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## UWE JOHNSON—“*DICHTER DER BEIDEN DEUTSCHLAND?*” ASSESSMENTS AND APPROPRIATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER 1989

### Introduction

Since the political events of 1989 and the unification of Germany in 1990, Uwe Johnson has received unprecedented attention. Arguably this attention culminated in 1994, the tenth anniversary of his death and also the year he would have turned sixty. The upsurge in interest came from a variety of academic and non-academic quarters. Johnson's works, which until 1989 were published in West Germany only, have been reissued by his publisher Suhrkamp in the new series “Leipzig Suhrkamp.” Numerous newspaper articles and well-marketed paperbacks on Johnson have appeared, all appealing to a readership that is not exclusively academic. Within the academic realm, a new yearbook (*Johnson- Jahrbuch*) and a new international series on Johnson-scholarship (*Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum*) were established in 1994 and 1989 respectively. The Johnson archives in Frankfurt/Main published many of his early essays for the first time and also put together a Johnson exhibit which toured Germany in 1991.

Since 1990 there have been many conferences on Johnson, ranging from regional to national and international meetings. Some addressed an academic audience, while regional events in Mecklenburg addressed the generally interested public; some meetings blurred the distinction between academic and non-academic events. Among this latter category was a symbolic return in 1992 of Johnson friends, writers, scholars, and journalists to Johnson's home town Güstrow in Mecklenburg. This event received considerable media attention since it included a *Sonderzug* from Berlin to Güstrow (a special train trip sponsored by the East German *Reichsbahn* and the West German *Bundesbahn*), speeches, readings by prominent authors from East and West, and a local tour of Johnson's high school and other places of his youth. Critics were quick to portray this event, which was also promoted by Johnson's publisher and long time supporter Siegfried Unseld from Suhrkamp, as embodying the new marketing strategies in the unified Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Here I will assess the significance of the attention Johnson has received since 1989. I am particularly interested in how the recent Johnson reception relates to larger discourses on the effects of German unification, the history of the divided Germany, and the reassessment of German literary historiography since 1945. Dismissing the wide attention Johnson has received as a marketing scheme, some critics argue that it betrays Johnson's lifelong attempts to avoid appropriations of any kind.<sup>2</sup> While recognizing that the recent Johnson reception is inseparable from the impact of the mass media and of marketing interests, I want to suggest that this neither fully explains nor invalidates the interest in Johnson. Instead, I will look at the debates surrounding both Johnson's biography and his works and will argue that these debates are part of the current processes of recovering and rewriting the history of the divided Germany on one hand and of negotiating diverging assessments of the unified Germany on the other. I further suggest that, within the discipline of *Germanistik* and German Studies, the recent interest in Johnson has larger implications for attempts to reconceptualize German literary history since 1945. The difficulties involved in categorizing his works under either GDR or FRG literature makes them a prime example for the discussion on literary historiography, which has assumed new significance since German unification.

In order to better contextualize the post-1989 reception of Johnson's works, I will first provide some background on Johnson and the reception of his works prior to 1989. After completing his studies in *Germanistik* under Hans Mayer at the University of Leipzig in 1956, Johnson was denied regular employment in the GDR, presumably because of his outspoken criticism of the state's attempts to criminalize the *Junge Gemeinde* in 1953 (the youth organization of the Protestant church).<sup>3</sup>

Johnson portrays these events in his first novel *Ingrid Babendererde. Reifeprüfung 1953*, a

novel that—for different reasons—was neither accepted for publication in the East nor in the West.<sup>4</sup> He subsequently submitted his second novel to the West German publisher Suhrkamp, aware of the fact that its publication would make his continued residence in the GDR difficult if not impossible. In 1959, he “moved” from East to West Berlin, just before his novel *Mutmassungen über Jakob* appeared with Suhrkamp. He insisted that he did not escape from East Germany but that he merely moved to the West. This personal assessment defied the political realities of the Cold War and neither stopped the GDR from calling him a traitor nor the FRG from trying to embrace him as a dissident. Never feeling at home in West Germany (more specifically West Berlin), Johnson spent long periods in the United States (New York City) and moved permanently to England in 1974. There he died in 1984, just one year after he completed the last part of his major work *Jahrestage: Aus dem Leben der Gesine Cressphal*, a project that had preoccupied him for more than fifteen years.

