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**‘A Saxon who’s learnt a lot from the Americans’:<sup>1</sup> Clemens Meyer in a  
Transnational Literary Context**

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Abstract

In recent years, Clemens Meyer has emerged as the literary voice of societal underdogs. Initially celebrated as the ‘tattoo-man of German literature’ (Elmar Krekeler) whose ‘rough’ East German background seemed to have certified the authenticity of his subject, with his growing success, Meyer has managed to shake off the exclusive, and somewhat limiting, label of ‘East German writer’ with its often specifically provincial associations. The publication of his latest novel *Im Stein* (2013, Underground) has finally led to Meyer’s recognition as a more high-brow writer whose work has entered the transnational literary field. In his novel, Meyer self-consciously references world literary predecessors who have inspired him (for example Dos Passos and Hemingway) but adapts these literary models to develop a singular style that goes beyond mere intertextual allusions. My reading of *Im Stein*, a multi-voiced novel that revolves around organized prostitution in an unnamed East German city post-1989, thus ties in with recent debates focussing on the notion of ‘world literature’. Following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s thoughts on ‘singularity’ in relation to world literature, I argue that it is precisely Meyer’s engagement with the specificity of his subject matter through writing ‘transnationally’ that allows the author to achieve ‘singularity’. This then paves the way for his work’s ‘universalizability’ and, consequently, for Meyer’s conscious adaptation of his work to world literature.

‘I would not be who I am today if I hadn’t grown up as I did ... a “child of the street” you could say, if you wanted to be melodramatic about it. That’s where I learnt my writing style. My friends down the pub know me as a storyteller.’<sup>2</sup>

(Clemens Meyer)

‘Von Hemingway habe ich mehr gelernt als in meinem gesamten Studium am Leipziger Literaturinstitut.’<sup>3</sup> (‘I’ve learnt more from Hemingway than from all my studies at the Leipzig Institute for Literature.’)

(Clemens Meyer)

In these two statements from 2008, published shortly after he shot to literary fame, Clemens Meyer paints a picture of himself as a writer whose style has been shaped by his personal experiences and a particular North American tradition of storytelling. Born in 1977 in Halle/Saale in the former GDR, Meyer grew up in Leipzig, where he lives to this day. Before studying at the German Institute for Literature in that city, to which he refers in the second quotation, he experienced ‘real life’ by working in the construction industry, for example, but also by spending some time in youth detention. His first novel *Als wir träumten* (2006, *When We Were Dreaming*) tells the story of a group of boys—young delinquents—who grow up in Leipzig before and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>4</sup> Meyer’s interest in social outsiders corresponds with the ‘maverick’ image Meyer produced or was led to produce by his publisher or other marketing factors.<sup>5</sup> While it can be assumed that, at least in part, Meyer himself manipulated his image as the ‘Tatoomann der deutschen Literatur’ (‘tattoo-man of German literature’),<sup>6</sup> the literary voice of the social underdogs, his physical appearance—his tattoos, very short hair, and less stylish clothes that

featured prominently in publicity photographs at the time—and his deliberately aloof stance towards the literary scene from which he sprang have allowed for the ‘marketing’ of his marginality.<sup>7</sup> While somewhat fetishizing his ‘real life’ experience over formal education, as the two opening quotations suggest, Meyer represents authorship at the beginning of his career as a masculine pursuit similar to his role model Ernest Hemingway, the US-American archetype of the author as tough, rather than cerebral, man. Yet Meyer has never denied the intellectual side of his authorship, and admitting that he is influenced by other writers is part of his authorial self-construction. As we will see Meyer’s style increasingly comes across as an homage to the writers who the author admires and whose literary concerns often revolve around social outsiders as well (for example Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Albert Camus).<sup>8</sup> Thus, for Meyer, there does not appear to be a contradiction between the expression of raw experience and the self-conscious reference to his literary predecessors: his work can still be ‘authentic’ and unique.

*Als wir träumten* enjoyed much critical acclaim, which continued when Meyer won the Prize of the Leipzig Book Fair in 2008 for his collection of short stories *Die Nacht, die Lichter (All the Lights)*.<sup>9</sup> These stories, which again focus on social outsiders primarily in what can be assumed is East Germany, were followed by *Gewalten: Ein Tagebuch* (2010, *Acts of Violence / Forces: A Diary*),<sup>10</sup> a collection of short story-like pieces written in 2009 that revolve around global events as well as the narrator’s personal life. These shorter texts have strengthened Meyer’s reputation as a writer who takes inspiration for his work from one literary tradition in particular that gives him the tools to depict social outsiders in appropriate ways: the American short story, with its fragmentary nature and focus on loneliness,<sup>11</sup> which, according to Thomas M. Leitch, centres on a ‘movement to disillusionment rather than

knowledge',<sup>12</sup> a characteristic that is clearly detectable in Meyer's aesthetics, as we shall see.

Meyer's growing into his writer's identity was accompanied by a shift in personal presentation, that is, the less prominent display of his tattoos, the longer hair, and more stylish clothes on publicity photographs. Meyer's changing self-portrayal as a writer might suggest that, as he has achieved success and prizes with his writing, he has decided 'to play the game':<sup>13</sup> he has overcome his initially difficult relationship with the literary market and abandoned—at least in part—the 'myth', to borrow a term Rebecca Braun draws from Roland Barthes, in connection with the marketing of authors,<sup>14</sup> of the 'maverick' writer, and begun consciously to shape his public persona as a well-read author who writes about a lot more than social issues in East Germany. The fact that Meyer recently held a teaching position at the German Institute for Literature in Leipzig,<sup>15</sup> the institution which, as the first quotation of this article suggests, did not teach him what he needed in order to become the writer that he aspired to be, is perhaps ironic evidence for his recognition of his skills—and his arrival in the literary scene that he largely avoided at the beginning of his career.<sup>16</sup>

