

**56. Valediction of 68ers' generation to Berlin in Uwe Timm's novel "Rot"****Gonca KIřMİR<sup>1</sup>****APA:** Kiřmir, G. (2023). Valediction of 68ers' Generation to Berlin in Uwe Timm's Novel "Rot". *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (34), 985-993. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1317123.**Abstract**

Literary motifs in fiction illustrate the subject matter and aestheticize the spirit and mindset of the time described. This study examined the historical and political motifs of the 68ers' generation within the framework of memory literature in the novel "Rot" (2001) by Uwe Timm, one of the most influential second-generation writers of German literature after World War II. The historical and political motifs in the novel reflect the struggle of the youth and student movements of 1968 in particular. In addition, the motifs in the work point to the cultural background of the worldviews of the 68ers' generation, which did not experience the Second World War and its aftermaths like the previous generation. The novel focuses on the journey of Thomas Linde, a jazz commentator and funeral orator, to the past. The main character, is preparing the funeral speech of his friend with whom he protested together in 1968. The novel describes Linde's process of writing this speech and the 68ers' generation's reckoning and farewell to the past they had internalized. The novel uses modern and post-modern narrative techniques to describe the past memories of 1968 with semi-autobiographical, half-fictional elements. This study examines in the context of memory theories how and why Uwe Timm constructed the political and historical motifs of the 1968 period based on his life story as a representative of the 68ers' generation.

**Keywords:** German literature, memory, 68ers' generation, Uwe Timm**Uwe Timm'in "Rot" romanında 68 kuřađının Berlin'e vedası****Öz**

Edebi motifler metinde hem eserin konusunu oluřturur hem de anlatılan zamanın ruhunu ve düşünce yapısını estetize eder. Bu çalışmada II. Dünya Savařı sonrası Alman yazınının önemli ikinci kuřak yazarlarından biri olan Uwe Timm'in, "Rot" (2001) romanında yer alan 68 kuřađının tarihi ve politik motifleri, anımsama edebiyatı çerçevesinde incelenmiştir. Metindeki tarihi ve politik motifler özellikle 68 dönem gençliđinin ve öğrenci hareketlerinin mücadelesini yansıtır. Buna ek olarak metin içerisindeki motifler, İkinci Dünya Savařı'nı yaşamamış 68 kuřađının, kendilerinden önceki baba kuřađından farklı olan dünya görüşlerinin kültürel alt yapısına da işaret etmektedir. Metnin odak noktasını caz eleřtirmenliđi ve cenaze hatipliđi yapan Thomas Linde'nin geçmişe yaptıđı yolculuk oluřturmaktadır. Ana karakter, 68 döneminde beraber mücadele ettiđi arkadařının cenaze konuřmasının hazırlıđını yapmaktadır. Roman, Linde'nin bu konuřmayı yazma süreci ile 68 kuřađının sadece hesaplařmasını deđil aynı zamanda içselleřtirdikleri geçmişle vedasını da anlatır niteliktedir. Modern ve post modern anlatım tekniklerinin bir arada kullanıldıđı metinde, 68 dönemine ait geçmiş veya anılar yarı otobiyografik yarı kurmaca unsurlarla verilir. Bu çalışmada,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil ve Tarih- Coğrafya Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, Alman Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD (Ankara, Türkiye), donen@ankara.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1820-3546 [Arařtırma makalesi, Makale kayıt tarihi: 20.05.2023-kabul tarihi: 20.06.2023; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1317123]

Uwe Timm'in 68 kuşağının bir temsilcisi olarak kendi yaşam hikayesinden hareketle, 68 döneminin politik ve tarihi motiflerini nasıl ve neden kurguladığı bellek kuramları bağlamında irdelenmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Alman Edebiyatı, Bellek, Kuşak, 68 dönemi, Uwe Timm