While the thematic and historical scope of *Jahrestage* is wider than that of Johnson’s other works, all of his writings deal extensively with various aspects of life in the early years of the GDR. Johnson’s depictions of social, political, linguistic and geographical aspects of GDR society differ in terms of detail and emotional intensity from his depictions of West Germany and the U.S. But far from being a work of sentimentalized memory, his texts are more accurately characterized as a work of remembrance regarding the history and legacy of fascism and the Holocaust, the early postwar period, and the failed socialist experiment in the GDR.<sup>5</sup> His works include explicit accounts of various forms of ideological oppression in the GDR, for instance the surprisingly detailed description of the surveillance and recruitment methods of the Stasi (secret police) in *Mutmassungen über Jakob* in the late 1950s. These critical assessments of socialism in East Germany find their counterpart in Johnson’s critical representation of the legacy of fascism and consumerism in West Germany and of racism and social inequality in the U.S.

What makes his works most intriguing, however, are the narrative strategies that preclude the reader’s identification with any one perspective or ideological stance. For Johnson, the “border,” a symbol of the ideological division of Germany and the world, turns into a literary category. Johnson’s own position as *Grenzgänger* (border crosser) between two ideologically opposed systems required, as he puts it in his Frankfurt lectures *Begleitumstände*, a new language and new narrative styles.<sup>6</sup> His writings attempt—both in terms of narrative style and of content—simultaneously to expose and defy the either-or-logic of the Cold War.

Considering his biography as *Grenzgänger* between the two Germanies, it may at first be difficult to understand why Johnson himself rejected the description “*Dichter der beiden Deutschland*” (author of the two Germanies), a term that was coined in the early 1960s by the critic Günter Blöcker. Johnson considered this label inappropriate since, on one hand, it was linked to an ideological appropriation by West Germany<sup>7</sup> and, on the other, because his works were accessible in only one of the two German states.

### **Johnson’s Reception In the GDR:**

The publication of *Mutmassungen über Jakob* in 1959 was followed by the publication of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* in 1961, just weeks after the building of the Berlin Wall. Predictably, Johnson’s works were dismissed in the GDR for various aesthetic and ideological reasons; soon thereafter his books were entirely ignored (*totgeschwiegen*). Prominent GDR authors like Peter Hacks and Hermann Kant contributed scathing assessments of Johnson in the early 1960s.<sup>8</sup> But it is also well documented that a number of other GDR authors were influenced by or responded to Johnson’s works in their own writings. The best known example is Christa Wolf’s *Der geteilte Himmel*.<sup>9</sup> Thus there is some indication that the unofficial reception of his works undercut the official Johnson prohibition in the GDR. This phenomenon may be read as an example for the existence of a semi-public literary sphere that circumvented complete state control.<sup>10</sup> It would be worth exploring further the extent to which this unofficial reception can be traced in intertextual references to Johnson’s writings in GDR literature.

In 1986, after more than twenty years of almost complete silence regarding Johnson,<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Grambow, production editor for the Hinstorff Verlag in Rostock, broke the silence with an

article on Johnson published in the GDR journal *Sinn und Form*.<sup>12</sup> Grambow also worked on a Johnson-anthology, a project that was eventually approved for publication and appeared in the Fall of 1989, almost concurrently with the opening of the Berlin Wall.<sup>13</sup> Since 1989, Grambow has continued to be extremely active and successful in promoting Johnson's works, and he is one of the very few East German scholars who has extensively and critically written about the reception of Johnson (or lack thereof) in the GDR in general and in GDR *Germanistik* in particular.<sup>14</sup> Significantly, Grambow himself was never part of East German academic establishment.

