THE POLITICS OF MEMORY IN HWANG SOKYONG’S NOVEL “THE OLD GARDEN”

Birgit Geipel
University of Tübingen
Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies

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18:00–20:00

The Old Garden is inspired by the writer’s personal experience during the turbulent period of the South Korean democracy movement and his political exile. While reflecting on the process of the creation of memory, it sheds light on the underlying traumatic recollection of the Korean national division. Particular emphasis is put on the transnational impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall, described in the book.
Lecture Content

Hwang Sok-yong’s novel Orae toen chŏngwŏn (2000, The Old Garden) is inspired by the writer’s own experiences in the turbulent time of the South Korean democracy movement and his political exile. Yet, it's intent is not just to document historical experience, rather it is a reflection on the process of the creation of memory. This talk will analyze how the experience of the fall of the Berlin wall described in the second part of the novel lends a transnational turn to the topic, but also shows the text as a palimpsest revealing glances of the underlying traumatic memory of the Korean national division, ultimately pointing to a possibility for closure.

Lecturer

Birgit Geipel has received a MA in Comparative Literature from Ludwig Maximilian University Munich and a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Riverside. Since 2018 she is a lecturer in the Department of Korean Studies at the University of Tübingen. Her research interests focus on Modern Korean Literature, especially Division Literature, Women's literature and the Korean Diaspora.

While her doctoral dissertation investigated the discourses of national division and unification in Korea and Germany, today’s talk is a further development of this topic with a focus on the transnational reception of the fall of the Berlin Wall in Korean Literature.

LECTURE: 18:00–19:40
Q&A: 19:40–20:00

SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR:
PROF. ANTONETTA L. BRUNO
INFO CONTACT: ELISA CIDDA
elisa.cidda@uniroma1.it