## Introduction

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, student demonstrations started in many countries such as France, Germany, the USA, Italy, Brazil and the UK in response to various sociopolitical and economic policies of the governments. The main concerns of the 1968 student movement in Germany included rejection of traditionalism, actions against the law, criticism of the Springer media firm, demand for democracy, and reactions against the Vietnam War. The spectrum of ideas of the 68s period occurred almost simultaneously worldwide and was based on idealistic thoughts (Frei, 2008: 216). These protests initially significantly impacted France and subsequently influenced many other countries, especially the USA and Germany. The students dynamically participated in such demonstrations and motivated the activists. Many of these activists were mobilized in the West, driven by a desire to prove themselves artisans for a better world as a new generation (Bauß, 1977). In Italy, universities remained closed for twelve days in mid-March due to violence in student uprisings. However, after reopening the universities, the students resumed their protest right from where they had left off. In the early spring of 1968, students at German universities organized to protest against the Vietnam War. They also started addressing issues such as the recognition of East Germany, the resignation of high-ranking officials with Nazi backgrounds, and advocating for students to have a more significant say in their education. In 1968, three protesters were killed in Brazil, prompting students to further protest against the four-year military dictatorship. In Japan, students protested the presence of American troops on their soil and voiced opposition to militarism. In England, students contended against the United States' interest in the Vietnam War. They also demanded increased educational aid during protests at Cambridge, Oxford and other British universities (Bauß, 1977; Hadem, 2007; Kurlansky, 2005).

The common element in worldwide student demonstrations was the protest against the Vietnam War or the existing societal structure. The youth of that period were exceptionally inclined to disrupt the world as a generation that distrusted authority. However, this generation did not encourage war and believed engaging in battle was not beneficial. Indeed, student protests in Germany criticized many sociopolitical strategies, particularly the Vietnam War and the authoritarian education system prevailing in the universities. These young people, recognizing the effect of fascist background in the country, advocated for the necessity of democracy and embraced Marxist theory (Kurlansky, 2005; Herbert, 2014). The student movements of 1968 had political and social impacts on the social circle in Germany. An anti-authoritarian structure is effective in education, attire, and challenging societal norms and tradition in the social sphere.

Furthermore, with the rise of a culture of open discussion, there has been an increase in the discourse related to sexual freedom, peace and women's rights. The political effects of the '68 era in Germany resulted in the establishment of the Green Party, the emergence of citizens' initiatives, and the implementation of emergency and anti-terrorism laws (Herbert, 2014). German student leaders demonstrated their strength by mobilizing thousands of people on different issues. The "Vietnam War", the "illegal military dictatorship in Greece" and the oppressive regime of the "Shah of Iran" were considered the three most prominent issues at that time. The German Socialist Students' Union (SDS: Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund), a Marxist student group, was highly organized and actively

engaged on those issues. They believed the Nazis were influential in government and Germany was not genuinely democratic. Even theology students exerted much effort to make their voices heard. They emphasized the need to address the immorality of the West German state and the actions of the USA in the war against Vietnam in their church sermons (Busche, 2003; Frei, 2008; Kurlansky, 2005).

Implementing state emergency laws and the visit of Iranian Shah Reza Pahlavi to Germany escalated the violence during the '68 era in Germany. Students protested against the state visit of the Shah in Berlin, considering him representative of an oppressive government. Police killed Benno Ohnesorg during such a demonstration on June 2, 1967. Students organized large-scale protests against Springer Media Publishing in response to the incident. Due to perceived bias in the media on the murder, student leaders articulated their diminishing patience, leading to massive protests and street demonstrations (Frei, 2008: 114). Student leader Rudi Dutschke and SDS called for a sit-in across the country to shed light on the murder of Benno Ohnesorg. Their demands included the dismissal of those responsible for police intervention and the appropriation of media tycoon Axel Springer's media house. The assassination attempt on Rudi Dutschke on April 11, 1968, in Germany further exacerbated the charges against Springer Publishing. The demonstrators took over the Springer building in Munich with the slogans "Springer killer!" and "Springer Nazi!". In Hamburg, Esslingen, Hannover and Essen, thousands of students clashed with the police. During such confrontations, the demonstrators successfully impeded the distribution of Springer newspapers (Hadem, 2007: 14-15; Kurlansky, 2005: 215).

The "68ers' generation", as an accountability movement towards the Adenauer era, sparked a renewed historical consciousness in the socio-political development of Germany. This generation sought to address and confront the history of National Socialism, which the paternal generation had witnessed during and after the Second World War. In literature, novels based on official history or documents also reflect the changing perspectives on history. Analyzing the works of Uwe Timm, his novels such as "Hot Summer" (1974), "Rot" (2001), "Der Freund und der Fremde" (2005) and Freitisch (2011) delve into the student movements of 68 and can be described as a generational novel or a novel of the '68 period.