Simply by looking at Meyer's relatively short writing career, we can see clear parallels between the construction of Meyer's authorship and Braun's analysis of authorship with reference to Bourdieu: 'while an author's cultural capital (his or her actual literary output) does still figure in the overall public perception, public narratives unfolding in the mass media prioritize his or her far more newsworthy symbolic capital (the perceived social importance of the person by other players in the field [such as critics]). It is in this sense that authors are "made"'.<sup>17</sup> Meyer's products are strongly linked to their producer who, at least in the past, was often pigeonholed as a 'rough East German writer'. Although Meyer's 'East Germanness'

gained a specific quality through a perceived link to his social marginality which became an important marketing factor, Meyer himself recognized the ‘value of [his] marginality’ and constructed his own social outsiderdom by giving it ‘aesthetic value’ through his writing.<sup>18</sup>

However, at least since the publication of his latest novel *Im Stein* (Underground),<sup>19</sup> Meyer’s symbolic capital—his rough East German background—has played a lesser role, which allows him, and his promoters, to focus on his writing style, to enter the transnational literary field (to adapt a Bourdieuan term), and to escape the ‘provinciality’ in which German literature was perceived to have become trapped after German reunification,<sup>20</sup> and which has recently been the focus of discussion in German feuilletons yet again.<sup>21</sup> The ‘aesthetic value’ of his novel is, I argue, now more strongly connected with a style that is comprised of more than mere intertextual references to authors whose works have travelled well beyond their national borders and shaped world literature and is less dependent on a content heavily connoted with the author’s own experiences. As I will demonstrate, Meyer appropriates his predecessors’ literary influences in order to put a specific, (East) German, subject matter into literary language, a practice which I describe here as writing ‘transnationally’. This then allows Meyer to gain access to the world literary stage.

My perception of Meyer’s style thus ties in with transnational approaches to German-language literature that have gained momentum in literary scholarship lately. Some critics even speak of a ‘*transnational turn* in literary studies’.<sup>22</sup> The editors of the recently published volume *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Literature* understand transnationalism ‘as a plurality of intersecting, and cross-cutting flows of products, ideas, people back and forth over

borders' which impacts everyone.<sup>23</sup> What interests me most with regard to the transnational elements in Meyer's work is 'the (productive or disruptive) tension between the particular and the universal',<sup>24</sup> an aspect which is key to my view of world literature in this article. The editors explain further that many texts

implicitly or explicitly thematize their authors' awareness that [...] fiction too is a product that circulates back and forth across borders, absorbing or rejecting other cultural influences and constantly restating, challenging, or reconfiguring nation *and* world. This self-awareness of their own mobility—their own transnationalism—[...] may even frame some contemporary German-language works as *world literature*.<sup>25</sup>

With *Im Stein* Meyer contributes to what Elisabeth Herrmann calls 'a reconceptualization of *world literature* as a phenomenon of literary mobility':<sup>26</sup> he makes his readers aware of the mobility, that is, resonance of his literary predecessors in a specific contemporary setting and, consequently, of his own conscious movements between styles and aesthetic influences as an author. This may also remind us of David Damrosch's definition of world literature as 'a mode of circulation and of reading'; he points out that 'no single way of reading can be appropriate to all texts, or even to any one text at all times'.<sup>27</sup> Meyer as a receiver and reader of his preferred world literary texts, which I will specify below, circulates them beyond their cultures of origin as he adapts, and perhaps further develops, their authors' styles. Not only does he then act as a mediator between the writers he admires and the readers of his own texts, but he also appropriates those pre-existing styles to capture his contemporary world with its own social challenges and so

emulates his predecessors with a contemporary twist. By engaging with world literature in such a transnational way, Meyer both shapes his work and style and is able to reflect on the meaning of world literature in a contemporary ‘transnational reality’.<sup>28</sup> It is this approach to his own writing that marks Meyer’s ‘novel’s non-provincialism’<sup>29</sup> and that allows for its comparability to other world literary contexts.<sup>30</sup>

My view on world literature in the context of Meyer’s work follows Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s consideration of a work’s ‘singularity’ as a prerequisite for its ‘universalizability’.<sup>31</sup> Before delving further into Spivak’s thoughts, Meyer’s own comment on the situatedness of literary works, its specificity, as an indicator for world literature will help us understand what role world literature plays in Meyer’s own work:

Das ist das Großartige an der Literatur: dass der Leser auf Reisen geht in fremde Welten, in denen er sich wiedererkennen kann. [...] Ich glaube, die großen Romane der Weltliteratur sind deshalb so zeitlos, weil sie streng in ihrer Zeit angesiedelt sind. Ein Roman kann in längst vergangenen Epochen spielen, aber er muss den Bogen in die Gegenwart schlagen, um den Leser emotional zu erreichen. Darauf kommt es an: dass ich als Leser das Gefühl habe, es geht um mich.<sup>32</sup>

(That is the great thing about literature: that the reader can travel to strange worlds in which he can recognize him/herself. [...] I think world literature’s great novels are timeless precisely because they are strongly tied to their times. A novel can be set in long-gone epochs but it must make a link to the present in order to reach the



reader emotionally. This is what matters: that I, as the reader, feel that this is about me.)

Meyer's view of world literature clearly echoes Spivak's insistence on 'what is singular in any text is the universalizable'.<sup>33</sup> Exploring the relationship between an author's/artist's singularity and the universalizability of their work under the auspices of 'the ethics of alterity', Spivak insists that 'we can imagine the other [...] as singular, universalizable, but never universal'.<sup>34</sup> 'Universality' is here seen to stand for essentialism, normativity, exclusion, and an association with grand narratives.<sup>35</sup> 'Universalizability', by contrast, describes a work's relatability to other contexts and experiences, its mobility which ensures an asymptotical reaching towards some common condition. In my reading of Meyer's work, specificity—the novel's situatedness that Meyer conveys via writing 'transnationally' in intellectual interaction with his literary role models—is a prerequisite for its singularity and thus universalizability. My appropriation of the concept of 'singularity' in the context of Meyer's work thus differs from Peter Hallward's discussion of 'the specific' and 'the singular' in relation to postcolonial criticism, two concepts that he defines as clearly distinct from each other. Hallward regards the two terms as

two fundamentally divergent conceptions of individuation and differentiation. [...] [T]he singular mode of individuation proceeds internally, through a process that creates its own medium of existence or expansion, whereas a specific mode operates, through the active negotiation of relations and the deliberate taking of sides, choices and risks, in a domain and under constraints that are external to these takings. *The specific is relational, the singular is non-relational.*<sup>36</sup>

In my understanding of Meyer's work 'the specific' allows for 'the singular': as Meyer attributes the aesthetic value of a given work of literature to its ability to travel to other contexts despite its situatedness and to capture readers independent of their social background, Meyer can reach 'the singular' through 'the specific' and thus negotiate his own place in world literature.

