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Publication Date
2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Divided: Four States, One Imagination
Discourses on National Division and Unification in Korea and Germany

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

by

Birgit Susanne Geipel

September 2017

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Acknowledgments

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Discourses on National Division and Unification in Korea and Germany

by

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Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
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The dissertation "Divided: Four States, One Imagination" analyzes discourses on national division and unification in Korea and Germany. It investigates novels and films in Korea and Germany depicted the relation of the individual and society from the formation of new states to the heights of ideological conflict until the restructuring of the world order in the post-Cold War era. In my first and second chapter I analyze two early works of division literature, Uwe Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (Speculations about Jakob) and Ch'oe In-hun's *Kwangjang* (The Square). They depict the quest for an ideal society where the tension between individual and state is resolved. I argue that in both novels the protagonists' idealism clashes with the reality of division, which is formally represented through the attempt of a dialectic move failing to come to a synthesis due to the lack of a third option. The third chapter discusses impeded communication in the novels *Somun ŭi pyŏk* (Wall of Rumors) by Yi Ch'ŏng-jun and *Der Mauerspringer* (The Wall Jumper) by Peter Schneider. In an oppressive environment, which Paik Nak-chung called a "division

system," I claim, that the characters unsuccessful rejection of interpellation via ideology in protest of a coerced choice exposes the complicated relationship between individual and state. The fourth chapter discusses identity and life narratives in the post-cold war era by putting Brigitte Burmeister's *Unter dem Namen Norma* (Code Name: Norma) as a post-unification novel and Kim Nam-ho's *Mannam* (Meeting), a North Korean unification novel, in the context of the post-socialist world order. In my last chapter I analyze the depiction of border-space as Foucauldian "heterotopia" in the films *Kongdonggyŏngbiguyŏk JSA* (dir. Park Chan-wook, Joint Security Area), and *Der Himmel über Berlin* (dir. Wim Wenders, Wings of Desire). The action of the characters is defined by these places as they try to pass through a liminal stage to attain unity.

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Fig. 1: East Side Gallery, Berlin

Introduction

Walking along the East Side Gallery in Germany's capital a watchful observer might find amongst the colorful graffiti and paintings decorating the remnants of the Berlin Wall, this single line of Korean writing: "*Uri ŭi sowŏnŭn t'ong'il*" (Our wish is unification). The author, most probably a South Korean tourist, has mindfully subtitled in English: "Our wish is unification of North and South Korea." The snapshot above portrays a piece of the wall that has undergone a double transformation: a material remnant of the Cold War and a symbol of division turned into a piece of art and a symbol of unification. But today it is a reminder of the enduring division in another place and the wish for future change. In one frame we find past, present and future. It shows the politics of the border space and imprinted into its very surface the artistic articulations of the emotions sparked by the political situation. The awareness of a lingering "not yet" implied by the last addition to the Wall might strike the involved observer as painful; it is what we can call, following Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, the 'punctum'[1] of the picture.

National division has raised emotions reaching beyond economic and political reason, of home, family and belonging, which politics and state power quickly learned to exploit. In this respect Korea and Germany share a similar fate: they were both divided in the aftermath of World War II. Despite all cultural and historical differences Korean and German people faced a common dilemma: In the split the former putative unity of nation and state dissolved and the question of national identity in the bizarre constellation, 'one

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[1] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 8.

nation, two states,' acquired a new complexity. The divide was dictated by the establishment of two opposing state ideologies which forced the people to choose either side, entailing an ideological commitment. Thus, the external geopolitical division became also an internal problem of identity.

The importance of the Cold War era of national division has not only been recognized in its historical and geopolitical dimension in separate studies about both nations, but it is also exactly this difference of unified Germany and not/not yet unified Korea after 1989 that has prompted comparative approaches of the German and Korean situation. Almost all of these comparisons are conducted by the social sciences. Given the suddenness of change in Germany a lot of comparative research on national division and unification issues was bound to be very target oriented. From the 1990s until now, Korean scholars writing on this topic mirrored the growing German pessimism about the achievement of unification. While the sudden change in the German situation triggered comparative research in the social sciences, such as international relations, politics, anthropology or sociology, but it has not taken place in literature studies.

This lack of a comparative scholarly research on national division and unification in the literary domain seems odd, since national division and unification are prevalent topics in German, and especially Korean, literature and film. Yet, in contrast to the considerable variety of comparative approaches in other disciplines, literary scholars stayed within the borders of one nation, keeping the Korean and German literatures apart from each other and a similar comparative analysis has not yet been undertaken as a larger project. Some prefaces of translated novels and a handful of essays and

commentaries point to the possibility of a comparison, but most scholars stay away from the topic referring to historical and cultural differences that supposedly make direct comparison unproductive, if not impossible. Specifically the following two differences are often listed to justify the reluctance of considering German and Korean literature within one research project: the roles in World War II with Germany as the aggressor and Korea, as a colony of Japan and Germany's unification versus Korea's ongoing division. Sylvia Bräsel, a scholar of German literature who is also committed to German-Korean literary exchange, for example, advocates this standpoint in her essay "Erfinden und Erinnern. Überlegungen zu ausgewählten Werken moderner südkoreanischer Literatur aus fremdkultureller Sicht (Inventing and Remembering. Reflections on Selected Works of Modern South Korean Literature from a Foreign Perspective)." Bräsel reviews selected pieces of South Korean literature and claims that only the general description of the process of coming to terms with the past could possibly serve as a point of comparison between German and South Korean literature. She completely dismisses the topic of national division, which, in her view, cannot bear detailed comparison. This approach, she writes, is aiming at quickly finding "parallel topics through a superficial reading." [2]

The "different history and culture"-statement is often left uncontested as the alleged difference seems to be obvious. However, in this context, the differences are superficial and the argument fails the point: Certainly, Korea and Germany are different in many ways. However, speaking of national division, Korea and Germany are

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[2] Sylvia Bräsel, "Erfinden und Erinnern. Überlegungen zu ausgewählten Werken moderner südkoreanischer Literatur aus fremdkultureller Sicht [Inventing and Remembering. Reflections on Selected Works of Modern South Korean Literature From a Foreign Perspective]," in *Ostasienrezeption in der Nachkriegszeit. Kultur-Revolution – Vergangenheitsbewältigung – Neuer Aufbruch*, ed. Walter Gebhard (München: Iudicum, 2007), 303.

connected by a number of latent similarities which still await proper scholarly treatment. Thus, dismissing comparative studies by merely pointing to cultural differences ignores its huge potential for insight into events and mechanisms that have profoundly shaped society and culture of the last and the current century. I argue that parallels beyond cultural differences can be uncovered. In the end what would be the merit of comparing two completely identical situations? On the other hand, comparing the repercussions of a similar political event – national division – in the literature of two culturally different societies – Korea and Germany – highlights the idiosyncrasies of the event. In this regard the fall of the Berlin Wall and the changed situation in Germany contributes to comparative analysis that allows for a rich variety of perspectives.

The Nation as Imaginary

My interest was sparked by a growing awareness of exactly these mechanisms and the conflict's far-reaching implications: Bevor researching on this topic, I heard from the translator of Christa Wolf's works, Professor Chon Young-Ae of Seoul National University, that these translations of literature of the German Democratic Republic had not been allowed in South Korea until the 90s. My surprise at hearing this remark stemmed from the fact that Christa Wolf was widely read in West Germany, despite belonging to the GDR canon. Yet, with knowledge of the strong anti-communism of the Park Chung-hee area this case of censorship is not surprising at all. The circulation or censorship of literature, and knowledge in general, does not follow the logic of national boundaries, but rather the larger trajectory of Cold War ideologies modified by their local

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conditions. Ultimately, how can a project which deals with the nation as an ideological construct limit itself by an insistence on the boundaries of national literature?

Assuming that Korea and Germany are incomparable entities only reiterates and reinforces the core problem of the whole division and unification debates, which is the implicit assumption that the nation is a primordial and indivisible unity. Rather than accepting these assumptions as facts, this project needs to take in account that the nation is an ideological concept of its own. The imaginary nature of the nation has been addressed by many scholars. Already in 1882 in his speech "What is a Nation?' Ernest Renan contests the idea that a nation is an unquestionable given: "The nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end."[3] He further points out the aspect of voluntariness as crucial for the imagination of national belonging:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form.[4]

The idea that the nation exists in the possibility to imagine a community drawn together by a shared sense of time also connects to Benedict Anderson's most widely discussed thesis in his seminal work *Imagined Communities,* in which he analyzes the spread of nationalism through print-capitalism. Anderson points to a changed apprehension of time in the wake of modernity. The religious, medieval notion of "simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present"[5] is replaced by, "to borrow again from Benjamin, an idea of 'homogeneous, empty time,' in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse,

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[3] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 20.
[4] Ibid., 19.
[5] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 24.

cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar."[6] Here, so Anderson, the word 'meanwhile' as the consciousness of an existence between past and future acquires new importance.

While Renan in his speech excludes language and race from the definition of a nation, he acknowledges at least a unifying potential in a shared language.[7] For Anderson, furthermore, language fulfils a crucial function. He links the origin of the nation as an 'imagined community' to the emergence of print-capitalism. The invention of the letterpress in connection with capitalism, so Anderson, brought forward the need to publish in vernacular to reach a broader public to become profitable. Print-capitalism also contributed to the development of national languages in creating "unified fields of exchange and communication," and it "gave a new fixity to language,"[8] as once the printed books were in use, language stopped changing, and finally "print-capitalism created languages-of-power"[9] by elevating one dialect amongst many to be the standard version of a language. Thus, he concludes, "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation."[10]

Etienne Balibar is another critique of the idea of the primordial nature of nations. Balibar equally demasks the illusion that nations are naturally grown structures with only one origin and analyzes the elements that contribute to this fiction. He raises the question

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[6] Ibid.
[7] Renan, "What is a Nation?," 15.
[8] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 44.
[9] Ibid., 45.
[10] Ibid., 46.

how the national community is different from any other community if origin and continuity are an illusion.

> *Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary,* that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past).[11]

The nationalization of individual "is not a question of setting a collective identity against individual identities," so Balibar.

> *All identity is individual*, but there is no individual identity that is not historical or, in other words, constructed within a field of social values, norms of behaviour and collective symbols. Individuals never identify with one another [...], nor, however, do they ever acquire an isolated identity, which is an intrinsically contradictory notion.[12]

Balibar rather sees the production of a unified people as essential for the construction of the nation form. As the imaginary symbol of the nation form, the people accumulate the illusion of origin, continuity and future of the nation. The creation of the people allows to ignore the differences within the community and to focus on "the symbolic difference between 'ourselves' and 'foreigners' which wins out and which is lived as irreducible."[13] This requires, Balibar writes, that "external frontiers have to be imagined constantly, as a projection and protection of an internal collective personality, which each of us carries within ourselves and enables us to inhabit the space ot the state as a place where we have always been - and always will be - 'at home'."[14]

The people ultimately become unified by what Balibar calls a 'fictive ethnicity.' Also no nation has a common, homogeneous origin, by nationalizing the social

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[11] Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology." in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities,* ed. Immanuel Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 93.
[12] Ibid., 94.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 95.

community and ethnicizing the people, the population is "represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interest which transcends individuals and social conditions."[15] As a result, so Balibar, "one can be interpellated, as an individual, in the name of the collectivity whose name one bears."[16] Finally, this 'ficitive ethnicity' is produced by language and race. Language is central in its function as national language. The individuals become integrated into a language community through the training in a national school system. However, as language has an inclusive character, open to everyone who is willing to learn it, race in its exclusive function is essential for the creation of ethnicity.[17] The racial community is based on the idea of genealogy. In the nation state it gains importance while tribal communities and other notions of kinship loose importance. The more the traditional idea of the family clan dissolves the more the state intrudes into family life. Solidarity and loyalty are not directed towards the tribal community any more, but towards the racial community and the national social state. The family has now the national function of reproducing labor force, which is subordinated to the 'fictive ethnicity.'[18] Balibar concludes that the elements language and race can be given different importance to according to the historical circumstances.

Nationalism and Unification Politics

In both countries, Germany and Korea, these elements play out differently shaping different discourses around the imaginary of the nation. In contrast to other

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[15] Ibid., 96.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 98f.
[18] Ibid., 99ff.

European states, Germany only became a unified Nation-State in 1871 after the Franco-German war. Yet, nationalism before the German Nation-State has its origin in the early 19th century. Under the impression of the Napoleonic wars Johann Gottlieb Fichte declared that a German national consciousness has to be established through a new national education. Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808, Addresses to the German Nation) emphasize the civilizational role of the German nation, founded in German language and history, and the German character which is produced through divine law.[19] The nation, following Fichte's view is constituted through an eternal essence. Through political consolidation the *Kulturnation* then turned into a Nation-State, which added the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (people's community), which ultimately evolved into the racist ethnic nationalism of the Nazi-era.

Korea on the other hand is often deceptively referred to as a nation with a tradition of thousand years. "In many Korean history textbooks," Henry Em writes, "Korean history is confidently and unproblematically traced back to prehistoric times – suggesting that the Paleolithic people who inhabited the Korean peninsula 400,000 to 500,000 years ago were 'early Koreans.'"[20] However, before the late 19th century, a notion of Korea as a nation did not exist:

> [T]here was little, if any, feeling of loyalty toward the abstract concept of 'Korea' as a nation-state, or toward fellow inhabitants of the peninsula as 'Koreans.' […] Since at least the seventh

[19] Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Reden an die deutsche Nation [Addresses to the German Nation]," in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke. Dritte Abteilung. Populär Philosophische Schriften. Zweiter Band: Zur Politik, Moral und Philosophie der Geschichte,* ed. Johann Gottlieb Fichte. (Berlin: Veit & Comp, 1864, reprint: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1965), 382.
[20] Henry Em, *Nationalist discourse in modern Korea: Minjok as a democratic imaginary* (Ann Arbor MI: UMI, 1995), 1.

century, the ruling classes in Korea had thought of themselves in cultural terms less as Koreans than as members of a larger cosmopolitan civilization centered on China.[21]

It was only at the turn of the 20th century that the concept of nation enters Korea. The remarkable amount of nationalist writing at that time "marked the greater participation of Korean elites in the global ideologies of capitalist modernity," but also "reflected a resistance to external political pressures, in particular to Japan after 1905."[22] Due to the successive loss of sovereignty of the last king of Chosŏn-Dynasty and the annexation of the territory "writers began moving away from state-centered definitions of the nation to contemplate an alternative location, one variously called the national soul (*kukhon*) or national essence (*kuksu*)."[23] These concepts rely on cultivation of language, religion, history, and reminiscent to the idea of *Kulturnation* described by Fichte. However, the concept that would become the most relevant even in contemporary Korea is the concept of the homogenous ethnic nation (*minjok*), introduced by historian Sin Ch'aeho in 1908. *Minjok* is a neologism joining the Chinese characters *min*, for 'people' and *jok* mostly used in words in the field of 'clan,' 'tribe' and 'family.'[24]

> This very combination – two venerable characters traditionally used to denote various types of social groups – served to blur the term's recent origins, suggesting an etymology that, like the claims being made for the nation, stretched into the distant past. Moreover, with its individual components giving the term a somewhat organic touch through its intimation of a popular (*min*) and familial (*jok*) derivation, it proved most useful for intellectuals writing about the nation as a natural entity.[25]

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[21] Carter Eckert, *Offspring of Empire: The Koch'ang Kims and the Colonial Origins of Korean Capitalism, 1876-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 226f. Also cited in Em, *Nationalist discourse*, 3.

[22] Andre Schmid, *Korea Between Empires 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 5.

[23] Ibid., 15.

[24] Ibid., 172.

[25] Ibid., 172f.

Minjok, an amalgamation of two characters with different connotations has evolved into a powerful concept, which until today remains uncontested in the popular discourse and is the driving force behind a unification ideology in South, as well as North Korea.

After World War II the division of both countries went through several stages: the partitioning into occupation zones in 1945, the formation of separate states in 1948 in Korea and 1949 in Germany, and the experience of the Korean and the building of the Berlin Wall. Each of these steps further deepened the intra-national divide, situating the newly formed states on the opposing side of the Cold War world order. After the process of division, nationalism played a different role in each country's unification policies. Nevertheless, the fact that both countries divisions have originated out of the same geopolitical power game between the West and the Eastern Bloc, led the Republic of Korea and the Federal Republic of Germany to maintain close contact concerning the question of national unification: The launch of West German *Ostpolitik* (Eastern Policy) inspired the Joint Communiqué between the two Korean states in 1972, which voiced the mutual aim of unification.[26] This was followed by a renewed distance during the rest of the Park Chung-hee's military dictatorship and Roh Tae-woo's *Nordpolitik* (Northern Policy) in the 80s, which aimed at the isolation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea by engaging in economic cooperation with its communist allies. The 90s brought change with the first civilian President of South Korea, Kim Young-sam, paving the way for the later policy that came closest to the idea of *Ostpolitik*: President Kim Dae-jung's

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[26] Meung-Hoan Noh, "West German Ostpolitik and Korean South-North Relations," in *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974. European and Global Responses*, ed. Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 153.

Sunshine Policy leading to the two historic North-South summits in 2001 and 2007, under Roh Moo-hyun, and a new economic cooperation between the states. However, the Sunshine Policy was suspended with President Lee Myung-bak's election in 2008 and remains discontinued until this date with a renewed distance between the states.

West German *Ostpolitik* was later acknowledged as a driving force in the era of *détente* and evaluated positively for contributing to the peaceful ending of the Cold War. However, Chancellor Willy Brandt was initially criticized by the conservative opposition for strengthening the other side by economical engagement with the Eastern Bloc and legitimizing the German division by recognizing the German Democratic Republic as a separate state. Nevertheless his course was further pursued by the succeeding conservative government and eventually led to unification. Seen from a Cold War perspective of the West the FRG's absorption of the GDR was a political victory. The assumption, however, that a similar policy will lead to a similar result is not justified. The discourse that drives or impedes effective unification policies is not the same. Meung-Hoan Noh points out this fundamental difference between the West German and South Korean agenda at the time of *Ostpolitik*:

> Behind Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was a renunciation of militant nationalism and a commitment to building a United Europe. For Korea, on the other hand, the driving force behind a South-North dialogue was a traditional nationalism. Where West Germans found the concept of the fatherland increasingly alien, for Koreans it was still their principal goal.[27]

The concept of the nation clearly is a key point in the issue of national division and unification. While nationalism in both cases evolved out of a situation of territorial threat creating the need for a national consciousness, it served in Korea as a means of

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[27] Ibid., 155.

inner resistance to Japanese fascism, yet, in Germany it culminated in a racist ethnic-nationalism in fascist Nazi-Germany. Nationalism, which was always an integral factor in Korean unification aspirations, did not play a main role in Germany until shortly before the actual unification. Despite the German trauma of the Nazi-period, which made nationalism, and especially racialized nationalism a taboo until today, an ethnic/cultural nationalist sentiment was kindled by Western politicians to create popular consent in the unification question. This proved to be essential for German unification, as John Borneman writes:

> Without this imaginative possibility – one people must naturally live in one state – it would have been much more difficult, if not unlikely, for either the ordinary East Germans or Helmut Kohl, […] to so successfully bring West Germans and the international community to agree on the legitimacy of unification.[28]

This sudden revival contrasts the non-nationalistic orientation of *Ostpolitik* before. Yet, the fiction of the national community's natural unity is the precondition to make the legitimacy of unification unquestionable to the own population, as well as the international community. In contrast to Korea where the rhetoric of nationalism dominates both states unification policies, there existed no larger consent on the necessity of unification in Germany. Especially the government of the GDR had no plans to aspire future unification with "fascist" West Germany and rather maintained a close connection to the Soviet Union. Consequently it rejected any concept of German national identity that would associate it with the German Nazi regime and West Germany which was seen as the heir of the Nazi legacy. In this sense the GDR failed in their task of "nation-

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[28] John Borneman, "North Korea South Korea: One Korea and the Relevance of German Reunification," in *The Partition Motif in Contemporary Conflicts*, ed. Smita Tewar Jassal and Eyal Ben-Ari (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2007), 347.

building."[29] It constructed its identity solely around anti-fascism, ignoring the ordinary people's wish for national identity and unification. With the growing economic discrepancy between the two states, citizens in the East started to identify more and more with the West German concept of 'one nation, two states.' The FRG offered a package of economic prosperity, the possibility of national identification and hope for unification in contrast to the GDR's economic regression, a post-national concept of an antifascist nation and the insistence on the partition of East and West. The GDR recognized the dangers of Western rapprochement and reacted:

> West Germany's *Ostpolitik* – which raised the danger of increased contacts and identification with West Germany – led to a full-blown attempt to create a separate GDR identity. (One of the most absurd aspects of this policy was a ban on singing the GDR national anthem – it was to be listened to wordlessly because the text made mention of German unification.)[30]

This attempt to create such a "separate GDR identity" only worked for the regime itself, and ironically, for the leading critics of the regime. The intellectual opposition never found an effective dissident discourse as they fundamentally agreed with the ideals of the GDR, only criticizing short-comings of the particular governing regime. As a result the broad masses did not find their interests represented and turned towards the West, which offered the desired imagination of national kinship and West German politicians reacted to East German citizens' voicing of national sentiment.

John Borneman recognizes the dilemma of necessity and dangers of exploiting the national imagination:

> The concept of the German cultural nation is a form of traditional legitimacy that appeals to what Weber called an 'eternal yesterday'. It has proven resilient, and a seemingly necessary fiction in

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[29] Mark R. Thompson, "A Hostile People but a Loyal Opposition: National Identity and anti-Fascism in the GDR," in *Political Thought and German Reunification. The New German Ideology?,* ed. Howard Williams a.o. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 14.
[30] Ibid., 14f.

the unification process to justify the imperative of negating the five decades of engineered social change and political division of the Cold War. But in many ways it has also served to obscure the conditions that might make actual unification possible, by providing an ideological justification that had little to do with empirical reality.[31]

Various studies detailed that after the euphoria of unification insecurity and depression was widely spread throughout eastern Germany. Most prominently psychiatrist Hans-Joachim Maaz attributes this in his study *Der Gefühlstau. Ein Psychogramm der DDR* (1990, The Emotional Block. A Psychograph of the GDR) to the difficulties of immediately assimilating to the demands of Western capitalist society after decades of Communist socialization.[32] The national imagination did not cushion this shock, but rather complicated it, as the cultural and ethnic kinship ties were assumed to weigh more than the political socialization of the Cold War.

While the West German state took advantage of the void of an East German identity to unify the country, in Korea an equally fervent national sentiment on both sides South and North Korean have formed strong identities in opposition to each other. Paik Nak-chung, one of the leading South Korean intellectuals to speak on the issue of national unification, coined the term 'Division System' to describe Korea's situation. The 'Division System' is a self-perpetuating system connecting North and South in its antagonism kept alive by both governments that establish their power and authority by this stable construct of opposition.[33] Although in popular unification discourse belief in one homogenous nation is seen as a bonding force, it is in fact this sentiment of nationalism that serves as a powerful tool to keep up the 'Division System.' Both states

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[31] Borneman, "North Korea South Korea," 347.

[32] Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Der Gefühlsstau. Ein Psychogramm der DDR* [The Emotional Block. A Psychograph of the GDR] (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1990).

[33] Paik Nak-chung, "The Idea of a Korean National Literature Then and Now," *Positions 1/3* (1993): 574.

legitimized their rule in the positive legacy of a resistant post-colonial nationalism and termed the governments of the respective other state a puppet-regime to the US or the Soviet Union. As the respective other state was never legitimally recognized, it was not a question of communist North against capitalist South, but rather of 'true Korean nation' against the 'traitor to the nation' and vice versa.[34] Although great expectations were set into the success of the 'Sunshine Policy,' the temporarly improved relations did not change the bigger mechanism of the 'Division System.'

The Ethics of Comparison

With this background in mind I will now consider a debate on unification between Jürgen Habermas and the before mentioned Paik Nak-chung, both leading intellectuals on the topic in West Germany and South Korea at that time. It is one of the few high-profile debates which was six years after Unification in Germany Habermas gave a speech on "National Unification and Popular Sovereignty" at Seoul National University in South Korea. He takes a critical stance on Germany's hasty unification by absorption and the fact that the West German government revived the "ethno-national world of the 19th century imagination,"[35] the idea of a *Volksnation*, where "the demos of citizens, in order to stabilize itself, must be rooted in the *ethnos* of fellow countrymen."[36] West German politicians, so Habermas, counted on this bonding energy, assuming that this kind of "pre-political background consensus"[37] would be an adequate basis for an unproblematic

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[34] Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea. Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 161.

[35] Jürgen Habermas, "National Unification and Popular Sovereignty," in *Habermas and the Korean Debate*, ed. Sang-jin Han (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1998), 115.

[36] Ibid., 114.

[37] Ibid., 115.

unification. While for Habermas the main actor in the process of unification should ideally be the civil society in the public sphere, in the German case this was only the pretense for what was really an institutional unification. The nature of this political act resulted in a variety of negative social aftereffects.

Habermas well-informed analysis of the German situation then was criticized by Paik Nak-chung, one of the leading intellectual voices on the problem of national division in South Korea. Paik, who quite similar to Habermas embraces a position left of center, agrees with Habermas' main idea of civic participation, which is also a major driving force in his approach to unification. Yet, Paik's contention is that Habermas fails to recognize the unique situation of Korea and the "sui generis nature of Korea's division."[38] He strongly disagrees with Habermas' warnings against ethnic-nationalism and asserts that on the contrary civic participation and "progressives on both sides were hampered precisely by the fundamental lack of an effective national discourse."[39] For Paik civic participation and ethnic-nationalism are intrinsically linked and constitute a valuable measure for political change. This is call for resistance against the political status quo of the "Division System." Thus, from Paik's perspective, considering Korea's geopolitical in-between position and its colonial legacy, nationalism is a positive force, rather than a deceptive construct.

The debate, which could have been productive, ends in a deadlock. The superficial difference lies in differing perceptions of nationalism, which need to be

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[38] Paik Nak-chung, *The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 95.
[39] Ibid., 97.

addressed; yet, the issue which ultimately impedes further communication is that of positionality. Habermas is well aware of the historical differences between Korea and Germany, which he addresses at the beginning of his speech. Nevertheless, he proceeds as follows:

> As the starting-points in Korea and Germany differ in so many respects, we should not pitch the comparisons at too concrete a level if they are to have instructive value. Allow me, therefore, to move to a somewhat more abstract level and to examine from a certain historical distance the question of how national state and democracy are related to each other.[40]

Despite an acknowledgment of difference his subsequent reflections entitled "The National State and Democracy" and "The Lessons of German 'Reunification'"[41] imply a postion of universality. In response Paik Nak-chung emphasizes the particularity of the Korean case by emphasizing the uniqueness of the 'Division System' to Korea. Habermas reenacts the rhetoric of exchanges between German and South Korean politicians on the same topic, embracing the idea that this knowledge exchange takes place in order to teach and learn a lesson. This position embraces, as Naoki Sakai has noted before in connection to Habermas philosophical position, that "the West must represent the moment of the universal under which particulars are subsumed." Sakai continues: "Indeed, the West is particular in itself, but it also constitutes the universal point of reference in relation to which others recognize themselves as particularities. In this regards, the West thinks itself to be ubiquitous."[42] Most of the discussions and comparisons on the topic of national division and unification in Germany and Korea

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[40] Habermas, "National Unification," 111.
[41] Ibid., 115.
[42] Naoki Sakai, "Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism." *Translation and Subjectivity: On "Japan" and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 155.

suffer from this problem. Whith this work I want to open up the discussion which to easily spirals towards communicative dead ends as shown above.

Overview

This dissertation discusses literature and film from the beginning of the Cold War until the fall of the Wall in Germany and the era of *détente* between North and South Korea with the introduction of the Sunshine Policy in South Korea. The topic of national division created a vast body of literature and film in all four states, so that a choice of the works discussed cannot claim to be exhaustive in the variety of complex problem this topic poses. It rather focuses on different aspects from all four sides at different points in time. By presenting artistic productions from all four states side by side I will offer the possibility to see examples across national borders, ideological borders, borders of disciplines and historical time periods, which are all connected through their common theme portraying the various discourses on national division and unification. Especially with the inclusion of a North Korean novel, which has not yet been translated and discussed in English, I want to take a step towards overcoming the invisible border that keeps the study of North and South Korean literature apart. Drawing together all these examples is challenging, yet worthwhile as they show the different approaches of writers and directors working in the ideological force field of the Cold War.

The connecting thread is the experience of the break within the imaginary of the nation through the intrusion of Cold War politics and the subsequent emergence of unification ideology, which again disrupts the newly formed Cold War identities. The quest of the literary and cinematic characters is defined by the search for their place in

society, in this evolving situation of ideological confrontation. The first four chapters on literature chronologically illuminate the core theme of identity in a divided nation, moving from the new experience of division to the further entrenchment of the separate fronts and finally its resolution with different effects in unified Germany still divided Korea. The final chapter on film builds on the results of the previous chapters and broadens the scope from narrative techniques to visual presentation. It will further investigate the theme of division and unification by focusing on the intra-national border space itself.

Although all authors provide their own individual perception of the situation, the works discussed in this dissertation are also parts of larger literary trends of their place and time and represent views that many of their contemporaries share. The literary depiction shows a shift in the perception of the problem from the initial critique of ideological opposition by individuals who cannot identify with the political situation of division, to a growing internalization of this same division. While division was perceived as disruptive to identity in the beginning, it unwittingly became a defining part of the new generation growing up with the Cold War system as the normative world order. Therefore, by the end of the Cold War unification or potential unification turns out to be a threat to identities which have formed in opposition to the national other.

The findings from the literary and cinematic analysis are informed by scholarly works that explore the socio-political implications of national division. First and foremost I discuss Paik Nak-chung's theory of the Korean peninsula as caught up in the 'Division System' which posits the people against the governments. In Paik's theory, as mentioned

above, the two states have a vested interest to perpetuate the situation of division. This concept inherently challenges the predominant Cold War rhetoric of a pure opposition between the two ideologically opposed states. The idea of the 'Division System' is fundamental to any study of Korean national division. Yet, Paik's observations are coming from the heights of Cold War confrontation and can be modified in light of further developments, considering also the German experience of post-Unification identity problems, for instance.

More recent scholars working on the problematics of North-South reconciliation have pointed to the intricacies of identity formation with a side note on the German case. In *Korea and Its Futures*, Roy Richard Grinker also states that the division itself is a part of contemporary South Korean identity. Therefore, not the situation of division but a possible unification would constitute a disruption of identity.[43] In the same vein Roland Bleiker points out in *Divided Korea* that ideological difference is not the same as identity difference. Identity is the overarching sense of the self and its role in society, while ideology is only one part. Identity difference may still persist after particular ideologies and their supporting systems have vanished. Indeed, in Germany these persistent identity differences are still problematic despite the political unification of the country.[44] While in Germany the vanished border lays open new conflict points, in Korea the remaining border enforces the utopian vision of a harmoniously unified nation. These debates inform the following five chapters which compare and contrast artistic representation of

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[43] Roy Richard Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 9.
[44] Roland Bleiker, *Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 18.

the national division and unification discourse, which include examples from both states of the divided nations.

The first and second chapter "The Death of Idealism: Individual and State in Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square* and Uwe Johnson's *Speculations about Jakob*" will discuss the two novels from the beginning of the Cold War which are considered the founding works of literature in the era of national division. These works are influenced by the authors' experience of the first decade in a divided nation after World War II and the uprooting of their personal lives by the subsequent events. Uwe Johnson and Ch'oe In-hun observe the newly founded states from a philosophical standpoint. In their quest for a Hegelian civil society they evaluate the relationship between individual and state in each of the new political systems and explore the limits of personal freedom within these relations. I argue that in different ways both of their works subvert dialectical reasoning. Johnson critiques the idea of an objective truth through the paralleling of different voices in a dialogical writing style. Ch'oe works with the metaphors of "Open Square" and "Closed Room" to describe the two opposed states with their idiosyncratic systems and flaws. Both novels deliberately do not arrive at a synthesis in the end, which is represented by the suicides of their protagonists. Ultimately, this is the death of idealism in the nascent era of national division in a world where the Cold War dynamics just started. Ch'oe eventually revisits his work and changes the trajectory of his work to a transcendental overcoming of these political structures.

