Heimat as *Schein*: Debunking the German Myth of *Heimat* in Herta Müller's Narratives

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Abstract

This project examines Müller's anti-*Heimat* stance through the interrelated discourses of space, gender and morality. Placing Müller's oeuvre in the spatial turn, this dissertation first explores issues related to gender and morality found within the distinct spatial entities she identifies as the German-speaking *Dorfheimat* and the Romanian *Staatsheimat*. In both these *Heimat* spaces, Müller exposes a social construct that relies on patriarchal mechanisms of oppression and exclusion to maintain its immaculate veneer. For Müller, *Heimat* is reduced to a myth based on ideological and spatial ideals that perpetuate instances of hypocrisy and duplicity. Through Müller's compelling imagery – her *Bildlichkeit*, this dissertation then interprets *Heimat* and its mechanisms of betrayal as a coded tableau; a visual landscape made decipherable through an analysis of verbal imagery grounded in the leitmotiv of *Schein*. *Schein*, I argue, is pervasive in Müller's descriptions of objects and places as colouration and light. As such, *Schein* visualizes truth as that which is either disclosed or silenced. Along this line of thought, this dissertation concludes by examining the recurring theme of silence found throughout Müller's narratives.

Résumé

Ce projet de recherche porte sur la position anti-*Heimat* de Müller par l'entremise d'une approche discursive d'espace, de genre et de moralité. En situant l'œuvre de Müller dans une optique d'espace, cette thèse expose d'abord les problématiques liées au genre et à la moralité au sein des entités régionales du *Dorfheimat* germanophone et du *Staatsheimat* roumain. Müller met à nu un construit social qui s'appuie sur des mécanismes patriarcaux d'oppression et d'exclusion afin de conserver son lustre idéologique. Pour Müller, le *Heimat* se réduit à un mythe basé sur des idéaux d'espace et d'idéologie, lesquels perpétuent l'hypocrisie et la duplicité. À l'aide des images évocatrices produites par Müller à travers son *Bildlichkeit*, ce projet de recherche étudie ensuite la façon avec laquelle l'auteure transforme le *Heimat* et ses mécanismes de trahison en tableau codé : un paysage visuel qu'il est possible de déchiffrer par une analyse de l'imagerie verbale comprise dans le motif du *Schein*. Dans mon analyse, j'avance que le motif du *Schein* se retrouve au sein des descriptions que Müller fait des objets et endroits en termes de couleur et de lumière. Ainsi, le *Schein* se veut une manifestation silencieuse de la vérité dans les œuvres de Müller, puisque le motif créé un tableau visuel de ce qui serait autrement étouffé ou gardé sous silence. Dans ce même ordre d'idées, cette thèse se conclut par l'analyse du thème du silence, multiforme et omniprésent dans l'œuvre de Müller.

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Introduction

I. Herta Müller's Disdain for the German Concept of *Heimat*

> *Das war der Betrug der Dinge, der ganzen Umgebung an mir. Weil sie sich als 'Heimat' verstand und genügte, lieβ sie mich in ihr verstecktes Leben nie hinein.*
> (Müller, "Betrug" 214)

Herta Müller's sentiment towards *Heimat* is one of rejection. In her essay "Heimat oder Der Betrug der Dinge" (1997), she makes her stance clear: "Wenn ich mich zu Hause fühle, brauche ich keine 'Heimat'. Und wenn ich mich nicht zu Hause fühle, auch nicht" ("Betrug" 219). Reflective of her essay's title, Müller's novels expose the "Betrug der Dinge," the deceit of things, and denounce the traditional and nostalgic German concept of *Heimat*. In the critical portrayal of *Heimat* she delivers in her essay "Der König verneigt sich und tötet" (2003), Müller makes a well-defined distinction between the smaller *Heimat* of the village and the broader *Heimat* of the nation-state: "Dorfheimat als Deutschtümelei und Staatsheimat als kritikloser Gerhorsam und blinde Angst vor Repression" (König 29). On the one hand, she criticizes the German village and its 300 year-old patriotism based on an ethnocentric myth of superiority that relies on patriarchal mechanisms of exclusion to produce and ensure the *Heimat* myth. On the other hand, she denounces Ceausescu's nationalist and patronizing politics of duplicity that left the Romanian population caught in a "web of cruelty, corruption, and hypocrisy" (Bauer, *Gender* 153). By forcing men and women into the role of "victims and victimizers," (Stan 6) the seemingly antagonistic politics of the German village and the Romanian state yielded the similar results.

Be it the *Dorfheimat* or *Staatsheimat*, Müller's negative portrayal of *Heimat* lays bare a cloak-covered social construct that relies on patriarchal mechanisms of oppression and exclusion to secure its legitimacy and viability. The hetero-normative mechanisms of marginalization, oppression, and exclusion forced upon Müller's protagonists are visible through the recurring themes of shame, disgust, guilt, and humiliation. The following analysis draws on Martha C. Nussbaum's *Hiding from Humanity* (2004), which sheds light on these emotions and their social, political, and legal functions. The investigation of the social mechanisms that produce feelings of shame, disgust, and guilt proves essential for an examination of Müller's portrayal of *Heimat* in her narratives, since the aforementioned feelings raise questions about social norms and integration. For Müller's marginalized, oppressed, and excluded characters, peer pressure to comply with these norms is concurrent with punitive mechanisms of shaming and humiliation that produce feelings of guilt and disgust. As a consequence, her characters are ostracized or rejected from the idyllicized social construct of *Heimat*, as they fail to conform to its norms and fail to honour its prescribed virtue of innocence.

The connection between *Heimat*, innocence, and gender appears in Blickle's *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, in which rather than arguing the fundamental innocence of *Heimat*, he demonstrates instead "how the idealization of a home ground has lead again and again to borders of exclusion" (188). In his chapter "Heimat and Innocence," Blickle looks into "the uncanny and persistent German longing for a space of innocence that *Heimat* always implies" (ix) as stated in the preface to his study. Here, he investigates the spatial aspect of *Heimat*, thereby noting how *Heimat* "combines territorial claims [- and which also speak here for the realm of nature -] with a

fundamental ethical reassurance of innocence; and, to achieve this combination, it uses a patriarchal, gendered way of seeing the world" (*Heimat* 2). Furthermore, in his recent article entitled "Gender, Space and Heimat," Blickle also distinguishes two contrasting ideas of *Heimat*: the traditional concept that can be traced back to 1780, as well as the new, feminist notion of *Heimat* that has emerged since 1990.

The new, feminist notion of *Heimat* aims to break hetero-normative structures by proposing a more fluid and inclusive understanding of *Heimat*; one that now encompasses and embraces diversity in regards to overlapping identity categories such as gender, religion, race, and class that determine integration. Today, it seems that German speakers, men and women alike, have all established their own individualized definition of the concept. In *Heimat: Neuentdeckung eines verpönten Gefühls* (2010), Verena Schmitt-Roschmann claims that in present-day Germany, the term *Heimat* is found "überall" and as such, its usage has become random and its presence "allgegenwärtig" (13). *Heimat*, Schmitt-Roschmann argues, has become somewhat disconnected from its original meaning, and the consequence of this is that "[…] eine ganze Generation [hält] das Wort für sinnentleert und bedeutungslos" (13). Yet she argues that *Heimat,* as a deep-rooted German identity concept*,* "hat jetzt auch etwas drängend aktuelles" (10) in light of the "unergründliche Krise" (11) of present-day globalization. Whereas *Heimat* might have become bereft of its original meaning for a generation that has grown to use it loosely and in a broader sense, for others, *Heimat* still resonates with grounded tradition. It has always been and continues to be a term of intensive debate. As Gabriele Eichmanns points out in the introduction of *Heimat goes Mobile* (2013): "Heimat challenges the mind of both the man in the street and the

academic alike. Emotionally as well as ideologically laden [, it] has elicited, and still elicits, various explanations and interpretations throughout the ages as well as throughout different parts of the German-speaking world" (1). In her interpretation of the concept, Schmitt-Roschmann argues that *Heimat* came to be out of a need to fulfill one's sense of "Zugehörigkeit, Gemeinschaft, Einordnung, [und] Identität" (Schmitt-Roschmann 11). Eichmanns adds to this list of definitions by pointing out that over time, however, *Heimat* has acquired new meanings that now encompass:

> […] a place of comfort, unspoilt nature, one's mother tongue, blood relations and familiar traditions and customs. Thus, Heimat has served as the justification for dividing and uniting the German people; has been worshipped and despised, misused and abused; has caused unbelievable sorrow as well as feelings of utter comfort, security and belonging; but has never, not even after the shameless Blut-und-Boden propaganda during the Nazi era, stopped to influence and infiltrate the minds of countless Germans. (1)

In light of this statement, it appears that the essence of the traditionalist German concept of *Heimat* is indeed "based on a spatial concept of identity" (Blickle, *Heimat* 15); one that remains exclusive, as it is "constructed by men for men" (Blickle, "Gender" 55). Traditionally the spatial concept of *Heimat* implied "black and white contrasts between genders — with obvious consequences for dichotomous concepts as varied as city-country, public-private, domestic-foreign, etc" (Blickle,"Gender" 54). As a result, the traditional notion of *Heimat* often imposed black and white modes of conduct on its people. As a gendered concept, it usually implied normative and hierarchical gender

assumptions that separated men from women, the masculine from the feminine. In her essay “Heimat oder der Betrug der Dinge” (1997), Müller alludes to this binary when she recalls the regressive effect that *Heimat* had on the assignment of gender roles in her native village:

> Das Wort ‘Heimat’ klang damals aus dem Mund der Männer wie ‘Herrgott’ aus dem Mund der Frauen klang. Die Arbeit an der ‘Heimat’ war wie alle anderen Alltagsdinge pragmatisch aufgeteilt: Die Männer hatten ihre Erinnerung an den Krieg, die Frauen ihre Gebete. Ohne Verklärung läβt sich das Wort Heimat gar nicht gebrauchen. (214)

In this passage, Müller speaks ironically about the “pragmatic” division of gender roles that formed the hetero-normative pattern of the village she grew up in. Whereas men are portrayed here as being stuck in the past and reminiscing about the glorious patriotic years of the War, women are said to keep busy by praying to God. What men and women have in common is a similar nostalgic longing for an idealized space. By then describing *Heimat* as Verklärung, Müller brings forth the mythological characteristic of *Heimat*, thereby underlining that the concept would otherwise not even exist. By associating *Heimat* with myth, she also underlines how the social construct is based on fictitious ideological and spatial ideals that create a vicious circle of hypocrisy and duplicity. In doing so, she in fact implies that *Heimat* is nothing but an illusion, a deceptive *Schein.*

This dissertation seeks to trace the debunking of the myth of *Heimat* in Müller’s narratives through the motif and verbal imagery of *Schein*. In so doing, it explores Müller’s anti-*Heimat* stance through the interrelated discourse of space, gender and

morality found amidst the *Dorfheimat and Staatsheimat*-- two distinct yet interrelated *Heimat* spaces that form the locus of Müller's Romanian narratives. In my dissertation, I contend that Müller reduces both the *Dorfheimat* and the *Staatsheimat* to mythical socio-spatial constructs that rely on regressive doctrines and nationalist ideologies to promote and maintain their immaculate veneer. This immaculate veneer, I argue, is illustrated in Müller's works through the recurring leitmotif of *Schein*. Building upon Müller's anti-*Heimat* portrayal, I also argue that mechanisms of exclusion, oppression and betrayal lurk behind instances of *Schein* found within the spatial environments depicted in Müller's narratives. In my dissertation, I suggest that *Schein* should be seen as a visual cue used by Müller to unveil the hypocrisy and duplicity of *Heimat*. Before moving onto close readings of Müller's texts, I first set the stage of this dissertation by exploring recent academic discourses on the German idea of *Heimat,* an ideologically-loaded notion that remains a core element of German identity to this day. This then brings me to discuss *Heimat* as it pertains to Müller. Here, I describe how *Heimat* is to be perceived as a central theme found either as the backdrop or at the forefront of her narratives. Concluding this introductory section is a detailed explanation of the thesis structure and its methodology.

II. *Der Schein trügt*: On the German Myth of *Heimat*

> *Heimat [-] das beständige Sehnen nach Orten der Kindheit, Orten der Geborgenheit, der glücklichen Erinnerung, der einfachen, klaren Verhältnisse. Nach Orten der Ruhe inmitten der Beschleunigung, am besten in heiler Natur, zwischen hohen Bergen, tiefen Wäldern, klaren Seen. Nach Orten, an denen nichts fremd ist oder bedrohlich, nichts widersprüchlich, gebrochen oder zerstört. Dieses tiefe Bedürfnis nach Heimat ist etwas Urdeutsches.*
> (Schmitt-Roschmann 1)

The German term *Heimat* emerged in the Middle Ages, and throughout the centuries, it epitomized the idea of "Germanness" (Eichmanns 1). Although the term *Heimat* was always used in the German-speaking world, its prominence re-emerged at a time of profound mutation during the Napoleonic wars that ranged France against shifting alliances of other European powers; this happening at a time that also coincided with the beginning of industrialization. Reactionary to progress and French influence, *Heimat* then expanded in opposition to - and in relation with – modernity and rational thought during Germany's Age of Enlightenment. Referring to this Age of Reason, George L. Mosse points out in *The Image of Man* (1996):

> […] suffice it to say that the belief in unity - in the interrelationship of men, women and nature - was decisive here. The exploration of nature, central to Enlightenment thought, meant learning to read nature's innermost purpose through outward appearances, decoding that which could be seen, touched, measured, and dissected. (24)

During this period of mutation in Europe, German speakers sought to protect a traditional perception of the world by re-establishing a close relationship between nature and their social environment, a reconciliation that lead to the equation "Mother-Nature-Heimat"[1] (Blickle, *Heimat* 124). For the German bourgeois*, Heimat* spoke for German nation building; it served as a social and political ideal that encouraged transformations unfolding across the European continent against established aristocracies, especially on German-speaking soil.

As Boa and Palfreyman point out in *Heimat – A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890-1990*: "The transition from the particularist patchwork of [aristocratic] states to the Prussian-dominated, unified Germany of 1871 was marked by tensions between regional and national identity which were intensified by the extreme rapidity of industrialization and urbanization" (1). Verena Schmitt-Roschmann argues that *Heimat*, although generally perceived as a spatial concept, is merely "ein Gefühl" found in the collective German imaginary and that uses territory as its realm (30). In *'Heimat': At the Intersection of Memory and Space* (2012), Eigler and Kugele also observe that *Heimat* helped provide "a point of crystallization for grappling with the effects of modernity in literary and aesthetic writings from the late 18th century to the present" (1). Poetological concepts of "the naïve and the sentimental, central to German Classicism," they argue, "are closely bound up with notions of lost primordial belonging – to be remembered or imagined in the literary realm" (1). This aspect is underlined by Gernot Böhne in his work *Für eine ökologische Naturästhetik*, when he explains that:

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[1] Blickle alludes here to Broch, who spoke of the same "mother- nature- Heimat" equation in his *Bergromane*.

> Die bürgerliche Entdeckung der Natur von der Landschaftsmalerei über die Naturlyrik, über Wandern und Rudern bis zur touristischen Erschlieβung der Alpen, von der Lust an der Nacktheit der Puttis und armen Leute über die Schwärmerei für die Naivität und Naturverbundenheit des Weibes bis zum Lob des guten Wilden – ist Entdeckung der Natur als des Anderen Vernunft. (Böhme 42)

As Böhme points out here, during the periods of Enlightenment and Romanticism, the German male subject's imaginary romanticized and idealized both the notion of *Heimat* and the realm of nature. For the bourgeois male, *Heimat*, like the *Naturschöne*, became a rediscovered space protected from intrusive and destabilizing shifts associated with the rapid growth and spread of industrialization. As such, *Heimat* provided an idyllic counter-image to a society that was hastily being transformed by and confronted to the onset of modernity. What soon became the correlation between *Heimat* and nature stemmed from the illusionary and nostalgic notion of *Heimat* as a pure, and therefore morally innocent territorial ground protected from various forms of environmental and moral pollution.

In alignment with this philosophical reasoning that emerged at the time of Romanticism, Blickle refers to German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, who argued that man (the self) sought reconciliation with nature ever since the moment of the fall of Eden, a divisiveness between man and nature which Schelling identifies as *Entzweiung*: a split, a becoming two. In doing so, man (the self) sought to achieve reconciliation through a "heightening of the unity" (*Heimat* 120) taking place between himself and the subliminal, *das Naturschöne.* The concept of *Heimat*, Blickle argues,

provided the German collective imaginary with an ideological identity that reflected the virtues of *das Naturschöne* and which provided an illusion of unity through *Schein*:

> The concepts of the beauty of nature and of Heimat are closely related. They both invest in an inanimate Other with shining subjective qualities that reflect themselves back as identity. One could speak of the halo with which the subject invests both Naturschönheit and Heimat, giving them the misty glow of an originary space. (*Heimat* 121)

This perpetual quest to unite oneself with nature was indeed integrated in the foundation of *Heimat*, in which the self sought after "the idea of heaven, a unifying and sheltering space hitherto associated with the heavenly spheres, into more-human realms" (*Heimat* 120). This might explain why in the imaginary of the German bourgeois, the Alps are often perceived to epitomize the nostalgic idea of an untarnished land that inspires both awe and the sought-after reconciliation between man and nature.

In this line of reasoning, *Heimat* helped the German subject acquire a self-perceived - and self-proclaimed - correlation between himself and nature. However, this perceived unity with nature is mere *Schein*, as it is perpetuated through man-made social constructs on which the concept of *Heimat* is based. The deceit of these man-made social constructs comes from the false belief that they are entrenched in the laws of nature. Thus, in *Heimat*, hetero-normative social conventions are jealously protected, as they are perceived to promote the idea of natural harmony and unity. Ironically, in the regressive, ethnocentric *Heimat* imaginary, it is believed that one's identity - whether personal or collective, is formed by laws of nature, not by social constructs.

The man-made construct of *Heimat* and its will to perceive its unity with nature has a direct impact on the perception of gender roles associated with male and female subjects and the behaviour each should have in the society. In the male dominated *Heimat*, the quest for unity with nature resonates with a quest for unity with the feminine. *Die Heimat*, as the "ideal woman or mother," (Blickle 93) represents for the male German subject a sheltering space similar to man's first nature, as a human creature living inside the female womb. For Nietzsche, *Heimat* was "an [aside] allusion […] to the mythical womb of the mother, hidden behind a larger argument about the Apollonian and Dionysian in art" (*Heimat* 92). In this same line of reasoning, Freud refers to female genitalia as:

> […] this uncanny [Unheimliche] […] entrance to the ancient home [zur alten Heimat] of the human child, the entrance to the site of our first habitation. "Love is homesickness," the old saying goes, and when the dreamer remarks to himself during his dream: I know this, I've been here before, then the genitalia or the womb of the mother maybe substituted. So, the uncanny is in this case also the formerly homey the familiar. The "un" before heimlich [secret] marks its disavowal. (Freud 75, qtd in Majer-O'Sickey 207)

By associating the mother's womb with the notion of a so-called *Urheimat*, Freud's statement provides a further example of how the spatial concept of *Heimat* is, in the German imaginary, connected with woman's corporal nature. In her essay "Framing the *Unheimlich,*" (2003) Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey develops on Freud's statement linking woman and *Heimat* and points out here the "intricate chain of substitution" implied by

the relation “Mother-Heimat”: “Heimat as mother, mother as Heimat, mother as home, mother as *unheimlich*, and therefore no longer Heimat” (207). The perception that *Heimat* and motherhood are interwoven has a direct impact on the female role of mother in the *Heimat*. Traditionally, women in the *Heimat*, be it the wife, or daughter-wife to become, have been taught to adhere to the moral and sexual virtue of innocence. This is embodied and prescribed by the law of purity (virginity) prior to wedlock, as well as through woman’s ‘natural’ and predetermined role of childbearing, deemed crucial for ensuring *Heimat*’s existence and survival.

As women evoke nature (womb as *Heimat*), so too can nature evoke woman. Like the land he owns, the female body is a possession of the male subject[2]. In *Heimat*, man’s moral duty is to protect both territory and woman from unwanted trespassing and contamination. An example of this appears in Blickle’s anthology on *Heimat*, in which he refers to complaints made by Ernest Bovet, who was once president of the Swiss *Heimatschutz* [Association for the Protection of the *Heimat*]. Blickle explains here how in 1912, Bovet vehemently fought against the construction of a cable car (*Drahtseilbahn*) that would connect the ground to a mountaintop: “The white mountain top is to the mountain climber a proud virgin whom one conquers slowly through devotion and love. She has an elevating effect on the soul for the rest of one’s life. To the hero of the cable car, she is a waitress with whom one fools around for half an hour’” (*Heimat* 92-93). What Bovet’s observation suggests here is that the womanized mountain flawed by the cable car is just as immoral as the woman who is tarnished by sexual vice. The hypocrisy bespeaks the male subject’s biased authority at the helm of *Heimat*, as he has the means to potentially disgrace and humiliate the female subject through his own

[2] See also Lyn Marven, who explores the theme of woman as a landscape in *Body and Narrative* (2005).

active participation. Unlike the male subject himself, both nature and woman must remain pure and innocent. This prescribed virtue of purity and moral innocence worshiped through the social construct of *Heimat* is, as made evident here, often correlated with a perfect woman and her womb. “Heimat is the *shining* bride or *shining* motherhood” (*Heimat* 82 *my emphasis*). As exposed through Blickle’s example, *Heimat* calls for a puritan definition of what it means to be a virgin, a wife and a mother, and as such, it implies limitations into women’s own agency and self-determined realization as second-class citizens.

