

**Identity Construction in Contemporary German Literature – Stephan Wackwitz’s *Ein unsichtbares Land* and Andrea Paluch & Robert Habeck’s *Der Schrei der Hyänen***

By

Pieter W. Prinsloo

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of German and Slavic Studies

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Copyright © 2012 by Pieter W. Prinsloo

## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes how identity develops within narratively constructed worlds by examining different processes of identity formation in generational narratives *Ein unsichtbares Land* by Stephan Wackwitz (2003) and *Der Schrei der Hyänen* by Andrea Paluch and Robert Habeck (2004). The thesis employs a cultural memory perspective with a particular emphasis on the perception of the reader, with the aid of identity and *Generationenroman* theory. By gaining an understanding of the cultural memory, individual characters in the fictional or semi-fictional primary texts are able to distinguish between those who belong to a group, and those who do not. The frictions between group identities and the ability to distinguish between groups enables the individual to form new concepts of the self; the texts also show how difference can function as a source of negativity that isolates it from change and new identity formation.

## **Acknowledgements**

I thank my supervisor Dr. Stephan Jaeger, as well as Dr. Alexandra Heberger and Dr. Linda Dietrich for serving on my thesis examination committee.

I am grateful to all the members of the Department of German and Slavic studies who have helped me throughout my studies at the University of Manitoba, namely Dr. Cheryl Dueck, Dr. Alexandra Heberger, Karin James, and Dr. Stephan Jaeger. Without their passion and enthusiasm for the subjects that they teach, my interest in German Studies might never have been stirred.

I would like to thank the Heinz Frank Memorial Scholarship, as well as the Senator Thomas Alexander Crerar Scholarship for providing me with financial assistance during my graduate studies.

Dr. Stephan Jaeger has served as my advisor over the last two years. During that time he has been a constant source of encouragement, motivation, constructive criticism, and everything a graduate student could ever hope for. His patience with me over the last two years is greatly appreciated. I will always regard Dr. Jaeger as the exemplar of professionalism, integrity, work ethic, and modesty.

I would also like to thank Angela Hodge for her linguistic expertise and my immediate family for their financial and moral support throughout my university education.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my wife-to-be Tami McNulty, who has encouraged me to follow my hopes and dreams. Without her unwavering support and love, this project would not have been possible.

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. Methodology.....</b>	<b>9</b>
II.1. Cultural Memory.....	10
II.2. Identity.....	18
II.3. Generational Narratives.....	24
<b>III. Cultural Memory and Collective Identity in <i>Der Schrei der Hyänen</i>.....</b>	<b>29</b>
III.1. Learning through the Cultural Memory.....	30
III.2. Assigning Identity.....	39
III.3. Replacing Facets of Cultural Memory with Personal Memory.....	50
III.4. Moving Towards a Unique Individual Identity.....	58
<b>IV. Individual Identity Construction in <i>Ein unsichtbares Land</i>.....</b>	<b>60</b>
IV.1. <i>Ein unsichtbares Land</i> as Non-Fiction.....	62
IV.2. Collective Identity in <i>Ein unsichtbares Land</i> .....	65
IV.3. Forging a Unique Individual Identity.....	69
IV.4. Strengthening of Identity through Remembering and Forgetting.....	77
<b>V. Identity Problems in <i>Ein unsichtbares Land</i> and <i>Der Schrei der Hyänen</i>.....</b>	<b>84</b>
V.1. Trauma causing Identity Complications.....	85
V.2. Hybrid Identity Construction.....	92
<b>VI. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>107</b>

## I. Introduction

Identity<sup>1</sup> is a concept that plays an integral part in the lives of individuals, which ultimately governs the perceptions that influence the way in which interaction takes place between peoples of different cultures. Identities are seldom consciously forged by will and are usually constructed subconsciously over the life of an individual, in response to learned and forgotten knowledge. The concept of memory and the information that the individual remembers or forgets is important as memory contains references and other information that the individual finds valuable in dealing with situations which are similar to those encountered in the past. The learned knowledge that an individual will access throughout his or her lifetime comes from three primary sources as described by Jan Assmann: individual memory created from firsthand experience, communicative memory as individuals communicate with one another, and cultural memory contained in writings and other recordings of past occurrences.<sup>2</sup> Memories from all three levels are learned and sometimes forgotten to accommodate new knowledge.

As knowledge transfers from one generation to another, each memory or piece of knowledge is not necessarily guaranteed a place in the collective consciousness of the culture, leading to the loss, or amnesia, of knowledge from generation to generation. As each member of a culture forges a unique identity for him- or herself at the frontier of present time, the individual comes to accept or exclude stories from the cultural memory<sup>3</sup> to create personal memories through which the individual is able to perceive the world and

---

<sup>1</sup> The definition of identity will be discussed in detail in chapter II: Methodology, incorporating the theory of Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Homi K. Bhabha.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 109-118, 109.

<sup>3</sup> The definition of cultural and collective memory will be explored in detail in chapter II: Methodology, analyzing the concepts of Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Maurice Halbwachs.

relate with the cultural memory. As a group of individuals grow old, and a new generation is born, the individual passes on the knowledge that has been learned over a lifespan to members of the new generation, so that the cycle of acceptance and exclusion can start anew. Aleida Assmann describes this occurrence as:

[...] a contract between the living, the dead, and the not yet living. In recalling, iterating, reading, commenting, criticizing, discussing what was deposited in the remote or recent past, humans participate in extended horizons of meaning-production. They do not have to start anew in every generation because they are standing on the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret.<sup>4</sup>

Aleida Assmann describes culture as a contract.<sup>5</sup> Each culture is comprised of a collective made up of individuals who share similar ideals, languages, and beliefs about their origins and morals. The identity of a group is loosely defined, focusing on the most overt characteristics to form what seems like an all-encompassing character of the entire culture. The generalized form of characteristics can be defined as stereotypes which can create problems when individuals from different cultures first start to communicate with one another. A stereotype can be defined as: “beliefs about characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of certain groups. More than just beliefs about groups, they are also theories about how and why certain attributes go together”.<sup>6</sup> Because one individual has *learned* about the character of the exotic individual through the stories and memories of his or her own culture, these expectations may or may not be fulfilled by the exotic individual since they may not resemble the cultural identity that the individual has formed of the exotic culture. When these expectations are not fulfilled in the expected manner, the individual is

---

<sup>4</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive.” *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 97-107, 97.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>6</sup> James L. Hilton and William von Hippel, “Stereotypes.” *Annual Psychology Review* 47 (1996): 237-271, 240.

likely to react in a number of ways; the most common results of such cross cultural exchange is friction (either positive or negative), new perceptions being created, and possibly new understanding depending on the character of the individual forming the new perspectives.

Because each individual's identity undergoes small changes as one gains new experiences and forms new memories and perspectives about the things that they encounter throughout their lives, identity is always in a state of flux. As with the individual, the same can be said for the collective identity, albeit changes in the collective identity can take a longer period of time to take effect. Because individual identities remain in flux, a stagnating identity may create barriers to continued identity development. Such problems can be caused by traumatic experiences that the individual experiences in his or her life that serves to inhibit the continued growth of identity. A trauma disables the individual and diminishes his or her ability to adapt and deal with changes in his or her environment, and compromises the ability to process new experiences. In both narratives specific characters are presented as suffering from trauma. In *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, the characters of Nele and Kriemhild become traumatized, which prevents them from gaining new experiences and freezes their identities. Similarly, in the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* the character of Andreas Wackwitz also suffers from trauma as the capitulation of Germany during World War I baffled him, like many of his generation.

Trauma is the result of the individual going through an event that is mentally highly disruptive, which the individual struggles to understand and cope with because of its perceived absurdity and meaninglessness.<sup>7</sup> The individual becomes unable to coherently

---

<sup>7</sup> Athanasios Anastasiadis, "Transgenerational Communication of Traumatic Experiences." *Journal of Literary Theory* 6 (2012): 1-24, 1.

relate such experiences within a traditional narrative structure, which subsequently comes to haunt the individual's psyche and cause unpredictable behaviour when confronted with reminders or triggers of the trauma that they have endured.<sup>8</sup> Trauma can also have the effect of causing an individual to become withdrawn and closed to new experiences which in turn solidifies an identity which would otherwise have been open to new and diverse influences.

The concept of how identity is constructed over a prolonged period of time and between different successive generations is present in the multi-generational novels of Stephan Wackwitz' *Ein unsichtbares Land* (2005)<sup>9</sup> and Andrea Paluch & Robert Habeck's *Der Schrei der Hyänen* (2004).<sup>10</sup> In both narratives, characters come to better understand their past, ancestors, and their own identities as facets of their familial histories are revealed to them in the process of a mix of individual, communicative, and cultural memory formations. These histories contain elements of colonialism and involvements in both World Wars, with ample material to examine the frictions that are caused by the stereotypes that one culture holds of another. *Ein unsichtbares Land* provides the reader with a narrative in which the narrator learns and imagines memories which were lost to him through the rediscovery of his familial past contained in the memoirs of his grandfather, Andreas Wackwitz. Through the discovery of *new* memories, the narrator's understanding of the past becomes broadened, and questions regarding cultural frictions become comprehensible and partly explainable, leading to the development of the narrator's identity.

The narrative of *Der Schrei der Hyänen* provides the reader with gradual enlightenment as to the familial heritage of the main characters, which is revealed in bits and pieces to individual characters, but not completely clear to each character within the

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>9</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein Unsichtbares Land*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Paluch and Robert Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*. München: Piper Verlag, 2004.

narrative.<sup>11</sup> As new aspects of the familial past are revealed to each character, their identity subtly changes in response to the new knowledge that is imparted to them. In this fictional representation, negativity is contained in the form of colonialism and the complexities that inter-racial relationships present to individuals who are not capable of accepting and understanding such relationships.

Exploring identity construction in both narratives is important for evaluating to what degree children are different from their parents/grandparents, what effect the past has on contemporary identities, and the role of the reader's perception in understanding the differences from generation to generation. Furthermore, the ways in which individual characters confront the past presents the possibility that they will choose to either shun or accept the past to reach a cathartic state. This allows them to be aware of the past, yet to possess it in such a manner so that they can incorporate the lessons learned from the past into everyday life without becoming traumatized. To examine the effect that catharsis has on identity construction is significant to understanding the mechanisms of generational identity construction.

By applying theoretical approaches in the areas of identity construction, collective and cultural memories, as well as generational narratives (Halbwachs, Aleida & Jan Assmann, Schöpflin, Horstkotte, Bhabha) to the aforementioned narratives, the question of how individual identity construction functions in relation to past, remembered/learned, and forgotten histories will be explored. The combination of these approaches are unique in the sense that the analysis combines theoretical approaches and applies them to the narratives in a new way. *Der Schrei der Hyänen* has very little research literature devoted to it. Despite

---

<sup>11</sup> As such, the reader is the only individual capable of learning everything that is contained within the narrative, as each character is shielded from certain memories in the narrative through selective communication between characters, the neutrally located narrator, and time.

the numerous interpretations and analyses available on the *Ein unsichtbares Land*, none explore the cultural memory aspect, or the concept of identity in great detail. Thus, the combination of cultural memory and identity approaches to these narratives provide a unique approach that produces a coherent analysis of each, while providing an important case study on generational identity construction in fiction in general.

The way in which each generation constructs their identities in relation to past events will be examined to gain an understanding of how characters come to grips with the past of their ancestors and how this affects their dealings in the present. These narratives are not necessarily about *true*<sup>12</sup> stories as such, but offer the opportunity to explore possible worlds, which mirror the actual world in its morality, and logic, while allowing for deviation from accepted facts and history to form a fictional narrative that incorporates aspects of western history to offer a plausible historical background against which the narratives can unfold.

Using *Ein unsichtbares Land* and *Der Schrei der Hyänen* as primary material for analysis, individual identity construction will be argued as consisting of distinct stages, of which three are discussed in this thesis. The first stage largely focuses upon becoming aware of, and conforming to a culturally specific identity that is derived from the cultural memory. This serves as a starting, or reference point, upon which the individual character starts their journey of constructing a unique identity through the determination of who does and does not belong to a certain group. Evaluation of this stage will be done with material from *Der Schrei der Hyänen* as opposed to *Ein unsichtbares Land*. In the latter, this stage is not as clearly represented, as the narrator becomes aware of differences in identities as the narrative progresses, thus being presented subtly throughout the entire narrative. With material from *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, which shows that the first stage of identity

---

<sup>12</sup>*Ein unsichtbares Land* is written in first person narrative style to form a semi-biographical narrative.

construction relies heavily on the assigning of identity to an unknown individual and his or her culture as a whole, and focusing upon the stereotypes associated with that culture, i.e. physical and other overtly distinguishable characteristics. Once the individual has completed the stage of assigning identity, and thus making cultural divisions associated with identity, advancement to the next stage can take place.

The second stage of identity construction encompasses reflection upon the individual's own cultural identity. During this stage, the individual will evaluate the different stories and versions of identity within his or her own culture. By either incorporating or excluding aspects of the cultural identity into the individual identity, the individual will either form an identity closely aligned with that of the perceived collective, or one that is slightly more deviant from the collective. This second stage is analyzed with material from *Ein unsichtbares Land* as the narrator reads and interprets his grandfather's memoirs directly and re-learns *forgotten* memories from his grandfather's memoirs, at the same time finding aspects of his grandfather's character that he does not agree with. Through this (partly imagined) disagreement with his grandfather, the narrator is able to distinguish himself from his grandfather, leading to the construction of a unique identity that continues to be related to that of his grandfather and culture as a whole.

The third stage is perhaps the most important and most complicated at the same time. In this stage, problems which arise due to the frictions between identities that do not easily conform to a specific cultural framework are evaluated. Identity problems arise when an individual finds him or herself not being able to easily reconcile his or her own identity with only one culture. Where an individual is unable to conform to only one culture, aspects of different cultures become incorporated into the identity, which leads to the construction of

hybrid identities. A hybrid identity negotiates a troubled position between two or more distinct cultures as it does not easily conform to just one culture. Material from *Ein unsichtbares Land* will be compared in this stage to that of *Der Schrei der Hyänen* in which characters of mixed race must form an identity that straddles the delicate position between physical appearance and the culture in which they become immersed. The narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* poses no such problems, albeit the narrator does expose himself to foreign cultures to further influence his identity development. With material from both narratives, the problems and advantages of a hybrid identity will be explored to show how hybridity provides individuals with the opportunity to incorporate more than one cultural perspective into their being. Without such duality (or multiplicity) the individual would be left to choose one culture, and thus perhaps never attaining personal fulfillment. Despite each generation's varying experiences and the different forces which act upon the development of their identities, the three stages of identity construction functions largely the same in each generation in the two texts as characters try to differentiate from the collective to which they belong, and to make sense of the world that they live in.

## II. Methodology

Examining how identity is developed within the two aforementioned narratives requires the understanding of theoretical concepts that deal with cultural memory, identity theory in relation to cultural memory, and the generational novel format that has become popular in German literature as a way of representing and confronting the past associated with World War II and the Holocaust. In regard to this subject-matter, questions related to trauma, the notion of victim and perpetrator, and the guilt that those born after atrocities share with their parents and grandparents, emerge.<sup>13</sup> From the cultural memory the individual is able to distill a sense of who belongs, and who does not belong to a certain group. Once established, the individual embarks upon the task of forming a unique personal identity which remains related to that of their culture(s) as a whole. The two narratives fall within the generational narrative framework in which numerous protagonists are portrayed in different periods of time, yet being biologically related to one another, to form a coherent narrative over a relatively long period of time.

---

<sup>13</sup> Ariane Eichenberg, *Familie – Ich – Nation*. Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2009, 10-11.

## II.1. Cultural Memory

The term cultural memory (*Kulturelles Gedächtnis*) was first used by Jan Assmann in *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis* (1992), which built upon Maurice Halbwachs' *La Mémoire collective* (1939). Assmann defines the cultural memory as being embodied in four main areas: 1) mimetic memory, 2) memory of things, 3) language and communication, and 4) transmission of traditions and rituals from one generation to another.<sup>14</sup> Through these four avenues, members of a culture share a common *memory* regarding the past, how historical events developed, and the culture's place in that memory. From this shared memory, the group is able to form a culture that is distinguishable from that of another group.

Halbwachs, who precedes Assmann, defines collective memory as a socially constructed memory wherein the individual displays and communicates sentiments regarding various topics that he or she feels the group will find agreeable, and at the same time subjugating the individual's personal memory.<sup>15</sup> By adhering to collective thoughts and conventions, it becomes possible for memories to survive across generations, as each member of the collective shares with the other the stories, memories, and myths which they believe to be of importance to their group. Halbwachs goes further to argue that where the individual has no personal experience with a particular subject, concept, or phenomenon, he or she will turn to the collective memory to fill the gaps of individual

---

<sup>14</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München: C.H. Beck, 2005, 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*. Translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980 (1939), 50-51.

memory in order to gain context and understanding of something with which the individual has no personal experience.<sup>16</sup>

The concept of safeguarding memories from the erosion of time is explored by Aleida Assmann. According to her, there exists a cycle to remembrance and forgetting which is essential to cultural memory:

The dynamics of individual memory consists in a perpetual interaction between remembering and forgetting. In order to remember some things, other things must be forgotten. Our memory is highly selective. Memory capacity is limited by neural and cultural constraints such as focus and bias. It is also limited by psychological pressures, with the effect that painful or incongruent memories are hidden, displaced, overwritten, and possibly effaced. On the level of cultural memory, there is a similar dynamic at work.<sup>17</sup>

Aleida Assmann asserts that the act of forgetting is a natural and necessary process that a culture must go through in order to have societal change take place. Where this becomes destructive, is when such forgetting is actively targeted at a specific minority that exists within a broader culture. This might be done in an attempt at erasing aspects of disagreement between the minority and majority within a culture to help foster nation-building through the creation of a more cohesive cultural narrative. Examples of such occurrences can range in severity from a simple act of writing an *official* history of events, to overtly censoring dissenting opinions or exiling those who do not subscribe to the official sentiments. The effect of this would be that the cultural memory does not grow organically; rather it is engineered to have a desired effect.<sup>18</sup>

Where the evolution of the cultural memory occurs naturally, the act of forgetting is caused by the neglecting of certain details attached to a memory. The neglected aspects

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>17</sup> Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive", 97.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 98.

amount to details which successive generations no longer find important in recalling a memory. Where these neglected details are forgotten as those who experienced the actual events pass away, the events leave the communicative memory and become embodied in traditions and customs of a culture, the details of the memories becoming contained in the recorded histories in mediums such as texts, photographs, films, audio recordings, etc. With these records often becoming filed away in libraries and archives, ready to be discovered by scholars of later generations, the most basic knowledge of the memory sometimes remains within the communicative memory, but becomes liable to miscommunications and misinterpretations. Through miscommunication and misinterpretation, a memory can become but a shadow of itself, having a completely different meaning compared to what it once did.<sup>19</sup>

Conversely, those memories which a culture deems to be of paramount importance are preserved in national museums, monuments, and galleries. These national efforts serve to work towards a common narrative that is created by nation-states, to foster a culture and a common heritage. Such narratives are “taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography.”<sup>20</sup>

Remembering and forgetting as described by Aleida Assmann coexist well with Jan Assmann’s arguments regarding traditions and cultural artifacts. Assmann asserts that in addition to the erection of monuments, traditions and the actions surrounding rituals are also of importance to cultural memory as they serve as a reminder to those observing customs and traditions.<sup>21</sup> Through the mimicking and order contained in traditions like the Jewish Passover celebrations, rituals enable a culture to form the basis from which to

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>21</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 17.

distinguish themselves from other groups, thus bringing the ability to distinguish between “us” and “them”, ultimately between “I”, or “me” and “you”.

Despite a culture’s seemingly homogenous makeup, in reality there are different sub-cultures and sub-groups which further separates one group from another, while still belonging to an overarching collective. An example of this is the familial unit that is able to distinguish itself from other families, while being of the same culture as those other families. These sub-groups will author narratives that might differ from that of the overall culture as a whole. Contrasting and non-coherent narratives within a culture are the by-product of a society which undergoes a period of rapid change. During such a period, conflicting sentiments surge to the forefront of the collective consciousness, as difficult topics are explored and discussed within society. Thus, one must regard cultural memory as “an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group, be it a family or a nation, whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations.”<sup>22</sup>

Sometimes societies change drastically within a short period of time because of cataclysmic events that rocks the very stability that societies seek to ensure for themselves. One can argue that German society is an example of this, since over the last 100 years Germany went from being an imperial colonial power, to a fledgling democracy which was succeeded by fascism. Out of fascism came the Second World War and the Holocaust. Following the Second World War, Germany was split up amongst the Allies and ultimately split in two for almost forty years. Today, Germany is once again a unified state that operates within the democratic frameworks that are employed by Western nations in one form or another. Such drastic changes in society over such a

---

<sup>22</sup> Alon Confino, “Memory and the History of Mentalities.” *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008, 81.

relatively short period of time have spawned numerous narratives regarding Fascism, the Holocaust, occupation, division, the relationship between perpetrator and victim, and the general theme of suffering.