The third chapter "Walled Minds: The Division System in Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's *Wall of Rumor* and Peter Schneider's *The Wall Jumper*" focuses on the time of further

progression into the Cold War, when national division has already become the accepted state in both nations. It is a situation which Paik Nak-chung describes as a "Division System" in South Korea, based on the idea that the governments of both North and South Korea gain power through the perpetuation of the system. The South Korean and West German novellas that I will discuss revolve around the observation of a communication barrier or a complete break-down in ideologically repressive societies. Both novellas work with a *mise-en-abyme* narrative. While Yi's novel describes a writer who suffers from censorship, followed by a writer's block to the extent of a complete refusal of self-expression in any way, Schneider's protagonist tries to find a story about a man who refuses to be ideologically confined by the Berlin Wall. In both novellas the impossible quest of the individual to defy Althusserian interpellation as a subject via ideology necessarily fails. I claim that these works intensely show the pervasive influence of ideology that complicates a distinction between the individual and the state. While the assumption of a clear opposition between the state and a unity of the people of both states is at the base of Paik Nak-chung's theory of the Division System, Yi's and Schneider's pessimistic literary depicition of the situation complicates potential ideas for overcoming the system.

The fourth chapter "Illusions of Unity: Brigitte Burmeister's *Codename: Norma* and Kim Nam-ho's *Meeting* as Life Narratives in Unification Literature" compares an Eastern German and a North Korean novel from the post-Cold War era by analyzing how the concept of national unification is depicted through fictional life narratives. Burmeister's novel describes the popular discontent and the crisis of identity in post-

unification Germany of the former East German now forced into the Western narrative of the victory of capitalism over communism and the deception by a unification ideology of ethnic nationalism. The story of the narrator's split with her husband parallels the split of society along people's ability to adapt to a new ideological narrative. The North Korean writer Kim Nam-ho's novel, however, is a counter-narrative to the historical and ideological developments in the post-Cold War era and celebrates an eternal projection of a unification soon to come on the bases of this same concept of ethnic homogeneity which is exposed as deceptive in Burmeister's novel. I argue that kinship narratives constructed by a unification ideology create illusions of homogenous identities, which are dismantled by the reality of heterogeneity in a nation unified after decades of division.

The fifth chapter "The Border as a Space of Otherness: Representations of Liminality in Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and Park Chan-wook's *Joint Security Area*" analyzes the use of space in two films that are set in border zones and explore concepts of unity. Both films are pre-unification films, though from different time periods: they are shortly before unification in the case of the West German film *Wings of Desire* and *Joint Security Area* from the decade of détente during the Sunshine policy era in South Korea. I claim that the border spaces depicted in the films are heterotopic spaces, borrowed from Foucault who defines them as spaces of difference. I further argue that these intra-national border spaces not only generally have a heterotopic quality, but that they also determine the action in both films. While in Wenders' film the divided center of Berlin becomes the liminal space where in a rite of passage a historical trauma is overcome in its characters attainment of an internal unity of the soul. In Park's film the

Joint Security Area is the center of division where the attempts to emotional unity are obstructed by the external forces of the Division System. The passing through the liminal stage fails as the repressive system ultimately does not permit such action from characters within a place of otherness.

Chapter 1

The Search for Truth: Writing against Cold War Dichotomies in Uwe Johnson's

Speculations about Jakob

Empty spaces and time mark the transition from World War II into the early phase of the Cold War. "Zero Hour" (*Stunde Null*) and "Liberation Space" (*haebang konggan*) in German and Korean history, moments of sweeping political change, mark a period of hope for a better society. Yet, this is also the period in which the borders of the occupation zones turned into intra-national borders through the establishment of two ideologically opposed states. The existential hope and subsequent despair in the aftermath of these events is captured in two remarkable novels, which I will analyze in this and the following chapter.

Both of them are set in a time which was a fresh start for both nations; after the turmoil of the Nazi reign in Germany, and the colonial period in Korea, and both portray youthful protagonists who readily embrace the new age, yet end up deeply disappointed. They are Uwe Johnson's *Speculations About Jakob* (*Mutmassungen über Jakob*, 1959) and Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square* (*Kwangjang*, 1960). The two stories evolve around idealistic young men, the railway dispatcher Jakob Abs and the student Yi Myŏng-jun, whose moral conflicts with their environments in an ideologically divided nation force them to commit suicide. The intra-national border crossings of the protagonists enable the presentation and reflection of the two hostile confrontational state ideologies.

This chapter will focus on *Speculations About Jakob*, by analyzing Uwe Johnson's narrative technique which at the same time employs and subverts conventions

of the nascent East German literary scene. I argue, that through his polyphone writing style and the deliberately incomplete dialectical structure of his novel, Johnson ultimately challenges the ideological dichotomy of the Cold War mindset.

Uwe Johnson – "Poet of the two Germanys"?

Uwe Johnson's novel is an analysis of the dilemma many people were suddenly facing at the time: a decision for one side of the nation, or the other. In one of his published lectures, *Begleitumstände* (Circumstances), he writes:

> Es trifft zweifellos zu, dass ein Mensch, der in beiden Teilen Deutschlands zu Hause ist oder Kenntnisse hat, vor eine Wahl gestellt ist. Es ist aber genauso richtig, dass die westdeutsche Wirklichkeit im Vergleich zur ostdeutschen Wirklichkeit keine echte Alternative darstellt, keine nationale. Eine vernünftige Entscheidung ist also nicht möglich. [45]

> There is no doubt, that a person, who is at home in, or at least has knowledge of both parts of Germany faces a choice. However, it is also true that the West German reality in comparison to the East German reality does not constitute a real national alternative. A reasonable decision is therefore not possible.

The protagonist's border-crossing in *Speculations* preceded Johnson's own emigration. Johnson, born in 1934 in Cammin, former East-Prussia, came as a refugee after World War II together with his mother to settle in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). He studied German philology and started writing fiction; however, he never received permission to publish his first novel *Ingrid Babendererde*, as well as his second novel *Speculations about Jakob*. He considered it as a necessity for his future career to move to West-Berlin in 1959.

The nature of this border-crossing and the oscillation of his literary characters make it difficult to pin Johnson to one of the two German states. The fact that he is indeed the first one to address the topic of the existence of two German states that was

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[45] Uwe Johnson, *Begleitumstände. Frankfurter Vorlesungen* [Circumstances. Frankfurt Lectures], (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980), 218. (All translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.)

until then a taboo subject in both camps of the Cold War in literature earned him the title

"Dichter der beiden Deutschland (Poet of the two Germanys)." As this was a term coined

by West German publishers he strongly opposed it, perceiving it as just another attempt

to ideologically label him.[46] The wish to categorize Johnson ideologically goes against

the grain of his works. Johnson himself stated: "Persönliche Erfahrungen hinderten mich

immer, eine Ideologie rückhaltlos mitzudenken, mitzuerleben. (Personal experiences

have always prevented me from wholeheartedly subscribing to an ideology and live by

it.)"[47] He furthermore describes his migration with the following words:

> Ich bin auch wirklich umgezogen, nicht geflüchtet, ich hatte sogar eine Genehmigung. Der Ortswechsel war kein politischer, sondern ein technischer, hygienischer, neutraler Akt. [...] Ich bin in aller Ruhe umgezogen, mit der Schreibmaschine in der einen Hand und einer Aktentasche in der anderen. [48]

> In reality, I moved, I did not defect, I even had received permission. This change of location was not a political, but rather a technical, hygienic, neutral act. [...] I moved at my own leisure, with my typewriter in one hand and my briefcase in the other one.

Johnson was also not comfortable to be seen as a mediator and refuted an often used

expression that insinuated that he found an in-between position by writing from the rare

location, 'on the Wall':

> Der Ausdruck 'auf der Mauer' stammt nicht von mir, sondern von einem Journalisten. Ich glaube nicht, daß man wirklich einen Position 'auf der Mauer' einnehmen kan. Ich habe den Westen nicht aus ideologischen Gründen gewählt, sondern bin aufgrund der Arbeitsbedingungen umgezogen: Ich bin dorthin gezogen, wo mein Buch gedruckt wurde. [49]

> The expression 'on the Wall' is not my own, rather it was coined by a journalist. I do not think that you can really take a position that is 'on the Wall'. I did not choose the West for ideological

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[46] Theo Buck, "Uwe Johnsons Utopie gegen die deutsche(n) Wirklichkeit(en) [Uwe Johnson's utopia against the German reality(/ies)]," *Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum* 5 (1996): 23.

[47] Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz, *Der Erzähler Uwe Johnson* [The narrator Uwe Johnson] (Bern, München: Francke Verlag, 1973), 98.

[48] Ibid.,102.

[49] Ibid., 92, also cited in: Alessandra Jaforte, *Die Mauer in der literarischen Prosa der DDR* [The Wall in the literary prose of the GDR] (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang: 1991), 65.

reasons; rather I had to move because of the working conditions: I moved to the location where my book was printed.

In Johnson's novel these doubts are reflected in the thoughts and dialogues of the main characters, which revolve around the unclear circumstances of the protagonist's death on the rail tracks. *Speculations about Jakob* is told in retrospect: the story begins right after Jakob's passing which could be either seen as a mere accident through an oncoming train, a suicide or even murder plotted by the *Stasi*. Jakob Abs had worked as a railway dispatcher for the East German *Reichsbahn*. He and his mother came as refugees from Pomerania after World War II. They found a new home in the house of the carpenter Heinrich Cressphal and his daughter Gesine, with whom Jakob fell in love. Jakob's firm belief in the socialist state is shattered after his mother's flight to the West, and after experiencing the GDR's consent to the brutal suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Later Gesine leaves the GDR to work for the NATO. Jakob has a chance to visit her in the West, but he decides not to stay in the West and dies on the railroad tracks under inexplicable conditions the day he returns home.

Johnson's reluctance to fit into one category of the Cold War world finds full expression in his work: locating *Speculations* in either of the two German literary histories is a challenging task. It could be described as a novel typical to the GDR insofar as its plot revolves around the political events in the east in 1956. However, in terms of narrative technique, Johnson is far ahead of his time, as I will illustrate later on. While literary tendencies in the GDR of the 50s and 60s are rather affirmative of the regime's political course, Johnson attempts to question the notion of existence of an objective truth. Former East German scholar Hans Mayer who emigrated to the West in 1963

points to the affirmative tendencies in the East as the main problem in dealing with the national division in literary works. The reliability of the characters in East German novels such as Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (*Divided Heaven*, 1963) reaffirm in their clear outline the doctrine of the outer division by depicting a distinctive inner division.[50] In this sense Johnson's literary works – *Speculations* and his following works on the same topic – do not blend with the main tendencies of the East. Rather the novel is defined by its subversion of the literary *zeitgeist*. Yet, if one tries to place Johnson in the context of West German literary history his works appear isolated due to their topic. East German writer Monika Maron reflects on Johnson's work after unification in 1997. She takes up Jens Reich's comment calling *Speculations about Jakob* an "verhindertes Schicksalsbuch der DDR-Jugend der fünfziger und sechziger Jahre. (obstructed book of fate for the GDR's youth in the 50th and 60th.)"[51] Maron acknowledges that she had not read Johnson's work until decades later, although it had been available in the GDR. Despite its obvious narrative virtuosity and its timely contents, Johnson's works remained a marginal phenomenon, hardly appreciated by youths still holding on to a utopian vision for the state.

West Germany, on the other hand, had to hear about the division from the East.[52] Johnson's work, by choice of his topic, also goes against the grain of West German literary trends of his time, as in the West, writers of Johnson's generation hardly

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[50] Hans Mayer, *Deutsche Literatur seit Thomas Mann* [German literature since Thomas Mann] (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968), 96, and also: Hans Mayer, "Versuch, eine Grenze zu beschreiben. Zu Uwe Johnsons Roman 'Mutmaßungen über Jakob' [Attempt to describe a border. About Uwe Johnson's novel 'Speculations about Jakob']," in *Vereinzelte Niederschläge. Kritik, Polemik* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1973), 144.

[51] Monika Maron, "Ein Schicksalsbuch [A book of fate]," in *Quer über die Gleise. Essays, Artikel, Zwischenrufe* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Verlag, 2000), 7.

[52] Ibid., 19.

overcame the limits of their own mental borders. Besides the dominant topics World War II and the Nazi-past, writers mainly dealt with social and cultural problems in their own state and provided moderate criticism of capitalism.[53] Maron states that "Die Teilung wurde akzeptiert, sei es als Konsequenz von Auschwitz oder als günstige Gelegenheit zur Erprobung der eigenen Utopie auf fremden Boden. Von der Literatur aus dem abgespaltenen Teil erwartete man demzufolge auch nicht, dass sie einen Beitrag zum Ganzen und damit zum Eigenen zu leisten hätte. (The Division was accepted, may it be as a consequence of Auschwitz or as a convenient possibility to practice one's own utopia on foreign soil. As a consequence nobody expected that the literature of the separated part would contribute to the whole, and thus to that which was ours.)"[54] National division mostly remained a matter of political essays only. Magnus Enzensberger is fascinated with Johnson for this reason: "Uwe Johnsons Roman hat ein sensationelles Thema. Das ist nicht des Autors Schuld. Dieses Thema, das auf der Hand liegende, das zentral, zum Himmel schreiende Thema der deutschen Teilung hat zehn Jehre lang auf seinen Autor gewartet. (Uwe Johnson's novel has a sensational topic. It is not the author who is to blame for that. This topic, the obvious one, the central one, the sky-rending topic of the German Division, has been waiting for its author for ten years.)"[55] Thus, in the West German literary context as well, Johnson is the first, and to such an extent the only author to address the German division as an existential problem.

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[53] Mayer, *Deutsche Literatur*, 78.

[54] Maron, "Schicksalsbuch," 22.

[55] Ibid., 19.

Multiple Voices and Many Facets of Truth

Speculations about Jakob rejects clear dichotomies. Uwe Johnson's inquiry into the problem of the times ventures deeper than just juxtaposing the two ideologies. Just as Ch'oe In-hun does in his novel *The Square*, Johnson discusses ideology against the backdrop of a newly founded state: A space where the relationship between subject and the state still seems negotiable. The speculations about Jakob's death are the medium to portray the contrasting individual positions on the limitations of freedom within society. The conflicting viewpoints of the characters illustrate this impossible quest for the ultimate truth

The novel's narrative mode undermines the ultimate claim to truth of ideologies through the plurality of the voices in quest of this truth. The death of Jakob Abs initiates the plot, and the speculations surrounding its cause are expressed by a polyphony of voices: This "Orgelspiel aus Stimmen (organ play of voices),"[56] as D. G. Bond calls it, is composed of High- and Low-German, Saxonian dialect, English, Russian and Italian. Furthermore some passages are written in almost biblical prose, while others contain insertions of socialist expressions typical for the GDR. The three narrative forms are separated into the following: Interior monologues of Jakob's girlfriend Gesine Cressphal, Gesine's former boyfriend Dr. Jonas Blach and Stasi agent Rohlfs, intersected with heterodiegetic narration and three dialogues between Jonas and Jöche, a former colleague

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56 D. G. Bond, "The Dialogic form of Uwe Johnson's Mutmassungen über Jakob," *The Modern Language Review* 84/4 (1989): 874.

of Jakob, Jonas and Gesine, and Gesine and Rohlfs.[57] There is no indication that one of the voices has any authority over the others and the intradiegetic voices are also equal to the extradiegetic narrator. [58] Matthias Göritz calls this method a "self-imposed decentralization" which prevents any unambiguous causal links, creates an elliptical structure and withholds important information until the end.[59] The representation of the same events through different perspectives leaves the reader uncertain about the actual occurrences for most of the time. Thus, the juxtaposition of perspectives creates the impression of unreliability concerning the comments about Jakob's life and the circumstances of his death. The narrative mode of the novel is representative for unreliable narrations as it does not allow for the conclusion of a stable, ultimate truth. Rather, the narrated world is dissolved into a series of alternative versions. This notion is enhanced through the different characters' quoting each other, which results in decontextualizing the other's words. Mikhail Bakhtin calls this procedure "hybridization," which adds new layers of meaning.[60] The enunciations of the characters become subjective interpretations of the truth. Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz notes that the seemingly dialectic development of the story where every thesis is countered by an antithesis is thwarted in the end as no higher insight is attained and it all remains in a speculative state.[61] Unlike in the dialectic process favored by East German novels thesis and antithesis do not merge into a synthesis. Different opinions merely coexist; therefore,

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[57] Matthias Göritz, "Die Ethik des Geschichtenerzählens in Uwe Johnsons *Mutmassungen über Jakob* [The ethics of storytelling in Uwe Johnson's *Speculations about Jakob*", *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 6 (1999), 44f.

[58] Bond, "Dialogic form," 874.

[59] Göritz, "Ethik des Geschichtenerzählens," 46.

[60] Mikhael M. Bakhtin, "Discourses in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson, Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 362.

[61] Schwarz, *Der Erzähler Uwe Johnson*, 16.

the novel is a dialogical novel in the Bakhtinian sense that leaves the reader without a final closure.

The polyphone novel serves as a medium of language critique for Johnson. There is no ultimate singular explanation for Jakob's death, no ultimate truth, and no singular meaning in language itself. The language of *Speculations* eludes ideological determination. Jonas Blach, the English literature scholar in Johnson's novel and the most vocal critic of the system pushing for change muses as follows:

> Die Sprache lebt mit der Gemeinschaft, von der sie gesprochen wird, und vergeht mit ihr; in der Literatur aber ist uns erhalten das Weltverhältnis eines einzelnen Subjektes, soll man eigens achten auf das Subjekt, das achtzehnte Jahrhundert geistesgeschichtlich betrachtet, und welcher sprachlichen Mittel es sich bedient zur Erfassung und Bewältigung der Welt? [...] Andererseits, hingegen, wenn die Geschichte eine ist von Klassenkämpfen, die Literatur als anschauliche Illustration zu den Lehren des Marxismus, unstreitiger Nutzen, was ist gegen das Mehrwertgesetz etwa einzuwenden? Und wenn nun eines Tages jedes in literarischer Absicht hingeschriebene Wort um und um gedreht ist und unsere Kenntnis der angelsächsischen Sprache und aller irgend beteiligten Kulturkreise ist umfassend, lückenlos, wie versehen wir uns der Gegenwart?[62]

> Language lives in the community that speaks it and perishes with it; whereas literature preserves for us one individual's relationship to the world, should one pay exclusive attention to the individual, consider the eighteenth century from the angle of its history of thought and the linguistic means it used to come to terms with and overcome the world? […] Whereas, on the other hand, if history is a history of class struggles and literature a tangible illustration of Marxist theories, the benefit is undeniable, and who can seriously dispute the theory of the surplus value? And if one fine day each word that has been written with literary intention finds itself twisted around and around and our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and all its related culture groups is complete, without loophole, how do we face the present?[63]

Jonas implies that the reduction of an expression to its meaning is not sufficient for the understanding of reality, just like literary studies cannot reduce the understanding of one epoch to the comment of one individual.[64] Ironically Stasi agent Rohlfs, Jonas' antagonist, also comes around to the following conclusion: "Also gut. Wir einigen uns darauf, dass niemand besteht aus den Meinungen, die von ihm umlaufen. (Very well. Let

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[62] Uwe Johnson, *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 102f.
[63] Uwe Johnson, *Speculations about Jakob*, trans. Ursule Molinare (San Diego: Harvest Book, 1963), 81.
[64] Bond, "Dialogic form," 882f.

us agree that nobody consists of the opinions people have of him.)"[65] A relativizing utterance like this coming out of the mouth of the most prominent representative of the state clearly negates the possibility of formulating an ultimate truth in this closed system.

This creates tension as the system, portrayed in *Speculations*, demands a unified worldview, even as Jakob's act of "quer über die Gleise gehen (cutting across the tracks)," rejects the very idea of one, as he take the liberty of choosing another way, unaligned with the prescribed protocol. The multiplicity of opinions on the ideal form of the newly founded state is expressed through the different, clashing concepts of freedom. Hansjürgen Popp defines them as follows: There is the protagonist Jakob's conscientiousness, which is characterized as "So-müssen (having to do)." This contradicts captain Rohlfs' understanding of freedom as an "Einsicht in die Notwen-digkeit (insight into the necessity)" of the "having to do". For Jonas, the scholar, on the other hand, freedom equals "Anderskönnen (being able to do otherwise)", and, in Gesine's case, it even requires an "Andersmüssen (having to do otherwise)."[66] These different concepts are played out in the dialogues and interactions of the characters analyzed in the following.

Initially Jakob does not distinguish between the will of the individual and the will of the collective. Only after two events in his life – his mother's defection to the West and his encounter with the Stasi agent Rohlfs, does he acknowledge a dichotomy between the individual and the state. From this moment on, his uncritical participation in the

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[65] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 241 / Johnson, *Speculations*, 190.
[66] Hansjürgen Popp, "Einführung in 'Mutmassungen über Jakob' [Introduction to 'Speculations about Jakob']," in *Über Uwe Johnson*, ed. Reinhard Baumgart (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), 50.

system begins to disintegrate.[67] In the course of the novel Jakob confronts various concepts of freedom which stress the relation of the individual and society in different ways. Two opinions clash in the encounter between Jakob and Jonas. Although both, Jakob the laborer, as well as Jonas the intellectual, see themselves as devoted socialists, Jakob does not question the system, while Jonas adopts it as his task to fix its short-comings.[68] Jakob denies the existence of freedom in the first place:

> 'Freiheit' ist eher ein Mangelbegriff, insofern: sie kommt nicht vor. Wer auf die Welt kommt redet sich an mit Ich, das ist das Wichtigste für ihn, aber er findet sich mit mehreren vor zusammen, und muss sich einrichten mit seiner Wichtigkeit; niemand kann so frei sein etwa aus der Physik auszutreten für seine Person. Als soziales und natürliches Lebewesen (ich bin ein...) weitgehend fest.[69]

> "[F]reedom" is a negative [literally: lacking, B.G.] concept rather: it doesn't exist. Whoever enters this world addresses himself as "I", that's the most important to him, but he finds himself in the company of several other I's and has to readjust his self-importance; nobody is free enough for instance to step out of physics as far as he's concerned. As a social and natural being (I am a…) fixed to considerable degree.[70]

In addition, Jonas' viewpoint contrasts with Rohlfs' world view. Jonas' and Rohlfs' ideas depict the basic ideological conflict of opinion regarding a socialist society. Jonas is convinced that it is necessary to liberalize and democratize socialism, while Rohlfs clings to the accepted authoritarian way.[71] This is shown in the controversy that arises over Krushchev's disclosure of Stalin's crimes. In the novel, the official discourse on this

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[67] Kurt J. Fickert, *Neither left nor right. The Politics of Individualism in Uwe Johnson's Work* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 26f.
[68] Ibid., 33f.
[69] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 135.
[70] Johnson, *Speculations,* 107.
[71] Swantje Rehfeld, "Leben unter fortwährender Prüfung. Das Bild des Sozialismus in Uwe Johnsons Roman 'Mutmassungen über Jakob' [Life under ongoing scrutiny. The image of socialism in Uwe Johnson's 'Speculations about Jakob']," *Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum* 7 (1998): 22.

event is recapitulated in a question-answer-sequence.[72] The account ends with a plea for party-line loyalty:

> [W]as stellt der Oberste der Besten vor, was vertritt er, was ist enthalten in ihm? Die gute Sache. Die gute Sache kann nicht zurückgeschickt werden. Schädigt nicht jede Bekanntmachung von Fehlern das Ansehen der guten Gruppe? [...] Es ist notwendig, dass ihre Gerechtigkeit unbestritten bleibe zu jeder Zeit. Freiheit die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit ... (was ist notwendig?).[73]

> Because, what does the Best of the Best stand for, what does he represent, what is he invested with? The good cause. The good cause cannot be sent back. Does not each airing of errors harm the reputation of the good group? […] It is necessary that its fairness remain indisputable at all times. Freedom: acceptance of this necessity… (What is necessary?)[74]

Rohlfs agrees with the party's decision not to publish Krushchev's speech in the GDR:

> Muss so ein Nachfolger (betrachte ich es so:) die Fehler des Vorgängers erwähnen, so gefährlich das ist für sein Amt, muss er wissen. Ich halte (ich erdachte für, ich weise zurück) diesen Namen „Fehler" für einen einzigen Unsinn, was ich denn damit gemeint: Massnahmen der Regierung sind von der Bevölkerung unliebsam empfunden worden – als ob sie damit falsch wären! Über die Notwendigkeit kann niemand urteilen als die Partei, wir.[75]

> If a successor (to look at it from that angle) feels obliged to mention his predecessor's errors, dangerous though it be for the administration, he must know. I consider (I regard, I refute) the word "error", a lot of nonsense, what is it supposed to signify? The government has taken certain measures that didn't please everybody, as though that made them wrong! Nobody is in the position to judge whether they're necessary or not, except the party, except us.[76]

His concept of freedom, according to this statement, requires that individuality "is canceled out by the necessity that the state, as a totality, continue to exist."[77] Jonas, on the contrary, is in favor of Krushchev's choice. Gesine, on the other hand, completely distances herself from ideological discussions regarding the internal matters of the GDR's socialist system and evaluates Stalin's condemnation by his successor as a "taktische Einzelheit ohne Belang (political move of no importance)."[78] She avoids any

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[72] Ibid., 22.
[73] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 123.
[74] Johnson, *Speculations*, 97f .
[75] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 127.
[76] Johnson, *Speculations*, 100.
[77] Fickert, *Neither left nor right,* 30f.
[78] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 124/ Johnson, *Speculations*, 98.

participation in Eastern Bloc events and thus turns her back on the GDR. She also distances herself in the same way from the ideological positions of the West, and her new employer, the NATO, as the conversation between Jonas and Cressphal shows:

> " [...] Es hört sich ungerecht an was sie von uns sagt, weil sie mit uns nun einmal nichts zu tun haben will –"
> Und nichts mit den Amerikanern: sagte Cressphal.
> "– und mit keinem überhaupt, ja wenn einer in der Mitte stehen will um jeden Preis, kann er wohl klaren Kopf behalten. [...]"[79]

> "[…] It sounds unjust, the things she says about us, because she wants to have nothing to do with us…"
> Or with the Americans either: Cressphal said.
> "… or with anyone else, yes, if one wants to stay out of it at any cost, one may be able to keep a clear head. […]"[80]

As can be seen from these statements, her position is that of a pure individualist, standing in between the systems. Socialism will not leave her, even when she is deciding against it, it will stick to her as the reason for her emigration and abandonment of her family in the GDR.[81] On the other side she is also a stranger in the West, where she cannot find a political home and has no family ties. Thus, she stands outside of both systems, as a thoroughly detached individual. Her "have to do it another way" becomes universal, as her internal decision to oppose any ideology creates a set of circumstances that lead to external alienation: in the West as an East German, as well as in the GDR as a defector from the Republic. She is constantly pushed into the position of an outsider.

In a climactic scene at the house of Heinrich Cressphal, Gesine's father in the GDR, all the above mentioned characters meet and a confrontation of their opposing ideas takes place. It is a direct clash of their world views in the presence of Cressphal

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[79] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 124.
[80] Johnson, *Speculations,* 98.
[81] Popp, "Einführung in 'Mutmassungen über Jakob,'" 56f.

and, more importantly, Jakob. A discussion ensues on the matter of how far a citizen should submit, or rather, give up on his or her own interests for the sake of the state.[82] The result of this conversation is that it demonstrates to Jakob the irreconcilability of the different positions. It also ends in Rohlfs' consent to let Gesine return to the West and his permission for Jakob to go and visit her. This is the moment where the basis of his dilemma is created: the possibility to choose between East and West Germany. Under the pressure of decision-making, which has been elevated to a highly ideological level in the discussion, his personal conflict in the conversations with Jonas, Rohlfs and Gesine, reaches its peak.

Already before the final clash of Jonas, Rohlfs and Gesine, their conversations were dominated by the indecisiveness and inconsistency of Jakob, who is only beginning to approach the problem of individual and society. He first becomes aware of a possible conflict between his own individual beliefs and the will of the state, when the Stasi agent Rohlfs comes to see him after his mother defects from the Republic. Reeling from the after effects of this event and his first contact with the Stasi he contradicts state orders:

> "Soll einer sich selbst versäumen über einem Zweck": sagte seine Stimme selbstwillig fragend zäh bis zum letzten Laut. [...]
> "Ja" sagte Herr Rohlfs grob.
> "Du wohl" sagte Jakob. Seine Hände kehrten sich mit locker ausgestreckten Fingern offen.
> "Du auch Jakob" sagte er.
> "Ja": sagte Jakob. "Aber keiner, der nicht gefragt ist."[83]

> "Can a man waste himself on a purpose," said his voice, detached, questioning, tenacious to the last sound. […]
> "Yes," Herr Rohlfs said gruffly.
> "Like you," said Jakob. His hands turned over, the fingers open, loose.
> "Or you, Jakob," he said.
> "Yes," said Jakob. "But nobody who hasn't been asked."[84]

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[82] Fickert, *Neither left nor right*, 33.
[83] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 156.
[84] Johnson, *Speculations*, 124 .

Jakob has come to the realization that he has to put his personal ties above the state. Although he agrees with Rohlfs that the individual should toe the party line, he disapproves of Rohlfs' determinative ideological monopolization. Jakob claims that cooperation for the 'good cause' has to be a voluntary act.[85] In contrast to Gesine's individualistic resistance to any state ideology, Jakob's idealism does not yet exclude the possibility of a functioning relationship between individual and state. In a later conversation with Jonas, he takes an antagonistic position, which now stresses the limitation of individual freedom: "Und dass einer sich immer aussuchen kann was er will und verantworten mag: das nennst du Freiheit? (That a man can always pick what he likes and vouch for: you call that freedom?)"[86] Once again, only the responsibility of the individual for themselves is a fixed value.

The 1956 Hungarian Revolution finally puts to test Jakob's individual moral judgement which contradicts the state orders. He is torn between his identification with his role as a laborer and his sympathy for the ideals of the Hungarian Revolution, which he acknowledges as morally justified. In fulfilling his duties as a railroad dispatcher by organizing the transport of Soviet troops through the GDR to Hungary, he violates his own moral values. After finishing his work and leaving after his shift, Jakob is described by his colleagues as somebody who seems "als ob er nicht wisse wohin nun gehen (as though he didn't know where to go now)."[87] Thus conflicted Jakob undertakes his journey to the West. Just like Gesine who asks him to stay there with her, he feels

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[85] Rehfeld, "Leben unter fortwährender Prüfung," 18.
[86] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 253/ Johnson, *Speculations*, 199.
[87] Ibid., 251 / Ibid., 197.

estranged and cannot relate to the new environment. Although he is in love with Gesine, he cannot resolve to stay in the West. During his visit a discussion about the moral failing of the West concerning the Suez Crisis figures prominently. The politically questionable intervention of the West in the Suez Crisis is paralleled with the Soviet intervention in the Hungarian Revolution.[88] This demonstrates that the West lacks political integrity in the same way as the East. Jakob returns to the GDR and Gesine realizes in retrospect that her hope for a shared future in the West has been an illusion from the beginning: "[B]leiben wollte er von Anfang an nicht und nein. (He never intended to stay, he absolutely didn't want to.)"[89] Jakob dies crossing the rail tracks immediately after returning home.