A different side to Meyer's relationship to world literature can be seen in the adaptations of his first novel *Als wir träumten* to the theatre by Armin Petras in 2008 (Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin, in co-operation with Schauspiel Leipzig) and to film by Andreas Dresen in 2014 (premiere at the 65th Berlin Film Festival in 2015).<sup>37</sup> As much as these adaptations highlight the novel's significant position in recent German literature, they draw attention to the text's capacity to be 'translated' into and circulated via other genres, thus enabling a wider reception beyond Meyer's readers. Circulation and reception are key elements of world literature for Damrosch, and translation, the fact that world literature 'gains in translation', adds a further dimension to this concept.<sup>38</sup> In this article, however, I wish to focus on a text's singularity and universalizability, whose nexus Meyer has brought to the fore most recently in *Im Stein* both by adhering to the local contexts in his work and by receiving, and thus circulating, what he deems to be world literature that in turn shapes his writing style. Damrosch's response to Spivak's notion of singularity in relation to world literature is: 'when it's done well, world literature actually reframes the singular in new ways'.<sup>39</sup> This article aims to show how Meyer's 'reframing of the singular' is not part of a 'provincialization' of contemporary German literature,<sup>40</sup> but a move towards world literature.

*Im Stein*, published in 2013, is a multi-voiced novel that revolves around organized prostitution in an unnamed city post-1989. This city is sometimes referred to as ‘Eden City’, perhaps a tribute to Reinhard Kriese’s science fiction novel *Eden City, die Stadt des Vergessens* (Eden City, City of Oblivion) published in the GDR in 1985, but references make clear that Meyer modelled this city on the conurbation of the two nearby cities Leipzig and Halle.<sup>41</sup> The narrative comprises inner monologues spoken by the prostitutes, the pimps, and other social outsiders whose memories, flashbacks and sudden associations with, for example, childhood songs or films make these monologues often appear like streams of consciousness. Stage-like dialogues between characters, reports as well as extracts from official documents, for example the Prostitution Act passed in 2002, which regulates prostitution as a service and has improved the social and legal status of sex workers in Germany, give the narrative a montage-like character. In his discussion of the ‘cosmopolitan novel’, Berthold Schoene refers to this technique as ‘compositeness’; it is ‘[e]pisodic yet cohesive’ and ‘forges narrative assemblage out of a seemingly desultory dispersion of plot and characterisation’.<sup>42</sup> *Im Stein* does not have a clear storyline as such, and narrative perspectives often change in quick succession. The readers are required to piece the puzzle together; the titled chapters, which not only have the length of short stories but also share some of their stylistic features, guide us to some extent. Although Meyer wishes the prostitutes’ voices to take centre stage,<sup>43</sup> these women often remain nameless or have several (private and professional) names, often making it difficult to differentiate between the various female characters. The two main male characters who lead the reader through the plot—Meyer has called them antipodes<sup>44</sup>—are Arnold Kraushaar, also referred to as ‘Der Alte’ (the old man), AK, or sometimes as ‘der Mann hinterm Spiegel’ (p. 141) (the man behind the mirror),

and Hans Pieszek, or ‘Schweine-Hans’ (pig-Hans)<sup>45</sup> who run the prostitution business in the big city: Arnold owns a number of flats he rents out to prostitutes and Hans runs a club. Various other characters come and go and give the narrative some order, for example the Bielefelder, or ‘Graf’ (Count), a West German businessman who wants to expand his prostitution business to East Germany after 1990 and who teaches Arnold a great deal about ‘the market’; Randy, the only real pimp, who comes from the West German Ruhr-area and uses the post-1989 ‘chaos’ in East Germany to make money in the prostitution business; a policeman to whose thoughts we are privy as he visits his favourite prostitute; and, above all, a number of prostitutes with their different views on their lives and work.

The blurb on the back cover of the book announces *Im Stein* as ‘Gesang der Nacht’ (song of the night), thus connecting the novel’s subject matter with a particular milieu that is associated with night-time activities. While this idea is certainly not far-fetched, many of the novel’s sex workers go about their business in rented flats during the day, and some of the characters also question the notion of the ‘milieu’ or ‘demi-monde’ (pp. 466-467, p. 471). The novel is therefore first and foremost about the connections between all these different voices in a big city.<sup>46</sup> And although AK and Hans hold the plot together and ‘conduct’ these various voices, there is no single hero or flâneur who wanders through the streets of the city taking everything in. Meyer has also mentioned Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* when discussing his style in an interview.<sup>47</sup> AK in particular can be regarded as a Franz Bieberkopf-like figure, that is, one of the many voices that invites the reader to experience different views on the margins of city life, the ‘underground’ of the city, that one currently rarely reads about in German literature. *Im Stein* is a novel about the city (and the ‘stone’ in the novel’s German title also serves as a metaphor for the

city here), but also one about capitalism (the flow of money and exchange of goods), of the changing economic and social situation in Germany post-1989, of gender issues, and, above all, of power.<sup>48</sup>

The theme of the exchange of goods and people, which is at the novel's centre, mirrors Meyer's transactions with, or more precisely circulation of, established literary topoi. This may remind us again of Damrosch's definition of world literature as 'a mode of circulation'.<sup>49</sup> Before Damrosch introduces his definition, he quotes from the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who 'adopted Goethe's term [*Weltliteratur* (world literature)] precisely in the context of newly global trade relations'. While Damrosch acknowledges the 'dramatic acceleration of globalization' which 'has greatly complicated the idea of a world literature',<sup>50</sup> Marx and Engels' assessment of the economic situation in the mid-nineteenth century is still of relevance for the post-1990 capitalist world which Meyer captures in *Im Stein*:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploration of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. [...] All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. [...] National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature.<sup>51</sup>

It therefore does not come as a surprise that Meyer's translator Katy Derbyshire has identified Marx as one of many intertextual references in her review of *Im Stein* on her blog: 'There is Machiavelli and Karl Marx and Wolfgang Hilbig and David Peace and Hubert Fichte and Lewis Carroll, and no doubt more I haven't identified.