Overall it is important to keep in mind that the most recent interest in Johnson in the East is a phenomenon that was not entirely triggered by the *Wende* and the unification of Germany. The renewed interest in Johnson preceded these political events and needs to be viewed within the context of the major shifts in GDR *Kulturpolitik* and in GDR popular culture in the 1980s. David Bathrick has described these shifts as a "massive implosion of the borders separating public and private, official and nonofficial cultural life," a development, he argues, that furthered the emergence of citizens' groups in the late 1980s.<sup>15</sup>

### **Johnson's Reception in the FRG before 1989:**

With his two novels published in 1959 and 1961, Johnson quickly became a well-known and often controversially discussed young author in the West. Johnson received important literary prizes including the Fontane prize in 1961 and the Büchner prize in 1970; excerpts of his works were included in many high school textbooks (*Lesebücher*); and his works were translated into several different languages, turning him into an internationally known author. The flipside of his success were attempts in the FRG to market Johnson as *Dichter der beiden Deutschland* and, more significantly, attacks from conservatives and right-wing critics who accused him of supporting communism and of morally justifying the Berlin Wall.<sup>16</sup>

The public attention Johnson received in the 1960s ceased in the 1970s and 1980s. After the publication of the first volume of *Jahrestage* in 1970, Johnson turned from a widely discussed author to one whose works were mainly considered in academic circles, a phenomenon that Ulrich Fries situates within a diminishing interest in the GDR among the general public in the West.<sup>17</sup> The relative silence around Johnson in the FRG corresponds curiously with the enforced silence in the GDR. This silence was interrupted briefly by the publicity surrounding his untimely death in 1984, but did not really change until the late 1980s with several important publications on Johnson. Though primarily addressing an academic audience, these books signal a growing interest in Johnson by a range of scholars from West Germany and elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> Thus, while the political events in 1989 and 1990 certainly contributed to the wide attention given to Johnson in the 1990s, the renewed interest in Johnson in both the East and the West preceded these events.

Arguably, the general lack of critical revision within post-1989 GDR *Germanistik* corresponds in some ways with a similar lacuna in the West. Among the mostly liberal representatives of GDR studies in the FRG and in the U.S. (and I include myself in this group), it was, prior to 1989, unpopular to address politically sensitive issues when researching or teaching GDR literature and culture. In the 1970s and 1980s, these "politically incorrect" issues included Stasi surveillance, censorship, and other forms of repression in the GDR, i.e., issues that happen to figure prominently in Johnson's writings. In an article entitled "Wie Uwe Johnson die Staatsicherheit verfolgte," Rudolf Gerstenberg corrects a common misperception about GDR literature, namely that Johnson was a rare exception to an otherwise complete taboo concerning representations of the Stasi. Although most of the texts he mentions, interestingly enough, could not appear in the GDR, Gerstenberg points out that the taboo did not exist so much in GDR literature as it did in academic circles in both East and West.<sup>19</sup>

Helmut Dubiel has coined the term "anti-anticommunism" for liberal intellectuals in the West who created their own version of self-imposed censorship by avoiding issues that may have contributed to the anti-communism of the West.<sup>20</sup> While the selective reading and research practices within GDR studies before 1989 can be explained with the binary logic of the Cold

War, it is less obvious why, since 1989, these often skewed approaches within GDR studies have been redressed only reluctantly.

### **Discourses on Johnson since 1989**

One can look at the attempts to appropriate Johnson and his works for various ideological agendas as examples of the larger East-West discourses that historically have been fraught with failed communication, projections, accusations, and defenses. Indeed the differences between the discourses on Johnson by critics from the East and from the West are still so striking that it seemed helpful to continue using these East/West labels in my discussion of the Johnson reception since 1989. Yet, I would argue there is a clear distinction between ideologically motivated appropriations of Johnson prior to 1989, in particular during the Cold War of the 1960s, and the most recent commentaries on Johnson in which critics openly reflect the different positions from which they speak. What makes the Johnson reception since 1990 most interesting are competing interpretations that are grounded in the widely diverging social, political and cultural experiences of the critics.