Developed through a male hegemonic point of view, *Heimat* is the place where “the modern split between male and female is healed [and] where the one who lives home may remain unaware of any tensions or incongruities between the two [genders]” (*Heimat* 83). It implies well-defined roles for everyone that composes its society, and this applies to all categorical spheres, be it gender, religion, class, etc. Revolving around black and white binaries, *Heimat* also relies on regressive and fixed binary conceptions such as male / female, in / out, public / private. Pointing to Gisela Ecker’s essay “’Heimat’: Das Elend der unterschlagenen Differenz,” (1997) Blickle notes that *Heimat* puts the “feminine-motherly figure in the immobile center, the male figures in the negotiable and changing spheres about the center, [and] on the outside [...] everything that arises from a new time and a new social order and that is endangering of the Heimat” (*Heimat* 106-107). Accordingly, men in *Heima*t are granted mobile, “differentiated features, [whereas] the center and the outside are statically embodied by the motherly-feminine figure and the figure of the Jew respectively” (*Heimat* quoting Ecker 106). The misogynist and racist perception of the world found in this citation

resonates directly with Müller's portrayal of a disintegrating *Heimat* in her novel *Der Mensch ist ein grosser Fasan auf der Welt*, in which Windisch, the male protagonist, perceives women and Jews as having cracked the unity and harmony of *Heimat*. Accordingly, he exclaims: "die Juden verderben die Welt. Die Juden und die Weiber" (77). What both citations suggest is that for Müller, *Heimat* revolves around mechanisms of exclusion. From a gender perspective, woman's fixed and defined emplacement in *Heimat*'s center confirms her confinement as a dominated being. For the male subject, *die Heimat* evokes a feminine space that he can both harness and control. And like *Heimat*, the female subject is seen as property over which man can rule in order to protect her immaculate boundaries. In other words, both *Heimat* and women inspire a utopian place in which territorial / physical purity and moral innocence are both defended and preserved.

This idyllic connotation speaks for what Svetlana Boym refers to as being the nostalgic affect for a utopian place. In *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), she explains that: "Nostalgia (from nostos – return home, and algia- longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (XIII). Although *Heimat* is portrayed positively,by Ernst Broch in his opus *Prinzip Hoffnung*, the latter nevertheless refers to a form of deception that derives from a romanticized notion of *Heimat*, when he states: "Heimat is that which *shines* everyone into his or her childhood, but it is a place where no one has ever been" (*Heimat* 131 *my emphasis*).

The false illusion of *Heimat* and its mechanisms of deception are a central focus

in Herta Müller's works of autofiction[3]. Indeed, the utopian dream of *Heimat* is never materialized in the life of men and women portrayed in Müller's works. Instead, Müller's depiction of *Heimat* sheds light on dystopian realities in which prescriped norms and biased conditions are imposed upon a society that blindly accepts them, and where social stratification favours mechanisms of exclusion based on hetero-normativity and ethnocentricity. Through those who 'see differently', Müller lays bare the web of hypocrisy and duplicity that contradict the virtues of harmony and unity traditionally believed to be found at the core of the spatial and ideological German notion of *Heimat*. Accordingly, *Heimat* is to be perceived as a myth that produces norms and ideologies that revolve around outward appearances. Be it under the form of shine, look, appearance, semblance or illusion, *Heimat* evokes a deceptive *Schein*; an ideological veneer that blinds people from reality and keeps them confined to a space of lies, deceit, and betrayal.

[3] *Autofictional* is a term Müller uses herself to make clear that her novels and novellas are to be read as fictionalized autobiographies. See also Ralph Köhnen.

III. *Heimat* as *Schein* in Müller's Essays and Novels

> *Die Heimat ersetzt jedes Schuldgefühl durch Selbstmitleid. Sie ist ein unauffälliges, weil zugelassenes Mittel der 'guten Menschen' zur Verdrängung und Verfälschung.*
> (Müller, "Betrug" 214)

Müller's anti-*Heimat* stance contests the space of moral innocence by laying bare the hypocritical mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion that rely on shame, disgust, guilt, and humiliation to ensure and perpetuate the collective labour of deception implied by *Heimat*. As a spatial concept that epitomizes the virtuous principles of harmony and unity, *Heimat* refers to a place in which those who belong (and behave) are also expected to be morally pure and innocent. As Friederike Eigler points out in "Critical approaches to Heimat," in turn, those who shun *Heimat*'s normative rules become exposed to "the conservative and, at times, regressive connotations of the concept" (29). In her narratives, Müller introduces characters who fall victim to Müller's two distinct *Heimat* entities depicted in her essays and works of fiction: the *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat.* Although distinct in size and ideology, these two *Heimat* spaces are nevertheless similar in their oppressive function. Be it in the *Dorfheimat* or *Staatsheimat*, those who fail to be in alignment with the imposed set of traditional or political ideologies inevitably fall victim to various forms of marginalization, ostracization and exclusion.

In my thesis, I show that by reading Müller's fctional and non-fictional texts through the lens of gender one gains additional insight into the concept of *Heimat* and its false

pretence of moral innocence. In doing so, I base my discussion on Müller's critical stance and negative portrayal of *Heimat* found both in her essays and works of fiction. Although many Müller scholars insist that the author's essays are "by no means designed as adjuncts offering a theoretical aid to understanding [her works of fiction], let alone a key to their meinaning [,] (Kohl 16), it remains that Müller's essays directly interact with themes that she also explores in her novels. In light of this observation, Kathrin Kohl points out in her essay "Beyond Realism: Herta Müller's Poetics" (2013) that "the overt use of metaphor in [most of Müller's essays] indicates that they are intended to engage not just the rational faculties but also the imagination and the emotions in ways that provide a counterpoint to the fictional works rather than constituting an entirely distinct form of discourse" (Kohl 160). Kohl maintains that Müller's essays and works of fiction "interact in complex ways [and the] autobiographical foundation of her essays underpins their poetological import, in accordance with their rhetorical concept of *ethos*, which assumes that the writer's moral stature and presence will enhance the communicative efficacy of the speech or text." (Kohl 16) To this effect, this dissertation, although it does not seek to undermine the poetological significance of Müller's essays, draws many parallels between Müller's essays and works of fiction. In doing so, it takes into consideration insightful autobiographical information found in Müller's essays to address the issue of *Heimat,* as well as to address other related issues such as space, gender and morality found in her novels.

In her works, Müller distorts the idyll of *Heimat*, its *schönen Schein*, by revealing how male dominance and gender inequality result in a patriarchal construction of innocence that is instrumental in orchestrating feelings of shame, guilt, and disgust to

humiliate and control non-conforming individuals. In light of this observation, I argue that Müller's works introduce characters that fall victim to the luring *Schein* of *Heimat*, as they each in their own way fail to conform to its normative social structure. As they do not comply, they are also able to "see differently"[4] and therefore scrutinize *Heimat* and its mechanisms of deceit. By seeing reality through a different light, Müller's characters demystify the illusion of an idyllic *Heimat* and unveil its pervasive and corrupt social structure underlying all levels of governance, whether in the village, the city, or the nation-state. By doing so, these narrative voices also distort the concept's false pretence of moral innocence, its ideological veneer, its *schönen Schein*.

Through her unique and compelling imagery – or what Philipp Müller calls her "symbolträglich[e] Bildlichkeit," ("Titel/Bild" 115) Müller transforms her portrayal of *Heimat* into a coded tableau that becomes decipherable through an analysis of *Schein*. Nietzsche, in his work *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, refers to the term *Schein* in the specific context of Classical Greek drama and associates its meaning with "shine, look,

[4] The idea of 'seeing differently' resonates here with Amelia Jones' eponymous book, in which she argues: "[…] that it is worth rethinking the question of identification through attention to aesthetics and the visual" (1). In her book, Jones quotes Juliet Steyn, who, in alignment with Herta Müller's pro-individualist and anti-totalitarian stance, acknowledges that alterity through visual representation "prevents complete identification and totalization. That which has been traditionally thought as aesthetics is reaffirmed as a site in which the limits of the thinkable are at work and might be rephrased and represented" (Steyn qtd in Jones 5). Jones then explains that the idea of "seeing differently" aims to "provide a provisional new model for understanding identification as reciprocal, dynamic, and ongoing process that occurs among viewers, bodies, images, and other visual modes of the (re)presentation of subjects" (1).

appearance, semblance, illusion" (Sallis 25). In the same vein, the Roman poet Horace wrote: "Decipimur specie recti" - we are deceived by the appearance of truth" (*Ars poetica,* l. 2.5), which in the German context, becomes: "Wir werden vom *Schein* (my emphasis) des Rechten getäuscht" (Horaz, *Von der Dichtkunst* 15). In alignment with Horace's words, the proverb "Der Schein trügt" also warns of deception, betrayal and bigotry. As such, it resonates with Müller's own claim made evident in her essay "Heimat oder der Betrug der Dinge" (1997). Here, she addresses the idea of deception found in *Heimat*, an ideological notion that impairs logical reasoning:

> In Liedern habe ich das Wort Heimat zum ersten Mal gehört. Ein kurzer Gedanke ging mir damals durch den Kopf: Weshalb singen sie das, sie sind doch zu Hause. Sie hatten Sehnsucht nach dem Ort, an dem sie sich befanden, Sehnsucht in den Augen, die glänzten. Es war das Glänzen des Suffs. Der Suff lieβ sie schwimmen. (214)

In this essay, Müller compares the effect of *Heimat* to drunkenness and exposes how the social construct of *Heimat* – through its ideological veneer, leaves people blinded by "the longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (Boym, xii-xiv); a false illusion for which they must also keep up false appearances.

This understanding of *Heimat* as a nostalgic dream has lead me to address the notion of *Heimat* as an illusionary space that relies on various normative ideologies to safekeep appearances. From this perspective, my dissertation associates the act of keeping up appearances for the sake of *Heimat* with the motif of *Schein*. This approach is inspired, among others, by Nietzsche, who alludes to the "schöne[n] Schein der Traumwelt" (III 1: 22) in his discussion of Apollonian and Dionysian in *Der Geburt der*

Tragödie; a terminology that I shall borrow to speak of the false illusion of *Heimat*. As John Sallis suggests in *Crossing Nietzsche and the Space of Tragedy* (1991), the word *Schein* should "be read in its full range of senses: shine, look, appearance, semblance, illusion" (25). Also to be added to Sallis' interpretation of *Schein* is the adjective *scheinheilig*, which ties into fake social appearances of moral preaching, yet also acquires the characteristic of acting in a hypocritical or contradictory manner.In this respect, my close readings of Müller's texts have allowed me to discover how *Schein* and its derivative *Scheinheiligkeit* appear across Müller's body works. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, although Müller does not explicitely allude to the term *Schein* herself, the various etymological meanings of *Schein* found across Müller's works make it a malleable visual cue that I use to illustrate the pernicious effects of the social construct of *Heimat*. In other words, Müller uses a distorting strategy that calls for the "Depotenzieren des Scheins zum Schein," (*Geburt der Tragödie* 14) as she debunks *Heimat* and its *schönen Schein* to lay bare false illusions that promote hypocritical and corrupt ideologies. It is from this angle - the notion of *Schein* as hypocrisy, duplicity and deception, that I shall examine Müller's critical portrayal of *Heimat*, a central and recurring theme found throughout her works.

IV. Structure and Methodology

This thesis is based on two perspectives. The first part focuses on debunking *Heimat* through the gaze of those who see differently. Here, I will expore Müller's critical portrayal of the spaces of *Heimat* that shall be based on territorial and ideological distinctions found between *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*. Accordingly, this first perspective, that focuses on Müller's portrayal of *Heimat* as an ideological space, will be divided into three distinct chapters: **Chapter one:** *Der Schein trügt: Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat* as *'Anti-idylle'*; **Chapter two:** *Der Schein trügt (wieder)*: When the *Schein* of *Heimat* Turns into *Panopticon*; and **Chapter three:** *Der Schein trügt nicht mehr*. The second part will focus on Müller's stylistic devices she uses to expose *Heimat*'s deceit, especially for the marginalized, ostracized and excluded who have learned to 'see differently'. In line with many studies that have focused on Müller's "erfundene Wahrnehmung" (Eke) and her "fremden Blick," (Paola Bozzi) my investigation seeks to further investigate the visual experience in Müller's oeuvre by granting special attention to the role and agency of objects and things; the role of colouration and light; and the role of silence in her narratives. Each of these stylistic approaches contribute to the formation of the "fremde Blick" and the "erfundene Wahrnehmung", Müller's two "organizing principle[s]" (Grewe 99) that determine "visual experience" (ebd) for her characters who are able to see through the hypocrisy and duplicity of *Heimat*. The second part is then divided into two chapters. **Chapter four:** *Heimat* Space as *Widerschein* and **Chapter five**: Language and Silence as *Schein.*

Chapter one, *Der Schein Trügt: Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat* as *Anti-idyll*,

exposes patriarchal forms of duplicity found in both *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*. Focusing on the gaze of outsiders, my investigation seeks to unveil the deception of *Heimat*'s so-called space of innocence through the recurring theme of gender and moral forms of marginalization of shame, guilt and humiliation featured in the novels *Niederungen*, *Der Fasan* and *Herztier*. This first chapter is divided into three sub-chapters. The first, dealing with the novel *Niederungen,* analyzes how the young female narrator's gaze unveils the deceptive *Schein* of *Heimat* in her *Dorfheimat*, thereby exposing its deep-rooted, regressive and oppressive hetero-normative rules. Through her scrutinizing gaze that dissects the dysfunctional relationships affecting family and neighbours, the young female narrator brings to light the gender discrepancy between women and men. Here, women are burdened with shame, guilt and humiliation, while men, empowered by patriarchy, benefit from the immaculate *Schein* of moral innocence, no matter how vile and corrupt they may be. Focusing on *Der Fasan,* the second sub-chapter explores how *Dorfheimat's* traditional forms of deception quickly give way to equally deceptive patriarchal norms now being imposed by *Staatsheimat*. This shift in power structures implies that men in the village are now struggling to keep their traditional right of authority vis-à-vis new authority figures who speak in the name of the state. The gender bias favouring men continues to affect the subjugation of women in the village. In *Der Fasan*, women's bodies become the ultimate means of trade for villagers seeking to emigrate. The third sub-chapter, which focuses on the novel *Herztier*, investigates how in Ceausescu's *Staatsheimat*, the village, and the city are equally hindered by rampant and pervasive instances of corruption, abuse and deprivation. The hypocrisy found in the German-speaking village finds its equivalent in

the Romanian city under the form of duplicity. As Müller makes clear through the character of Lola, both the village and the city operate in similar ways, which leads to comparable effects of marginalization, oppression and exclusion. By focusing on this character, I will show how women in the city fall victim to betrayal; a deceptive trap found all across Ceausescu*'s* all-pervasive patriarchal regime. The anonymous narrator reveals how Lola firmly believes that she will improve her fate by studying in the city, and how to further her goal, she aligns herself with a man of influence and authority. The anonymous narrator then sees how Lola is blinded by the illusionary *Schein* of progress she associates with the city, and how she is then lured into a trap of deception and betrayal that leads to her own downfall.

Chapter two, *Der Schein trügt (wieder)*: *Heimat* as *Panopticon*, examines how Müller, in her novels *Atemschaukel* and *Der Fuchs*, uses *Schein* as illusion and ideology to warn against omnipresent, life-threatening surveillance. *Schein*, therefore, has the function of what Foucault described as being the ubiquitous gaze of Panopticism. The chapter focuses on each novel respectively, and is thus divided into two sub-chapters that examine how panopticon-like surveillance is present and visible in both levels of *Heimat* depicted in Müller's works, namely: the traditional *Heimat* of the German community featured in *Atemschaukel*, and the totalitarian form of *Heimat* embodied by Ceausescu's regime featured in *Der Fuchs*. In *Atemschaukel*, the story begins in the final stages of World War II. Here, I investigate how the protagonist's closeted homosexual identity is what triggers his haunting fear of being watched and his sexual orientation disclosed to his community and the state. The novel's protagonist Leo sees his homosexuality as a moral and sexual vice that goes against the virtue of moral

innocence prescribed by *Heimat.* For Leo, *Heimat* becomes the menacing and confining "Fingerhut der Stadt, wo alle Steine Augen hatten" (7). For this reason, he feels vulnerable and threatened by a *Heimat* that thrives on normativity and panopticon-like surveillance. The second sub-chapter focuses on *Der Fuchs* and explores how panopticon-like surveillance is implied in the novel's leitmotiv "Was glänzt, das sieht". Here, Müller turns instances of luminous and glimmering *Schein* into visual cues that warn of surveillance. Indeed, along with the dictator's "Schwarze im Auge" perceived to be watching over all national subjects, all things that shine become daily reminders of life-threatening surveillance found amidst Ceausescu's pernicious rule over Romania.

Chapter three, *Der Schein trügt nicht mehr* is divided into two sub-chapters, each one respectively dealing with the departure from the *Heimat,* be it through deportation (*Atemschaukel*), or exile (*Reisende auf einem Bein*). In the first sub-chapter, focusing on *Atemschaukel*, attention is drawn to Leo's life-threatening ordeal of deportation that makes him realize how his *Heimat* is, ironically, not only a place of saturation, but also a place of deprivation. As a notion built upon normative ideologies, *Heimat* makes Leo feel *heimatsatt* (saturated) prior to his deportation. At this stage, Leo is aware that he cannot be part of *Heimat*; as a closeted homosexual burdened with shame and guilt, he does not honour the virtues of innocence and moral purity prescribed by *Heimat*. His emotional *Heimatlosigkeit* soon becomes physical upon being deported to the *Lager*. After surviving five years in the *Lager*, Leo's emotional *Heimatlosigkeit* only worsens following his returning to home and country. In the end, his relation to *Heimat* remains one of saturation and of mutual rejection.

The rejection of *Heimat* is an initial situation that is also found in Müller's novel

Reisende. Accordingly, the second sub-chapter focuses on this novel and explores the issue of *Heimatlosigkeit* as perceived by the novel's protagonist Irene, who flees the confining *Staatsheimat* through exile. Although disoriented and debilitated by her unknown future, Irene, soon becomes aware of one issue upon setting foot in the West: she does not want to experience *Heimweh*. In other words, Irene does not wish to experience nostalgic affect for the country she left behind, a sentiment otherwise assumed by citizens who are deprived of their native home and homeland. By rejecting all emotional ties to her *Staatsheimat* and its duplicitous policies, Irene embodies Müller's categorical stance in relation to *Heimat* and exile: "Für gerettete Verfolgte ist Heimat der Ort, wo man nicht zurück hindarf" ("Diesseitige Wut").

Chapter four, *Heimat* Space as *Widerschein,* complements the aspect of *Heimat* discussed previously in the first perspective. More specifically, it examines how objects and places, beyond having symbolic meaning, take an agency of their own in Müller's narratives. In her essays, Müller makes a clear point of explaining how in her writing "Orte und Gegenstände stehen nicht nur herum, sie sind ein Teil der Handlung" (*Lebensangst* 26). The first sub-chapter places Müller's oeuvre in relation to the *spatial turn*, and will therefore explore theories by scholars like Michel Foucault, Edward Soja and Sigrid Weigel who have put forward the importance of space as an epistemological category of investigation. The second sub-chapter investigates the significant role that objects and places play in Müller's narratives, as they become a material and visual medium through which her characters can 'see differently'. The final and third sub-chapter expands on the second by focusing on the aesthetic symbolism of colouration and light found behind the deceptive *Schein* of things and places, or to use Müller's

words, the deceptive *Schein* of *Gegenstände* and *Orte*. My investigation shall be based upon Walter Benjamin's writings that deal with notions of colouration and light, but it also relies and expands on essays written by Beverly Driver Eddy and by Müller herself that specifically touch upon the aspect of colouration and light in respect to Müller's own relation with *Bildlichkeit*. Müller's painterly imaginary found in her narratives, I argue, calls for the reader to envision what lies beneath the surface. Or as Gary Shapiro explains in his book *Archeologies of Vision* (2003), it invites the reader to "dwell on that which is not strictly visible [, thereby] taking the seen as a sign of unseen meanings" (89). From a semantic point of view, I also argue that Müller's pictorial descriptions related to *Heimat* and gender also provide a visual dimension to what would otherwise remain glossed over or silenced.

Along this line of thought, **Chapter five** will then examine the recurring theme of silence found throughout Müller's narratives. Entitled *Language and Silence* as *Schein*, this chapter first investigates how in both the *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat,* language can be manipulated to produce lies and deception. This chapter also looks into silence, first as a lack of communication, but also as a function of camouflage, be it as a strategy to hide that which cannot be said, or as a strategy to defy language tarnished by authoritarian speech. Drawing on Müller's essays and novels, my investigation discusses both silence and language in relation to Müller's *Heimat* discourse. This chapter thus explores how in the context of *Heimat*, the meaning of silence and language changes based on the variables of gender, language and geopolitical order.

Chapter 1: *Der Schein Trügt*: *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat* as *Anti-Idylle*

1.1 *Dorfheimat* as *Anti-Idylle* in *Niederungen*

> *Das Wort 'Heimat' klang damals aus dem Mund der Männer, wie 'Hergott' aus dem Mund der Frauen klang. Die Arbeit an der 'Heimat war wie alle anderen Alltagsdinge pragmatisch aufgeteilt: Die Männer hatten ihre Erinnerung an den Krieg, die Frauen ihre Gebete.*
> (Müller, "Betrug" 214)

In Müller's debut novel *Niederungen*[5], the idealized equation of "Mother – Nature-Heimat" is subverted by the ruthless and lackluster portrayal of *Dorfheimat* reality. Here, the young female narrator's gaze is one that scrutinizes corrupt patriarchal traditions on which the family household and village social structure are based. In other words, the young girl distorts the *schöne Schein* of *Heimat*, and unveils the lack of moral innocence found in her social environment. By demystifying and rejecting the social construct of *Heimat* and its "patriarchal, gendered way of seeing the world," (Blickle, *Heimat* 2) she sets her gaze on hetero-normative gender characteristics that set the tone for her parents' uneasy relationship that, incidentally, also speak for relational patterns across the village. The relationship between the young girl and her parents is based on a local discourse of morality that exposes traditional and regressive norms of gender conformity. However, the omnipresent instances of corruption found in her own household leads the young girl to experience an acute sense of alienation vis-à-vis her own family. By witnessing her dysfunctional family structure, she recognizes how corruption found in the private realm of the household is also found in the collective

[5] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novel to *Niederungen*.

realm of her village. From the introductory pages of the novel onwards, the young girl senses that her inner character and worldview do not fit the patriarchal mould of her own family. Her disillusionment and sense of displacement are twofold: On the one hand, she sees a frustrated mother whose matrimonial life is, both metaphorically and literally, reduced to the vicious circle of picking up the broken pieces of their shattered home-life: "Mutter weint und redet, Mutter redet und weint. Mutter redet weinend und weint redend" (94). On the other hand, she sees an alcoholic father – "Vater ist wieder betrunken" (92) – who remains stuck in the past as he glorifies his years spent as a juvenile soldier during the Nazi era.