Throughout the novel Jakob is depicted as a person torn apart. He breaks down because he cannot come to terms with his inner conflict about individual freedom and the demands of a collective state. The contrasting characters of Jonas, Rohlfs and Gesine show him different possible solutions, which he is not able to accept. As a consequence all characters end up in the story as losers: Jakob is dead, Jonas gets arrested as dissident, Gesine is estranged in the West and even Rohlfs does not succeed in his task. As Norman Aechtler points out Rohlfs is a "conservative idealist" who will not find his place in the reality of "real existing socialism" either.[90] Strongly rooted in his or her own idealist belief-system every one of these characters is destined to fail in a system that pretends to call for but in the end does not tolerate idealism. Ironically, in the end, Heinrich

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[88] Fickert, *Neither left nor right,* 44.
[89] Johnson, *Mutmassungen*, 280 / Johnson, *Speculations*, 219.
[90] Norman Aechtler, "'Du brauchst schon Glück, um auf deinen Herrn Rohlfs zu treffen.' Uwe Johnsons Agentenduo als politische Option der *Mutmassungen über Jakob* ['You need some luck to meet your Mr. Rohlfs.' Uwe Johnson's agent pair as a political option of the *Speculations about Jakob*]," *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 13 (2006): 137.

Cressphal's cat is the only one who stays unchanged by all the events. Throughout the novel the characters continually comment on the cat and it becomes a vehicle for reflection for all the visitors of Cressphal's house. The cat incorporates the ideals of a life in harmony with its destiny as well as freedom and independence.[91] It is the only 'character' in the novel that can lead a life free from social responsibilities; all the human characters end up broken.

The Lack of Synthesis

Speculations about Jakob portrays characters from different social classes and different positions within the GDR. Although Gesine is the most active part in the story and might be considered the true protagonist of the novel as she will also be in Johnson's tetralogy *Anniversaries - From the Life of Gesine Cresspahl* (*Jahrestage - Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cresspahl*, 1970-1983), which follows Gesine's life in the West and her emigration to the USA. In *Speculations*, however, Jakob's character is the symbolical center of the novel. In light of the ideological conflicts involving his family and his personal involvement in the events around the Hungarian Revolution, Jakob leaves the role of the conforming, dutiful worker, within whom the wills of the individual and state is harmonious. Thus, he becomes in a Marxist sense estranged from his home, the GDR, and is shattered by it. The West is not an alternative either. His death on the rail tracks symbolizes his failure to find an acceptable solution to the differing world views.

Seen in the context of other literary works in the GDR *Speculations about Jakob* is a rejection of GDR's socialist realist novel which focused on the struggle of the worker

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[91] Fickert, *Neither left nor right,* 31.

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within society. *Speculations* shares certain elements with the newly forming genre of *Ankunftsliteratur* (literature of arrival [in socialism]) in the GDR, which followed the *Aufbauliteratur* (literature of setting-up [socialism]), that includes famous works such as Christa Wolf's novel *Divided Heaven*, Brigitte Reimann's *The Siblings* (*Die Geschwister*, 1963) or Herrman Kant's *The Aula* (*Die Aula*, 1965). Wolf's novel in particular shares key elements with Johnson's work: it is telling the story of Rita, whose partner Manfred defects to the West. She cannot convince her partner to return, nor does she want to stay in the West. Yet, in contrast to Jakob, she ultimately thrives in the socialist society, transcending the loss of her love and becoming a productive member of society through her work in an industrial plant. *Ankunftsliteratur* was deliberately pitched against pessimism, with its aim to portray the young generation's successful "arrival" in the new society. These narratives specifically sanctify the building of the Wall as a positive factor which provides a shield of bad influence and the guarantee of peace of mind for the characters. In the case of Wolf's *Divided Heaven*, the Wall is the irreversible end to Rita's and Manfred's relationship which causes Rita to attempt suicide before she finally fully accepts the new situation as a positive outcome. To fully understand the extent of the doctrine for writers to embrace the building of the Wall and ultimate division as positive, the following fact is worth noting: although Wolf's novel ultimately defends the Wall and her work was officially approved by authorities, the author still faced minor backlash for Rita's suicide attempt, which was seen as an inappropriate and too pessimistic action.[92]

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[92] Jaforte, *Die Mauer,* 65.

While in this genre of *Ankunftsliteratur* the working-class characters overcome doubt and confusion in a dialectical movement and ultimately identify with the socialist state and its belief in progress, Johnson shows the self-destruction of his hero: "Instead of triumphing in this way, Jakob is caught in the middle between a private ethic and a sociopolitical one, between a personality and an occupation, and is crushed between the two opposing forces."[93] Wolfgang Emmerich writes that *Speculations about Jakob* is "ein Beitrag zum Problem des 'Ankommens im Sozialismus' – nur daß dieser Beitrag, noch bevor das affirmative Genre eigentlich geboren war, dasselbe nicht bestätigte, sondern falsifizierte (a contribution to the problem of the "Arrival in Socialism" – only that this contribution, before the affirmative genre was even born, did not confirm, but falsify it)."[94] Not only through the content, but also structurally the novel subverted the genre, as the dialectical structure required by socialist realism is replaced through the Bakthinian dialogism. The narrative technique of Johnson is the explicit refusal to arrive at a synthesis to protest the political system through the failure of its former loyal subject.

In the characterization of Jakob by Wilhelm Johannes Schwarz the essential elements are summarized in the following words:

> Unter Johnsons Gestalten überragt Jakob Abs alle anderen. Aus den Berichten, Konversationen und Monologen der Überlebenden entsteht mosaikartig und liebevoll idealisiert das Bild eines in sich ruhenden Menschen, eines Individualisten, der wegen seiner inneren Unabhängigkeit und Ausgeglichenheit von keinem System abhängig war. „Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen", heißt es schon im ersten Satz von *Mutmassungen*. Er verfolgte seinen Weg nicht entlang ausgefahrenen Bahnen, sondern abseits vom Sog der östlichen wie der westlichen Ideologien. [95]

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[93] Fickert, *Neither left nor right,* 46f.

[94] Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* [Small Literary History of the GDR] (Berlin: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1996), 147.

[95] Schwarz, *Der Erzähler Uwe Johnson,* 15.

Amid Johnson's characters, Jakob Abs outshines all the others. From the reports, conversations and monologues of the survivors a mosaic-like and lovingly idealized image is created of a man, at peace with himself, an individualist, who is not dependent on any system due to his inner independence and even temper. "But Jakob always cut across the tracks," is the first sentence of the *Speculations*. He pursues his way not along the beaten track, but offside the maelstrom of the Eastern and Western ideologies.

Jakob is the ideal man, as described in socialist literary tradition. Yet, before the picture of Jakob is even developed in the novel his fatal virtue is already indicated in the first line: "Aber Jakob ist immer quer über die Gleise gegangen. (But Jakob always cut across the tracks.)" As an idealist Jakob is also a non-conformist who does not accept the dichotomy of the Cold War. It is exactly his strength in character leads to his death and decries the "ideal" society in socialism as well as the salvation of the West as empty promises.

Chapter 2

The Death of an Idealist: From Rejection to Transcendence in Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square*

In South Korea Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square* (*Kwangjang*, 1960)[96] is considered the first novel of the era of national division. In *The Square* the ideological opposition of North and South, communism and capitalism is depicted with the metaphors of 'the public square and a private room' which constitute a leitmotif and also clearly articulate the inner turmoil of the protagonist. The closed room and the open square as a dichotomy signify the tension between the individual and the society.

This chapter will first situate the author and his work within their historic and literary context at the beginning of the Cold War era, in the new states founded on each side of the ideological frontline. The subsequent analysis of *The Square* will show it's representation of the conflict between individual and state in this setting, and ultimately conclude the multiple revisions of the novel in Ch'oe's aspiration for transcendence. I argue that the quest of the *The Square'*s protagonists is to find an ideal society where the tension between individual and state is resolved. Similar to Uwe Johnson's *Speculations About Jakob* the protagonists' idealism clashes with the reality of division. This follows a stunningly comparable technique by formally setting up the novel in a dialectical structure, and yet deliberately avoids a synthesis. Different from Johnson, however, Ch'oe reconsiders his initial assumption of the lack of a third option.

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[96] All translations mine unless indicated otherwise.

Historic and Literary Border-Crossings

Ch'oe In-hun's, just as Uwe Johnson's novel is deeply embedded in the intellectual discourse of its historical period, and although not intended to be autobiographical, the protagonist's character reflects his author's philosophical dilemma. The genesis of *The Square* falls into politically turbulent times and was published in the same year of the Student Revolution of April 19, 1960. Ch'oe In-hun, born during the Japanese colonial rule in 1936, in today's North Korea, had fled to South Korea after experiencing the early phase of North Korean communism, only to witness the horrors of the Korean War in the following years and the subsequent rise of President Rhee Syngman, whose political power base was built on military and ideological containment of communism. Election fraud, censorship of the press and the undemocratic practices of Rhee's politics triggered resistance amongst the students and young intellectuals of the country.[97] In 1960, the year of the elections 1960 the frustration of the people exploded in waves of protest which culminated in the Student Revolution, finally resulting in Rhee's resignation. The following short liberal period ended with General Park Chung-hee's coming to power in 1961. However, during this gap of power Ch'oe was able to publish his novel relatively free of censorship constraints.

Considering Ch'oe In-hun's background and the historical circumstances he is the prime example of a writer of the Hangŭl-Generation[98] (*hangŭl sedae*) or Generation of the Student Revolution (*sailgu sedae*). According to the literary scholar Kim Pyŏng-ik

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[97] Quee-Young Kim, "From Protest to Change of Regime: The 4-19 Revolt and the Fall of the Rhee Regime in South Korea," *Social Forces* 74/4 (1996): 1185f.

[98] Referring to the generation returning to write in Korean language after the colonial period.

those of this generation who were able to overcome the trauma of the Korean War would develop a historical consciousness, enabling them to write about the war in a constructive way.[99] He also states that in this sense Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square* is the first, and to this extent maybe also the only, novel of its time that pursues the approach of critiquing ideology. This is achieved by moving the issue that was until then always embedded in emotion "from an object of the unconscious to the realm of conscious ideology."[100] Instead of purely decrying the human tragedy of the war, Ch'oe In-hun meticulously retraces his own migration and thought process by sending his protagonist across the border in the opposite direction from South to North. Later he refers to the novel's young protagonist as a "mirror image"[101] of himself in the preface to the 1989 edition of the novel. The story is told in retrospection by Yi Myŏng-jun, the protagonist of *The Square*, who is a philosophy student in post-liberation South Korea. Disappointed by the South Korean political system, he defects to the North. There he gets into trouble with the regime while working as a journalist. When the Korean War breaks out, he becomes a soldier and ends up as a prisoner of war. Given the choice to stay in the South, go back to the North or leave for a neutral country, he decides to go to India. However, he commits suicide on his way there. For Ch'oe In-hun *The Square* remained a project of constant investment which is documented through his ever revised prefaces to his six rewritings of the novel from 1960 to 1994.

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[99] Kim Byong-ik, "The Korean War in Fiction," in *Korean Literature: Its Classical Heritage and Modern Breakthroughs*, ed. Korean National Commission for UNESCO (New Jersey: Hollym, 2005), 314.
[100] Ibid., 310.
[101] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang [*The Square*]," in *Kwangjang/Kuunmong*, ed. Ch'ae Ho-gi (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2007), 8.

The Metaphorical Quest for the 'Square'

Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square* also illuminates the fundamental problem between the individual and the state. In *The Square* the problem of life in two equally ideologically repressive states is demonstrated by the allegorical depiction of a general problem: the tense relationship between the individual and society. "In the world of *The Square* individual and society are completely disconnected."[102] The irreconcilability of this relationship stems from man's need, as a social being, for a network of social ties and, on the other hand, his individual will. The protagonist Yi Myŏng-jun articulates this inner conflict through the metaphorical dichotomy of the 'closed room' (individual) and 'open square' (society).[103]. His quest is for an ideal civil society in a Hegelian sense, yet he will not reach a synthesis by reconciling the individual with society. It is only after several revisions of the text that the author Ch'oe In-hun lets his protagonist transcend these dichotomies and resolution can be found.[104]

Myŏng-jun, unlike Johnson's working class protagonist Jakob Abs, is a bourgeois intellectual who observes the events of the times and analyzes the situation as the story progresses. His telling name Myŏng-jun, constituted of the Chinese characters "*myŏng*" [

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[102] Ch'ae Ho-sŏk, "*Kwangjang* ŭi ch'angjakbangbŏp e taehan pip'anjŏk kŏmto [A critical study of the writing method in *The Square*]," in *Hanguk hyŏndaejakga yŏngu*, ed. Yi Chu-hyŏng oe (Seoul: Minŭmsa, 1989), 174.

[103] There exists prolific scholarship on the metaphorical use of the words *kwangjang* and *milsil*. Park Yŏng-chun points out that the word '*kwangjang*' appears more than 30 times in the whole text: Park Yŏng-chun, "Ch'oe In-hun ŭi *Kwangjang* esŏ *Kwangjang* ŭi ŭimi chŭngwie taehan yŏn'gu [Study about the meaning of the 'square' in Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square*]," *Ŏnmunnonjip - minjokŏmunhakhoe* 46 Chip (2002): 281-314.

[104] See also: Kim Hyŏn, "Sarang ŭi chaehwakin. *Kwangjang* kaejak e taehayŏ [The reaffirmation of love. On the revisions of *The Square*]," in *Kwangjang/Kuunmong*, ed. Ch'ae Ho-gi (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2007), 313-322, and Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um ŭi chuje pyŏndong munje. Ch'oe In-hun ŭi *Kwangjang* ŭi kyŏngu [The problems of the change of subject through the revisions of a work. The case of Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square*]," in *Ch'oe In-hun*, ed. Kim Pyŏng-ik, Kim Hyŏn (Seoul: Ŭnae, 1979), 162-181.

明, bright, enlightened] and "*chun*" [俊, hero, important man], puts him into the intellectual proximity of the generation of the Student Revolution, while he is furthermore also a representative of the war generation. Ch'oe In-hun himself, who prolifically commented on his own works, characterizes Myŏng-jun in his essay "*Chŏnjaeng kwa chugŭm*" (War and Death):

> 주인공인 이명준은 월북한 공산주의자를 아버지로 가진 대학생이다. 그 자신으로 말하면 나이로 보든지 자라온 환경으로 보든지 인생에 대해서 많은 요구를 하는 것이 당연하며, 또 요구하면 얻을 수 있다는 생각을 가지고 있다. 하기는 그런 경향을 이명준 개인의 성격이나 이력에 돌리는 것보다 그가 살았던 시대에 돌리는 것이 옳겠다.[105]

> The protagonist Yi Myŏng-jun is a student who joined his father who went North as a communist. Given his age and the circumstances it is natural that he expects a lot from life and thinks that he will receive what he wants. In fact this tendency should be not attributed to Yi Myŏng-jun's personality, but rather to the time in which he lived.

Ch'oe In-hun calls the time period between liberation and the Korean War "Second Enlightenment," a time of uproar and uprising, but also a time in which the "Ego" is not appreciated.[106] Yi Myŏng-jun, Ch'oe explains, stands in opposition to this time which tries to objectify him. He demands to be recognized as a subject, but to still live within society.[107] The term 'Ego' is essential to the novel, however, in the original version of *The Square* Ch'oe used it as above spelled out in Latin. Later he transcribed it and finally re-inserted it as the substitute for the Korean "*na*" (I) and "*chagi*" (self).[108]

The exclusive focus on the protagonist, whose thought process is discussed step by step, however, leaves no room for the evolution of the other characters. Everyone else in the story is a product of either the society in South or in the North without an

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[105] Ch'oe In-hun, "Chŏnjaeng kwa chugŭm [War and Death]," in *Munhak kwa ideollogi*, ed. Ch'ae Ho-gi (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2003), 99.
[106] Ibid., 99.
[107] Ibid., 99f.
[108] Theodore Q. Hughes, *Literature and Film in Cold War South Korea: Freedom's Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 171.

individual will, especially Myŏng-jun's girlfriends on either side. Thus, while, as Ch'oe

In-hun noted, Myŏng-jun stands in for his generation, the other characters stand in for the

society as a homogenous mass. While *Speculations* is told through the memory of many,

The Square is narrated through Myŏng-jun's chronological memory flashes while he is

on board of a ship which is destined to bring him to a neutral country. These analepses

are truncated by present events on board. The South and North Korean memories

correspond in their contents and form symbolically unities opposed to each other: the

discussions with his mentor, the teacher Mr. Chŏng and with his father, the conflict with

the system, and the hope and disappointment he experiences with his two lovers. The

narration, following Genette's terminology, is heterodiegetic with an internal focalization

on Myŏng-jun's consciousness until nearly the end. After his suicide, when the focus

switches to the captain of the ship, then it finally zooms out to an external focalization in

the last paragraph. However, despite limiting the perspective to one person, the

experience is broadened unusually as the protagonist crosses the border and equal amount

of space is dedicated to each side.

However, this equal comparison is a result of the author's multiple revisions since

the story appeared for the first time in the magazine *Saebyŏk* (Dawn) in November 1960.

Major changes were made in the 5th edition in 1976 and the final version with minor

alterations on which the further analysis relies is from 1994.[109] These changes also

correlate roughly with major political changes: the October Restoration (*Siwŏl Yusin*) of

1972, in which Presdient Park Chung-hee assumed dictatorial power and the

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[109] See Kim Pyŏng-ik, "Tasi ilgnŭn *Kwangjang* [*The Square* revisited]," in *Kwangjang/Kuunmong*, ed. Ch'ae Ho-gi (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2007), 223-236.

establishment of a civilian government under President Kim Young-sam in 1993. Initially the critical focus was more on the South Korean side, while the description of the North was kept very short. The first version is a direct reaction to the failure of South Korean politics of the time and therefore addresses the South Korean readers. Han Ki points out that at Ch'oe In-hun did not assume that his novel would be read in the North and therefore prioritized a political message to the South.[110] It was more important to foil the ideologically biased opinion of the North propagated by the government of President Rhee Syngman. The novel is remarkable in the sense that Ch'oe In-hun made clear that there "were also 'people' in North Korea," as Kim In-ho states.[111] Later Ch'oe In-hun expanded discussion of North Korea to an equal balance, which Han Ki explains by the pressure to adhere to the strict anti-communism under President Park Chung-hee.[112] Moreover, North Korea's totalitarianism had become more and more evident later on and could have hardly been ignored by Ch'oe In-hun. Through this equal emphasis of criticism *The Square* became an outstanding work concerning the problem of an ideologically divided nation.

The numerous revisions are a sign of Ch'oe In-hun's dedication to the readers. Rather than detaching from his work and moving on with time, he conceived of his novel as a means to stay in dialogue with the reader and adapt it for younger generations. Every change in content and style is therefore also a renewed attempt to reach the next

[110] Han Ki "*Kwangjang* ŭi wŏnhyŏngsŏng, taehwajŏk sasangryŏk, kŭrigo hyŏnjaesŏng [*The Square*'s original form, its dialogism and topicality]," *Chakka sekkye* (Spring 1990): 86.
[111] Kim In-ho (2004) "*Kwangjang* kaejak e natanan pyŏnhwa ŭi yangsang dŭl [The images of change appearing in the revisions of *The Square*]," in *Haech'ea wa chŏhwang ŭi sŏsa. Ch'oe In-hun kwa kŭ ŭi munhak* (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2004), 124.
[112] Han Ki "*Kwangjang* ŭi wŏnhyŏngsŏng", 89.

generation. Han Ki calls this the "dialogic character" (*taehwajŏk sŏnggyŏk*) of the novel: "The dialogic character of the text of *The Square* signifies exactly this. To every new reader he speaks in a new manner!"[113] However, this term "dialogic character" is not to be equated with the Bakhtinian dialogism signifying a plurality of voices; it rather shows a different concept of the relation between the author and his work, in politically engaged literature.

Ch'oe In-hun writes in "*Chŏngch'i wa munhak*" (Politics and Literature): "문학의 공간은 현실의 공간을 판단하는 인공 공간[이다]. (The space of literature is an artificial space which passes a judgement on the space of reality.)"[114] In *The Square,* as a novel of divided space, spatial metaphor is a central theme throughout the novel, signified by Yi Myŏng-jun's search for the 'square.' The author's own preface already outlines his underlying philosophical concept by mapping out the dichotomy of 'closed room' and 'open square':

> 인간은 광장에 나서지 않고는 살지 못한다. [...] 시대와 공간을 달리하는 수많은 광장이 있다. [...]
> 사람들이 자기의 밀실로부터 광장으로 나오는 골목은 저마다 다르다. 광장에 이르는 골목은 무수히 많다. [...]
> 광장은 대중의 밀실이며 밀실은 개인의 광장이다. 인간을 이 두 가지 공간의 어느 한쪽에 가두어버릴 때, 그는 살 수 없다.[115]

> If man does not step out on the square, he cannot live. [...] Depending on time and place there are many different squares. [...]
> The way out of one's own closed room into the square is different for everybody. The ways leading out on to the square are countless. [...]
> The square is the closed room of the masses. The closed room is the square of the individual.
> If man restricts himself to one of these areas, he cannot live.

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[113] Ibid., 82.

[114] Ch'oe In-hun, "Chŏngji wa munhak [Politics and Literature]," in *Munhak kwa ideollogi*, ed. Ch'ae Ho-gi (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 2003), 283.

[115] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 17f.

Myŏng-jun's quest for the 'square' begins in South Korea where he leads a life that alienates him from everyone else. It is a life in the *milsil* – the 'closed room.' According to the author's initial outline all elements of the plot in the South – circumstances, events and characters – indicate separation from public life.

Myŏng-jun, a philosophy student, spends most of the time in his own room with his books, in his own world of thought: "나의 방에는 명준 혼자만 있다. 나는 광장이 아니다. 그건 방이었다. 수인의 독방처럼, 복수가 들어가지 못하는 단 한 사람을 위한 방. (In the room of the I, Myŏng-jun was all alone. The I was not a square. It was a room. Like a prisoner's single cell, an impenetrable room for one person.)"[116]While the metaphor *kwangjang* (square) is used throughout the novel, Ch'oe sometimes also uses *pang* (room) instead of *milsil* (closed room) to express the opposite. Theodore Hughes points out Ch'oe's differentiation between "*pang* (space of doubting Ego stripped of all worldly possessions) and *milsil* (space of the materialistic, acquisitive *kaein* [individual]),"[117] using the first one in reference to the protagonist's retreat and the second for the condition of the South Korean citizens. State interventions also take place in secret, in a closed room, not publicly and in the open. Transparency is not there to protect Myŏng-jun when he is called to the police station and beaten into confessing his alleged communist beliefs as a result of the defection of his father and his study of Marx. It all happens in the secret, closed rooms of the police station. There is no society to protect its citizens, no official trial and no public legal system to help him.

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[116] Ibid., 63.
[117] Hughes, *Literature and Film,* 169.

Myŏng-jun's mentor in the South, the teacher Chŏng, is an intellectual who lives secluded from the public. He is detached from the current events of the days and occupies himself with archeology and travelling. These pursuits allow him to escape from the reality of the here and now temporally and geographically. Their discussion about South Korean politics is central to the novel as Myŏng-jun elaborates on his ideas about the relationship of 'square' and 'room' in South Korea: "인간은 그 자신의 밀실에서만은 살 수 없어요. 그는 광장과 이어져 있어요. 정치는 인간의 광장 가운데서두 제일 거친곳이 아닌가요? (One cannot only live in his own closed room. One has to become connected with the square. Is not politics the harshest of all squares of mankind?)"[118] Myŏng-jun describes the state corruption using images of physical destruction: "모두의 것이어야 할 꽃을 꺾어다 저희 집 꽃병에 꽂구, 분수 꼭지를 뽑아다 저희 집 변소에 차려놓구, 페이브먼트를 파 날라다가는 저희 부엌 바닥을 깔구. 한국의 정치가들이 정치의 광장에 나올 땐 자루와 도끼와 삽을 들고, 눈에는 마스크를 가리고 도둑질하러 나오는 것이지요. (They cut the flowers in the public and put them in their own vase at home, they turn off the fountains' public water-taps and install them on their own toilet, they dig out the pavement and use the stones to pave their own kitchen. When Korean politicians step out on the square of politics, they always carry a sack, axe and a shovel, then they mask their eyes and start with the raid.)"[119] He further develops this picture adding to the 'square of politics' similar images of the 'squares of economics and culture': "한국 경제의 광장에는 사기의 안개 속에 협박의 꽃불이 터지고 허영의

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[118] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 55.
[119] Ibid.

애드벌룬이 떠돕니다. 문화의 광장 말입니까 헛소리의 꽃이 만발합니다. (In the square of South Korean economics in the fog of fraud fireworks of threat explode like blossoms and over all this, balloons of vanity are floating. Talking about the square of culture, the flowers of nonsense are in full bloom there.)"[120] For Myŏng-jun the failure of the state to be the guardian of the public sphere, to keep and preserve the common good results in people's retreat into private life and the extinction of public life:

> 이런 광장들에 대하여 사람들이 가진 느낌이란 불신뿐입니다. 그들이 가장 아끼는 건 자기의 방, 밀실뿐입니다. [...] 개인만 있고 국민은 없습니다. 밀실만 푸짐하고 광장은 죽었습니다. 각기의 밀실은 신분에 맞춰서 그런대로 푸짐합니다. [...] 아무도 광장에서 머물지 않아요. 필요한 약탈과 사기만 끝나면 광장은 텅 빕니다. 광장이 죽은 곳. 이게 남한이 아닙니까? 광장은 비어 있습니다. [121]

> The only feeling people have about such squares is suspicion. What these people cherish the most is their own room, only their closed room. [...] There are only individuals, there is no 'people'. There are only a lot of closed rooms and the square has died. Those single rooms, furnished to their needs, exist in great varieties. [...] Nobody stops before the square. After they have finished their raid the square is totally emptied. The square is dead. Isn't it like that in Southern Korea? The square is empty.

However, Myŏng-jun remains passive in his complaints. Too accustomed to his life in privacy, within his own closed room of philosophical critique, he refuses to take action when Mr. Chŏng suggests taking up the fight against injustice himself. Responding to his mentor's call to "그 텅 빈 광장으로 시민을 모으는 나팔수는 될 수 없을까? (become the trumpeter who calls the people back to the empty square),"[122] he only admits his lack of confidence.

Instead of taking political action he seeks solace in a romantic relationship. Yun-ae, to whom he turns in disappointment, however, seems just like a mirror image of their

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[120] Ibid., 56.
[121] Ibid., 57.
[122] Ibid.

society. Withdrawn into herself, she only opens up physically, but her true character remains inaccessible to him. She turns out to be the wrong partner, not fitting into his ideal image of the ideal 'square': "분명히 그녀와 나란히 서 있다고 생각한 광장에서, 어느덧 그는 외톨박이였다. (Although he had always thought that he would stand together with her on that square which he had imagined, without really having noticed it he had found himself alone.)"[123] Yun-ae seems unpredictable to Myŏng-jun when "손댈 수 없는 그녀의 밀실로 도망치고마는 것이었다. (she retreated into her closed room, where he could not reach her.)"[124] Ultimately he decides to leave her in another act of escape.

After the conclusion that he cannot find the 'square' in the South, Myŏng-jun defects to the North, hiding inside a cargo ship: "그는 때묻지 않은 새로운 광장으로 가는 것이라고 들떴다. (The thought of going to a new, still unsoiled square had made him restless.)"[125] In a utopian dream, he pictures the ideal 'square' which he hopes will manifest itself in the North:

> 광장에는 맑은 분수가 무지개를 그리고 있었다. 꽃밭에는 싱싱한 꽃이 꿀벌들 잉잉거리는 속에서 웃고 있었다. 페이브먼트는 깨끗하고 단단했다. 여기저기 동상이 서 있었다. 사람들이 벤치에 앉아 있었다. 아름다운 처녀가 분수를 보고 있었다. 그는 그 녀의 등뒤로 다가섰다. 돌아보는 얼굴을 보니 그녀는 그의 애인이었다. 그녀의 이름을 잊은 걸 깨닫고 당황해할 때 그녀는 웃으며 그의 손을 잡았다.[126]
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> On the square there was a fountain and above it a rainbow appeared. Bees were humming over a patch of flowers and the fresh flowers smiled at him. The pavement was firm and clean. Here and there were some bronze statues. People sat on the benches. A beautiful girl was looking at the fountain. He stood behind her. When she turned and he saw her face he realized it was his beloved

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[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 110.
[125] Ibid., 111.
[126] Ibid.

> one. It occurred to him that he had forgotten her name and he was embarrassed. She just smiled at him and took his hand.
> "Does something like a name matter?"

The image that he conjures here is the version of the 'square' which he felt had been destroyed by South Korean politics. It is the vision of a place that provides the possibility for individuals to meet without barriers, unlike in his relationship with Yun-ae. Again, the whole character of this new society is subsumed under the image of the smiling woman.

Upon his arrival in North Korea Myŏng-jun finally discovers another 'square,' which is exclusively public in contrast to the absence of a public sphere in the South. The North Korean 'square' does not allow any individual space. From the very beginning Myŏng-jun is exposed to the public, he has to speak publicly about his defection from the South and finally becomes a journalist, which stands in contrast to his withdrawn life as a philosophy student. A realization soon sets in, that what he has found in North Korea does not match his utopian vision of the 'square.' He confronts his father, who has become a party official, about the inconsistencies he has observed, pointing out that the actual atmosphere does not correspond with the state propaganda: "인민이 어디 있습니까? 자기 정권을 세운 기쁨으로 넘치는 웃음을 얼굴에 지닌 그런 인민이 어디 있습니까? (Where is the 'people'? Where is the 'people' whose faces are overwhelmed with joy, happy that they have founded their own government?)"[127] In reality the party takes the place of the people: "일이면 일마다 저는 느꼈습니다. 제가 주인공이 아니고 '당'이 주인공이란 걸. '당'만이 흥분하고 도취합니다. 우리는 복창만 하라는 겁니다. '당'이 생각하고 판단하고 느끼고 한 숨지을 테니, 너희들은

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[127] Ibid., 115.

복창만 하라는 겁니다. (No matter what I did, I constantly had this feeling. I am not the protagonist, the party is the protagonist. Only the party is delighted, enraptured. We should just repeat. The party thinks, the party judges, the party feels and sighs, and wants us to repeat it.)"[128] Myŏng-jun's father remains silent, neither does he agree nor does he contradict. His position as a journalist inevitably brings Myŏng-jun into conflict with the party line. When he reports after an official trip to a Korean kolkhoz in Manchuria, that old Japanese uniforms serve as working clothes, he is reprimanded. His observations violate the norms of socialist realism prescribing a selectively positive report. For this act of non-conformism his superiors order him to exercise public self-criticism. The public nature of the punishment stands in contrast to the secret torture in South Korea.

He realizes that he had lost his individuality a long time ago: "마음의 방은 벌써 무너진 지 오랬으므로. 그의 둥글게 안으로 굽힌 두팔 넓이의 광장으로 달려가야 했다. (The room of his heart had been destroyed a long time ago. He had to run to the square that was the size of the circle that both his arms could embrace.)"[129] In his disappointment Myŏng-jun again turns to seek fulfillment in the love for his new girlfriend Ŭn-hye, looking for a new type of 'square', the 'square of love.'[130] However, Ŭn-hye, in the same way as her predecessor Yun-ae, is a reflection of their society. She fully opens up to Myŏng-jun, yet, as a ballerina she is a public person by profession. Thus, Myŏng-jun has to share Ŭn-hye with her spectators and cannot possess her all for himself. This becomes an insurmountable problem when Ŭn-hye receives the opportunity

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[128] Ibid., 116f.
[129] Ibid., 128.
[130] Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um," 175.

to tour in Moscow with her ballet company and accepts the offer against Myŏng-jun's explicit wishes. The couple reconciles when they meet again during the Korean war, where Ŭn-hye serves as a nurse, but she dies during an attack soon after.