There are critics from both the East and the West, for instance, who have discovered Johnson as regional author of Mecklenburg, but they have done so in very different ways. Fritz Raddatz's three-part series on Johnson's Mecklenburg in the *Zeit-Magazin* is a good example for the often romanticized representation of an unfamiliar part of Germany in the (West) German media. Raddatz evokes nostalgic images of Mecklenburg as embodying the pre-modern and juxtaposes these images—with reference to Johnson's *Jahrestage*—to modern/postmodern images of New York City.<sup>21</sup> Then there are critics from the East whose focus on Johnson's Mecklenburg serves as an example for a new regionalism, the confirmation of regional identities that often corresponds with a high degree of alienation from the political system of the new FRG. But there are also scholars who rightly warn against turning Johnson into a *Heimatsdichter* or provincial poet of Mecklenburg (with all its questionable connotations of "blood and soil" literature).<sup>22</sup> Both aspects of this regional dimension of the Johnson reception—the discovery of Johnson's Mecklenburg from the outside and from within the reestablished state (the GDR had dissolved the traditional state structure in 1952)—have significantly contributed to the recent popularization of Johnson.

There are other ways in which Uwe Johnson's works serve as an object of identification for some East Germans. Several commentators refer, for instance, to Johnson's critical portrayal of the Federal Republic in his literary and his autobiographical writings. These texts include a chapter from *Jahrestage* entitled "Wenn Jerichow zum Westen gekommen wäre" (May 29, 1968) and the short prose works "Versuch eine Mentalität zu erklären,"<sup>23</sup> and "Eine Reise wegwohin."<sup>24</sup> These texts portray East Germans who feel estranged and unwelcome in the West, as well as negative aspects of consumerism, the "free press," and commodification, i.e., aspects that invite comparisons with a critical assessment of the effects of German unification.<sup>25</sup> One of the more prominent examples is Christoph Hein's 1992 lecture in Dresden, "Ansichtskarte einer deutschen Kleinstadt leicht retuschiert" where he evokes Johnson's Jerichow chapter in order to support his argument that the democratic structure (*Rechtsstaat*) in unified Germany is endangered.<sup>26</sup>

Other critics, some of them very young, consider the discovery of Johnson's works decades after they were written, as an opportunity to learn more about the history of their own society and to work through aspects of GDR history that were, prior to 1989, largely inaccessible or taboo.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective Johnson's works function, as Norbert Mecklenburg has phrased it, "als literarische Archaeologie jenes deutschen Teilstaates, der mit den neunziger Jahren der Geschichte angehört" (as a literary archaeology of the German state that, since the 1990s, has become part of history).<sup>28</sup>

Significantly, some of the same commentators who explore Johnson's accounts of the early GDR are highly critical of West Germans who focus exclusively on Johnson's representation of the GDR and fail to comment on his representation of the FRG.<sup>29</sup> The most sustained argument in this regard comes, however, not from an East German but from the British scholar Greg Bond. He argues that—by focussing on Johnson's representation of the

repressive side of GDR socialism—West German critics avoid dealing with another major topic in Johnson's works, namely the common German history preceding the division of Germany, National Socialism and the Holocaust.<sup>30</sup>

Some of the above-mentioned examples illustrate selective approaches to Johnson's writings that either foreground his critical representation of East Germany or West Germany and that lend themselves to promoting stereotypical views of the "other" Germany. Yet closer scrutiny of his writings also enables critics to challenge these very stereotypes. His writings provide ample opportunity for interrogating and negotiating East-West differences instead of simply ignoring these differences or reaffirming common clichés about the "other" Germany. Specifically, texts like *Das dritte Buch über Achim* or *Jahrestage* provide the opportunity to explore the peculiar dynamics between both German states and challenge an exclusive foregrounding of the "other" Germany (GDR) that tends to erase the role of the old FRG.

Scholars in the East and the West as well as scholars outside of Germany increasingly recognize Johnson as a central figure in German literature since 1945. His works provide opportunities for joint East-West projects and for productive academic exchanges. Among the most significant publications on Johnson are the proceedings of an international conference (1994 in Neubrandenburg) entitled *Johnson zwischen Vormoderne und Postmoderne*, edited by the East German scholar Carsten Gansel and the West German director of the Johnson archives, Nicolai Riedel. As Gansel points out, a large part of recent Johnson research has focussed on the reconstruction of history and on aspects of memory and remembrance in Johnson's major work *Jahrestage* (xi). Thematically, this focus foregrounds not only Johnson's representation of the divided Germany, but also the common history of Germany prior to its division, namely the war and the Holocaust. Those are the very issues that the British scholar Bond considered to be neglected in the recent Johnson reception.