Longing for the luminous *Schein* of an era during which his German-speaking village worshiped the expansionist ideals of the Third Reich, the father appears nostalgic for the glorious years that brought ethnocentric pride to his *Heimat*. With the loss of the war and the fall of the Nazi regime, both his personal ambitions as a soldier, and his German-speaking village's collective illusions of greatness came undone. In other words, he is no longer "ein Glühender"[6] National Socialist ("Körper" 95), the adjective Müller uses in reference to those who blindly believed in the *Schein* of Nazism and who felt illuminated by patriotic pride and honour. Like others in the village, the father experienced the humiliation of losing the War and witnessed the punishment of deportation imposed onto the German community by Romanian and Russian

[6] Müller refers here to her uncle who was, like her father, "ein glühender, ein Nazi und Antisemit" ("Körper" 95). Still referring to her uncle, she explains how Nazi ideologies made him feel glorious and superior, observing: "Im Dorf, in diesem Kaff am Rand der Welt, fühlte er sich als Vertreter des Führers, stieg aufs Weinfass und hielt Reden, trimmte und belehrte als Dorfideologe die jungen Leute, erpresste, denunzierte. Er war verbissen und besessen" ("Körper" 95).

authorities. He is traumatized by the defeat, and as a result, he struggles to overcome his loss of pride and honour. As he relies on alcohol to escape this form of defeat, he no longer embodies the *Heimat* virtues of physical vigour and moral discipline traditionally associated with masculinity.

Left with an alcoholic husband with whom she no longer shares the matrimonial bed[7], the mother projects her feelings of frustration and humiliation onto her child, whom she unfairly blames and punishes for her husband's callous behaviour, but also for her own emotional turmoil and failed relationship: "[Dein Vater] hätte gerne mit dir gespielt, aber du musst immer alles verderben, und hör jetzt endlich zu weinen auf" (73). Shunned by her father and reprimanded by her mother, the young girl is left to reflect on her own sense of guilt. Referring to her mother's scolding fits, she confides: "[j]edesmal fiel ich hin und begann zu weinen und wußte in diesem Augenblick, daβ ich keine Eltern hatte, daβ diese beiden niemand für mich waren" (72). As made evident here, the young girl does not only feel alienated, but altogether orphaned by her own parents. The emotional distance separating the narrator from her parents allows her to critically perceive the familial dysfunction and moral injustice found in her own household.

In an attempt to make sense of the turmoil she witnesses all around her, the young girl's scrutiny focuses on various gendered norms that provide the illusion of moral innocence and social order amidst the chaos found in both the private realm of the family household and in the socio-political realm of the village. Her portrayal of

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[7] Based on the passage "[…] einen Zeugbesen zwischen den Ehebetten" (79). The fact that there are two matrimonial beds suggests that the couple sleeps in the same bedroom, but do not share the same bed.

hetero-normative dynamics reveals a gender-segregated society that is dominated by hegemonic masculinity. Conversely, women appear as un-emancipated, subjugated beings that do not benefit from the same advantages as their male counterparts. For instance, the narrator observes that whenever men and women come together, the norm implies that the former lead the pack, while the latter follow subserviently behind them: “Die Männer gehen paarweise voran auf die Straβe. Die Frauen gehen paarweise und eingehängt hinterher” (68). As a feminine trait, the term *eingehängt* implies both closeness and intimacy, and accordingly, it stands in opposition to agency and independence that traditionally belong to the masculine realm. For women, to be considered *eingehäng*t might also indicate a state of stifling intimacy that leads to a form of repression for those who do not comply. The subordination of women witnessed here by the young female narrator is one that is also repeated within the confines of the family household. As exemplified by the young girl’s mother, women must fulfill their duties within the restricted boundaries of the hearth, as imposed upon them by the norms of patriarchy.

Despite her young age, the girl is taught by her elders to perform her prescribed gender role that is deep-rooted in patriarchal tradition. Her reaction is one of confusion and disdain, as she frowns down upon what she considers to be an un-emancipated lifestyle reserved for women, both in the private realm of the household, and in the collective realm of the village. Aware that she, herself, will one day become a woman, the young girl fixates on gender prescribed duties awaiting her as a future mother and housewife in her *Dorfheimat*. Her scrutiny begins at home, where on one occasion she observes how her mother obsessively washes the windows until they are immaculately

clean. The chores executed by the mother are portrayed here as an instance of obsessive-compulsive disorder:

> Mutter hat viele Sommerbesen für die Blätter […] viele Winterbesen für den Schnee […] Mutter hat einen Brotkümmelbesen […] einen Teppichklopfbesen […] einen Bettzeugbesen […| einen Kleiderbesen […] einen Möbelabstaubbesen […] Mutter hält mit ihren Besen das ganze Haus sauber. (79)

Through her young and naïve narrator, Müller ironically undermines the virtue of "Sauberkeit".[8] She does so by showing how the *Schein* of the immaculately clean windows allows the young narrator to see the village through a different lens; one that is framed and reduced to a miniature portrait: "[Die Scheiben] sind so sauber, daβ man das ganze Dorf darin sieht, wie im Spiegel des Wassers" (80). Through the young girl's distorting gaze the window itself becomes a mirror. Instead of admiring the cleanliness of the windows, she is repulsed by their dizzying effect on her, as it reflects the bleak reality of the village: "Man wird schwindlig, wenn man lange das Dorf in der Scheibe ansieht" (80). Thus, beyond experiencing "Schwindligkeit" when gazing at the *überclean* windows, the young girl's situation also suggests that she is nauseated and therefore physically repulsed by traditional gender roles.

This is further confirmed when the young girl herself must submit to housecleaning tasks and accidentally falls and breaks a plate. Scolded by her mother, she is then forced to clean up the broken pieces scattered all over the kitchen floor.

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[8] Here, cleanliness could also symbolize women's moral and sexual honour within the context of *Heimat*.

Once again, the chore of housecleaning leaves her in a state of dizziness: “Ich kehrte die Scherben auf und sah die Küche ganz verschwommen zwischen vielen Tränen. Der Besenstiehl war höher als ich selbst. Er ging vor meinen Augen hin und her. Der Besenstiehl drehte sich, die Küche drehte sich” (65). Instead of creating clarity, cleanliness leaves the young girl feeling disoriented by a sense of blur. By first witnessing her mother frantically wash the windows, then experiencing first hand the chore of keeping the household clean, the young girl is left to ponder her own gender role as a female. Her mother’s predicament as a frustrated housewife informs her of her own fate as a female subject, should she follow in her mother’s footsteps and remain trapped within the patriarchal structure of her village.

Speaking for this sense of entrapment is the young girl’s perception that her village is both a place of familiarity and estrangement:

> Aus den Feldern sieht man das Dorf als Häuseherde zwischen Hügeln weiden. Alles *scheint* (*my emphasis*) nahe, und wenn man darauf zugeht, kommt man nicht mehr hin. Ich habe die Entfernungen nie verstanden. Immer war ich hinter den Wegen, alles lief vor mir her. Ich hatte nur den Staub im Gesicht. Und nirgends war ein Ende. (23)

This form of deception is reflective of what Freud describes as the uncanny. Indeed, it appears that the familiar village becomes a source of estrangement and alienation for the young girl, who here faces the panic of disorientation. Whereas the young girl’s inner reflections on her village expose how she experiences displacement in her spatial environment, they also reflect how she is unable to grasp the logic behind the normative structures that define social conventions in the *Dorfheimat*.

When examining the village's patriarchal structure in greater depth, the young girl's scrutinizing gaze then witnesses how traditional hetero-normative roles of gender define the regressive status of woman in society. In *Niederungen*, these norms are also mimicked behind the closed doors of the matrimonial bedroom. As a strategy to avoid "Unkeusches" (112) at all cost, women in the village are taught to be ashamed of their own bodies, to fear their sexual nature and to repress their femininity:

> Und wenn sie an die Schränke gehen, schauen sie hinauf zur Zimmerdecke, um sich nicht nackt zu sehen, denn in jedem Zimmer des Hauses kann irgendetwas geschehen, was man Schande oder unkeusch nennt. Man muss bloβ nackt in den Spiegel schauen oder beim Strümpfehochrollen daran denken, daβ man seine Haut berührt. In Kleidern ist man ein Mensch, und ohne Kleider ist man keiner. (60)

Mirroring the ideological cloak of *Heimat*, women have been taught for generations that unveiling skin will stain their moral reputation, since the naked body also speaks for sexual arousal.

In the *Dorfheimat*, women are well aware that their naked bodies have the power to destabilize men. This is in alignment with men's belief that women are capable of disempowering them by the sight of their unveiled bodies. Thus for men, the rejection of female nudity might be rooted in the fear of unveiling their weakness as sexually dependent beings. This uncalled-for inversion of roles in patriarchal gender hierarchy appears in the German myth of the Lorelei,[9] in which the beauty of the young maiden's

[9] Müller uses Heine's poem to illustrate the fate of those who tried to flee the *Heimat*, explaining: "Der Rhein ist die Donau, das blitzende Geschmeide der Jungfer die Verlockung zur Flucht. Fliehen, nur

body and the disarming charm of her voice is said to have bewitched the sailors navigating on the Rhine. The legend illustrates the perceived threat of femininity. As exemplified by the Lorelei, women's bodies are thought to have the potency to lure men into the abyss and awaken their desire, which in turn, remind men of their mortality (in the sense of *Eros and Thanatos*) and worse, the fragility of their self-control and moral virtue. The patriarchal concept associated with the village's strict norms regarding sexuality and the female body helps to ensure gender-prescribed norms that allow men to maintain their authority and to protect them from the destabilizing threat of women and their feminine charms. In alignment with this male moral reasoning based on fear, the young girl's *Dorfheimat* is portrayed as a place where women must veil their bodies to protect family and personal honour. Müller makes this the central theme of her story "Das Fenster", in which a young woman has been dressed up with nine layers of skirts to armour herself from the risk of sexual vice at a local dance. Despite the illusionary *Schein* of protection assumed through the effort of putting on nine layers of skirts - "Der neunte Rock ist Lichtgrau wie die Pflaumen am Morgen" ("Das Fenster" 118) - she lifts-up her skirts and wilfully engages in sexual encounters. By having sex out of wedlock with more than one partner, she has failed her *Heimat* morally by engaging in the sin of lust. Furthermore, this discussed passage highlights the hypocritical breech of moral duty, as the young woman described here only respects *Heimat* laws of virtue in *Schein* through the cloak of her nine layers of dresses.

Fliehen – egal was passiert. Die meisten bezahlten den Fluchtversuch mit dem Leben. Der Schiffer ist ein Fliehender auf der Donau im 'Abendsonnenschein'" ("Lale" 81). Although she uses the poem in a different context than the one I discuss here, it nevertheless remains relevant in the general context of this thesis that focuses on the luring deceit of *Schein* found in Müller's portrayal of *Heimat*.

From a hetero-normative perspective, the story “Das Fenster” exposes how women in the archaic village are considered to be a subgroup within patriarchal hierarchy, as made visible through their inhibiting and gender-prescribed outfits. Quoting sociologist Erving Goffman, Martha C. Nussbaum argues that in a patriarchal context, women are traditionally perceived to belong to a “subhuman” group by their dominant male counterparts. In alignment with Nussbaum’s observations, I argue that women’s subordination (here illustrated via excessive layers of dresses) is a way to collaborate and ensure traditional hetero-normativity and to facilitate men’s purchase of an “appearance of control” (336) for avoiding social disorder and disruption. It reinforces the stratification of *Heimat* (male on top, female as a subgroup, children as another subgroup and the outsider as alien). In turn, this stratified structure denies liberty and equality to women in a patriarchal society determined to secure its male hegemony.

The visible subordination of women exposed through the village’s patriarchal social order evokes a similar regressive definition of female identity found in *Niederungen*’s joint text “Faule Birnen”. In this short story, the young narrator and her elder sister who is about to get married have an open and candid discussion about the role of women in life. Here, discrimination appears to be covered through the *Schein* of normalcy, as the elder sister does not criticize the subordination associated with her gender. In alignment with the gender stigma which Goffman calls women’s “spoiled identities,” (Nussbaum 221) female subjects of the village are once again only considered ‘women’ if they are paired with a man: “Ich schau ins Wasser und frag: bist du schon eine Frau. Käthe wirft Kieselsteine ins Wasser und sagt: nur wer einen Mann hat, ist eine Frau. […] Wer keinen Mann hat, hat auch keine Kinder” (Müller, ”Faule

Birnen" 110). The passage appears to play on two semiotic meanings of the word "Frau". In line with De Beauvoir's famous aphorism "on ne nait pas femme, on le devient," (40) aligning with a man through the normative institution of marriage not only gives women the status of wife and mother, it also grants them the status of woman. Incidentally, it is then pointed out that men are not confronted with the same gender bias: "Die sind auch Männer, wenn sie keine Frauen haben" (Müller, "Faule Birnen" 110). The passage exposes how *Heimat*, through its patriarchal dogma, fixes, prescribes and undermines female identity. By definition, to be a woman under the scrutinizing gaze of men implies that she must remain physically 'pure' and innocent, or else find a man and get married. She achieves this by accepting her subjugation and her gender-prescribed duties (keeping her body veiled, marrying a man, and bearing children). As such, woman's emancipation in the village ends with maternity; a reality that stems from the myth of motherhood that is deeply entrenched in the collective imaginary of *Heimat* and that sheds light on its interrelated discourse of gender and moral innocence.

In *Niederungen*, the young girl debunks the myth of motherhood and undermines the virtue of moral innocence traditionally associated with this gendered responsibility. In other words, she unveils the *nadirs* (novel's English title) lying underneath this sanctifying role by revealing how her own mother detracts from moral innocence. The young girl perceives her mother's loss of female attractiveness to be the cause behind her feelings of frustration and humiliation associated with her fixated position as a housewife and mother. However, she is also conscious that she, instead, must bear the blame for her mother's plight:

> Seitdem es mich gibt, sind Mutters Brüste schlaff, seitdem es mich gibt, hat Mutter kranke Beine, seitdem es mich gibt, hat Mutter einen Hängebauch, seitdem es mich gibt, hat Mutter Hämorrhoiden und quält sich stöhnend auf dem Klo. Seitdem es mich gibt, spricht Mutter von meiner Dankbarkeit als Kind und kommt ins Weinen und kratzt sich mit den Fingernägeln. (20)

In reference to this passage, Sigrid Grün points out that the mother "erlebt […] ihre Mutterrolle nicht positiv, sondern sieht sich als Opfer des körperlichen Verfalls, für den das Kind die einzige Ursache ist" (72). Accordingly, the mother appears "krank, erschöpft und verhärmt," (72) and what is more, she blames all of these conditions on her own child. Indeed, she reproaches her daughter of remaining oblivious to the physical and emotional sacrifices endured since the day she gave birth to her, as exemplified by the sentence: "Seitdem es mich gibt, spricht Mutter von meiner Dankbarkeit als Kind und kommt ins Weinen und kratzt sich mit den Fingernägeln der einen Hand an den Fingernägeln der anderen" (20). In turn, the child, blamed by her mother of being ungrateful, develops a sense of self-inflicted guilt, as highlighted in the repetitive sentence "Seitdem es mich gibt" mentioned above. In its form, the young girl's repeated sentences that bring to light her self-inflicted guilt recalls the Catholic prayer "Herr, ich bin nicht würdig" (*Katholisches Gebetbuch* 145) which appears later in the text. In its content, however, the passage becomes an indicator of how the mother experiences shame towards her decaying body; a self-reflexive perception for which, based on the young girl's perception, the mother has chosen to burden her.

The issue conveyed here shows how mother and daughter are trapped in a

vicious circle of blame[10] and guilt transmitted from one generation onto the next. Recalling Müller's essay "Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel," it is as though the mother sees a younger version of herself, with the distinction that unlike herself, the daughter is physically, and arguably morally, intact. As she sees a better and forlorn version of herself mirrored in her young daughter, the frustrated mother lays blame onto her child for the loss of her youth and femininity. This would support Grün's further observation pertaining to this same issue and in which she points out that the negative portrayal of motherhood applies to the entire village: "Eine positive Sicht der Mutterschaft ist in der Gesellschaft offensichtlich unüblich, denn die Vorwürfe an die Kinder setzen sich von Generation zu Generation fort" (Grün 72). What Grün's observation also suggests is that the hypocritical issue of blame and guilt is not only found within the young girl's household, but rather one that is well established across the village through tradition. In the *Dorfheimat*, mothers traditionally transpose blame onto their daughters for their gender's predicament, and conversely, the daughters experience an unfounded self-inflicted sentiment of guilt. As a consequence, the dynamics between mothers and daughters deserves to be analyzed within the broader collective realm of the *Dorfheimat*.

In *Niederungen*, women's interaction with religion proves helpful in examining the moral issues of stigma, blame and guilt found amongst mothers and daughters in both the private and collective realm. The religion of Catholicism and its worship of the Holy Trinity composed of the male structure of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is yet another

[10] Blame is understood here as the responsibility for fault or wrongdoing attributed onto someone else, while guilt refers to the self-reflexive sentiment of fault or wrongdoing perceived by oneself.

means traditionally used in the village to promote and ensure the sanctity of patriarchy and the moral legitimacy of male hegemony. It is also used to remind women to consider themselves deprived of moral innocence. When analyzing the patriarchal discourse of religion, it appears that feelings of stigma, blame and guilt are exclusively inherited from mother to daughter. This would suggest that the accountability of vice in the interrelated discourse of stigma, blame and guilt is one that is predominantly held by women in the village. In the *Heimat* community, religion helps promote and perpetuate the stigma of guilt reserved for members of the "deuxième sexe" (De Beauvoir). When comparing what takes place privately behind the closed doors of the household, as opposed to what takes place collectively behind the closed doors of the church, the issue of *Scheinheiligkeit* comes to the fore. At home, the young girl's mother brutally brushes off all sense of culpability by transferring blame onto her daughter. At church, however, she promotes the illusion of moral good by taking part in guilt-ridden prayers in which all women are obliged to take part: "Alle Frauen knien nieder, schlagen dieses dreifache Kreuz, murmeln Gott-ich-bin-nicht-würdig, schlagen wieder ein Kreuz und stehen auf" (61). As exemplified here, the story's young narrator is exposed to the devout Catholic faith of the village that is forged and lead by male authority, although blindly worshiped and sustained by women.

In this religious context, the young girl is taught from the earliest age to confess her sins and to carry the stigmas of subordination and perpetual guilt that her religion preaches about her gender. This explains why the young girl naively imitates the women around her who are praying for redemption. She confides: "Ich bete. Groβmutter stöβt mir mit der Kniespitze ans Bein, ich bete leiser" (61). Sensing the guilt-ridden

existence plagued by the women before her, the narrator confides: “Ich will mich von der Schuld losbeten” (61). As exposed here, the narrator is taught from the earliest age that her gender is one that is fraught with guilt. This resonates with Christian doctrines featured in the book of Genesis, where blame is set upon the biblical figure of Eve, who is deemed responsible for humankind’s loss of virtue and of completeness. By extension, it also explains why men are on Earth and no longer find themselves in Eden. In this religious and regressive patriarchal discourse, women are told and taught to believe that they are responsible for men’s mortality and animalistic impulses (Nussbaum 90). For centuries, Christianity and its patriarchal structure have been blaming women, who, based on the Bible and its doctrines, continue to be perceived as bearers of original sin. The stigma of gender brought upon women by the Church justifies women’s stigmatization in the patriarchal *Heimat*.

A gender bias associated with religion is also evident in *Niederungen*’s parallel story “Grabrede”. In this story the young girl dreams of her father’s funeral. She is horrified by the blame and subsequent humiliation placed against her by villagers who attend the funeral. The gender bias favouring men over women in the village’s discourse of moral innocence is made evident when observing that, here, it is not the deceased father who must bear the guilt for his immoral sins but rather his daughter, the young female narrator, who survives him. The young girl’s dream suggests that her father never faced any retribution for his moral vices, which were manifold and that she learns about through villagers who attend her father’s funeral. Whereas a first man tells her: “In einem Rübenfeld hat er eine Frau vergewaltigt […] Zusammen mit vier anderen Soldaten,” (“Gabrede” 9) another man comes up to her and confides: “Dein Vater hat

jahrelang mit meiner Frau geschlafen […] Er hat mich im Suff erpresst und mir das Geld gestohlen" ("Gabrede" 10). Now that he is dead, the villagers express their anger by blaming her, his child. After the second man informs the young girl of her father's past wrongdoings, a woman comes up to her and expresses her own disgust: "Dann kam ein runzeliges Weib auf mich zu und, spuckte auf die Erde und sagte pfui zu mir" ("Gabrede" 10). What first appears to be an unfair retribution for her father's wrongdoings turns into a sequence of humiliation brought against her by the village community which shuns her. In their eyes, she is nothing more than the flesh and blood of her immoral father.

Faithful to *Heimat* and its idiosyncratic "Blut und Boden" reasoning, the villagers consider the young girl guilty by association. Because of her father's sinful crimes, she is shamelessly ostracized and persecuted by the villagers who turn her into a *Nestbeschmutzerin*. Considering the young girl as a threat to village unity and harmony, they defend their ethnocentric world views at all costs: "Wir sind stolz auf auf unsere Gemeinde. Unsere Tüchtigkeit bewahrt uns vor dem Untergang. Wir lassen uns nicht beschimpfen, sagte [einer]. Wir lassen uns nicht verleumden. Im Namen unserer deutschen Gemeinde wirst du zum Tode verurteilt" ("Gabrede" 11). Based on the accusations laid against her, the young girl appears to be also guilty of criticizing the community's ethnocentric traditions and regressive values. This is underlined through the village community's self-perceived efficiency referred to here as "Tüchtigkeit", a quality they believe can protect their tight-knit community from downfall. Disconcerted by the unfair indictment brought against her, she feels humiliated: "Ich sah an mir herab und erschrak, weil man meine Brüste sah. Ich fror. Alle hatten die Augen auf mich

gerichtet […] Die Männer hatten Gewehre auf den Schultern und die Frauen rasselten mit Rosenkränzen" ("Gabrede" 10). Beyond exposing the young girl's sentiment of humiliation, the passage also exposes how in *Heimat*, moral virtue, religion, sexuality and ethnocentric pride are tightly bound, perhaps even interdependent of one another. As the psychologist James Gillian argues, "humiliation increases people's sense of persecution and alienation" (Nussbaum 235). In the short story "Grabrede," we can see how the young girl is first blamed, then humiliated by the villagers who rally as a mob community against her. The *Heimat* community portrayed in the female narrator's dream brand her as a *Nestbeschmutzerin*, as she is believed to stain the *schöne Schein* of the community and its ideological beliefs. From a religious perspective, the female narrator's guilt is perceived as twofold, as a daughter of an immoral father, but also as a woman *de facto* stigmatized by her gender.