The end of the Korean War grants Myŏng-jun, now a North Korean POW in the South, the possibility to choose either side after the armistice. He cannot accept the North, which does not allow for any individual ideas, as his home: "이것이 돌아갈 수 없는 정말 까닭이었다. 그러다면? 남녘을 택할 것인가? 명준의 눈에는, 남한이란 키에르케고르 선생식으로 말하면, 실존하지 않는 사람들의 광장 아닌 광장이었다. 미친 믿음이 무섭다면, 숫제 믿음조차 없는 것은 허망하다. (He really did not have a reason to go back there. So? Should he choose the South? From Myŏng-jun's perspective South Korea was, as Kierkegaard would express it, a square of non-existent people, a non-square. While fanatic belief was scary, non-existent belief in ideals was pointless.)"[131] Neither North nor South is acceptable for Myŏng-jun after his experiences. The South offers only closed 'rooms' and in the North there is only a public 'square'.

The protagonist's quest is to find the ideal society that the metaphor that of the 'square' represents. Myŏng-jun dreams of a society that combines 'room' and 'square', or individualism and social integration, but his ideas do not correspond with reality. In South Korea extreme individualism, in the sense of the negative aspects of capitalism, destroys social cohesion. In the North, the extreme collectivism of communism destroys the room for individual development. In splitting up the two vital spheres of 'room' and 'square' and attributing them to two rivaling social-systems, which in their

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[131] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 168f.

implementation he perceives as either decadent or repressive, Ch'oe In-hun articulates his criticism of Korea's national division. Both systems are exclusive ones and deny the individual vitally important elements of living together. In *The Square* Myŏng-jun's ideas of a model state clash with the reality of the two states.

Myŏng-jun's idealism does not stand the test of reality. In the South the individual is torn between private life and society, which according to *The Square* is mainly a phenomenon of capitalism. In Myŏng-jun's mind, as Ch'ae Ho-sŏk notes, this crisis becomes an absolute one.[132] Myŏng-jun fails to find the solution to the problem in the South: "As Yi Myŏng-jun does not realize that his conflict with society, which cannot be solved in a peaceful way, is historically conditioned, he is looking for a solution using an ahistoric method."[133] This ahistorical perspective paradoxically draws on historical events, including the economic system (capitalism vs. communism). This subjective, wishful thinking of the individual can never be in harmony with society. Therefore, the final value seen from an ahistorical perspective is always the idea itself.

It is this frustration which drives Myŏng-jun to defect to the North. However, his ideal images of the revolutionary North are continually shattered. Myŏng-jun then voices his disappointment openly through his criticism of North Korea, which is not well received. After being admonished for an article comparing the North Korean and French Revolution, because the latter is seen as a bourgeois revolution, he explains to his father:

그러나 제가 말하고 싶었던 건 그게 아니었습니다. 그때 프랑스 인민들의 가슴에서 끓던 피, 그 붉은 심장의 얘기를 하고 싶었던 겁니다. 시라구요? 오, 아닙니다. 아버지, 아닙니다. 그 붉은 심장의 설레임 그것이야말로, 모든 것입니다. 그것이야말로 우리와 자본주의자들을

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[132] Ch'ae Ho-sŏk, "*Kwangjang* ŭi ch'angjakbangbŏp," 174f.
[133] Ibid., 175.

가르는 단 하나의 것입니다. 인민 경제 계획의 초과 달성이 문젠 게 아닙니다. 우리 가슴속에서 불타야 할 자랑스러운 정열, 그것만이 문젭니다. [134]

But that wasn't what I wanted to say. I wanted to talk about the blood that streamed in the French citizens' hearts in those, about that red heart. Is that just a phantasm? Oh, it's not like that. It's not like that, father. The beating of this red heart, that's everything. It is exactly that which makes us different from the capitalists. It is not about national economics, fulfillment of the plan and percentages, that is not the problem. It is only about the flame in our heart and our proud passion that is the only problem.

Myŏng-jun can imagine an idealized concept of a revolution in North Korea, but not a normal life after it. In reality he searches in vain for a model corresponding to his idealized one.[135] Therefore, Myŏng-jun's utopian ideas of a better, communist North perish: "믿음 없이 절하는 것이 괴롭듯이, 믿음 없이 정치의 광장에 서는 것도 두렵다. 코뮤니스트란, 월북할 때 그러려니 그려본, 그런 인종들이 아니었다. 한때 그들의 존재를, 믿음이 없어진 현대에서, 한 가지 기적으로 생각했다. 이상주의의 마지막 지킴꾼들. (To bow without belief was agonizing and to stand on the square of politics without believe was intimidating. When he went to the North he did not imagine communism in that way. Originally he had thought its existence was a kind of miracle in these times without belief. The last guardian of idealism.)"[136] In the following passage Myŏng-jun realizes what already should have been the logical conclusion of his ahistoric equation of the French and Russian Revolutions: "그는 스탈리니즘과 기독교, 특히 카톨릭을 한 가지 정신의 소산으로 보는 아날로지를 배급받은 수첩에 적어보았다. [...] 에덴 동산에서 법왕제에 이르는 기독교의 걸음걸이는, 그대로 코뮤니즘의 낳음과 자람의 걸음에 신기스럽게 들어맞는 것이었다. 그들른, 쌍둥이 그림이었다.

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[134] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 115.
[135] Ch'ae Ho-sŏk, "*Kwangjang* ŭi ch'angjakbangbŏp," 176.
[136] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 165f.

(He recognized Stalinism and Christianity, especially Catholicism, as the products of one mind and he had written down the analogies in a notebook he had received at a distribution. [...] The evolutionary steps from the fall of mankind in paradise to papacy, and the development of communism were analogous in a mysterious way. They were the picture of twins.)"[137] He realizes that the two diametrically opposed ideologies[138] only differ on a superficial level, but have the same basic idea. This leads to his final epiphany of the futility of ideology. Ultimately even Myŏng-jun's long idealized ideology of communism could not lead to the utopia he wishes. This proves that the gap between his idealistic beliefs and the concrete political situation in both Korean states is insurmountable. The death of Yi Myŏng-jun is not only the death of a despairing idealist, but perhaps also the death of idealism itself.

Transcending Cold War Dichotomies through Love in the Revisions

The revised edition of 1976 includes a major change that impacts the interpretation of the novel's ending. Ch'oe In-hun introduces the concept of love that can transcend ideology. For this reason the author massively expanded Ŭn-hye's role in the story.[139] Besides the 'square of politics,' the 'square of economics,' there is now another 'square' that appears, when all others fail. This one is more existential than the others and dissolves the dichotomy of 'closed room' and 'open square,' individual and society, North and South. It is the 'square of love' which is reserved for Ŭn-hye. Myŏng-jun first acknowledges the existence of this 'square' during his stay in Manchuria:

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[137] Ibid., 166f.
[138] Christianity is equated with capitalistic ideology. Although Protestantism would be a better match, Ch'oe In-hoon's use of Catholicism illustrates the parallel structures of ideologies, here papacy and Stalinism.
[139] Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um," 175.

그는 만연필을 손에 낀 채, 두 팔을 벌려서 책상 위에 둥들게 원을 만들어, 손끝을 맞잡아봤다. 두 팔이 만든 둥근 공간. 사람 하나가 들어가면 메워질 그 공간이, 마침내 그가 이른 마지막 광장인 듯했다. 진리의 뜰은 이렇게 좁은 것인가? 명준은 팔로 테두리진 그 공간 속에서 떨던 은혜의 몸을 그려봤다. 허전한 두 팔이 만들어낸 공간이 뿌듯이 부피를 가져오는 듯했다. 그녀의 살이 그 공간을 채워오는 것이었다. [140]

He stretched his arms with the pen in his hand to form a circle on the desk with his fingertips touching. This round space his arms made. If somebody would slip into it, it would be fully filled and maybe this was the ultimately last square that he was able to reach. Was the garden of truth so limited? Myŏng-jun imagined Ŭn-hye's body trembling inside the space encircled by his arms. This space within his arms seemed sufficiently large. Her body would completely fill this space.

This 'last square' Myŏng-jun mentions also refers to the "the square that was the size of the circle that both his arms could embrace," cited above. When he and Ŭn-hye meet again during the war, they share this 'square' for the last time hiding in a cave: "누워서 보면, 일부러 가리기나 한 듯, 동굴 아가리를 덮고 있는 여름 풀이, 푸른 하늘을 바탕삼아 바닷풀처럼 너울너울 떠 있다. 접은 지금 3미터의 반달꼴 광장. 이명준과 은혜가 서로 가슴과 다리를 더듬고 얽으면서, 살아 있음을 다짐하는 마지막 광장. (Lying there he saw the summer weeds willfully concealing the entrance of the cave, swaying like seaweed against the blue sky. A half circular square of three meters. The last square where Myŏng-jun and Ŭn-hye were alive, tightly intertwined touching each other's chest and thighs.)"[141] In this part for the first time images of the sea appear which reoccur in the description of Ŭn-hye's pregnancy: "그 기름진 두께 밑에 이 짭사한 물의 바다가 있고, 거기서, 그들의 딸이라고 불릴 물고기 한 마리가 뿌리를 내렸다고 한다. (Inside this round belly was a sea of salty water, where a fish that was called their daughter was putting down its roots.)"[142] This expansion of the sea figuration

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[140] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 124.
[141] Ibid., 164.
[142] Ibid., 183.

and Ŭn-hye's pregnancy were added in the revisions as Kim Hyŏn notes.[143] Directly following this memory Myŏng-jun realizes that the feeling of surveillance that had overcome him on board is related to the two seagulls following the ship. He plans to kill them, but before he can shoot they start talking to him: "그때 어미 새의 목소리가 날아왔다. 우리 애를 쏘지 마세요? (Then the voice of the mother bird rose. You won't shoot our child?)"[144] The seagulls are Ŭn-hye and their unborn daughter. This constitutes the most decisive revision in the text. Before 1976 the seagulls are Yun-ae and Ŭn-hye who follow their former lover like the past that haunts him.[145] When Myŏng-jun aimed to shoot the birds in this former version they shout: "용서해 주세요! 용서하세요! 쏘지 말아요! (Forgive us! Forgive us! Please don't shoot!)"[146] With these words Myŏng-jun once again relives situations in which these women had begged him for forgiveness. While Yun-ae and Ŭn-hye torture him through their appearance, Ŭn-hye's and her daughter in the new version evoke positive emotions.

A fan with the image of sea and seagulls brings forth memories from North and South passing by his inner eye and it seems to him that his life narrows down like the sticks of the fan. From his quest to find the perfect society he turned to the love, but as Ŭn-hye was taken from him he feels reduced to pure existence: "그는 지금, 부채의 사북자리에 서 있다. 삶의 광장은 좁아지다 못해 끝내 그의 두 발바닥이 차지하는 넓이가 되고 말았다. (Now he had arrived at the inner point of the fan. The square of life

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[143] Kim Hyŏn, "Sarang ŭi chaehwakin," 320f.
[144] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 183.
[145] Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um," 165-169.
[146] From the original version of *The Square*, cited in: Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um," 167.

had become smaller and was finally reduced to the size of the soles of his feet.)"[147] The 'square of life' almost equates the 'closed room'. Anything that relates to civil society has disappeared from this place, the place of pure existence which Park Yŏng-chun calls "Myŏng-jun's square"[148] When Myŏng-jun's life has reached the final point he also reaches the final realization about the 'square': "바다를 본다. 큰 새와 꼬마 새는 바다를 향하여 미끄러지듯 내려오고 있다. 바다. 그녀들이 마음껏 날아다니는 광장을 명준은 처음 알아본다. 부채꼴 사북까지 뒷걸음질친 그는 지금 핑그르 뒤로 돌아선다. 제정신이 든 눈에 비친 푸른 광장이 거기 있다. (He was looking at the sea. The big bird and small bird were sailing down to the sea. The sea. Myŏng-jun understood for the first time how liberated these women could fly around this square. He who had come to the endpoint of the fan was spinning around on the spot. There was a blue square that he could see through the eye of his mind.)"[149] Myŏng-jun recognizes a new meaning in the love of Ŭn-hye and his unborn daughter who already have transcended life, and whose love for him also transcended death. The meaning of this love has grown to another level which is not comparable to the 'square of love' that was their physical encounter during the war. His journey to a neutral country now appears in the same light as his former attempts to escape his situation as the past will continue to haunt him once he arrives in India. The 'blue square' is no mundane place anymore. He can only reach this place through his suicide in the sea. Kwŏn Pong-yŏng points out that from the sea,

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[147] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 187.
[148] Park Yŏng-chun, "Ch'oe In-hun ŭi *Kwangjang*," 311.
[149] Ch'oe In-hun, "Kwangjang," 187f.

the element of chaos, a new order can arise.[150] In the same vein of interpreting the sea as a place of new beginning Kim Hyŏn parallels the sea imagery of Ŭn-hye's pregnancy. He interprets Myŏng-jun's suicide in the sea as the return to the womb which grants the possibility of rebirth.[151]

The revised version of *The Square* does not end with failure and loss as the original version, but also points to the possibility of transcendence.[152] Love transcends ideology which finally grants Myŏng-jun freedom. It is only from the vantage point of two decades past that Ch'oe In-hun was able to reinterpret the somber fate of his protagonist, whose personality he saw, as cited above, determined by the time in which he lived. The reinterpretation goes hand in hand with a reevaluation of the women's role in novel. In the male-dominated world of the original version the female characters only serve as impersonation of the failure of society and means for escapism. Later, at least Ŭn-hye is elevated to the place of a guiding spirit and leads the way for Myŏng-jun's final salvation. The changes in the story open the binary of Cold War confrontation by creating a completely different dichotomy: the base mundane male world of politics and division against the higher spiritual female sphere of love and unity. It is significant that Ŭn-hye's and Myŏng-jun's unborn child is not a son, but a daughter. It is Ch'oe In-hun's own "dialogical" writing style which prompted him to reconsider the implications of the previous ending. These revisions ultimately let him overcome the bleak conclusion of the original version and transcend the political dichotomies through reevaluating Myŏng-

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[150] Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um," 176f.
[151] Kim Hyŏn, "Sarang ŭi chaehwakin," 321.
[152] Kwŏn Pong-yŏng, "Kaejakdoen chakp'um," 177.

jun's suicide. His metaphysical return to the feminine universes becomes the alternative to the nation.

The Death of Idealism and the Beginning of the Division System

For both novels the new geopolitical developments of national division created a space to lay out a traditional problem of political philosophy: the tension between the individual and the state. The protagonists cannot, but fail in their search for the concept of an ideal society. In an almost experimental set-up, two opposing ideologies are pitched against each other within the once undivided space. The timeframe of the novels, within the first decade of division, allows border-crossing and at least the possibility of contemplating a voluntary choice of either of the two political systems. Johnson's novel is before the build of the Wall and Ch'oe's novel begins before the Korean War. Both set out to a dialectical move, but never reach a synthesis. In Johnson's novel this is a deliberate subversive act of protest against the restricted individual freedom in the German Democratic Republic. As the system has betrayed its very people, Jakob, turns from an idealistic loyal subject into an alienated individual disconnected from society. In *The Square* the motivation is different. The dialectical move cannot be concluded after Myŏng-jun experiences extreme individualism in the South and pure representation of the state in North. The third option, the ideal civil society, is not visible for him. Myŏng-jun is an idealist like Jakob, yet, unlike Jakob he is from a different class. As a philosophy student he is a bourgeois, and as Paik Nak-chung critically points out he is caught in his

petty bourgeois mindset.[153] Myŏng-jun is not able to accept that his idealized world does not correspond with reality, furthermore he is too passive to actively advocate for change. Jakob on the other hand with his high moral standards does not fit into an imperfect society. The drastic disconnect between ideal and reality necessarily ends with the protagonists' death in both cases.

The death is the only possibility for the two protagonists through the absence of change in their character as well as the absence of change in society, in other words, an absence of future.[154] As it turns out in both novels society as it moves out of a deeply totalitarian time is not changing but merely a perpetuation of the past. This is most explicitly shown in *The Square* where the elites of both regimes continue the life style of the colonizers, and the anti-communism in the South is directly contrasted with the anti-communism during the colonial era.[155] Furthermore, specifically in the North and the East, "arrival in socialism" which promises a bright future, is not possible for either character. Myŏng-jun is not willing to adapt the ahistoric image of revolution to the grey reality of socialism and Jakob is not willing to compromise his practical moral judgement to adapt to every political course change of the GDR regime.

The two novels succeed in pointing out the main problem of the time: the enforcement of the division between individual in society while the opposing regimes stand united in their oppressiveness. Theodore Hughes aptly stated this for *The Square*:

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[153] Paik Nak-chung, "Siminmunhaksron [The Idea of Civil Literature]" *Ch'angchak kwa pip'yŏng* (1969/6): 500f.

[154] Kwŏn Se-hun, "Togil kwa hanguk ŭi pundanmunhak – Ube Yonjon ŭi 'Yak'ob e taehan ch'uch'ŭk,' k'ŭrisŭt'a 'Nanuŏjin hanŭl,' Ch'oe In-hun ŭi 'Kwangjang' [German and Korean literature of national division – Uwe Johnson's 'Speculations about Jakob,' Christ Wolf's 'The Divided Heaven,' Ch'oe In-hun 'The Square']" *Togilŏmunhak* 17 Chip (2000): 334.

[155] Hughes, *Literature and Film,* 169.

"The movement of the Ego respatializes division, effecting a unification of the ROK and the DPRK. Both formations are united in their opposition to the development of the Ego, dividing the Ego from a meaningful, autonomous engagement with the social."[156] Here, in the first novels to deal with ideological division of the nation, we can see the first stage of a mental stalemate of the individuals locked inside the Cold War dichotomy. What followed was the evolution of the "Division System,"[157] which was described by South Korean literary scholar Paik Nak-chung whose theory and its implications I will further discuss in the following chapter.

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[156] Ibid., 168.

[157] Paik Nak-chung, "The Idea of a Korean National Literature Then and Now," *Positions 1/3* (1993): 574.

Chapter 3

Walled Minds: The Division System in Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's *Wall of Rumor* and Peter Schneider's *The Wall Jumper*

The South Korean scholar Paik Nak-chung describes the state of the Korean Peninsula as caught up in a "Division System." He defines the relation between North and South Korea as "*sui generis* system" which perpetuates the status quo of hostility between the two states, even outliving the Cold War era.[158] The systemic nature of this situation, Paik claims, has not been recognized for a long time and a real discourse on North Korea and unification only became possible after the democratization movement in the late 80s.[159] For the democratic opening "in the South Korean context," Paik writes, "openness toward the North [is] a measure hardly separable from that of 'internal democracy' as the North-South confrontation has always been the main source of the state's vertical strength, and freedom of expression relating to North Korea and of contact with North Koreans a key issue of civil rights."[160] The "Division System," he explains, shows its anti-democratic nature in the "peculiar combination of adamant exclusionism and intimate reactivity in the mutual relations of the two Korean states." [161] Paik's theory was innovative as it broke with the Cold War paradigm of a clear cut dual opposition, pointing out the part that the South Korean state played by ideologically oppressing the people, and it was controversial as Paik claimed the system was ongoing even in the 90s, still hindering true democracy.

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[158] Paik Nak-chung, "The Idea of a Korean National Literature Then and Now," *Positions 1/3* (1993): 574.
[159] Paik Nak-chung, "South Korea and the Democratic Challenge," *New Left Review* 197 (1993): 72f
[160] Ibid., 71.
[161] Ibid., 72.

When Paik Nak-chung writes his concept of the "Division System," he explicitly refers to the Korean case alone. The experience of a civil war and Korea's colonial past are important factors in his theory which highly complicates Korea's position as a frontline in the Cold War. As a consequence Paik describes the German case in contrast to the Korean case as a pure "local manifestation of the Cold War system."[162] Yet, despite these important historical discrepancies, I argue that considering Paik's theory through a comparative approach is productive for both sides. I will discuss literary works which were written within and against the circumstances which Paik calls the Division System. These works describe how the expected ideological commitment for one side gradually turns the external geopolitical division into an internal problem of identity.

The two novellas which I will analyze in this chapter share the main theme of negotiating the relationship between state and individual with the previous chapter. Yet, they do not share the youthful fervour and initial hope for an ideal society that was finally disappointed in *The Square* and *Speculations about Jakob*, which I analyzed in the previous chapters. The South Korean writer Yi Ch'ŏng-jun in his novella *Wall of Rumors* (1972, *Somun ŭi pyŏk*) and the West German Peter Schneider in his novella *The Wall Jumper* (1982, *Der Mauerspringer*) approach the problem of identity in the context of national division through a more sinister portrait of a traumatized society. Written in the 70's and 80's, both works fall into a period when the division had become an established reality with no prospect of unification in the near future, as the unification of Germany within less than ten years was unpredictable at that time: Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's *Wall of Rumors*

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[162] Paik Nak-chung. *The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 95.

was published about twenty years after the Korean War and Schneider's *The Wall Jumper* twenty years after the erection of the Berlin Wall. In both novellas the appearance of non-conformist liminal characters disrupts the world of the narrator. I argue that these liminal characters' rejection of ideological interpellation by the state and their desperate quest for a neutral position exposes the absence of a clear distinction between the individual and the state. This problem finds expression in the subsequent failure of communicating without ideological bias or, if the former is successful, self-expression turns out to be impossible. The reality of the subjection of the individual further complicates Paik Nak-chung's theory of the Division System, in which the stories of Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's and Peter Schneider's novellas are set. In the following section I will lay out the main theme of the novellas and consider the social and historical circumstances in which the two authors were working, and its distinct influence on their narrative approach.

Yi Ch'ŏng-jun and the Task of Voicing Dissent after the Coup D'état

Yi Ch'ŏng-jun writes under difficult circumstances. In South Korea, General Park Chung-hee had manoeuvred the nascent democracy into a military dictatorship. The short interim period after the Student Revolution of April 19, 1960 during which Ch'oe In-hun published *The Square* ended with General Park Chung-hee's Coup D'état on 16 May, 1961. The following era brought with it strong limitations on the freedom of expression Korea's doorstep. A speech by Park Chung-hee in 1962 illustrates his main argument:

> Freedom of thought and speech is not unlimited…. Licentious thought and speech out of the bounds of good sense, and those tending to disrupt national unity, cannot be condoned or tolerated either from moral or legal viewpoints, since they are bound to bring misfortune, instead of progress, to the society and in the end jeopardize the national existence and survival. Let us reflect for a moment how dangerous it would be if Communist imperialism, in the disguise of democracy,

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made use of the freedom of thought and speech for their propaganda and agitation. Freedom of thought and speech, however fully guaranteed and respected under normal circumstances, cannot be condoned when it threatens to harm the interest of the entire nation and to disrupt the very legal order and social institutions which guarantee it.[163]

The 'National Security Act' and the newly introduced 'Anti-Communist Act' were "used by the Korean government not only against espionage or sabotage, but also to control and punish domestic dissent, such as the publication of unorthodox political commentary, art, or literature, on the ground that such expressions benefitted an 'antistate organisation.'"[164] The relation to North Korea, which served as the justification for these limitations of freedom of expression was at the same time a taboo. As Paik Nak-chung explains: "[T]he sheer weight of the national security state – identifying the North Korean regime as the National Security Law's 'anti-state organization' par excellence – has tended to suppress any real debate."[165] For many people the promise of economic alleviation and security, the loss of an abstract concept of freedom seemed a fair price at that time.

For the literary scene in South Korea it meant that it had to take on the task of resistance against the oppression of the mind, as Kim Yun-shik asserts, when he locates the true starting date of the 60s in the year 1962.[166] Before, Post-war society had already found itself uprooted on several grounds. The 'absence of the father' (*aboji ŭi puche*) was not only a practical phenomenon caused by the loss of lives in the war, but also through an ideological drain of idealistic men to the North. Furthermore, South Korean society

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[163] Youm Kyu Ho, *Press Law in South Korea* (Ames: Iowa State University Press: 1996). 54.
[164] Ibid., 153.
[165] Paik Nak-chung, "South Korea," 72.
[166] Kim Yoon-shik, "The Post-War Fiction of Korea – From the Early 1950's to the late 1950's," trans. Jang Gyung-ryul, in *Modern Korean Literature (1945 – 1990)* (Seoul: The Korean Culture and Arts Foundation, 1992), 79.

experienced intellectual detachment from its own reality through an education system that channeled western liberal arts, thus creating a generation of intellectuals well-versed in French existentialism, but, in Kim Yun-sik's opinion, utterly out of touch with the needs of their time.[167] In this intellectual climate Paik Nak-chung started his prolific career as a non-conformist scholar, writing about the state of South Korean democracy, the role of literature and the task of the public intellectual. Paik Nak-chung, in his essay "The Idea of Civil Literature" (1969), calls for a reinvigoration of civil spirit and the overcoming of a literature of excessive self-obsession. He brands some work of the past decade, including Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square,* as stuck in petty bourgeois thinking.[168] As his own argument is inspired by western concepts of civil movements, he will ultimately revise the arguments in his seminal essay "The Idea of National Literature" (1974), in which he establishes the "national" as inherently anti-colonial and anti-imperial.[169] These essays precede Paik's later solution to the Division System, which was based on the necessity of civic participation supported by a nationalist discourse. Alongside these concepts, the role of the intellectual and the writer in society as agents of social change remains a key topic in his scholarly work.

Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's writing style, as well as his main themes, are intrinsically linked to his experience of intellectual oppression by the state. This sense of an inescapable, impending fate is caused by his experiences with the Coup D'état in such close

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[167] See Kim Yoon-shik, "The Post-War Fiction," 81.

[168] Paik Nak-chung, "Siminmunhaksron [The Idea of Civil Literature]" *Ch'angchak kwa pip'yŏng* (1969/6): 500f.

[169] Paik Nak-chung, "The Idea," 560ff..

succession with the Student Revolution.[170] While Kim Yun-shik indicates that there is hardly any literature directly relating to the event of the Student Revolution and even less to the Coup D'état, Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's novella *Wall of Rumors* is one of the few works linked most closely to the problems of the military dictatorship.[171] Through the overcoming of realism via a new writing style, his works represent a subtly veiled but inherently scorching critique of the surveillance state and political violence. As a practitioner of "concept writing" (*kwannyŏm chakka*), rather than focusing on detailed description of a particular incident, Yi's writing follows the logic of a concept.[172] The main theme of his novels is the precarious relationship between state and individual during the time of autocratic oppression. Like Ch'oe In-hun and other writers of this area, Yi is highly conscious of language and his relationship with the reader. Thus, this political dysfunction translates in Yi's works into an inability or refusal of self-expression, especially through his depiction of a writer's block.

Wall of Rumors

In *Wall of Rumors* Yi Ch'ŏng-jun tells the following curious story of an editor and a traumatized writer: The narrator, the chief-editor of a magazine, is asked for help by the writer Park Chun, who has also submitted stories to his magazine. Because Park seems to be insane – he will not reveal his identity no matter how he is interrogated and he is afraid of both the dark and flash light – the narrator sets out to find the reason for this behavior. Three stories by Park that are inserted into the frame narrative reveal his

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[170] Kim Yun-sik, *Unmyŏng kwa hyŏngsik* [fate and form] (Seoul: Ibjangch'ŏngsŏ 11, 1992), 103.
[171] Kim Yoon-shik, "The Post-War Fiction," 85.
[172] Pae Kyŏng-yŏl, "Yi Ch'ŏng-jun ŭi *Somun ŭi pyŏk* koch'al [A study of Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's *Wall of Rumors*]," *Inmunkwahak yŏn'gu* Che 14 Chip (2010): 53f.

relationship to society: The first two feature paranoia and persecution complexes, while the last story reveals the origin of Park's behavior. It is the story of his alter ego 'G' who recounts a past event in an interrogation: During the Korean War G and his mother were forced to reveal their ideological alliance. Blinded by a flashlight and threatened to be executed for the wrong answer they were forced to choose in spite of the fact that they were unaware to whom they were speaking. They were oblivious who is speaking to them: The state police or the communist partisans. Despite his confession, G is convicted and in a Kafkaesque manner his prosecutors declare him guilty for the sole reason that he has been prosecuted. The two other main figures that appear in the frame story are his colleague Ahn, who rejects Park's stories, and Dr. Kim at the mental hospital where Park is treated, who tries to force a confession from Park. However, the 'wall of rumors' that has built up around Park has already successfully silenced him. After Kim's last attempt to make him speak by pointing a flashlight into his face, Park disappears without a trace. The narrator has failed to help him and as a consequence of this experience quits his troublesome job as an editor.

The novella revolves around the feeling of oppression, persecution and surveillance, while the aggressor and the reason for the persecution remain unclear. It is this obscurity and the seeming absence of reason which led the literary critic Kim Yun-shik to link Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's depiction of the political reality of the 1960s to Franz Kafka's *Trial*.[173] Given the threat of censorship, it is not surprising that there is no mention of direct influence of the state. Rather it seems that the society has internalized

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[173] Kim Yun-sik, *Unmyŏng,* 103.

an authoritarian structure. Yi's characters, however, often refuse to adapt, and so literary critic Kim Hyŏn acknowledges the *Wall of Rumors* as outstanding work.[174] This refusal of Park Chun's character to adapt is the light which illuminates the repressive structure of the depicted society.

Park Chun's avoidance of social conformity equals a rejection of what Louis Althusser describes as "interpellation as subject." Althusser, whose philosophy extensively describes the oppressive aspects of ideology in society, divides the controlling apparatus of the state into the following two categories: A 'Repressive State Apparatus' (RSA) and an 'Ideological State Apparatus' (ISA). The RSA consists of public institutions which repress through violence, such as the police or jurisdiction,[175] while the ISA, consisting mainly of institutions which functions on an ideological basis such as schools or churches.[176] RSA and ISA are connected insofar as the RSA protects the ISA. Althusser states: "*[A]ll ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects.*"[177] Thus, ideology and the subject mutually define each other. The constitution of the individual as subject is achieved through interpellation. Yet, Althusser emphasizes that the subject, who is only constituted as such by its subjugation, nevertheless is a free subject. It voluntarily accepts interpellation, but is not aware of its ideological subjugation at the same time.[178] The controlling power of the state is pervasive in *Wall of Rumors* through the ISA in the

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[174] Kim Hyŏn, "Yokmang kwa kŭmgi [desire and taboo]," in *Munhak kwa yutopia – konggam ŭi pip'yŏng* (Seoul: Munhak kwa chisŏngsa, 1992), 245.
[175] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 143.
[176] Ibid., 144.
[177] Ibid., 171.
[178] Ibid., 182.

Althusserian sense. While a subject can never be outside of ideology, the protagonist makes exactly this futile attempt to be so. Park Chun continually rejects interpellation through ideology in an attempt of self-protection, which given the impossible task necessarily fails. His choice to reject being coerced into conformity comes with the price of marginalization.

In the authoritarian society of *Wall of Rumors* self-expression is limited. Park Chun's voice is censored by the other individuals who are consciously or unconsciously performing as ideological guards. Specifically it is the narrator's colleague Ahn, an expert in literature, thus a representative of the ISA, who claims that Park Chun's stories do not fulfill the demands of the time. Although he agrees with the narrator's interjection, that Park Chun's story allow for multiple interpretations and could be seen in a favorable light, he nevertheless insists on his first evaluation. And Ahn gives no other reason than his acclaimed authority in the literary field. Thus, with his arbitrary decision he censors Park Chun's voice.