### **The parting of the 68ers generation to Berlin in the novel "Rot"**

Uwe Timm, a writer of contemporary German literature, is indeed considered a representative of the post-World War II generation. As a witness of the 1950s and an activist in the 1968 protests, Uwe Timm expresses his personal experiences of the transformative period of Germany in his literary work. The author's literary stuff primarily narrates the recent history of Germany, which bears all the historical burden of the post-war period and is undergoing the development of a new epoch. Timm states that his initial involvement in student movements as a representative of the '68 generation is steered by a desire to question authority and a deeper understanding of himself. Timm also emphasizes that it is typical for people to desire to change themselves and their relationships throughout their lives. Despite the authoritarian repression during student movements, the author candidly addresses the problems of the period. Timm's sensitivity to social issues led him to join the German Socialist Students' Union (SDS: Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) (Hielscher, 2007). The German Socialist Students Union, as an active participant in the events of 1968, possessed a profound understanding of the reasons and motivations behind the student protests of that era. Timm skilfully portrays what he witnessed as a member of the 68ers generation through the characters in the novel "Rot". Timm's other novels, "Hot Summer" (Heisser Sommer) and "Der Freund und der Fremde" (2005), also feature autobiographical elements related to the '68 period. His three novels "Johannisnacht" (1996), "Rot" (2001) and

"Halbschatten" (2008), are known as the Berlin Trio. These works of Uwe Timm are about Berlin and reveal Germany's recent past. According to Germer (2012), Timm's three novels, written in Berlin, show similar narratives. All three novels feature narrative characters who provide first-person information and are biographically based on author Timm.

Generally, the author's novels can be summarized under two main content headings. The first content heading encompasses the period in which Germany strives to recover and restructure itself after the war. The second content heading focuses on the 68 period, when American culture was dominant, and characterizes the reshaping of the country's social structure. The author embarked on his journey to the world of literature by publishing "Hot Summer" in 1974, drawing on the realistic and document-based understanding of literature prevalent in the 60s. The aim here is "to convey the facts through an understanding of literature, where literature serves as means of revealing the truth to the reader" (Franke, H.P.; Staehle U.; Ulrich G.; Wenzelburger D., 1983: 126).

Like his other works, the author uses this understanding of literature in his novel "Rot" by dealing with the main character's reckoning with his life in the '68 period. Timm is a realist writer who draws inspiration from actual life topics in his writings. The author addresses the historical memory of the reader by weaving together facts and historical events in the background of the work. In general, across his novels, including "Rot"; the author desires to make sense of a particular "moment" of history and transfer it to future generations. At this point, the past is seen as something that has been left behind and, in a sense, considered dead. In contrast, the narrated historical event continues to live in the present (Ricœur, 2013: 244). Therefore, Timm carries and reshapes the historical process he lived through his novels as a witness of the '68 period to the present.

Literature is a tool that carries history, and history yields the memory of societies. The purpose of history is to collect and organize information about the past. Thus, the historian's task is to determine the historical facts objectively. Indeed, interpretations can be made based on these determinations, but they may not have the same freedom as literature, which can embrace fiction. A writer can create a scene in the reader's memory using his fictional creativity. In a sense, the author adds emotion and color to historical events. All the novel's characters revive historical facts by depicting historical events in the literature. Thus, a reminiscence and reckoning for the past occur in the reader's imagination. In this context, the author presents the relationship between reality and fictional history to the reader by placing the events in history in a fictional text and making sense of the past from today's point of view through his imagination. Uwe Timm, who witnessed the 68ers generation and played an active role in student actions, places the texture of history in his works with a modern perspective and reminds the reader of the past. At the same time, transferring Linde's forbidden love and revolutionary youth ideals to the present in the novel "Rot" is criticized as futile and criticized (www.faz.net, 2023).

In the novel "Rot" a panorama of recent German history is traditionally constructed through the story of people in their fifties who dream of and fight for a different democratic country (Steinert, 2001). The novel also uses appropriate autobiographical narrative tools to penetrate the consciousness of the 68 generations (Rüdenauer, 2001). Uwe Timm has employed similar techniques not only in his novel "Rot" but also in the novels "Hot Summer" which focuses on the 68ers generation and the student movements, and "Der Freund und der Fremde", a narrative depicting his friendship with the student leader Benno Ohnesorg with whom he struggled together during the '68 period. The novel "Rot" is a work that describes how the generation of '68 engages in a reckoning with itself years later. Additionally, it explores the societal and individual changes after the '68 period.