In her 2006 book *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, Aleida Assmann describes how cultures remember a past filled with conflict. Assmann asserts that when conflicts take place, there is a victorious and non-victorious party. Nation states that have a relatively long and stable history will more often than not seek to remember the victorious moments in their past, and neglect the moments in which they were not victorious.<sup>23</sup> Assmann elaborates on her argument and states that sometimes this practice is broken, as cultures remember non-victorious moments in their past that can be deemed traumatic.<sup>24</sup> Specific to Germany, its defeat during World War II left the country in ruins, causing many individuals to suffer as Germany's infrastructure, industry, and governmental institutions were almost completely destroyed. Because of this suffering, and the German people's part in their own destruction as well as their responsibility for the destruction caused by World War II and the Holocaust, German society has made conscious efforts to keep the memory of their own, and the suffering of other cultures by German hands alive and relevant in the cultural consciousness, so that such acts would not be carried out again. Through this practice the German people is able to confront their collective guilt associated with World War II and the Holocaust on a national level.

Aleida Assmann describes this occurrence as:

Der Imperativ, unter den die Erinnerung sie stellt und mit dem sie die Niederlage verarbeiten, ist wesentlich stärker. Deshalb kann man durch Siege auch ‹verlieren› und durch Niederlagen ‹gewinnen›. [...] In der Tat

---

<sup>23</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. München: C.H. Beck, 2006, 64.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

werden Niederlagen dort mit großem Pathos und zeremonialem Aufwand erinnert und reaktiviert, wo eine Nation ihre Identität auf ein erlittenes Opferbewusstsein gründet. In Solchen Fällen wird die Erinnerung an ein erlittenes Leiden und unrecht wach gehalten, um unter äußerem Druck den Zusammenhalt einer Gemeinschaft zu forcieren, Ansprüche zu legitimieren und Gegenwehr zu mobilisieren.<sup>25</sup>

Through this, one can conclude that the identity and the memories that are alive in contemporary German cultural memory are different in nature than those before World War II. Despite the shift from remembering victorious moments of triumph, to remembering moments of defeat and trauma, the memories functions largely the same. Traumatic memories act the same way as victorious memories, in that they give the culture something to remember and to unify under, thus helping to foster a collective memory surrounding an aspect of their past.

With a lively discourse regarding the immediate past, it is possible for aspects of history to fall to the wayside, when what a society perceives as important is actively discussed and brought to the forefront of cultural memory. During such a time of intense discourse, to prevent the forgetting or loss of what society deems as highly important, monuments are erected to serve as a constant reminder of a specific memory or historical event. Jan Assmann writes “Whenever we think about something that we do not want to forget under any circumstances, we invent memory aids that range from the famous knot in our handkerchief to our national monuments.”<sup>26</sup> Fitting the framework of remembering and forgetting, over time some aspects of the past will be rediscovered in the future. Once rediscovered, it is unlikely that those aspects will have exactly the same meaning to the current generation, as it did for previous generations. As each successive generation

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>26</sup> Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, 8.

matures, they reinterpret their cultural past, thus creating new meanings from events and memories in the collective consciousness. Indeed, rediscovered narratives or histories often serve to “steer emotions, motivate people to act, [...] [and] become[s] a socio-cultural mode of action.”<sup>27</sup> This holds merit as the memories of World War II, the Holocaust, and the memories stemming from a divided Germany continue to influence political and societal sentiments in Germany to the present day.<sup>28</sup>

Naturally not all rediscovered memories are negative in nature. Some rediscovered memories can be positive, which serves to remind of a happy moment in a culture’s past, such as triumphs at an Olympic games, or the positive outcome in a situation where success was unlikely. These positive memories can fulfill the same role as traumatic memories, as such memories can be used to remind people of past triumphs, thus motivating people to work together to attain similar feats to those that their culture had achieved in the past.<sup>29</sup>

In short, the memory that a collective holds of its own history will serve as a unifying, inspirational and stabilizing force which contains the essence of a collective’s values, morals, and beliefs. Sometimes a collective will forget aspects of their history, only to rediscover those aspects in the future. Rediscovered pasts hold new meanings for individuals and collectives who seek to expand their views and understanding of the past,

---

<sup>27</sup> Alon Confino, “Memory and the History of Mentalities”, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, who has written about post-colonial culture and the complexity of hybrid identity, states that “Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present.” (Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004, 63.)

<sup>29</sup> An example of this is a television advertisement commissioned by the State of New York which received much airtime on CNN and other American television channels during the summer and fall of 2012. This advertisement focuses on the former achievements of the State of New York, such as building the first railway network in the U.S., building successful business empires, and being a leader of technological and industrial innovation in North America. This advertisement is aimed at attracting new business to the State of New York, in hopes of reinvigorating its economy through citing past triumphs and current developments such as the lowest state tax rates in nearly 60 years. This advertisement can be seen at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQgILIGg1E8>.

thus influencing their dealings in the present through the enhanced understanding of the past.

The concept of cultural memory is important to the understanding and analysis of *Der Schrei der Hyänen* and *Ein unsichtbares Land* as both narratives rely heavily on the past, and each character's understanding of their culture and their culture's past and the character's own individual past. Having a general concept of their own culture, each character is able to distinguish between their own culture and cultures which are alien to them. With this distinction in place, characters are then able to feel integrated into their cultural group, assign an identity to themselves, their culture, and individuals from foreign cultures. The cultural memory also enables them to distinguish between right and wrong from the group's perspective, which regulates their dealings with individuals from different cultures. With knowledge of the cultural memory, no matter how limited or vague, individual or group identity can be formed.

## II.2. Identity

Once the individual becomes aware of herself/himself, of his or her surroundings, and of the world that he or she lives in, each individual will seek to understand how and why things happen, and how he or she fits into the world. Through awareness of the cultural memory, the individual is guided by the collective knowledge of his or her culture which ultimately influences the way that individual acts, makes choices, and interacts with others. No individual is born with memories from a previous life, or indeed with the memories of their ancestors, nor are they born with a fully formed sense of identity, or opinions about other groups or past events. Nevertheless, individuals, as Aleida Assmann puts it, “[...] do not have to start anew in every generation because they are standing on the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret”.<sup>30</sup> Once capable of understanding and negotiating the cultural memory, the individual embarks on a journey of discovery in which he or she looks towards the past, posing questions such as “who am I?”, “what came before me?”, “what happened, and how and why did these things happen?” The resulting discoveries often impact the answers that the individual forms for the question of “who am I?”

The modern term *identity* is derived, from the Latin *identitas* and has a definition of “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is”, or “a close similarity or feeling of understanding”.<sup>31</sup> For the individual, the meaning of identity becomes much more than this, and often includes the core questions of “who am I?” This question is not always a conscious one, and often boils down to the individual’s choices when faced with moral or ethical dilemmas, or circumstances in which the individual must make value-based

---

<sup>30</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive”, 97.

<sup>31</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

judgements. The collective identity, which is derived from the cultural memory, is a general term with which each individual within the collective is vaguely familiar. Within this framework there exists scope to accommodate differing and contingent group identities, which at the same time still fit the overarching morals, ethics, and beliefs of the culture.<sup>32</sup>

Borrowing the definition of identity that George Schöpflin describes, identity can be viewed as:

[...] a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour so that identity construction necessarily involves ideas of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, desirable/undesirable, unpolluted/polluted etc. These norms are not absolute and are not fixed definitively, though they are made to appear timeless in order to ensure their inviolability from questioning.<sup>33</sup>

Much of the collective’s identity is based on perceiving an *other*, and constructing an identity contrary to that of the other group.<sup>34</sup> The perception of the other is often based on distinguishable features such as physical appearance, language, and other physical or cultural attributes known as stereotypes. Stereotypes can be defined as “beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of certain groups. More than just beliefs about groups, they are also theories about how and why certain attributes go together.”<sup>35</sup>

The construction of identity by exclusion supports Aleida Assmann’s arguments regarding the authoring of a “collective autobiography”<sup>36</sup> which contains the myths, memories, and prejudices of a group, as well as portraying the *other* as antagonist, and

---

<sup>32</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 131.

<sup>33</sup> George Schöpflin, “The construction of identity,” *Österreichischer Wissenschaftstag Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft*. 2001. Lecture. Web. [http://www.oefg.at/text/veranstaltungen/wissenschaftstag/wissenschaftstag01/Beitrag\\_Schopflin.pdf](http://www.oefg.at/text/veranstaltungen/wissenschaftstag/wissenschaftstag01/Beitrag_Schopflin.pdf). 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> James L. Hilton and William von Hippel, “Stereotypes”, 240.

<sup>36</sup> Aleida Assmann, “Canon and Archive”, 101.

figures symbolizing the collective as the protagonist. The collective autobiography is filled with myths and legends that hold cultural figures in a noble light so that the collective is able to foster a common, if somewhat vague, collective identity. An example of such a figure is the medieval German king Frederick I (1152-1190), also known as Barbarossa, because of his blonde-reddish beard. As the historian Hagen Schulze puts it, “Barbarossa became a symbol, in the early nineteenth century, of the German people’s longing for a nation [...]”<sup>37</sup> Such aspects of the collective autobiography are subject to elaborations, the neglect of details, and otherwise fictionalizing narratives that are based on reality. Kenneth J. Gergen, who has written about narrative identity, points out that within such narratives there is a suppression of description,<sup>38</sup> as the authors of a narrative seek to make it as clear and cohesive as possible, while adhering to the goals that the narrative seeks to accomplish.<sup>39</sup> Over time, neglecting details through the suppression of description can lead to the initial narrative losing much of its authenticity, sometimes even becoming a completely new narrative as it has deviated much from the original. The Barbarossa example also fits this mold, as the figure used by propagandists during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a combination of the lives of Frederick I and his grandson Frederick II, to serve a specific propagandistic purpose of uniting the Germanic peoples under one nation.<sup>40</sup>

Through the identification of the *other*, the collective is able to form an identity by identifying what it is not. Contrary to the collective’s exclusion of the *other*, as Schöpflin

---

<sup>37</sup> Hagen Schulze, *Germany: A New History*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Suppression of description is the conscious or subconscious neglect of details surrounding a historical event, rather focusing on the general idea of the event.

<sup>39</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, “Narrative, Moral Identity, and Historical Consciousness: A Social Constructionist Account.” *Making Sense of History: Narration, Identity, and Historical Consciousness*. Ed. Jürgen Straub. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 99-119, 106.

<sup>40</sup> Hagen Schulze, *Germany: A New History*, 13.

points out, there exists a cultural transfer between groups which sees opposing cultures eventually adopting aspects of the *other* culture and incorporating it in their own.<sup>41</sup> This cultural exchange often brings with it subtle changes to the group identity over time, as new aspects are incorporated into the identity, and others are neglected.

The process of individual identity construction relies on the existence of a group identity, which can be viewed as a starting, or reference point from which the individual can distinguish him or herself from the group. Despite the reliance of the individual upon the social group context, total agreement between these two entities is not guaranteed. Indeed, their disagreement on aspects such as sexuality, gender, politics, and religion is necessary for the individual to feel that he or she has distinguished him or herself from his or her collective group. Individual identity is not fixed, and changes over time as new developments and experiences are gained by the individual. Thus, the relationship between the individual and collective identities can be defined as: “an individual’s understanding of themselves is a product of interaction with significant others, it cannot be said that identity emanates exclusively from within the person and that it is stable throughout life.”<sup>42</sup>

As the individual moves through time he or she inevitably deals with other individuals from his or her own culture and cultures that are foreign to him or her. In the case of individuals from different cultures having contact with each other, cultural exchange takes place which serves to either reinforce or weaken the cultural stereotypes that the individual has of the foreign culture. Another possibility is children being born from parents who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This leaves the child in

---

<sup>41</sup> George Schöpflin, “The construction of identity”, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Monica Lindgren and Nils Wåhlin, “Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals.” *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 1 (2001): 357-377, 359.

a precarious position as they might feel part of both cultures, yet unsure which culture he or she identifies with more. From this uncertainty, the existence of hybrid identities becomes possible as the individual incorporates aspects from more than one culture into his or her own identity. This process is neither linear, nor predictable, and relies on the individual's interaction with other individuals and collectives through which he or she can gain new memories, perspectives, experiences, and stereotypes.

Homi K. Bhabha, in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), describes the hybrid identity as emerging where more than one culture is present, and individuals constructing identities that comprise aspects of more than one culture.<sup>43</sup> A hybrid identity is complex, as the individual accommodates aspects and viewpoints from more than one culture, causing difficulty when these cultures enter conflict between one another. As such, the individual can feel torn between two worlds as they might have to choose one side over the other for a variety of reasons. As Bhabha explains, “the universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests.”<sup>44</sup> A hybrid identity is thus not always accommodated by each culture that the individual feels a part of.

One way that a hybrid identity can exist is through the use of “masks” which allow the individual to be a part of more than one culture, as he or she adapts him or herself to function within the framework of more than one culture.<sup>45</sup> Such masks become a coping mechanism that the individual can use to be part of one culture when appropriate, and another when needed. According to Bhabha, “[C]olonial specularity, doubly inscribed,

---

<sup>43</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 113-114.

<sup>44</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha.” *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. J. Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990: 207-221, 208.

<sup>45</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 62-64.

does not produce a mirror where the self apprehends itself; it is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid”.<sup>46</sup> From this, hybridity is more than the mixing of *X* and *Y*, rather hybridity is a mix of *X* and *x*, where *x* denotes the partial presence of *X*.<sup>47</sup> In other words, Bhabha’s hybrid identity can be viewed as being comprised of a dominant culture, with another cultural viewpoint comprising a smaller percentage of the entire hybrid identity.

Criticism of this notion includes the question of what can be viewed as a hybrid culture, and what cannot. As Antony Easthope puts it, “Does hybridity in an ethnic definition suppose that the two ethnic identities joined together were formerly pure in themselves?”<sup>48</sup> Cultures, like identities, are constantly in a state of flux and are never fixed. As such, even cultures which seem homogenous undergo changes over time to include new aspects that could formerly be found in a different culture.

By being able to feel as part of their cultural collective and being able to develop their identities through feeling comfortable enough to disagree with their collectives, the characters of *Ein unsichtbares Land* and *der Schrei der Hyänen* are able to differentiate themselves from their collectives. The reader’s perception of each character’s identity development is influenced by the structures of the narratives themselves. Both narratives fall within the generational narrative genre, and employ a non-linear timeline that alternates sporadically between the past and present, while placing emphasis on different protagonists within the narrative at different points in time. This allows the reader to perceive how the actions of characters in the past influence other characters in the present or future. The reader can access information that is located in the past when it is relevant

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 113-114.

<sup>47</sup> Nezar AlSayyad, *Hybrid Urbanism*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001, 6-7.

<sup>48</sup> Antony Easthope, “Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity.” *Textual Practice* 12.2 (1998): 341-348, 342.

to the plot and pivotal in the way that the reader perceives a character's identity development. Therefore, the reader is able to see how actions that were taken before a character's birth continue to affect him or her in the present or future, despite not being responsible for those actions. Because of this, it is necessary to explore the genre of generational narratives to better understand how the reader is able to perceive identity development within the narratives.

### II.3. Generational Narratives

The genre of generational narratives have become increasingly popular within German literature after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent German (Re-)unification, as a mode of portraying and dealing with a traumatic past associated with World War II and the Holocaust.<sup>49</sup> Anna Rutka describes the genre of *Generationenromane* or *Familienromanen*:

Viele seit Mitte der 90er Jahre publizierte Texte eröffnen einen biographischen Blick auf die deutsche Vergangenheit, erzählen diese »aus den Brüchen wie der Kontinuität der Familiengeschichte« und konfrontieren sie »mit einer scheinbar - anders gearteten Gegenwart«. [...] Die der Nachfolgeneration angehörenden Autorinnen und Autoren erforschen ihre Familiengeschichten als Teil der eigenen Vergangenheit und reflektieren zugleich ihr Verhältnis zur Schuld- und Opfergeschichte Deutschlands, beziehen Stellung zur Erinnerungskultur im öffentlichen und privaten Bereich.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Friederike Eigler, "Zur Historisierung des Heimatbegriffs im Generationenroman: Dieter Fortes Trilogie *Das Haus auf meinen Schultern*." *Germanic Review* 83.2 (2010): 83-106, 86-87.

<sup>50</sup> Anna Rutka, "Erinnern als Dialog mit biographischen Texten. Zu aktuellen Familienromanen von Uwe Timm *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (2003), Wibke Bruhns *Meines Vaters Land* (2004) und Stephan Wackwitz *Ein unsichtbares Land* (2003)." *Das Prinzip Erinnerung in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur nach 1989*. Eds. Carsten Gansel and Pawel Zimniak. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010. 107-117, 108.

Expanding on this description, the genre is characterized by narratives which typically portray more than one generation of a family, thereby differentiating itself from the earlier *Väterliteratur* of the 1970s and 1980s, which focuses primarily upon the children's discovery of the parent generation's involvement in World War II and the Holocaust.<sup>51</sup> Within generational narratives, each generation's experiences are portrayed in such a way as to foster a coherent narrative, and the reader is able to observe and gain understanding from the actions of each character representing his or her generation within the narrative. As each generation is shielded, to some degree, from the others by time, there is no guarantee that each generation is privileged to know the exact exploits of the previous generation.<sup>52</sup> In addition, a character's dealings with the past are altered through the temporal disconnect and safety that ensues with the progression of time.<sup>53</sup>

The narratives of *Ein unsichtbares Land* and *Der Schrei der Hyänen* fit this temporal description as both narratives unfold from different points in time. The narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* unfolds as the narrator analyzes the memoirs of his grandfather, which contain Andreas Wackwitz's remembrances of his own life from the latter part of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. The narrative of *Der Schrei der Hyänen* is more complex from a temporal standpoint as five successive generations are represented by their matriarchal figures. Arabella represents the first generation at the latter part of the nineteenth century, succeeded by her daughter Nele who is born in German South West Africa and later relocates to Germany with her father Paul von

---

<sup>51</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*. München: C.H. Beck, 2007, 72-73.

<sup>52</sup> Within *Der Schrei der Hyänen* some characters even deliberately keep information from younger generations which impacts their identities, understanding of history, their place in the family, and their place in the world.

<sup>53</sup> Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt: Berlin, 2005, 9.

Kavea. At the outbreak of World War II, Nele gives birth to Kriemhild who plays a minor, yet important role in the narrative. The characters of Cosima and Hera represent the fourth and fifth generations, respectively, but suffer a disconnect from their ancestors as Cosima *disappeared* shortly after her birth and was raised outside of the family, only to be contacted by Nele later in Cosima's life, allowing both Cosima and Hera to discover their familial heritage.

Through the shielding of time and the neglect of details associated with historical events, it is sometimes only the reader of the narrative that can be fully aware of each facet and detail contained in the narrative, thus allowing the reader to piece together the multiple facets of the narrative and be aware of the complete narrative as framed by the author(s). Where characters are not aware of their ancestor's exploits, frictions arise because they hold beliefs which are contrary to the truth. Common themes of German generational narratives which enhance these frictions include colonialism, World War II, the Holocaust and other controversial aspects of 20<sup>th</sup> century German history.

Most generational narratives are written by the second or third generation after World War II. These narratives differ from those written by individuals who lived before or during World War II who have often focused more on societal issues and politics.<sup>54</sup> The frictions which arise between generations as a result of a parent or grandparent's exploits during the years of World War II, serve to impact identity construction. Aleida Assmann describes the search for understanding identity in generational narratives in response to colonialism, war, and genocide:

Die Identitätssuche der schreibenden Person(a) gewinnt damit eine historische Tiefe und Komplexität, die in der Väterliteratur so noch nicht angelegt war. Das schlägt sich auch in der Schreibweise der Texte nieder,

---

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 87.

die im Falle des Familienromans stärker von Recherchen angetrieben und mit Materialien aus dem Familienarchiv und anderen Dokumenten durchsetzt sind.<sup>55</sup>

This is particularly true of *Ein unsichtbares Land* in which the author uses his grandfather's memoirs as historical evidence, and includes photographs from the family archives to help illustrate aspects of his familial story and explain why there was a disconnect between him and his grandfather when the senior Wackwitz was still alive. Conversely, in *Ein unsichtbares Land*, the narrator in his 50s looks back upon his family history and the characters within *Der Schrei der Hyänen* rely solely on communicative memory. Within this narrative, a member of each of the five generations remains alive to relay information which is crucial to the development of the plot.

Both narratives adhere to Markus Neuschäfer's description of the stages that the characters within a generational novel go through in understanding their place within the family and history as a whole. Using these stages he describes the family dynamic as initially being dysfunctional and the youngest member of the family being distanced from the rest of the family. Because of the dysfunction, the youngest member enters the second stage and attempts to understand why the family dynamic is dysfunctional. Through this exploration, the youngest member of the family undergoes a therapeutic or cathartic process which ultimately leads to understanding and the youngest member of the family finding his or her place within the family unit as a whole.<sup>56</sup> As Aleida Assmann states: "Hier geht es um die Integration des eigenen Ichs in einen größeren Familien – und Geschichtszusammenhang."<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Markus Neuschäfer, "Vom doppelten Fortschreiben der Geschichte." *Literaturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Generationsforschung*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010. 164-203, 165-166.

<sup>57</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 73.

The form of the two generational narratives ensures that the reader is able to see how identity construction takes place, as each chapter within the narratives usually shows a clear temporal disconnect from the previous and following chapter. Through this disconnect, the reader is able to infer more clearly how a specific character's identity is affected through the experiences that they undergo in a specific chapter. As each character becomes aware of the characteristics of their ancestors, their perception of their culture, family, and themselves become open to change. Aleida Assmann explains: "Umbildung von Identität bedeutet immer auch Umbau des Gedächtnisses."<sup>58</sup> Through this, the reader is able to build an understanding of the cultural memory and identity that surrounds each generation and how each generation impacts the other through the passing on of the cultural memory. The reader is also able to see how events in the "past" influence sentiments in the "present" and how a character's understanding of their past is enhanced through the discovery of *new* facets of their familial past, all the while altering the perceived, assigned, and constructed identities of characters within the narrative(s).