Amid wild assumptions concerning the reason why Park Chun's work is prohibited from being published, he is surrounded by a 'wall of rumors.' Deprived of his right to self-expression he ends up with a writer's block. This condition of fear of speaking out is ultimately an act of self-censorship. The key to this revelation is an interview article, which the narrator finds by coincidence. Writing is to Park Chun like confessing against flashlight, it is revealing one's own identity without knowing the reader's identity:

내가 소설을 쓰고 있는 것이 마치 그 얼굴이 보이지 않는 전짓불 앞에서 일방적으로 나의 진술만을 하고 있는 것 같다는 말이다. 문학행위란 어떻게 보면 한 자가의 가장 성실한

자기진술이라고 할 수 있다. 그런데 나는 지금 어떤 전짓불 아래서 나의 진술을 행하고 있는지 때때로 엄청난 공포감을 느낄 때가 많다.[179]

> Writing a novel for me is as if I am one-sidedly recording a testimonial in front of a flashlight that hides its face. In a way, creating literature might be called the individual´s most sincere self-testimonial. However, at times I feel an overwhelming fear as I wonder about what kind of flashlight I am testifying underneath.

This paragraph is not only at the core of the novella, but also at the core of Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's literary work. In a commentary "The Invisible Reader," Yi comments about the difficulty of writing without an immediate readership response.[180] Kim Yun-sik cites Yi on the same topic, exploring the motivation to write. Following Yi's psychological analysis of the writing process, people turn to writing if their outside reality becomes problematic and prompts them to withdraw into their inner world. Kim Yun-sik then points out that for the writers of the generation of the Student Revolution this inward turn is also an attempt to resolve their spirit of revenge. It is this inward turn, that separates the writer from other outspoken activists, as it sets the stage for reoccurring failure. As soon as the writer has found a new order and explained it to the readers, changing reality can fail the writer again.[181]

For Park Chun in *Wall of Rumors,* this dilemma results in the denial of his identity: refusing to disclose any information, he looks for refuge in insanity. However, he is not granted the benefit of madness, because society still requires a statement. While he is constantly forced to confess and reveal his identity, the identity of the oppressor, society or the masses, remains opaque. Park Chun finds himself in a surveillance society

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[179] Yi Ch'ŏng-jun, *Somun ŭi pyŏk* [The Wall of Rumors] (Seoul: Yŏllimwŏn, 2010), 116f. All translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.
[180] Yi Ch'ŏng-jun, "Chakka notŭ/Poiji ahnnŭn tokja [Author's note / The invisible Reader]," in *Somun ŭi pyŏk* [Wall of Rumors] (Seoul: Yŏllimwŏn, 2010), 154ff.
[181] Kim Yun-sik, *Unmyŏng,* 104ff.

with elements of 'Panopticism' described by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*.[182] The 'ideal' prison imagined by Jeremy Bentham is the Panopticon whose major effect is "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."[183] The Panopticon is based on the two principles visibility and unverifiability: "Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so."[184]

Park Chun evidently feels persecuted in his first encounter with the narrator: "제발 형씨, 그렇게 노려보지만 말고 날 좀 도와 달란 말이오. 난 지금 쫓기고 있는 몸이오. (Please, mister, don´t just stand there glaring at me but help me out. I am being chased right now.)"[185] Yet, it is not clear who is persecuting him. Park Chun's constant feeling of being watched is obvious throughout the story, but very aggravated in his two first stories: Already in the first story the protagonist tries to escape the gaze and evaluation of society by retreating so deeply into himself that a return becomes impossible.[186] In the second story the development of the persecution complex is emphasized even further by the protagonist who sabotages himself through his own paranoia. As a company driver the protagonist of the second story involuntarily witnesses

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[182] See also: Pae Kyŏng-yŏl, "Yi Ch'ŏng-jun," 61.
[183] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 201.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Yi Ch'ŏng-jun, *Somun ŭi pyŏk,* 44.
[186] Ibid., 37f.

his boss' shady business. Without even knowing exact facts, he begins to suffer from feelings of complicity:

> 언제나 감시를 받고 있는 심경이다. 회사 안에서는 벌써부터 자기기 곧 쫓겨나게 되리라는 소문이 나돌기 시작하고 있다. 아무도 믿을 수 없다. 소문이 묻혀 보이지도 않는 눈들이, 귀들이 사방에서 자기만을 감시하고 있는 것 같다. 회사에서 뿐 아니라 집안에 있는 마누라까지 의심스러워진다. 그는 이따금 넋이 나간 사람처럼 멍해 있기도 하고 때로는 딴 생각을 하다가 종종 주의력을 잃어버릴 때가 생기기 시작한다. 드디어 그 주의력 결핍 때문에 운전수로서의 자격을 상실하고 회사를 쫓겨나고 만다.[187]

> He had a feeling that he was always being watched. There was already a rumor in the company that he would be fired soon. Nobody could be trusted. It seemed as if unseen eyes and ears hidden in the rumors were surveying only him. Not only those at the company, but even his wife at home seemed suspicious. He began to have instances where he would stand motionlessly as if he had lost his mind, at other times he would be distracted by other thoughts and lose his concentration. Finally, because of his lack of concentration he lost his driver´s qualifications and was fired from the company.

These two stories show the distorted relation between Park Chun and the ISA. Park's refusal to conform to the ISA line brings on an internalized confrontation with the RSA in the third story of the imagined prosecution. The last story furthermore illustrates that Park Chun is subjugated to what Foucault would call 'indefinite discipline:' "an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgment that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed, the calculated leniency of a penalty that would be interlaced with the ruthless curiosity of an examination […]."[188] Park Chun is repeatedly interrogated. The culmination is the interrogation executed by Dr. Kim, which eventually incites a reenactment of Park's childhood trauma. Park Chun's first experience of forced confession during the Korean War was so traumatic that it continues to haunt

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[187] Ibid., 68.
[188] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 227.

him, as shown in his third story, which revolves around this past event. Woken by a nighttime intrusion into their home and blinded by the offenders' flashlights, G/'s mother tries to avoid ideological allegiance and affirms their neutrality, which turns out to be an unacceptable position for the interrogators:

> 아주머니는 누구 편이냐, 어머니를 사정없이 추궁을 하고 들었습니다. 그러니까 어머니는 다시, 우리는 아무것도 모르고 그저 농사나 지어 먹는 사람이다, 누구를 따라간 일도 없고 누구의 편이 된 일도 없다, 무식한 죄로 그러는 것이니 제발 허물을 삼지 말아 달라 ..... 이 아주머니 정말 반동이구면, 누구의 편이 아니라니 그런 반동적인 사상은 용서할 수 없다. 189

> Auntie, who's side are you on? My mother faced a merciless interrogation. So my mother said again: We are just ignorant peasants living from the earth, we are not following anyone, we are on nobody's side, we are only guilty of being ignorant, please don´t take us at fault… This auntie is really dimwitted, being on nobody's side, such a reactionary attitude is unforgiveable.

This instance in the story is the key for the narrator to come closer to understanding Park Chun's behavior. The childhood memory is the missing piece of information which only comes to light after delving into the fourth level of the internal narrative. The childhood of G, recounted to his interrogators in Park Chun's story within the frame story of *Wall of Rumors* is the endpoint of Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's *mise-en-abyme* narrative. All the other stories of Park Chun are a repetition of different versions of the same problem. The inability to communicate is at the core of all these stories, mirroring the aspects of his troubled psyche in the frame story and enhancing the feeling of speechlessness. The initial traumatic event, however, is hidden one layer deeper.

The experience of the Korean War is seen as decisive for the development of the writing style of many authors in South Korean literary criticism. Kim Pyŏng-ik, for example, explains that Yi Ch'ŏng-jun, born in 1939, belongs to the generation who lived

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189 Yi Ch'ŏng-jun, *Somun ŭi pyŏk,* 126.

through the Korean War in their adolescence. Therefore the chaos and crimes which they saw during this period had traumatic effects on them, leading to Yi's detailed psychological approach to the topic.[190] Yet, Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's literary work is not a personal trauma narrative. Rather the depiction of trauma becomes a means to identify political and social problems. In one of his earlier works which more explicitly addresses Korean War trauma this is clearly laid out. The novella *P'yŏngsin kwa mŏjŏri* (*Imbecile and Idiot*, 1966) tells the story of two brothers. The older one, a medical doctor and war veteran, suffers from a writer's block when he tries to put a traumatic event during his time as a soldier into words. He ultimately overcomes his problem after his younger brother confronts him and he finishes his book. The younger brother, however, is a painter who suffers from a similar artistic crisis. He never confronts his own problems, which remain diffuse and intangible. His inability to attain resolution is labeled as a problem of his generation in the end. The problem of the younger brother's generation in *Imbecile and Idiot* is that of a generation of the Student Revolution, which Yi depicts again in *Wall of Rumors*, where he achieves an even more complex narrative of trauma and obstructed resolution. As a censored writer, Park Chun, who is at the same time self-censoring, endures the constant tension of equally wanting to speak and simultaneously being denied the right to speak. He cannot work through his trauma, because the core of it cannot be addressed. North Korea as the 'Other' is in large part ominously absent in *Wall of Rumors*, although it is at the hidden core of the story. The unresolved political conflict

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[190] Kim Byong-ik, "The Korean War in Fiction," in *Korean Literature: Its Classical Heritage and Modern Breakthroughs*, ed. Korean National Commission for UNESCO (New Jersey: Hollym, 2005), 312f.

serves as justification for political repression and censorship. North Korea thus turns out to be constantly present in the silence.

Park Chun's personal trauma is linked to the problem of coerced ideological choice during the Korean War, but extends to the frame story in which ideological dissidence is treason and even ambiguous utterance must be censored. In his quest for neutrality he rejects interpellation as a subject via ideology. As a result, he is both protected and imprisoned at the same time by his refusal and consequential inability to establish a coherent identity. The narrator, as the editor of the magazine finds himself in a precarious situation censoring but also helping Park Chun. This makes him almost complicit and he oscillates between the positions of perpetrator and victim. He has to deliberate the rightfulness of his actions. On the one hand he has the power to give voice to his contributors or to silence them. On the other hand he finds his power limited and has to reckon with his own helplessness in the end. In this sense, the narrator also faces the problem of the intellectual as discussed by Paik Nak-chung. Paik ranks the intellectual above the writer as the one responsible of leading the writer.[191] The narrator has to realize that he has unwittingly become a medium of state power and has to concede failure in his task for civil society.

Peter Schneider and West Berlin

Peter Schneider's novella *The Wall Jumper* shares the theme of state power and ideology with Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's work, despite its differing preconditions which account for a slightly lighter and more ironic tone. The narrator in *The Wall Jumper* is a writer in

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[191] Kim Yoon-shik, "The Post-War Fiction," 84f.

West Berlin. Like the rest of West Germans he is disinterested in the problem of national division until his interest is sparked by his friends who had left the German Democratic Republic. Reflecting on the 'German-German Question,' he sets out to find the story of a man who becomes a border-crosser between the two German states. During his search he moves back and forth between the West and East to visit another writer in the GDR. He collects five stories, but ultimately, the narrator is not satisfied; to him the stories seem to lack something and make sense only when connected to each other. In a sudden final twist, the narrator's own "Wall jumping" comes to a halt, as for no apparent reason, his permission to cross the border is revoked.

The two novellas, *The Wall of Rumors* and *The Wall Jumper,* are comparable in their quest-structure. Both narrators, confronted with the psychic crisis of their fellow citizens set out to understand the condition of their society that does not allow the construction of a coherent, unified identity. Both share the structure of stories set within a frame story. In Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's novella, Park Chun's stories are the key to the riddle of his state of mind. In Schneider's case the anecdotes, which in fact are partly taken from real events [192] are "illustrations of the narrator's arguments about the absurdity of responses to the 'German Question', an absurdity that is all more evident in the narrator's ironic perspective as he records the bizarre activities of the Wall Jumpers." [193] They differ, however, in the extent to which the national "Other" is directly depicted. In the following section, I will contrast the *The Wall Jumper* with the *The Wall of Rumors.*

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[192] Gordon Burgess, "'Was da ist, das ist [nicht] mein:' The Case of Peter Schneider," in *Literature on the Threshold. The German Novel in the 1980s,* ed. Arthur Williams a.o. (New York: Berg, 1990), 112.

[193] Susan C. Anderson, "Walls and Other Obstacles: Peter Schneider's Critique of Unity in *Der Mauerspringer*," *The German Quarterly* 66/3 (1993): 365.

Peter Schneider and Yi Ch'ŏng-jun are both politically motivated. South Korean literary criticism identifies Yi Ch'ŏng-jun and his whole generation as those who possess the "vengeful spirit" of the Student Revolution in 1960, as Kim Yun-shik writes, but who were also affected by the rapid industrialization. Thus, according to Kim Yun-shik, the sense of duty and the political spirit of the generation of the Student Revolution is inseparable from any evaluation of their works.[194] Schneider comes from a comparably politicized background. As a West German left-wing intellectual, he challenged the conservatism of the Federal Republic. The post-war period was marked by strong generational conflicts between parents, especially fathers, and university students who were small children during the Nazi period. The German Student Movement of 1968 unleashed the tension built up by the students' questioning of their parents' involvement in the fascist regime. The political trigger was the creation of the Emergency Act (*Notstandsgesetz*), which in the case of an emergency would allow a bundling of the power of parliament and federal council into one joint committee. It also allowed for limitations on civil rights, such as the restriction of movement and surveillance of telecommunications. The law was passed on May 30, 1968, by a grand coalition of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats under Chancellor Georg Kiesinger, whose Nazi past was well known. It was met with negligible resistance of the parliamentary opposition, but with conversely extreme 'extra-parliamentary opposition' (*Außerparlamentarische Oppostion, APO*). For the young, politically aware generation,

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[194] Kim Yun-sik, *Unmyŏng,* 108f.

this new legislation meant a destabilization of the new democracy and recalled the conditions of the Weimar Republic which enabled Hitler's rise to power.

Peter Schneider, who was a fervent participant in the student movement, became an active spokesperson for the APO. He was particularly involved in the movement's actions against the right-wing press owned by Axel Springer. Because the media produced by Springer had and continues to have a strong influence on public opinion, the student movement denounced Springer as abusing the freedom of the press. Later on, after the heydays of the student movement were over, Schneider was disappointed by the meager outcome, if not failure of these activities. Many of his works reflect back on the student movement. However, another significant part of his later work after his move to West Berlin is dedicated to the issue of national division and the possibility of unification. With his novella *The Wall Jumper,* Schneider wrote one of the first West German literary works dealing with the national division. Until then, West German writers considered the divided nation merely a topic for speeches and discussion rather than literary exploration.[195]

In contrast to the invisibility of North Korea in *Wall of Rumors*, the 'Other' is strikingly visible and omnipresent in *The Wall Jumper*. Schneider's choice of Berlin as the setting of his novella is essential. While the rest of West Germany largely displayed intellectual disinterest in the issue, life in West Berlin was shaped in every aspect by the presence of the German Democratic Republic. Nowhere was the presence of the "Other"

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[195] Dagmar Wienröder-Skinner, *Aspekte der Zweitstaatlichkeit in deutscher Prosa der achziger Jahre* [Aspects of the division into two states in German prose of the 80s] (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), 6.

more immediate and the division more visible than in Berlin, the metropolis of the Cold War, at the center of which the clash of 'two political continents'[196]was being played out. It is the place where landmarks of the Nazi-past (e.g. der Führerbunker[197]) belied the real national trauma even as Germans dealing with their collective guilt were simultaneously being hindered by the politics of national division.

There was perhaps no other place where the so-called 'free world' looked more like a prison than West-Berlin, a small area in midst of enemy territory encircled on all sides by the Berlin Wall and accessible only through the air or by vehicle transit corridors guarded by the GDR. West Berlin thus was an unattractive location, a grey run-down city with visible scars from the war, surrounded by a wall that blocked all access to nature around the city. To compensate the residents who did not leave – a mass exodus would have been an ideological loss right in front of the enemy – the government of the FRG implemented certain privileges and material incentives to stay. Lower taxes, eligibility for subsidized housing, exemption from military service and the absence of a curfew were factors that constituted a major draw especially for young, liberal minded people, such as university students and artists who went to seek inner freedom within the spatial confinement of the city. West Berlin thus became a way to escape the conservative atmosphere of the West and popular refuge for many who were, just as Peter Schneider, disillusioned by the student movement of the 60s. This atmosphere of West Berlin was cultivated until unification brought a sudden end to this alternate space. Due to this

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[196] Ibid., 24f.
[197] Peter Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer* [The Wall Jumper] (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2006), 27. / Peter Schneider, *The Wall Jumper,* trans. Leigh Hafrey (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 28.

special status, West Berlin became a common topos in artistic works dealing with national division and unification. Through its paradoxical state of combining confinement and liberation, depictions of West Berlin showcases the most striking example of the cultural and psychological impact of these political events.

The Wall Jumper

The Wall Jumper begins with the description of a landing approach of an airplane in Berlin. As the plane circles the airspace over Berlin and crosses the wall several times the city still looks unified from the air. The shadow of the plane easily passes the border back and forth: the problem of division only resurfaces when the plane touches down and reconnects to its shadow. Ivar Sagmo points out the ironic inversion of Adelbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl*, in which Schlemihl's loss of his shadow symbolizes the loss of identity, since his otherness leads to Schlemihl's being ostracized from society. In Schneider's novella the difficulties begin with this initial regaining of the shadow and the individuals' attachment to a specific system.[198] As the plane approaches slowly, the cityscape presents the image of military or a prison: "Im Sprachgebrauch der Berliner werden diese Wohnhäuser Mietskasernen genannt. (Berliners commonly call these apartment houses apartment barracks.)"[199] There is not only mention of the Wall, but also

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[198] Ivar Sagmo, "Vom anderen Gesetz im ähnlichen Leben. Fremderfahrungen in und mit Peter Schneiders Erzählung 'Der Mauerspringer' [About the other law in the similar life. Experience of otherness in and with Peter Schneider's novella 'The Wall Jumper,'" *Jahrbuch. Deutsch als Fremdsprache* Bd. 11 (1985): 192. See also: Petra Platen, *Zwischen Dableiben und Verschwinden. Zur Kontinuität im Werk von Peter Schneider* [Between staying and disappearing. About the continuity in the work of Peter Schneider] (München: Iudicum, 2006). 82.
[199] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 5. / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 4.

the innumerable backyard walls that separate the neighbors. Even a Sunday promenade is associated with a "Hofgang (exercise period in a prison yard)" [200]

As often as the physical aspects of the Wall are described in this novella, its psychological effect ultimately takes the lead role. While the narrator is at first effectively in denial about the physical existence of the Wall: "Tatsächlich sehe ich die Mauer nicht mehr (I really don't see the Wall anymore),"[201] he cannot escape the psychological wall he hits as it separates him from his East German friends. Similar to the narrator in the *Wall of Rumors*, the narrator in *The Wall Jumper* comes to his awareness of the identity crisis created by the political situation through characters, who do not fit into the system defined by national division.

Robert, a writer who has defected from East to West, adapts well for all practical purposes to the West German lifestyle, and yet, he intellectually avoids being part of the West German public discourse:

> Nach seiner Übersiedlung in den Westen wurde Robert mit so vielen Fragen zu diesem Thema bombardiert, daß er beschloß, die Antwort zu verweigern. Das Interesse, das war leicht zu merken, galt nicht dem Poeten, der in der DDR nicht mehr veröffentlichen konnte, sondern dem politischen Fall, und zu dem billigen Identitätszuwachs, den die westdeutsche Öffentlichkeit aus jedem Übersiedler herauszuschlagen versucht, mochte Robert nichts beitragen. Da die Erkundigung nach seinen Eindrücken im Westen meist mit der Hoffnung auf ein Bekenntnis zur westlichen Lebensform verknüpft war, zog er es vor, sich einen Ort im Niemandsland zwischen den Grenzen zu suchen.[202]

> After emigrating to the West, he was bombarded with so many questions on the subject that he finally decided not to answer them. It was easy to see that people were interested in him not as a poet who could no longer publish in the GDR, but as a political phenomenon. And Robert had no desire to provide the cheap ego-boost [literally: identity accession, B.G.] that the West German media try to extract from every emigrant. Since queries about his impressions of the West were usually tied to the hope that he would pledge allegiance to a Western life-style, he preferred instead to hunt for a no-man's –land between the borders.[203]

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[200] Ibid., 7. / Ibid., 6.
[201] Ibid., 8. / Ibid., 7.
[202] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 20f.
[203] Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 20f.

The aggressive ideological monopolization of identity by West German society does not allow him to silently blend in. Petra Platen argues that Robert cannot resort to his East German identity, which he has left behind, and thus has to become more West German than the West Germans. This dilemma ends in his estrangement toward both societies.[204] Ironically, Robert, who moved to the West because he was subject to censorship in the East, is now silenced again. Robert's denial of his own marginalized state results in a profound disinterest in the "German Question," which is finally the trigger for the narrator's search for an all-German identity. It is a sudden awareness of the single-mindedness of Western mass mentality that initiates this search. Stephen Brockmann calls the narrator's "decision ultimately to begin collecting stories about the Wall […] a kind of amateur psychotherapy: intentional memory work."[205] The narrator's approach is the following: He wants to find

> die Geschichte eines Mannes, der sein Ich verliert und anfängt, niemand zu werden. Aus einer Verkettung von Umständen, die mir noch unbekannt sind, wird er zum Grenzgänger zwischen beiden deutschen Staaten. Zunächst ohne Absicht beginnt er, einen Vergleich anzustellen, und wird dabei unmerklich von einer Krankheit erfaßt, vor der die Bewohner mit festem Wohnsitz durch die Mauer geschützt sind. Am eigenen Leib und wie im Zeitraffertempo erlebt er den Teilungsprozeß, bis er glaubt, nachträglich eine Entscheidung treffen zu müssen, die ihm bisher durch Geburt und Sozialisation abgenommen war. Je öfter er aber zwischen beiden Hälften der Stadt hin- und hergeht, desto absurder erscheint ihm die Wahl. Mißtrauisch geworden gegen die hastig ergriffene Identität, die ihm die beiden Staaten anbieten, findet er seine nur noch auf der Grenze.[206]

> the story of a man who loses himself and starts turning into nobody. By a chain of circumstances still unknown to me, he becomes a boundary-walker between the two German states. Casually at first, he begins making comparisons; as he does so, he imperceptibly contracts a sickness from which inhabitants with a fixed place of residence are shielded by the Wall. In his own person and as though at split-second speed, he lives through the partition process and comes to believe that he has to make a decision, one he had previously been spared by birth and socialization. But the more

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[204] Platen, *Zwischen Dableiben und Verschwinden,* 88f.

[205] Stephen Brockmann, "Divided and Reunited Berlin in Peter Schneider's Fiction," in *Berlin. The Symphony Continues. Orchestrating Architectural, Social, and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital,* ed. Carol Anne Costabile-Heming (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 225.

[206] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 22.

he crosses from one half of the city to the other, the more absurd the choice seems. Having come to distrust the hastily adopted identity that both states offer him, he feels at home only on the border.[207]

In the process of looking for this story and through his "frequent exercises in psychological wall-jumping," [208] he himself becomes its protagonist, as Edward R. McDonald puts it. He crosses the border to visit his friend and colleague Pommerer, a writer in the GDR, to discuss his project. In forcing himself to be objective, the journey becomes an ethnological exploration for Robert that brings the narrator to the realization that the East shows him a mirror image of the West. In his discussions with his colleague, every reaction of the narrator is countered by Pommerer, "durch den Hinweis auf Parallelerscheinungen im Westen. (by referring to parallel phenomena in the West.)" [209] In this way the narrator's conflicts with his friends from the GDR are generally supported by the contrasting East/West media coverage of the same or a similar topic. Dieter Lamping calls it an experience of alterity, in which difference and similarity enter a dialectic relationship.[210]

A further means for the narrator to understand the East-West relationship is by exploring the memories of time spent with his ex-girlfriend Lena, who has left the GDR and had never been able to identify with the West. In contrast to Robert, Lena never emotionally detached from her origin and never attains a sense of arrival in her new society. Her constant struggle to find a place turns into a persecution complex. The

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[207] Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 23f.
[208] Edward R. McDonald, "The Obfuscating Shadows of the Berlin Wall: German-German (Mis)perceptions of 'The Other's World' in Peter Schneider's *Der Mauerspringer*," in *The Berlin Wall. Representations and Perspectives,* ed. Ernst Schürer a.o. (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 133f.
[209] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 64. Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 69.
[210] Dieter Lamping, *Über Grenzen – Eine literarische Topographie* [About/Over borders – A literary topography] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2001). 138.

narrator sees her identity as fully shaped by her upbringing in the East: "In dieser Sehnsucht nach Klarheit und Entschlossenheit setzte sich noch bei seinen Gegnern die Erziehung eines Staates zu unverbrüchlicher Treue, kämpferischem Einsatz, eiserner Entschlossenheit durch. (This longing for frankness and resolution revealed the effect, even on dissidents, of a state education in steadfast loyalty, militant commitment, and iron determination.)" [211] When the narrator tries to understand Lena's position he perceives a sense of estrangement from his environment: "Ich war in den Innenraum hinter jenem Zaun gelangt, den Lena um sich gezogen hatte, und sah die Welt jenseits des Zauns nur noch als etwas Äußeres, von dem es sich zu reinigen galt. (I had entered the enclosure that Lena had erected around herself; the world beyond the fence was something extraneous, of which I had to purge myself.)" [212] Seeing his own society through the eyes of the "Other" raises his awareness of the ideological presence of the state in the West:

> [Es] erschien mir der Staat im Westen, der sich als Gesellschaft ausgab, ungleich gewalttätiger und stärker, unsichtbar, aber allgegenwärtig. Er war durch die Türritzen der Wohngemeinschaften ebenso eingedrungen wie in die Köpfe der Bewohner; er sah uns von den Bücherborden an, stand neben unseren Betten und beherrschte unsere Träume von verfolgenden Polizisten.[213]

> [The] state to the West, which claimed to be a society, seemed to me far more violent and powerful, invisible but omnipresent. It had crept in through the cracks in apartment doors, crept into the heads of the inhabitants; it stared at us from bookshelves, stood beside our beds, and filled our dreams with police-men who pursued us.[214]

The experience is mirrored in the non-encounter with his conformist cousin in the GDR. When the narrator decides to visit his aunt's house, this cousin who serves in the National People's Army, which restricts him from contact with the West, hides in his room. As

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[211] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 93. / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 102.
[212] Ibid., 94 / Ibid., 103.
[213] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 38.
[214] Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 41.

nobody is there to potentially report the cousins' contact, it seems to the narrator that his cousin is led by an "innerer Polizist (internalized cop)."[215] The cousin willfully acts according to the guidelines of his state in contrast to the individuals who defected and reject any new kind of ideological interpellation.

The above described encounters and experiences are reminiscent of *Wall of Rumor,* as *The Wall Jumper* also focuses on "power that the state exerts as it embeds its socio-political values into the subconscious mind of its citizenry."[216] In the cases where the influence of ideology becomes conscious for various reasons, there are also instances of resistance. Similar to Park Chun's rejection of interpellation and its consequences, there is self-censorship in Robert's case who does not want to be exploited for ideological purposes and Lena's seemingly self-chosen confinement which serves as protection against the unwanted ideological absorption. The narrator's further observations in the East, after all his border-crossing and discussions he must realize, as Susan Anderson writes, that "all protagonists see their own ideas of self in relation to the political system in which they have matured."[217] For the narrator, his observations boil down to the central question: "Wo hört ein Staat auf und fängt ein Ich an? (Where does the state end and a self begin?)"[218] This question is impossible to answer in a Germany "das seine Identität seit dreißig Jahren aus der Abgrenzung gegen die andere Hälfte bezieht (that over thirty years has acquired an identity in opposition to the other half),"[219] and where,

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[215] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 115. / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 124.
[216] McDonald, "The Obfuscating Shadows," 127.
[217] Anderson, "Walls and Other Obstacles," 365.
[218] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 87/116 / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 95/125.
[219] Ibid., 66 / Ibid., 72.

as Brockmann writes, the Wall has become the "source of personal and national identity."[220]

The function of the stories-within-the-story in Schneider's novella are an attempt to find an answer in the realm of the imaginary. Here Schneider differs from *Wall of Rumor*. Due to censorship, Park Chun's character could not have been North Korean. Rather Park Chun's neutral stance stems from the very early period of division carrying over the pre-division mindset embodied in the character of G's mother in the third layer of the story. In contrast, stunning neutrality like Park Chun's cannot be found in the frame story of *The Wall Jumper*. Set a decade later the characters disrupting the narrator oblivion are already formed by the Division System. Their assimilation problem stems from being identified with or self-identifying as the "Other." The narrator's story collection now looks for individuals who are, for no given reason, not subject to an ideology determined by the Wall. Following their private agenda, they disregard the Wall and its political symbolism.

In one of the framed narratives, which lends its title to the whole book, Herr Kabe from the West, is disturbed by the existence of the Wall and decides to jump over it, as this is the only direct way to the East. He keeps jumping back and forth, enjoying the good treatment in the mental asylum in the East and his social welfare rent in the West. His disrespect for the rules of Cold War confrontation brings both sides into the awkward position of having to acknowledge the other side as a political entity in order to claim the illegal nature of Herr Kabe's action. The most stunning detail for the representatives of

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[220] Brockmann, "Divided and Reunited Berlin," 228.

both state orders is that Herr Kabe's attitude expresses neither "politische Absichten noch einen ernsthaften Willen zum Dableiben (political aim nor serious desire to stay on)."[221] In the internal stories, Wall-jumping is always brought to an end by direct intervention through the Repressive State Apparatus. In one of the five stories the border-crosser even ends up being shot and killed by the border police. The characters in the anecdote are judged as either insane, criminal or both by their environment. In most cases Wall-jumping ends with punishment. In the frame story the state does not intervene into the narrator's actions until the end, when his own Wall-jumping is brought to a sudden halt, being denied entrance to the GDR for no apparent reason. McDonald calls this quest for "absolute objectivity" an "impossible dream of the narrator, […] as he pendulates in the story's main frame between the two halves of the city, continuously seeking to overcome his own psychic bifurcation and gain a sense of total belonging, he fails like the characters in his collection of framed anecdotes."[222] The narrator's utopian visions are destroyed in every single story, as there is no position "on" the Wall, or as is observed in one of the stories: "wie wollten die Angeklagten auf einer Mauer Halt finden auf der selbst Katzen ins Rutschen geraten? (how did the defendants keep their footing on a [wall] where even cats slip off?)"[223]

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[221] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 30. / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 31.
[222] McDonald, "The Obfuscating Shadows," 147.
[223] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 49/ Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 53.

The Division System revisited

A thought experiment of the narrator describes his empirical findings: What would people do if the governments of both states and their newscasters went on a holiday to the beach for one year? The most likely answer:

> Sie würden – nach einer kurzen Umarmung – herausfinden, daß sie ihren Regierungen viel ähnlicher sind, als sie vielleicht hofften. Es würde sich herausstellen, daß sie den biographischen Zufall, in verschiedenen Besatzungszonen aufgewachsen zu sein, aus denen dann zwei gegensätzliche Gesellschaftssysteme wurden, längst zu ihrer Sache gemacht haben. Spätestens bei der Frage, in welcher Hälfte ein Leben vorzuziehen sei, würde sich der Streit, den beide Staaten täglich über die Medien führen, in den Wohnzimmern fortsetzten. Wer bisher Zuhörer war, müßte nachträglich beginnen, in den zweidimensionalen Sprechern im Fernseher den eigenen, stark vergrößerten Schatten zu erkennen.[224]

> After a brief embrace, they would discover that they resemble their governments much more closely than they care to admit. It would become evident that they have long since made their own crusade out of the biographical accident of growing up in different occupation zones – later, different social systems. As soon as someone asked which half offers a better life, the fight that both states carry on daily in the media would break out in the living room. Those who until then had acted as bystanders would be forced to recognize their own crudely amplified shadows in the two-dimensional figures on TV.[225]

German division here is represented as a self-perpetuating system, which is in an important aspect different from Paik Nak-chung's concept of the "division system" introduced in the beginning of this chapter. The thought experiment subtracts the government as representative of the state, which also implies an absence of the Repressive State Apparatus from the scene. What remains is the result of long term education by the Ideological State Apparatus. On one hand this shows that Paik's theory of a systematic nature of division is applicable to other cases of ideological division. On the other hand it also highlights how Paik's otherwise pioneering theory seems one-dimensional.