And it ends—almost—with Mahler, but is otherwise nothing like [Teju Cole’s 2011 New York novel] *Open City*.<sup>52</sup> The most prominent literary influence that Meyer does not seem to tire to mention is perhaps the most obvious literary role model: John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer* (1925).<sup>53</sup>

Derbyshire’s list of intertextual references may lead to the dismissive assumption that Meyer lacks, perhaps, a certain degree of creativity, of not being able to develop his own unique style. However, his allusions to *Manhattan Transfer* highlight particularly well how Meyer appropriates his literary influences, how he adapts them to bring out the specificity of his subject matter. Thus we can read Meyer’s transnational literary engagement as an ‘aesthetic device’. My evaluation is inspired by Herrmann’s assessment of many contemporary German-language works. She states:

Through intertextual references and allusions to world literature; style and genre mixing; and alienation as well as humorous and ironic distancing from one’s own identity, collective mentality, or national particularities—through all these, transnationalism is applied as an aesthetic device with which new literary possibilities can be sought out, and through which German literature is finally brought into sync with international currents. In these ways, German literature is renewed and revitalized.<sup>54</sup>

Meyer’s nod to modernism, which never ends for the author,<sup>55</sup> is—one would therefore think—deliberate. Both *Manhattan Transfer* and *Im Stein* are set in urban contexts at times marked by social change and insecurities; there is an increased visibility of the capitalist system and the circulation of commodities, and a concern

with how capitalism—albeit in different phases—creates an unfair economic system and social outsiders. Social fragmentation and change certainly come through in both novels’ style with montage-like elements and a mix of fact and fiction, for example.<sup>56</sup> In many ways the content informs the form and vice versa. Despite the clear parallels in terms of style and, to some extent, content (the link between prostitution and urban modernity is a well-established one of course<sup>57</sup>), *Manhattan Transfer* and *Im Stein* do not react to the same social crisis. *Manhattan Transfer* ‘supports the premise that the totality of the modern city, like the totality of American history itself, had grown beyond human comprehension’ in the early twentieth century;<sup>58</sup> *Im Stein* captures—to borrow Peter Thompson’s words—‘a situation [marked by] the general crisis of modernity which hit the western world in the 1970s and [by] the end of communism in the 1990s’.<sup>59</sup> Meyer’s city is, however, not a city like New York, and Meyer is aware of the relative insignificance of his city. In fact, while the reader may perhaps not develop a sense of place unlike of James Joyce’s Dublin, Franz Kafka’s Prague, or Alfred Döblin’s Berlin, all of which are identifiable locations in these authors’ respective oeuvres, Meyer here creates a transnational space shaped by the mobility of its (often temporary) inhabitants and commodities under the changing economic conditions of the post-1990 world in East Germany. Thus his embrace, or even celebration, of the fragmentary nature of the city, the interconnectedness and circulation of people and goods, which also reflect the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, a time that ‘has been marked by increased fragmentation, change, and the disappearance of the grand narratives’,<sup>60</sup> can be regarded as part of his novel’s ‘universalizability’: the reader’s full engagement with *Im Stein* is not dependent on a familiarity with the setting, which is locatable in an East German context yet is simultaneously an unidentifiable city; and it is Meyer’s style—his

circulation and adaptation of literary modes and topoi that travel well<sup>61</sup>—that allows for a productive involvement with the text well beyond an exclusively German audience.

Meyer's representation of the city can, however, also be read as an example of a 'turn to the small' which Schoene regards as another feature of the cosmopolitan novel.<sup>62</sup> For Schoene, the cosmopolitan novel represents 'worldwide human living and global community'.<sup>63</sup> A 'turn to the small' is 'strategically necessitated by apprehending globalization as a powerful meaning-enforcing system whose impact can be allayed only by mobilising the entire microcosmic "nitty-gritty" of global multiplicity'.<sup>64</sup> It is Meyer's zooming in on his characters under the changing transnational circumstances described above that differentiates his work from many of his contemporaries'. Meyer's earlier texts in particular were frequently read in the context of post-*Wende* (that is the time after the so-called 'change', the collapse of the GDR in 1989/90), Postcommunism,<sup>65</sup> or 'East German' literature. Meyer is also often discussed with reference or in comparison to authors of a similar age and East German background, or 'generation', that is, what Linda Shortt has referred to as a 'transitional generation' (those born in the late 1970s whose entry into adolescence/adulthood coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall) as well as with reference to his peers from the German Literature Institute in Leipzig.<sup>66</sup> These are categorizations which Meyer, understandably, regards with suspicion<sup>67</sup> and which contradict his understanding of world literature with which I opened my discussion of *Im Stein*: despite their situatedness world literary texts do not rely on specific knowledge in order to be understood fully and thus allow for parallels with other contexts.



It is therefore particularly noteworthy that with *Im Stein* Meyer entered a different literary arena: he now has the ‘Image als sächsischer Charles Bukowski mit Hang zum Untergrund’ (‘image of a Saxon [note: not “East German”] Charles Bukowski with a penchant for the underground’), as he was described on a German television programme in the autumn of 2013.<sup>68</sup> This image nicely combines his local affiliation (Saxony, Leipzig) with a transnational element—that of the American ‘outsider author’ Charles Bukowski with his interest in ‘the urban poor and “losers” in society’ and his ‘straightforward style of writing’<sup>69</sup>—that triggers a number of associations for an educated reader beyond the local (East) German context.