However, one can read Bond's critique also as a response to the controversy about the so-called *Gesinnungsästhetik* (moralistic aesthetics) in 1991. Critics like Schirmmacher and Bohrer sought to ban the German past from post-unification literary debates and called instead for postmodern art exclusively concerned with the aesthetic realm, thereby constructing a questionable opposition between ethics/politics and aesthetics. (Klaus Scherpe has aptly summarized this dichotomy: "Der Moralist schreibt schlecht; der Ästhet hat keine Moral." — The moralist writes badly, the aesthete has no morals.<sup>31</sup>) As the title of the aforementioned volume, *Johnson zwischen Vormoderne und Postmoderne*, suggests, the opposition between ethics/politics and aesthetics is convincingly challenged in the contributions to this volume. Several articles investigate the relation between reconstructions of history and fiction in *Jahrestage* by drawing on postmodern theories.<sup>32</sup> Critics including Gansel, Jochen Herres and Dirk Sangmeister are careful, however, not to turn Johnson into a postmodern author. Instead they point out postmodern dimensions of his works, all of which interrogate distinctions between the fictional and the historical realms. These postmodern aspects include intertextual elements, Johnson's comments on the role of the author as equal in status to that of the characters, and the integration of historical and other documents into the novel. These critics thus revise earlier assessments of *Jahrestage* as aesthetically conventional or even outdated.

Gansel, for example, draws on the notions of the postmodern and the premodern to discuss thematic aspects of *Jahrestage*. He conceptualizes Gesine's move from a small town in Mecklenburg to West Germany and eventually to New York City as a change from a pre- to a postmodern world and points out parallels to the experiences of many East Germans since 1989 who were plunged into postmodern West German society. While this assessment risks equating the GDR with a closed and homogeneous society, Gansel's overall argument seems to me convincing both with regard to the novel and to his allusions to contemporary Germany: He sees an unresolved and ultimately productive tension between Gesine's critical distance to the free market economy, crime, racism, and other aspects of U.S. society on one hand and her daughter Marie's immersion in U.S. society on the other hand. This contrast serves to relativize those aspects of the Gesine character that Gansel calls "romantic anti-capitalism."<sup>33</sup>

Gansel's article is a good example of a common phenomenon in recent Johnson research of straddling different discourses. There are numerous analyses which relate social, political and cultural aspects of contemporary life in unified Germany to academic discussions of Johnson. This mixing of discourses seems all the more significant when considering German academic conventions that distinguish—more so than in the U.S.—between academic and popular discourses and that have traditionally erased the subjective stance of the critic. This discursive shift entails risks, for instance a recycling of stereotypical ideas of the “other” Germany. But it also provides the opportunity to make explicit the positionality of the critic and the social and historical contexts within which Johnson's works are discussed. This, in turn, facilitates negotiating different readings of his works and, by extension, negotiating diverging readings of contemporary German society.

### **Conclusion**

The renewed academic interest in Johnson has larger implications for literary historiography which I will briefly outline in my concluding remarks. Prior to 1989 most scholars in East and West presumed that Johnson was part of West German literature.<sup>34</sup> Since 1989 there has been little consensus about Johnson's place in literary history. (This uncertainty is reflected in the title of an international Johnson conference held in 1994 in France: “Uwe Johnson. L'ecrivain de quelle Allemagne?” — Author of which Germany?). Some critics and scholars from the East are in the process of discovering Johnson as an author of and about the GDR. Prominent intellectuals and writers including Günter Grass, Hans Mayer and Manfred Bierwisch have declared Johnson to be the most significant author who came out of the GDR. Aside from assigning Johnson to either West or East German literature, Norbert Mecklenburg suggests other possible classifications: as regional author of Mecklenburg, i.e., as critical *Heimatdichter*; as representative of socialist literature in the West; as representative of emigrants' literature; and as writer of the divided Germany.<sup>35</sup> These classifications recall Uwe Johnson's own autobiographical essay, “Ich über mich,” in which he comments in an ironic manner on the numerous attempts to label or categorize him.<sup>36</sup>