In the following stage of her dream, the female narrator sees how the stigma is also applicable to her mother. Bearing what appears to be a feeling of shame, the mother confides: "Ich werde mein ganzes Leben in Schwarz gehen" ("Gabrede" 11). Because of her husband's death, the mother should wear black, as it is a tradition imposed by the institution of the Church. However, the mother's sentence, due to its emplacement within the text, also suggests that she is ashamed of both her immoral late husband and her daughter. Accordingly, it appears as though the mother imposes a self-inflicted mark on herself, so as to carry the stigma of shame associated with her family for all the village community to witness. In other words, the mother's mourning in black reflects the village community's dogmatic belief in religious doctrines, as well as the gender bias that lies in its foundations. In the village, it is not men, but rather women

who must repent and bear the burden of shame, guilt and humiliation brought against them through patriarchal tradition and religion. These village norms only worsen once the Romanian state imposes its own standards onto the village and its social dynamic.

Although once privileged by patriarchal tradition, men in the village must now negotiate this 300 year-old advantage and learn to reconcile their patriarchal roles in the *Dorfheimat* with those of the intrusive and all-pervasive state. Indeed, the Romanian state's authoritarian policies are rampantly assimilating the German-speaking village, including its traditional ways. Men are now confronted with Ceausescu's socio-political agenda that has transgressed their village's borders. The issue is destabilizing in terms of gender, as women must now obey the state, rather than follow the rules of the household. As they must learn to deal with the presence of Romanian authorities who have established themselves in the village, men now rely on corruption to protect their traditional rights and interests. This is also clearly exemplified in the young narrator's witnessing of the new events. Through her unveiling gaze, the young female narrator exposes various situations of corruption taking place in the village involving bribes with local Romanian authorities.

Confirming this hypothesis, the young girl sees how, unlike women, men in the village can be shamelessly corrupt while remaining bereft of any blame or sense of guilt. For example, the young girl witnesses how the Romanian law pertaining to alcohol is anything but effective: "Im Dorf darf man [...] keinen Schnaps brennen. Im Sommer riecht das ganze Dorf nach Schnaps, wie ein riesiger Schnapskessel. Jeder brennt seinen Schnaps hinten im Hof hinter dem Zaun, und keiner redet darüber, nicht einmal mit seinem Nachbarn" (61). Here, corruption allowing the village to pursue its interests

is nothing but a hypocritical open secret badly dissimulated behind closed doors – and fences. The young female narrator discloses just how pervasive corruption has become in her lackluster community. At one point, the young girl describes the stench of alcohol that often lingers across the small village, which she fittingly compares to a "riesiger Schnappskessel" (61) that binds neighbours to one another in narrowness and confinement. The vice of deception is also unveiled when the young girl witnesses yet another state 'rule' that is infringed by men in the village: the law that forbids the slaughter of fawns for private consumption. Here too, the narrator's father demonstrates that for him, *Staatsheimat* rules do not apply, as they impede on his own patriarchal authority within the *Dorfheimat*. Reflecting this, the young girl explains how her father "Am Morgen […] dem Kalb mit einem Hackenstiel das Bein durchgehackt [hatte]" (61). Through her scrutinizing gaze, the young girl sees her father as "ein Lügner" who disguises a brutal and illegal act by turning it into a so-called innocent misfortune caused by the animal itself: "Vater erklärte dem Tierarzt auf Rumänisch, wie sich das Kalb den Fuβ in der Kette an der Futterkrippe verfangen hatte […]" (61). This passage underlines how for men, lies are allowed without consequences. Moreover, the young girl is then further disappointed by an exchange that takes place between her father and the local Romanian veterinarian. Reflective of duplicity and corruption effecting the village, the veterinarian easily accepts schnapps and money in exchange for his silence: "Vater hatte schon, als der Tierarzt noch schrieb, einen *Hundertleischein* (my emphasis) in seine Rocktasche gesteckt, und der Tierarzt tat so, als würde er nichts davon merken und schrieb weiter. [...] Der Tierarzt trank auch das achte Glas Schnapps mit einem Zug leer" (62). To her own dismay, the young narrator realizes that her father and the

Romanian veterinarian are not the only villagers taking part in corrupt dealings.

Shifting her attention from the traditional village onto the authoritarian state, the young girl observes how her father's behaviour is not unique, but rather the norm. In the village, men shamelessly engage in immoral and illegal activities to preserve their independence from Romanian authorities who now exert control over the German-speaking village and its community. In doing so, the village men become both perpetrators and victims caught in a web of lies and deceit. As Müller herself points out in her essay "Immer derselbe Schnee und Immer Derselbe Onkel" (2011): "Lüge, Warheit und Würde. Den Staat durfte man immer anlügen, wenn man konnte, weil man nur so sein Recht bekam – das wusste ich. Die Lüge[n] meines Vaters funktioniert[en], sie war[en] geschmeidigt, und nötig war[en] sie auch" ("Onkel" 104). From her adult point of view Müller acknowledges here that although such behaviour was corrupt, it nevertheless became a strategy of survival. In *Niederungen*, the situation is, however, perceived from a child's point of view. Through her untarnished moral innocence, the young girl does not yet see the necessity of lies and corruption. Her inner consciousness nevertheless tells her that this wrong behaviour is omnipresent in the village. Accordingly, she remains disillusioned and disgusted by the social and political mechanisms that corrupt and paralyze life in her social and spatial environments. In the end, her relationship to both the *Dorfheimat* and the *Staatsheimat* remains one of rejection.

In *Niederungen*, the young girl's rejection of a traditional and patriarchal concept of *Heimat* is first made evident through various instances in which she critically scrutinizes the constraining, hypocritical and corrupt patriarchal structure veiled by a

false pretence of moral innocence. The consequence for the young girl is that she perceives her relationship with her mother to be a broken one, since the latter blames her for her plight as woman and mother. The young girl questions where this broken relationship stems from by critically observing the broader patriarchal structure in her household and village. She becomes aware that patriarchy and its male hegemony engender a permanent stigma upon women, mothers and daughters who, traditionally, have been controlled and subjugated by their matrimonial and paternal counterparts. However, the young girl does not accept this gender-prescribed fate. Her critical gaze towards a patriarchal structure of the village makes her reject this regressive and confining social environment.

This is confirmed when all her alienating family members are gathered at the dinner table: “Jeder iβt und denkt an etwas. Ich denke an etwas anderes, wenn ich esse. Ich sehe nicht mit ihren Augen, ich höre nicht mit ihren Ohren. Ich habe auch nicht ihre Hände” (45). As hinted through the sentence “ich sehe nicht mit ihren Augen”, the young girl is at odds with her family’s worldview. Through the equally symbolic passage “Ich habe auch nicht ihre Hände,” (45) the young girl’s intuition tells her that she does not share her family’s sullied hands. For her, they are all perpetrators, playing a role to ensure the village’s traditionalist and patriarchal norms. This reasoning leaves her disillusioned and as a result, she is left with the impression that all efforts to feel loved, protected and understood by her parents are simply in vain. What is more, her yearning to belong to the family equation is silenced by fear: “Ich wollte [den Eltern] etwas sagen, aber ich hatte den Mund so voller Zunge, dass ich kein einziges Wort hervorbrachte” (73). Disconnected and muted, the young girl is left with no one to rely

on and no one to communicate with. This leads her to ponder: “Ich] fragte mich, weshalb ich da in diesem Haus [mit ihnen saβ], ihre Gewohnheiten kannte, weshalb ich nicht von hier weglief, in ein anderes Dorf, zu Fremden [kurz blieb] und dann weiterzog, noch bevor die Leute schlecht wurden” (73). Based on her personal experience and scrutinizing gaze, the young girl foresees the prognosis that no *Dorfheimat* could ever put an end to her sense of alienation, as she is aware that she will never be at ease with the traditional dictates of a patriarchal society.

Due to her female gender, she is conscious that she will never be more than a second-class human being. Instead, she will belong, like other women in her village, to a “spoiled identity” (Goffman qtd. in Nussbaum 176). Within the confines of the village, she sees how her individuality will always be denied by men, but also by women who share these views and who blindly reproduce forms of gender segregation based on archaic patriarchal views. Because of this, she can neither identify with, nor believe in the deceptive *Schein* of *Heimat*, and predicts that no matter which *Dorfheimat* she would run off to, her sense of *Heimatlosigkeit* would always prevail. In light of Müller’s later novels, the young girl’s experience of estrangement establishes a *Heimat* discourse that is consistent and therefore found throughout Müller’s essays and works of fiction.

1.2 When *Staatsheimat* Outshines the *Dorfheimat* in *Der Fasan*

> *'Heimatliebe' und 'Vaterland' waren häβliche Wörter geworden. Sie ähnelten den kleinen, schmierigen Funktionären des Dorfes, ihren Anzügen und Mappen. Diese 'Heimat' roch wie der Schweiβ der Genossen: Angstschweiβ nach oben, Wutschweiβ nach unten. Wie ihre Staatsdiener gab die Heimat Befehle und brauchte kleine Leute, Exekutanten, die diese Befehle ausführten.*
> (Müller, "Betrug" 215)

In her 1986 novel *Der Fasan*[11], Müller exposes how the traditional *Dorfheimat* and its social structure are being overturned by the intrusive *Staatsheimat*. Similar to the young female narrator in *Niederungen*, the omniscient narrator in *Der Fasan* helps unveil regressive forms of patriarchy found in the novella. Whereas *Niederungen* depicts the hypocrisy of traditional patriarchy of the *Dorfheimat*, *Der Fasan* portrays Ceausescu's duplicitous state policies that are rampantly intruding and dismantling centuries of patriarchal tradition, both within the patriarchal household and across the village. Whereas it exposes the rampant forms of injustice affecting Windisch and his neighbours in the village, the novella also sheds light on the generational, ideological and gender divide forming itself within the family household. For women, this meant that although they were no longer constrained to the hearth, they now became directly liable to the state. Forced to adjust traditional beliefs with the pervasive duplicitous policies of an interventionist and morally corrupt modern state, Windisch and others like him feel an urgent desire to migrate abroad to Germany, the original *Heimat* of their ancestors. Seeing their *Dorfheimat* idyll come undone, Windisch and his neighbours must reconcile

[11] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novella *Der Fasan*.

with the idea that their German-speaking village is slowly being eradicated from Romania's geopolitical map through state policies of homogenization and re-localization. Although they sacrificed their daughter in exchange for a better life abroad, Windisch and his wife Katharina show no sign of remorse, and remain blindly bound to the blood and soil ideologies of their *Dorfheimat* community, which explains their visit to the native village after spending only one year abroad.

It is under these harrowing and bleak conditions that Müller's novella portrays how the ideological values of the state are rampantly overtaking those of the traditional German-speaking village. Lead by Nicolae Ceausescu, 'the father' of all Romanians, the patronizing authoritarian state discarded all forms of authority other than its own. Ethnic minorities in Romania were considered a nuisance endangering totalitarian rule, as they hindered Ceausescu's nationalist policies of uniformity that "aimed at transforming all co-inhabiting nationalities into new socialist citizens of the Socialist Republic of Romania" (Gal and Kligman 28). Set in this political context, *Der Fasan* tells the story of a German-speaking village that is falling victim to corrupt authorities who use their cunning tactics of duplicity to bribe and assimilate its population. As Karin Bauer observes in "Zur Objektwerdung der Frau", the novella "durchbricht den *Schein* (*my emphasis*) von dörflichem Gemeinschaftsgefühl und Solidarität […]" and in doing so, it puts into question the immaculate, ideological veneer of *Heimat* by exposing instances of "Brutalität und Gewalt, Erpressung, Korruption und Ausbeutung ebenso wie Verdrängung und Heuchelei" (143). Now at the mercy of the Romanian state, all villagers – regardless of age, faith or gender – fall victim to its oppressive authoritarian politics. Müller recalls experiencing a similar reality in her own native Romanian village

and writes in her essay “Die Insel liegt innen, die Grenze liegt drauβen”: “Drei, vier Politfunktionäre hatten alle und alles unter Kontrolle. [...] [Sie] profilierten sich durch Drohungen, Verhöre, Verhaftungen. 405 Häuser hatte das Dorf, etwa 1500 Bewohner. Niemand traute sich darüber zu reden” (“Insel” 199). As they are becoming ‘colonized’ by corrupt Romanian authorities and deceived by opportunistic neighbours who collaborate in these illegal trade-offs, Windisch and other neighbours who belong to the German-speaking community are now confronted with a blurred reality in which the thin line separating good from evil, right from wrong, is no longer visible. It is in this context of rampant and all-pervasive corruption that Windisch, the novel’s protagonist, finds himself entangled in bribes with the village mayor.

When Windisch informs the mayor of his desire to migrate to the West with his family, the latter demands bribes as a condition of supporting the request. In order to fulfill his quest, Windisch must first supply the mayor with several sacks of flour. In return, the mayor shamelessly lies to Windisch through the false promise that he will soon provide him with the necessary documents required for passports. Although Windisch has supplied the mayor with several sacks, the latter remains insatiable: “Noch fünf Transporte Windisch [...] und zu Neujahr das Geld. Und zu Ostern hast du den Paβ” (16). The mayor’s demands and unfulfilled promises leave Windisch disillusioned and discontent: “’Der zwölfte Transport seitdem, und zehntausend Lei, und Ostern ist längst gewesen’, denkt Windisch” (16). Nevertheless, Windisch naively refuses to acknowledge the vanity of his efforts and continues to deliver sacks of flour to the corrupt mayor. In alignment with the German saying *Der Schein trügt*, this instance of deception is a first example in the novel of how unscrupulous local officials exploit

villagers through mechanisms of subjugation mirroring those of colonialist regimes. In doing so, they damage the honour, dignity and interests of the community by undermining its three hundred year-old traditions and status of relative autonomy.

The loss of relative autonomy in Ceausescu's Romania also took its toll on issues related to gender and sexuality. As Gal and Kligman point out:

> The intrusion of the state institutions into what was formerly a private sphere of family and reproduction produced a much remarked and fundamental change. While wage work – not only possible, but virtually compulsory for all- made both men and women dependent of the state as employees in state-owned enterprises, policies toward families made women and children less dependent on husbands and fathers. (48)

In *Der Fasan*, this shift in gender roles is made clear through Windisch and his colleague the Nachwächter. In the early stages of the novella, both ponder their authority as husbands and fathers, which leads to a conversation in which they criticize the futility of women: "'Weiβ Gott', sagt Windisch, 'wozu gibt es sie, die Frauen' […] 'Nicht für uns', sagt [Der Nachwächter]. 'Nicht für mich, nicht für dich. Ich weiβ nicht, für wen" (9). It appears here that both men believe that women are mischievous and only on earth to benefit the interests of men other than themselves. Windisch and the Nachwächter's words suggest that their traditional patriarchal authority has now been replaced by a sense of disempowerment as a result of an intrusive state. As such, it is in alignment "with a discursive opposition between the victimized 'us' and a new and powerful 'them' who ruled (Gal and Kligman 55). As exposed here, dispossession orchestrated by local authorities in the village has clearly reached the realm of gender

and sexuality.

This sense of victimization and disempowerment experienced by Windisch and the Nachwächter would explain their misogynistic attitude and sense of mistrust towards women. Observing how their authority is no longer valued by women who depend more and more directly of the state, they now see their female counterparts as corrupt beings who do not honour their traditional, moral and sexual virtue. As Bauer argues in her reading of the novella, "[d]as aus Ignoranz, Aberglauben und eigennützigen Vorurteilen sich konstituierende Bild der Frauen dient dabei zur Legitimierung dieser Unterlassung. Aus männlicher Sicht sind alle Frauen Huren, die jede Gelegenheit wahrnehmen, ihre sexuellen Begierden zu sättigen" ("Objektwerdung" 148). What this observation also reveals is the *Scheinheiligkeit* of men who project the image of their own urges onto women, which leaves them to believe that women are just as promiscuous as they are themselves. A further example for this hypocritical gender view can be found in another comment made by Windisch's friend, the *Nachtwächter*, who surmises that the way young women incline their feet when walking is reliable evidence for determining whether they have lost their virginity. Based on this false notion, Windisch regards his own daughter with suspicion, thereby observing how "Amalie beim Gehen die Fussspitzen seitlich auf die Erde stellt" (83). By witnessing his daughter's walk in this apprehensive manner, Windisch now has visual proof that his unwed daughter has lost her virginity—which also provides him with an excuse to prostitute her in exchange for the passports. In doing so, he has answered his own question "who are women for," as his daughter now serves as a commodity of exchange that will benefit the entire family, while also serving the corrupt interests of the local authorities.

In *Der Fasan*, it is the figure of Amalie who, as a daughter born under Ceausescu's paternalist governance, embodies the undermining of traditional gender values that took place under his regime in Romania. As such, her character also embodies the shifting generational, ideological and gender dynamics that are taking place both at home and in the village. These shifts occurred as a result of an intrusive state that imposed women's "full-time participation in the labor force," (Kligman 5) and which also sought to create "socially atomized persons directly dependent on a paternalist state" (Kligman 5). Amalie's job as a kindergarten teacher in a nearby town grants her a certain level of autonomy and independence, as made evident in a passage in which she refuses her father's money to purchase a vase she has set her eyes on: "Ich hab mir Geld gesparrt. Ich werd sie selbst bezahlen" (93). Hence, unlike the generation of her mother, Amalie is financially independent of her father for the access to material goods, which reflects how she is no longer at the mercy of the village and its traditional norms.

However, Amalie's character also shows how this *Schein* of progress and equality for women through acquired autonomy and independence remained a deception. As argued by Gail Kligman, duplicity in Ceausescu's Romania took the form of interfering policies that intruded upon women's sexual and reproductive rights. Imposed upon the female population, these policies made contraception and abortion illegal, so as to better implement the law that forced a minimum child-rearing quota of four or five children upon women (1). Kligman also argues that these regressive pronatalist policies, however, also had a broader deterring effect on women's lives and those of their families:

> The interests of states (and nations) in social reproduction often conflict with those of women and families in the determination of biological or individual reproduction. Modern states and their citizens alike claim rights to the regulation of diverse reproductive concerns such as contraception, abortion and adoption. Hence, reproduction serves as an ideal locus through which to illuminate the complexity of formal and informal relations between states and their citizens, or non-citizens, as the case may be. (3)

In *Der Fasan*, the themes of contraception and reproduction also serve as an "ideal locus" (3) to shed light on the generational gap that is opening between Amalie and her mother as a result of the intrusive state. Unlike Katharina, Amalie knows what contraceptive pills are and, more significantly, she also knows how to use them[12]. Hence, when Katharina notices tablets in Amalie's purse, she appears puzzled and feels compelled to ask her daughter: "Wozu brauchst du Pillen? Du bist doch nicht krank" (82). Instead of mocking Katharina's ignorance, Amalie retorts to her mother's inquiry with an astute and equivocal "Ich nehme sie für alle Fälle" (82). At a first glance, Amalie's spontaneous answer appears to be a clever attempt to elude the taboo topic of sexuality, so as to keep her active sexuality undisclosed. Yet the words "für alle Fälle" are clearly impregnated with double meaning. Considering that the word "Fälle" is the plural form of the feminine noun *die Falle* -- literally a "snare," "deception," or "trap" -- the astute answer is also reflective of Amalie's instinctive measures of protection in the

[12] Addressing the issues of sexuality and contraception, Gal and Kligman explain that: "Problems of women's sexuality and autonomy were hardly addressed at all in official discourse. Recent interviews suggest that in Romania sex could not be discussed even among women themselves or with their own daughters, let alone in the media" (Gal and Kligman 54).

face of all-pervasive corruption plaguing the village and its German-speaking community.

Since these words are spoken when Amalie is dressed up to meet with the local *Pfarrer* and *Milizmann* to fetch the passports, Amalie's reasoning suggests that she is already aware that young women like her have become the currency of exchange in the village for those who seek to migrate abroad. As a kindergarten teacher, she too has relied on bribes offered by parents of pupils to access scarce material goods. In the chapter "Ein groβes Haus," "Die Zahnärztin gibt Amalie einen Nelkenstrauβ und eine kleine Schachtel" (60). Although the dentist informs Amalie that "Anca ist erkältet" (60) and subsequently tells her "Geben Sie ihr bitte um zehn Uhr diese Tablette" (60), it could also be that the dentist – or another parent with high connections - has provided Amalie with illegal contraceptive pills. Less speculative is the clear exchange of goods taking place between Amalie and her pupil Ugo's mother. In the same chapter "Ein grosses (*sic*) Haus", the narrator reveals how: "Udos Mutter arbeitet in der Schokoladenfabrik" and how she routinely brings "Zucker, Butter, Kakao und Schokolade" (60) on every Tuesday. What is more, Udo's mother informs Amalie that she has settled an agreement to obtain the passports: "Udo kommt noch drei Wochen in den Kindergarten […] Wir haben die Verständigung für den Paβ" (60). As she has close connections with Udo's mother who is in the process of receiving the family passports from local officials, chances are that Amalie is already informed of the price that must be paid to obtain the necessary documents to leave the country. Thus when her parents inform her that she must meet with the two local authorities in charge of delivering the necessary travel documents, it could be argued that Amalie already sees through her

parent's impending scheme of betrayal.

Pointing to this form of corruption, the trade of sexual favours in exchange for official documents runs counter to traditional discourses of honour and virtue that were once found at the core of the village's *Dorfheimat* identity. Unlike her husband Windisch, Katharina has no inhibition in using her daughter as a commodity of exchange. Setting priorities first, she bullies her husband and makes her stance clear: "jetzt geht's nicht um die Schande […] jetzt geht es um den Paβ" (74). At a first glance, her stance appears to be hypocritical, as she knows that because of her age, her own body is of no interest to the *Pfarrer* and *Milizmann*, the two local male authorities who can determine the family's access to passports. This leaves it up to her daughter Amalie to forfeit her honour and trade her body in exchange for the wanted goods. Katharina's lack of inhibition towards the idea of sexual trade relates to her own past, as she too once traded her body as a means of survival in the *Lager* where German-speakers from Romania were deported and incarcerated. The omniscient narrator reveals how this occurred during her years of deportation spent in a Soviet labour camp in the aftermath of World War II. There, Katharina experienced humiliation first hand to overcome the threat of starvation and death, which is the reason why she remains far more practical about the threat of dishonour now menacing her family and the degrading humiliation and violation to which her daughter will be exposed. As she herself relied on the desperate measure of prostitution to survive inhuman conditions in the *Lager*, she is conscious of the cost that must be disbursed to overcome dire situations of despair, and knows that where material goods are of the greatest interest but not readily available, the female body can function as a valuable asset. Based on this reasoning, Katharina

has no inhibitions in sending her daughter Amalie to prostitute her body to the mayors' acolytes in fraud and betrayal, the *Pfarrer* and the *Milizmann*. On the contrary, she even helps her daughter get ready for what she knows will be a sexual exchange.