Meyer’s strategic citing of world literary authors, which the reviewer clearly recognizes and specifically points out in her review, reveals the author’s—to use Spivak’s term again—‘singularity’. This singularity then allows him to make his ‘cultural capital’ travel and to market as specific form of social outsiderdom that, although its context is East Germany, has a global appeal. He can therefore also overcome what Stuart Taberner has identified as ‘an implicit belief that peculiarly “German” factors make [German authors of nonminority backgrounds, in contrast to their ethnically non-German colleagues,] less marketable as transnational, or less likely to write transnationally’.<sup>70</sup> Yet Meyer does not overcome this belief by following a trend that Taberner has also identified, namely by choosing locations outside Germany in order to deal with global issues.<sup>71</sup> He overcomes it by writing ‘transnationally’, and this is in stark contrast to the primarily linear narratives often produced by younger East German writers who wish to capture the experience of post-1989 life in Germany. It is noticeable that many younger (East) German writers seem to try to find order amidst the post-1989 change, or ‘chaos’, by constructing straightforward narratives, or, to quote Karen Leeder, a ‘meticulous realism as

[“authenticity’s”] narrative counterpoint’.<sup>72</sup> I would therefore like to suggest that Meyer challenges some of his colleagues’ conservatism by looking at the ‘chaos’, or what Meyer has also referred to as the ‘mediale[s] Gewitter’ (‘media thunderstorm’) of our lives,<sup>73</sup> through the eyes of socially marginalized characters.<sup>74</sup> This has two implications: first, he questions what our contemporary reality is,<sup>75</sup> what authenticity is,<sup>76</sup> which allows him to reflect on broader literary processes through the situatedness of his subject matter; and second, questions of ‘alienation’ or a ‘sense of dislocation’ often associated with life in post-1989 East Germany, although this is also often related to a ‘new global state of dislocation’,<sup>77</sup> gains a further dimension in Meyer’s novel, namely one not tied to a supposed ‘East German experience’. Meyer may market his local context in his writing to an extent, but his work does not sell some form of ‘East Germanness’. On the contrary: as has become clear in my analysis so far, Meyer desires for his literary work to be associated with ‘the world’ rather than with somewhat limiting local contexts, at least as far as the perception of his work goes. Thus Meyer can reach singularity (his novel) through the specific (his writing technique).

The questioning of authenticity and reality comes through particularly in the way Meyer’s characters deal with their memories. It is noticeable that almost all characters at one point or another mention that they cannot quite remember what happened (p. 57), or that they ‘mix things up’ (p. 17), or that their train of thought has just been interrupted (p. 88). Their memories are highly unreliable,<sup>78</sup> and the (mis-)perception of time also plays a crucial role in the novel. In that sense *Im Stein* challenges the memory discourse, the retrospective construction of the past, often associated with literature produced by writers socialized in the former GDR/East

Germany.<sup>79</sup> The following example of a prostitute commenting on her work and its implications shall illustrate the questioning of reality:

Wo waren wir stehengeblieben ... Ist der Arbeitstag vorbei, habe ich das alles aus meinem Kopf. Alles raus. Sofort. Ich kann nicht sagen, dass ich da irgendwie darunter leide, und die meiste Zeit, die meiste Zeit denke ich da auch nicht dran, denke ich drüber nicht nach. Sage ich mir. Und das ist das. Die Wahrheit muss man sich immer wieder sagen. So zu sich selbst. Es sind Phantasiegeschichten, nur Phantasiegeschichten. Hinterm Spiegel stehe ich und prügele auch, wenn es verlangt wird. Lack und Leder. Die Anschaffung lohnt. Distanz. Professionalismus. Heimat? Was soll ich dazu sagen. Tanzen? (p. 296)

(Where were we ... as soon as the working day is over, everything is gone from my head. Everything's gone. Immediately. I can't say that I suffer from it somehow, and most of the time, most of the time I don't think of it, don't think about it. That's what I tell myself. And that's that. You have to keep telling yourself the truth. To yourself, in a way. These are fantasy stories, only fantasy stories. Behind the mirror I stand and also hit them when required. Leather and all that. The purchase is worth it. Distance. Professionalism. Home? What should I say about this. Wanna dance?)

This is Birgit, a prostitute originally from West Germany, whose thoughts wander off as she is having coffee with a colleague. She reflects in an interesting way on 'truth' here, on the authenticity of one's experiences; the well-established metaphor of the mirror,<sup>80</sup> which runs through the novel and which highlights questions of reality,

people's perceptions and perspectives, but also the issue of control depending on which the side of the mirror one finds oneself, is also implied here. In Meyer's world of trade and power, it also becomes more difficult to identify the marginalized clearly.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, *Heimat* (home), and belonging, is something which Birgit seems to feel indifferent about or of which she has lost hold. The concept of *Heimat* is of course of great significance in German culture, especially when looking at a home that has been lost, such as the GDR.<sup>82</sup> This example also highlights particularly well how style and content depend on each other in Meyer's work. The thematic issues raised here are reflected in the stream of consciousness-like technique which Meyer employs as he is constructing and bringing across to his readers his character's experiences and her world.

The figure of the reader, recurrent in this article, plays a significant role for Meyer. He has mentioned that he has no desire to reach a particular audience.<sup>83</sup> Bourdieu's editor Randal Johnson made the point that 'no one enters the literary field—no one writes a novel, for example—to receive bad reviews'.<sup>84</sup> I would like to add here that readers play a crucial role in the circulation of texts, most certainly desired by their authors, that make them world literature.<sup>85</sup> Although Braun sees a connection between the construction of authors as consumable brands and 'their [voluntary or imposed] efforts to reach an audience',<sup>86</sup> Meyer clearly does not go for being an 'easy read' or 'entertainment',<sup>87</sup> but pays homage to writers and works, set in different places and at different times, by whom he feels inspired. This has moved him well beyond the myth of the East German 'maverick' writer that may have surrounded him at the beginning of his career. Instead Meyer, one could argue, now performs transnationality—he consciously plays with the authorial labels employed

by the publishing industry—and uses world literature as a strategy, in terms of both his authorship and the reception of his work.