"Uwe Timm's *Rot* also focuses on life in the post-revolutionary period. Set in the space between life and death, at the very last moment before the protagonist Thomas Linde dies after he has been hit by a motor car, *Rot* is a novel about life and what makes it meaningful. As he lies dying, Thomas Linde, a former revolutionary who now serves as a eulogist at secular funerals, reflects on his life and its highs and lows, recounting his family history, his revolutionary participation, his friendships, loves, and professional achievements. *Rot* is thus a useful foil for Schneider's *Rebellion und Wahn* in further elucidating certain central motifs such as the place of the past in the present and the successes and failings of the revolution (Shortt, 2015, 69).

In his novels, Uwe Timm generally emphasizes the importance and reality of history in human life. The author places the historical facts, which form the novel's central theme, into the texture of his stories within a particular framework. In the background of his stories are experiences and memories that also contain the characteristics of his generation. Uwe Timm deals with the issues of confronting and coping with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*<sup>2</sup>) regarding the literature-history relationship by dealing with German Colonization, National Socialism and its aftermath in his works. Through the main character Linde in the novel, the historical events witnessed in the past are fictionalized, and the author reminds him of the reckoning of his generation. The characters in the work are conveyed to the reader from a historical point of view, and the characteristics of the period are examined from a realistic point of view. In the novel, amidst a backdrop of social, political, and historical reckoning, there exists the author's connection with the past, specifically his memories. As an individual who has experienced two distinct generations, the author possesses memories encompassing both the post-war period and the era of '68. Memory requires a certain kind of knowledge based on experiences. In this novel, the memories that the main character forgets and recalls are based on his internalized knowledge and experience. According to A. Assmann (2007), memories emerge through perceptions. Therefore, knowledge, experience, perception and reminiscence are essential components of memory. Memory plays a central role in perception and the formation of memories. It serves as the repository where knowledge and experiences are stored.

"(...) in the same way, memory requires an elaboration of information about the past, including traces of experience, within meaningful schemata. Autobiographical memories are an essential component of the self. Locke already suggested that losing personal memories amount to losing one's identity. (...) the function of which is to extract the meaningful and general information from the wealth of experienced detail. But for memories of the self, we think on the contrary that losing the details of experience is tantamount to losing the whole thing, as it were" (Boyer; Wertsch, 2009, 29-30).

Uwe Timm, a writer who lived/experienced the '68 period, endeavours to rekindle the forgotten experiences of that time within the reader. The author's internalized "memoirs" about the described periods are based on specific knowledge and expertise. The novel "Rot" addresses personal and collective memory in this context. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that different groups and communities possess unique moments and experiences, and the collective memories of a group are passed on from one generation to the next within that social group (Connerton, 1992). Therefore, like other works of the author, "Rot" transfers the history of post-war Germany and the '68 period to the next generations. In the context of the interest in the past, it is argued that memory retention is facilitated by a commonality in interests and thoughts rather than relying solely on similarity or juxtaposition (Connerton, 1992:61).

The central theme of the novel "Rot" revolves around the author's realization of the ideals of his 68ers generation and self-accountability after the situation calmed down. In this particular work by the author, the character of Thomas Linde, who embodies the characteristics of the 1968 generation, serves as a

<sup>2</sup> The history cannot be changed. However, one can engage in a process of confronting or reconciling with it. The concept of dealing with the past, which has no counterpart in either English or French, is often used in Germany. Because this concept reveals the longing for the impossible (Schlink, 2012: 73).

vehicle to critically evaluate and remind the reader of the '68 period and its aftermath. The main character, Thomas Linde, is a jazz player and funeral orator. He has a forbidden love affair with light designer Iris, who is twenty-one years younger than him. Linde flashes back to that time and remembers her past while preparing his friend's funeral speech, with whom he protested together in 1968. The notes left behind by his friend Aschenberger play an essential role in the main character's confrontation with his past. In the novel, the explosive material that Aschenberger prepared to bomb the Berlin Victory Column is a significant motif representing the confrontation between the 68ers generation and the previous generation. It symbolizes the radical and aggressive methods employed by some members of the 68ers generation to challenge and disrupt the existing social and political structures (Rüdenauer, 2001).