---

<sup>58</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München: C.H. Beck, 1999, 62-63.

### III. Cultural Memory and Collective Identity in *Der Schrei der Hyänen*

The first stage of identity construction to be examined involves the individual becoming aware of, and exploring the cultural memory. From this exploration, the individual is able to differentiate his or her group from others, and better understand divisions between cultural groups. The character of Arabella in *Der Schrei der Hyänen* is portrayed as becoming aware of an effectively new cultural memory when she arrives in German South West Africa. The German settlers continue the cultural memory that they took with them when they left Germany, but have expanded on this memory to incorporate the memories of dealing with new surroundings and different peoples. As Arabella is new to this part of the world, she must become acquainted with new facets of the cultural memory.

Once an understanding of the cultural memory is reached, an individual can start to include and exclude individuals from *their* group. The process of inclusion and exclusion hinges upon the cultural memory, and relies on overt differentiation points such as physical appearance. The characters of Cosima, Nele, and Frank help to illustrate how such exclusion is performed in the narrative.

Once the process of inclusion and exclusion has taken place, the results influence the way in which individuals from one culture interact with individuals from another culture. In the cases of Nele and Frank, the reader is able to observe examples of negative friction, in which Nele and Frank act hostile to members of the Herero culture. Arabella, on the other hand, is able to move past her perceptions of the Herero and build meaningful relationships with members of the Herero culture as her cultural understanding moves beyond simple inclusion and exclusion, and her personal experience overwhelms and replaces the stereotypes contained in the cultural memory.

### III.1. Learning through the Cultural Memory

Within the narrative of *Der Schrei der Hyänen* the character of Arabella leaves Germany as an adult to find a husband in German South West Africa. Arabella's arrival in German South West Africa presents her with more than a new landscape. She faces a new culture, climate, and a cultural memory that is different from the one with which she is familiar. The cultural memory that she finds in German South West Africa is expanded to accommodate the memories that have been formed through activities in this new country. Because she does not have firsthand knowledge of her new surroundings, she must turn to the German cultural memory in German South West Africa for reference, as Maurice Halbwachs argues the individual does when faced with situations in which he or she has no firsthand experience.<sup>59</sup>

Shortly after Arabella arrives in German South West Africa, she finds a husband in the character of Frank. Frank is a German settler who arrived in German South West Africa in 1894, and subsequently fought at the battle of Hornkranz.<sup>60</sup> At the battle, his actions are described: "Frank [hat] die Revolverkanone bedient und die Hottentotten platzen lassen wie eingelegte Gurken."<sup>61</sup> He is also described as knowing "die Farbe von Hirnmasse und das quietschende Geräusch des Bajonetts, das ins Fleisch dringt."<sup>62</sup> Since that time, Frank has taken ownership of the farm named Crewo where he raises cattle with the help of his Herero farm hand Josef. Upon the journey to Crewo, Arabella has the opportunity to explore the cultural memory by asking Frank and the accompanying Paul von Kavea, the son of the governor, questions about the people, country, climate, and other topics.

---

<sup>59</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 51.

<sup>60</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Arabella's unfamiliarity with her new surroundings is made clear by internally focalized third person narration:

Sie hörte zum ersten Mal, daß es in Südwest eine Bevölkerung jenseits der Deutschen gab. Natürlich wußte sie, daß in Afrika Eingeborene lebten, und sie hatte von den Negern in Hagenbecks Tierpark in der Zeitung gelesen, aber in ihrer Erfahrung gab es Schwarze bislang nur als Kruneger, Kutscher oder Hirten oder als Zielscheiben in Franks Schlachtberichten.<sup>63</sup>

Arabella's acquaintance with her new surroundings begins with Paul's description of the different indigenous peoples of South West Africa. Paul describes the Herero as "ein geborenes Herrenvolk!" and "[...] etwas wie die Germanen unter den Eingeborenen [...]", and "Das genaue Gegenteil von den Hottentotten, die mit den Juden vergleichbar sind und nichts selbst besitzen. Im Grunde sind sie so besitz- wie charakterlos."<sup>64</sup> The narration informs the reader that Arabella starts to understand the differences between the indigenous peoples, also signaling how she is starting to learn through the sharing of the local cultural memory, making use of Jan Assmann's model of communicative memory.

From her newly learned knowledge about the racial hierarchy of indigenous peoples in South West Africa, she asks Frank how Josef came to be under his employ.

»Wieso arbeitet Josef für dich? « fragte sie Frank  
 »Er war einmal ein richtig reicher Herero, aber dann kam die Rinderpest.  
 Und jetzt ist er ein richtig armer Herero. Er hat alle seine Tiere verloren. «<sup>65</sup>

Frank's attitude towards the Herero is inherently negative, which the reader can observe through the interactions between Frank and Josef. Frank perceives the Herero as being uneducated, unskilled, and the embodiment of idiocy, very much the opposite of the opinion that Paul has of the Herero. The reader is confronted with Frank's attitudes towards the

---

<sup>63</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

indigenous peoples as he often uses derogatory language to describe indigenous peoples. Examples of this include calling a cow in labour a “Verdamnte Niggerkuh”<sup>66</sup> because the birth is not going as it should, and describing the landscape to which he and Arabella are arriving: “Jetzt kommt zivilisiertes Land, und du wirst nicht mehr wie eine Negerin zu Fuß gehen.”<sup>67</sup> The reference to walking is in response to having traversed rough terrain which made it impossible for Arabella to ride a horse or travel in a wagon.

The linking of sources of frustration and anger to the derogatory description of the Herero population is indicative of colonial times,<sup>68</sup> but also that Frank does not view Josef and other Herero as favourable, or being equal to himself and other Germans. Frank’s ill feelings towards Josef culminate when he drunkenly rapes Josef’s daughter Eva, which Frank legitimizes as repayment of a debt that Josef owes him.

»Bitte schnell«, sagte er. Es war Josef.  
 »Was ist los?«  
 »Ihr Mann«, stieß Josef hervor, »ich werde bestimmt bezahlen!« Seine Stimme war heiser, und er zitterte.  
 »Wo ist er? «  
 »Im Pontok. Bitte schnell. « [...] In dem Augenblick, in dem auch sie an den Eingang trat, fiel aus dem Pontok ein Schuß. Ein Schrei wurde abgewürgt und hallte in der absoluten Stille nach. Dann setzte das Klappern wieder ein. Erst jetzt konnte Arabella sich rühren. Sie sprang zu Josef, der in sich zusammengesackt war, und nahm seinen Kopf in die Hände. Sie roch Blut und fühlte, daß seine Haare naß waren.<sup>69</sup>

At this point in the narrative several years have passed since Arabella’s arrival in German South West Africa. During these years, Arabella has been exposed to a culture which is not very accepting of the Herero, yet she is aware that Frank’s sentiments are not those shared

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>68</sup> Roland Schmiedel, “Reflexionen über Bedeutungsveränderung im deutschen Kolonialroman am Beispiel von Paluch/Habecks *Der Schrei der Hyänen* (2004).” *Acta Germanica* 37 (2009): 67-79, 69.

<sup>69</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 102-103.

by all German settlers, because of Paul's opinions that he shared with her when she first arrived.

With Frank's actions against Josef and Eva, his negativity towards the Herero is solidified. Frank thus represents the extreme xenophobic sentiments contained in the cultural memory, whereas Paul represents a more liberal and moderate view. With Arabella's neutrality through her unfamiliarity with the indigenous peoples, she is better able to form her own opinions regarding the Herero as she is exposed to both sentiments contained within the cultural memory.

At the beginning of Arabella's confrontation with a new country and unfamiliar customs, she turns, as Halbwachs argues the individual does, to the collective knowledge of the group for guidance. Drawing on the cultural memory, Arabella is able to learn new concepts and customs that are relevant to her new surroundings, of which she has no personal experience. By relying on Frank and other German settlers to a lesser extent, to enlighten her about German South West Africa, she follows Jan Assmann's model of communicative memory as information is shared with her verbally. Where information is not shared verbally, Arabella is able to learn through her observations of settlers like Frank interacting with the indigenous population. Arabella is exposed to cultural memory that is predominantly negative towards the indigenous population, as evidenced by Frank. Despite this, Arabella retains a relatively neutral position as far as race relations are concerned.

Frank's character and actions are a fictional representation of German colonial history in South West Africa, which is filled with injustices and incidents of discrimination against indigenous peoples of South West Africa. During the era of German control over the region, there existed an institutionalized system of discrimination against indigenous peoples

ranging from the lack of freedom to own property, to the lack of basic legal rights. A historical example of such inequality is the passing of legislation which dictated that “(1) Every coloured person must regard a white man as a superior being (*höheres Wesen*) [&] (2) In court the evidence of one white man can only be outweighed by the statements of seven coloured persons.”<sup>70</sup>

The institutionalized system of discrimination was backed by a thriving merchant trade which sometimes took advantage of the Herero’s indigenous customs and system of commerce. Historically speaking, Herero culture functioned in a socialistic state of being, with no single individual having authority to claim ownership of land. Cattle were held in common by a family or clan, which relates to the Herero myth of creation.<sup>71</sup> Cattle, in Herero culture, played an integral role in the way that society was structured. Some cattle were perceived as being sacred and gifted by the ancestors. The responsibility of administering all aspects related to sacred and common cattle was that of the *Eanda*. The *Eanda* was a female hierarchy that oversaw inter-tribe trading, the selection of animals to be slaughtered, and everything related to the maintaining of the cattle herd, and in turn the collective well-being of the tribe.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, colonial German culture functioned on a system of private enterprise and capitalism, which placed no special meaning on either the land or cattle beyond pure economic gain. To Frank and colonial merchants, both land and cattle are simply commodities that can be bought and sold to gain a profit.

The character of Charly functions as a representation of historical merchants. Like Charly, these merchants were eager to trade with the Herero, as they found it easy to mislead

---

<sup>70</sup> Silvester and Gewalt. *Words Cannot be Found*, 57.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

them and ultimately trade very little for Herero cattle.<sup>73</sup> The disproportionate trade that took place was partly due to the fact that the Herero did not have a similar concept of ownership, bartering, and trading to that of the Germans. The Herero simply did not understand what was happening in these transactions until it was too late. The Herero not only bartered away many of their cattle, but those cattle found grazing on the land of German settlers were seized by the authorities and sold off without any compensation finding its way into Herero hands.<sup>74</sup>

Because of the difference between German and Herero culture, including their systems of trade, Frank's seemingly simple explanation of Josef's circumstance loses credibility. Through knowledge of the existing system of discrimination against the Herero, and the fact that many merchants took advantage of the Herero through trading, it is possible that the fate of Josef's cattle could have been influenced by much more than the *Rinderpest*. Although, it must be noted that the *Rinderpest* outbreak of 1896/97 is historically accurate, giving at least some credibility to Frank's explanation.<sup>75</sup>

The acquisition of the land by German settlers is important to note as well. Before the arrival of the Germans, there were no fenced off or demarcated borders to indicate ownership of land. With their arrival, the German authorities created boundaries<sup>76</sup> and drew up contracts with various chiefs and indigenous leaders to legitimize their acquisition of indigenous lands.<sup>77</sup> The problem with this system of land purchase was that the Herero peoples themselves did not perceive their chiefs as having the authority to sell something which they had no ownership over. In essence, the chiefs were selling something that did not

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>75</sup> Winfried Speitkamp, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*. Stuttgart: Philip Reclam, 2005, 123.

<sup>76</sup> Silvester and Gewalt. *Words Cannot be Found*, 78.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 27.

belong to them, and the German settlers gained large tracts of land at relatively low prices. To make things worse, the contracts were drawn up in German, a language that the Herero had almost no knowledge of and copies of the contracts were seldom passed on to the various chiefs.<sup>78</sup>

*Der Schrei Der Hyänen* illustrates the illegitimacy of the tribal chiefs in the selling of land in an exchange between Assa Riuara and a captured German soldier:

»Was haben wir euch getan? « Er warf sich in den Sand.  
 »Eure Farmen stehen auf unserem Land. «  
 »Wir haben es von deinem Häuptling Samuel Maharero gekauft«, brüllte Georg. [...]  
 »Es war nicht Samuels Land. Er konnte es nicht verkaufen. Es ist das Land seines Volkes«, erwiderte Assa.  
 »Aber das wußten wir doch nicht«, schluchzte Dieter.  
 »Ihr wußtet es«, entgegnete Assa.<sup>79</sup>

It is estimated that in 1890, the Herero occupied most of the land known within present day Namibia as Damaraland, and that their population at that time numbered between 80 000 and 90 000.<sup>80</sup> This number dwindled alarmingly by 1911, when an official census revealed that there were only 15 130 Herero remaining.<sup>81</sup> The primary cause of this drastic drop in the Herero population was the genocide carried out by the German colonial forces during the Herero uprising of November 1903, but the effect of one sided trading practises and imperialistic acquisition of land played a role as well.

Because of the intentional and systemic exploitation of the Herero, Frank and the female merchant character Charly represent the aggregate negativity that German colonialism brought to South West Africa. Frank symbolizes the system of land acquisition

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>79</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 110.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 106.

and occupation by the Germans, and Charly represents the mercantile trading system that saw many Herero lose ownership of their cattle.

After Josef's murder and the rape of Eva at the hands of Frank, Arabella turns to Charly for help. At this point in the narrative, Arabella is unsure of what to do, as she does not feel safe remaining with Frank. Charly gives Arabella advice, and explains how she can survive without Frank. During her conversation with Charly, Arabella discovers that Charly is now in the livestock business:

»Du könntest wie ich ein Geschäft aufmachen. Die Schwarzen kaufen wie verrückt. Gerade heute waren viele fremde Hereros da, der Laden ist total leer. «  
 »Haben sie bezahlt? « fragte Arabella.  
 »Mit Vieh.« Charly wischte sich die Oberlippe ab.  
 »Du nimmst Vieh an? «  
 »Ich werde expandieren. Nicht mehr nur Gemischtwaren, sondern Schlachtviehexporte. [...]«<sup>82</sup>

It is unclear to what extent Arabella is aware of the discrimination against the Herero and the bad trading practises that German merchants employ. At this point, the role of the literary world becomes important. The term literary world can be defined as:

By *literary world* let us mean, therefore, the diegetic totality constituted by the sum of all aspects of a single text, constellated into a structure or system. This unity need not be diegetic in a purely conventional sense; it need not, that is, be a function solely or partly of narrative development or progress. It is enough that this unity emerges from the interior representational content of the work and that it thus belongs *as a formal concept* most properly to the arrangement of the work's content, of which it is the formal expression.<sup>83</sup>

In addition to this, worlds contained in literature are “semantically incomplete because, being constructed by language, characteristics and relations of the fictional object cannot be

<sup>82</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 106-107.

<sup>83</sup> Eric Hayot, “On Literary Worlds.” *Modern Language Quarterly* 72.2 (2011): 129-161, 137

specified in every detail.”<sup>84</sup> As such, the reader constructs a representation of the world based on the descriptions contained within the text.<sup>85</sup> The result is that the author(s) include only the information that is necessary for the advancement of the narrative, and the reader’s imagination, acting on the knowledge that he or she possesses, must fill the gaps contained in the text.<sup>86</sup> This influences the reader’s perception of identities in the narrative as the reader utilizes the knowledge that he or she possesses about cultures, history, and familial relationships, and other factors bearing influence on identity development.

The resulting literary world created by the narrative of *der Schrei der Hyänen* leads the reader to perceive the characters of Frank and Charly negatively. A reader who is unaware of the colonial history surrounding German South West Africa will not form the same world and conclusions compared to another reader that is more aware of these issues. Frank is portrayed to be a racist individual who tolerates the Herero, but only to a certain point. The representation of Charly is more delicate; she is not portrayed as doing anything negative, but through the knowledge of history, and cues from the narrative, the reader is able to draw conclusions about her trading practises and her role in the narrative, ultimately portraying Charly as negative and giving legitimacy to the Herero uprising.

From this, the reader can assume that Arabella, though her interactions with Frank, Charly, and Paul, gains an understanding of the stories, myths, and sentiments contained within the cultural memory. Through the acquisition of knowledge contained in the cultural memory, Arabella is able to see how German and Herero individuals and their groups

---

<sup>84</sup> Ruth Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 114.

<sup>85</sup> Eric Hayot, “On Literary Worlds”, 146.

<sup>86</sup> For example, a scene in which characters are described cooking a meal in the kitchen, the reader will automatically imagine various cooking utensils commonly found in a kitchen, whether mentioned in the text or not. The filling of gaps left by the narrative allows for the creation of a world in which the same reader can explore concepts and relationships that the actual world does not allow.

function in relation to one another, and what distinguishes them from the other. With this ability, Arabella is able to continue her identity development as she becomes aware of different groups, and is able to alter her assumptions about each group's identity.

### **III. 2. Assigning Identity**

After gaining an understanding of the stories, myths, morals, and assumptions contained within the cultural memory, the individual is able to differentiate between groups. More than this, the individual is able to differentiate, correctly or incorrectly, if another individual belongs to a specific group or not. As Alon Confino points out, the “[...] collective memory is an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group [...]”.<sup>87</sup> Thus, cultural memory and group identity is highly intertwined. The process through which one decides whether another individual belongs to a specific group relies on the use of stereotypes, which focuses upon the most overt cues of someone's appearance, demeanor, and character.

Deciding whether or not an individual belongs to a group, an identity will invariably be assigned to the individual. The assigned identity will depend on whether the one making assumptions perceives the individual to be an embodiment of his or her cultural memory, or a reflection of another culture's memory. The characteristics that one focuses on when assigning an identity are often reduced to the most basic terms which serve to reduce a culture or collective identity to generalizations that forms caricatures or

---

<sup>87</sup> Alon Confino, “Memory and the History of Mentalities”, 81.

stereotypes of a very complex societal construction. An example of a negative stereotype within *Der Schrei der Hyänen* is the term *Wollkopf*<sup>88</sup> which describes the hair of indigenous people in Africa. Another stereotype is Frank's perception of the Herero as inept and of lesser worth.

A recurring theme within *Der Schrei Der Hyänen* is skin color, and the assumptions about characters with dark skin. One of the most striking examples of the use of stereotypes to assign an identity to someone based on physical appearance is played out in the confines of a travel agency where the character of Cosima works. Cosima's dark skin, akin to someone whom one would expect to find on the landscape of Namibia,<sup>89</sup> causes a potential customer to make assumptions about her, and thereby assigning an identity to her. The man's own skin color is not mentioned, but the reader can deduce that because he finds Cosima's skin color interesting, that it must be different from hers, i.e. the man is likely Caucasian. As the man enters the travel agency, he interacts with Cosima while trying to arrange travel to Africa:

Cosima nickte dem Mann zu. Er war Anfang Dreißig, vielleicht ein, zwei Jahre älter als sie. Sein grauer Anzug war auf sein Gesicht abgestimmt.  
 »Was kann ich für sie tun? « fragte Cosima.  
 »Ich will nicht mehr auf die Lofoten. «  
 Cosima sah ihn abwartend an.  
 »Ich will in Ihre Heimat« grinste der Mann schräg.  
 »In die Lüneburger Heide? « ließ sie ihn auflaufen.  
 »Ach, deshalb sprechen Sie so gut Deutsch«, stellte er fest.  
 »Also ins kulturlose Afrika? «<sup>90</sup>

From this exchange, the reader can see that the man almost immediately forms assumptions about Cosima, including her education, origin, and identity. The assumptions

---

<sup>88</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 25.

<sup>89</sup> South West Africa became Namibia when it gained independence from the U.N. mandated protection of South Africa on 21 March 1990.

<sup>90</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 53.

that the man forms are perhaps the result of past personal experience with physically similar individuals, or more likely in this context, learned memories and assumptions which permeate through the cultural memory of *his* culture. As a result, the man is casting an identity upon her, which Schöpflin describes as the process of exclusion. Schöpflin argues that for an identity to have, and maintain its value, it must both include and exclude, otherwise risking unsustainability as too much inclusion will make a specific identity redundant.<sup>91</sup>

Jan Assmann describes the interaction between the individual and group identities:

[...]Aspekte der Ich-Identität, auch der der individuellen Identität, sind „soziogen“ kulturell determiniert. Beide Prozesse, der der Individuation und der Sozialisation, verlaufen in kulturell vorgezeichneten Bahnen. Beide Identitätsaspekte sind Sache eines Bewußtseins, das durch Sprache und Vorstellungswelt, Werte und Normen einer Kultur und Epoche in spezifischer Weise geformt und bestimmt wird. [...] Identität, auch Ich-Identität, ist immer ein gesellschaftliches Konstrukt und als solches immer kulturelle Identität.<sup>92</sup>

Following Assmann's argument, the individual is less a product of the cultural identity, rather the culture becomes a product of the personal identity and the way that the individual perceives his or her collective. Thus, the reader can see that the identity of the man influences how he perceives his cultural identity; as such, the man in the travel agency has a perception of *his* culture that reflects his own identity. Cosima, being dissimilar to the man, does thus not fit into the cultural framework that he holds of his own collective. As a result, the man assigns an identity to Cosima because she is dissimilar to him, and perceived to be different than the individuals in his culture. Therefore, the man does what seems natural to him, i.e. excluding someone who overtly appears different to himself.