With *Im Stein* Meyer has loosened the link between his persona as ‘rough East German writer’ and his work, between producer and product, that determined the reception of his early work. He may still market a form of East German social outsiderdom through his novel but by consciously turning his singularity into something universalizable with his stylistic turn towards world literature, the value of what readers may read as his East Germanness or social marginality has gained a more global appeal. Meyer therefore does not sell social marginality, let alone East Germanness, as such, but instead folds it into one transnational tradition in particular: modernist fiction that connected the US with the UK and continental Europe and through which authors received each other.<sup>88</sup> Yet he does not simply rehash his chosen world literary authors but adds his own contribution to, or further development of, the literary traditions whose beginnings were strongly influenced by these writers and which are still a relevant tool when capturing the contemporary world that is at the centre of *Im Stein*. Meyer’s literary achievements certainly have their roots in the writer’s contemporary (East) German experience and his ongoing interest in social marginality there, but through his style and, to some extent, universalizable subject matter he draws thought-provoking parallels between the uncertainties and instabilities of the beginning of the twentieth century and those of a contemporary globalized Germany and thus can speak to a global audience. By writing towards his own singularity with his stylistic nod to his literary predecessors, Meyer did not, however, produce a mere copy of great modern literature with *Im Stein*.<sup>89</sup> On the contrary: with his novel Meyer has renewed ‘productive conversation[s] between and across cultures’<sup>90</sup> and discussions about the

universalizability of literature by ‘reflect[ing] on the [contemporary] transnational reality’ via his novel and by ‘participat[ing] in it’ as an author.<sup>91</sup> And it cannot be denied that this practice is beneficial for his own image as a now more intellectual writer. Meyer may be ‘a Saxon who has learnt a lot from the Americans’, but with *Im Stein* he has gained a singular position in German literature—and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Ina Hartwig, ‘Nachtarbeiter in Wechseljahren’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 24/25 August 2013, p. 17; original: ‘der [...] Sachse, der oft betonte, wie viel er von den Amerikanern gelernt habe’. – Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

This article is based on a paper with the same title which I presented at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association at New York University in March 2014 as part of the seminar ‘Cultural Capital and Writing Transnationally’. I would like to thank the seminar organiser, Stuart Taberner, who also read an earlier version of this article and for whose comments I am grateful. Finally, I would like to thank the audience at the German Interdisciplinary Research Workshop at the University of Warwick, where I was invited to speak about “‘Die Stadt und die Welt’: Clemens Meyer, Singularity, and World Literature’ in February 2015. Their comments inspired some of my thoughts on transnationalism and the city.

<sup>2</sup> Clemens Meyer quoted in this translation on website of And Other Stories publisher, <<http://www.andotherstories.org/author/clemens-meyer/>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

<sup>3</sup> ‘Opfer des Kanons: Der Schriftsteller Clemens Meyer über Geschichten von Liebe, Freundschaft und Verrat’, aufgezeichnet von Christopher Schwarz, in

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*Wirtschaftswoche*, 12 February 2008; accessed via <<http://www.wiwo.de/unternehmen/schon-gelesen-opfer-des-kanons/5349282.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

<sup>4</sup> Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten: Roman* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2006). See also Frauke Matthes, ‘Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*’: Fighting “Like a Man” in Leipzig’s East’, in *Emerging German-Language Novelists of the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Lyn Marven and Stuart Taberner (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 89-104.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> Elmar Krekeler, ‘Clemens Meyer blickt in einsame Männerherzen’, *Die Welt*, 03 February 2008; accessed via <<http://www.welt.de/kultur/article1622033/Clemens-Meyer-blickt-in-einsame-Maennerherzen.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016]. Meyer was known for showing off his tattoos and extremely short hair in publicity photographs such as the one on the back cover of the hardback edition of *Als wir träumten*. See also Matthes, ‘Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*’, p. 89 and p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), for example, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> In the interview on his publisher’s author’s page, Meyer mentions a list of writers of a variety of backgrounds who he admires. Amongst those are ‘mein [my] DosPassos [*sic*] und mein Hemingway und mein Fitzgerald und mein Céline und mein Camus’. That is not to say that Meyer was not influenced by German-language authors as he also mentions Hans Henny Jahn, Hubert Fichte, and Uwe Johnson, for example. ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’, Clemens Meyer Autorensseite, <[http://www.fischerverlage.de/site/clemens\\_meyer/interview](http://www.fischerverlage.de/site/clemens_meyer/interview)> [accessed 22 June 2016].

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<sup>9</sup> Clemens Meyer, *Die Nacht, die Lichter: Stories* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2008); English translation: *All the Lights*, translated by Katy Derbyshire and introduced by Stuart Evers (High Wycombe: And Other Stories, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Clemens Meyer, *Gewalten: Ein Tagebuch* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Charles May, 'A Survey of Short Story Criticism in America', in *Short Story Theories*, edited by Charles May (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 3-12 (p. 5 and p. 11).

<sup>12</sup> Thomas M. Leitch, 'The De-bunking Rhythm of the American Short-Story', in *Short Story Theory at the Crossroads*, edited by Susan Lohafer and Jo Elleyn Clarey (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State Press, 1989), pp.130-147 (p. 133).

<sup>13</sup> Randal Johnson, 'Editor's Introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essay on Art and Literature*, edited and introduced by Randal Johnson (Polity: Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1-25 (p. 8). I briefly discuss Meyer's physical appearance and his changing attitude towards the publishing industry in Matthes, 'Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*', p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Braun, 'Cultural Impact and the Power of Myth in Popular Public Constructions of Authorship', in *Cultural Impact in the German Context: Studies in Transition, Reception, and Influence*, edited by Rebecca Braun and Lyn Marven (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 78-96 (esp. p. 82). See also Braun's chapter on a wider discussion of the relationship between the author and the marketing of their public persona in a German context.

<sup>15</sup> Deutsches Literaturinstitut, <<http://www.deutsches-literaturinstitut.de/archiv-gastdozenten.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

<sup>16</sup> See Matthes, 'Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*', p. 89.



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<sup>17</sup> Braun, 'Cultural Impact and the Power of Myth', p. 85. In this context the question could be posed to what extent Meyer is 'not only producer[], but also agent[] of transmission and reception'. Matthew Philpotts with reference to Pierre Bourdieu, 'Cultural Impact as Symbolic Capital: The Case of the Elite Intellectual Field', in *Cultural Impact in the German Context: Studies in Transmission, Reception, and Influence*, ed. by Rebecca Braun and Lyn Marven (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), pp. 97-112 (p. 97).

<sup>18</sup> Huggan discusses 'the value of marginality' in *The Postcolonial Exotic*, pp. 20-27; *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Clemens Meyer, *Im Stein: Roman* (Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer, 2013). Subsequent references to this work will be given in parentheses in the main body of the article. I translate the novel's title as *Underground*; other translations mentioned in reviews include the literal translation *In Stone* and *Set In Stone*, which in my view does not capture the point of the novel.