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[224] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 66f.
[225] Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 72.

Paik's original thought is based on the idea that the repressive state alone is perpetuating the division. Paik's theory is ground-breaking in that it points out that the South Korean government had a vested interest in perpetuating the North-South confrontation. Yet, the other implication that North Korea is not the foreign Other, but as Roy Richard Grinker phrases it "an internal feature of south Korean life,"[226] is partly true, but also problematic in its essentialist nature. In the Korean context, at that time it was easy to maintain the idea of an underlying homogeneity of the people through the enforced absence of a real public discourse on North Korea. Anything could be projected onto North Korea, which was at the same time omnipresent, but muted. Furthermore Grinker aptly critiques: "Paik enshrines the people state opposition […]." On the assumption, as Grinker summarizes, that "the two Koreas are already unified on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural homogeneity. Paik's formulation thus requires that the people and states be diametrically opposed to each other." In this scenario, "[t]he state is the agent of division, while the people remain unified victims."[227]

Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's and Peter Schneider's literary reflections confirm but also add complexity to Paik's theory of the Division System. They both expose the ideological oppression pervasive in their respective states that controls the minds of the people on their particular side of the divided nation. Yi Ch'ŏng-jun does so within his limited room of free expression by mastering the artful technique of "saying-instead,"[228] as Yi Su-

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[226] Roy Richard Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures. Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 38.

[227] Ibid., 38f.

[228] Yi Su-hyŏng, *Yi Ch'ŏng-jun kwa kyohwan ŭi sŏsa. Paesin kwa poksu ŭi chŏngsinkyŏngjehak* [Yi Ch'ŏng-jun and exchange of narration. Economics of the mind of betrayal and revenge] (Seoul: Yŏkrak, 2013), 19.

hyŏng puts it. By describing Park Chun's struggle for an individual opinion, he exposes the society around him, in contrast, as being fully subject to the state. The character of the narrator can only gain awareness of this condition, and then departs into a doubtful future by quitting his job as an editor of a journal. Although he is liberating himself from being a wheel in the machinery of the state, at the same time, he also descends into a condition of powerlessness he resigns from his post of intellectual influence.

Schneider, not as constrained by censorship, more explicitly addresses the same problem. His style is, in contrast to Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's, more essayistic than literary. The circumstances also allowed him to approach the topic by drawing a direct comparison to the situation in East Germany. The extraordinary location of West Berlin and his own political position as a far left liberal put him geographically and ideologically in close proximity to the border. His claim that West Germany and its population were, in their closed-mindedness, equally as state-indoctrinated as East Germans and therefore equally as much a problem for unification, was far from being a mainstream opinion in his time. The publication of *The Wall-Jumper* provoked polarized criticism, for example Walter Hinck called his position that of the "homeless West German left," which could locate their version of socialism neither in West nor in the East.[229] As someone who moved to the divided city of Berlin from the South, the narrator in *The Wall Jumper* moves from his original unawareness of the problem –"[J]e weiter weg von der Grenze, desto ungenierter bildet sich das jeweils halbe Volk ein, ein ganzes zu sein (the further you are

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[229] Cited in Lamping, *Über Grenzen,* 141. See further critiques in Sagmo, "Vom anderen Gesetz," 200.

from the border, the more casually each half-people imagines itself whole)"[230] – to an active dialogue with the other side, only to realize that any communication is obstructed by ideological bias. The narrator's disappointment in his attempts to find a complete German identity is expressed in the following conclusion: "Die Mauer im Kopf einzureißen wird länger dauern, als irgendein Abrißunternehmen für die sichtbare Mauer braucht. Pommerer und ich mögen uns noch so weit in unseren Wünschen von unseren Staaten entfernen: wir können nicht miteinander reden, ohne daß ein Staat aus uns spricht. (It will take us longer to tear down the Wall in our heads than any wrecking company will need for the Wall we can see. Pommerer and I can dissociate ourselves from our states as much as we like, but we can't speak to each other without having our states speak for us.)"[231] Since the publication of this novel, the "Wall in our head" has become a popular saying in reference to national division and unification in Germany.

Paik Nak-chung suggests that working towards Korean unification through civic participation is "hampered precisely by the fundamental lack of an effective national discourse."[232] The narrator in Schneider's novella also judges the national discourse in West Germany with a devastating critique. He suggests that the frequent debates about the concepts "Nation" and "Unification" can hardly keep their audience awake:

> Man hat den Eindruck, der 1011. Aufführung eines Repertoire-Theaters beizuwohnen, bei der sich Schauspieler wie Zuschauer heimlich das Gähnen verkneifen. Daß das Stück über die Leiden des geteilten Deutschland trotzdem in Bonn immer wieder nachgespielt wird, schien sich weniger einem lebendigen Interesse zu verdanken als einer stillen Übereinkunft zwischen Ensemble und Parkett: man spielt das Stück eigentlich gar nicht für sich, sondern für andere, die leider nicht anwesend sein können.[233]

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[230] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 8 / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 8.
[231] Ibid., 110 / Ibid., 119.
[232] Paik Nak-chung. *The Division System*, 97.
[233] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer,* 29.

> It's like watching the 1,011th performance of a repertory play in which actors and audience both stifle their yawns. The fact that the drama about the sorrows of a divided Germany is still running in Bonn seems less due to anybody's real concern than to tacit understanding that this play has not been staged for the theatergoers at all, but for others who unfortunately can't make it.[234]

In the narrator's opinion, unification discourse built on the rhetoric of a shared national heritage is directed into the void. Reflecting on all the possible points of personal identification, he ends up rejecting every option. Born in an undivided Germany, he cannot call the state Federal Republic of Germany his fatherland, as he is actually older than the state, but any reference to a unified Germany would necessarily be a reference to a land that only exists in the past and in his imagination.[235] He ultimately narrows it down to the idea that the German language is the only inclusive element with the potential for identification. Yet, in reference to national unification through a shared national language, this state of affairs has less in common with Fichte's concept of German essence found in a shared history, culture and language as it would first seem. It turns out, this shared language is a pure act of communication to which he would like to return to by clearing away interaction determined through ideological bias. The attempt to "eine gemeinsame deutsche Sprache zu sprechen, [kann] nur mit einer Weigerung anfangen: mit der Weigerung, das Kirchenlatein aus Ost und West nachzuplappern. (speak[ing] a common German language has to begin with a refusal to parrot the Church Latin of East and West.)"[236] Yet, he is not optimistic that his call for a universal rejection of ideological interpellation will be heard soon. Yi Ch'ŏng-jun, even more than Schneider, continued to develop his theme of speechlessness further in his following work. In his

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[234] Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 29.
[235] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer,* 116f.
[236] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer*, 118 / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 127.

later novel *Irŏbŏrin marŭl ch'atjasŏ* (*The Search for the Lost Words,* 1981) Yi takes this concept to an extreme: the protagonist, a writer, is suffering because words have lost their focal point in the world and wander off aimlessly. In the process of the search for the purity of language, language itself becomes homeless.[237]

Peter Schneider closes his novel with a somber outlook: "[D]iese Mauern werden noch stehen, wenn niemand mehr dasein wird, der hindurchgehen könnte. ([T]hose walls will still be standing when no one is left to move beyond them.)"[238] Although unification tore down the actual wall, Schneider's assumption about the persistence of biased communication proved right. Unification through absorption – which in Paik Nak-chung's opinion would not be a real solution to overcome the Division System – also impeded dialogue as equals.

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[237] Kim Yoo-Youn, *Brennende Wirklichkeit – Kalte Theorie* [Burning Reality – Cold Theory], trans. Kim Young-Ok and Matthias Gatzemaier (München: Iudicum, 2004), 120.

[238] Schneider, *Der Mauerspringer,* 127 / Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, 139.

Chapter 4

Illusions of Unity: Brigitte Burmeister's *Code Name: Norma* and Kim Nam-ho's *Meeting* as Life Narratives in Unification Literature

Decades of the Cold War status quo have slowly rendered the concept of Korean unification into a utopian vision, while in unified Germany the short-lived euphoria of unification has been replaced by a sober reality. The moment of unification itself became not just a historical, but also an emotional turning point in the lives of many Eastern Germans. The world to which they were conditioned for more than a generation dissolved when the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was absorbed by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Shared discontent over these events found its voice in a vast amount of life narratives dealing with the events of the immediate post-wall era. The genre of unification literature also exists in North Korea, which declared the anticipated national unification the main theme of literary production beginning in the late 1990s. This chapter introduces these literary genres against the backdrop of the global transition out of the Cold War order, with a particular focus on the novel *Unter dem Namen Norma* (1994, Code Name: Norma)[239] by East German writer Brigitte Burmeister and the North Korean novel *Mannam* (2001, Meeting)[240] by Kim Nam-ho. These novels show the interplay between post-Cold War discourses around the reality of national unification and an illusion of unity.

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[239] Brigitte Burmeister, *Unter dem Namen Norma* [Code Name: Norma] (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994).
[240] Kim Nam-ho, *Mannam* [Meeting] (Pyongyang: Pyongyang Ch'ulpansa, 2001).

The Post-Cold War Era and Unification Literature

After 1989 we can observe a case of non-simultaneity of events in Germany and Korea: An era of post-unification and one of pre-unification. Two individual historical outcomes are thus embedded in one global history. The West declared the end of the Cold War and in academic discourse Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the "End of History" resulting from the final victory of liberal democracy over communism.[241] Considering that the Cold War is not quite over, this view turns out to be problematic as "contrary to expectations in the West, communism in Asia did not go the way of Eastern Europe, and the DPRK did not follow Romania and East Germany into the dustbin of history. On the contrary, the DPRK asserted that 'the irreversible current of history' was still leading mankind toward socialism."[242] Not even the "victorious" West can lay claim to a single master narrative, which in itself is a concept that has been declared a relic of modernity by postmodern philosophy.[243] Jean Baudrillard analyzes this new desire to homogenize history in *The Illusion of the End* (1992):

> A mania for trials has taken hold of us in recent times, together with a mania for responsibility, precisely at the point when this latter is becoming increasingly hard to pin down. We are looking to remake a clean history, […] All that has happened this century in terms of progress, liberation, revolution and violence is about to be revised for the better.[244]

Refuting the idea of an end of history and thus "also the end of the dustbins of history," Baudrillard asserts rather that history "has become its own dustbin."[245] The concept of a historical victory of one ideology over the other becomes questionable as the West loses

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[241] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989).

[242] Charles K. Armstrong, *The Two Koreas* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 57.

[243] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report of Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), XXIV.

[244] Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 11-12.

[245] Baudrillard, *The Illusion*, 26.

the opposition through which it defined itself in the dissolution of the East. "The attraction of the void is irresistible. The 'victory' of the West is not unlike a depressurizing of the West in the void of communism, in the void of history."[246] Baudrillard locates Berlin as the place where the destabilization of post-Cold War identiy becomes most apparent, "since there, paradoxically, it is from reunification that the antagonism arises. It is not the confrontation, but the rapprochement of two worlds which produces violence and the clash of mentalities."[247]

The production of post-socialist counter-identities through the dominance of the new "winning ideology" is particularly enforced through the disregard for the reality of life under socialism. Everyday life experience entailed more than ideology, but Western perceptions of post-socialist subjects tend to remain fixed in the binary of the Cold War mindset. Alexei Yurchak, in his study on the last Soviet generation, addresses this problem:

> Dichotomies such as oppression and resistance, truth and lies, official culture and unofficial culture, the state and the people, public self and private self overlook the complex meaning, values, ideals, and realities that constituted the Soviet system and, defying clear-cut divisions, existed both in harmony with the state's announced goals and in spite of them. [248]

The same statement holds true for the everyday life experience in the former GDR, and to a certain extent for defectors from the DPRK. There is evidence from defector narratives that even dissident North Koreans cannot always completely detach from their everyday life experience, as dire as the circumstances might have been.[249] Furthermore, the desire

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[246] Ibid., 49.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press), 283.
[249] Roy Richard Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 225.

or even obsession of the West to see the DPRK in clear-cut categories is obvious in the overflow of biased media reports that try to fill the gap of the unknown.[250] Unfortunately, North Korean literature contributes to this impression as the state limits individual expression and encourages artistic works to remain framed through the Cold War paradigm. Since the 1990s it has been noted as well that North Korea has combined its communism with an intensified nationalism, which reflects "the changed international environment, especially the demise of the Soviet empire that further isolated the country from outside."[251]

Nationalism is a device that maintains inner stability by creating an opposition against the foreign other. It creates an "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's terms, which is the formation of an abstract group mentality beyond the boundaries of the immediate community of everyday interaction.[252] In the case of West Germany and Korea, especially in North Korea, unification debates were driven by ethnic nationalism that employed imagery of family and kinship. This has become the basis of a unification ideology that appeals to the sphere of the seemingly apolitical realm of family and blood relation and thus pretends to transcend the ideological divisions of the Cold War. The inherent flaw here is a blind assumption of universal homogeneity in one nation.

In Germany, the fall of the Wall disproved this assumption and created a new scenario wherein the reality of unification had problems that could not be solved by

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[250] William Mazzarella, "Totalitarian Tears: Does the Crowd Really Mean It?," *Cultural Anthropology* Vol 30/1 (2015): 92.
[251] Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea. Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 91.
[252] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 6.

kinship rhetoric. Eastern German authors raised their voices against the West German perspective dominating the media. The era of the *Wende* (transition) saw a massive rise in literary production. Many of these literary works tell stories of separation, loss, and isolation rather than of a reunion. The genre is marked by a notable output of autobiographies or autobiographical inspired works and by a considerable number of women writers. Critiques of the post-unification period range from the humorous-satirical, for example Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* (1996, Heroes Like Us), to the grotesque with Ingo Schramm's *Fitchers Blau* (1994, Fitcher's Blue) and Thomas Hettche's *Nox* (1995), all of which deliver alternative variations and perspectives on the moment of unification contrasting the media image of joy and liberation. Others focus on estrangement and change society immediately following unification. Examples are Helga Königsdorfer's *Gleich neben Afrika* (1992, Right Next to Africa), Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal* (1994, Dance at the Sewer), and Brigitte Burmeister's *Unter dem Namen Norma* (1994). The rewriting of history, the subversion of kinship narratives of unification ideology, and a comparison of the post-socialist situation to colonialization by the capitalist world are recurrent motives in these works.

In contrast, North Korean novels since late 90s often depict the unification of the nation as a happy ending and emphasize a new focus on life on the other side of the border. Scholars have identified a drastic change of tone due to the changing economic circumstances at the end of the global Cold War era:[253] The DPRK lost its main ally with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and "the absorption of East Germany by the Federal

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[253] Stephen Epstein, "On Reading North Korean Short Stories on the Cusp of the New Millennium", *Acta Koreana* Vol. 5/1 (2002): 33-34.

Republic of Germany appeared as an ominous portent for North Korea's future."[254] Furthermore, years of draught and flood devastated the country and caused a great famine, remembered in North Korea as the "arduous march" (*konan ŭi haenggun*). Depictions of the socialist paradise were no longer sustainable following these crises, an subsequently an orientation towards the future, although generally a given in socialist literature, became even more pronounced. The sought-after future is one in which persistence through these times of hardship will be rewarded and South Korean, as well as diasporic Korean, will liberate themselves from "US-neocolonialism," a phrase signifying the capitalist master narrative in the post-Cold War era. One significant genre of the time are the autobiographies of the "Unconverted" (*pijŏnhyang changgisu*), the North Korean long-term political prisoners detained in the South that had been allowed to repatriate as part of the Sunshine Policy instituted by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. These autobiographies were often written in collaboration with famous novelists. Examples are: Ri Chung-myŏl's *Chogukŭi adŭl* (2002, Son of the Fatherland), Nam Tae-hyŏn's *T'ongil ryŏnga* (2003, Unification Tale), or Kwon Chŏng-ung's *Pukŭro kanŭn kil* (2004, The Way to the North). These autobiographies and fictional accounts are predominantly set in the South and conclude with the return of the protagonist and the hope of unification. Other novels of this time, which also depict North Korean interactions with the national other and criticism of South Korea, by featuring pro-South Korean protagonists or South Koreans and other ethnic Koreans which convert to North

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[254] Armstrong, *Two Koreas*, 57.

Korean communism are: Kim Nam-ho's *Meeting*, Kim Won-chong's *Insaengŭi hŭrŭm* (2001, Life's Flow), and Cho Sŭng-ch'an's *Sukwon* (2007, A Long Cherished Wish).

Germany's New Disunity

The disillusion felt by many people in the aftermath of German Unification is well depicted in Brigitte Burmeister's novel *Code Name: Norma* (1994). The story is related through the narrator and protagonist's stream of consciousness during two days in the summer of 1992. The days' events, as well as her recollections of the past, provide the space for a multiplicity of voices and life histories that defy the concept of unity in the recently unified nation. Marianne Arend, the protagonist, struggles to come to terms with her life, which is, like those of her neighbors in former East Berlin, under revision and judgement by the new West German master narrative. The story also revolves around Marianne's separation from her husband Johannes, as the couple is torn apart by the newly enforced freedom, and the developments in her friendship with her neighbor Norma. Although not supportive of the former GDR regime, Marianne, unlike her husband, is not eager to embrace the new norms of the West. This dilemma presents itself as a constant theme throughout the novel. Previously, the couple was confined, yet also bound together, by the Wall in a state of passive resistance against the regime. Following unification, however, the protagonist finds herself in a situation where everybody, and especially her husband, expects her to become active.[255] As the story evolves, Marianne tries to find her way in this new tyranny of freedom.

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[255] Burmeister, *Norma*, 62.

Burmeister's protagonist shares her name with 'Marianne', national symbol of the French Republic, and universal symbol of liberty and reason. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the character translates a book about the French revolutionary Saint-Just, one of the leading figures of the French Revolution's terror regime. In her role as a translator, Marianne is a mediator, not only between languages, but also between culture and history, East and West, the past and the present. Marianne repeatedly draws implicit parallels between the French Revolution in 1789 and the German "peaceful revolution" in 1989. This comparison is also reflected in the chronology of the novel. The novel is split in two parts: One day during the time before Marianne leaves to join her husband in the West and the other immediately after their final split, the day of her return to Berlin. The days are June 17, the anniversary of the Uprising of 1953 in East Germany and July 14, "Bastille Day." June 17 is a controversial date, subject to different interpretations: In the East condemned as "konterrevolutionärer Putsch, aber um alles in der Welt nicht: Volksaufstand (counterrevolutionary coup, but not for the life of me: people's uprising)" [256] and in West Germany celebrated as a national holiday and day of unification. In 1992 there is nothing equivalent to the historic importance of this day, which had been rendered redundant by the new national holiday, the day of German Unification on October 3.

Charged, and at the same time void of symbolism, is also the setting of the novel: "[E]in großes Haus, hundert Jahre alt. Der Stadtteil, in dem das Haus steht, hieß weiter Mitte, als er längst Rand war, dahinter Niemandsland, von der Schußwaffe wurde

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[256] Ibid., 66. All translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

Gebrauch gemacht. Mitten in der Stadt Leere, ein Tummelplatz für Kaninchen [...]. (A big house, one hundred years old. The quarter in which the house stands was still called 'Mitte' [Center] when it had already become the margin, behind it no man's land, firearms were used. In the center of the city emptiness, a playground for rabbits […].)" [257] The protagonist lives in an apartment building right at the former border between East and West Berlin. It is a place of transition: the wall has fallen and the space has not yet filled with city life. The center of the capital still remains an empty space: "[E]ine grüne Naht der Stadt an der Linie ihrer früheren Zertrennung (A green seam of the city at the line of former partition)," former "Todesstreifen (death strip)," now "Bauerwartungsland (prospective developed land)."[258] The empty space is not only physically void, but it is also, in Baudrillard's terms, linked to the historical void.

With the fall of the Wall an exodus begins: many former East German citizens embrace the new possibilities of unification, as does Marianne's husband, and move to the West. The reluctance to accept this new freedom makes those who leave suspicious of those who choose to stay in their old environment:

> Wie die sich aus dem Staube machten. In die Rheinebene oder ins Jenseits, sollten die Zurückgebliebenen zusehen, nachfolgen, es stand ja jedem frei, Freiheit über alles, und ängstlich, schwach und blöde, wer da nicht mitkam, eine natürliche Auslese nach wie vor, schon die Wohnanschrift ein Psychogramm. Und in den frischen Gräbern hier die Opfer, Täter, Opfertäter, alle nicht mehr zu vernehmen, desto dichter die Mutmaßungen, bündiger die Urteile, endgültige Ratlosigkeit bei denen, die sich nichts erklären konnten. [259]

> How they all ran away. Over to the Rhine valley or the afterworld, leaving those who stayed to watch or follow, as everybody was free to decide. Freedom above everything, and fearful, weak and stupid, who did not follow, a natural selection still, already the address a psychograph. And in the fresh graves, here the victims, perpetrators, victim-perpetrators, not to be interrogated any

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[257] Ibid., 7.
[258] Ibid., 31.
[259] Ibid., 44.

> longer, the more speculations, the more concise the judgment, ultimate perplexity of those who could not make sense of it.

The lives of the apartment building's inhabitants become the focal point of Marianne's attention. Their individual life stories, now under revision from the post-unification perspective, arouse the protagonist's awareness of the multiplicity of narratives coexisting around one person. She recalls memories from her teenage years, not recoverable from any curriculum vitae or state security file, and she formulates her central question: "Was kann man heute von einem Menschen wissen? (What can we know about a person today?)"[260] It is exactly this incomprehensibility that is not tolerated in a time when history itself is under trial. A rumor appears: a neighbor is supposed to have worked as an informal collaborator for state security. She commits suicide and thus becomes "ein weiteres Opfer unserer unblutigen Revolution (a further victim of our un-bloody revolution),"[261] as Marianne sarcastically comments in allusion to the cruelties of the French Revolution. There is no empathy for the victims, who are simply assumed to have been perpetrators once. Marianne gets into an argument about the new sense of entitlement to render judgment on the life histories of former East German citizens with her friend Norma.[262] For Marianne there is no simple way to judge: "gut und böse, Wahrheit, Lüge, Mut und Feigheit, Täter, Opfer, Schuld und Sühne, alles hohle Begriffe (good and bad, truth, lie, bravery and cowardice, perpetrator, victim, crime and punishment, all hollow terms)."[263] This argument results in a break between the two friends when Norma claims that she would not trust anybody, because anyone could have

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[260] Ibid., 14.
[261] Ibid., 42.
[262] Ibid., 58-59.
[263] Ibid., 61.

been an informal collaborator, even Marianne. The revolution so mercilessly calls for a scapegoat that accusations are not even verified or else some simulacrum of evidence is constructed through the euphemistically named process of "*Erinnerungsarbeit* (memory work)," such as when Marianne witnesses what seems to be a trial in the backyard of the house. An old party member is surrounded by neighbors. It is, as someone explains, "kein Gericht, sondern ein Gesprächskreis (not a trial, but a roundtable discussion)" concerning "das Problem der objektiven Schuld (the problem of objective guilt)."[264] To Marianne's great surprise it turns out that the former party member called for this meeting himself, saying: "ohne Beteiligung des Kollektivs kann Kritik und Selbstkritik nicht gedeihen (without the participation of the collective criticism and self-criticism cannot prosper)."[265] Still rooted in the mindset and rhetoric of socialist ideology, he exposes the similarity of the "new" practice of "memory work" to the old routine of "criticism and self-criticism".

These experiences drive Marianne further into her own reflections regarding how she should deal with past. She imagines how she would invite the neighbors to a meeting to recount their biographies and how she would then tell her own story in such a detailed manner, and that this act would postpone their judgement. She pictures them saying: "Diese Erinnerung, schön und gut, nur sah die wahre Wirklichkeit ganz anders aus. (This memory, fair enough, but actually the true reality was different.)" And: "Wie treffend! Wie falsch erlebt! (How accurate! How wrongly experienced!)"[266] The scenes of

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[264] Ibid., 146.
[265] Ibid., 151.
[266] Ibid., 165.

judgement allude to scenes from the tribunals of the French Revolution. Marianne translates what is written about Saint-Just's speeches at the National Assembly in 1792, when the terror regime was at its peak:

> Er forderte die Hinrichtung Ludwigs XVI. ohne Urteilsspruch, ohne Aufschub, ohne Appell an das Volk. Die Nachwelt werde sich eines Tages darüber wundern, daß man im 18. Jahrhundert weniger weit gewesen als zur Zeit Cäsars. Damals wurde der Tyrann mitten im Senat hingeopfert, ohne anderes Verfahren als dreiundzwanzig Dolchstöße, und ohne anderes Gesetz als die Freiheit Roms, sagte Saint-Just. [267]

> He demanded the execution of Louis XVI, without a verdict, without a grace period, without appeal to the people. The afterworld would be amazed that in the 18th century justice had been less advanced than in the times of Caesar. Back then, the tyrant was sacrificed in the middle of the senate, without further trial than twenty-three dagger thrusts, and without another law than that of the freedom of Rome, said Saint-Just.

Two hundred years ago Saint-Just had justified his demand for the king to be executed without trial with the same inverted logic adopted by Marianne's contemporaries, who do not see a problem with pre-judgment in the name of freedom.

In her fervor to recover the life stories of her neighbors and to protest discarding individual histories, [268] Marianne goes through the garbage to collect other people's memories, [269] thus literally rummaging through the dustbins of history. When she cannot find anything useful there she finally turns to the letters of the König sisters. Years prior, she had come into the possession of the personal documents of the sisters who had died a decade earlier. She finds the correspondence between Minna König and her childhood friend Claire Griffith, formerly Klara Lentz, who had emigrated to California in 1927. Separated by the Iron Curtain and on different sides of the world, Minna and Claire connected through their letters in a constant desire for a reunion that was never to happen.

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[267] Ibid., 213.

[268] Frank Thomas Grub, *'Wende' und 'Einheit' im Spiegel der deutschsprachigen Literatur. Ein Handbuch* ['Transition' and 'Unity' as Represented in German Literature. A Handbook] (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 373.

[269] Burmeister, *Norma*, 134-135.

Marianne concludes that it was not so much the content of their exchange as it was the utopian vision of their reunion that kept their friendship alive. Through the exchange of letters and the dwindling hope of reunion "[wurde] der Wunsch mit der Zeit zur fixen Idee […], alles zu spät, viel zu spät (the wish slowly became an obsession, too late, much too late)."[270] Their relationship remains preserved as it was during their youth, which Marianne attributes to the spatial distance between them and calls a lucky circumstance.[271] Juxtaposed against the eternally preserved friendship of Minna and Claire "aus stabiler Ferne (from a stable distance)"[272] stands the disillusionment of those who did live to experience a family reunion. In Frau Samuel's case her good relationship with her sister in the West ends after unification over an argument about the monetary value of packages of Western goods that her sister, still proud of her act of charity, had sent.[273]

After delving into the past and collecting her environment's memories, the conflict reaches its peak when Marianne finally joins her husband in the West. She feels completely estranged in this new environment which seems to confirm all her prejudices about the West. She is repulsed by the fact that she will always embody the stereotype of the East German in the eyes of the West Germans. Drunk at a garden party they host for her husband's new friends, Marianne singles out Corinna Kling, who has proven herself to possess numerous prejudices against the East. Declaring "[e]s ist an der Zeit, daß Sie die Wahrheit über mich erfahren (the time has come for you to learn the truth about

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[270] Ibid., 130.
[271] Ibid., 156.
[272] Ibid., 161.
[273] Ibid., 160.

me),"[274] Marianne begins the game with her victim Corinna. What follows is a biography, which Marianne invents as she talks, guided by Corinna's reaction and informed by all possible stereotypes. The story is one of a childhood of material and emotional deprivation with strict socialist parents. Marianne goes on to tell how she was seduced by a Stasi officer to work as an informal collaborator under the name "Norma," spying on her friends out of misguided love. Corinna is torn between pity and horror, trying to justify Marianne's imagined actions: "Kein bißchen Freiheit deshalb? […] aktive Opfer, könnte man sagen (Not a little bit of freedom, that's why? […] active victims, one might call you)."[275] The game and the story are influenced by multiple factors: her argument with Norma, her battles with her husband, different biographies of neighbors and a reaction to Western stereotypes. Marianne's fake confession is "expressive of a collective [East German] identity that owns up to its *Täter* [perpetrator] as well as to its *Opfer* [victim] and to an identity that allows all the shades of grey in between,"[276] as Alison Lewis observes, and thus resists the one-dimensional Western master narrative by blurring the boundaries between guilt and innocence.

However, Marianne cannot name her primary reason for playing this cruel game with Corinna when her husband confronts her in what turns out to be the last trial scene of the novel. The incident causes the couple to separate and Marianne takes the train back to Berlin. Together with Norma she tries to understand what has happened and what had caused her actions: "Ich breitete Erinnerungen aus im Bogen um die leere Mitte, den

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[274] Ibid., 224.
[275] Ibid., 235.
[276] Alison Lewis, "The Stasi, the Confession and Performing Difference: Brigitte Burmeister's *Unter dem Namen Norma*," in *German Writers and the Politics of Culture, Dealing with the Stasi*, ed. Paul Cooke and Andrew Plowman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 166.

Beweggrund, nach dem [Norma] gefragt hatte (I spread out my memories around an empty center, the reason that [Norma] wanted to know)." [277] The center space, where her motivation should have been located remains empty. Although they cannot recover Marianne's reason for her behavior, Norma pinpoints Johannes' reason for condemning Marianne. "Horror vacui,"[278] she says, "das erträgt der Mensch eben nicht, eine Handlung ohne erkennbaren Grund. Da muß er etwas an die leere Stelle setzen… (people just cannot stand it if there is an action without visible reason. That's why he must put something into the empty spot…)"[279] The novel concludes with a plea for friendship and for the acceptance of difference:

> Und sind wir auf dem richtigen Weg, wenn wir unsere Identität in geschlossener Fülle suchen, in Lückenlosigkeit? Ich warne vor dem Horror vacui. Denken wir daran, daß beim Go-Spiel ein Gebiet nur lebendig bleibt, wenn man dafür gesorgt hat, daß zumindest zwei freie Räume existieren, die Spezialisten nenne das "offene Augen."[280]

> And are we on the right track, if we look for our identity in closed fulfillment, without gaps? I caution you against the horror vacui. Consider that in the game of Go a region only stays alive, when there are at least two free spaces, the specialists call this "open eyes."

Set in a "Stadt ohne Zentrum (city without center)"[281] *Norma* ends with the idea of embracing the heterogeneity of life histories and worldviews.

The protagonist of the novel continuously challenges the expectations placed on her by the changed political situation and thus criticizes the dominant discourse of the West that demanded that former East German citizens revise and adapt their life stories according to the expectations of the "winning ideology." *Code Name: Norma* in particular questions the dominant narrative of unification ideology that assumes

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[277] Burmeister, *Norma*, 250.
[278] Ibid., 254.
[279] Ibid., 255.
[280] Ibid., 283.
[281] Ibid., 272.

unification to be a harmonious, natural process. In the interview-book *Wir haben ein Berührungstabu* (We have a taboo interacting with each other), published soon after unification by Margarete Mitscherlich and Brigitte Burmeister, Burmeister confirms that thinking about the two parts of the nation was charged with kinship terminology: "Die deutsch-deutschen Verhältnisse wurden immer ganz gerne familiarisiert. Die armen Brüder und Schwestern im Osten, der reiche Onkel im Westen… Und für die Vereinigung gab es das Bild der Ehe […]. (The German-German relations were often familiarized. The poor brothers and sisters in the east, the rich uncle in the west… And for reunification there existed the image of marriage […].)"[282] The GDR of course was assumed to perform the female role, as Mitscherlich adds. *Code Name: Norma*, however, pinpoints the inadequacy of the idea that kinship or marriage, with its expectations of sameness and perfect adaptation, is any guarantee for an ongoing stable relation. The illusion of a continuous union without friction is only realized in the case of the childhood friends separated by the Wall, for whom reunion stays a wish continuously postponed into the future and ultimately never realized. In all of the other cases reality incites conflicts and leaves people disillusioned. The novel advocates for a mindset that leaves room for difference and disagreement and does not call for a total assimilation to one side. It leaves room, an "empty space," for developments in the future free from the judgement of some predetermined standard.