---

<sup>91</sup> George Schöpflin. "The construction of identity", 3.

<sup>92</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 132.

Cosima's physical appearance complicates her identity within the German culture. This is because she is not physically similar to the majority of individuals within the German collective. As such, Cosima might feel that she is a member of the German collective since that is the culture she grew up in, the language that she speaks, and the morals and ethics that she might subscribe to. Despite this, individuals who do not know a character such as Cosima personally, will not perceive her to be a (full) member of the German collective, assigning an identity to her that is dissimilar to the collective German identity.

Although the man in the travel agency is guilty of acting on assumptions and stereotypes, Cosima is equally guilty. Cosima confronts the man with the use of sarcasm by providing stereotypes of herself and Africa to insinuate that the man's judgements are incorrect. By replying "Also ins kulturlose Afrika?" to the statement "Ach, deshalb sprechen Sie so gut Deutsch", Cosima in turn makes an assumption about the man, and acts upon a stereotype about German perception of African cultures. The stereotype in this case being that the man regards Africa to be a *kulturlose* land in comparison to Germany. This assumption plays on the reality that many German settlers, who arrived in South West Africa, regarded the indigenous population as being *Kulturlos* as they did not possess the same level of *civilization* as the settlers. Perhaps more accurately, the settlers didn't encounter a culture which they were expecting or were accustomed to. The most notable difference was language, because the indigenous languages contained clicks and other audible dissimilarities to European languages.<sup>93</sup>

The assigned identity that is given to Cosima prevails throughout their exchanges, as the man's assumptions about her identity is so strong, that he is unable to cope with the

---

<sup>93</sup> Roland Schmiedel, "Reflexionen über Bedeutungsveränderung im deutschen Kolonialroman", 69.

reality that Cosima is *de facto* German, as this is the culture in which she grew up in. The discourse between Cosima and the man grows more tense with the arrival of Cosima's daughter, Hera (it has been suggested that the name Herero comes from the root *Hera*, which translates to "the assegai swingers"),<sup>94</sup> whom does not *appear* to be Cosima's daughter because of her blond hair and fair skin.

»Darf ich mal? « Hera drängte sich an dem Mann vorbei und griff in das Bonbonglas neben Cosimas Telefon.  
 »Es gibt gleich Mittag«, sagte Cosima mit gespielter Strenge. Die blonden, vom Sommer und dem Freibadchlor geblichenen Haare klebten auf Heras Stirn.  
 »Oh, Sie haben eine kleine Freundin? « wandte sich der Mann an Cosima.  
 »Das ist meine Mutter«, berichtigte ihn Hera.<sup>95</sup>

This interaction is presented to the reader as part dialogue; partly described through zero focalization which helps to showcase the friction that is produced between the three characters as Hera enters the travel agency. Hera's familiarity and casual demeanor in the travel agency serves to irritate the man further, and he is unsure of how to deal with the fact that Hera is Cosima's daughter.

Following Hera's arrival, the man grows increasingly irritated and leaves the travel agency mumbling discontented, unable to accept that Hera is Cosima's daughter as their relationship is too unfamiliar. Through this part of the narrative, the reader experiences a possibly bigoted individual whose individual and cultural identity makes it difficult for him to accept the reality of the familial relationship between Hera and Cosima. The man is unable to expand his own thoughts, perceptions, morals, and identity enough to accommodate the complicated reality that Hera and Cosima present him with since Cosima does not fulfill the assigned identity that he places upon her. The addition of Hera, whom the

<sup>94</sup> Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, 65.

<sup>95</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 53.

man would most likely have identified as German, further complicates matters, as her mother does not conform to the cultural identity that the man would associate with her.

Slocum-Bradley argues that it is of paramount importance that an understanding of different identities exists, otherwise conflict can be expected.<sup>96</sup> The frustration that the man in this passage suffers is an indication that he is unable to understand or accept the identities of Hera and Cosima, which causes enough conflict for the man to leave frustrated and unsatisfied. Were the man able to simply ignore, or accept, the fact that Cosima does not conform to the identity that he assigns her, he would have left on an amiable footing, with successful travel arrangements made. The incident with the man in the travel agency is not the only instance where Cosima's physical appearance has caused confusion.

Similar to the animosity that Frank feels towards Josef and the Herero people of South West Africa, Nele, who is one generation younger than Frank, displays similarly severe sentiments. Nele, Cosima's grandmother, is guilty of assigning her an identity solely based on Cosima's physical appearance, thus making assumptions about her character. Being present at Cosima's birth, Nele is shocked to find that Cosima's skin is much darker than what she was expecting.<sup>97</sup>

Having been in the delivery room where her daughter Kriemhild has been undergoing a normal delivery, the reader is able to see that Nele is a very aggressive character who comes to dominate the proceedings when she exploits her own personal power as a senator in the German political system. Despite the doctor's reassurances that everything is proceeding as normal, Nele insists on a caesarian birth, citing that she does not want her

---

<sup>96</sup> Nikki R. Slocum-Bradley, "Identity Construction in Europe: A Discursive Approach." *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 10 (2010): 50-68, 65.

<sup>97</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 133.

daughter to suffer unnecessarily.<sup>98</sup> It is easy for the reader to see that this explanation is not very credible as the narrator's zero focalized narration makes it clear that Nele is impatient and wants the procedure to be carried out as quickly as possible, with the least amount of inconvenience to herself, rather than to Kriemhild.

Nele tries to create the façade of being a caring and compassionate individual, but the reader is able to see that Nele only cares for her daughter, and granddaughter, on a superficial level, submitting to the expectations that society places on her through the cultural memory. While Kriemhild is still conscious, she discusses the two names that she had picked out for her unborn child; Kriemhild states that if the child is to be a girl, the name would be Cosima, and Richard if it is to be a boy. Beyond this, Kriemhild hands Nele a golden locket with the name Cosima engraved upon it. When Nele asks about the name engraved on the locket, Kriemhild explains that it is a gift to her yet unborn child (if the child is a girl). At this point Nele asks what is to become of the locket if it is a boy. Kriemhild then says that her grandfather's *Taschenuhr* is to be the child's. Nele immediately protests and exclaims "Die Uhr gehört mir!"<sup>99</sup>

Following this exchange with Kriemhild, Nele decides to use a combination of her political power, and playing on the façade of being a concerned mother, to have the doctor agree to carry out a C-section.<sup>100</sup> To the reader it is made undeniably clear that the doctor is not prepared to oppose Nele once she has effectively given an order. "Er kannte die Senatorin gut genug, um zu wissen, wie gefährlich es war, sich mit ihr anzulegen"<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 128.

With the combination of the dialogue in the narrative and the details provided by the narrator, the reader is able to see that Nele's character is plagued by impatience, stubbornness, and accustomed to getting her way. As the narrative continues, the reader also encounters Nele's sentiments towards people of different races. Nele makes no effort to hide these inherently negative sentiments which prevail from the previous. Nele's sentiments are displayed when the doctor hands Cosima to her after the C-section has been carried out successfully. Immediately Nele becomes more dissatisfied as Cosima is revealed to have a much darker complexion than what was expected of her. In response, Nele bends over her unconscious daughter and drily states "Mit einem Neger"<sup>102</sup> insinuating that Kriemhild had cheated on her husband with someone of African descent.

Nele's inability to accept Cosima into her family is the possible result of her upbringing. Nele, the daughter of Arabella, was born just after the Herero uprising, and would have been subjected to the same prejudices that characters like Frank held of the indigenous peoples of South West Africa. Since acquiring virtually the same cultural memory that the older generation did before her, it appears that her perception and attitudes towards the indigenous peoples of South West Africa is no different than that of Frank. This illustrates Aleida Assmann's theory of remembering and forgetting, as Nele is unable to, or unwilling, to forget aspects of the cultural memory that govern the way she interacts with peoples from other cultures.

As is pointed out, "[...] the relationship and the dialectics between memory and forgetting are never 'given' and never linear".<sup>103</sup> This opens the door for the reader to pose

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>103</sup> Vita Fortunati and Elena Lamberti, "Cultural Memory: A European Perspective." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 127-137, 127.

the question whether or not a young Nele had any interaction with indigenous peoples in German South West Africa, and why her personal memories have not come to replace the negative stereotypes contained in the cultural memory. Commenting on such a situation,

Aleida Assmann offers:

Andenken und Resentiment sind Erinnerungsformen mit sehr unterschiedlicher Stoßrichtung. Wo sich Geschichte als gewalttätiger Nexus von Schuld und Rache perpetuiert, kommt alles darauf an, einen Ausgang aus der Geschichte zu finden. Das kann nur durch die Begrenzung und Zähmung virulenter Erinnerungen geschehen, die die fatale Dynamik in Gang halten. Die Leistung, Streit zu schlichten und Frieden zu stiften, bestünde demnach in der Zähmung und Transformation kollektiver Erinnerungen.<sup>104</sup>

Nele's inability to move past her prejudices and accept Cosima for who she is, is the source of much of the narrative's negativity. Nele's fear of Cosima's possible identity drives her to abandon Cosima at an orphanage, telling Kriemhild that she was stillborn.<sup>105</sup> This action is motivated by Nele's insecurities and the inflexible barriers of her own identity. To accommodate Cosima, Nele would have to expand and change her own identity, to welcome Cosima into her family, and as such, move further away from the collectively homogenous identity that she holds of her own culture. By assigning an identity to the newborn Cosima based on her physical appearance, Nele forms assumptions about her yet undeveloped individual identity. Because Nele does not know what kind of a person Cosima will grow up to be, she turns to her understanding of dark skinned people that she has gained from the cultural memory. Since her perception of the indigenous peoples of South West Africa is inherently negative, she views Cosima in a negative light, thus excluding her from her family.

---

<sup>104</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 70.

<sup>105</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 294.

The practise of assigning identity to characters based solely on their physical appearance is not only a German phenomenon within *Der Schrei der Hyänen*; the reader is able to see that indigenous characters are also guilty of this practice. An example of this is the assigning of an identity to the character of Charly, the gender bending female merchant from Germany who recently entered the cattle trade. During the Herero uprising Charly is perceived as male, which leads to her death.<sup>106</sup> Charly is described by the narrator:

Charly war unverheiratet und hatte vier oder fünf schwarze Liebhaber. Sie kleidete sich wie ein Mann, rauche Zigarre und war eine der wenigen Frauen, die nicht als angeworbene Braut nach Südwest gekommen waren, sondern allein und auf eigene Verantwortung.<sup>107</sup>

From this description, the reader is made aware that Charly does not conform to the traditional gender roles of Wilhelminian German society, and that she is somewhat of an oddity in comparison to Arabella's character. Her unique character not only confuses the Herero, but also complicates her relationship with other German settlers. Indeed, Frank is described as only tolerating her because she is German. "Für Frank repräsentierte sie ein Mischmasch aus Verlotterung und der neuen Zeit, die er verabscheute und er duldete seine Nachbarin nur, weil die Weißen in Südwest zusammenhalten mußten."<sup>108</sup>

Through Charly, the reader encounters a character that does not conform to the identity that would be expected of her when using the cultural memory as a guide. When the Herero uprising ensues, captured German soldiers are rounded up by the Herero warriors and readied for execution. Included in this group is Charly. Arabella, knowing that Charly is female and a possible ally during this tumultuous time, pleads with Assa Riuara, the leader of the Herero warrior band, not to execute Charly:

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 91.

Der junge Krieger zog sein Messer und öffnete Dieters Hals. Dann schnitt er Georgs Kehle durch. Schließlich trat er hinter Charly. »Sie ist eine Frau«, rief Arabella. Assa drehte sich zu ihr um. »Sie sieht aus wie ein Mann. « Arabella schrie, kniff die Augen zusammen und preßte sich die Hände auf die Ohren. Sie hörte Blut, das in Luftröhren gurgelte.<sup>109</sup>

Like the man in the travel agency and Nele in the delivery room, Assa makes a judgement based on his perception of Charly; because she fits the mold of a German male character, this identity is assigned to her, which subsequently leads to Assa's legitimization in killing her. Where Arabella is not seen as a threat, Charly who is perceived as a male, is one. The assigned identity given to Charly fits Assa's understanding of German identities, but does not fit the identity that Charly has of herself.

The assumption that Arabella, a traditional feminine character, is not a threat to the Herero could stem from their own culture's perception of the female gender. In Herero culture, the female gender is held in high regard, the Herero woman "beyond milking the cows and attending to her children, did little or no manual labour. Instead of being the drudge and slave of her husband, as is the case with most Bantu tribes, the Herero woman was his pampered pet."<sup>110</sup> Charly, the polar opposite of Arabella, is thus perceived as a threat to the Herero.

With these examples taken together, it becomes apparent that at different periods in time, in both cultures, the process of assigning identity functions the same as each character assigning identity uses *their* cultural memory as a guide. The man in the travel agency, Assa, and Nele, all located in different times and spaces, assign identity to a specific character solely based upon their physical appearance, making use of the stereotypes which they hold

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>110</sup> Silvester and Gewalt, *Words Cannot be Found*, 63.

of alien cultures. The assigned identities in all cases dictate how the characters interact with each other, the expectations that accompany those assigned identities, and the outcome of their dealings. In these cases the outcomes are negative, one resulting in an unsuccessful business transaction, one in the abandonment of a newborn, and the other in the death of an androgynous character.

### **III. 3. Replacing Facets of Cultural Memory with Personal Memory**

Once the individual has gained an understanding of the cultural memory, and has learned how to distinguish between different groups, he or she can advance to a further stage, in which facets of the cultural memory are replaced by personal memory. The individual is able to substitute what he or she learns by replacing information contained within the cultural memory that is either outdated or not completely accurate when compared to the personal experience of the individual. The information that the individual learns is dependent on communication with others, and the observations made through socialization. As Jan Assmann describes:

[D]as individuelle Gedächtnis baut sich in einer bestimmten Person Kraft ihrer Teilnahme an kommunikativen Prozessen auf. Es ist eine Funktion ihrer Eingebundenheit in mannigfaltige soziale Gruppen, von der Familie bis zur Religions- und Nationsgemeinschaft. Das Gedächtnis lebt und erhält sich in der Kommunikation; bricht diese ab, bzw. verschwinden oder ändern sich die Bezugsrahmen der kommunizierten Wirklichkeit, ist Vergessen die Folge. Man erinnert nur, was man kommuniziert und was

man in den Bezugsrahmen des Kollektivgedächtnisses lokalisieren kann.<sup>111</sup>

The characters of Nele and Frank are examples of individuals who are unable to move past their racist sentiments, whereas Arabella shows through her interactions with Eva that the opposite is possible. After the Herero uprising, Arabella is taken prisoner for the intended purpose of being a messenger to the German government: “»Du bleibst am Leben«, sagte Assa, »denn du wirst nach Windhoek gehen und dort erzählen, daß Orlog ist. [...]«”<sup>112</sup> During the initial stages of her capture Arabella is treated like any other prisoner, but with the passage of time, distance from her own culture, and total immersion in Herero culture, Arabella becomes able to shed the confines of the stereotypes governing German-Herero relationships, which have dictated how she acts towards Eva and other Herero up until this point in the narrative. From this, Arabella’s relationship with Eva, Josef’s daughter and maid to Arabella, is transformed into one of friendship, replacing the master-servant dichotomy that existed previously.

Despite Arabella’s total immersion in Herero culture, she is allowed to retain traits and characteristics of her own culture and identity, as is evidenced by the wearing of shoes,<sup>113</sup> while the Herero women are dressed in traditional garb (the Herero traditionally wore sandals made from giraffe skin).<sup>114</sup> Despite being a prisoner, Arabella is fortunate enough to be given enough freedom to accompany Eva as she and the other Herero women searches

---

<sup>111</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 36-37.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-136.

<sup>114</sup> Heinrich Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times: Being the story of South West Africa up to the date of Maharero’s death in 1890*, Translated by Cyril G. Hall. London: Frank Cass. 1966, 45.

for honey (which the Herero mixed with water, and later learned from the Nama how to make honey beer)<sup>115</sup> and other naturally occurring foodstuffs.<sup>116</sup>

During the scavenging trip, their relationship undergoes a final solidification. This is presented in the narrative when Eva asks Arabella to take her unborn child away, the child being the result of Frank raping Eva.<sup>117</sup> After some thought, Arabella concedes that she is not able to do so and has no desire to take the child from her. Arabella then asks Eva why she would ask her such a question. Eva explains that because the child is begotten from Frank, that the child rightfully belongs to Arabella, as Frank did to her through marriage.<sup>118</sup> This exchange is presented to the reader through dialogue, which reveal Arabella's internal thoughts. Arabella is shown to have difficulty understanding what is expected of her: "Arabella wußte gar nicht, wie die Hereros fühlten, und das auch nicht, ob sie ihre Kinder liebten."<sup>119</sup> Through this the reader can see that Arabella struggles to understand the dynamics of Herero culture, and how she is expected to behave in this particular situation. It is interesting that both characters feel an obligation to the other, as it was Frank who raped Eva, and it is Eva who is bearing the child that in all right should have been Arabella's, according to Herero culture. This is a good example of where cultural differences cause some confusion between the two characters, as neither acts as the other expects them to. After some discourse, it is concluded that the child will not be taken from Eva, to which she happily replies: "»Dann werde ich es behalten. «"<sup>120</sup> The communication that takes place between Eva and Arabella fits what Jan Assman describes in building the *individuelle*

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>116</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 148-150.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 152.

*Gedächtnis*. Where Eva communicates with Arabella about Herero traditions and customs, these aspects replace or enhance the previous knowledge that Arabella had of the Herero.

Before arriving at this point of mutual understanding and acceptance, Arabella's perception of Eva and Herero culture as a whole undergoes a change. The narrator reveals Arabella's changing perception when she discovers a change in Eva's physical appearance as she reintegrates into her native culture. "Erst dachte sie, die Vergewaltigung hätte eine Veränderung an Evas Körper bewirkt, aber dann begriff sie, daß sie Eva vorher noch nie nackt gesehen hatte und der Anblick einfach nur ungewohnt war."<sup>121</sup> Arabella's perception of Eva starts to change and deviates from the identity that Arabella previously assigned her. This change in perception is partly due to Arabella's enhanced cultural understanding.

Despite Arabella's increased understanding, Arabella remains unsure how Eva feels toward her, ultimately posing the question "»Haßt du mich? «"<sup>122</sup> to which a verbal answer is not received. Instead, Eva cuts Arabella a piece of *Biltong*<sup>123</sup> and gives her some water. From this it can be surmised that Eva does not hate Arabella outright, but that she is not completely comfortable with the wrong that was done against her. Through this, Arabella assigns a new identity to Eva: victim. At this point, Arabella is not sure how to perceive Eva since multiple changes are occurring simultaneously making it difficult for her to assign a new identity to Eva, namely rape, immersion in Herero culture, pregnancy, and a role reversal in which Eva becomes the *de facto* superior. Arabella can thus perceive Eva in a number of new ways: Herero, a quasi-German because of her prolonged exposure to

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>123</sup> Biltong is dried meat which is usually spiced with salt, pepper, and coriander. Biltong became popular in Southern Africa as settlers had to travel long distances without access to fresh food, or being able to preserve food in another fashion. Biltong became especially popular as the Southern African climate is well suited to producing Biltong, i.e. hot and relative dry in both summer and winter.

German culture, or victim. Spence argues that where there exists a complex framework which makes it difficult to either claim or assign an identity, victimhood will in most cases be assigned, or claimed, as it will appear to be the “loudest” or most easily distinguished identity among many.<sup>124</sup>

Eva is not initially assigned victimhood because shortly after Arabella is taken prisoner, she is bitten by a poisonous snake which leaves her hallucinating and incapacitated. During her hallucinations, Arabella dreams of the different victims that she has witnessed over the past few days, including bloody faces, headless lips, and general sense of suffering. What is interesting about these dreams is that Eva is not directly mentioned or imagined.<sup>125</sup> While recovering, Eva takes care of Arabella and nurses her back to health, an act that is consistent with the earlier role Eva played as servant, but with the confines of her earlier subjugation being lifted, this act takes on a new meaning. If Eva did not care for Arabella on some level, she would have left Arabella to be treated by someone else, or even left her to die. On various occasions Eva functions as interpreter and cultural liaison, explaining to Arabella what is happening around her. Despite Eva’s strength, and seemingly independent character, victimhood is ultimately assigned to her as she is brutally murdered by her fellow Herero women, who have become aware of the unborn *bastard* child in Eva’s womb.

This victimhood can be argued to be only assigned by Arabella, who from her perspective does not understand why Eva is murdered by her fellow Herero.<sup>126</sup> Eva’s assigned identity of victim is the result of two factors. First, Eva was raped by Frank and

---

<sup>124</sup> Donald P. Spence, “Narrative Truth and Identity Formation: Abduction and Abuse Stories as Metaphors.” *Narration, Identity, and Historical Consciousness*. Ed. Jürgen Straub. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 120-132, 121.