<sup>20</sup> See Stuart Taberner with reference to the *Literaturstreit* in 1990, in 'Introduction: German Literature in the Age of Globalization', in *German Literature in the Age of Globalization*, edited by Stuart Taberner (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2004), pp. 1-24 (p. 15).

<sup>21</sup> See Maxim Biller, 'Letzte Ausfahrt Uckermark', *Die Zeit*, 20 February 2014; accessed via *Zeit online*, <<http://www.zeit.de/2014/09/deutsche-gegenwartsliteratur-maxim-biller>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

<sup>22</sup> Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei, and Stuart Taberner, 'Introduction: Contemporary German-Language Literature and Transnationalism', in *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Literature*, edited by

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Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei, and Stuart Taberner (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015), pp. 1-16 (p. 2; italics in original).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1 and p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9; italics in original.

<sup>26</sup> Elisabeth Herrmann, 'How Does Transnationalism Redefine Contemporary Literature?', in *Transnationalism in Contemporary German-Language Literature*, edited by Elisabeth Herrmann, Carrie Smith-Prei, and Stuart Taberner (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015), pp. 19-42 (p. 19; italics in original).

<sup>27</sup> Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Herrmann, Smith-Prei, and Taberner, 'Introduction: Contemporary German-Language Literature and Transnationalism', p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Compare Stuart Evers, Introduction to *All the Lights*, pp. vii-x (p. x): 'What he [Meyer] has harnessed is a style that suits his concerns – part American minimalism, part post-modern European – and that he has fashioned it into his own.'

<sup>31</sup> Spivak discusses the concept of 'singularity' in a recorded discussion with David Damrosch, in David Damrosch and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Comparative Literature/World Literature: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and David Damrosch', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 48.2 (2011), 455-485 (pp. 467-478). Spivak outlines her concept of 'ethical singularity' in, for example, 'Translator's Preface and Afterword to Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps*' (1995), in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, edited by Donna

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Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 267-286 (pp. 269-271).

<sup>32</sup> Opfer des Kanons’.

<sup>33</sup> Damrosch and Spivak, ‘Comparative Literature/World Literature’, p. 478.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 468. Compare Peter Hallward who explains that “[u]niversal applies to concepts whose reach is properly meta-specific but not singular’, in *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing Between the Singular and the Specific* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. xxi.

<sup>35</sup> While Damrosch is also critical of ‘universality’, he points out that ‘we should be aware that universality itself is not an eternal and unchanging concept. Rather, it has often been a culturally situated, strategic emphasis’. David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 135, and pp. 135-139 for a further discussion of this idea.

<sup>36</sup> Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial*, p. xii; italics in original.

<sup>37</sup> *Als wir träumten*. Dir. Andreas Dresen. Pandora Films. 2015.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>39</sup> Damrosch in Damrosch and Spivak, ‘Comparative Literature/World Literature’, p. 474.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Spivak’s comment in *ibid.*, p. 473: ‘It’s a time to singularize rather than provincialize the European context of comp lit’. See also my previous comment on the alleged ‘provinciality’ of contemporary German literature in this article.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’, Clemens Meyer Autorensseite.

<sup>42</sup> Berthold Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’, Clemens Meyer Autorensseite.

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<sup>44</sup> Clemens Meyer in interview ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa: Hans Dieter Heimendahl unterhält sich mit Clemens Meyer über dessen Buch “Im Stein”’, 9 October 2013; link to video accessed via ZDF, *Aspekte*, 11 October 2013, ““Bordelle—Kathedralen des Lebens”: Clemens Meyer über seinen Rotlichtroman “Im Stein””, <<http://www.zdf.de/aspekte/Bordelle-Kathedralen-des-Lebens-30134932.html>> [accessed 5 March 2014; URL and video link no longer available].

<sup>45</sup> People think Hans Pieszek was a butcher in the past, but he was actually a gardener (p. 46, p. 273).

<sup>46</sup> Meyer in ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa’; ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’ and Clemens Meyer Autorensseite. In the latter interview, Meyer also refers to *Im Stein* as ‘Gesellschaftsroman’ (‘social novel’) whose ‘Welt der Nachtgestalten’ (‘world of characters of the night’) mirrors the present.

<sup>47</sup> Meyer in ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa’.

<sup>48</sup> Meyer mentions the metaphor of the stone in ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa’; ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’, Clemens Meyer Autorensseite. In the latter interview, Meyer calls *Im Stein* a ‘Großstadtroman’ (‘city novel’) as well as a ‘Wirtschaftsroman’ (‘economic novel’).

<sup>49</sup> Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3 and p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, p. 421; quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>52</sup> Katy Derbyshire, ‘Clemens Meyer: *Im Stein*’, 24 August 2013, *Love German Books* blog <<http://lovegermanbooks.blogspot.co.uk/2013/08/clemens-meyer-im-stein.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016]. Meyer has also mentioned that he read Marx’ *Das Kapital*, in ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’, Clemens Meyer Autorensseite.

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<sup>53</sup> John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, with an introduction by Jay McInerney, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2000). See Meyer's comments on *Manhattan Transfer* and his adaption of modernist literary devices in 'Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa'. *Im Stein* also contains a chapter with the intertextual title 'Transfer, (Bye-bye, mein Ladyboy)'.

<sup>54</sup> Herrmann, 'How Does Transnationalism Redefine Contemporary Literature?', p. 37.

<sup>55</sup> Meyer in 'Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa'.

<sup>56</sup> Meyer has referred to *Im Stein* as 'eine große Montage' ('a great montage'), in 'Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*', Clemens Meyer Autorensseite.

<sup>57</sup> Hartwig, 'Nachtarbeiter in Wechseljahren', 17.

<sup>58</sup> Desmond Harding, *Writing the City: Urban Visions and Literary Modernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 97-98. See also Harding's chapter 'Ulysses and *Manhattan Transfer*: A Poetics of Transatlantic Literary Modernism', pp. 95-132, for a detailed analysis of Dos Passos's novel.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Thompson, "'Die unheimliche Heimat': The GDR and the Dialectics of Home', *Oxford German Studies*, 38.3 (2009), 278-287 (p. 278).

<sup>60</sup> Linda Shortt (with reference to Peter Thompson), 'Reimagining the West: West Germany, Westalgia, and the Generation of 1978', in *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989*, edited by Anne Fuchs, Linda James-Chakraborty, and Linda Shortt (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 156-169 (p. 159).

