bist du sehr nahe am Leben. Regisseur Leander Haußmann spricht über seinen neuen Film. *General-Anzeiger*. 1 October 2003.

¹⁴⁴ [Für einen Ossi gehalten] *Liegen lernen*, p. 223.

¹⁴⁵ This intertextual reference to a film in which citizens of a future society are routinely killed when they reach the age of 30 is of course another ironic sideswipe directed at Herr Lehmann who is himself about to turn 30.

¹⁴⁶ *Berlin Blues*, p. 243. [Kenn ich, den Film. [...] Hab ich früher mal im Westfernsehen gesehen, als ich noch im Osten war.] *Herr Lehmann*, p. 277.

¹⁴⁷ Leander Haußmann (director), Thomas Brussig (script): *Sonnenallee*, Boje/Buck (production), 1999, dvd: highlight 2003.

¹⁴⁸ [Gegenstück] Althen: *Kreuzberg kann sehr alt sein*. Even though Haußmann himself claims: "*Herr Lehmann* has nothing to do with *Sonnenallee*." [*Herr Lehmann* hat nichts mit *Sonnenallee* zu tun], *Im Film bist du sehr nahe am Leben*, there are several obvious parallels between the two films. Haußmann used many of the same actors and created a very similar closing scene set at the Wall.

¹⁴⁹ *Herr Lehmann*, p. 127. Translated by Brownjohn first as "bogus biker" (*Berlin Blues*, p. 111), then as "nancy boy" (*Berlin Blues*, p. 114), this highly derogatory term emphasises Detlev's (a stereotypically gay first name) tough looking exterior as well as his alleged effeminacy.

¹⁵⁰ Wolfgang Becker produces a similar effect in *Good Bye Lenin* when the east German protagonist Alexander Kerner (played by west German actor Daniel Brühl) is asked by his new western employer to team up with a colleague from West Berlin (played by Florian Lukas), See Wolfgang Becker (director), Bernd Lichtenberg (script): *Good Bye Lenin*, X-Filme (production), 2003, dvd: Warner Home Video 2003.

¹⁵¹ [Getreu den Vorgaben] Bartels.

¹⁵² [Phantom] *Liegen lernen*, p. 333.

¹⁵³ The novel has Helmut travelling to Berlin where he unsuccessfully tries to track down Britta. In the film version he manages to find her, only to realise: "You're only human after all." [Irgendwie bist du ja auch nur'n Mensch.] *liegen lernen* 1:20:26-1:20:28.

¹⁵⁴ [Ein verantwortungsloses, bindungsunfähiges, triebhaftes Arschloch] *Liegen lernen*, p. 313.

¹⁵⁵ [Wo warst du denn am 9. November 1989?] *liegen lernen* 0:01:44-0:01:49.

¹⁵⁶ [Ich war da, in Berlin, auf der Mauer, am Brandenburger Tor.] *liegen lernen* 0:01:50-0:01:52.

¹⁵⁷ [Aber das stimmte nicht. Denn an diesem Abend lag ich mit einer Frau im Bett und sah mir ein Video an.] *liegen lernen* 0:01:53-0:01:58.

¹⁵⁸ [Ach - erzähl mir doch keinen Scheiß!] *liegen lernen* 1:08:41-1:08:43.

¹⁵⁹ [Jemand, den man nicht mit dem durchsichtigsten Kram beeindruckten konnte] *liegen lernen* 1:08:29-1:08:32.

¹⁶⁰ See Brian McFarlane: *Novel to Film. An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996, p. 10-11.

¹⁶¹ [Da ist schließlich das Jahrhundertereignis der ostdeutschen Revolution, das bis zum vorletzten Kapitel so auffällig ausgespart ist, daß diese Leerstelle des Romans im Bewußtsein des Lesers [...] eine ausgesprochene Dynamik entfaltet.] *Verwirrt, träge und verliebt*.

¹⁶² Not surprisingly the new ending was a bone of contention for Regener who wrote the novel and scripted the film and Haußmann whose ideas finally prevailed. The film's audio commentary on the dvd is testimony to the differences between author and director concerning the border scene.

¹⁶³ Kathleen Stewart: Nostalgia: A Polemic. In: Cultural Anthropology 3 (1988). Pp. 227-241, here: p. 228.

¹⁶⁴ [Es sind Genrebilder eines verschwundenen Landes jenseits, aber auch diesseits der Mauer.] Körte.

¹⁶⁵ [Die Zäsur, die auch westliche Biographien modelliert hat] Ibid.