By helping her daughter prepare to meet with the *Pfarrer* and *Milizmann*, Katharina exposes the *Scheinheiligkeit* of her own moral virtue. Indeed, although she has taken charge of the logistics for the sexual encounter, she pretends to be principled and makes sure that Amalie's attire will remain decent, so as to avoid suspicion of immorality among judgmental neighbours. This is made especially apparent in the passage in which "Amalie öffnet ihre Handtasche [und] tupft mit der Fingerspitze Lidschatten auf ihre Lider" (82). Concerned of what neighbours might say, her mother intervenes and tells her, "[n]icht zu grell [...] sonst reden die Leute," and calls out a firm "[e]s reicht" once her daughter's eyelids have turned "wasserblau" (82). Her concern suggests here that she remains vulnerable to local norms and peer pressure that condemn all shameful acts. Moreover, it also shows that she still looks up to the traditional moral code that determines her wish to keep the *Schein* of family honour alive. As Martha C. Nussbaum argues: "for shame involves the realization that one is weak and inadequate in some way in which one expects oneself to be adequate. Its reflex is to hide from the eyes of those who will see one's deficiency, to cover it" (183). The concern of what neighbours might think pressures Katharina to uphold the family's appearance of honour and the pretence of moral and sexual innocence. As a gender-specific virtue, the appearance of propriety and innocence remains strictly regulated by the community's "evil eye,"[13] a malicious form of surveillance that regulates behaviour

[13] Shapiro, quoting Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, speaks of the malicious and malevolent "evil

and which fosters peer pressure and public scrutiny. Seeing his daughter leave home to fetch the passports, Windisch fears this public scrutiny by revealing: “Ich geh nicht aus dem Haus […] damit die Leute mir nicht sagen können: jetzt ist deine Tochter dran” (83). In the end, what these words confirm is that both Windisch and Katharina are more preoccupied by what people might think and say, than showing any form of concern for the well-being of their daughter who now embodies a commodity of trade.

For she is sent out to the *Pfarrer* and *Milizmann* to trade her body in exchange for the family passports, Amalie is to be seen as a victim of manipulation and deception. The sexual trade-off to which Amalie falls victim occurs in the chapter “Das silberne Kreuz,” in which Amalie appears to be haunted by the memory of her sexual exploitation. The motif of the cross first appears through her two aggressors, the *Pfarrer* and the *Milizmann*, who both wear the cross under their uniforms: “Unter dem blauen Rock [des Milizmanns] hängt ein silbernes Kreuz” [;] “Das silberne Kreuz [des Pfarrers] drückt auf Amalies Schulter” (103). Although the symbol of the cross would usually be associated with the virtues of merit (*Milizmann*) or holy protection (*Pfarrer*), both men’s crosses symbolically epitomize the notion of duplicity. As made evident in Amalie’s painful recollection of events, the motif of the shiny silver cross is to be seen as a metaphor of deception, as it reflects the *Schein* of moral virtue usually associated with religion and order. For Amalie, the cross also signifies the death of her own soul. In her perception, both men’s crosses symbolize her crucifixion as a victim of sexual trade. More than a commodity of exchange, Amalie also embodies the martyr who sacrifices herself for her ‘people’s cause. The silver cross pressuring on Amalie’s shoulder recalls

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eye”, a form of surveillance that will resurface in Chapter 3.

the humiliating bearing of the cross incurred by Christ, a sacrifice he endured under the will of his all-mighty father. The analogy made here is telling, considering that Amalie has sacrificed for three levels of patriarchy: the father of the state, Ceausescu, embodied by the *Milizmann*; the father figure of God embodied by the village priest; and finally the father figure of patriarchy embodied by her own father.

Amalie's sexual subjugation also raises the question as to whether or not her victimization is to be seen as prostitution or rape. When seen as prostitution, it would, beyond depicting the issue of corruption, underline the *Scheinheiligkeit* of religion. Ironically, it is indeed the *Pfarrer* himself who requires Amalie to submit her body in exchange for issuing the baptism records that will allow her and her family to obtain the much wanted passports: "Amalie soll am Samstagnachmittag zum Pfarrer kommen […] damit [er] ihr den *Taufschein* (my emphasis) im Register sucht" (98). In requesting Amalie to trade her body in exchange for passports, the priest does not forbid, but rather enacts sexual vice by requesting sexual services in exchange for a service. In doing so, he hypocritically engages in prostitution, a moral vice that runs counter to the religious doctrines of virtue prescribed by *Heimat* and religion. As an accomplice to the Romanian corruption, the German-speaking *Pfarrer* epitomizes both betrayal and hypocrisy, favouring personal advantage over the moral virtue and collective interests of the village community.

Whereas the *Pfarrer* embodies the betrayal of the *Dorfheimat*, the *Milizmann* personifies the intrusion of the state in the village community. In this line of thought, Amalie's victimization would also symbolize the collective geo-political rape incurred by the village as a subjugated and disempowered community. Speaking in the name of the

all-mighty “Vater aller Kinder” (*Der Fasan* 61) Ceausescu, the *Milizmann* is the intermediary state official who applies the dictator’s policies in the village. In doing so, he contributes in turning the once multicultural nation into a new, culturally homogenous state. The link between the violation of women and the violation of a culture recalls the inherent link binding *Heimat* and the feminine. Indeed, as a concept deemed feminine at its core, *die Heimat* evokes for men the notion of a sheltering space, as a baby boy living inside his mother’s womb. In this line of thought, destroying the patriarchal honour of the community by intruding and sullying the woman’s womb through rape is a way for the Romanian state to symbolically subjugate and literally assimilate the German minority. The ultimate impact for the village is that it sees its *Dorfheimat* idyll implode through the loss of its autonomy, respect, and honour through cunning tactics of corruption and assimilation. Amalie’s violation should thus also be seen as embodying a metaphorical situation of rape involving the state (*Staatsheimat*) as aggressor and the village (*Dorfheimat*) as its victim. Betrayed by an archaic village and violated by an intrusive state, she has lost all sense of shelter and belonging. In the end, she remains jaded and disillusioned, and is repulsed by both levels of *Heimat*.

On the eve of their departure, Amalie’s grief and repulsion are made clear when her father, Windisch, shows obliviousness towards her emotional burden and chagrin. Speaking for the generational divide separating her from her parents, her own disillusionment with *Heimat* is incompatible with her parents’ sentiments of nostalgia at the thought of leaving their *Dorfheimat*. Thus, when Amalie sheds tears while reminiscing the betrayal and violation she endured, her father’s inconsiderate blindness leaves him believe that she is sad at the idea of leaving the *Dorfeimat* behind: “’Ich

weiβ', sagt Windisch, 'Abschiede sind schwer […] Jetzt ist es wie im Krieg', sagt er. 'Man geht und weiβ nicht, ob und wie und wann man wiederkommt'" (104). In a similar fashion, his wife Katharina also appears to be more concerned by the idea of a homecoming than by the sacrifice endured by her daughter.

Katharina's self-interest and lack of compassion is made clear in the chapter "Die Dauerwellen," in which the narrator describes how she has made herself look beautiful for the long train journey abroad by investing in a perm and a new denture: "Windischs Frau hat hat ihren Zopf abgeschnitten. In ihrem kurzen Haar sind Dauerwellen. Ihr Mund ist hart und schmal vom neuen Gebiβ" (105). Looking out of the window of the train and seeing the village slowly disappear, the narrator reveals how under "den Dauerwellen, in der Schädeldecke drin, hat Windischs Frau sich ihre neue Welt, in die sie ihre groβen Koffer trägt, schon eingerichtet" (108). Beyond underlining Katharina's egoistic ambition and lack of remorse in the wake of Amalie's prostitution and rape, the passage also suggests that Katharina is determined to keep ties with the corrupt village "Wenn der Herrgott will, kommen wir im nächsten Jahr zu besuch" (108). Windisch and his wife Katharina's words expressed on the day of their departure reveal how both are naively and blindly struck with *Heimweh*, a nostalgic longing[14] for their native *Heimat*. This, it seems, explains why the couple perplexingly return to their native village for a visit after spending only one year abroad in Germany.

As exposed through the three different protagonists of the novella - namely

[14] As Svetlana Boym elaborates, "Nostalgia (from nostos—return to home, and algia —longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (Boym, xiii-xiv).

Windisch, his wife Katharina, and their daughter Amalie - *Heimat* ultimately imposes an ambivalent sense of belonging upon those who remain unconditionally bound to its blood and soil ideology. Reinforcing this statement is a passage in which Windisch receives a letter from a former neighbour, der Küschner, who writes from West Germany: “Eines ist schwer [...] Eine Krankheit, die wir alle kennen aus dem Krieg. Das Heimweh” (80). Although he too has fled the village, the Küschner’s letter demonstrates that he still longs for the familiar place and community he left behind. While confined to the corrupt village, the Windisches, the Küschners, and other neighbours all relied on migration and mobility as the only option for escaping the oppression of an intrusive state. Yet Müller’s novella also shows how for those who believe in *Heimat*, the agony of migration eventually catches up through the haunting sentiment of *Heimweh*, the nostalgic longing for the place one calls ‘home’.

Windisch and Katharina’s unwelcoming return visit to their native *Dorfheimat* provides an uneasy conclusion to Müller’s novella. For both of them, the deep-rooted attachment to the concept of *Heimat* still anchors them in a nostalgic and localized patriarchal tradition. However, Amalie’s choice of not accompanying her parents back to the *Heimat* indicates that she is not haunted by *Heimweh*, but rather still haunted by a past in which she experienced *das wehtun der Heimat*; the pain and sacrifice she endured to leave the *Heimat.* Amalie’s “Krankheit,” the disease plaguing her memory, is not a nostalgic longing for a bygone past, but rather the haunting scar of hypocrisy and deception she experienced in the place she no longer calls ‘home’.

1.3 "Angleichung von Stadt und Dorf", or The Illusion of Progress in the City

> *Im Dorf waren alle vor dem Staat geduckt, aber untereinander und gegen sich selbst kontroll-würdig bis zur Selbstzerstörung. Feigheit und Kontrolle – beides war auch in der Stadt allgegenwärtig.*
> (Müller, "Tischrede", 22)

In *Herztier*[15] (1994), the portrayal of *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat* takes another turn. Instead of taking place within the confines of the village, the story predominantly unfolds in a provincial Romanian city. Yet despite this transition from a village to an urban space, the fate of women remains the same, as they continue to be victims of Ceausescu's instrusive and duplicitous state. Under its illusion of progress – its *schöner Schein* – the dictatorship hides *Scheinheiligkeit*; a duplicitous and biased discourse of virtue and equality that, once again, favours the partial interests of men over those of women. As Gail Kligman explains: "The legacy of patriarchal relations was not significantly altered, and, it may be argued, was further exacerbated by the paternalist structure of the socialist state. […] In everyday rhetoric, ideological dedication to women's 'emancipation' camouflaged a continuing gendered stratification of the division of labor in the workplace and in the family" (25). It is in this biased context that *Müller* depicts the victimization of women by corrupt male bureaucrats in her novel.

As a university student, *Herztier*'s narrator scrutinizes a series of tragic events that unfold around her on the university campus. In doing so, she sheds light on a web of lies and corruption based on male-orchestrated forms of peer pressure and deception. This web of lies and corruption taking place on campus is made evident

[15] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novel *Herztier*.

through the victimization of her dormitory roommate Lola, a young female student who is found dead, hanging in her dormitory closet. Like the university authorities who condemn Lola's death as a shameful act, the narrator initially believes that Lola took her own life out of shame as a result of the debauched lifestyle she was leading in the city. However, once she finds Lola's diary, the narrator discovers how her roommate Lola was lured into a trap of injustice and deception.

Already through the narrator's observations, it becomes apparent that Lola's first lure is the naïve belief that she could find social ascension by moving to a nearby city to study at a university: "Etwas werden in der Stadt, schreibt Lola, und nach vier Jahren zurückkehren ins Dorf" (9). Yet the promise of progress, love and emancipation Lola hopes to find in her new urban and academic environment remain unfulfilled. The narrator predicts this imminent failure by observing how Lola still carries the stigma of misery on her facial features: the "armgebliebene Gegend im Gesicht […]" (23). In her essays, Müller associates this form of verbal imagery to her *fremde Blick*, her estranged gaze. This particular form of perception is clearly explained in her eponymous essay, in which she states: "Was man aus der Gegend hinaus trägt, trägt man hinein ins Gesicht" (174). Through this manifestation of verbal imagery that she applies to Lola, the narrator already predicts how her roommate, despite moving to the city and studying at a university, is condemned to remain scarred and stigmatized by her past. As such, it is perceived by the narrator to be a precursory sign that she will not succeed in finding the enhanced status she desperately longs for. Instead, the narrator foresees how Lola's naïve ambitions will eventually lead to her tragic and humiliating downfall.

Even Lola herself appears to have been aware of the city's deception before her

sudden death, as she is said to have spoken “immer öfter über Bewuβtsein und Angleichung von Stadt und Dorf” (27). Lola’s words suggest here that she sees an analogy between the “Dürre” of the village and the crumbling infrastructure of the city. It also suggests that Lola is already conscious that her chances of finding prosperity in the city are out of reach. Yet despite her disillusionment of the city, she continues to naively pursue her romantic dream of finding love and social ascension through conjugal association, although she knows that it will be difficult to seduce a man of high society who will love her in return and who will accompany her back to her village: “[e]s wird schwer sein, die Hemden eines Herren weiβ zu halten [...] Es wird schwer sein, die Hemden weiβ zu halten bei all dem Dreck [des Dorfes], in dem die Flöhe springen” (13). Lola’s words further underline how she is self-conscious of her stigmatized rural background, and how she anticipates the struggle she will face to keep a man from the city at her side in the dearth of her infested village. Portrayed as romantic, ambitious and unwavering, Lola is convinced that her attempts to seduce a man of power and authority who will love her and accompany her in the village will be worth the effort: “[e]s wird meine Liebe sein, wenn er nach vier Jahren mit mir kommt in die Dürre” (13). For Lola, the ideal man will wear a white shirt, since in her idealized perception, a ‘white collar’ attire epitomizes her ideal of romance and social ascension. Lola’s reasoning exemplifies how women in the village who have broken with tradition are now compelled to believe that they can no longer rely on village men to meet their needs. Because villages across the state struggle to survive the intrusive and pervasive policies of the state, only men who work for the state in the city - “hauptamtlichen Funktionär[e] und Representanten” (15) as Müller calls them in *Lebensangst und Worthunger* - are

believed to have the means to provide Lola with an improved existence. Through the metonymical figure of 'white shirts', Lola recognizes the privileged status of men working as civil servants for the state; men of privilege who embody – and execute authority.

Lola's alignment with a man wearing 'weiβe Hemden' would, accordingly, also symbolize her social ascension. Yet through her scrutinizing gaze, the narrator foresees how Lola's naïve and romantic attempts to find love and social advancement through such a man – "[einen] Mann, der etwas studiert [hat,] saubere Fingernägel [hat, und der] weiβ, daß er im Dorf ein Herr ist [,]" (11) is to no avail. She foresees Lola's failed attempts by seeing how Lola is caught in a vicious circle of deception. Pointing to Lola's failing strategy, the narrator explains how instead of finding romance and social ascension, Lola has become the victim of manipulation and exploitation: "Ich dachte mir, Lola trägt abgeschürfte Haut, aber nie eine Liebe. Nur Stöβe im Bauch auf dem Boden des Parks" (23). Thus for the narrator, Lola's intimate encounters are nothing more than sexual trysts. Instead of fulfilling her need for romance and social ascension, Lola's promiscuous behaviour leaves her deprived, disheartened and marginalized.

Lola's dream of social ascension turns into a nightmare once the man whom she thinks is right for her turns out to be cunning and deceptive. The man who eventually betrays her is her *Turnlehrer*, her sports teacher at the university. In her desperate attempt to seduce him in the gym, "Lola machte sich schwer, damit er sie fester anfassen muβte" (25). The reason behind Lola's determination to seduce the sports teacher becomes evident following the narrator's discovery of her diary which reads: "Nun ist er der erste im weiβen Hemd" (29). This explains why Lola puts an extra effort

into seducing the sports teacher, a man who, in her eyes, corresponds to her ideal and who could thus fulfill her romantic ambitions of love and status. As a university employee, the sports teacher is a civil servant working for the state, meaning he would be able to provide Lola with respect and progress. Instead of this, the sports teacher remains as exploitative and deceptive as the state policies for which he stands. Already married, he takes advantage of Lola's youth, as well as her naivety and vulnerability. His interest in Lola, like all of the men before him, remains of carnal[16] nature: "Lola wuβte, daβ der Turnlehrer sie an den Schultern, am Hintern, an den Hüften hochheben würde. Daβ er sie, wenn sein Wutanfall vorbei ist, anfassen würde, wo es kam" (25). Therefore, his white shirts are nothing more than *schöner Schein*, an illusion of 'whiteness' under which hides a vile and immoral nature.

The sports teacher's deceptive nature surfaces in Lola's diary, discovered by the narrator and read aloud after Lola is found dead, hanging in the closet. In her diary, Lola writes about the sexual encounter she had with the sports teacher behind closed doors at the university gym. Recalling the encounter in her journal, Lola explains how what she hoped would be a romantic encounter turned into a scenario of sexual aggression during which she felt isolated, helpless and victimized: "Der Turnlehrer hat mich abends in die Turnhalle gerufen und von innen zugesperrt. Nur die dicken Lederbälle schauten zu. Einmal hätte ihm gereicht" (31). Through Lola's diary, the narrator learns about the sports teacher's misleading intentions that left Lola trapped in a vortex of victimization. Whereas the door was "von innen zugesperrt" by the sports teacher who lured her into the empty space of the gym, so too did Lola become consciously "zugesperrt," once she

[16] See Martha C. Nussbaum 90.

realized that her efforts to seduce the sports teacher were in vain. Instead, he knowingly mislead her towards her own emotional void and physical entrapment. Through Lola's comment "[e]inmal hätte ihm gereicht," (31) the narrator also exposes the sports teacher's refusal to engage in any form of romantic relationship with Lola.

For the narrator, it becomes apparent that Lola's deception was twofold; first misguided by her own cynical ambition of finding a man in 'white shirts', Lola then became blinded by the sports teacher's deceptive *Schein*. After reading Lola's diary, the narrator now sees how Lola's idealization and blind trust in a man in a white shirt left her humiliated and marginalized. By alluding to the lack of credible witnesses - "[n]ur die dicken Lederbälle schauten zu" (31) – Lola revealed her sense of helplessness and alienation, but also the sense of desperation which led her to stalk her once admired violator: "[i]ch bin heimlich nachgegangen und hab sein Haus gefunden" (31). Unable to come to terms with the sports teacher's rejection, Lola crossed the line to reach a point of no return. Ironically, what was once Lola's quest towards social ascension lead her straight into the path of her own downfall: "Nachlaufen und weglaufen musste Lola mit ihrem Wunsch nach weißen Hemden. Der bliebe noch im äuβersten Glück so arm wie die Gegend in ihrem Gesicht" (17). Speaking for the vicious circle of deception, the narrator's words reveal how deception is a trap towards which people run, but from which they end up trying to run away. For Lola, this vicious circle of deception meant that she would, in the end, remain feeling just as deprived as the village from which she came.

Yet Lola's victimization did not stop here. Reflective of the gender stratification that determine power relations between men and women across the state, Lola's

victimization became distorted by the sports teacher and other duplicitous university officials who turned her abuse into a case of sexual misconduct. As a result, they convened to organize a trial against her, during which the sports teacher – the same man she once trusted and idealized - reported her to the department head for prostitution. As shown here, women in the socialist city are also discriminated by their gender, as they do not benefit from the same respect and power as their male counterparts. Even when innocent, women remain entrapped by their subordinate role in society. This explains why, although portrayed as a victim who seeks to defend her rights and interests, Lola is hypocritically turned into an offender, first by the sports teacher who accuses her of prostitution, then by the governing university authorities who, blinded by patriarchal prejudice, unquestionably believe the sport teacher's claims. Lola's victimization, therefore, degenerates into stigmatization, an orchestrated witch-hunt that leads to charges of prostitution laid against her. As a perceived offender, Lola has become "tainted and discounted" (Goffman qtd in Nussbaum 221). As a result, she is humiliated by an unmerciful university community that condemns her for having breeched her oath of honour towards the regime and its political ideologies.

Through the narrator's account of events, the novel also exposes how the university and its *Lehrstuhl* mirror the *Staatsheimat* and Ceausescu's authoritarian model of governance, as both institutions rely on a prescribed yet duplicitous discourse of virtue. The lack of justice and transparency is made especially evident in the aftermath of Lola's suspicious death. First accused of prostitution, Lola is then condemned for the shameful act of suicide: "Diese Studentin hat Selbstmord begangen. Wir verabscheuen ihre Tat und verachten sie. Es ist eine Schande für das ganze Land"

(30). As Sigrid Grün points out, for the university authorities, Lola is “nicht Opfer, sondern Täter” (71). Deemed guilty of having brought shame onto the university and its nationalistic ideologies, Lola is *de facto* blamed for casting a shadow on the idealistic *Schein* of the Romanian state; a duplicitous state to which Müller pejoratively refers to as *Staatsheimat* in order to underline its mythical illusion of splendour and greatness.

Blamed by the state, Lola’s alleged guilt leads to her posthumous condemnation. Even in death, the university authorities deny her of victim status; instead, they deem that she must posthumously be excluded from both the institution and the regime’s political party to erase all traces of her shameful and embarrassing existence. Yet thanks to Lola’s diary, the narrator is able to unveil the truth behind Lola’s suspicious death. In doing so, the narrator also brings to light the discourse of shame, guilt, and humiliation unfolding before her. The narrator learns that Lola was pregnant and that she no longer harboured the hope of being able to escape her circumstances and her village heritage: “Ich werde die Dürre nie los. Was ich tun muβ, wird Gott nicht verzeihen. Aber mein Kind wird niemals Schafe mit roten Füβen treiben” (31). Just like the “nachlaufen” towards a romanticized idyll that misguided her, Lola’s “weglaufen” from a broken idyll through ‘suicide’ leads straight to her downfall.