<sup>61</sup> Much of Franco Moretti's literary world-systems theory revolves around the question whether certain forms, plots, or styles travel well and if so how (see in particular, 'The Slaughterhouse of Literature' [2000], in *Distant Reading* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), pp. 63-89, and 'Evolution, World-Systems,

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*Weltliteratur*' [2005], in *Distant Reading* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), pp. 121-135. I am less concerned with this question in my reading of Meyer's work but it is certainly an aspect that is worth considering if one was to approach world literature as a world-system.

<sup>62</sup> Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29. Schoene's references to Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community* in his argument reveal some parallels between Spivak's 'singularity' and Nancy's *mondialisation* or 'the creation of the world'. Schoene summarizes: 'As a term, concept and dynamic, mondialisation is as all-encompassing as globalisation. What renders it fundamentally different, however, is that it originates and stays rooted in the specific, unassimilable singularities of the global' (*ibid.*, p. 24).

<sup>65</sup> See David Williams on *Als wir träumten*, in *Writing Postcommunism: Towards a Literature of the East European Ruins* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 135-143. Compare also with comments on *Als wir träumten* as a *Wende*-novel, for example, Eberhard Falcke, 'Auf hartem Boden', *Die Zeit*, 9 March 2006; accessed via *Zeit online*, 8 June 2009, <<http://www.zeit.de/2006/11/L-Meyer/komplettansicht>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

<sup>66</sup> 'Opfer des Kanons'. See also Matthes 'Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*', p. 89.

<sup>67</sup> Evers, Introduction to *All the Lights*, pp. vii-x (p. x). See also Clemens Meyer in 'I need the Klagenfurt Money' (interview with Gerrit Bartels), *sightandsight.com*, 26 June 2006, <<http://www.signandsight.com/features/823.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016]; original interview in *die tageszeitung*, 21 June 2006.

<sup>68</sup> ZDF, *Aspekte*, "Bordelle—Kathedralen des Lebens".

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<sup>69</sup> Paul Clements, *Charles Bukowski, Outsider Literature, and the Beat Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), p. 1. On ‘the outsider’ as both a theme in Bukowski’s writing and a ‘role’ claimed by the author, see pp. 93-120.

<sup>70</sup> Stuart Taberner, ‘Transnationalism in Contemporary German-language Fiction by Nonminority Writers’, *seminar*, 47.5 (November 2011), 624-645 (p. 626).

<sup>71</sup> Stuart Taberner, ‘Introduction: Literary Fiction in the Berlin Republic’, in *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*, edited by Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-20 (p. 10). *Im Stein* does, however, contain a chapter set in Japan, ‘Tokio im Jahre null’ (Tokyo in the Year Zero), because AK and Hans have some business links there.

<sup>72</sup> Karen Leeder, ‘Introduction’, *Oxford German Studies*, 38.3 (2009), 236-241 (p. 240). However, see Linda Shortt’s comment on global trends in writing style, ‘Reimagining the West’, p. 159. Shortt’s comment also ties in with an early exception to these straightforward narratives: Ingo Schulze’s novel *Simple Stories* (1998). The title already suggests American influences and a narrative that consists of 29 stories and is not straightforward. See Leeder, ‘Introduction’, p. 240; and Paul Cooke, ‘East German Writing in the Age of Globalization’, in *German Literature in the Age of Globalization*, edited by Stuart Taberner (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 2004), pp. 25-46 (p. 38).

<sup>73</sup> Meyer in ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa’.

<sup>74</sup> For a brief discussion of Meyer’s difference from East German writers of a similar age due to his ‘focus on outsiders’, see Matthes, ‘Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*’, p. 90.

<sup>75</sup> Meyer in ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa’.

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<sup>76</sup> ‘Erst in der Literatur entscheidet sich, ob etwas authentisch ist.’ Clemens Meyer quoted in Julia Schaaf, ‘Der Zauberer von Leipzig-Ost’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 2 April 2006, p. 61; accessed via *faz.net*, <<http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/literatur-der-zauberer-von-leipzig-ost-1327644.html>> [accessed 22 June 2016].

<sup>77</sup> Cooke, ‘East German Writing in the Age of Globalization’, p. 38 and p. 40.

<sup>78</sup> Gillian Pye discusses the ‘unreliability of memories’ with reference to *Als wir träumten* while pointing out Meyer’s borrowing from F. Scott Fitzgerald in ‘Matter Out of Place’, in *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, edited by Renate Rechten and Dennis Tait (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 126-138 (p. 132 and p. 138n31).

<sup>79</sup> For a comparison with Meyer’s questioning of reality through his ‘film-like’ writing style in *Als wir träumten*, which differentiates him from some other contemporary East German writers’ engagement with reality and memory, see Matthes, ‘Clemens Meyer, *Als wir träumten*’, pp. 99-100.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Interview Clemens Meyer zu *Im Stein*’, Clemens Meyer Autorensseite.

<sup>81</sup> Compare Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, p. 27.

<sup>82</sup> In *Im Stein*, half-remembered GDR-songs, for example, such as ‘Unsere Heimat’ (‘Our Home’, p. 343), function as indicators of a lost GDR or home.

<sup>83</sup> Meyer in ‘Clemens Meyer auf dem blauen Sofa’.

<sup>84</sup> Johnson, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, p. 8.

<sup>85</sup> See Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?*, pp. 297-300.

<sup>86</sup> Braun, ‘Cultural Impact and the Power of Myth’, p. 83.

<sup>87</sup> Compare Taberner, ‘Transnationalism’, pp. 638-639.



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<sup>88</sup> See Joris Duytschaever, ‘Joyce—Dos Passos—Döblin: Einfluß oder Analogie?’, in *Materialien zu Alfred Döblin Berlin Alexanderplatz*, edited by Matthias Prangel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 136-149; or Harding, *Writing the City*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>89</sup> Compare with Taberner’s discussion of debates surrounding the supposed ‘provincialism’ of German literature throughout the 1990s and some conservative writers’ attack on ‘today’s German fiction to be largely imitative, cut off from its traditions and reduced to producing pale copies of more “metropolitan” literatures’ (‘Transnationalism’, p. 637).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 638.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

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