From today's perspective of a unified Germany, the assessment of Johnson as writer of the two Germanies—the assessment Johnson rejected categorically—assumes new significance. Viewing Johnson as author of the divided Germany not only avoids classifying him as either East or West German writer, it also opens up much larger questions regarding standard approaches to postwar German literature. The discussion about reconceptualizing German literary historiography has assumed new relevance since German unification. While scholars with diverging approaches and agendas are participating in this discussion, they all seem to agree that the standard separation between GDR literature and FRG literature does not adequately represent postwar German culture.<sup>37</sup>

Within this larger discussion Johnson is significant in two different ways. First because Johnson's texts cannot be separated from his biography as *Grenzgänger* between the two Germanies, they resist easy categorization as either East or West German literature (as do the biographies and works of many other writers and intellectuals). His biography and his oeuvre therefore demonstrate the need for rewriting German literary history since 1945. Second, his works not only challenge standard East/West classifications but indeed foreground, both in terms of content and narrative style, how both German states depended on one another and reacted to each other within the logic of the Cold War. This latter dimension of Johnson's works seems to me a most crucial aspect that would have to be further explored in its effects on the production, distribution and reception of literature. From this vantage point Johnson's writings indicate one way in which German literary history after 1945 could and, I believe, should be rewritten.

## Notes

1. Thomas Rietzschel, "Sonderzug nach Güstrow. Mit Honeckers Salonwagen auf den Spuren von Uwe Johnson," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 8, 1992. Klaus Podak, "Güstrow und Uwe Johnson: Literarische Spurensuche per Schiene. Ein Sonderzug voller Geisterbeschwörer. Bundesbahn, ein Buchverlag und ein Bundesland gehen eine Liaison ein, um den 1984 gestorbenen Schriftsteller auch in Mecklenburg zum Klassiker zu machen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 10, 1992.
2. See, for instance, Greg Bond, "'Die Toten halten zuverlässig das Maul': Uwe Johnson im wiedervereinigten Deutschland," *Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum* 3 (1993): 181-87. Thomas Schmidt, "Auf dem Weg zum Klassiker?" *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 1 (1994): 282-93.
3. In a public speech at the University of Rostock Johnson pointed out that the state's treatment of the church group was in conflict with the constitution of the GDR. See "Die Katze Erinnerung." *Uwe Johnson—Eine Chronik in Briefen und Bildern*, ed. Eberhard Fahlke (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995) 47-48.
4. The manuscript of his first novel was found in Johnson's house after his death and was posthumously published by Suhrkamp in 1985. Johnson's correspondence with the Aufbau publisher in 1956 and several commentaries on his first novel are included in *Über Uwe Johnson*. ed. Raimund Fellingner (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992) 11-46.
5. Several critics have commented on Johnson's interest in Walter Benjamin's notions of history and remembrance. See, for instance, Jürgen Grambow, "Poetik und Mimikry. Uwe Johnson als Leser Walter Benjamins," *Wenigstens in Kenntnis leben. Notate zum Werk Uwe Johnsons*, ed. Carsten Gansel, (Neubrandenburg: Federchen, 1991) 39-48. Theo Buck, "Uwe Johnsons Utopie gegen die deutsche(n) Wirklichkeit(en)," *Internationales Uwe Johnson-Forum* 5 (1996): 23-38, here 36.