The name of the novel "Rot" also depicts versatile motifs. It is paradoxical to speak of melancholy in this novel, as the color red often connotes rebellion and passion rather than causeless sadness or mourning. Red color also represents vitality, fertility, energy and revolution. (Stamova, 2018: 8) In this context, the author narrates in the novel the incident when Linde, while crossing a red light, was hit by a car. This event catalyzes reflecting on the time and experiences between life and death. After Linde was hit by a car, the sounds he heard on the street were inserted non-chronologically into the text. According to Weisz (2009), the novel "Rot" title symbolizes love, blood or rebellion. It can also mean the end of political events compared to the sunset time. The political resistance, individual acts of sabotage and heroic courage of Thomas Linde and his friend Aschenberger, as individuals of the 68 era generation, are symbolized with red color in the novel. Therefore, from the symbolization of the red color, it is realized that Aschenberger's death serves to begin of change in the main character. It changes Linde's relationship with his girlfriend Iris and his perspective on the past. The character of Iris is depicted both as a listener and a questioner in the novel. Linde enjoys narrating about his past, just as he enjoys Iris' conversation. Linde's growing interest in Iris is further heightened by her attentive and fond listening, mainly when she inquires about his past. This interest causes Linde to talk more about the past. On the other hand, the age difference between the two also reveals two different worlds or generational differences. Light designer Iris, twenty-one years younger than Linde, exudes a vibrant and lively personality that aligns perfectly with her namesake. As a representative of the new generation who did not live in the '68 period, she is interested in Linde's past experiences and narratives. Linde described the generation gap with her as, "Nein, sie hat sie sich anverwandelt, diese Prints der Ideen. Ich hingegen gehöre noch zu der Generation, die erst alles umständlich ganz lesen muss/No, she has transformed them, these prints of ideas. I, on the other hand, still belong to the generation that first has to read everything in its entirety" (Timm, 2001: 34).

With the characters Iris and Linde, the author not only wants to remind the reader of the generation gap but also to remind the reader of the youth of Germany's 1968 era. Through the character of Linde, a funeral orator, the novel underscores the inevitable nature of death and the burden of the past. In this novel, Timm consciously tries to remind the past of the '68 period using the motif of "red" and the character "Linde". To reflect the past, photographs, one of the vital memory objects, are described as virtual objects in the text. Thus, while preparing Aschenberger's funeral speech, the past photos that Linde found in his house point to the motif of fateful friendship that reflects the spirit of the 1968 era. In the context of the 68 student movement, exemplified by characters like Linde, Aschenberger, and their friends, the novel encapsulates the aspirations and ideals of the youth who strive to assert their identities and organize protests to critique the prevailing system.

“Und da erkannte ich ihn wieder, das Foto, gut dreißig Jahre alt, zeigt ihn, Aschenberger, nicht Lüders: Volles blondes Haar, schlank, schon damals wirkte er asketisch, er trägt auf dem Foto einen Vollbart, sieht aus wie Johannes der Täufer auf dem Fresko in Padua. Ich fand sogar ein Bild, das uns zusammen zeigt, wir stehen da, halten ein Plakat hoch. Spiegelbildlich steht darauf: Schluß mit dem Bombenterror in Vietnam. (...) Ein anderes Foto zeigt uns beim Verteilen einer Zeitung“ (Timm, 2001: 68).

As indicated in the quote, the two photographs from the '68 era that influenced Thomas Linde remind him of the actions he and his friends organized at the university. In the example of Linde and Aschenberger, the motives of 68ers against the traditional education system are clear. In other words, the author offers a critical perspective on the actions that the 68ers generation could not accomplish in the past, examining them from the vantage point of the present tense within the text. One of this criticism's most critical fictional tools is the Berlin Victory Column, which Aschenberger wanted to blow up. The city of Berlin was chosen as the place of memory, and this column is the symbol of recent German history. The Victory Column (Siegessäule) was built between 1864-1873. This column was designed after the victory in the Second Schleswig War in 1864. Until the construction of the column was completed, victories were also achieved in the Prussian-Austrian (1866) and French (1870-71) Wars. Therefore, this monument is also attributed to those victories. In Hitler's period, the fourth ring was added to the memorial to commemorate the victory in the Battle of France. The Victory Column survived largely unscathed from air raids during the Second World War (Herbert, 2014). In the novel, Timm summarizes the official history through this historical motif. The package that Aschenberger left behind to explode the column indicates the confrontation and reckoning with the recent history. Aschenberger, who experienced the 1968 period and opposed the sociopolitical system of that time, sought to challenge and question the course of history by preparing the explosive substance. Thus, he may have wanted to express his anger and farewell to the events 68 by removing the Berlin Victory Column. The main character, Linde, has more dilemmas about the past after the death of his friend Aschenberger. Although the angel on the column represents a religious motif, it reminds us of war, death and history written in blood because of the events attributed to the column. The main character expresses his feelings about the Victory Column as follows;