<sup>125</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 139.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-155.

second, Arabella feels some guilt and responsibility for the rape because Frank was her husband. Eva's murder because of the child that she carries in her womb serves to heighten the sense of guilt and responsibility that Arabella feels. In line with Spence's arguments regarding victimhood identity, it is also possible that Arabella is subconsciously grateful that Eva's fate was not her own, adding to the guilt that Arabella already feels towards Eva. Spence argues that in cases such as these, where the person assigning the identity of victim allows the individual perceived as the victim certain lapses and leeway, which would not be afforded to someone that is not being perceived as a victim.<sup>127</sup> Where someone with Arabella's cultural background, and place in colonial German society, probably would have expected their former servant to continue their obedience and loyalty toward them, Arabella does not expect this, rather being afraid of how Eva now perceives her.

Assa explains to Arabella that Eva's death is legitimized by the fact that she carried Frank's bastard child within her.<sup>128</sup> This is explained to Arabella as she is outraged and puzzled by what has happened while she is trying to help Eva while she bleeds profusely from her stomach.<sup>129</sup> During this scene Arabella is filled with a sense of duty towards Eva and acts instinctually to help save her friend, not because of guilt dominating her actions, rather a sense of duty that stems from love and friendship. The friendship between Arabella and Eva is solidified by the narrator who refers to Eva as Arabella's "*Freundin*".<sup>130</sup> There are several factors at play during this scene which must be taken into account. The Herero are unable, and unwilling to accommodate Eva's unborn child within their collective, as they perceive this to be a threat to their collective identity as Assa explains to Arabella.

---

<sup>127</sup> Donald P. Spence. "Narrative Truth and Identity Formation", 121.

<sup>128</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 154.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-154.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

Despite the threat that Eva's unborn child represents, the Herero adopt aspects of German identity regardless of their opposition to it. The permeation of aspects of German culture infiltrating Herero culture is made apparent by Assa as he is wearing a white shirt, trousers, and carrying a gun during these events, in contrast to traditional Herero clothing that typically consisted of "[...] tanned skin of goats, sheep, and other wild animals".<sup>131</sup> The wearing of European style clothing and the brandishing of a firearm shows how aspects of alien cultures, and group identities, eventually spill over into another group identity even if it seeks to remain *pure* and homogeneous.

This is consistent with the arguments that Schöpflin makes, suggesting that despite collective trying to maintain themselves by the exclusion of other identities, cultural exchanges and reciprocity does occur as two opposing collectives will adopt facets of each other's identities over time.<sup>132</sup> There are multiple perspectives from which the reader can analyze the relationship that develops between Arabella and Eva after the Herero uprising, including different motives for the development of their friendship. Perhaps Arabella subconsciously, or through the realization that she is dependent upon Eva, develops her friendship with Eva because she can only stand to benefit from Eva's help. Examples of Arabella becoming dependent on Eva's grace is presented in the narrative as Eva provides Arabella with food and water, and nurses her back to health. Arabella is able to accept Eva as her friend because after her immersion into Herero culture, Arabella substitutes her own personal experience with Herero culture for that contained in the cultural memory.

Describing the interaction between individual and the collective memory, Halbwachs states:

---

<sup>131</sup> Heinrich Vedder, *South West Africa in Early Times*, 45.

<sup>132</sup> George Schöpflin, "The construction of identity", 3.

While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember. While these remembrances are mutually supportive of each other and common to all, individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them.<sup>133</sup>

This opens the door for the individual's personal experience to take precedent over the memories contained in the collective. By acquiring personal memories, the memories contained in the cultural memory will be overwritten, or forgotten, to help foster the advancement of the individual's understanding or as Aleida Assmann puts it: "Mit dem Verblässen der Gedächtniskultur gewann die persönliche Erinnerung an kultureller Relevanz."<sup>134</sup>

Interestingly, early in the narrative Arabella evaluates the relationships that she shares with both Charly and Eva. "Obwohl Charly sie behandelte wie eine Freundin, hatte Arabella nicht das Gefühl, sich ihr anvertrauen zu können. Dazu gab es zuviel, was Arabella an ihr bewunderte. [...] Natürlich konnte Eva keine Freundin wie Charly sein, aber manchmal fühlte Arabella sich ihr viel näher."<sup>135</sup> This gives the reader the opportunity to see that Arabella, despite being surrounded by a very negative attitude towards the Herero, does not share the same intensity as do others of her culture. Without the confines of Arabella's culture which makes any meaningful friendship between her and Eva taboo, she is able to form a complex yet meaningful friendship with Eva that would not have been possible without the Herero uprising and Arabella's subsequent capture.

It is sad to note that because of the complex relationship illustrated within the narrative between German and Herero society that their friendship could not have flourished in either culture at that time, because members from both societies would have perceived

<sup>133</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 48.

<sup>134</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, 95.

<sup>135</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 91-92.

their friendship as taboo and unnatural. Without the confines that her culture places upon her, Arabella is able to replace aspects of her cultural memory with personal memories, thus moving past the stereotypes and assigned identities that she, and her culture, had once assigned to Eva and other Herero. By moving past those assumptions and stereotypes, Arabella manages to adapt the identity that she assigns to Eva, and manages to build an elaborate and much more equal relationship with her.

#### **III.4. Moving Towards a Unique Individual Identity**

With the acquisition of the cultural memory, the individual becomes able to distinguish between members of different groups. The process, through which the individual assigns identities to other individuals from their own, and different groups, depends on the use of stereotypes, which can sometimes be negative in nature as is highlighted by characters like Frank and Nele within the narrative of *Der Schrei der Hyänen*. By knowing who does and does not belong to an individual's group, the individual moves towards fostering an understanding of his or her own group, and by proxy other groups as well.

Arabella arrives in German South West Africa without much knowledge of the country and its peoples, but through the sharing of knowledge, and stereotypes, with her cultural peers, she learns through the cultural memory and eventually is able to assign identities to members of the Herero culture. Frank and Nele are examples of individuals within the narrative who rely heavily on the assigning of identity to members of foreign cultures to legitimize their cross-cultural interaction. Unlike Arabella though, Nele and

Frank are much more conservative in their sentiments towards the Herero as they close themselves to developing their own sentiments regarding the Herero, and choose to rely on the negative stereotypes contained within the cultural memory to govern their interactions with members of Herero culture.

By becoming familiar with the numerous stories, myths, sentiments, and morals contained within the cultural memory, Arabella becomes able to form a concept and understanding of her collective memory. She becomes able to meta-reflect upon her individual and group identity and embark upon the process of differentiating herself from her group. In this process, she will evaluate the various sentiments contained within the group, and decide whether or not those sentiments are necessarily the ones that she subscribes to, and if not, form new views to replace those which she does not find agreeable.

From this, the reader is able to see how an individual has the opportunity to become familiar with cultural memory and form assumptions. He or she can exclude those who do not belong to his or her own cultural group and through this process form a unique individual identity. Through this process the reader can discern how some sentiments contained in the cultural memory become outdated and over time become less agreeable as more and more individuals construct identities that incorporate moderate sentiments towards race, politics, and equality.

#### IV. Individual Identity Construction in *Ein unsichtbares Land*

The second step of identity construction that is examined is the intermediary stage in which the individual looks to the collective and starts to form a unique individual identity. This stage is contingent upon the individual having a basic understanding of the collective identity and the memories contained in the cultural memory. In Stephan Wackwitz's *Ein unsichtbares Land* (2003) the narrator confronts the group identity through the family memories which span roughly 100 years. The materials examined by the narrator include family photographs and the memoirs of the author's grandfather, Andreas Wackwitz that move the overall narrative away from factuality, and further into non-fiction by the narrator's toying and reinterpretation of materials and memories. This is keeping with the genre of *Generationenromanen* as Eigler argues, which is characterized by the grandchildren examining their familial "[...] Vergangenheit in Form von Briefen, Fotos und Tagebüchern".<sup>136</sup>

In the memoirs, the narrator finds stories that his grandfather recorded, of which some are fairly straight forward and believable. Other stories however, are harder to believe and straddle the line between truth and fiction as the narrator imagines and reinterprets memoir excerpts. Through this, the reader can see how stories are adjusted to fulfill a need, i.e. to make someone appear more courageous than what they actually were, or make a mundane anecdote more interesting. Contained in these stories are the sentiments of Andreas Wackwitz, the grandfather of the narrator. The narrator at times comments on his grandfather's sentiments, through which the reader is able to see how some of those sentiments have become outdated, and can today be perceived as racist and nationalistic.

---

<sup>136</sup> Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende*, 9.

The narrator's understanding of the past is altered through the rediscovery of his grandfather's memoirs, but the narrator's interpretation of the past is also liable to inaccuracy as he takes liberty in imagining details of events presented in the memoirs. The imagination of the narrator is motivated by the rediscovery of his father's long lost camera that was confiscated by British sailors at the outbreak of World War II. Neither the narrator or his father, Gustav Wackwitz, are certain as to the contents of the camera, but with the aid of the memoirs, the narrator places the camera at key points in his grandfather's life and imagines moments in time that the camera may have captured.

With the exploration of his grandfather's memoirs, the imagined photographs contained in the rediscovered camera, and the analysis of his grandfather's sentiments, the narrator is able to continue his identity development. The narrator finds sentiments in his grandfather's memoirs that he does not agree with, and comments on his reactions when discovering those sentiments. By disagreeing with the sentiments contained in his grandfather's memoirs, the narrator differentiates himself from his grandfather, thus creating a unique individual identity. The process of remembering and forgetting aspects of his familial past, and imagining possible photographs further serve to aid the narrator in his differentiation from the collective identity.

#### IV.1. *Ein unsichtbares Land* as Non-Fiction

The narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* is written from the perspective of a German man in his 50s, reflecting upon his life lived thus far, and the role that his grandfather has had, and continues to have in his life. The author, Stephan Wackwitz, uses multiple excerpts from his grandfather's meticulously kept memoirs to create a literary world in which the narrator explores the differences between himself and his grandfather. These materials coupled with the narrator's own memories form the basis from which the narrator is able to examine the cultural memory, collective identity, and the character of his grandfather. As Aleida Assmann points out in her analysis of the narrative, the narrative becomes a therapeutic tool to help the narrator understand the complexities contained within the relationships with his grandfather and the past.<sup>137</sup> This form of narrative is not atypical to the genre of the German generational novel, though *Ein unsichtbares Land* challenges the definitions of fiction and autobiography. Horstkotte points out that: "If there is such a thing as the new German family novel, the genre occupies an uneasy position between fictionality and referentiality."<sup>138</sup> In this sense, the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* can perhaps best be regarded as a mixture of the contemporary German *Generationenroman* with Freud's *Familienroman*, the latter playing a lesser role in the overall narrative structure.<sup>139</sup>

Freud's notion of a *Familienroman* or *family romance* is explored in his 1908 title *Der Familienroman der Neurotiker*. In this work Freud surmised that children often have fantasies in which their parents are replaced by more notable, reimagined versions of

---

<sup>137</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 94.

<sup>138</sup> Silke Horstkotte, "'Ich bin ins Reich der Toten geraten': Stephan Wackwitz and the New German Family Novel." *New German Literature: Life Writing and Dialogue with the Arts*. Eds. Julian Preece, Frank Finlay and Ruth J. Owen. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 325-342, 325.

<sup>139</sup> Simone Costagli and Matteo Galli, "Chronotopoi. Vom Familienroman zum Generationenroman." *Deutsche Familienromane*. Eds. Simone Costagli and Matteo Galli. München: Fink, 2010. 7-20, 10, 15.

themselves. The child's imagination comes to expand on reality where his or her family is richer, more famous, and more powerful than what they are in reality.<sup>140</sup> This plays a role in the identity development of the individual as they examine their familial unity and gains an understanding of how his or her family fits into the larger collective, asking questions about the importance of wealth, power, and influence, i.e. "do *we* have any?"

Donald E. Polkinghorne points out that "[i]n narrative therapy, clients are viewed as understanding themselves as the protagonist of a narrative".<sup>141</sup> Aleida Assmann argues that both the narrator and Andreas are protagonists within the narrative,<sup>142</sup> which is partly true, but the friction that exists between grandfather and grandson produces a relationship akin to that between protagonist and antagonist. Viewing the narrator as protagonist produces a problem, which Polkinghorne points out as: "The passage of time erodes a person's narratively constructed identity, making it necessary to reconstruct it time after time"<sup>143</sup> As identities are constantly in flux, a character's identity at one point in time is not the same as it is in another point in time. As such, the interactions that the protagonist of the narrative has with other characters, their sentiments towards values, stories, and notions that exist in the cultural memory will differ at different points in time. This is present in *Ein unsichtbares Land* as the narrator looks back on his life from the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because his identity at that time is not the same as what it was in the 1960s and 1970s, the literary representation that the narrator frames of himself, at that time, becomes a reinterpretation of his previous identity and sentiments towards the past.

---

<sup>140</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *An Invisible Country*, Translated by Stephan Lehmann. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2005, 246.

<sup>141</sup> Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness." *Narration, Identity, and historical Consciousness*. Ed. Jürgen Straub. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 3-22, 15.

<sup>142</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 81.

<sup>143</sup> Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness", 14.

Therefore, the “historical” sources that the author cites in the narrative lose some of their truth-value as they help to create a work of fiction, in which the narrator perceives aspects of the past from a contemporary view that has been influenced by the narrator’s reflective identity development up until the time that the narrative is created. The reader can regard the narrative to be non-fiction as it includes aspects of the Wackwitz family history which is elaborated and partly imagined by the narrator and his grandfather. Examples of narrative fragments which are liable to reinterpretation within the text include the Wackwitz family’s exodus from South West Africa<sup>144</sup> at the outbreak of World War II.<sup>145</sup> Despite the elaborated narrative fragments, the narrative does contain *true* facets of the family history which is recorded in the memoirs. To help clarify the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, Dorrit Cohn argues that

History is more often concerned with humanity in the plural than in the singular, with events and changes affecting entire societies, than those affecting the lives of individual beings. [...] Indeed, one of the distinctions of fictional as compared to historical narrative is that the former is able to make an entire life come to life as a unified whole in a short span of story time [...].<sup>146</sup>

Horstkotte, in addition, argues that narratives such as *Ein unsichtbares Land* are the product of the transition between the social or communicative memory models to a more political or purely collective memory, using the Assmann framework.<sup>147</sup> From this, the narrator perceives his grandfather as symbolizing the past and the collective identity that existed before World War II in Germany. Because Andreas Wackwitz is no longer alive and able to communicate with the narrator personally, their communication takes place through

---

<sup>144</sup> The country ceased to be *German* South West Africa in 1915 when South African troops invaded and claimed the territory in the name of the British Empire. South Africa continued to administer the country until it became independent and assumed the name Namibia in 1990.

<sup>145</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 26-34.

<sup>146</sup> Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, 18.

<sup>147</sup> Silke Horstkotte, “Ich bin ins Reich der Toten geraten”, 326.

his memoirs. This falls within the political or collective memory spheres, moving away from the communicative memory that takes place between living entities.

#### IV.2. Collective Identity in *Ein unsichtbares Land*

In the early stages of the narrative, the narrator recounts his youth and how he had a difficult time making sense of his grandfather who would sit at the breakfast table whimpering, but on other occasions would be much more composed.<sup>148</sup> The representation of his grandfather effectively having a dual persona relates to the narrator holding him as symbolizing the pre-war world. The whimpering in the presence of his grandchildren can be interpreted to mean that the collective identity that existed before World War II occupies a submissive position in the presence of the post-war collective identity, complicated by notions of trauma, guilt, and remorse. By framing his grandfather in this light, the narrator confronts the collective identity as he confronts the character of his grandfather:

Kinder wollen zum Beispiel zuverlässig wissen und in der Schule lernen, wie groß ihr Land ist. Unseres aber schien keine ordentlichen Grenzen zu haben wie andere Länder. Es endete an gepunkteten, merkwürdig unzurechnungsfähigen Linien, in Landstrichen, wohin man nicht fahren konnte und von denen niemand eine Vorstellung hatte, trotz der erdkundlichen Lehrfilme, beispielsweise über die »Kurische Nehrung«, die wir in der Schule manchmal sehen dürfen[.] [...] Viel von dem dramatischen Autoritätsverlust, den Schule und Republik nicht sehr viel später erlitten, scheint mir im Rückblick auf solche Vorführungen zurückzugehen. Die sagten nicht nur nie etwas beim Frühstück. Die konnten uns nicht einmal zuverlässig beibringen, wie groß unser Land war.<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>148</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 20.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

The maps that the narrator describes are akin to the memory aids that Jan Assmann describes to help remind members of a society of something important in their past.<sup>150</sup> In this case, the memories that the maps evoke are not necessarily memories that the culture is proud of, but they do become memory aids which remind the culture of their tumultuous past in the first part of the twentieth century. At this point in time, the memories that the maps embody are not yet promoted to the level where their sanctity would be embodied in national monuments, rather at this stage West German society is still on the level of using more basic and less intrusive memory aids as reminders of the recent past. Perhaps society is not ready to erect national monuments at this point in time, but reminders that are embodied in everyday items serve to remind members of the society of their past.

By having a map in the classroom which displays West German borders after World War II, it serves as a constant reminder of World War II and the complexity it caused in the post-war German world as Germany occupies a strained position within Europe: divided between the Western and Soviet spheres of influence. The narrator depicts himself as being critical of his teachers and the rest of society, whom he perceives as being unable to give definite answers to even the most basic questions. This criticism signals the narrator's departure from simply being aware of the cultural memory and the collective identity, with the posing of critical questions relating to the past, the cultural memory, and the collective identity. Through this criticism, the narrator takes the first steps in differentiating himself from the collective and creating a unique personal identity.

Going beyond the maps in the classroom, the narrator alludes to his grandfather in this critical excerpt, who comes to represent the collective identity of the older generation of Germans who were born before World War II. As Andreas becomes the embodiment of the

---

<sup>150</sup> Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 8.

past, and everything that the narrator perceives critically in his youth, the relationship between grandfather and grandson becomes more than two family members struggling to get along. Their relationship is transformed into an allusion the past is intruding upon, and having limited interaction with the present. This notion is strengthened by the narrator recounting how his grandfather wanted nothing to do with him:

[...](das Ende der Nachkriegszeit in Deutschland ist gerade an solchen Nebensächlichkeiten sichtbar geworden: dass Familien sonntags manchmal zum Mittagessen ins Restaurant gingen; dass Frauen so kurze Röcke trugen, als wären sie kleine Mädchen; und dass Männer mit Kindern spielten.) Mein Großvater aber wollte nichts mit mir zu tun haben.<sup>151</sup>

Both the narrator and his grandfather are present in the same space at the same time; however their interaction is very strained and limited. This reflects the two *worlds* that are present in the same space, but despite the post-war world reaching out and wanting to understand what came before it through the narrator, the pre-war world resists and wants nothing to do with the post-war world, as symbolized by Andreas keeping a distance from his grandson. The friction that exists between the narrator and his grandfather leads to what Anna Rutka points out to be the prevention of the Nation (collective identity) as recounted in a heroic or favourable light by the narrator.<sup>152</sup> The narrator is prevented from looking at his grandfather's generation as being role models for his own character's development, rather turning his grandfather and his generation into anti-role models against whom the historical version of the narrator in the 1960s and 1970s rebels against, wanting to be as different from them as possible. This rebellion is represented in the narrative when the narrator becomes politically involved during his university studies:

---

<sup>151</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 22.

<sup>152</sup> Anna Rutka, "Erinnern als Dialog mit biographischen Texten.", 117

Übrigens würde ich, so wenig ich es an jenem Oktobermorgen schon wusste, vergeblich alles ganz anders zu machen versuchen. Ich würde einen Großteil meiner kostbaren Studienjahre durch die Mitgliedschaft in einem jener karnevalistisch-kommunistischen Kampfbünde versauen, eine freiwillige Sklaverei, die ich auf mich nahm, Weltläufigkeit und Freiheit in den Wind schlagend. Ein verlorenes halbes Jahrzehnt in einem Alter, in dem einzelne Jahre länger und wichtiger sind als halbe Jahrzehnte in meinem.<sup>153</sup>

The historical Stephan Wackwitz's rebellion is characterized by stating openly that he wants to be nothing like his grandfather.<sup>154</sup> One way in which the presently located narrator achieves this is by outlining the shortcomings of his grandfather in the narrative as he continues to reflect upon the memoirs and the narrator's personal remembrances. By representing his grandfather's shortcomings, the narrator builds a type of monument which will remain in the narrative to remind the reader of the past, the pre-war collective identity, and the conflicts which arose during that time. By building these monuments, the narrator also reminds himself of his grandfather and the past, solidifying his perception of his grandfather's identity.

From the narrator's rebellion against his grandfather and the world that he represents, it becomes apparent that the narrator in the twenty-first century possesses an understanding of the cultural memory and the collective identity that is created from the cultural memory. By looking at the uncertain responses of his school teachers, the complexity of the post-war world that the maps in the classroom represent, and the whimpering of his grandfather at the breakfast table, the recounting narrator distinguishes himself, and his historical self, from the collective. This allows for the distinction of the narrator's individual identity from that of the collective and that of his grandfather. The unique individual identity that the narrator

---

<sup>153</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 58.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

creates for himself remains functional and relatable to the collective identity, despite its deviations and differences.