6. For a summary and brief discussion, see: Carsten Gansel, introduction to *Uwe Johnson zwischen Vormoderne und Postmoderne: Internationales Uwe Johnson Symposium 22.-24.9. 1994*, eds. Carsten Gansel and Nicolai Riedel (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) IX-X.
7. D.G.Bond, *German History and German Identity: Uwe Johnsons "Jahrestage."* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993) 197-199.
8. Uwe Johnson, *Begleitumstände. Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1980) 154-56. See also Jürgen Grambow, "Uwe Johnsons Rezeption in der DDR," *Literaturbriefe aus Rostock*, (Frankfurt/Main: Luchterhand, 1990) 153-69, here 155-56.
9. Fritz Rudolf Fries considered his novel *Auf dem Weg nach Oobliodooh* to be a response to Johnson's *Mutmassungen über Jakob*. Günter Kunert comments on his interaction with Johnson in *Ein englisches Tagebuch*. See Grambow, *Literaturbriefe*, 156.
10. David Bathrick considers the "literary sphere" to be part of a "socialist public sphere." *The Power of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press: 1995). Both Bathrick and Marc Silberman (in his contribution to this volume) seek to explore the complex and often contradictory notion of a "socialist public sphere." The Johnson reception among some writers and intellectuals in the GDR is but a small example of how official GDR *Kulturpolitik* was incongruent with the multiplicity of "real existing" semi-public and private discourses among writers, discourses that in turn shaped their own (published) writings.
11. Prior to Jürgen Grambow, Kurt Batt, chief editor of the Hinstorff-Verlag, discussed Johnson in "Die Exekution des Erzählers," *Sinn und Form*, vol. 24, no. 6 (1972): 1273-77. Reprinted in *Die Exekution des Erzählers. Westdeutsche Romane zwischen 1968-1972*. (Frankfurt/Main: 1974).
12. Jürgen Grambow, "Heimat im Vergangenen," *Sinn und Form*, vol. 38, no. 1 (1986): 134-57.
13. Uwe Johnson, *Eine Reise wegwohin und andere Prosa*, ed. Jürgen Grambow (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1989).
14. Grambow, "Uwe Johnsons Rezeption in der DDR," *Literaturbriefe*.
15. Bathrick, *The Power of Speech*, 55. This shift in the 1980s was signaled by the publication of controversial texts, Christoph Hein's open critique of censorship at the 1987 writers' congress, as well as by the emergence of a semi-official popular culture and various citizens' groups (Bathrick 53-54).
16. On the dispute between Johnson and Hermann Kesten in 1961 and the political scandal it provoked in the West German parliament, see Margund Hinz and Roland Berbig, "Ich sehe nicht ein, daß die Mauer in Berlin ein literarisches Datum gesetzt haben sollte. . ." Uwe Johnson im politischen Diskurs 1961." *'Wo ich her bin. . .'* *Uwe Johnson in der D.D.R.*, eds. Roland Berbig and Erdmut Wizisla (Berlin: Kontext, 1993) 240- 69.
17. Ulrich Fries, "Zum gegenwärtigen Stand der Beschäftigung mit Uwe Johnson," *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 1 (1994): 222-59, here 231.
18. Among these publications was the first issue of the *Internationale Uwe- Johnson-Forum* (published irregularly, volume 6 appeared in 1996) and a collection of essays entitled *Johnson: Ansichten—Einsichten—Aussichten*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen (Bern: Francke, 1989).