“Die Siegessäule wird sehr fremd aussehen, in Weiß getaucht, ein gnadenloses Weiß, nichts Farbigen, ein Neonweiß, stell ich mir vor, das alles kalt zeigt, die eingelagerten, vergoldeten Kanonen, schattenlos, das ist wichtig, Schatten vertuschen. Und in die ausgeleuchteten Kannelüren werden schwarze Textstreifen projiziert. Ich habe die Textteile schon herausgesucht: Blut und Eisen. Wir Deutschen fürchten Gott und sonst nichts auf der Welt. Am deutschen Wesen soll die Welt genesen. Arbeit macht frei“ (Timm, 2001: 423).

In this excerpt, the presence of this column, which symbolizes victories in wars, is described as a black mark and, in the background, criticizes political and military actions in German history. For example, the expression "Arbeit macht frei", which is expressed with a critical discourse in the novel, refers to the period of National Socialism (1933-1945). The slogan "Arbeit macht frei" (Work sets you free), put forward by Goebbels, Hitler's propaganda minister in 1933, expressed the lie that work will set people free. The Nazis wrote this slogan on the gates of the concentration camps and brutally used the Jews in these camps and killed them in gas chambers (Herbert, 2014). With this sentence in the novel, the author also emphasizes why the 68 generation is angry and questioning the parental generation. The youth of '68 in Germany vehemently rejected the attitudes of obedience, acceptance, non-questioning, and uncritical conformity exhibited by the previous generation who experienced World Wars I and II. The phrase "Ich habe die Textteile schon herausgesucht: Blut und Eisen" in the above quote reminds us of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's period (1871-1890), which is again defined as another dark mark of German history. Bismarck gave a speech before the Budget Committee in the Prussian State

Assembly on the unification of the German lands in 1862. In the last part of this speech, he states that problems can no longer be solved by talking but only by "blood and iron" (Herbert, 2014). This speech is a discourse that demands war and orders the necessity of arming. The "blood and iron" policy aimed to achieve German unification and increase Germany's power and influence in Continental Europe through military means. Therefore, the political and military policies implemented in the period from the 19th century to the 20th century and their results are criticized through this quotation. Thus, the novel "Rot" is not only a reckoning but also a farewell to the issue of why the 68ers generation rejected the policies internalized by the previous generations and how they made their voices heard.

## Conclusion

In his novel, Uwe Timm utilizes documents, autobiographies, and fictionalization to depict the experiences of his generation during the student protests that defined the 1968 period. Like other countries such as France, the USA, Italy, Brazil, and England, student demonstrations in Germany were driven by sociopolitical issues. These protests were directed towards the state of emergency laws, criticism of Springer Media Publishing, demands for democracy, and opposition to the Vietnam War. The students of the '68 period expressed a collective desire for a society without class distinctions. Their shared goal was to challenge the existing social structure and take action against the undemocratic system. The novel encompasses various historical periods, socio-political contexts, and cultural codes interwoven into a fictional literary narrative. The 68 period is a prominent example, as it offers unique themes and motifs that provide an abundant source of fictionalization for the author. These motifs contribute depth to the subject matter discussed in the text and establish coherence in both content and form. Timm constructs these motifs, which are transmitted through autobiographical and collective memory, by combining them with his own life.

In the novel "Rot," the author highlights how history shapes human life and conveys historical and political motifs that serve as the focal point of the work. For example, historical and political events such as the protests against the Vietnam War, the death of the student leader Benno Ohnesorg, the assassination attempt on student leader Rudi Dutschke are important events of the collective memory. The author summarizes his period by fictionalizing these events.

These historical facts establish a connection between reality and fiction, prompting a recollection of the past. The author intends to fictionalize his experiences and observations within the framework of modern novel discourse, using everyday moments to depict the '68 period in Germany for the reader. As someone who lived through 68, Timm reflects his memories onto the characters of Linde and Aschenberger, conveying his historical responsibility to the reader. The novel, often referred to as a '68 novel or a Berlin novel, encapsulates the hopes and dreams of the 68ers generation through two characters: Thomas Linde, torn between memories of this era and his forbidden love for Iris, and Aschenberger, representing the shadow of a past internalized by the 68ers generation. By incorporating historical and autobiographical elements, Timm aestheticizes the '68 period in his novel, using the metaphor of light to illustrate the necessary shifts in thoughts and perceptions.

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