### IV.3. Forging a Unique Individual Identity

Maurice Halbwachs asserts that human consciousness is dependent on socialization and communication between the individual and the group.<sup>155</sup> Building upon this sentiment, Aleida Assmann expands this concept to mean that an individual who has been isolated for his or her entire life would not be able to possess a consciousness, nor the ability to recall memories.<sup>156</sup> From this, one must extrapolate that how an individual perceives his or her world, and themselves, is a product of his or her collective. Thus, it can be understood that “[...] people construct their identities through social interaction and repeated self-reflection, which means that to a large extent identity becomes something unique to the individual”.<sup>157</sup>

The narrator’s desire to differentiate himself from his grandfather thus relies upon reflection about the collective identity and the identity of his grandfather. Lindgren and Wåhlin term this form of identity development *reflexive identity development* and state that “reflexivity is revealed when they articulate their narratives in interaction with others”.<sup>158</sup> The interaction that takes place in the narrative is not between the narrator and another character, rather the interaction that takes place in the narrator’s reflexive identity development is contained between the narrator and the reader.

---

<sup>155</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 35.

<sup>156</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 25.

<sup>157</sup> Lindgren and Wåhlin, “Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals”, 358.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

The communication between the narrator and reader focuses upon the narrator describing the character of his grandfather, who is presented in the narrative as a rigid individual, which one can best describe as bureaucratic, racially prejudiced, and nationalistic. Aleida Assmann describes Andreas Wackwitz: “Nach dem Krieg ging der Krieg für ihn weiter; er kämpfte im Kapp-Putsch mit, seine Einstellung glitt mit der Radikalisierung der Geschichte «vom deutschnational Illusionären ins schon ganz unverschämt und ungebremst Nationalsozialistische» hinüber.”<sup>159</sup> Andreas’ acceptance of the rise of National-Socialism is illustrated in the narrative by incorporating an excerpt from his memoirs in which he states: “Rückschauend frage ich wiederum: ist es ein Wunder, daß alle, die wie ich sie erwartet hatten und von ihr dann bitter enttäuscht wurden, - und das waren wir alten Frontsoldaten fast alle – 15 Jahre später dann glaubten, nun sei es soweit?”<sup>160</sup>

The sense conveyed to the reader by this excerpt is that Andreas felt that his generation’s time for greatness had finally come, echoing the general feeling of his generation, whose disappointment after World War I served to welcome Hitler’s rise to power. This yearning for adventure and greatness, which in his own eyes he still had not achieved, motivated Andreas to leave Germany at the time of Hitler’s rise, to search for adventure in South West Africa. It is explained from the narrator’s twenty-first century point of view that Andreas’ life was one filled with setbacks and personal disappointment. This disappointment started early in his life as he desired to become a Prussian District Officer, which is described in the narrative as the highest position in the Prussian civil service, having bearing over almost all proceedings within a district, including police

---

<sup>159</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 82.

<sup>160</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 104-105.

administration.<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately for Andreas, reaching this post would never be possible for him as his father was unable to finance the schooling which would have made this possible,<sup>162</sup> and the position ceased to exist after World War I. The narrator speculates that because this desire goes unfulfilled throughout his life, that Andreas subconsciously sought to fill the void left by never attaining this position through other avenues.

Noch vor dem Eintritt in irgendeine Laufbahn befand sich der junge Mann vor einem Paradox: Der Staat, dem sich zur Verfügung zu stellen er sehnlich wünschte, schloss ihn, noch ehe er Gelegenheit gehabt hätte, sich zu bewähren oder seine Eignung unter Beweis zu stellen, vor der Stellung, in der staatlich Autorität sich am glänzendsten verkörperte, von vorneherein aus.<sup>163</sup>

The narrator notes that this unfulfilled desire greatly influenced his grandfather's life. Through becoming a protestant preacher, and spending a prolonged time in South West Africa, Andreas does in one way or another become similar to a Prussian District Officer in that he is able to advise members of his congregation, and wield a form of soft power and influence in his community: "[...] in der Erinnerung an den jungen Mann, der er einmal war, ist ihm unter der Hand selber klar geworden, dass er damit dann doch noch eigentlich so etwas wie ein preußischer Landrat gewesen ist."<sup>164</sup>

Despite Andreas being a man of God, the narrator chooses to highlight his grandfather's racial insensitivity. To convey this message to the reader, an excerpt from Andreas' memoirs in which he recounts a vacation in the United States is included in the narrative: "Wenn bei einer Gesamtbevölkerung der Vereinigten Staaten von 200 Millionen

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 43.

20 Millionen Neger sich fast sämtlich in den großen Städten zusammenballen, so kann das bei dem erheblichen Zivilisations- und Bildungsgefälle nicht gutgehen.“<sup>165</sup>

By framing Andreas as an individual who personally wanted to achieve distinction, sympathized with National Socialism, spent time in a foreign land, and became a community leader through his position as a preacher, the narrator paints a complex picture of his grandfather's identity when coupled with descriptions of him trembling in his grandchildren's presence. Kenneth J. Gergen argues that “once defined by the storyteller, the individual (or entity) will tend to retain his or her identity or function within the story.”<sup>166</sup> The narrative that is created by Stephan Wackwitz is however, more complex than that. Through the structure of a *Generationenroman*, more and more details from different points in time are incorporated into the narrative to help the reader perceive changes and complexities in the identities of both Andreas and the narrator.

Building on the historical version of the narrator's sentiments that he wants to be nothing like his grandfather, he is met with ironic disappointment when he, the reflecting narrator who is in his middle age, reflects his identity against that of his grandfather and discovers that the two Wackwitz men are not as different as a younger version of the narrator would have hoped for. Aleida Assmann describes the narrator/Stephan Wackwitz succinctly:

Der Enkel Stephan Wackwitz gehört der 78er Generation an; er ist 1952 in Stuttgart geboren und wurde bereits zu Schulzeiten vom Sog der 68er Bewegung fasst. Während seines Studiums der Germanistik und Geschichte war er Mitglied des Studentenbunds MSB Spartakus, einer Organisation, in der er, wie er schreibt, fünf entscheidende Jahre seines Lebens verloren hat. [...] Der zum ironischen Pragmatiker und freien Schriftsteller mutierte Wackwitz hat fast ausschließlich im Ausland gearbeitet; seit 1999 leitete er das Goethe-Institut in Krakau, wo er seinen

---

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>166</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen. “Narrative, Moral Identity, and Historical Consciousness”, 102.

Familienroman schrieb; 2006 hat er das Goethe-Institut in Bratslava übernommen.<sup>167</sup>

By finding similarities between himself and his grandfather, the narrator inadvertently portrays the similarities between them to the reader which ultimately influences the conclusion that despite their different places in history, their identities are similar. Both men devoted some of their youthful energies to organizations and causes which they thought would change their world for the better, and through their involvement in these organizations they would prove their mettle.

To further add to the irony, the recounting narrator realizes similarities between himself and Andreas as well, and points them out:

Die Erinnerungen meines Großvaters über den Rückzug aus Frankreich am Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs habe ich inzwischen so oft gelesen, dass die Gedanken und Formulierungen des zweiundzwanzigjährigen Leutnants so etwas wie meine eigenen geworden sind, etwas, von dem ich nicht mehr weiß, ob ich es erlebt, gelesen oder als Kind gehört habe – oder ob es nicht in Wirklichkeit mit anderen Erbanlagen, Fehlern und Begabungen auf mich gekommen sein könnte: eine große Nase, eine Vorliebe für Havanna-Zigarren, eine Neigung zu frühem Grauerwerden und ein Weltkrieg.<sup>168</sup>

In addition to the similarities that the narrator conveniently points out to the reader, the reader can find other similarities in the form of the narrator serving a self-imposed exile in Japan,<sup>169</sup> similar to Andreas, who during the interwar years, relocated his family to South West Africa to lead a parish.<sup>170</sup>

By evaluating his grandfather's identity and place in history, the historical Stephan Wackwitz attempts to take action in living his life differently to that of his grandfather. He feels that leaving Germany and spending time away from his own culture would give him

<sup>167</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 82.

<sup>168</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 101-102.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

distance and time to escape the memories of his grandfather. Ironically, the narrator's actions in leaving Germany and joining a communist organization drive his character closer to that of his grandfather. The groups that the narrator chooses to join and the destinations he travels to might very well be different than the organizations and destinations favoured by his grandfather, but the actions remain fundamentally the same. Both characters join organizations that they identify with, and leave their native Germany in search of adventure. This fits Lindgren & Wåhlin's statement: "Reflexive identity construction can be described metaphorically as a journey in both time and space, suggesting that we need to travel to other places in order to understand ourselves better and to discover more about who we are."<sup>171</sup>

Despite the similarities that exist between the historical Stephan Wackwitz and the recounting narrator to that of Andreas, key differentiating features exist within the narrative, which drives the reader to the understanding that both entities are distinct from each other. Returning to the example of Andreas recounting his time in the United States, the recounting narrator describes his reaction to reading those sentiments in his grandfather's memoirs: "1974, wenn ich diese Abschnitte damals zu Gesicht bekommen hätte, würde ich wohl nur die Augen verdreht haben [...]"<sup>172</sup> From this the reader becomes aware that the narrator does not share his grandfather's racial views, instead he finds Andreas' sentiments immature and outdated, even during the mid-1970s. Despite this however, the narrator does not openly criticize Andreas' sentiments, and only distances himself by stating his muted response to those sentiments.

---

<sup>171</sup> Lindgren and Wåhlin, "Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals", 370.

<sup>172</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 162.

Anna Rutka points out that the narrator only possesses rudimentary memories of his grandfather.<sup>173</sup> This is admitted by the recounting narrator, which opens the door for the reader to realize that much of the memories that the narrator recounts of his grandfather are partly invented as he reads through his grandfather's memoirs. This gives credibility to Polkinghorne's notion of time eroding a narratively constructed identity. With the passage of time, and the reconstruction of Andreas' character through the rudimentary memories that the recounting narrator possesses, coupled with those contained in the memoirs, the narrator is able to (re)-construct a character for Andreas that would allow the recounting narrator to increase his uniqueness in relation to his grandfather. To further strengthen this argument, Rutka points out that the narrator does not make use of true primary sources such as letters or diaries, but rather memories already reflected upon and contained within Andreas' memoirs.<sup>174</sup> This further muddies the reliability and therefore the historical value of the memories contained within the narrative as events have effectively been influenced by two separate perceptions before reaching the reader.

The reader's perception of Andreas as a source of negativity is strengthened by the inclusion of photographs in the English version of the text which depict him as being very stern and serious. This sentiment is augmented by Andreas posing in his military uniform on page 110 of the English version, and a photograph on page 111 with his wife, where his facial expression is the same serious one in both photographs. This sense of sternness (and possible negativity) is heightened by Andreas' wife standing beside him with a noticeable smile.<sup>175</sup> In line with Lindsay Smith's arguments relating to photography theory, the narrator

---

<sup>173</sup> Anna Rutka. "Erinnern als Dialog mit biographischen Texten.", 115.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>175</sup> These photographs can be seen in the English translation from page 110 to page 113. The only picture of Andreas Wackwitz included in the German paperback edition is found on page 218, showing him with a

uses real photographs to not only paint a desired picture of his grandfather in the psyche of the reader, but also to help fill a void which allows the narrator to mourn<sup>176</sup> past histories, and possible futures that were lost to the Wackwitz family as a result of war and other hardships. These photographs help fuel the sense that the narrative's complexity can be partly attributed to Freud's notion of the *family romance*, which coupled with the narrator's "wortreicher essayistischer Stil"<sup>177</sup> encourages the reader perceive the narrative to be more *important* and fantastical than what it really is.

The narrative contained in *Ein unsichtbares Land* is not one that can be said to be of fundamental importance to the German people or their society as a whole, as Andreas and the members of his family are not depicted as having done anything overly heroic or out of the ordinary. The author portrays a fairly simple story of a seemingly tyrannical grandfather who views his grandchildren with disdain to be more complex and of higher importance within the text than what it might be in reality. The narrative that the author creates plays on his own views and fantasies about his family's past, conveying the importance of the narrator/author's family to have to his own character.

With the reader's perception of friction between the historical narrator and his grandfather that continues in the memories of the recounting narrator, it helps create the perception that the recounting narrator has to some degree managed to forge a unique personal identity. This identity is relatable, and in many ways similar to that of Andreas, but more importantly allows the narrator to feel himself to be unique through the realization that

---

Wildebeest that he shot during a hunt in South West Africa. In this particular photograph, Andreas' face is obscured by the shadow produced from his safari helmet, which possibly conceals a glimmer of delight, but is forever hidden from the eyes of the reader. It is therefore very difficult to definitively argue whether or not he is exhibiting delight at the success of his hunt or not. Instead, the German version of the text relies much more on literary description to convey the character and demeanor of Andreas to the reader.

<sup>176</sup> Lindsay Smith, "Photography Theory." *Year's work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 14 (2006): 134-142, 135.

<sup>177</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 91.

“Es geht schließlich darum zu erkennen, dass man Teil einer Geschichte ist, die man auch anders weitererzählen kann.”<sup>178</sup> This feeling of uniqueness is heightened by the narrator imagining and elaborating on memories contained in the memoirs. The imagination of the narrator which produces nuanced and slightly fabricated replacements for memories contribute to the narrator’s *family romance* that allows him to view his family’s history in a way that is unique to him. This unique view also allows the narrator peering back through time to become different from the other characters in the narrative.

#### **IV.4. Strengthening of Identity through Remembering and Forgetting**

Building upon the narrator’s identity development through differentiating himself from both the collective and his grandfather, the process of identity construction continues with the remembering and forgetting of memories. The processes of remembering and forgetting, described by Aleida Assmann go beyond the process of forgetting that Halbwachs attributes to physical injury.<sup>179</sup> The reality of physical trauma to the brain can be at times attributed to some memory loss in the individual, but beyond physical injury, remembering and forgetting does take place within the individual even when physical trauma does not take place. This phenomenon is more organic and less disruptive to the individual’s interaction with his or her own memories and that contained within the collective.

---

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>179</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 29.

Early in the narrative, the narrator recounts how his father, Gustav Wackwitz, is informed in 1993 by the “Dienststelle für Benachrichtung der Angehörigen ehemaliger Soldaten der Wehrmacht”<sup>180</sup> that the camera which was confiscated from him at the outbreak of World War II is to be returned to him. The narrator recounts how his father had forgotten about the camera that was with the Wackwitz family as they left South West Africa and sought to make their way back to Germany. With this discovery, the narrator and his father speculate about possible photographs contained on the yet undeveloped film in the camera. Included in their speculations are pictures of old buildings in Windhoek, Gustav’s fellow boy scouts, or even pictures of the *Adolph Woermann*, the ship that the Wackwitz family boarded that was disguised as a Portuguese cargo vessel, and that would have taken them, along with other German nationals back to Germany.<sup>181</sup>

The camera plays an important role within the narrative as it fuels the imagination of the narrator. With this, the camera becomes a memory aid, similar to those described by Jan Assmann which serves to remind the narrator of forgotten memories, thus becoming a form of cultural artifact. The recounting narrator later reveals that the contents of the film cannot be developed as the film has expired, leaving the narrator with the imagined images that *could* have been contained on the film, rather than the actual photographs. By incorporating the imagined memories with the memoir excerpts, the narrator transforms his perception of his familial past. An example of this is the morphing of the perception which he has of Andreas as a strict authoritarian individual into a wily Wilhelminian gentleman who smokes cigars with one of his fellow ship abandonees upon the Atlantic Ocean in triumphant fashion.

---

<sup>180</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 12.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.

Ich hätte mir so gewünscht, dass der siebzehnjährige Pfadfinder mit der Kamera in dem Rettungsboot neben der versinkenden »Adolph Woermann« eine Aufnahme von dem Studienrat Dr. Lehfeld und seinem Vater gemacht hätte, wie sie auf den Wellen des Atlantiks schaukelnd ihre Sumatras rauchten. Eine Zigarre auf dem hohen Meer. Diese wilhelminische Nervenstärke, diese Offiziers-Stoa, dieser Weltkriegs-Epikureismus hätte zu den Erinnerungsstücken an meinen Großvater gehört, die ich gern angenommen hätte. Kein Bild würde ich lieber neben die Fotos meines Sohns auf meinem Schreibtisch stellen als das der beiden Männer, Offizier im ersten Krieg vermutlich auch der Dr. Lehfeld, wie sie den eigenen Schiffbruch als rauchende Zuschauer betrachten.<sup>182</sup>

By replacing facets of lost history with fabricated replacements, the narrator produces a plausible, yet slightly fantastic version of what might have happened on the Atlantic Ocean during the Wackwitz exodus from South West Africa. Adhering to Aleida Assmann's model of remembering and forgetting, the act of forgetting memories is a passive occurrence which is partly done through neglect of details associated with memories which are not deemed important at the time. Those neglected memories are replaced with fabricated and elaborated memories through imagination and passive selection<sup>183</sup> which subconsciously serve to enter the final version of history on which the narrator bases his version of the past.

Through the imagined possibilities that are created by the recounting narrator, he embarks on reconstructing the narrative of the familial past through his own imagination and perceptions, leading to what Aleida Assmann terms as “[...] eine Form der historischen Einfühlung, die an Halluzination grenzt.”<sup>184</sup> This fabricated past is analyzed by Horstkotte who describes the narrator's treatment of his familial past:

The past as the narrator accesses it is not impersonal; it is constituted through acts of reading and through visits to memorial sites, and these reconstructive activities are firmly situated in the present and shaped by present interests. The use of retrospective sources introduces alternative

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>183</sup> Aleida Assmann. “Canon and Archive”, 99.

<sup>184</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 87.

viewpoints and the needs of a different present into the narrative, but these are only accessible to the reader through the narrator's overarching perspective, and he wilfully chooses and arranges materials.<sup>185</sup>

Through the reconstruction of the past by arranging materials such as surviving family photographs and the memoir excerpts, the narrator reconstructs the past similarly to how a narrative identity is constantly reconstructed, following Polkinghorne's arguments about narrative identity. Through constantly reconstructing the past, the narrator's perception, with the aid newly *remembered* memories, becomes altered which has bearing on his identity as it is reflected upon with the help of the newly rediscovered memories.

A common theme contained in German *Generationenromane* is the theme of guilt, and the relationship between victim and perpetrator. Narratives that fall into this category usually deal with a family member analyzing and interpreting a father, or grandfather's, involvement in World War II. As such, the narrators in these narratives usually carry with them a facet of guilt and to some degree responsibility for their ancestor's actions that become engrained in their identities. The recounting narrator in *Ein unsichtbares Land* is distinct in this regard, as the Holocaust is only alluded to, but never concretely discussed or analyzed. In the narrative, the Holocaust is "enacted through the recurring motif of haunting and spectrality."<sup>186</sup> Using this representation, the reader can perceive this as the narrator's fragmented memory associated with the Holocaust and World War II. Without exploring this portion of history comprehensively, the narrator undergoes the process of *forgetting*.

This forgetting is not deliberate as such, but follows Aleida Assmann's argument of memories becoming forgotten through neglect. Through this neglect, the narrator reflecting on his life and that of his grandfather from the present, further distinguishes himself from his

---

<sup>185</sup> Silke Horstkotte, "Ich bin ins Reich der Toten geraten", 331.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

grandfather and many of the narrator's own contemporaries who feel markedly more guilt and responsibility towards World War II and the Holocaust. Horstkotte points out that the Wackwitz family are portrayed to be always within the spatial realm of World War II, but not in the temporal realm.<sup>187</sup> This, she states, is because of the age structure of the family. At the outbreak of World War II, Andreas was already too old to participate, and Gustav still too young. In addition to this, Gustav's internment in a Canadian prisoner of war camp guaranteed his non-participation throughout the war. Furthermore, as Horstkotte points out, the narrator's almost total neglect of memories associated with the Holocaust is not necessarily immoral or wrong, as the Wackwitz family history simply has no personal association with that part of German history.<sup>188</sup>

Within the narrative, the narrator states: "Wahrscheinlich ist es den Schriftstellern, den Historikern und überhaupt allen, die mit der Vergangenheit zu tun haben, im Grunde immer darum gegangen, sich von ihr zu distanzieren [...]".<sup>189</sup> This signals that the narrator is aware of the distancing from memories associated with World War II. Thus, the narrator creates his own version of the past, which leaves the reader questioning the motives of this practice, as Paul Ricoeur has done in *Time and Narrative* (1984). Ricoeur states that narrators typically operate in universals, while presenting their own perceptions and opinions as an objective view of historical events.<sup>190</sup> This notion is not lost on the narrator of *Ein unsichtbares Land*, who poses the question of the importance of *truth* himself:

Es war, als könne ich jetzt erst – mithilfe der Bücher von Rorty,  
Habermas und meiner Phantasiebeziehung zu den beiden Professoren;  
zusammen mit meinem fernen Land – verstehen, dass man nicht nur die

---

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>189</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 80.

<sup>190</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. Vol I, 176.

Geschichte, sondern auch die Wahrheit herstellen muss und nicht einfach besitzen kann.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, the reader is able to see that the narrator located in the present is to some extent aware of what he is doing in creating a narrative in which he views his familial past with a new perspective that allows him to partly rewrite, or reinterpret, his familial history that leads him to creating a narrative that is akin to a *Familienroman* in the Freudian sense. The narrative that is created ceases to be purely objective and contains sentiments that are skewed by the narrator to fit his purpose of coming to terms with his identity and his place in his family and broader society. This practice is not unique, and not necessarily wrong, as Ricoeur states that it is impossible to narrate history without a certain point of view,<sup>192</sup> which brings along with it perceptions, judgements, and nuances which makes a certain history useful or acceptable to the collective. Ricoeur does caution however, that altering history for political purposes stands the chance of producing dangerous results.<sup>193</sup> The treatment of memory in the narrative, however, feels organic, and does not leave the reader with the feeling that the author is trying to promote a political agenda.

The narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* does not excuse itself from remembering those who suffered in the Holocaust. What the reader does find, however, is a narrator who composes a narrative about himself, his grandfather, and *his* country. This country, and narrative, is presented to the reader through “[...] niemals als kontinuierliche, sondern immer als fragmentierte und chronologisch hin und her springende Narration.”<sup>194</sup> The

---

<sup>191</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 153.

<sup>192</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 176.

<sup>193</sup> Maureen Junker-Kenny, “Memory and Forgetting in Paul Ricoeur’s Theory of the Capable Self.” *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 203-211, 208.

<sup>194</sup> Simone Costagli, “Family Plots”, *Deutsche Familienromanen: Literarische Genealogien und internationaler Kontext*. Eds. Simone Costagli and Matteo Galli. München: Wilhelm Fink. 2010. 157-168, 162.

meaning of the sense *country* or *Land* becomes expanded in the narrative, which Aleida Assman explains: “Der Titel des Buches *Ein unsichtbares Land* bezieht sich auf die Welt von vorgestern, in der Wackwitz‘ Großvater gelebt hat.”<sup>195</sup> Horstkotte, too, has her own understanding of the narrative’s title, which she describes as possibly meaning the different borders that Germany occupies before and after the World Wars.<sup>196</sup>

Perhaps the country that the narrator refers to is his narratively constructed world, which is impacted by the psychological processes of rediscovering and forgetting memories. The narrator’s present world impacts his identity because his perception becomes altered as he remembers and forgets. Contained in the narrator’s identity are the rules, relationships, and cohesive forces which make his world possible. By changing a facet of his world, the narrator in effect changes a facet of his identity, which is unique to him because of his recollections and understanding of the past.

The identity of Andreas serves as a reference point for the historical version of the narrator, who wishes to be distinct from him. The reader perceives differences between the narrator and his grandfather which fosters the understanding that the narrator has successfully differentiated himself from his grandfather and the collective identity through participation in different political movements, and the desire to be different from his grandfather. Despite this differentiation, the narrator remains a member of the collective, because his individual identity is related to that of his grandfather and the collective as a whole. Were the narrator unable to remain within this framework, it would signal a rapid departure from the cultural norms, morals, ethics, and practices of his culture, which one could describe as an identity problem.

---

<sup>195</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 84.

<sup>196</sup> Silke Horstkotte, “Ich bin ins Reich der Toten geraten”, 331.

## V. Identity Problems in *Ein unsichtbares Land* and *Der Schrei der Hyänen*

Identity construction is a complex process that relies upon the memories, experiences, perceptions, and cultural background of the individual. As such, one cannot predict how an individual will develop his or her identity because there is simply too vast a spectrum of experiences, authentic and imagined, which can be incorporated throughout the process. Out of this process there exists the possibility for individuals to encounter problems with their identity construction, limited in this analysis to two complications: 1) traumatic experiences influencing identity development; 2) incorporating facets from more than one cultural perspective, causing the construction of a hybrid identity.

Trauma, which comes from the Greek and means “wounds”,<sup>197</sup> can have a profound effect on how an identity is developed. Aleida Assmann explains:

Das psychische Trauma geht auf lebensbedrohende und die Seele tief verwundene Erfahrungen von extremer Gewalt zurück, deren Wucht den Reizschutz der Wahrnehmung zerschlägt und die aufgrund ihrer fremdartigen und identitätsbedrohenden Qualität psychisch nicht verarbeitet werden können.<sup>198</sup>

This notion is contained in *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, exemplified by the character of Nele. Her negativity is caused by trauma which she suffers at different times in her life that has an impact on how her identity develops, which influences her ability to form meaningful relationships with other characters contained in the narrative.

The second complexity associated with identity development that is examined, is the concept of hybridization. This complication is less negative in nature, and does not necessarily incorporate violence, or negativity, in its framework. Hybridization depends on the individual incorporating aspects from more than one cultural framework into his or

---

<sup>197</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 93.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

her individual identity. This enables the individual to identify with more than one culture, i.e. moving between cultures, possibly causing frictions as other individuals might not view this as favourable. Within *Ein unsichtbares Land* the historical figure of Rudi Dutschke is presented as forging a hybrid identity within the narrative.<sup>199</sup> In *Der Schrei der Hyänen* this concept is also present as Arabella spends a prolonged period of time within Herero culture, causing her to expand her understanding of this once alien culture, and inevitably incorporating aspects of *their* identity into her own.

### **V.1. Trauma causing Identity Complications**

In the early stages of *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, the reader is influenced by the actions and descriptions of Nele, to perceive her as abrasive, temperamental, and one of the main causes of friction between characters in the narrative. The frictions which Nele causes are partly because of her public persona as a *Senatorin*, strengthened by bearing the family name of the former governor of German South West Africa. Going beyond her public persona that emanates power and authority, the reader develops an understanding that Nele suffers from trauma as the narrative develops, causing her to have difficulty communicating and interacting with other characters.

A major point in the narrative that changes the reader's perception of Nele is when she phones her father, Paul von Kavea, and shares with him the news that her husband has died a heroic death fighting in the early days of World War II:

---

<sup>199</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 257.

Am 2. September 1939 hatte ihn Nele angerufen und ihm den Heldentod ihres Mannes mitgeteilt. Sie hatte nicht geweint. Mitten im Telefonat setzen Neles Wehen ein, aber sie schluckte den Schmerz hinunter und teilte ihm gefühllos mit, daß jetzt ihr Kind auf die Welt kommen würde.<sup>200</sup>

Nele's reaction to her husband's death is not what the reader would typically expect. Instead of crying and overtly displaying her sadness, she communicates the news to Paul matter-of-factly, similar to what one would use to describe the weather. During her communication with Paul, her trauma manifests itself physically as she shuts down emotionally and goes into labour. From this the reader can observe that despite Nele's emotional core shutting down, her body continues to function and experiences the trauma that her emotional core is unable to communicate or process. Aleida Assmann explains: "Die Erinnerung, die nicht ins Bewusstsein findet, ist, wie es heißt, in den Körper eingeschrieben".<sup>201</sup>

This is congruent with Anastasiadis' explanation of psychological trauma:

Undergoing or witnessing a horrific, violent event eventually results in trauma. A traumatic event overwhelms the ego's defense mechanisms and penetrates the protective shield. Traumatic experiences exceed the individual's capacity to cope and create permanent instability. [...] The traumatized individual tries to avoid stimuli associated with the trauma, or he reactivates his experiences in so-called intrusive symptoms, such as nightmares, flashbacks, and psychological reactions when confronted with reminders of the traumatization.<sup>202</sup>

Indeed, the subject of Nele's husband's death is not brought up again, which leaves the reader to assume that Nele never properly grieved for her husband, as she immediately had a newborn child to care for, thus pushing the grieving process into the background. The unprocessed trauma continues to be carried by Nele throughout her life, and not

<sup>200</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 129.

<sup>201</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 94.

<sup>202</sup> Athanasios Anastasiadis, "Transgenerational Communication of Traumatic Experiences", 1.

properly grieving for her husband negatively affected her interaction with other individuals. Her identity also suffers through the unprocessed trauma that she carried, leaving her to create an identity that incorporates a thick outer shell that prevents her from becoming attached to other characters, so that she is less likely to experience such trauma again. This is reinforced by the reality that Nele does not remarry, or become linked with another life partner, as well as her abrupt nature and shortness with other characters throughout most of the narrative.

Nele's emotional unavailability is not only caused by the death of her husband, rather her emotional shortcomings are also the result of the relationship that she shares with Paul. By reflecting on her relationship with her father as her daughter Kriemhild grows, Nele is able to see that Paul was a distant parent throughout her youth. As Anastasiadis claims: "The individual reinterprets the early event in the light of the later one and it acquires a belated traumatic effect."<sup>203</sup> The neutrally located narrator reveals this notion to the reader who is then able to juxtapose the relationship between Paul and Nele, before and after Kriemhild's birth.

Als er bei Nele eintraf, standen Arzt und Hebamme um eine leere Wiege. Nele saß daneben auf einem Schreibtischstuhl, ihre Füße in einer Pfütze. »Sie lehnt jede Hilfe ab«, entschuldigte sich der Arzt bei Paul. Auch ihn wies seine Tochter zurück, als er neben sie trat und ihre nasse Hand in seine nahm. »Ich krieg mein Kind allein«, hechelte sie. Dann holte sie Luft, beugte sich nach vorne und preßte ihre Tochter ins Leben.<sup>204</sup>

From this excerpt, the reader is able to see that Nele is stubborn and very independent.

This independence is a result of the distance that Paul kept from her as she grew up.

---

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>204</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 129-130.

Because Paul was emotionally absent, Nele learned to be independent to the point where it is difficult for her to accept help from others, even where it is necessary.

The notion of trauma develops as the narrator reveals the feelings that Paul has towards Kriemhild:

Mit ihr hatte er die Intensität erlebt, die ihm mit Nele verwehrt geblieben war. Die Freundschaft zu seiner Enkelin überbrückte sein fehlendes Verhältnis zu Nele. Und Nele hatte die Nähe zugelassen. Solange Kriemhild nicht in die Schule ging, war sie oft bei ihm auf dem Land gewesen. Mit ihr blätterte Paul Bilderbücher durch und sang ihr Südwester Lieder vor [...]. Abends lag er vor ihrem Bett und streichelte ihre kleine Hand mit dem Daumen, bis sie eingeschlafen war. Dann schaute er zu, wie sie ruhig atmete, und versuchte sich vorzustellen, was sie im Schlaf sah. Er baute ihr einen Bollerwagen und zählte mit ihr die Wellenringe, die ein Stein schlug, wenn man ihn ins Wasser warf.<sup>205</sup>

This relationship, of which Nele is aware, traumatizes her as she realizes that the relationship that she shared with Paul in her youth could have been closer and more loving. As she realizes this, the trauma sets in, as she realizes that she did not receive the attention that she should have as a child, and that the relationship between her and Paul could have been different. This facet of trauma too becomes engrained in Nele's psyche which again becomes suppressed. Through this more recent trauma, Nele feels that she is inferior in Paul's eyes, and tries to overcome this inferiority by achieving the position of Senator in the German government, similar to the position of Governor that her grandfather held in German South West Africa.

The trauma that Nele develops not only impacts her own identity, but also that of her daughter Kriemhild as some of the trauma that Nele experiences is transferred to Kriemhild. Kriemhild plays a minor, yet important role in the narrative. Within the narrative, Kriemhild represents the trauma that subsequent generations can adopt as they

---

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 130-131.

become traumatized after learning of their ancestors' actions. This occurs when younger generations adopt trauma through the cultural or communicative memory. Sigmund Freud calls this phenomenon an *archaic inheritance* and explains: "A new complication arises, however, when we become aware that there probably exists in the mental life of the individual not only what he has experienced himself, but also what he brought with him at birth, fragments of phylogenetic origin, an archaic heritage."<sup>206</sup>

Within the narrative Kriemhild is described as not being able to learn to swim, or how to play the piano.<sup>207</sup> The way that the narrator frames these realities, with the help of Nele's reaction to Kriemhild's shortcomings, is that Kriemhild is somehow emotionally or mentally underdeveloped. This theme returns in the narrative years later when Cosima's disappearance is orchestrated by Nele. Kriemhild is told that Cosima was stillborn, for which Kriemhild takes personal responsibility after being told that Cosima was stillborn because of complications with the umbilical cord. To this notion she replies: "Dann war ich es ja, die mein Kind umgebracht hat".<sup>208</sup>

The feeling of guilt that Kriemhild assumes causes her to have a complete nervous breakdown, preventing her from interacting with other characters, and from further developing her identity. The *reality* that she is presented with causes her to completely shut down emotionally, as she is unable to process the guilt of what has happened, which transforms into trauma. This emotional trauma is revealed by the narrator as being similar to the struggles she had had earlier in her life when she was unable to learn how to swim or play the piano. This strengthens the connection between her assumed trauma as a child

---

<sup>206</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*. Translated by: Katherine Jones. New York: Vintage Books, 1939, 157.

<sup>207</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 131.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

that is transferred to her from Nele, and the trauma that she undergoes later in life. The assumed trauma impacts the severity to which Kriemhild experiences later trauma in life, as the assumed trauma causes her to feel the effects of this new trauma more severely, causing her inability to overcome the tragedy with which she is presented.

Nele's traumatization continues in the narrative as Paul reveals to her that she is not his biological daughter, and indeed the daughter of Assa Riuara, Paul's Herero enemy during the Herero uprising. "Die Wurzeln ihres Stammbaumes zappelten als Zweige im Wind, sie selbst, Nele von Kavea, war eine Schwarze, eine Negerin."<sup>209</sup> This enlightenment leaves Nele in a very difficult position. Her whole world, and her identity, has been built on a lie, as she has built her identity from a German cultural perspective, viewing the Herero as the *other*. Now she has become the *other*, which complicates her place within the collective identity framework of German culture. The man, who she thought was her father for most of her life, is not her father, and indeed she no longer is who she thought she was. In addition to complicating her identity, Nele is now also faced with the guilt of knowing that Kriemhild did not cheat on her husband, but rather it is Nele's own genetics that caused Cosima's dark complexion, thus having an unnecessarily cruel part in her own daughter's mental breakdown.

Nele's identity crisis plays out at the end of the narrative at Crewo, as all the family secrets and underhanded deeds that were done against Cosima comes to the forefront. Nele, realizing that Cosima is physically, and from an identity standpoint, the woman that she should have been, tells Cosima "»Du bist die Frau, die ich hätte sein sollen«".<sup>210</sup> This sentence represents the feeling that Nele should have been the outcast, had dark skin, and

---

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 293.

possessed an identity that incorporates the reality of Cosima's character. Cosima at first does not know what Nele means, to which Nele responds: "»Mein Vater war Schwarz, nicht deiner«"<sup>211</sup>

Gil Eyal asserts that trauma "distorts the personality of the adult, in extreme cases causing individuals to disassociate and split their personalities. The only way to overcome these problems is to recover the memory of the original trauma and acknowledge it."<sup>212</sup> The reader is able to examine Nele's identity becoming disintegrated, as she continues to use derogatory terms such as *Negerin* to describe herself after learning that Paul is not her father. This shows that she has not shed her ill feelings towards the Herero, despite now having the ability to perceive herself as a part of the Herero culture, and being able to incorporate new aspects into her individual identity. This possibility also has the effect that she no longer feels herself to be authentic to her earlier identity that was based on German culture and collective identity. This new group context that Nele feels she must adhere to, makes it impossible for her to continue perceiving herself as a legitimate member of the German collective. In effect, Nele becomes torn between two worlds and identities, unsure of where she fits.

The disintegration of her identity leads Nele to commit suicide by walking into the burning farmhouse in which she grew up.<sup>213</sup> Nele is unable to morph her identity to include and accommodate aspects of Herero culture into her own, and as such is unable to confront her trauma and overcome it. The numerous sources of guilt and trauma (Paul remaining distant as a parent, playing a major part in Kriemhild's nervous breakdown,

---

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>212</sup> Gil Eyal, "Identity and Trauma: Two Forms of the Will to Memory." *History & Memory* 16.1 (2004): 5-36, 22.

<sup>213</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 296.

and complicating Cosima's life) becomes too much for her to confront and overcome, thus leaving her to commit suicide in dramatic fashion, signaling an end to the conflict contained within the narrative between the two cultural groups.

## V.2. Hybrid Identity Construction

Despite the conflict between German and Herero culture that is inherent in the narrative of *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, another outcome is also possible. In some cases, the individual character is able to incorporate aspects from more than one cultural framework into his or her individual identity, thus creating a hybrid identity. Hybridization is described by Homi K. Bhabha as being a *third space* and defined as: “[...] displac[ing] the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.”<sup>214</sup> Bhabha continues to describe hybridity as being not so much the creation of a distinct third entity from two or more existing entities; rather it's difference towards one through the aid of the other.

Within the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* the narrator incorporates the historical figure of Rudi Dutschke into the narrative and portrays him as representing the third space that Bhabha describes. The historical Rudi Dutschke is well known within German society for his political activity during the 1960s and 1970s. The fictionalized version of the historical Rudi Dutschke is almost entirely the product of the

---

<sup>214</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space”, 211.

author/narrator's imagination as in the narrative, and in history, neither Andreas nor Stephan Wackwitz met, or knew Rudi Dutschke personally, as Horstkotte points out.<sup>215</sup> The narrator frames Dutschke as being among Andreas' congregation in Luckenwalde, East Germany, during the post war years of the 1950s.<sup>216</sup> The narrator incorporates Dutschke into the narrative and frames him as displaying *difference* towards German culture, and continues the practice of placing members of the Wackwitz family in the spatial realm of important parts of German history, and continuing the temporal disconnect.

The narrator frames Dutschke's difference by quoting his wife:

[...] »Wie viele andere, die nicht ganz verdrängen konnten« [...] »hatte Rudi Schwierigkeiten mit seiner Identität als Deutscher. Manchmal resignierte er und glaubte, das Nachdenken über die Nazizeit aufgeben zu müssen. Die Schande war unermesslich groß. Um sich davon distanzieren zu können, bildete er sich ein, daß er ein Jude sei, den die Dutschkes bei sich versteckt hätten. Diese Einbildung stützte er auf die Tatsache, daß er beschnitten war.«<sup>217</sup>

By framing Dutschke's problems with self-identifying as German, relates to Freud's archaic inheritance. Dutschke becomes traumatized by the Nazi past as he discovers facets of history that becomes unthinkable to him because of their absurdity. The trauma causes Dutschke – in the imagination of the narrator – to question the political, societal, and institutional frameworks of society, which Bhabha asserts is one of the motivators for establishing hybridity through the third space.

The literary representation of Dutschke that the reader finds in the Wackwitz text is not portrayed as incorporating aspects of Jewish culture into his own and creating a

<sup>215</sup> Silke Horstkotte, “Ich bin ins Reich der Toten geraten”, 342.

<sup>216</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 49.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 257-258.

hybrid identity by adopting facets of Jewish culture into his own life and identity. Rather, the reader is able to see that the fictionalized Dutschke created by the narrator constructs a version of hybridity in which he retains many of the *German* aspects of the German collective identity, but also as accepting and confronting the wrongs of the past and basing fantasies that play a role on his identity development on possible pasts that might have occurred in his own personal and familial history. The coupling of Dutschke's fantasies with the representation of Dutschke's historical opposition to societal institutions of the day<sup>218</sup> help the narrator to create a fictional character that symbolizes the opposition to the institutions that were preserved through war and the splitting up of Germany by the Allies, and thereby confronting the past that continues to intrude upon the present. The resulting effect is that the narrator, who is able to identify to some extent with both worlds, is caught within the third space created by the opposition between these two worlds.

Like Dutschke who worked to confront what he perceived as presently existing facets of society that needed to be changed, the narrator frames his own historical self as mirroring the actions of his adolescent hero by becoming active in the *Marxistischer Studentenbund Spartakus*.<sup>219</sup> The historical Wackwitz's involvement in this organization reveals that he had adopted aspects of other cultures into his daily life and in opposing what he found unsatisfactory in the world.

So schlüpfen wir in die Rollen der ermordeten jüdischen Könige, gaben ihre Bücher als Raubdrucke heraus, trugen die Lederjacken und Ballonmützen, die wir auf den vergilbten Schwarzweißfotografien

---

<sup>218</sup> Jürgen Miermeister. *Rudi Dutschke*. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986, 73.

<sup>219</sup> The *Marxistischer Studentenbund Spartakus*, was a student movement in West Germany founded on the principles of socialism, preaching solidarity between students and workers, and hoping to bring an end to exploitation throughout the world. The movement sought to confront the past of their parents and make changes to the world that would prevent the atrocities of the World War II from occurring again.

gesehen hatten, nahmen Stimmen an, die ihre hätten gewesen sein können, gründeten Parteien, die hießen wie ihre. Und während alldem beobachteten wie das kleinste Zucken im Gesicht der Mächtigen, immer darauf gefasst, dass sie die Maske fallen lassen, dass sie wieder Goebbels und Hitler werden würden.<sup>220</sup>

By adopting the dress and imitating those that the narrator saw in photographs, he differentiates himself from Andreas and those from his generation. The violence which originates from Andreas' generation that had hoped to exclude the influences of the "ermordeten jüdischen Könige", plays a role in the actions of the historical version of the narrator and Dutschke in choosing to oppose the past through peaceful protest. Dutschke's non-violent roots run deep, emanating from his youth, where the historical Dutschke had refused to join the *Nationale Volksarmee* in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and succeeded in convincing his fellow classmates to abstain from joining to protest against militarism.<sup>221</sup> The historical Dutschke is quoted as saying: "Ich war nicht bereit, in einer Armee zu dienen, die die Pflicht haben könnte, auf eine andere deutsche Armee zu schießen, in einer Bürgerkriegsarmee, und zwar in zwei deutschen Staaten, ohne wirkliche Selbständigkeit auf beiden Seiten, das lehnte ich ab."<sup>222</sup>

Dutschke's non-violent roots can be traced back to his upbringing in a Christian family, which influenced Dutschke's ideologies throughout his life.<sup>223</sup> This notion is contained in the narrative as well, as the reader discovers that Dutschke was a member of Andreas' congregation during the 1950s. Understanding this context of the opposition to institutions, the reader is able to see that the literary, as well as the historical, Dutschke

---

<sup>220</sup> Stephan Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land*, 268-269.