19. Rudolf Gerstenberg, "Wie Uwe Johnson die Staatssicherheit verfolgte," *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 1 (1994): 47-57, here 49.
20. Helmut Dubiel, "Linke Trauerarbeit," *Merkur* 496 (1990): 482-491, here 485.
21. Fritz J. Raddatz, "Landschaften der Erinnerung," "Auf Verwischten Spuren," "Heimat: Das schönste Land der Welt," *Zeit-Magazin*, May 1, 8, and 15, 1992. While Raddatz contrasts images from New York City and Mecklenburg, Jürgen Zetzsche argues convincingly that Johnson's representation of Mecklenburg is shaped by the perception of New York and vice versa. Cf. ". . . ich meine die Grenze: die Entfernung: den Unterschied.' Uwe Johnsons Mecklenburg." *Biographie ist unwiderruflich. . . Materialien des Kolloquiums zum Werk Uwe Johnsons im Dezember 1990 in Neubrandenburg*, eds. Carsten Gansel and Jürgen Grambow (Frankfurt/Main, et al.: Lang, 1992) 21-34.
22. Norbert Mecklenburg, "Ein Land, das ferne leuchtet," *Über Uwe Johnson*, ed. Raimund Fellinger, 334-71.
23. First published in *Ich bin Bürger der DDR und lebe in der Bundesrepublik*, ed. Barbara Grunert-Bronnen. (Munich: Piper, 1970) 119-29.
24. First published in Uwe Johnson, *Karsch und andere Prosa* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1964).
25. The following two volumes include several contributions by mostly East German critics who, in their analyses of Johnson, comment in a critical manner on the social and political situation in unified Germany: *Biographie ist unwiderruflich. . .*, eds. Carsten Gansel and Jürgen Grambow, and *Wo ich her bin. . .*, eds. Roland Berbig and Erdmut Wizisla.
26. Christoph Hein "Ansichtskarte einer deutschen Kleinstadt leichtretuschiert," *Neue deutsche Literatur*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1992): 47-54. See Bond, *German History and German Identity*, for other critics of German unification who invoke Johnson.
27. The most interesting account I have come across is an essay by Michael Jesse, "Da war Einer, den hätte ich gern gekannt," (*Wo ich her bin. . .*, eds. Roland Berbig and Erdmut Wizisla, 163-74). On his trip away from unified Germany to Russia he describes his experiences with Johnson's novels, written decades earlier, as an encounter with his own most recent past. "War es, dass ich plötzlich wieder lesen konnte über Deutschland und deutsche Geschichte und hier Jemand eine Sprache gefunden hatte, die so lange von mir, ungekannt und dennoch eigentümlich vertraut, vermisst wurde?" (165).
28. Norbert Mecklenburg, "Uwe Johnson als Autor einiger deutscher Literaturen," *Literatur für Leser* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991) 1-7, here 1.
29. See, for instance, Roland Berbig, "Eine Bürgerin der 'D.D.R.' namen Gesine Cressphal erzählt. Beobachtungen zu der DDR in Uwe Johnsons *Jahrestage*," *Wo ich her bin. . .*, eds. Roland Berbig and Erdmut Wizisla, 319-56, here 350-51.
30. Greg Bond, "'Die Toten halten zuverlässig das Maul.' Uwe Johnson im wiedervereinigten Deutschland," *Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum* 3 (1993): 181- 87, here 186-87.
31. Klaus Scherpe, "Moral im Ästhetischen. Andersch, Weiss, Enzensberger," *Weimarer Beiträge*, vol. 42, no. 1 (1996): 109-127, here 115.
32. An anecdotal aside: At a Beckett conference in 1973, Ihab Issan, one of the major theoreticians of postmodernism, claimed that, if anyone, Uwe Johnson, would be able to write the story of the contemporary "hero." Ihab Hassan, "Joyce, Beckett und die post-moderne Imagination," *Das Werk von Samuel Beckett. Berliner Colloquium*, eds. Hans Mayer and Uwe Johnson (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1975) 1-25, here 17.
33. Carsten Gansel, "Zwischen Aufbau und Demission des Helden—Uwe Johnson, das Gedächtnis und die DDR," *Uwe Johnson. Zwischen Vormoderne und Postmoderne*, eds. Carsten Gansel and Nicolai Riedel, 31-54, here 43.
34. A notable exception is Wolfgang Emmerich who in his *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main: Luchterhand, 1989) discusses Johnson's early works as the first example of modern literature in the GDR (129-34).
35. Norbert Mecklenburg lists these possible classifications in "Uwe Johnson als Autor einiger deutscher Literaturen," *Literatur für Leser*, 1-7.
36. Johnson, "Ich über mich" (1977). Reprinted in *Über Uwe Johnson*, ed. Raimund Fellinger, 372-76.
37. See, for instance, Ursula Heukenkamp, "Eine Geschichte oder viele Geschichten der deutschen Literatur seit 1945? Gründe und Gegengründe," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 5.1 (1995): 22-37; Rainer Rosenberg, "Was war die DDR-Literatur? Die Diskussion um den Gegenstand in der Literaturwissenschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1995): 9-21.