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[282] Margarete Mitscherlich and Brigitte Burmeister, *Wir haben ein Berührungstabu* [We have a taboo interacting with each other] (Hamburg: Klein Verlag, 1990), 14.

North Korea's Future Unification

While Brigitte Burmeister's novel thus depicts a multiplicity of subjective narratives and life stories around the event of unification, Kim Nam-ho's novel *Meeting* is a narrative surrounding the quest for objective historical truth. In North Korean unification literature, unification is not in the past, but a predetermined event in the future. The discourse of future itself is politically charged in socialist societies: visions of the future have always been defined by a belief in the ultimate success of socialism. The ethno-nationalist communism of the DPRK embeds the national unification of the Korean peninsula into its vision of a socialist future, basing its argument on the presumption that only North Korea preserved the true nature of the Korean Ethnic Nation (*minjok*). To educate people about the state's policy, the DPRK strongly encourages the reading of literature. The literary scene is therefore strictly controlled. Kim Il Sung adopted Stalin's idea of writers being the "engineers of the human soul," modified into "soldiers on the cultural front."[283]

Kim Nam-ho's novel *Meeting* is an excellent example of the unification discourse in North Korea's literature. *Meeting* was published in 2001 to commemorate the Inter-Korean Summit on June 15, 2000 and found critical acclaim in the DPRK, with the North Korean literary critic Kim Sŏng-hŭi praising it as a work that is widely read in both North and South, as well as by the "overseas compatriots."[284] Although this claim is not necessarily factually accurate in respect to the latter two groups, it served to strengthen

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[283] Marshall R. Pihl, "Engineers of the Human Soul. North Korean Literature Today," *Korean Studies* 1 (1977): 77.

[284] Kim Sŏng-hŭi, "Unmyŏngŭi kwangwonŭl ttarŭnnŭn sarangŭi kunssang," in *T'ongili poinda* [Unification in Sight], ed. Rim Yŏng-sil (Pyongyang: Pyongyang Ch'ulpansa, 2005), 379.

the "imagined community" in affirming the official claim that Korea was ready for national unification. Kim Sŏng-hŭi observed as well that the value of the work lay in its depiction of teleological character development prescribed by Kim Jong Il: "작품에서 력사적사건을 기본으로 하는 줄거리는 그 사건 에 참가하는 사람들의 운명발전의 줄거리로 될 때라야 예술적인 의의를 가지게 됩니다. (If the plot of a work is based on an historical event, the work acquires artistic meaning only if the evolution of the fate of those who witnessed this event is described.)"[285] Although officially the DPRK follows only Kim Il Sung's and Kim Jong Il's artistic doctrines, this statement shows the lasting influence of socialist realism on North Korean writing. Katerina Clark's analysis in her study on the Soviet novel is thus also valid for the North Korean novel: "The enormous complexity of universal history is distilled in socialist realism as a normative progression from dark to light."[286] Ultimately, "the structure of socialist realist novel tropes this movement of the whole in the progress of an individual character."[287] Clark further describes how this "positive hero" evolves from a state of spontaneity (performing uncoordinated political actions) to a state of consciousness (performing actions guided by political awareness). "[H]istorical progress occurs not by resolving class conflict but through the working-out of the so-called spontaneity / consciousness dialectic,"[288] which

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[285] Kim Jong Il, Collected Works, Volume 1, page 346, cited in: Kim Sŏng-hŭi, "Unmyŏngŭi kwangwonŭl", 388.

[286] Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism With Shores. The Convention for the Positive Hero," in *Socialist Realism Without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1997), 28.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 15.

drives the master plot. The "positive hero" sets up his task, passes through trials until he, after attaining full consciousness through the help of a father figure, is finally initiated. [289]

In *Meeting* the "positive hero" Tae-myŏng evolves to consciousness by passing through all the stages that Clark identifies as constitutive of the master plot: set in Seoul, South Korea in 2000, shortly before the envisioned unification of North and South, the story of the journalist Tae-myŏng and his fiancée Hyo-na is told in retrospect. Tae-myŏng had been orphaned as a child and grew up together with Hyo-na. He became a leader of the student movement in the 1980s, but imprisonment and witnessing the collapse of the rest of the communist world left him morally broken. He decides to live a comfortable life in South Korea as a pro-government journalist until Hyo-na leaves him for his lack of faith in North Korea. His final reconversion to the North Korean cause as a result of seeing Kim Jong Il at the summit, reconciles the couple and unites them in their goal to support Korean unification under *juche* (self-reliance) ideology.

In his quest to attain consciousness, the hero of the Soviet novel acts in a world defined by the "Manichaean struggle between the forces of good and evil."[290] Following this argument Clark explains that the Soviet novel has a parabolic structure, [291] a characteristic also shared by North Korean novels. The invariable outcome of the

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[289] Clark's description of the master plot: "In the opening sections the hero is presented with some task in the public sphere, the fulfillment of which will really test his strength and determination. In the middle sections he endeavors to complete the task, against formidable obstacles, and, as he meets each test, he gradually achieves the required degree of self-mastery and impersonality to be initiated. The novel reaches its formal end in a scene where the moment of passage is enacted. A character who has already attained 'consciousness' presides and helps the hero shed the last vestiges of his individualistic consciousness and cross over to 'there.' At that moment the spontaneity/ consciousness dialectic is symbolically resolved." In: Clark, Soviet Novel, 167-168, and the stages of the master plot: "Prologue, Setting Up the Task, Transition/ Trials, Climax, Incorporation/Initiation, Finale" in: Ibid., 256-259.
[290] Clark, "Socialist Realism," 27.
[291] Clark, "Socialist Realism," 27-28.

protagonist's positive political development leaves no doubt of signification. *Meeting,* in this specific case, is a parable of unification. The *tertium comparationis* in the story is the "Meeting:" the reunion of the estranged lovers is described in minute detail against the backdrop of the Inter-Korean summit, the reconciliatory meeting of the two parts of a nation fallen apart. This interpretation also supported by Kim Sŏng-hŭi who emphasizes that Tae-myŏng's and Hyo-na's separation should be seen as paralleling the fate of the nation.[292]

In direct contrast to the formal structure of the novel is its claim to portray a real-life experience. The author Kim Nam-ho asserts authenticity of his depiction of the South through a pseudo-documentary style, inserting newspaper articles, letters, and phone call recordings. He claims in the epilogue to be personally acquainted with the protagonist, whom he supposedly met while hiking on Mount Paektu.[293] This chance encounter on Mount Paektu, however, is itself symbolically charged, as the mountain is known as the birthplace of Korea's legendary founding father Tangun and thus as the mythological origin of the Korean nation. This is not the only significant location of the shared national history that is incorporated in the novel: there are also the T'aebaek Mountains, stronghold of partisan resistance against Japanese occupation and, in the novel, the location of the protagonists' home village. Similarly, T'apkol Park in Seoul, is mentioned, which was both thestarting point of the March 1st movement in 1919 for Korean independence and the place where the protagonists confess their love for the first time.[294]

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[292] Kim Sŏng-hŭi, "Unmyŏngŭi kwangwonŭl," 381.
[293] Kim, *Mannam*, 256.
[294] Ibid., 108.

In this way, South Korean history is re-narrated from a North Korean perspective. References to locations of shared importance in nation building and resistance reaffirm territorial unity within North Korea's vision of independent unification. Contemporary South Korean territory is thus ideologically re-appropriated by the North. The structure of the North Korean novel, as inspired by the Soviet Novel's master plot, furthermore situates South Korean history within the narrative of historical progress with a predestined positive outcome. While South Koreans had been previously portrayed as victims of a puppet regime, installed by the USA, too weak to liberate themselves and follow the call of the revolution in the North,[295] this novel discovers the revolutionary potential of South Korean people. The description of the student protests – a defining moment of South Korea's democracy movement (*minjung undong*) in the 1980s – implies an expression of spontaneous political action that has not yet reached the state of consciousness. Although Tae-myŏng is strong enough to lead the student protest, he is not stable enough yet in his convictions to withstand torture in prison, and the disillusioning influence of the global demise of Socialism. When he visits Moscow he witnesses a Russia destitute after the downfall of the Soviet Union, which leads him to surrender to the temptation to live a comfortable westernized life.

This is the negative "climax" of the story: Hyo-na's and Tae-myŏng's personal philosophies clash. The conflict evidenced through their disagreement over journalistic practice in mediation and interpretation of political and historical events. This evolves

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[295] Sin Hyŏng-gi and Oh Sŏng-ho, *Pukhan munhaksa. Hangilhyŏnmyŏng munhak'e sŏ chuch'e munhakkaji* [History of North Korean Literature. From Anti-Japanese Literature to Juche Literature] (Seoul: P'yŏngminsa, 2000), 2.

into a debate whether to uncover and report the "truth" or to fall into line when politically expedient. Tae-myŏng uses his skills as a journalist not in order to voice his former political views, but instead resigns himself to pleasing the South Korean authority. When Hyo-na confronts Tae-myŏng with his journalistic activities, which contradict his former believes in support of conservative and pro-American forces in contrast to his former beliefs, he responds:

> 권력과 언론의 력학관계를 가장 정당하게 말한 사람은 과거 영국의 문사 베이콘이야. 그가 뭐라 했는지 아세요. 효나씨. <국왕폐하! 제가 펜으로 페하를 받들겠사오니 페하는 검으로 나를 보호하소서>,이것이 진실이야. 헤겔 역시 황제를 위해서 철대정신이란 말을 창조했었지.결국 언론이란 국가권력의 시녀에 지나지 않는다는 력사의 랭엄한 진실을 내가 어찌 외면 하리요.[296]

> The person who has said the truest words about the relationship dynamics between the authority and the press is Bacon, the old British literatus. Do you know what he said, Hyo-na. "King - Your Highness! I will serve you with my pen and you will protect me with your sword." This is the truth. Hegel, as well, has invented the concept of Absolute Knowledge for the Emperor. How could I overlook the cold truth of history that the press, after all, is nothing but the handmaiden of the state.

The boldness of this statement is embedded in its claim to universality; it might almost be seen as subversive given the situation of media control in the DPRK. At the same time, however, it is uttered by a character who has wandered into the terrain of postmodern thought:

> 지금 이 세계엔 어떤 리념의 싸움도 존재하지 않아. 리상이란것은 더욱 그렇지. 탈이데올로기, 탈력사의 가치관, 오로지 내가 세계의 중심이되고 소우주가 되는 모험시대가 시작됐다 그말이야. 강자는 살아 남고 약자는 사멸되는거야…[297]

> Now in this world the battle of ideologies does not exist. The same is even truer for the so-called ideals. Post-ideology, post-historical values, it means that a new era of adventure has begun, where only I become the center of the world and a microcosm of the universe. The strong will live and the weak will perish…

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[296] Kim, *Mannam*, 131.
[297] Ibid., 132.

In the Manichaean world of the novel where good and bad clearly exist, Tae-myŏng has lost faith in the "right" belief and is instead lost in the philosophical upheaval of the post-Cold War era.

At this point the debates of ideological allegiance and unification become intertwined. The interrelated key concepts of ethnic nation (*minjok*), the main argument for unification, and national independence in line with the *juche* ideology are pitched against Western influence and neocolonialism. Tae-myŏng is characterized through his statements as Westernized and estranged from his people, whereas Hyo-na, characterized as true to her people, challenges him. When Tae-myŏng takes her out to an expensive Western restaurant, she rejects: "그러니 제가 서양녀자로 달라 지길 바라지 않는다면 저를 조선음식집으로 데려 가 줘요. ([…] if you don't want me to change into a Western woman, please take me to a Korean restaurant.)"[298] After the initial step conceptually of defining their own people in opposition to the West/Capitalism, Hyo-na goes on to suggest that Tae-myŏng recognize North and South Koreans as the same people. With the claim to unity between the two Koreas is legitimized, as the opposition of Western/Capitalist to the Korean ethnic nation is developed, the USA is proven to be a neocolonial force in South Korea. Tae-myŏng claims to report objectively, but even his disengagement from the North Korean cause of unification under self-reliance makes him a traitor: "지금 대명씬 자신이 민족앞에 죄를 지고 있다고 전혀 생각되지 않아요. 먼 후날에 력사는 분단시대에 민족을 괴롭힌 자들을 반역자로 락인하게 될거예요. (Don't you think you're committing a crime against your people [*minjok*] right

298 Ibid., 140.

now, Tae-myŏng? In a distant future, history will brand the ones who made people [*minjok*] suffer in the era of national division as traitors.)"[299] The future of unification is a given and with it the victory of socialism over capitalism.

Despite Hyo-na's efforts to reconcile her fiancée to his former convictions, the couple splits up and only reunites five years later, when Tae-myŏng has met Kim Jong Il in person. Kim Jong Il in the end is the mentor and father figure whose possession of full political consciousness will convince not just Tae-myŏng, but the entire South Korean population: a fictive contemporary "*Kim Jong Il yŏlp'ung*"[300] (Kim Jong Il-Craze) in the South, raises seemingly realistic hopes for unification under *juche* ideology. Students dress like Kim Jong Il as the latest fashion trend [301] and one of Hyo-na's childhood friends is described as extraordinarily lucky for having a husband who looks just like Kim Jong Il, which makes the couple extremely popular.[302] At the summit Kim Jong Il is depicted as almost divine and convinces less with long speeches and arguments and more with his appearance as a man who has attained full enlightenment; Kim Jong Il, it transpires, is the ultimate unifying force. The novel concludes with Tae-myŏng's and Hyo-na's marital union and the prospect of National Unification in the near future, which the concluding remarks of the epilogue emphazise, "이제 우리 민족은 비로소 자기 운명의 참다운 주인이 되여 자주의 태양아래 만나는 과정에 하나의 통일강국을 탄생시키고야말것이다. (Now our people [*minjok*] will at last be the real master of its

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[299] Ibid., 150.
[300] Ibid., 20.
[301] Ibid., 37.
[302] Ibid., 59-60.

own fate and, through meeting under the sun of independence, finally give birth to one single unified powerful nation.)"[303]

Kim Nam-ho's novel *Meeting* claims to be an authentic life narrative documenting the historical event of North-South rapprochement through the experiences of a journalist battling his ideological confusion in the post-Cold War era. Yet, a real discussion of diverse opinions is not possible as the parabolic structure of the novel assumes a clear division between right and wrong and leaves no room for doubt as to the meaning of the victory of "truth." The master plot of the socialist realist novel focuses on the nature of the trials that the protagonist has to overcome, rather than on a surprising ending. Through these narrative techniques the glorious North Korean unification predictions become unquestionable. Unification is further tied to North Korean communism, the personification of the leader as the unifying father figure for all Koreans, and specifically to the concepts of *minjok* and *juche*. This belief in ethnic homogeneity legitimizes the claim to a natural unity of the nation, which is only disrupted through foreign influence. The connective force of the ethnic unity, however, is weakened if this familial bond is disregarded or if the individual does not accept the whole ideological construct and can be easily branded a traitor to the nation. As a result, *Meeting* unintentionally exposes the concept of a North-South union through the connective force of the ethnic nation, as it is deployed in the novel, as purely theoretical, only capable of supporting an illusion of unification.

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[303] Ibid., 257.

An Illusion of Unity

"Vor drei Jahren ist die Ewigkeit zusammengebrochen, die Zeit seitdem entfesselt, und wir geistern durch die alten Räume und versichern uns, hier zu sein, als wüßten wir noch, wo das ist. (Three years ago eternity collapsed, time since then is unbound, and we wander like ghosts through the old spaces and reassure each other that we are actually here, as if we still knew where that is.)"[304] Burmeister's protagonist states. For the people of the GDR unification meant the sudden end of the promise of a socialist future with openness for new developments. The DPRK remains, as in old socialist tradition, in eternal anticipation of a glorious future which is linked to the utopian goal of unification. For now North Korean identity seems stable in the euphoria of the moment through continuous evocation of imminent unification. Through the state of continuing division the euphoria will not subside as it did after the unification in Germany, as it is frozen in the moment of pre-unification. The future in North Korea is closed and unchangeable as it was in other former socialist societies. The closed identities which are produced in this way ensure inner state stability. Yet, just as in Germany, the idea of an ethnic bond between the separated parts of the nation is also employed to create popular consent for unification. This idea of the familial bond between members of a nation is a theoretical construct which does not survive the test of everyday reality, as can be seen in the experience of the difficult integration of former GDR citizens into West German society and North Korean defectors into South Korean Society.[305] It is

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[304] Burmeister, *Norma*, 79.

[305] Roland Bleiker, *Divided Korea: Toward a Culture of Reconciliation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 18.

namely the fact that one side is expected to "integrate" into the other that disproves the kinship narrative. This narrative can only exist in anticipation of unification, not afterwards. Roy Richard Grinker has analyzed the South Korean discourse on unification as dominated by this master narrative of homogeneity. Based on the fact that "almost every Korean living today was born and raised in a divided Korea and no Korean living today can remember a Korean state that is both sovereign and undivided", he shows that "the prospect of unification, too, as it is often imagined, idealized, and fantasized in projection into the future, is a disruption of the contemporary Korean identity."[306] If unification is really to happen one day, the illusion of homogeneity will have to give way to the reality of heterogeneity of a unified nation that encompasses a multitude of life histories formed by a divided past.

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[306] Roy Richard Grinker, *Korea and Its Futures: Unification and the Unfinished War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 9.

Chapter 5

The Border as a Space of Otherness: Representations of Liminality in Wim

Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and Park Chan-wook's *Joint Security Area*

The border, the dividing element between here and there, as well as the act of border-crossing in order to switch sides, are some of the perennial themes in literary works about national division. Yet, the border space itself has a special quality which often goes unexplored. The space of the border itself is at once a connective element, as well as, by its very nature as belonging to neither one side nor the other, a neutral zone. This stunning inversion of symbolic meaning can be found in some cinematic representations of the national division theme. These spaces provide room for the imagination of alternate scenarios, where contact and communication is not impeded, but on the contrary encouraged by the nature of the space.

This chapter discusses two films, *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Dir. Wim Wenders, 1987, *Wings of Desire*) and *Kongdonggyŏngbiguyŏk JSA* (Dir. Park Chan-wook, 2000, *Joint Security Area*), which are both set at the most iconic parts of their respective intra-national borders: West Berlin encircled by the Berlin Wall in formerly divided Germany and the Joint Security Area at the North-South Korean border. *Wings of Desire* was released in West Germany only two years before the Berlin Wall came down, although the political situation seemed at a deadlock at that time, while *Joint Security Area* is a product of the Sunshine Policy era (1998-2008) in South Korea. Liminality is a central theme in both films, which are set in with in spaces created through the historic circumstance of national division. The special status of West Berlin as the divided center

of Germany is fully defined by its location within East Germany, while the Joint Security Area is literally the center of division, a space which only exists to jointly keep both sides apart. The characters in each story are also in a liminal stage which reinforces the symbolic meaning of their respective settings. The medium of film visually supports the interaction between the inner space of the characters' consciousness and the outer space of the setting. In the following analysis I will argue that these places constitute 'heterotopias" defined by Michel Foucault as "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live."[307]

Border Space as Heterotopia

Michel Foucault coins the term "heterotopia" in his reflections on space in "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." He recognizes the social function of space and need to describe places of otherness, which he contrasts to the fully imaginary non-place of a utopia:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. [308]

Foucault's concept of exterior spaces of otherness formed by the socio-psychological conditions of society is inspired by Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological study, which shows "that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well."[309]

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[307] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics 16* (Spring 1986): 24.
[308] Ibid., 24.
[309] Ibid., 23.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard sets out to describe the poetic image and the spaces it produces. The image is a direct product of the soul, Bachelard writes, and the spaces of imagination thus cannot be measured, but have to be lived and experienced.[310] In a topoanalysis, he conducts a psychological study of the spaces of our life. He claims that past time is substantiated only through space, referring to Henri Bergson's concept of the *durée*, which cannot be revived, but only be thought of in an abstract immaterial line of time, or materialized through space. Time, according to Bachelard, does not live in memory but in space.[311] Foucault follows the phenomenological approach to the space of the interior, applying it to the spaces of the exterior.

Another theory essential for the understanding of heterotopia is the anthropological study of liminality. It is closely linked to what Foucault defines as one of two categories of heterotopia, a "crisis heterotopia," which refers to "privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis."[312] This means a transition through a phase in their life which momentarily puts them in a state of otherness: into a liminal state. The term 'liminality' was introduced by Arnold van Gennep in 1909 in *Rites de Passage*, describing rituals in small-scale societies. Victor Turner further developed the concept in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* where he summarizes Van Gennep's three stages of a passage rite:

> Van Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or 'transition' are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying 'threshold' in Latin), and aggregation. The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group

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[310] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), xx.
[311] Ibid., 9.
[312] Foucault, *"Of Other Spaces,"* 24f.

either form an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both. During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state; in the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation) the passage is consummated.[313]

He further elaborates on the second, the 'liminal stage:' "The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ('threshold people') are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between [...]."[314] For Foucault the location where this liminal stage takes place is a "crisis heterotopia," which is, however, "disappearing today and are being replaced, I believe, by what we might call heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed."[315] Foucault further describes possible attributes of heterotopia as being able to juxtapose several places, enclose remnants from different times, or as being a space of ritual and finally as space of illusion or compensation.

The space of and around the border is a heterotopia by its very nature as it always stands in contrast to the areas which it is delineating. I claim that especially the complex ideological and emotional discourses surrounding the intra-national borders of former divided Germany and divided Korea can be more clearly unpacked with these concepts of human geography. The concept of the heterotopia takes into account the full spectrum of subjective meanings and gives equal room to the real and the fantastic. In this chapter I

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[313] Victor Witter Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine Pub., 1969), 94f.
[314] Ibid., 95.
[315] Foucault, *"Of Other Spaces,"* 25.

will discuss how the characters in the films *Wings of Desire* and *Joint Security Area* move across the heterotopic space of the intra-national border in pursuit of unity with the Other to complement the self.

Wings of Desire: Berlin, the Divided Center

Wings of Desire is set in the divided city of Berlin in the late '80s. Since the beginning of time, the angels Damiel and Cassiel have watched over it, restricted to their passive tasks of observing and accounting. Given the turbulent history of the city, Wenders' film builds on a vast body of literature, theory, and criticism that addresses not only the special status of Berlin since the beginning of the 20th century, but also the city space in modernity in general. Notably, multiple aspects of *Wings of Desire* are inspired by the writings of Walter Benjamin. Wenders' protagonists are an overt reference to Benjamin's angel of history in the 9th thesis of the *Thesis on the Philosophy of History* (1940). In an intertextual reference during the library scene, when the audience listens in on the readers' minds, the second person reads the following:

> Walter Benjamin kaufte 1921 Paul Klees Aquarell *Angelus Novus* (Abb. 34). Bis zu seiner Flucht aus Paris im Juni 1940 hing es in seinen wechselnden Arbeitszimmern. In seiner letzten Schrift, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (1940), interpretierte er das Bild als Allegorie des Rückblicks auf die Geschichte. [316]

> In 1921 Walter Benjamin bought Paul Klee's water color *Angelus Novus* (fig. 34). Until his flight from Paris in June 1940 it hung on the walls of his shifting studies. In his last writing, *Thesis on the Philosophy of History* (1940), he interpreted the picture as an allegory of retrospection on history.

The famous passage concerning the angel of history reads as follows:

> Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor *uns* erscheint, da sieht *er* eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie

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[316] Wim, Wenders and Handke, Peter, *Der Himmel über Berlin. Ein Filmbuch von Wim Wenders und Peter Handke* [Wings of Desire. A film book by Wim Wenders and Peter Handke] (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1989), 23. All translations are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann.[317]

His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angle would like to stay, awaken the dead and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise: it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them.[318]

Wenders' reference inspired vivid discussion in interpretations of the film. Roger Cook points out the parallel between Benjamin's and Wenders' angels: they "are not able to alter the course of history; they only observe and verify it as they accompany it into the future with a painful countenance."[319] Martin Jesinghausen adds to the discussion by pointing out, that "[w]hereas Benjamin projects eternal homelessness, Wenders suggests possible homecoming in the here and now."[320] This is the case for Damiel, who becomes the positive counterpart of Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history,' when he is tired of his ethereal existence and decides to trade eternity for the "here and now" by falling in love. However, Cassiel remains like Benjamin's angel on his lonely course, blown onwards by the storm of time. Although he suffers seeing the misery of mankind, which he cannot alleviate – most notably in the suicide scene, when he cries aloud – he will not cross the boundary between heaven and earth. He, as well, is referenced in the library scene:

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[317] Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften I*, ed. Siegfried Unseld. (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp), 1977, 255.

[318] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 257.

[319] Roger F. Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History in Berlin: *Wings of Desire,*" in *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: Image, Narrative, and the Postmodern Condition,* ed. Roger F. Cook and Gerd Gemünden. (Detroit and Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 185.

[320] Martin Jesinghausen, "The Sky over Berlin as Transcendental Space: Wenders, Döblin and the 'Angel of History,'" in *Spaces in European Cinema*, ed. Myrto Konstantarakos (Exeter/England and Portland/OR: intellect, 2000), 85.

"Cassiel (Casiel, Casziel, Kafziel) – the angel of solitude and tears who 'shews forth the unity of the eternal kingdom.'"[321]

Furthermore, in their role of observers, before Damiel's descent to earth, the angels act as a medium for the spectator through which humans can be seen. They serve in the role of the *flâneur*, the paradigmatic figure of modernity in literature, discussed by Benjamin, who took the concept from Charles Baudelaire's essay "The Painter of Modern Life" (1865). Baudelaire describes the figure of the *flâneur* as disconnected and unnoticed by the crowd which allows him to observe and then reflect back like a mirror or kaleidoscope. The aim of the aimless wandering of the *flâneur*, who "goes his way, forever in search," is to discover modernity by trying to "distil the eternal from the transitory." [322] Benjamin in his turn recognizes the "uneasiness," with which his contemporaries "adapt themselves to a new and rather strange situation, one that is peculiar to big cities."[323] This new uneasiness, he quotes George Simmel's sociological reflections on city life, which is also due to the fact that "[i]nterpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear." Simmel claims that before the invention of modern public transport "people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another."[324] Thus, the gaze plays an even more important role in Benjamin's concept of the *flâneur*, who becomes an "unwilling

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[321] Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin.* 28.
[322] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Literature,* ed. and trans. P.E. Charvet (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 402.
[323] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1983), 37.
[324] Ibid., 38.

detective."[325] Considering Baudelaire's use of the *flâneur* as a medium to reflect the essence of modernity and as well as Benjamin's appropriation of the concept, we can see the *flâneur* as a general medium to portray his or her social environment.

In Wenders' film such is the portrayal of the condition of people in the divided city of Berlin, or even the divided nation as a whole. The angels are, in their exercise of observing the events, inverting the aim of the Baudelairean *flâneur* by trying to distil the transitory from the eternal. The eternal defines their whole existence; the transitory however, which is the real experience of singular moments, is beyond their reach. Their confinement in the eternal stream of time holds up their disconnection from humans, yet the movement of the camera initially works against it. The film begins with a close-up of an eye, which indicates that the camera will guide the viewer to follow the angels' perspective, providing a "bird's eye view of Berlin."[326] Cook comments: "Because the protagonists are angels, Wenders had to establish a radically new point of view for the camera, […] which was to give the illusion of unlimited movement through space and time."[327] And it is this "illusion of no physical limitations [which] clearly identifies the camera lens with the vision of angels."[328] He further states that viewers experience a feeling of security through the angel's view. The floating of the camera is only disrupted by the shot-reverse-shot technique, for the angels seeing and being seen by small

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[325] Ibid., 40.

[326] Alice Kuzniar, "Suture in/Suturing Literature and Film," in *Intertextuality: German Literature and Visual Art from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Ingeborg Hoesterey and Ulrich Weisstein (Drawer and Columbia/SC: Camden House, 1993), 212.

[327] Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History," 167f.

[328] Ibid., 169.

children,[329] which is accompanied by a list of questions and observations starting with the phrase: "Als das Kind Kind war… (When the child was a child…)"[330] Recurring is the questioning of the delineation of one's own identity against that of the other. Alice Kuzniar points out that the "haunting refrain 'Warum bin ich Ich und warum nicht Du?' ['Why am I I and not you?'] articulates the desire for closeness, if not oneness, with the 'Du,' for the specular reassurance of one's place in the world."[331] It is the curiosity of the childhood soul that knows no barriers and questions any experience of division. As Bachelard writes, it is only when we travel back to the inner space of our childhood which is motionless that we can relive memories of security.[332] This gap between the I and the you is closed momentarily through the strong connective force of eye contact with the angels. The viewer experiences a sensation of unity. Yet, it is a unity lost in the past that the film tries to reestablish.

The present temporality of the film is marked by the central theme of division. In particular, the division of cityscape and sky, and the division between the eternity of the angels and the now of the humans, is reinforced by the camera movement. Jesinghausen characterizes, "*Wings of Desire* as a filmic essay on divisions:"[333]

> The reality of division is the platform for lift-off into the transcendental perspective of the film. The 'real' Berlin is only a pretext to enfold a large-scale phenomenology of division on a meta-level of reality behind the concrete one: past and present, individual and political, human and divine, childhood and adulthood, male and female, physicality and spirituality, art and reality, black and white and colour, etc.[334]

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[329] Ibid., 168.
[330] Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, 4.
[331] Kuzniar, "Suture in/Suturing," 212.
[332] Bachelard, *The Poetics,* 5f.
[333] Jesinghausen, "The Sky over Berlin," 80.
[334] Ibid.

This juxtaposition of the division of the city and the psychological isolation of its inhabitants as demonstrated above can be seen throughout the film. The long camera flights through the city focus on the Wall and the areas around it, featuring the depressing sight of the wounds and scars World War II and the subsequent national division have left in Berlin's cityscape.

The angel's perspective knows no boundaries, and transcends physical as well as metaphysical borders, establishing the viewpoint of an omniscient narrator: "The shot moves through walls and borders, and offers access to the thoughts of the inhabitants of West Berlin."[335] Through the interior monologue of the people, which reveales "the emotional state of the inhabitants, most of whom are in thought about the isolation or misery in their lives,"[336] the viewer gets access to their inner most thoughts. The angels' presence penetrates their isolated existence for only a brief moment, establishing a fleeting sense of connection when the person's soul touches eternity. Wenders portrays the inner isolation of the inhabitants of a city that is encircled by a wall. Thus, the inner state of the people is parallel to the external geographical isolation of West Berlin encircled by Eastern Territory. Bachelard states that more than landscape, the house is a "psychic state," *état d'âme* that reflects the inner state of the individual.[337] I argue that if the house reflects the soul of the individual, here the city becomes the collective soulscape of its inhabitants, or as Cook phrases it, the "scarred city of Berlin that one sees

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[335] Barbara Mennel, "Shifting Margins and Contested Centers: Changing Cinematic Visions of (West) Berlin," in *Berlin. The Symphony Continues. Orchestrating Architectural, Social, and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital,* ed. Carol Anne Costabile-Heming (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 44f.

[336] Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History," 183.

[337] Bachelard, *The Poetics,* 72..

in *Wings of Desire* remains the symbol of German national identity."[338] The city space of West Berlin carries memories inscribed in its buildings and places marked by war and division, which are spatialized time in itself.