<sup>221</sup> Jürgen Miermeister, *Rudi Dutschke*, 18.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

that the narrator reflects upon does not shun his cultural background, as he does not want to cause anyone harm through violent action, and continues to incorporate the Christian tradition throughout his life and identity. Despite being portrayed as fantasizing about a possible Jewish heritage, Dutschke does not convert to Judaism, instead maintaining his relationship with Christianity. The result is that the fictionalized version of Dutschke employs the fantasies of a Jewish heritage as a tool by which to observe and distance himself from the institutions and history of his society.

In Wackwitz's text, Dutschke's hybridity enables him to oppose select aspects of his culture by creating a personal identity through which he is able to perceive a difference to the culture in which he grew up. With this ability, Dutschke is able to process the trauma that he adopts from the events of the Nazi past, and continue his identity development with the help of the fantasies that he creates about his personal history. The narrator's own youthful rebellion eventually comes to an end, and through the process of analysis and reconciliation, coupled with the help of the fictionalized Dutschke, the narrator at the early part of the twenty-first century is able to remain within the German collective, while distinguishing himself from his grandfather by being aware of the complexity and ability to look at the past critically through the use of the *third space*. The narrator learns that "Es geht schließlich darum zu erkennen, dass man Teil einer Geschichte ist, die man auch anders weitererzählen kann."<sup>224</sup>

The concept of hybridity can also be found in the narrative of *Der Schrei der Hyänen*. After the Herero uprising, Arabella is taken prisoner and spends a prolonged period of time immersed in Herero culture. During that time Arabella's identity continues to grow, which sees her form new perspectives of the Herero and their culture. These new

---

<sup>224</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*, 95.

perspectives enable her to sufficiently change her identity to be able to become friends with Eva, and eventually develop a romantic relationship with Assa. Arabella's morphing identity through her newfound understanding of Herero culture enables her to perceive the constraints of her own cultural background. Through these perceived constraints, Arabella's role as prisoner becomes complicated because she does not see herself as a prisoner any longer. Since her own culture places constraints upon her, Arabella is faced with the reality that she will be constrained in either collective, one way or another. This realization causes her to perceive Assa, her captor, in a different and kinder light.

The neutrally located narrator describes a scene in the narrative where Arabella chooses to hide from German colonial troops in order to spare Assa any negative consequences, despite being his prisoner:

Arabella stand auf, das Gewehr im Arm, den Zeigefinger am Abzug und blickte sich um. Der Saum des Flusses war schlammig und verwaist. Das Pferd hielt den Kopf auf die Böschung gerichtet, hinter der Assa verschwunden war. Kaum war Arabella oben, sah sie die Soldaten, eine berittene Patrouille von vier Mann. Sie trugen die Waffen auf die Oberschenkel gestützt, ihre Uniformen waren sandfarben. Sofort ging Arabella wieder in Deckung. Diese Soldaten hätten ihre Befreier sein können, aber sie hatte nur Angst um Assa.<sup>225</sup>

This passage reveals to the reader that Arabella is not eager to return to her natural cultural background. As the narrator points out, the soldiers could have been her salvation, ensuring a return to her previous way of life within the colonial German framework. Arabella's reluctance to return to her former way of life is congruent with what Bhabha terms fragmentation. Bhabha states: "The fragmentation of identity is often celebrated as a kind of pure anarchic liberalism or voluntarism, but I prefer to see it as a recognition of the

---

<sup>225</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 178.

importance of the alienation of the self in the construction of forms of solidarity.”<sup>226</sup> By being rescued by the soldiers, Arabella would have constructed a form of solidarity with the soldiers, signifying that she places herself within the sphere of the German collective and that the character of Assa is indeed the *other*. By not returning, she signals her rebellion to that solidarity through which she enters the *third space* and the realization of hybridity. Her rebellion is solidified in the reader’s perception as the narrator states: “Sie wollte nicht gerettet werden. Nicht, weil sie etwas anderes wollte, sondern weil ihre Verlorenheit nicht zu beenden war. Es paßte zu ihr, eine Fremde zu sein. Sie wollte ohne Ziel bleiben.”<sup>227</sup>

As a *Fremde*, Arabella is able to experience a sense of liberation that she is not able to feel in her native culture. If Arabella were to return to German society, she would have to once again conform to the role that her society expects her to conform to. While surrounded by Herero culture, Arabella has a completely different role assigned to her by the Herero, and to her, this new role is more acceptable than the one that her own culture places upon her. The *freedom* that Arabella feels during her capture becomes part of her identity, and she does not want to give up this newly developed part of her.

Returning to her native culture is a difficult prospect for Arabella to grasp, as she realizes that “Ginge sie zurück, wäre alles wie früher.”<sup>228</sup> The reader is led to believe that she would have preferred to stay with Assa, but Assa does not endorse this idea, eventually ordering her to return to her culture as it suits his purposes in the war against the colonial German forces.<sup>229</sup> This strikes the reader as interesting because Assa tells Arabella “»Du

---

<sup>226</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space”, 213.

<sup>227</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 178.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

bist keine Deutsche mehr. «<sup>230</sup> Arabella's transformation is visible enough to Assa, who perceives her as having grown dissimilar to other Germans through her experiences and actions.

Her newly developed hybrid identity leaves Arabella in a difficult position. She would prefer to stay with Assa, but this notion is not possible as her integration into Herero culture would be difficult as she is physically dissimilar to the Herero, and she would be perceived as symbolizing German culture and colonialism in their eyes. Returning to her own culture is also difficult for her because during the confrontation with the soldiers, she aims a revolver at a German soldier,<sup>231</sup> signaling her opposition to the way in which her own culture interacts with the Herero. In addition to this, her sentiments regarding the Herero have also become different than the mainstream notions held by others in her collective. Thus, Easthope's conclusion on the Bhabha hybridity model is apt in this situation. In Arabella's case, hybridity can be seen "as an unanticipated interface between two discourses or meanings conventionally separated."<sup>232</sup>

Towards the end of her *capture* Arabella surrenders her body to Assa, who initially resists her advances but eventually gives in.<sup>233</sup> By surrendering herself to Assa, Arabella's hybridity becomes solidified as she accepts Assa as her equal, and he accepts her as his. Despite this, Arabella's return to her own culture is inevitable as neither group is ready at this point to accept individuals from each other's groups as equals. This leaves Arabella to rely on the "masks" that Bhabha describes, which allow individuals the ability to move

---

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>232</sup> Anthony Easthope, "Bhabha, hybridity and identity", 346.

<sup>233</sup> Paluch and Habeck, *Der Schrei der Hyänen*, 183.

between different cultures at will.<sup>234</sup> Once back in her native culture, Arabella has to hide her new perceptions and acceptance of the Herero as her culture is not able to accept her views as their own.

The two exemplary characters from each of the narratives (Dutschke and Arabella) show that when faced with perceived shortcomings of one's own cultural background, the individual is able to move past possible trauma to construct an identity that can be defined as hybrid. In this hybridity, the individual becomes aware of cultural perspectives from more than one culture, and can come to incorporate these perspectives into his or her own individual identity as the individual continues to reflect their representation of themselves against that of the collectives that they perceive. The role of literature is important in this context, as it allows the reader to gain insight through the help of a disembodied narrator, as well as the reflectory process that a narratively constructed identity provides.

---

<sup>234</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 62-64.

## VI. Conclusion

The previous chapters have illustrated that identity construction is a process fraught with opportunities, challenges, and threats, having an effect on how individuals interact with one another, and how collectives try to exclude external influence to guard the sanctity of their own identity. The process of forming a unique individual identity is an unpredictable and complicated process that produces an infinite amount of unique identities, as each individual regards him or herself to be unique in one way or another.

The way in which theory in the fields of cultural memory and identity theory have been applied to the analyses of *Der Schrei der Hyänen* and *Ein unsichtbares Land* can be used to analyze other narratives as well. These processes are not only applicable to generational narratives, but also narratives of other genres in which a character's identity can be perceived as developing as the narrative progresses. This is especially relevant in narratives where the individual evaluates the sentiments contained in the collective consciousness and is perceived as overcoming friction between characters from different cultures.

As the individual is exposed to different experiences throughout his or her life, the individual's identity will be shaped accordingly and it cannot be predicted what the end result might be. This process is dependent upon an understanding, or at least the awareness of the knowledge contained in the cultural memory and the perception of a collective identity that comes out of the cultural memory's numerous myths, stories, traditions, and history. As the individual becomes aware of the cultural memory, he or she will start to distinguish between who does, and who does not belong to a specific cultural group. Through the perception of the *other*, distinctions are made which enable the individual to

ultimately create a unique personal identity. This process is helped by the individual reflecting his or her own perception of the self against that of the collective. Through a series of binary decisions, the individual will come to adhere, or depart from the sentiments contained in the cultural memory.

The role of literature in creating a literary world in the mind of the reader enables him or her to explore complex relationships and difficult questions. Both narratives contain conflicts, friction, and the possibility of confronting trauma which enables the reader to perceive select characters, such as Cosima or the narrator of *Ein unsichtbares Land*, reaching a cathartic state. By reading and understanding the information contained in the narratives, the reader is able to observe how individuals within the texts confront their cultural past and the wrongs that their cultures have committed. The way in which individual characters confront the past, or choose not to, has bearing on their individual identity development and the relationships that they form with individuals from their own, and other cultures. Within the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land*, the reader is able to observe how the narrator recounts his life and constructs his own identity, as well as the role that his grandfather plays in this process.

As characters within narratives build their identities, frictions arise between individuals and collectives. In the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land*, the narrator communicates a desire to be different from his grandfather, largely because of the friction that exists between them. This friction is born in the historical conflicts of World War I and World War II. The effects that these conflicts caused did not end with the date of conflict, rather the effects continue to be felt even today, as individuals continue to try and make sense of historical events that are incomprehensible at times. The narrator's historical self is

presented as being in conflict with his grandfather, culminating in the narrator's historical version asserting that he wants to be nothing like his grandfather, who comes to symbolize the collective within the text. The narrator that exists at the early stages of the twenty-first century reflects upon the relationship that he shares/shared with his grandfather and the actions that his historical self has taken as a result. Through his reflection on his grandfather's memoirs that contain the exploits of his entire life, the narrator is able to juxtapose his own life against that of his grandfather to reach a cathartic state within the narrative that allows him to feel closer to his grandfather by better understanding the hardships and motivations that challenged both Wackwitz men during their lives. As the narrator makes sense of his grandfather's character, and the world that he lives in, he becomes able to reconcile his identity with that of his grandfather and the collective as a whole.

The concept of forgetting and remembering plays an important role in the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* as the narrator invents, or distorts, memories which come to replace less fantastic versions of those same memories. The phantoms used to symbolize the suffering of the Holocaust communicate the human mind's inability to completely *remember* memories after long periods of time. As time advances, the details become neglected, and memories become phantoms of themselves. As Aleida Assmann argues, forgetting is not necessarily a bad thing, and in the case of the Wackwitz family, who were not directly involved in World War II, strategic forgetting is perhaps preferable to inauthentic remembrance. Out of such conflicts trauma can arise. Psychological trauma that impacts the continued development and reconstruction of the individual identity can be the result of personal experiences or assumed trauma through learning of the misdeeds of one's

family. The characters of Nele and Kriemhild represent the relationship between victim and perpetrator trauma. As Aleida Assmann explains, the victim perceives the act causing trauma as something incomprehensible, while the perpetrator only later becomes exposed to trauma. This is because the perpetrator plans, acts out an action which seems rational to him or her, and only later through reflection and new ways of understanding the past, realizes that he or she has committed an offence.<sup>235</sup>

Individuals, and at times collectives, can become traumatized to such an extent that they are unable to confront their trauma. When this occurs, the individual's ability to develop their identity becomes impaired, leading to the individual developing personality disorders that can cause abrasiveness, and the inability to evolve their identity with new experiences and observations. The individual who is able to overcome his or her trauma can hope to learn from his or her past, which can serve as a motivating factor in working towards spreading awareness so that the wrongs that were done against him or her are less likely to occur in the future. The literary representation of Rudi Dutschke within *Ein unsichtbares Land* mirrors that of the historical Dutschke and portrays him as opposing institutions within Germany that he, and many of his generation, perceived as outdated and representing unacceptable facets of society that existed before World War II. The literary representation of Dutschke is framed in a way that has him assuming trauma that originated out of World War II. By facing this trauma, overcoming it, and peacefully working with others to change society for the better, he enters Bhabha's *third space*. Within the third space the possibility for the individual to accommodate viewpoints from more than one cultural framework arises. This hybridity in effect breaks down divides between cultures and creates the possibility to foster collaborative relationships that benefit everyone involved.

---

<sup>235</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 96.

The concept of conflict arising from perceiving an *other* that is deemed as undesirable or adversarial, is contained in both narratives. In *Der Schrei der Hyänen* the character of Cosima is physically dissimilar to those of her collective. This makes her isolation easily justifiable to other members of the collective as she is overtly dissimilar to the majority of individuals in the collective. Nele, on the other hand is not readily perceived as being different. Indeed it is ironically the character with mixed ancestry that tries to prevent the character that is perceived as being different from entering the collective.

In the narrative of *Ein unsichtbares Land* the line of divide is blurred. The disconnect that exists between grandfather and grandson arises from the perceived difference that both grandfather and grandson cast upon each other. The identities assigned to Andreas, and to the narrator, are developed in response to each viewing the other as symbolizing their respective generations and what the other views as dissatisfactory within that generation. The friction that exists between grandfather and grandson is thus more the product of a perceived difference, rather than a tangible or easily observable difference between family members.

From this, the reader can evaluate difference (or perceived difference) that is a source of conflict within both narratives. Within the narratives, it becomes clear that it is irrelevant whether or not difference is actually present. Perceived difference plays a larger and potentially more devastating role, as individuals contained in the narratives take action based on their perceptions of the *other*. The identity that an individual constructs through interaction with cultural memory ultimately governs how the individual perceives the world and others contained in that world. By adopting a non-violent approach such as Dutschke's,

the individual can lessen the possibility of conflict while evaluating difference and enacting change.

Where two or more entities exist, there will always be scope for disagreement to arise. With the examples of Andreas Wackwitz and Nele in their respective narratives, the reader is able to observe how individual characters act on their perception of the world that they live in, and interact with other individuals who they encounter in their world. The example of friction between Nele and Cosima is somewhat simpler as Nele perpetrated her actions due to an observable dissimilarity between herself and Cosima. A similar distinction between Andreas Wackwitz and his grandson is more difficult to make as both are physically similar, and stem from the same collective group. With these two examples taken together, the reader stands the possibility of observing that conflict will arise in the presence of genuine difference, as well as perceived difference. The gauging of the degree of difference between individuals and collectives depend on the individual's own identity. Where characters have a limited identity and scope for further development, in the case of Nele, conflicts are more likely to arise as her own identity is limited through the trauma that she is unable to process. Conversely, characters who are more readily able to develop their own identities, like the characters of Arabella or the narrator of *Ein unsichtbares Land*, are able to interact with characters who they perceive as dissimilar to themselves because they are able to readjust their perception of themselves and their world, and in doing so minimizing conflict.

## Bibliography

AlSayyad, Nezar. *Hybrid Urbanism*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001. Print.

Assmann, Aleida. "Canon and Archive." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 97-107. Print.

Assmann, Aleida. *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. München: C.H. Beck, 2006. Print.

Assmann, Aleida. *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*. München: C.H. Beck, 1999. Print.

Assmann, Aleida. *Geschichte im Gedächtnis*. München: C.H. Beck, 2007. Print.

Assmann, Jan. "Communicative and Cultural Memory." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 109-118. Print.

Assmann, Jan. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. München: C.H. Beck, 2005. Print.

Assmann, Jan. *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. Print.

Anastasiadis, Athanasios. "Transgenerational Communication of Traumatic Experiences." *Journal of Literary Theory* 6 (2012): 1-24. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha." *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. Ed. J. Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990: 207-221. Print.

Cohn, Dorrit. *The Distinction of Fiction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. Print.

Confino, Alon. "Memory and the History of Mentalities." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 77-84. Print.

Costagli, Simone and Matteo Galli, "Chronotopoi. Vom Familienroman zum Generationenroman." *Deutsche Familienromane: Literarische Genealogien und internationaler Kontext*. Eds. Simone Costagli and Matteo Galli. München: Wilhelm Fink, 2010. 7-20. Print.

Costagli, Simone, "Family Plots." *Deutsche Familienromane: Literarische Genealogien und internationaler Kontext*. Eds. Simone Costagli and Matteo Galli. München: Wilhelm Fink. 2010. 157-168. Print.

Easthope, Anthony. "Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity." *Textual Practice* 12.2 (1998): 341-348. Print.

Eichenberg, Ariane. *Familie – Ich – Nation*. Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2009. Print.

Eigler, Friederike. *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005. Print.

Eigler, Friederike. "Zur Historisierung des Heimatbegriffs im Generationenroman: Dieter Fortes Trilogie *Das Haus auf meinen Schultern*." *Germanic Review* 83.2 (2010): 83-106. Print.

Eyal, Gil. "Identity and Trauma: Two Forms of the Will to Memory." *History & Memory* 16.1 (2004): 5-36. Print.

Fortunati, Vita and Elena Lamberti, "Cultural Memory: A European Perspective", *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 127-137. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. Translated by Katherine Jones. New York: Vintage Books, 1939. Print.

Gergen, Kenneth J. "Narrative, Moral Identity, and Historical Consciousness." *Making Sense of History: Narration, Identity, and Historical Consciousness*. Ed. Jürgen Straub. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 99-119. Print.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. Translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter. New York: Harper & Row, 1980 (1939). Print.

Hayot, Eric. "On Literary Worlds." *Modern Language Quarterly* 72.2 (2011): 129-161. Print.

Hilton, James L. and William von Hippel. "Stereotypes," *Annual Psychology Review* 47 (1996): 237-271. Print.

Horstkotte, Silke. "'Ich bin ins Reich der Toten geraten': Stephan Wackwitz and the New German Family Novel." *New German Literature: Life Writing and Dialogue with the Arts*. Eds. Julian Preece, Frank Finlay and Ruth J. Owen. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. 325-342. Print.

Junker-Kenny Maureen. "Memory and Forgetting in Paul Ricoeur's Theory of the Capable Self." *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Eds. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008. 203-211. Print.

Lindgren Monica and Nils Wåhlin. "Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals." *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 17 (2001): 357-377. Print.

Miermeister, Jürgen. *Rudi Dutschke*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986. Print.

Neuschäfer, Markus. "Vom doppelten Fortschreiben der Geschichte: Familiengeheimnisse im Generationenroman." *Literaturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Generationsforschung*. Ed. Gerhard Lauer. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010. 164-203. Print.

*Oxford Dictionary of Current English*. 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print.

Paluch, Andrea, and Robert Habeck. *Der Schrei der Hyänen*. München: Piper Verlag, 2004. Print.

Polkinghorne, David E. "Narrative Psychology and Historical Consciousness." *Narration, Identity, and historical Consciousness*. Ed. Jürgen Straub. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 3-22. Print.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. Vol. I. Print.

Ronen, Ruth. *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Print.

Rutka, Anna. "Erinnern als Dialog mit biographischen Texten. Zu aktuellen Familienromanen von Uwe Timm *Am Beispiel meines Bruders* (2003), Wibke Bruhns *Meines Vaters Land* (2004) und Stephan Wackwitz *Ein unsichtbares Land* (2003)." *Das Prinzip Erinnerung in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur nach 1989*. Eds. Carsten Gansel and Pawel Zimniak. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010. 107-117. Print.

Schmiedel, Roland. "Reflexionen über Bedeutungsveränderung im deutschen Kolonialroman am Beispiel von Paluch/Habecks *Der Schrei der Hyänen* (2004)." *Acta Germanica* 37 (2009): 67-79. Print.

Schöpflin, George. "The construction of identity." *Österreichischer Wissenschaftstag Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft*. 2001. Lecture. Web. [http://www.oefg.at/text/veranstaltungen/wissenschaftstag/wissenschaftstag01/Beitrag\\_Schoepflin.pdf](http://www.oefg.at/text/veranstaltungen/wissenschaftstag/wissenschaftstag01/Beitrag_Schoepflin.pdf) (accessed 03/05/2012).

Schulze, Hagen. *Germany: A New History*, Translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998. Print.

Silvester, Jeremy and Jan-Bart Gewald. *Words Cannot be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia: An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book*. Boston: Koninklijke Brill. 2003. Print.

Slocum-Bradley, Nikki R. "Identity Construction in Europe: A Discursive Approach." *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 10 (2010): 50-68. Print.

Smith, Lindsay. "Photography Theory." *Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 14 (2006): 134-142. Print.

Speitkamp, Winfried. *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*. Stuttgart: Philip Reclam, 2005. Print.

Spence, Donald P. "Narrative Truth and Identity Formation: Abduction and Abuse Stories as Metaphors." *Narration, Identity, and Historical Consciousness*. Ed. Jürgen Straub. New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. 120-132. Print.

Vedder, Heinrich. *South West Africa in Early Times: Being the story of South West Africa up to the date of Maharero's death in 1890*. Translated by Cyril G. Hall. London: Frank Cass, 1966. Print.

Wackwitz, Stephan. *Ein Unsichtbares Land*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005. Print.

Wackwitz, Stephan. *An Invisible Country*. Translated by Stephan Lehmann. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2005. Print.