Confirming this is the narrator’s testimony revealing how the authorities of the university took great measures to officially ensure Lola’s disgrace for the sake of sustaining its image and safe-keeping its ideological veneer*,* its immaculate *Schein*. This explains why the narrator suspects that the measures taken by the university authorities to condemn Lola were meant to cover up the sport teacher’s failings and restore his reputation and his image of moral virtue. Accordingly, the university

authorities eschew all investigation that would look into the cause behind Lola's death and swiftly conclude that it is a case of suicide. The university judges Lola in public, so that the consequences for her supposedly disgraceful behaviour may serve as a warning to others: "Die erhängte Lola wurde zwei Tage später am Nachmittag um vier Uhr in der groβen Aula aus der Partei ausgeschlossen und von der Hochschule exmatrikuliert. Hunderte waren dabei" (32). Lola's tragic fate shows how the university, as a national and nationalistic institution, goes to great lengths to eradicate the trace of all dissidents who are not in line with its rules and political ideologies. In doing so, it condemns and eliminates all those who cast a shadow over its ideological and 'illuminated' *Schein*.

Such a phenomenon occurs when Lola becomes a scapegoat for university authorities who ensure the appearance of normalcy, propriety and adherence to the law. The university authorities collectively and morally shame Lola, as they interpret her deviant actions of sexual promiscuity and suicide as ominous threats against the regime and its ideologies of unity and self-proclaimed greatness. In Lola's case, the university authorities insist on her complete ostracization; an exclusion that is meant to erase all traces of her existence. Her final curse is to be ostracized by both communities: 'Exmatrikuliert' from the university Lehrstuhl and rendered 'staatenlos' by her political party, even in death, Lola's fate is one of *Heimatlosigkeit*.

For the university authorities, Lola's complete eradication is needed to ensure its hegemony and immaculate veneer, its radiant *Schein*. In order to achieve this, the university as institution imposes "moral panic" (Nussbaum 77) upon its work force and student body. Nussbaum describes the "moral panic" phenomenon "as an instance of a

more general pattern in which unpopular and "deviant" groups [or persons] are stigmatized" (254). Nussbaum further argues that "narcissistic anxiety and aggression" often lead to the production of "herd mentality" (254). As a result, the people who call themselves 'normal' obtain what Nussbaum calls "a surrogate safety by bonding together over against a stigmatized group [or person]" (254). Such a bond is formed against Lola when the politicized university administration turns its students into a sort of 'mob justice' that rallies against shameful behaviours. By imposing this form of 'mob justice' upon its student body, the university authorities encourage 'good' students to expose and denounce all students who have breached their allegiance through unpatriotic acts. Summarizing this type of collective intimidation, quoting Stanley Cohen in *Devils and Moral Panics* (1972), Nussbaum argues that: "Deviants must not only be labeled but also be seen to be labeled; they must be involved in some sort of ceremony of public degradation" (95). This might explain why in *Herztier*, the university administration summons all university students into the *Aula*, the university main hall where a ceremony of public degradation takes place against Lola, and where peer pressure makes the rule of passion dominate over the rule of reason:

> Weil es allen zum Weinen war, klatschten sie zu lange. Niemand hat sich getraut, als erster aufzuhören. Jeder schaute beim Klatschen auf die Hände der anderen. Einige hatten kurz aufgehört und erschraken und klatschten wieder. Dann hätte die Mehrheit gerne aufgehört, man hörte, wie das Klatschten im Raum den Takt verlor, aber weil diese wenigen mit dem Klatschen ein zweites Mal begonnen hatten und feste Takte hielten, klatschte auch die Mehrheit weiter. Erst als in der ganzen Aula ein

> einziger Takt wie ein groβer Schuh an den Wänden hinauf polterte, gab der Redner mit der Hand das Zeichen zum Aufhören. (33)

As exposed here, the student population is forced to comply with what Müller, in her essay "Der König verneigt sich und tötet" describes as "kritikloser Gerhorsam und blinde Angst vor Repression" (29). Through peer pressure, students are reminded that they cannot defy hegemonic rule. Müller describes this form of subservience in her essay "Man will sehen, was nach einem greift". Here, she develops Elias Canetti's reflections on the effect of power mechanisms on the masses and applies it to her own Romanian experience; a time during which she saw how the population was deprived of agency and reduced to a subordinate mass: "Ihnen wurde auch befohen, wo mann sie was zu singen oder zu rufen haben. Alle in dieser Masse waren Marionetten der Macht" ("Man" 182). In *Herztier*, the students' blind allegiance has turned them into "Marionetten der Macht". Their subordination and lack of agency is fostered by the fear of being reprimanded and oppressed by ruthless authorities. The perverse effect of peer pressure is illustrated soon thereafter, where it appears that the dread of shame, or, more explicitly, the fear of being pointed out as a traitor and outcast, dictates the assembly's collective and puppet-like behaviour:

> Es wurde abgestimmt, um Lola aus der Partei auszuschlieβen und aus der Hochschule zu exmatrikulieren. Der Turnlehrer hob als erster die Hand. Und alle Hände flogen ihm nach. Jeder sah beim Heben des Arms die erhobenen Arme der anderen an. Wenn der eigene Arm noch nicht so hoch wie die anderen in der Luft war, streckte so mancher den Ellbogen noch ein biβchen […] Sie schauten um sich und stellten, da noch niemand

> den Arm herunterlieβ, die Finger wieder gerade und hoben die Ellbogen nach […] Und es blieb so still, bis der Turnlehrer seinen Arm auf das Pult legte und sagte: Wir müssen nicht zählen, selbstverständlich sind alle dafür. (36)

As shown in this passage, the students who attend do not acquiesce to Lola's expulsion out of conviction, but rather out of fear and debilitating peer pressure. The passage that concludes Lola's expulsion - "wir müssen nicht zählen, selbstverständlich sind alle dafür" (36) – exposes how difference of opinion is not only discarded; it is simply not an option.

Through this lack of diversity and freedom of speech, it appears that the university premises stand for an ideological space where herd-like policies of mass manipulation and hysteria ensure allegiance and homogenization. As such, it relies on an identity construct that imposes "disindividualization" (Blickle, *Heimat* 6) for the sake of a supposedly natural and unchallenged collective unity. Thus the university, the ideological space from which Lola was rejected and ostracized, shares clear characteristics with the *Heimat* concept and its idealized ground that often "leads to borders of exclusion" (188). Like *Heima*t, it too relies on the "submission to a cultural construct that is perceived as a natural state of being," (6) an ideological insistence to ensure the *Schein* of homogeneity for all Romanian subjects.

Chapter 2: *Der Schein trügt (wieder)*: *Heimat* as Panopticon

2.1 "Was glänzt, das sieht": Glittering *Schein* as Panopticon in *Der Fuchs*

> *Wenn Zerbrochenes funkelt, entsteht ein störrischer Glanz, aber nie ein Ganzes. Und wenn wir im einzelnen hängenbleiben und im Detail denken, besteht alles aus Zerbrochenem. Es bricht sich selbst, damit man es genau sehen kann. Und ich breche es noch einmal anders, damit ich darüber schreiben kann. Damit es im Wort annähernd das Ausmaβ kriegt, das es den wirklichen Dingen, die ich kenne, schuldig ist.*
> (Müller, "Anwendung" 114)

Similar to *Herztier*, Müller's 1992 novel *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*[17] uses the Romanian city to unveil the deceptive *Schein* of *Staatsheimat* and expose Romania's duplicitous, totalitarian policies. Set in 1989 during the final stages of Ceausescu's dictatorship, the story tells the story of Adina, a teacher deemed a political dissident and who, in the regime's final days, becomes a target of observation and interrogation. Suspected of conspiring against the regime, Adina becomes the victim of repeated break-ins in her city apartment. Feeling threatened by this intrusive surveillance, Adina soon sees danger lurking everywhere around her in her everyday environment. The impression of an omnipresent gaze that watches over citizens' every single move is symbolized in the novel by the dictator's portrait, a visual icon displayed for all to see across the land and which, in Müller's texts, becomes a reminder of constant surveillance. The dictator's gaze, referred to in the novel as "das Schwarze im Auge," reminds Adina that she is being watched and monitored by the state and its

[17] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novel *Der Fuchs*.

panoptic mechanisms of surveillance.

For Adina, the signal of danger associated with these mechanisms of surveillance is symbolized by a visual cue that serves as the novel's leitmotiv: "Was glänzt, das sieht". From her perspective, all that which shines is associated with "der Diktator" and his oppressive totalitarian regime. Although considered the "father" of the state, Ceausescu's rule was only guaranteed through the support of a state apparatus, a political entity composed of subordinate government authorities, secret agents and collaborators who ensured front-line control over the Romanian people. Those who operated the *Staatsapparat* and guaranteed its purpose were in turn rewarded with privileges for their blind allegiance. Lavinia Stan addresses this issue in her essay "Women," (2014) where she writes: "The Ceausescu regime was known for its 'wide repression,' which translated into the surveillance of large segments of the population by wide contingents of secret agents whose mission was to identify the 'enemy from within,' that is, citizens whose political convictions conflicted with the official line of hegemonic Communist Party" (7). The consequence of this intrusive form of surveillance was devastating for those who became preys of the state. These victims, Stan states, "lived in constant fear and had to devise elaborate language codes to hide their true political position [and] saw their professional aspirations thwarted for no good reason, and were often summoned to the *Securitate* of the police headquarters to explain their actions" (7). Agents of state repression were, until December of 1989 when Ceausescu and his regime were brought down, "portrayed as selfless champions of the common good, while their victims were seen as worthy of contempt" (1). Müller exposes this reality through the novel's leitmotiv "Was glänzt, das sieht", which serves as a

verbal imagery indicative of power relations. In the novel, Ceausescu's faithful followers— as I seek to demonstrate - are endowed with shiny attributes; 'hypericons'[18] that encapsulate and reverberate their privileged status and by extension, but also their potential threat as Ceausescu's henchmen.

Reflective of dictatorial hierarchy, the first person to be associated with glowing *Schein* in the novel is the dictator himself. His shiny attribute is his *Stirnlocke* - a glistening lock of hair falling on his forehead. Faithful to Müller's narrative strategy that focuses on detail[19] and individuality rather than totalizing unity, Adina magnetically gazes at the shiny lock of hair falling on Ceausescu's forehead. As such, she appears haunted by the luminous *Schein* of the *Stirlocke* that appears daily on the national newspaper and which hangs on the walls of all public areas across the country. The dictator's shiny lock glows amidst the country's lackluster conditions. In light of Müller's own reflections on her narrative strategy, Adina's focus on the *Stirnlocke* is to be understood as a defense mechanism against totalitarianism. By setting her gaze on the dictator's *Stirnlocke*, she rejects the totality of the image that symbolizes totalitarianism and turns it into a fragmented detail. Adina's gaze is a reminder of Müller's own mechanism of defence against totalitarianism discussed in her essay "Hunger und Seide" (1997); one that comes to light through her *Erfundene Wahrnehmung*, a perspective in which "das Detail wird größer als das Ganze" (*Hunger* 61). Through

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[18] Art historian W.J.T Mitchell explains that: "The metapicture is a piece of moveable cultural apparatus, one which may serve as a marginal role as illustrative device or a central role as a kind of summary image, what I have called a 'hypericon' that encapsulates an entire systeme, a theory of knowledge" (49).

[19] See Haines' article: "Schreiben wir im Detail".

Adina's dissecting gaze, she deconstructs the dictator's portrait and focuses on his glistening *Stirnlocke*, a *pars pro toto* that highlights the dictator's corruption and policies of duplicity that outshines everything else in the portrait, despite the lackluster newspaper on which it appears. Indeed, although the quality of the paper on which the dictator's picture is printed is described as "rauh" (27), the narrator reveals how

> die Stirnlocke des Diktators hat auf dem Papier einen hellen Schimmer. Sie ist geölt und glänzt. Sie ist aus gequetschtem Haar. Die Stirnlocke ist groβ, sie treibt kleinere Locken auf den Hinterkopf des Diktators hinaus. Die werden geschluckt vom Papier. Auf dem rauhen Papier steht: Der geliebteste Sohn des Volkes. Was glänzt, das sieht. (27)

The passage reveals how the dictator's lock of hair shines on lacklustre paper because the hair has been oiled with brilliantine; a hairdressing product that was scarce in Ceausescu's Romania and which therefore underlines privilege and high rank status.

When considering that the country is described as a deteriorating place plagued by dearth, distrust and depravity- confirmed by Müller's own words in *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, in which she states: "Alles im Land war so ein Schrotthaufen" (*Lebensangst* 9) - it becomes clearer how the glossed, shiny lock of hair reflects the privileged lifestyle of Ceausescu, whereas the lacklustre paper reflects the gloomy reality of the population. The dictator's lavish lifestyle outshines everything that is crumbling in the country, yet it also sheds light on how the dictator's privileged status was acquired to the detriment of the general population. What is more, it also exposes the population's submissive status and the tactics used by Ceausescu and his regime to control the Romanian people. In *Der Fuchs,* this is reflected by the fact that the lock is

made of “gequetschtem Haar,” (27) the adjective *gequetscht* being the German word for crushed. The *Stirnlocke* composed of crushed hair becomes a metaphorical figure standing for the dictator, who ensured his power by means of control and oppression. If the *Stirnlocke* is a metaphorical figure for Ceausescu, then the crushed hair, it seems, becomes a metaphorical figure for the crushed population, as well as for Ceausescu’s domineering character.

Beyond conveying the idea of a population crushed by its dictator, the *Stirnlocke* metaphor also sheds light on Ceausescu’s *Staatsapparat*. Whereas Ceausescu lead the *Staatsapparat*, the *Staatsapparat* was, in turn, ensured by a male-dominated political elite composed of “Wirtschaftsfunktionäre, Parteifunktionäre, Geheimdienst, Polizei [und] Militär” (“Die Insel” 203) who ensured authoritarian governance and surveillance. What this implies is that although Ceausescu had absolute power in Romania, he was nevertheless supported and followed by subordinate state authorities and other faithful acolytes who ensured his governance and complete hegemony. In *Der Fuchs*, this is reflected in the sentence: “sie [Die Stirnlocke] treibt kleinere Locken auf den Hinterkopf des Diktators” (27). As depicted here, the shiny *Stirnlocke* rules over subordinate ringlets of hair that have grown in posterior parts of the head. Hence, the passage presents a metaphor for dictatorial hierarchy that is perpetuated and spread out through what appears to be subordinate clones that form an army of miniature locks. This metaphor introduces yet another one of Müller’s narrative strategies, namely her “erfundene Wahrnehmung”; a form of perception described as follows in her essay “Der König”: “Das Gewöhnliche der Dinge platzte, ihr Material wurde zum Personal. Zwischen gleichen Dingen entstanden Hierarchien, und sie entstanden noch mehr

zwischen mir und ihnen" ("König" 59). Müller's explanation confirms the hierarchy distinguishing the *Stirnlocke*, found at the forefront of the dictator's head, as opposed to the other locks of hair following behind. What is more, through her sentence: "und sie entstanden noch mehr zwischen mir und ihnen," (59) she emphasizes that her capacity to 'see differently' is what allows her to draw this conclusion. In the greater scheme of things, the hierarchy visible in the metaphor of the *Stirnlocke* also explains why all subordinate authorities forming what Müller identifies as the *Nomenklatura* also benefit from enticing shiny objects and attributes. For Adina, these manifestations of *Schein* turn into visual indicators of potential threat, as she is aware that shiny objects and attributes are incentives or rewards received by the dictator's henchmen for their active contribution in ensuring that the mass population obeys the rules and dictates of the regime.

Whereas the *Stirnlocke* unveils the hierarchy found behind the novel's leitmotiv - "Was glänzt, das sieht" - das *Schwarze im Auge,* the dark substance in Ceausescu's eye*,* becomes another *pars pro toto* symbolizing the dictator's panoptic gaze that allows him to watch everyone, everywhere. Hence, "Das schwarze im Auge" of the dictator embodies the threatening gaze lurking behind the analogy "Was glänzt, das sieht". Hiding behind all that which shines, the darkness of Ceausescu's eyes speaks for the pervasive threat associated with the various mechanisms of surveillance that forces all national subjects to comply with the dictates of the regime. Under its threatening gaze, it keeps the population in confinement and in darkness. This explains why "das Schwarze im Auge" that is found in Ceausescu's portrait overlooking Adina's classroom "fängt dem Lichtfaden ein, der durchs Fenster fällt" (82). As exposed here, the dictator's black

eyes watch over the subordinated population, thereby catching all natural light shining through the windows. The dictator's eye appears to catch and direct natural light, as he is the only one in position to redistribute light among his subordinate subjects. As it manipulates all forms of natural light, the dictator's eye becomes a metaphor reflecting how the dictator is the only person entitled to enlighten a population that is mostly kept in the dark and left to face a gloomy and sombre reality. In light of this observation, it becomes clear how it is through "Das Schwarze im Auge," the dictator's looming stare robbing all light in the classroom space, that Adina is detracted from properly educating her pupils. Instead of properly educating the children, she must submit to the country's duplicitous ideologies and adhere to a state imposed curriculum that glorifies the nation's autocratic ideology.

As everything else in the authoritarian state, this patriotic, paternalist and patronizing ideology is communicated by means of the *Staatssprache*, a duplicitous and politically tainted language that is used as propaganda to disperse and ensure ideological parity across the state. Part of the broader *Staatsapparat*, the *Staatssprache* ensured that Ceausescu's dictates were followed. Hence, it too contributed in creating a Panopticon-effect on controlled and oppressed subjects. Explaining the effect of Ceausescu's *Staatssprache*, Müller recounts:

> In Bezug auf die Wirklichkeit der Tage war die Staatssprache doch in jedem Wort zynisch, eine Provokation [...] Und die war ja überall, wie faule Luft. Die war in den Zeitungen, im Fernsehen, die war in jeder verlogenen Sitzung, die war bei den Vorgesetzten, in den Lehrbüchern, auf den Parteilosungen an den Wänden der Fabrikhallen, auf den sogenannten

> Ehrentafeln im Park. Überall wo man hingeschaut hat. (*Lebensangst* 13)

As exposed here, the *Staatssprache* functions in ways that are similar to the threatening gaze found in the dictator's portrait. In *Der Fuchs*, Müller exposes how, similar to Ceausescu's "Schwarze im Auge," the *Staatssprache* has creeped into the school curriculum. Its presence is found in the "Lehrbücher" that ensure the nation's ideological *Schein* and that render a false idyllic portrayal of the nation. Exemplifying the intrusion of duplicity in the classroom, the novel's omniscient narrator reveals how Adina must make her pupils read a text entitled: "DIE TOMATENERNTE" (85). The text is reflective of what Haines and Littler identify as "socialist realism, the prescriptive aesthetic rules of eastern-bloc states" (6). In Adina's classroom, these texts intentionally provide the pupils with embellished interpretations, patriotic (and patriarchal) representations of the nation, as evoked by the text's sentence: "Es ist schön, auf den Feldern unseres Vaterlandes zu arbeiten. Es ist gesund und nützlich" (82). Haunted by the dictator's glare, Adina feels threathened and stalked. Forced to silence her disapproval, she must make her pupils read "DIE TOMATENERNTE," a school text glorifying the country's crop and harvest, yet visibly founded on propagandist misinformation.

The novel's narrator sheds light on the dark underbelly hidden behind the patriotic textbook by unveiling its false idyll. Unlike the lushious and bountyfull landscape described in "DIE TOMATENERNTE" text, the omniscient narrator exposes the true nature of things by describing the crumbling environment surrounding the academic institution:

> Vor der Schule liegt ein Viereck aus gelbem Gras, dahinter steht ein einzelnes Haus zwischen den Wohnblocks. Adina sieht den Dachwurz auf

> dem Dach des Hauses. Der Garten ist von den Wohnblocks an die Wand gedrückt. Die Weinreben spinnen die Fenster zu (85)

Here, the landscape surrounding the school is composed of a garden that is pressed against a corroding "Wohnblock". This forsaken scenery evokes the idea of confinement, as well as the dire and decaying conditions of the land under Ceausescu[20] and his regime. To borrow Müller's own words, it conveys the image that "Alles im Land war so ein Schrotthaufen" (*Lebensangst* 9). As the narrator points out, burnt, yellow grass that lacks light and water appears to be the only vegetation found in periphery of the school's walls. This observation stands in stark contrast with the natural lavishness and agricultural abundance of the land patriotically promoted in the school-text Adina is forced to teach in her classroom.

The discrepancy separating fiction and reality comes full circle when the content of the text read by Adina's pupils is immediately followed by a description of the natural landscape surrounding the school building. Along with the dying yellow grass found around the school's periphery, the narrator reveals how thriving weeds - "Dachwurz"- are rampantly growing over the crumbling infrastructure of the school building as a

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[20] Compagne also sheds light on the politics of duplicity under Ceausescu: "Die Versorgung der Bevölkerung mit Lebensmitteln war bei weitem nicht ausreichend: Aufgrund Ceausescus autarker Wirtschaftsvorstellungen und seines berühmten Größenwahns wurde viel Geld unter anderem für die Zurückzahlung von externen Schulden und die Finanzierung von den gigantischen Projekten des Diktators gebraucht, das durch erhöhte Exportraten auf Kosten der Binnenbedürfnisse und durch den Verzicht auf nötige Importe (Medikamente, usw.) eingebracht werden sollte. Die Konsequenzen dieser Misswirtschaft musste die Bevölkerung tragen […]" (67).

consequence of decay and dissolution. The last two lines of the above-mentioned passage are also telling: as an iconic symbol of East block countries, the *Wohnblock* is an architectural structure of socialism that embodies Ceausescu's totalitarian ideals. The garden cannot thrive, as it is overshadowed by this housing-block; a massive, lackluster high rise building that deprives it of sufficient space and natural light. Completing this scenario of obstruction and deprivation, the growing *Weinreben* on the school's walls veil the windows, preventing all entrance of natural light into the classroom. Ironically, "das Glänzen" reflected by the *Stirnlocke* is the sole source of 'light' readily available for Adina and her pupils. Yet it also encapsulates Ceausescu's politics of duplicity that infringe all spheres of society, as exemplified in Adina's classroom, where genuine forms of enlightenment are either hindered or overshadowed by teachings that praise the dictator and his corrupt state. The text appears of particular interest for unveiling the illusionary *Schein* of totalitarianism in *Der Fuchs*, as it speaks to the politics of duplicity plaguing the country.