Through this preservation of time within the space of the city, Berlin as depicted in the film stands in stark contrast to the descriptions of Berlin in the first half of the twentieth century, when the metropolis was perceived as the embodiment of fast-paced modernity. Benjamin's contemporary Friedrich Kracauer in his essay "Wiederholung" (Repetitions), describes Berlin as always shaking off the new as soon as it is old, discarding the old like yesterday's newspaper, to the extent that the moment of present-ness is always at the point of vanishing in the endless search for the ever-new. He ultimately calls it an unhistorical city in "Straße ohne Erinnerung"[339] (Street without Memory). The shock of the rise of fascism and World War II, which leaves the city in ruins, completely inverses the character of Berlin pressing forward in time. The Wall around West Berlin seems to freeze the city into an accumulation of layered spaces of the past. The past is even further amplified by the scenes of the WWII movie shoot within the film, which again merges the present with the past. The following voice-over reflection on the state of the individual plays during a car ride through Berlin which shows a montage of documentary footage in the city after the capitulation:

> Jibt es noch Grenzen? Mehr denn je. Jede Straße hat ihren eigenen Grenzbalken oder Grenzstrich. Zwischen den einzelnen Grundstücken gibt es einen Niemandslandstreifen [...] Das deutsche Volk ist in soviele Kleinstaaten zerfallen... wie es einzelen Menschen gibt... und die einzelnen Staatsgebilde sind beweglich: jeder trägt das Seine mit sich herum und verlangt eine Übertrittsgebühr, wenn der andere es betreten will, [...] Das nur für die Grenze, ins weitere Innere

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[338] Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History," 183.

[339] Siegfried Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* [Streets and Berlin and other places] (Berlin: Das Arsenal, 1987).

eines Staates kommt man nur mit den jeweiligen Losungswörtern. Die deutsche Seele der Gegenwart erobert nur der und kann nur der führen, der jedem einzelnen Kleinstaatler mit dessen paar Losungswörtern kommt. Zum Glück ist gegenwärtig niemand in der Lage dazu.[340]

Are there still borders? More than ever. Every street has its own borderline. Between the lots is a strip of no-man's-land […] The German people are divided into as many states… as there are individuals… and these small states are mobile: each person carries his own state around and demands toll if someone wants to enter […] And that only for the border, to get further inside each state passwords are required. The German soul of the present can only be conquered and governed by the one who arrives at each of those states with the right password. Fortunately nobody knows how to do that right now.

Berlin thus becomes a heterotopia of time: "Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies." [341] Foucault counts museums and libraries within this category due to its nature of preserving remnants of different times in one space. I argue that the inability of West Berlin to move on through spatially preserved, lingering historical trauma renders it such a museum-like space. The *flâneur*-angels, in addition to being omniscient observers, are also wandering the city like museum guests. They are not only passing through the walls of the buildings without the least problem, like seamlessly connected exhibits, but also through the most impermeable wall of the city, the Berlin Wall. For the angels the Wall is just a temporary aspect in the large stream of history. While they step through it with no hindrance they reflect on the history of mankind as a history of war. Yet, although the Wall reflects this history of war,[342] it becomes void in the face of eternity. Although it is easy for the angels to pass through the Wall and transcend the dividing force of contemporary political reality, another key figure shows the intensity of the interplay between the space and history.

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[340] Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, 62ff.
[341] Foucault, *"Of Other Spaces,"* 26.
[342] Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History," 183.

It is Homer, the aging poet, whom Cassiel encounters in the library scene. Wenders sends the old man to seek out the former center of Berlin, the Potsdamer Platz and "its pre-World War II splendor."[343] The Potsdamer Platz, once the heart of the city, has been divided in the middle and left in a void. Although a dead square now with grass growing over ruins and rubbish, the Potsdamer Platz is a "symbolically charged territory."[344] The camera follows the old man walking along the Wall, accompanied by Cassiel, who is invisible to the poet. He recalls images of the past, but his memory falters at the point of the Nazis' seizure of power. Thus, the reason for the current situation remains vague in the poet's reflections. The viewer on the contrary is confronted with a montage of real documentary footage of Berlin during the Nazi period and World War II. As his memory, like that of a traumatized person, fails Homer, he "mourns the lack of a center in the search for the absent *Potsdamer Platz.*"[345] The loss of the square as a place of encounter and union connects to the loss of another center. In the library scene, Homer reflects on his current state as a storyteller: "Meine Zuhörer sind mit der Zeit zu Lesern geworden, und sie sitzen nicht mehr im Kreis, sondern für sich, und einer weiß nicht vom anderen. (My audience became readers over the years, and they do not sit in a circle any more, and one does know nothing of the other.)"[346] Furthermore, the archaic union of people coming together to share knowledge is inverted in the library scene. All the people who gather there remain in isolation, everybody in their own pursuit of the greater

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[343] Mennel, "Shifting Margins," 45.
[344] Jesinghausen, "The Sky over Berlin," 80.
[345] Mennel, "Shifting Margins," 44.
[346] Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin,* 30.

meaning, disconnected from each other.[347] This is another reference to Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" in which he describes the loss of verbal communication in the move towards reading written script. Benjamin evaluates this transition as a loss of the collective experience of narrating and re-narrating, which transcends the individual's feeling of shock in the face of death and is instead focused on collective life.[348]

Although the state of the old man's mind is as void as the current Potsdamer Platz, and strangely oblivious of the recent history of war, the poet of the *Iliad* is still intrigued by the question of war and peace. Sick of the tales of war, he wonders: "Aber noch niemand ist es gelungen, ein Epos des Friedens anzustimmen. Was ist denn am Frieden, daß sich von ihm kaum erzählen läßt? Soll ich jetzt aufgeben? (But no one ever succeeded to intone an epic of peace. What is it about peace that does not allow for being narrated? Should I forsake my task now?)"[349] Homer is at a loss here in the same way as he is during his search for the Potsdamer Platz. As a result of national division, the former center of the city is exiled to the margins. Homer used to sit at the center, the Potsdamer Platz: "Denn am Potsdamer Platz, da war doch das Café Josti … Nachmittags hab ich mich da unterhalten und einen Kaffee getrunken, das Publikum beobachtet […]. (For at the Postdamer Platz, wasn't there the Café Josti… in the afternoon I would converse there, have a coffee, watch the crowd […].)" Now he is walking through no-man's land: "Man trifft keinen, den man … fragen kann. Das war ein belebter Platz!

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[347] Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History," 174.

[348] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller. Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 83-109.

[349] Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin,* 57.

(You meet no one whom you… could ask. This was a lively square!)"[350] This external marginalization parallels his inner marginalization as a narrator, the former center of society. Marginalized, like the homecoming Odysseus, he echoes the invocation of the muses in the *Odyssey*: "Nenne mir, Muse, den armen, unsterblichen Sänger, der, von seinen sterblichen Zuhörern … verlassen, die Stimme verlor … wie er vom Engel der Erzählung zum unbeachteten oder verlachten Leiermann draußen an der Schwelle zum Niemandsland wurde. (Sing to me, oh muse, about the poor and immortal bard, who, abandoned by his mortal audience, lost his voice … how he became the organ-grinder, unheeded or laughed at by the angel of the tale, out there on the threshold to no-man's-land.)"[351] The character of Homer is a 'liminal persona', caught in a liminal stage, while the Potsdamer Platz as the divided center is a crisis heterotopia. The poet remains in this liminal stage, while the protagonist of the film is able to perform a full passage.

Damiel, who falls in love with Marion, a French trapeze artist, and descends to earth, will move through all three stages of a passage rite and in the end transform successfully. In the 'phase of separation' he departs from the community of angels, where he initially belongs. He 'dies' in the arms of Cassiel, who holds him like Mother Mary in the pose of a Pietà. The symbolism of the Pietà, however, is inverted: While Christ after his death and the liminal period between Good Friday and Easter Sunday ascends to heaven, Damiel descends from his transcendental to an earthly existence. And again, in the second phase, location and state of mind coincide: "Damiel becomes human in the liminal site of the *Todesstreifen* (death strip), the space in between the East and West

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[350] Ibid., 58.
[351] Ibid., 59f.

German Wall, a symbol of liminality between eternity and the single existence of a human being." [352] The border space between East and West becomes the ultimate heterotopia. He then moves about in disorientation until, at the very end, in the third phase, when in his union with Marion, he becomes a full member of the human community. The figure of Marion embodies another extreme. She is also equal to Damiel in her solitude, although in all other aspects she is his opposite. As a foreigner she is stranger to the city and the circus where he first sees her is a heterotoptia, defined through illusion and transience. They both are ready to leave and overcome their solitude. "Material and spiritual worlds merge"[353] in Marion and Damiel. In their union they form a stark contrast to the other isolated inhabitants of Berlin as they have broken down the wall between them.

The division of the center in *Wings of Desire* thereby negates it and leaves only margins instead. The characters that populate those margins are dislocated, estranged and unable to connect with their environment. Because the old center, a place of interaction, symbolized by the archaic "circle of listeners" in Homer's memory, is absent the characters remain in isolation. Yet, the final scene of the union between Marion and Damiel is also a contrast to the earlier Homer scene. The couple meets at the Hotel Esplanade at the Potsdamer Platz, not far from the no-man's-land Homer has been walking through. [354] Potsdamer Platz, the divided center, becomes the setting of unification and Marion conjures the repopulation of the emptied space by using the

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[352] Mennel, "Shifting Margins," 45.
[353] Jesinghausen, "The Sky over Berlin," 82.
[354] Mennel, "Shifting Margins," 46.

metaphor of the 'square': "Wir sitzen auf dem Platz des Volkes, und der ganze Platz ist voll von Leuten, die sich dasselbe wünschen wie wir./ We sit on the square of the people and the whole square is full of people who wish the same thing as we."[355] The film ends with a promise of continuation. "The film closes with the words 'Fortsetzung folgt' ('the continuation will follow') superimposed over the sky above Berlin, while we hear in voice-over 'nous sommes embarqués' ('we have embarked')"[356] Cook concludes that "the story of Berlin, of *Der Himmel über Berlin* […] that unites a divided city and people, also promises a new beginning in the continuing search for a national identity."[357] Thus "positive transcendental unification" is put "against negative political division", as for Wenders the "real drama of division and unification […] is one of the soul."[358] The introspective approach of the film partly stems from its time of production as Stephen Brockmann, explains, *Wings of Desire* "was made on the cusp of a transition from the political to the private, from socially rigorous to the self-indulgently personal and in some ways the film itself thematizes the large-scale transition."[359] Yet, the act of focusing inward is not in itself completely apolitical in that it locates the traumatic experience of the Nazi era and World War II as a problem within the German soul.

Joint Security Area: The Center of Division

Like *Wings of Desire, Joint Security Area* is set at the borderline. Unlike *Wings of Desire* we are here at the heart of a violent border conflict. Despite the same function of the intra-national border between Germany and Korea, I argue that the border has a

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[355] Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin,* 162.
[356] Cook, "Angels, Fiction, and History," 181.
[357] Ibid.
[358] Jesinghausen, "The Sky over Berlin," 81.
[359] Stephen Brockmann, *A Critical History of German Film* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 399.

different spatial significance due to the different historical circumstances. While the Wall in Berlin cut through the beating heart of the city and inverted it into a marginal space, a "no-man's-land," the Joint Security Area is the heart of division, a space created to facilitate a communication between hostile parties which effectively succeeds at keeping them apart. I will discuss how the characters in *JSA* perform liminality in connection to the heterotopic space of the border. I will furthermore point out the literary references and ideological and political situation at the time of the production, all of which are influences to the discourse of division the film.

The film *JSA* belongs to the relatively new genre of "Division Blockbuster," which Hyangjin Lee calls "the response by a national cinema caught in the cross currents of localization and globalization."[360] The renaissance of the Korean film industry in the 1990s was economically triggered by the scaling back of the screen quota system in 1988 and the subsequent competition with US productions. To sustain their market share the Korean film industry eventually realized that it was not only improved technique and expensive special effects, but also a turn to themes of specific interest to Korean society that would keep them alive.[361] Another aspect is the turn of the political climate from the dominance of restrictive censorship during the era of the military dictatorship to democratization in the 90s. Regarding the representation of intra-Korean relations the "Sunshine Policy" (1997-2008), which was introduced by the President at the time, Kim Dae-jung, was continued by Noh Mo-hyun and ended with the presidency of Lee Myong-

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[360] Hyangjin Lee, "The 'Division Blockbuster' in South Korea: The Evolution of Cinematic Representations of War and Division," in *Divided Lenses. Screen Memories of War in East Asia*, ed. Michael Berry and Chiho Sawada (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016), 66.
[361] Ibid., 65ff.

bak, played a decisive role. The ideological division of the country as one of the most intriguing, but also most restricted discourses finally experienced new possibilities in terms of artistic representation in this new liberal climate in the era of détente. A more humanized representation of North Koreans starts to appear in film in the 90s, as in the box office hit *Shiri* (Dir. Kang Jekyu, 1999), the story of a female North Korean spy who falls in love with her South Korean counterpart. Park Chan-wook's *JSA* closely follows *Shiri*'s success as the second Division Blockbuster in 2000.

Park Chan-wook's film tells the story of a series of secret friendly meetings between soldiers from North and South while they are officially on guard duty, until one of these meetings is discovered by a North Korean superior and ends in a deadly shooting. Swiss Major Sophie Jean is appointed to investigate the curious incident as a neutral party, but ultimately fails as neither the individuals, nor the governments are interested in discovering the full truth. Compared to *Wings of Desire*, on the surface level the story seems more realistic than the openly fantastic story of the angels over Berlin. Under closer scrutiny, however, *JSA* is full of hyperbole and symbolism. Secret nightly meetings between lower-ranked North and South Korean soldiers at the border under the conditions depicted in *JSA* are just as likely as an angel falling from the sky in West Berlin. *JSA* is a thought experiment, just like *Wings of Desire*, reflecting on a given state of division and the possibility of unification. While Hyangjin Lee writes that *JSA* offers "no fantasy of reunification,"[362] I claim that the meeting scenes constitute a fantasy of a

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[362] Ibid., 68.

momentary emotional unification, which at same time is allowed and denied by the different spaces within the territory of the Joint Security Area.

In an interview Park Chan-wook explains his intention concerning the setting of the film: "I tried to show Panmunjeom as a product of the Cold War and at the same time a contradictory space […]."[363] Indeed, the space of the Joint Security Area is highly paradoxical in its nature. It is the area around Panmunjŏm, officially the only place where North-South meetings can take place and by this very definition the center of division and dividing force in Park Chan-wook's film. In his discussion of the film Adrien Gombeaud points out this key aspect by working with Rudolf Arnheim's spatial analysis in *The Power of the Center*. Gombeaud writes that Park "bases his compositions and direction on a simple architectural reality as described by Rudolf Arnheim,"[364] and refers to the following passage from Arnheim's work: "When a composition is built on two segregated halves, the weight of a central axis, be it vertical or horizontal, divides the two parties effectively. More than separation is needed, however. If those parties did not interact, there would be no good reason for them to be united in the same composition. Therefore, the dividing axis commonly carries a bridging element as well."[365] When the camera narrows down the focus further from the whole of Panmunjŏm to the exact center of separation, the demarcation line becomes visible as the central axis dividing the two sides. This is illustrated in the film by repeated aerial shots showing in a geometrical configuration the North and South Korean soldiers standing on each side facing each

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[363] Young-jin Kim, *Park Chan-wook*, trans. Colin A. Mouat (Seoul: Seoul Selection, 2007), 82.

[364] Adrien Gombeaud, "Joint Security Area. Pak Chan-Wook, Korea, 2000," in *The Cinema of Japan & Korea*, ed. Justin Bowyer (London: Wallflower Press, 2004.), 240.

[365] Rudolf Arnheim, *The Power of the Center. A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1988), 137.

other "like figures on a chessboard."[366] Yet, Gombeaud argues, the "geographical paradox of *Joint Security Area* resides in what separates North and South Korea: a bridge."[367] The 'bridge of no return' runs counter the supposed intention of a bridge, which is to connect two sides. However, the very existence of the bridge also confirms the existence of two separate units. Thus, the symbolism of the bridge assumes a dual meaning as something both connective and divisive.

Parallel to the spatial divider of the borderline, Sophie Jean also unwillingly becomes a divisive character: She is sent as a mediator, yet, just as any interpreter, she confirms the mutual inability to understand each other. Her presence blocks a direct communication between the two parties. While the soldiers from North and South were deeply connected by their friendship before, they now have to perform an inability to communicate. Sophie, Gombeaud writes, is sent "to play the role of the neutral centre in order to unify the pieces of a broken story. As the story unfolds, she tries to unite facts and people, but realizes it is beyond her control; she can only play the divider."[368] Gombeaud concludes: "The centre is geometrically unable to create unity. In other words, if there were no Swiss, or foreign force in the middle, there would be no North and South Korea. The centre is, literally, and, in this case, geographically, pivotal. […] *Joint Security Area* describes a Korean political reality and also expresses the idea that Korea is not responsible for its division."[369] The representation of national division as a result of the intrusion of foreign ideology and the concept of the Korean War as a proxy war

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[366] Gombeaud, "Joint Security Area," 236.
[367] Ibid., 237.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid., 237f.

within the Cold War power struggle is a common trope in Korean literature as well. Yet, in JSA this is secondary, but not the primary thesis. Sophie Jean, after all, is a reluctant divider and herself under pressure by the internal power struggle of the system she encounters.

At the beginning she is pushed into the liminal stage. When she is required to remain absolutely neutral in her investigations, she pointedly inquires: "So, my job is then to stand at the borderline and ask: 'Could you please tell me why you pulled the trigger?'"[370] Ironically in the end she will be pushed to one side, just as she is pushed on the borderline in the beginning. This is already foreshadowed by the comment of a South Korean Officer at the start of her investigations: "Neutral Nations Commission... There are two sorts of people in the world: Commies and the enemies of commies. There is no middle position here." Neutrality is not possible at the site of confrontation. Major Sophie Jean literally stands on the border between North and South Korea, and in her whole character she embodies the uncomfortable position of being in-between. She is neither South, nor North Korean, but born in a neutral country. She is neither East nor West but both Korean and European, that is half-Korean and half-Swiss; and last but not least "the first female staff in the JSA since 1953."[371] Her presence, according to Kyung Hyun Kim, "is defined by international law, biracial identity, and female body in a masculine uniform. [...She] transgresses not only crossing the boundaries of nation, race, and

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[370] *Joint Security Area*, Dir. Park Chan-wook, Cast Lee Young-ai, Lee Byung-hun, Song Kang-ho, CJ Entertainment, 2000.
[371] Ibid.

ideology, but also the homo-social community of men."[372] Sophie is therefore a 'liminal persona', as she "elude[s] or slip[s] through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space."[373] The liminal state of her character is directly connected to the political reality of division, which is most explicit in the scene when we see her walking on the demarcation line in an aerial shot, the only time she completely blends in with her environment.

Ultimately Sophie Jean is not acknowledged by either side, nor is she allowed to remain in the middle. Her liminal existence is terminated when she is pushed to one side in the end, as the South Koreans have dredged up her father's history during the Korean War. She is suspended for being the daughter of a communist and thus no longer regarded as neutral. Park Chan-wook explains in an interview:

> Sophie's background, where her father was a prisoner in a Communist P.O.W. camp who chose to go to a neutral country, is a set-up where we decided to make her seem like the hero's daughter in CHOI In-hoon's *Gwangjang*, [...]. Our whole generation is to some extent fascinated with CHOI In-hoon's *Gwangjang*. I wanted to carry on that beautiful tradition within another genre.[374]

Kwangjang (*The Square*, 1960), probably the most influential literary work on national division in South Korea, as discussed in the second Chapter, thus also referenced in the story of *JSA* almost 50 years later. Ch'oe In-hun's hero Yi Myŏng-jun, who despairs over the irreconcilability of individual and state, commits suicide before reaching a neutral country. Sophie, the daughter he could have had there, survives her in-between position despite the abuse she experiences from each side. She can adapt because she voluntarily chooses to fail in her mission, after the South Korean side found out about her communist

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[372] Kyung-hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 168.

[373] Ibid., 95.

[374] Kim, *Park Chan-wook*, 81.

father, and recognizes the dynamics of the Division System, as it has been described by Paik Nak-chung. She leaves her neutral post and secretly aligns with the victims of the system of division, the soldiers representing the ordinary people who are oppressed in the joint effort by the higher ranks of both sides to keep division in place. Yi Su-hyŏk, the tragic protagonist of *JSA* could be Yi Myŏng-jun's contemporary counterpart as, similarly, his attempts to cross the border and the ensuing events thereafter will cause him to commit suicide. Yet, Park Chan-wook states: "This movie has nothing to do with the agonies of intellectuals. I just sympathized with an individual who was unable to choose either side. I wanted to depict a conflict between the individual and the establishment."[375] Eventually Yi Su-hyŏk does not lose an intellectual battle like Yi Myŏng-jun. It is rather an emotional battle.

While Major Sophie Jean moves in a geometrical space and eventually comes to understand the inverted logic of the heterotopic space of the border which ultimately allows her to subvert the system and discover the truth, the opposite happens to Sergeant Yi Su-hyŏk. As he is serving his compulsory military service he already finds himself in a space which can be described as a crisis heterotopia using Foucault's vocabulary.[376] Midway through this space the following event occurs: in a troop exercise which accidently crosses the border into the North, Yi Su-hyŏk's foot is caught in a mine. Deserted by his troop he is left to die on enemy territory until he is miraculously saved by two North Korean soldiers. The emotional bond which forms at this moment leads him to a series of voluntary border transgressions, during which he seeks out the company of his

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[375] Ibid., 82.

[376] Foucault, *"Of Other Spaces,"* 24.

new friends in the cabin of the northern checkpoint just across the "bridge of no return." Yi Su-hyŏk enters another liminal space via these transgressions and in doing so enables a double life which is defined, as Suk-young Kim points out, by the connection of time and space in the "binary opposition of night/North Korean territory/friendship and daytime/South Korean territory/hostility."[377]

These oppositions are enforced by the movement of the camera. Daytime shots of the border emphasize the strict geometry of division, while aerial shots visualize the unnaturally enforced symmetry of Panmunjŏm. At night, however, this geometry of straight lines dissolves. When Lee Su-hyŏk first decides to cross the border the camera starts to spin: Surety of here and there blurs in the dizziness of this shot and the viewer only realizes that he has really crossed when he opens the door of the Northern Checkpoint. In the scene where Yi brings his fellow South Korean military comrade to cross the border with him, the straight line returns for a moment. The camera shows their feet in close-up: Lee steps over the line, his friend hesitates and the scene resembles the shots of Panmunjŏm during daytime. Eventually Lee convinces his friend and he steps over as well. Kim Young-jin observes: "When the main character, Sgt. LEE, crosses over to hang out at the Northern checkpoint, the camera turns in endless circular movements. This camera movement uses unbroken and connected movement rather than contrasting vertical and horizontal lines, and gives the pleasure of overcoming, if only through the

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[377] Suk-Young Kim, "Crossing the Border to the 'Other' Side. Dynamics of Interaction between North and South Korean in *Spy Li Cheol-jin* and *Joint Security Area,*" in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema,* ed. Frances Gateward (Albany/ NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 241.

imagination, the bonds of division […].”[378] While the camera moves in a circle from one face to the next we can see in between them the word “*tongil*” (unification) on the wall, which underscores the connectedness of the circular movement. The circle is broken after the shooting incident and goes back to the geometrical opposition during the interrogation.

However, despite the interpretation of the circular movement as unifying, there is tension in these scenes as well. The soldiers talk about possible war and ideology intrudes now and then into the conversation. I argue that these circular movements also signify dizziness and danger. Indeed, the whole period between his stepping on the mine and final suicide after the end of the investigation is really life lived on the border with death. The close-up of his feet on the mine is repeated as he crosses the borderline via the ‘bridge of no return’ and again immediately before his suicide there is a close-up on the leg into which he was shot during the incident when their secret meetings are discovered. Yi Su-hyŏk’s suicide at the end, after he learns that it was him and not his South Korean friend who fired the fatal shot at one of their North Korean friends who had previously saved his life, is the belated explosion of the mine.

The time span between Yi Su-hyŏk initially being trapped with the mine and his final suicide is a liminal stage that aims at a passage from solitude in division to ultimate unification. The cabin at the North Korean checkpoint which serves as the meeting point of the nightly encounters is a mirror image of the barrack for officially regulated meetings in Panmunjŏm. The homely, well-lit hut within the dark, cold and hostile

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[378] Kim, *Park Chan-wook*, 40.

environment is a place of enhanced intimacy, as Bachelard describes in his analysis of soul space.[379] Within this counter-space a regress into childhood takes place which allows the soldiers to momentarily overcome ideological differences through emotional bonding. This is further intensified as the bond between the soldiers seems almost homoerotic and creates the connotation of a secret lovers' meeting around the forbidden encounter. The attempt, however, to move forward out of the liminal stage and fully conclude the rite of passage into an ultimate union fails twice. The first time the North Korean soldiers reject Yi Su-hyŏk's invitation to defect to the South, the second time Yi Su-hyŏk rejects the North Koreans' offer to dissolve the dangerous situation as their meeting is discovered by just staying in North Korea. Ideology repeatedly interrupts the harmony of their friendship and leads to the failure of moving on to a permanent union. Visually this is depicted by the pictures of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il being placed constantly within the frame during the cabin scenes. The pictures are only temporarily hidden, when Yi Su-hyŏk's colleague makes an effort to take a photo of Yi Su-hyŏk and their North Korean friends without the two pictures also appearing in the frame.

With the failure of concluding the passage out of the liminal stage, the crisis heterotopia of the secret meeting space eventually turns out to be a heterotopia of deviation; not a temporary, but a constant space of otherness. Emotional unification as a space of otherness at the heart of ideological division is not acceptable and impeded by the Division System, Paik Nak-chung's concept of Korean national division as a system constantly enacting and perpetuating itself as both the governments in the North and the

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[379] Bachelard, *The Poetics,* 38ff

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South profit from it.[380] Thus people, and in this case the soldiers, are trapped in the system, which is preserved in the last scene of the film: In a tourist snapshot of a scene of Panmunjŏm, taken before the tragedy, all four friends are depicted each on his respective side, though connected in one frame. It is a memory of their temporary union, as well as their lasting division.

While *Wings of Desire* focuses almost completely on the interior space of the soul and locates the obstacle to unity in the traumatic memories of the past, *JSA* points to the outer circumstances of division. The failure of effective passage from the liminal stage to unity is obstructed by the system, which does not allow for a space of otherness. Just as Foucault suggests in the conclusion of "Of Other Spaces" that repressive societies will not tolerate the existence of heterotopias,[381]*JSA* locates the failure of unification in the Division System.

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[380] Paik Nak-chung, "The Idea of a Korean National Literature Then and Now," *Positions 1/3* (1993): 574. See also: Kim, "Crossing the Border," 239.
[381] Foucault, *"Of Other Spaces,"* 27.

Conclusion

The 'meanwhile' of the nation time, as Benedict Anderson defined the new consciousness of existence in the present, is suspended during the state of national division. The situation of division does not set an end point to the imagination of the nation as the separate states perpetuate the confirmation of the temporariness of the situation. Yet, its time frame is disturbed. Left only with the shared past and the vague affirmation of a shared future, the present of the nation is determined by ideologies that reinforce rejection of the national Other. Ernest Renan once stressed the importance of the existence of the nation in a present consent: "A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. […] A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life."[382] This daily plebiscite cannot take place during this state of exception in the national consciousness, and a feeling solidarity with the other former part of the nation could lead to suspicion.

All the works discussed in this dissertation deal with this state of exception (or its consequences in the case of unified Germany) and a conflicted national imagination. The assumption of an ideal nation and the realization of a disruption are fundamental to most of the works. In Ch'oe In-hun's *The Square* this loss of the ideal nation in face of reality is so disillusioning for the protagonist that he rejects this reality in the original version of the novel as unacceptable. The option to leave the contested space of the divided nation is

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[382] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 19.

even actively dismissed through the protagonist's suicide on board of the ship that takes him away to the neutral country India. The neutral place is not a solution for the idealist Yi Myŏng-jun. He turns against the possibility of the new, of the other, which is signified by the ship itself. Michel Foucault writes in the conclusion of his essay "Of Other Spaces" that "the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea" and "has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates."[383] This statement is Foucault's indictment of totalitarian systems which restrict any possibility of deviation from the norm.

Yi Myŏng-jun's failure to finding a neutral place within the nation is a common dilemma for the many of the characters in literature and cinema of division for generations to come. It is also an act of resistance. This resistance to accept the present situation of division and the oppression it creates is also shared by Yi Ch'ŏng-jun's protagonist in *Wall of Rumors*, through complete withdrawal into silence, and by the protagonist in *JSA* through disobedience in face of the forces of the 'Division System.' Even Kim Nam-ho's novel *Meeting* shares the theme of resistance against the division; yet, in its political orientation its call for the restitution of the nation is fully aligned with the propaganda of North Korea's nationalist communism and lacks the quest for the neutral position.

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[383] Michel Foucault, *"Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986): *27*.

The question how to overcome the 'Division System' still remains open in Korea's situation of an ongoing division and an increasing confrontation of the states. However, German unification also did not produce the ideal unified nation promised by politicians. As Paik Nak-chung has written time and again, political unification, and especially unification by absorption as it was the case in Germany, does not necessarily contribute to overcoming the system of division.[384] The Division System as a state of mutual impeded communication is hard to break with the concept of social unity through the problematic concept of ethnic nationalism in the German context. The German novels are all linked by the authors' attention to language and communication. The multiplicity of voices and narratives which they depict stand in contrast to the unifying aspect of a shared language. *Wings of Desire* shares the focus on language through the literary quality of Peter Handke's screenplay. Yet, its main theme is a withdrawal from the political into an almost anachronistic conjuring of the national soul transcending the temporary boundaries erected by the Cold War politics and left uncontested by the national trauma of the Nazi era.

In conclusion of this work I want to reflect on an author who embraces the possibility of a new perspective through the spatial distance from the center of conflict. Ch'oe Yun describes an instance of reconciliation that respects identity difference shaped by decades of division. In her short story "Abŏji kamshi" (1992, His Father's Keeper)[385] the South Korean protagonist, who resides in Paris, France, receives a visit from his old

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[384] Paik Nak-chung. *The Division System in Crisis: Essays on Contemporary Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
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Father who, after leaving his first family to go to North Korea, now lives in China with his second family. Full of resentment of the life choices his father had made and left his mother alone to care for the family, the protagonist greets his father with bias. The son struggles with the clashing images he has in his head: On the one hand he had idolized his father he had never known and secretly imagined him a hero driven by his faith in communism, on the other hand demonized him for this same conviction. When he meets his father the first time he turns out to be neither hero, nor daemon, but only an old man beaten by time. At the end, when they both go to visit the Wall of the Communards at the Père Lachaise Cemetery, the son manages to see his father in the greater perspective of history and at the same time as a human being.

Ch'oe Yun's story is one possible end point to a whole literary tradition of thematizing the "Absence of the Father" in South Korean literary history. The surveillance of the father in the story, which is the literal meaning of the title in Korean, can end by embracing the difference without suspicion. It is an arrival at a conclusion that ultimately respects difference without the employing the help of a prior emotional bond or the ideological conversion of either side. Both his excessive love due to his familial bond, as well as the excessive hate due to the political situation, impeded the protagonist to recognize his father for what he really was. A notable difference in this story in contrast to all other works discussed in this dissertation is the permanent relocation of both sides to a place more distant to the national conflict. This escape from both the emotional, as well as the political implication of the divided nation might have been not possible on neither side of the national territory, or on the border which represents the

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center of division. Ch'oe Yun, a transnational writer herself, succeeded in telling the story of national division freed from its heavy legacy. In her case the liberating space of otherness lies outside the nation.

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