Another example confirming how Ceausescu's politics of duplicity have the capacity to infringe all spheres of society is brought to light by Adina, who is now convinced that she has become a victim of state surveillance. When Adina comes home one day to her apartment to find a piece of her fox fur dissected, she realizes that her fear of surveillance is no longer an illusion. Linked to the novel's title, the *Fuchsfell* is a haunting reminder that Adina is being watched and manipulated by a secret agent suspecting her of being at odds with the state's ideologies. Adina's distress as a result of intrusive surveillance grows stronger as time goes on and more and more parts of the fox fur are dissected: "erst den Schwanz, dann einen Fuβ nach dem anderen, am Ende

den Kopf" (125). Adina has come under suspicion by the *Securitate*, the state police, as she is believed to have conspired against the regime along with Edgar, Kurt and Abi, three friends who form a music group and whose censored song lyrics denounce the situation of oppression and confinement affecting the Romanian population.

On the other side of the coin, Adina suspects that her intruder is a *Securitate* officer seeking to intimidate her. Her intuition is confirmed once she encounters a suspicious man in the staircase of her friend Clara's apartment building. The man fits the description of a *Securitate* officer who once interrogated her friend Abi, who in turn warned Adina of the potential threat of surveillance by the same *Securitate* agent. In doing so, he provided Adina with a visual cue that would help her recognize the secret agent: his noticeable birthmark. Through this physical trait, the novel's leitmotiv of Panopticon-like surveillance linked to shininess surfaces once again. Here, Adina realizes that her friend's interrogator is the intruder who enters her apartment in her absence, a conclusion she draws once she encounters a man with a noticeable black birthmark that shines: "Zwischen Hemdkragen und Ohr steht beleuchtet ein Muttermal […] der Kreis der Taschenlampe ist an seinem Kinn gecknickt" (221). The light reflecting on the stranger's birthmark confirms Adina of the identity of her intruder. Incidentally, she also realizes that her intruder is having an affair with her close friend Clara, which allows her to identify him by his name Pavel. As revealed here, Clara has betrayed Adina by aligning herself with a secret agent whose work consists of spying on her and her friends. Yet, she seeks to make amends by warning Adina of an imminent threat, namely that the *Securitate* has issued an arrest warrant against her. Deemed guilty by Pavel of having stained the ideological veneer of the state, Adina's victimization comes

to be signified by the image of the hunted fox. As a prey of surveillance and potential entrapment, she must escape from the threat of exposure in the city and find refuge in a last-minute hideout. A few days into hiding, Adina and her friends learn that Ceausescu's regime has fallen. Ironically, the narrator reveals how Pavel now feels threatened by his own prey. Once the hunted victims, they are now hunters seaking retribution for Pavel's threatening surveillance and oppressive work in the name of Ceausescu's regime. To ensure his escape, Pavel has changed his identity, so as to deceive the border guards and avoid the risk of being detained:

> An der Grenze […] wartet ein Auto. Ein Mann im dicken Pullover reicht seinen Paβ durchs Fenster. Der Grenzofizier liest: KARACZOLNY ALBERT […] Als er seinen Paβ ins Handschuhfach legt, schlüpft aus dem Kragen an den Hals des Mannes ein fingerspitzengroβes Muttermal. Der Schlagbaum öffnet sich. (273)

As exposed here, Pavel flees the country by making himself pass for a Hungarian citizen returning to his homeland, as he expects to be chased by those he oppressed and who now seek retribution. Pavel's true identity is exposed by the narrator, who alludes to his 'Muttermal', his distinct and recognizable birthmark.

From a political point of view, however, the fact that Pavel was ready to flee the country in the wake of an unforeseen downfall reveals yet another fox-like ruse; an anticipated and schemed plan to escape the country. Müller states that many of Ceausescu's henchmen were motivated to rise to the top of the hierarchy, only to have better access to ways that would allow them to escape abroad, away from Ceausescu's grip: "Je höher man in eine Position klettern konnte, um so gröβer die Möglichkeiten.

Man verfügte über Einfluβ, konnte die Abhängigkeit anderer nutzen. […] Bei vielen war das Sich-an-die-Macht-Dienen eine einzige, getarnte Vorbereitung der Flucht" ("Insel" 206). From a different political angle, Pavel's urgent need to escape exposes a reversal of scenarios taking place in the country that is no longer governed by dictatorship; one that illustrates the need after the dictatorship "to brand somebody as a victim or as a victimizer" (Stan 2). From a sheer human perspective, however, it also shows how years of injustice, surveillance and oppression can swiftly give way to genuine feelings of betrayal, hatred and rage.

The image conveyed by the title-sentence *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* sheds light on the illusionary *Schein* of progress that continues beyond Ceausescu and his regime's fall. As Roxanne Compagne observes, the title – *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* - illustrates the vicious circle that leaves the country in a web of lies and corruption: "Das Motiv des Fuchses verdeutlicht also eine Kontinuität, die auch durch die äuβeren Ereignisse nicht zu durchbrechen ist. Im Grunde ist alles beim Alten geblieben, mit dem feinen Unterschied, daβ Opfer[21] und Täter die Rollen vertauscht haben" (130). In her essays, Müller has oftentimes pointed out that despite the political events of 1989, many authorities who belonged to Ceausescu's *Staatsapparat* and who were the agents of his authoritarian doctrines

[21] Based on Herta Müller's observation in her essay "Die Insel liegt innen – die Grenze liegt auβen," those who formed the Nomenklatura were opportunists who, at the end of the day, were themselves victims of Ceausescu's despotic authority. Müller explains: "[…] man muβte sich arrangieren, Karriere machen. Je höher man in eine Position klettern konnte, um so gröβer wurden die Möglichkeiten […] Bei vielen war das "Sich-an-die-Macht-Dienen eine einzige, getarnte Vorbereitung der Flucht" (206).

remained in power in this sudden fall of Ceausescu's regime.

Müller specifically refers to the gap separating representation and reality in relation to this so-called shift towards democracy. She recounts how even more than a decade after Ceausescu's fall, she was being spied on and scrutinized by Romania's secret service during a visit to her native country. This clarifies why she associates duplicity to the term "democracy" when referring to her native Romania:

> Das Europafähnchen an der Rezeption und die *Schnüffler*[22] (my emphasis), die einem hinterherlaufen. Das ist Demokratie auf Rumänisch. Es ist bekannt, daβ sich der Geheimdienst Ceausescus, die Securitate, nicht aufgelöst, sondern nur umbenannt hat in SRI (Rumänischer Informationsdienst), der nach eigenen Angaben 40 Prozent, also das jüngere, agile Personal der Securitate übernommen hat. Der wirkliche Prozentsatz ist wahrscheinlich noch gröβer. Und die restlichen 60 Prozent des Personals sind heute Rentner mit dreimal höheren Renten als alle anderen oder die neuen Macher der Marktwirtschaft. Im Chaos der ersten Wendezeit haben sie sich ihre „Schnäppchen" besorgt – Banken, Fabriken, Hotels, Reisebüros, Tankstellen etc. Und die Schnäppchen von damals mausern sich täglich weiter zu satten Vermögen eines sorglosen Lebens. Die Schnäppchen-Millionäre helfen einander auf allen Ebenen. Ihr Netz überzieht das Land vom Parlament über die Wirtschaft, Justiz,

[22] The imagery conveyed through the term "Schnüffler" could further explain the reasoning behind Müller's choice to use the image oft he fox to represent secret agents shamelessly "snuffling' into the personal lives of those who were perceived to be political dissidents.

> Universitäten bis in die Krankenhäuser. Dieses Netz sorgt für die allgegenwärtige Korruption und wird sich in nächster oder ferner Zukunft durch nichts stören lassen. […] Auβer Diplomat kann ein Ex-Spitzel in Rumänien heute beinah alles sein, was er früher war. (“Cristina” 9 - 10)

As Müller states here, perpetrators of authoritarian persecution, whose duty it was to spy upon and interfere in the private spheres of people’s lives, were simply replaced by acolytes or subordinates who nevertheless belonged to the ruling hierarchy. As such, the regime is not reformed anew, but simply re-shuffled from within. Müller hints at the reshuffling of the status quo in *Der Fuchs*, when the narrator reveals: “Die Tochter der Dienstbotin ist Direktorin, der Direktor ist Sportlehrer, der Sportlehrer ist Gewerkschaftsleiter, der Physiklehrer ist Verantwortlicher für Veränderung und Demokratie” (282). The novel ends with the bittersweet conclusion that there is no turning point: even Ceausescu’s downfall - the shift that was to put an end to duplicitous policies, injustice and surveillance – remains itself nothing but a deceptive *Schein*.

2.2 When the *Schein* of *Heimat* Turns into a Panopticon in *Atemschaukel*

> *Weil sie sich als 'Heimat' verstand und genügte, lieβ sie mich in ihr verstecktes Leben nie hinein. In diesem Versteckspiel gewann die 'Heimat' jeden Tag, und ich verlor das Spiel. Auch ich nahm mir das Wort 'Heimat'. Wenn mich schon nichts auffangen konnte, wollte ich wenigstens für all das, was mich niederdrückte, ein Wort.*
> (Müller, "Betrug" 214)

In *Atemschaukel*[23] (2009), *Heimat* is once again portrayed as a place of deceit that fails to embody the sheltering notion commonly associated with the idea of 'home'. On the one hand, deceit means here a strategy of survival for the novel's protagonist who is emotionally burdened with the secret of his closeted homosexuality. On the other hand, deceit also stands for the lurking threat of disclosure ensured by the *Heimat*'s heterosexist mechanisms of surveillance. Based on the life of poet Oskar Pastior, with whom Müller initially planned to co-write the novel, the story recounts the fate of Leo Auberg, who, after sixty years, tells the story of his deportation to a *Lager* in the Ukraine during the final stages of World War II. As *Atemschaukel*'s narrator, Leo looks back in time and recalls the month of January 1945, the eve of his deportation to a Soviet forced labor camp at the age of seventeen. He remembers that as a closeted homosexual, his fear of being disclosed and punished for his non-conforming sexual practices was greater than his open fear of being deported to a forced labour camp: "Ich habe mir gedacht mit meinen siebzehn Jahren, dass dieses Wegfahren zur rechten Zeit kommt. Es müsste nicht die Liste der Russen sein, aber wenn es nicht zu schlimm

[23] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novel *Atemschaukel*.

kommt, ist es für mich sogar gut. Ich wollte weg aus dem Fingerhut der kleinen Stadt, wo alle Steine Augen hatten" (7). In other words, Leo's *Heimat* was a place "where every stone had eyes" (Boehm 2) as he was made to feel vulnerable and threatened by the surveillance of both his neighbours and the state.

As for Adina in *Der Fuchs*, Leo's haunting fear invokes Foucault's concept of Panopticism. Foucault gives insight into the lurking sense of threat experienced by the inmate who believes that he is permanently being watched, explaining that "the major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action […]" (*Discipline* 201). Although Foucault's concept uses the prison as his socio-spatial context, the Panopticon's functional structure is also applicable to Leo's personal perception of *Heimat*, a place he considers imprisoning through a seemingly omnipresent surveillance ensured by collective peer pressure. As Gary Shapiro points out, "the Panopticon is a device for total surveillance […] where a high premium is attached to having an orderly population subject to constant inspection" (8). This corresponds to Leo's description of normative inspection incurred in his hometown, which he metaphorically compares to a "Fingerhut" (7). Leo is aware that the risk of disclosure in this confined space depends on his capacity to camouflage his sexual orientation from his social entourage composed of parents, neighbours and local authorities, who all ensure *Heimat'*s normative structure. Leo's fear of disclosure, I argue, is a reaction to what could be perceived as a "generalized ocular regime" (Shapiro 8) watching over his every action.

Leo's fear of imminent disclosure in the *Heimat* makes him feel exposed and threatened within the local, regional, and national borders of his *Heimat*. On the national scale, his fear is in part legitimized by the fact that from 1864 to 2001, homosexuality was criminalized in Romania[24]. In the German-speaking context of Transylvania (*Siebenbürgen*), Leo's 'regional' *Heimat*, it could be argued that the even stricter anti-homosexual laws of the Third Reich, known as Paragraph 175 and 175a,[25] would have

[24] Giving historical insight on Romania's jurisdiction and its specific laws on homosexuality, Nastase states: "The Romanian Penal Code of 1864 criminalized all homosexual acts. This code remained in effect for the better part of a century, and while it was intermittently reinforced, it remained essentially in its original form. In 1936, the code limited reference to homosexuality except in cases of rape. A short time later, legislators were still grappling with the issue, and Article 431 was introduced, stating that homosexuality could be illegal if it caused "public scandal", but not otherwise. A repeal of that particular language then appeared in the Penal Code of 1948. By 1968, the basic code was again reconsidered, and the first paragraph of Article 200 read: "Sexual relations between persons of the same sex are punishable by imprisonment of one to five years." At that point, the infraction moved from the public domain and into the private" (Nastase 315, in: *Romania since 1989* Henry F. Carey).

[25] As Dagmar Herzog explains in her book *Sex after Fascism*, "Paragraph 175 criminalized "coitus-like" behavior between men. […] As a provision of the German Criminal Code from 1871 to March 1994, Paragraph 175 criminalized homosexual acts between males. As of 1935 however, The National Socialists both expanded the scope of the law (in part through the addition of 175a) to all same-sex activity between men; this included mutual touching or even individual masturbation engaged in side by side and in some cases even "erotic glances". The Nazis also significantly sharpened and expanded the scope of punishments for violations of the paragraph to include longer prison and workhouse sentences, sentences to concentration camps, and castration. […] The brutal impact of Paragraphs 175 and 175a during the Third Reich was public knowledge in post-war Germany" (Herzog 89).

influenced the ethical and sexual mores of ethnic Germans living in Transylvania. The general public was familiar with the anti-homosexuality laws of the Third Reich and most ethnic-Germans in Romania openly supported and glorified Nazi ideologies during the period 1933-1945. This historical claim seems to correspond with the events that took place in Leo's *Heimat* at the time: "Und es gingen Nachbarn und Verwandte und Lehrer in den Krieg zu den rumänischen Faschisten oder zum Hitler" (56). The likelihood that these laws played an influential role within Leo's own household is probable because of his parents' adamant support and admiration for Hitler's Aryan ideologies. Part of the socionationalist political agenda, these ideologies promoted the idea of *Mens sana in corpore sano*. As a result of his failure to meet such Nazi standards of 'masculinity', his parents openly demonstrate a lack of pride. This exhibits Leo's incapacity to find his place in the clearly dichotomized hetero-normative mould of a *Heimat* that outspokenly supported Hitler's ideologies.

Referring to this normative ideal of masculinity that long persevered in German culture and which culminated in Nazi ideologies, Mosse explains that "Physical awkwardness, weakness of nerves, and ill health in a person mean that his awareness of the world is distorted because it is transmitted from the body to the mind"(41). In line with this type of reasoning, Leo recalls how his parents took great measures in making him become more athletic, so as to be more in tune with the German-speaking village's Nazi-based conception of masculinity: "Und mich schickten die Eltern, weil ich zu pummelig war und soldatischer werden sollte, einmal pro Woche zum privaten Turnunterricht, dem Krüppelturnen" (54). As exposed in this passage, these private sport lessons were organized to cure physical disabilities such as lack of muscle tone

and excessive weight; a lack of vigour and manliness that shames Leo's parents and which in turn humiliates Leo, who feels stigmatized and marginalized.

Featured in the novel's chapter "Aufregende Zeiten," this passage is the first indication of Leo's parents' admiration and support for Nazi ideologies. Pondering the discriminatory consequences of his parents' fanatic stance, Leo reveals the consequences that such doctrines would have implied, should he have been "AUF FRISCHER TAT ERTAPPT" (9):

> Meine [Eltern] glaubten, wie alle Deutschen in der Kleinstadt, [an] Hitlers Schnurrbart und an uns Siebenbürger Sachsen als arische Rasse. Mein Geheimnis war […] schon höchste Abscheulichkeit. Mit einem Rumänen kam noch Rassenschande dazu (11).

Based on Leo's observation, relationships with Romanians would cause an additional rupture with *Heimat*'s prescribed rule of purity pertaining to race. Having already broken the rule of *Heimat* and 'nature' linked to gender and race, Leo's homosexuality becomes more than a violation of masculine ideals. As in Müller's other novels, the consequence for Leo's two-fold breach of gender virtues implies blame, shame and humiliation. Aware of this risk, Leo becomes even more "in [s]ich eingesperrt" (272). Through Leo's closeted sexual identity, *Atemschaukel* exposes the mechanisms of oppression and exclusion inherent in the normative notions of *Heimat*.

As a social construct setting the standards of morality in the German-speaking context, the traditionalist idea of *Heimat* promotes moral purity and other claims of innocence while seeking to restrain marks of Otherness, which it construes as flaws and vices. Yet, as pointed out by Blickle, pretending to be innocent is not the same as being

innocent (*Heimat* 157). Müller herself refers to the *Scheinheiligkeit* of *Heimat*, comparing the social construct to a "Versteckspiel," ("Betrug" 214) a game of hypocrisy and lies in which the winners who—at least outwardly-- behave according to established norms, are opposed to the losers who defy these very norms. As such, the social construct of *Heimat* becomes a regulatory device from which social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion emerge. While its purpose is to project an image of purity and moral innocence, it relies on blame, shame, and humiliation to cast aside those who do not fit in. It is because of this dogma of moral innocence preached by a hetero-sexist *Heimat* that Leo – pressured by this social environment to remain closeted – regards his sexual orientation as "absonderlich, dreckig, [und] schamlos" (8).

As a young man burdened with confusion and shame, Leo remembers the urgent need to camouflage what he himself was taught to perceive as an impure deviance that needed to be kept hidden from public scrutiny. Looking back, he remembers how his *Heimat* taught him to feel shame and repulsion towards his own, "absonderlich" and "dreckig" sexual orientation. As exposed in his recollection of memories, he is aware that engaging in promiscuous homosexual encounters implies a tarnishing of *Heimat* virtues. He also believes that his "vice" would evoke "Abscheulichkeit" (11): a feeling of disgust among the 'moral' people living in his *Heimat* community, whom he believes would immediately condemn, humiliate and persecute him, should they ever learn of his 'abnormal' behaviour.

Martha C. Nussbaum argues that disgust is a refusal to ingest, and therefore it refers to a refusal of being contaminated. Looking back in time, Leo remembers how he struggled to reconcile his personal sexual needs with the reactions of disgust that his

sexual deviance would have certainly provoked among members of his family, and especially in his mother. Reflective of this divergence in perception found between his mother and himself is the passage in which Leo describes a pavilion that stood in the municipal park of his hometown, which also happens to be the place where his secret sexual encounters took place. His description of the pavilion appears to mirror the feelings of confusion he has towards his own homosexuality, as well as those of disgust anticipated from his mother in regards to what he perceives to be a sexual vice:

> Auf dem Heimweg bin ich in die Parkmitte, in den runden Pavillon gegangen, wo an Feiertagen die Orchester spielten. Ich blieb eine Weile darin sitzen. Das Licht stach durchs feingeschnitzte Holz. Ich sah die Angst der leeren Kreise, Quadrate und Trapeze, verbunden durch weiβe Ranken mit Krallen. Es war das Muster meiner Verirrung und das Muster des Entsetzens im Gesicht meiner Mutter. (8)

As exposed here, Leo believes that his incapacity to control his sexual desires is the source of his emotional confusion, whereas he is also convinced that his perceived sexual deviance would raise sentiments of disgust when seen through the eyes of his own mother.

In the novel's general *Heimat* context however, the society's feelings of disgust towards homosexuality also speak to the ideological refusal of potential moral contaminations. Such moral contaminations would threaten ideological aspirations of purity and perfection, which, in turn, would also suggest one's own physical impulsions as a human being. Thus, in the backdrop of the *Heimat* natural order, homosexuality becomes a shameful and abnormal trait that epitomizes the human being's rejection of

all deviant forms of desire. Conscious of his supposed lack of moral virtue, Leo perceives his sexual exploration, the period of "Wildwechsel, [indem er sich] weiterreichen [lieβ]," (8) as a form of 'animalistic abnormality'. This perception of moral deviance is what forces him to keep his sexual identity a secret. The secret intimacy of his closeted identity is perhaps why, amidst self-deprecating adjectives such as "absonderlich, dreckig, schamlos […], " (8) he remembers how, nevertheless, he experienced ambivalent feelings, since he also perceived his secret abnormality to be "schön" (8).

Reminiscing about the secret sexual encounters that left him sentimentally confused, Leo recalls how he took part in anonymous "Rendezvous" (8), the code-name for his participation in clandestine sexual trysts that occurred prior to his deportation to the *Lager*. The secretive aspect associated to this cover-up is reiterated through the various code names that Leo and his anonymous partners used when they engaged in their furtive encounters. Leo recalls:

> Ich ging zum zweiten Rendezvous mit demselben ersten Mann. Er hieß DIE SCHWALBE. Der zweite war ein neuer, er hieβ DIE TANNE. […] Danach kam DER FADEN. […] Dann DIE PERLE. Nur wir wuβten, welcher Name zu wem gehört. (8)

While the pseudonyms seem random, they all serve one purpose: to camouflage their identity. Guilt-ridden by a breach of innocence that goes against the prescribed normative laws of *Heimat*, Leo and his sexual partners were aware that they were "subject[ed] to a generalized ocular regime" (Shapiro 8). Thus, the code names they gave themselves became the chosen preventive method used to avoid being caught by

the Panopticon-like surveillance of his *Heimatstadt*, a place "wo alle Steine Augen hatten" (7). As a result of feeling haunted and threatened by the surveillance of *Heimat*, Leo also saw his desire to flee the "Fingerhut der kleinen Stadt" (7) increase. As suggested in the passage: "Es müsste nicht die Liste der Russen sein, aber wenn es nicht zu schlimm kommt, ist es sogar gut,"(7) Leo's optimism in the face of deportation gave him the illusionary hope that it would liberate him from his small town's Panopticon-like surveillance. Thus, the saying *der Schein trügt* also applies to the story told in *Atemschaukel*. Its manifestation begins with Leo's naïve and foolish misconception of what soon awaited him amid the dehumanizing confines of the *Lager*.

After telling the reader of the life-threatening struggles he faced during his five years of incarceration in the forced labour camp, Leo recalls the toiling experience that awaited him upon his return to his native *Heimat*. Although physically liberated from the *Lager*, his anticipated liberation from emotional confinement remained a deceptive illusion. This explains why upon his return home, Leo felt exposed to *Heimat*'s Panopticon-like surveillance: "Seitdem ich wieder daheim war, hatte alles Augen. Ich war eingesperrt in mich und aus mir herausgeworfen, ich gehörte nicht ihnen und fehlte mir" (272). Experiencing simultaneous feelings of entrapment and displacement, Leo now felt rejected and disconnected from his social environment.[26] His conflated feelings also reveal how he missed the identity he was able to construct during his five years of confinement; a forged identity that granted him moments of complicity and solidarity amid the life-threatening conditions undergone in the *Lager*. Now looking back, Leo

[26] These conflated feelings of saturation and disconnect shall be addressed in Chapter 3.1: "From *Heimatsatt* to *Heimatlos*: Breaking up with the *Schein* of *Heimat* in *Atemschaukel*".

appears to long for the safe feeling of anonymity he was able to develop and project onto his inmates in the *Lager*. He remembers how for them, he became "Der Nichtrührer," (264) a nickname which indicates the unbreakable stoicism he acquired through his silent and phlegmatic demeanor.

Apart from experiencing disconcerting feelings of nostalgia for the *Lager* upon his return to the homeland, Leo also feels inhibited by the resurgence of his sexual compulsions once he is re-exposed to the normalcy of everyday life in the *Heimat.* By re-engaging in *Wildwechsel*, the compulsive sexual behaviour he was able to put aside during his years of deportation spent in the *Lager*, Leo felt once again at risk of disclosure. In reference to his past demons that soon resurfaced, he recalls:

> [Damals] streifte [ich] nach den fünf Lagerjahren Tag für Tag duch den Tumult der Straβen und übte im Kopf die besten Sätze für den Fall meiner Verhaftung: AUF FRISCHER TAT ERTAPPT— gegen diesen Schuldspruch habe ich mir tausend Ausreden und Alibis zurechtgelegt. (9)

Although bearable at first, his fear of disclosure became overwhelming once he set foot in a familiar place that had already lured him into temptation prior to his deportation: the "Neptunbad". This was the public bath where he and intimate partners used to meet to have clandestine sexual encounters prior to his confinement in the *Lager*. He remembers how, upon coming across this place loaded with secret memories, he felt compelled to enter without needing further reflection: "Ohne zu überlegen, ging ich durch die Tür in die Halle. Der dunkle Steinboden spiegelte wie ruhiges Wasser. Ich sah meinen hellen Mantel unter mir zur Kassenloge schwimmen. Ich verlangte eine Karte" (286). He also remembers how despite being aware of the risk, he was unable to

overcome temptation. This lack of willpower is depicted in the sentence in which he recalls how he saw his “hellen Mantel unter [ihm] schwimmen” (286) once he entered the bathhouse, as if dispossessed of his own agency. Unable to keep control over his own person, he felt exposed and inhibited by a sense of danger that suddenly came upon him. Lured by the tempting *Schein* of desire, Leo recalls how he suddenly felt scrutinized by the cashier sitting at the entrance of the bathhouse, whose words he believed concealed a double-entendre:

> Die Kassenfrau fragte: eine oder zwei. Hoffentlich sprach aus ihrem Mund nur die optische Täuschung, nicht ein Verdacht. Hoffentlich sah sie nur den doppelten Mantel und nicht, dass ich unterwegs war in mein altes Leben. (286)

As exposed here, the cashier’s words left Leo frozen and constrained by the crippling fear of being “AUF FRISCHER TAT ERTAPPT” (9).

Leo’s suspicion about the cashier was then heightened through the *Schein* of surveillance which he, looking back, now associates with the *Neptunbad*’s spatial environment: “Die Kassenfrau war neu. Aber die Halle erkannte mich, der blanke Boden, die Mittelsäule, die Bleiverglasung am Schalter, die Kächelwände mit dem Seerosenmuster” (286). The shiny attributes Leo remembers seeing inside the *Neptunbad* indicates intertextuality with Müller’s novel *Der Fuchs*, and especially with its leitmotiv *“*Was glänzt, das sieht*”.* Leo, who shares Adina’s fear of being followed and observed, associates the *Neptunbad* with mechanisms of surveillance involving deceptive *Schein*. He portrays his anxiety as being so great that it turned into paranoia once he suspected the cashier of using a deceitful strategy to trap men who, like him,

relied on secretive public places such as the *Neptunbad* to engage in sexual encounters. Following this instance of paranoid fear experienced at the *Neptunbad*, Leo remembers how he then sought radical change and tried to camouflage his true nature by actively partaking in the *Schein* of normalcy*,* a shift that foremost implied the necessity to adhere to *Heimat* values and hetero-normative norms.

Under the growing pressure of conformity and fear of looming threat, Leo decided to marry Emma, a girl he met shortly following his misadventure at the *Neptunbad*. By marrying Emma and adhering to the hetero-normative institution of marriage, he believed that he would be able to ensure a misleading appearance of normalcy. Looking back, however, Leo now sees how his marriage to Emma created an illusion of safety, a cloak of normalcy and security that hid his secret and promiscuous sexual encounters with other men in the years following his return to the homeland*.* This vicious circle left him caught in a a web of lies that pressured him to stay in what he knew was a *Scheinehe* for the sake of keeping the *Schein* of *Heimat* and sexual propriety alive.

As a result of keeping his true identity camouflaged from his wife for several years, Leo became burdened with a guilt-ridden sense of shame. This becomes palpable in the chapter “Ich bin immer noch das Klavier”, in which he remembers how, one evening, he suddenly became worried that his closeted identity was on the verge of being disclosed by his wife, Emma. He then remembers how he became destabilized by Emma’s comments, which seemed to indicate that she knew the truth about his double identity. Once again evocative of the leitmotiv “Was glänzt, das sieht,” Leo’s fear of disclosure took place in a restaurant named the *Goldener Krug* – two words that evoke the aspect of *Schein* through the golden colouration of a name and its symbol. Leo

especially remembers how, while sitting at a table of this restaurant with Emma, he was overcome by a sense of fear. This debilitating fear occurred after the waiter serving their table complained about how the piano player performing in the restaurant that evening was playing on a piano that was out of tune: “Da hören Sie es, das habe ich doch dem Chef die ganze Zeit versichert, das Klavier spielt falsch. Und was hat er gemacht, er hat den Pianisten rausgeschmissen” (289). Leo explains that his fear came through when the waiter pronounced the words *Spieler.* He immediately associated this words with himself, as it was the code name he used to camouflage his identity when attending his secret Rendezvous in the nearby park. Already stunned by the waiter’s words, Leo remembers feeling horror-struck once Emma added her own comment to the situation and pointed out: “Na siehst du, immer erwischt es den Spieler, nie das Klavier” (289). Similar to the fear he experienced after feeling exposed by the cashier in the *Neptunbad*, Leo became frightened by Emma’s uncanny choice of words and questioned the true nature of their intent:

> Wieso hatte sie mit diesem Satz gewartet, bis der Kellner weg war. Ich hoffte, sie weiβ nicht, was sie sagt. Im Park habe ich damals den Decknamen DER SPIELER gehabt. Angst kennt kein Pardon. Ich habe den nahen Park gewechselt. Und meinen Decknamen. Für den neuen Park weit von der Wohnung und nahe am Bahnhof habe ich mir den Namen DAS KLAVIER genommen. (289)

His doubts were all the more genuine based on the way Emma was starring at him. Describing her scrutinizing gaze, Leo recalls: “In ihren Augen drehten sich gelbe Zahnrädchen. Sie waren angerostet, ihre Lider blieben beim Blinzeln daran hängen [...]”

(289). Now recalling Emma's rusty and yellow stare,[27] Leo still believes that his wife's words, calculated words that reflected the gear-like mechanism of her thoughts, hid awareness, cynicism, and double-entendre. The eyes that remain "beim Blinzeln hängen" (289) evoke the idea that Emma now refused to close her eyes in front of the truth. Crippled by fear, Leo remembers how he could no longer simply rely on secrecy to camouflage his closeted identity. After spending years of being fearful and trying to be in tune with an orchestrated false identity, he also realized that he could no longer meet the normative standards of *Heimat*. In order to unshackle himself from debilitating fear, he chose to tell Emma a final lie. In this lie, he pretended to leave the home and country for a visit to his aunt in Vienna, when in reality he was emigrating and had no intention of returning to the *Heimat*.

His motivation to flee from the *Schein* of normalcy, as he recalls, was first related to his wife's potentially threatening suspicions. However, his eagerness to flee the country was also related to the worsening political conditions that reinforced repression and punishment against the deviant crime of homosexuality:

> Zu der Zeit waren im Park DER KUCKUCK und DAS NACHTKÄSTCHEN verhaftet worden. Ich wuβte, dass bei der Polizei fast alle reden und mir

[27] As shall be discussed in Chapter 5, colouration and light have an agency of their own in Müller's narratives. If compared to the definition of the colour yellow in her novel *Der Fuchs,* the colour yellow described in this passage of *Atemschaukel* would also symbolizes silence, while rust, as suggested in my interpretation of *Der Fuchs*, would indicate the crumbling state of an infrastructure. In the context of Leo's relationship, I argue that Emma's yellow eyes symbolize her silent knowledge of Leo's homosexuality, whereas the rust Leo sees in her eyes indicates the deterioration of their marital union, which for Leo, was nothing more than a deceptive *Scheinehe* to begin with.

> keine Ausrede etwas nützt, wenn die zwei DAS KLAVIER erwähnen. Ich stellte einen Besuchsantrag für Österreich. (291)

For Leo, who barely survived incarceration in the *Lager*, exile became the only escape from the lurking threat of imprisonment. His *Besuchsantrag* for Austria is what allowed him to escape from the Panopticon-like surveillance of his Romanian state. Although he was able to flee the risk of being caught, shamed, and humiliated, Leo, confides how sixty years later, he still carries the haunting silent burden of guilt towards his wife:

> Es ist bis heute meine schwerste Schuld, ich habe mich für eine kurze Reise kostümiert, bin mit einem leichten Koffer in den Zug gestiegen und nach Graz gefahren. Von dort habe ich eine handgroβe Karte geschrieben: Liebe Emma, Angst kennt kein Pardon. Ich komme nicht wieder. Emma kannte den Satz meiner Groβmutter nicht. Ich habe den Satz zurückgegriffen und ihm auf der Karte das Wort NICHT beigefügt, damit auch sein Gegenteil hilft. (291)

For Leo, “Ich komme nicht wieder” is the sentence that would put an end to his marital deception, the *Scheinehe* he gave into for the sake of normalcy. Yet these last words addressed to Emma also form the sentence that would put an end to his false identity. Loaded with meaning, the words written here refer to the earlier sentence: “Ich weiβ, du kommst wieder” (8). These words, spoken to him by his grandmother on the night of his deportation, comforted him and helped him find the necessary resilience needed to overcome the inhuman sufferings he incurred during his five years spent in the *Lager*. Accompanied by the negation “NICHT”, these reclaimed words now spoke for Leo’s broken relationship with Emma, as well as for his definitive breakup with *Heimat*. Thus,

although negative in form, the sentence “Ich komme nicht wieder” remained deceptively positive in their intent. When Leo confesses: “Ich habe [dem Satz] das Wort NICHT beigefügt, damit auch sein Gegenteil hilft,” (291) he reveals how the sentence no longer stood for his hope of a homecoming to the *Heimat*, but rather for his need to escape a world of fear, lies and deceit he came to associate over and over again with the traditional notion of Heimat and the dictatorial Romanian state.

Chapter 3: *Der Schein trügt nicht mehr*

3.1 From *Heimatlos* to *Heimatsatt:* Rejecting the Deceptive *Schein* of *Heimat* in *Atemschaukel*

> *Alle Heimatsatten machen hier ihr Leben, aber jedem fliegt es davon. Alle schauen ihm nach, allen schillern die Augen wie Broschen aus Achat, Smaragd oder Bernstein. Auch auf sie wartet eines Tages früh oder bald oder spät Eintropfenzuvielglück.*
> (Müller, *Atemschaukel* 285)

In *Atemschaukel*, the denial of shelter and warmth by the home and the homeland provoke the emotional unraveling of Leo's relationship with *Heimat* during his time in the *Lager*. It is during his time of confinement in the *Lager* that Leo replaces the sense of displacement he felt prior to his deportation by a new, equally disheartening sense of abandonment and betrayal exerted by both his parents and the Romanian state. After accumulating various instances of *Heimatlosigkeit* through physical and emotional alienation during his time of deportation, Leo becomes ever more skeptical and cynical towards the notion of *Heimat*. His cynical skepticism, however, turns to saturation once he is liberated from the *Lager* and returns to his home and homeland. Previously *heimatlos*, Leo is now *heimatsatt* (285), a concept antipodal to *heimatlos* and which emphasizes a nauseating feeling of disconnect and oversaturation towards the false *Schein* of *Heimat*. This sense of disgust eventually provokes his definitive emotional breakup with a home and homeland that both fail to provide him with a sense of shelter and belonging. In the end, Leo's simultaneous feelings of being at once *heimatlos* and *heimatsatt* lead him to discard what little value remains of his attachment

and identification to *Heimat* following his return from the *Lager*.

However, Leo's conscious breakup with *Heimat* already takes place while still confined in the *Lager*. In the chapter "Wer hat das Land ausgetauscht," he describes how two years of confinement triggered a sudden longing for both mother and *Heimat*. While the title directly refers to Leo's incapacity to recognize and relate to his homeland that appears to have been changed for another country, the chapter's main focus lies on Leo's recollection of a dream that haunted him three nights in a row. In this dream, Leo remembers seeing the uncanny image of a white baby carriage. The white carriage is familiar, as it was once his own, yet it also appears estranged, as it had long since been converted it into a shopping cart by his father. Especially estranging for Leo was, however, the presence of a baby boy sitting in the carriage and dressed in a blue bonnet (190). In this passage, the masculine gender of the baby, stereotypically indicated by the colour blue, reinforces Leo's sense of alienation from a mother whom he fears has forgotten her first-born child and replaced him with a new baby brother.

The dream is significant in indicating Leo's relationship with *Heimat*, as it functions as a premonitory vision that leaves Leo confronted with the disheartening impression that his own family has abandoned him: "Meine Eltern haben sich ein Kind gemacht, weil sie mit mir nicht mehr rechnen" (213). In German, the verb rechnen is endowed with several meanings: to count, to reckon (*mitrechnen*), or to expect. Whether the verb "rechnen," used in the German text, means the exclusion of Leo from the family equation[28], or his parents' lack of faith in his return, the outcome remains the

[29] This interpretation would fit Bettina Bannasch's claim that "[*Atemschaukel*] deals with equations, not with comparisons" (119). This claim is contextualized later on my essay.

same. It is not so much the new addition to the family that hurts Leo, but rather the belief that he has been replaced by an *Ersatz*-brother, a conclusion he draws due to the lack of acknowledgement and maternal love manifested by his mother, whom he believes has intentionally and cold-heartedly chosen to remain emotionally distant with him during his time of confinement in the *Lager*. [29]

Hence, although it begins with Leo's undisclosed sexual orientation, Leo's crisis and eventual breakup with *Heimat* are also provoked by the chagrined relationship he has with his mother during his incarceration in the *Lager*. As pointed out earlier in this thesis, Blicke, as well as other *Heimat* scholars, have demonstrated how the concept of 'Heimat' is intrinsically connected to the mother and the 'mother country'. Leo's disconnected relationship to *Heimat* is also closely tied to both.[30] Boa and Palfreyman argue that "[w]omen […] embody [Heimat]: they are part of the package of hearth and home as the inner world at the heart of Heimat. […] Heimat connotes womb-like security and warmth. But Heimat may become claustrophobic so that sons long to cut the umbilical cord" (26). The stereotypical qualities of femininity in the conceptualization of mother, as closely interwoven with that of biological, ecological, and ethical forms of nature, become intrinsically attached to *Heimat*. Boa and Palfreyman, then, point to the crisis that can result from the excess of *Heimat*: the claustrophobic effect of restriction and repression. Leo's crisis with *Heima*t is thus twofold: he first experiences its claustrophobic effect through the fear of overabundant familiarity and surveillance, and

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[29] The issue of neglect will be discussed in Chapter 5 that will explore the issue of silence in *Atemschaukel.*

[30] A close discussion of the development of the relation between Leo and his mother during the *Lagerzeit* will follow.

yet he also feels abandoned and rejected once the umbilical cord from mother, home and homeland has been cut through his deportation. Recalling the sentiments of being *heimatsatt* and *heimatlos*, Leo's perception of mother and *Heimat* merges through contradictory feelings of oversaturation and disconnect. Before deportation, both mother and *Heimat* evoke sentiments of restriction and repression, yet during deportation they evoke feelings of betrayal and abandonment.

Leo's emotional void as a result of feeling betrayed and abandonned by mother and *Heimat* is conflated with the physical void of acute hunger during his period of incarceration in the *Lager*. For Leo, the state of suffering from acute hunger bears the name of *Nullgrenze*[31], a threshold separating life and death that revolves around the availability of food rations. Bettina Bannasch, for whom "[t]he zero sign is hunger, that ever present and all-powerful hunger of which the novel has to tell," (119) argues that *Nullgrenze* is the stage that Leo must reach, and overcome, in his strategic attempt for survival. In her essay, she claims that Leo's "[…] survival strategy [in the *Lager*] continues until 'the worst is past'" (115). At this point, I wish to expand on Bannasch's claim and suggest that the state of 'absolute zero' has implications that go beyond the paradigm of hunger, as it also affects Leo's perception of gender dynamics amongst inmates in the camp.

As the first-person narrator himself acknowledges, the *Lager* has enforced a new axiom of performativity upon its prisoners. The idealized gender performances relating to masculinity and femininity which Leo associates with *Heimat* are soon outplayed by

[31] Philipp Boehm translates the term *Nullgrenze* with "absolute zero" and, on some occasions, with "bread court" in his English translation of the novel, entitled *The Hunger Angel*.

the essential performance “1 Schauffelhub= 1 Gramm Brot” (91) that determines survival in the *Lager*. Leo remembers this shift in priorities when he recalls: “Als [Hunger] hysterisch mit uns herumlief, als die *Hautundknochenzeit* da war, als Männlein und Weiblein nicht mehr voneinander zu unterscheiden waren, wurde auf der Jama weiter Kohle abgeladen. Nur die Trampfelpfade um Unkraut wuchsen zu” (96). The “paths in the weeds” (Boehm 86) mentioned here refer to the visible trail created through the coming and going of men and women meeting in a big aluminum tube that the inmates named “Zeppelin” because of its resemblance to the German aircraft. This so-called “Zeppelin” was situated in a nearby field and served as a meeting point for clandestine sexual encounters. Once the inmates reach the *Nullgrenze* upon facing acute hunger, the paths are no longer visible as a result of the loss of sexual desire. This interruption in libidinous activity marks the end of all sexual trysts amongst inmates in the forced labour camp and bears the name of “Hautundknochenzeit” (96).

In *Facing the extreme* (2000), Tzvetan Todorov writes on the consequence of acute hunger and states: “there may exist a threshold of suffering beyond which an individual’s actions teach us nothing more about the individual but only about the reactions that unbearable suffering elicits from the human mechanism. One can be brought to that threshold by prolonged starvation, or by the imminent threat of death […]” (38-39). As Todorov points out here, extreme situations have the power to demonstrate the true nature of the human condition. The extreme state of starvation which Leo and inmates face in the *Lager* allows him to see the instinctive human values that dictate social interaction and social perception amongst inmates in the camp, as opposed to those produced and fostered by normative values in *Heimat*. As a place

deprived of *Schein* and "where everything is out in the open," (42) the camp has the effect of shifting Leo's preconceived perception of hetero-normative standards: "Denn in der Dreieinigkeit von Haut, Knochen und dystrophischem Wasser sind Männer und Frauen nicht zu unterscheiden und geschlechtlich stillgestellt" (158).

As Leo sees how starvation incurred in the *Lager* reduces human beings into gender-immobilized objects (*geschlechtlich stillgestellt*), the implications of *Nullgrenze* in the *Lager* are therefore not only about physical starvation, but are to be perceived as all-pervasive threats that also take a toll on the realms of sexuality and sexual desire. As women and men become compared to neutral, sexless objects as a result of acute starvation, gender performance appears to be at a standstill. Conversely, the gendered ideologies on which normative masculine and feminine virtues are based in *Heimat* no longer play an essential role for Leo and his fellow inmates. Leo's shift in perception in regards to compulsory hetero-normativity allows him to see through the *Schein* of *Heimat* and recognize how its discourse of gender and sexuality is one that is constructed on a moral axiom of virtue and performance.

When placing *Atemschaukel* within the nature versus nurture debate surrounding notions of gender and sexuality,[32] it appears that *Heimat* nurtures constructed norms of sex, gender, and sexuality based on a normative and ideological matrix that blindly locates heterosexual behaviour in the realm of nature. As witnessed by Leo during the *Lager*'s *Hautundknochenzeit* however, the constructed *Heimat* discourse of gender and

[32] The nurture versus nature debate pertaining to gender and sexuality opposes two distinct philosophies. On the one hand, there are those who believe in the idea that gender normativity is genetically inherited, whereas on the other hand, there are those who are of opinion that gender is a performed identity that is constructed by the influence of one's social and spatial environment.

sexual desire falls apart upon reaching the *Lager*'s *Nullgrenze* stage: "Man sagt zwar weiter Der oder Die, wie man der Kamm oder die Baracke sagt. Und so wie diese sind auch Halbverhungerte nicht männlich oder weiblich, sondern objektiv neutral wie Objekte – warscheinlich sächlich" (158). This shift appears to be directly linked to the dissolution of established norms and rules of virtue related to gender and sexuality in the *Lager* upon reaching the stage of *Nullgrenze*: "Die Nullgrenze kennt keine Paragraphen, sie braucht kein Gesetz," (114) Leo postulates, thereby further indicating the absence of laws regarding sexual activity and deviance within the *Lager*[33]. During the *Hautundknochenzeit* in the *Lager*, it appears that gender conformity takes on a secondary role. Indeed, it appears that gender is denaturalized, as women and men can no longer perform their gender roles once imposed upon them by *Heimat* society and its reverence of hetero-normativity. By extension, the social construct of hetero-normativity is also deconstructed, as masculine and feminine no longer play a normative role separating right from wrong, virtue from vice. Judith Butler notes: "Gender is not entirely what one 'is,' nor is it entirely what one 'has' […] Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms [as masculine and feminine] are deconstructed and denaturalized" (54). For Leo, the *Heimat* rules of gender and sexuality lose their significance and imminent threat upon reaching the stage of *Nullgrenze* that prompts the *Hautundknochenzeit,* as the only performance he must ensure is not one related to the nurtured construct of masculine virtue, but rather one

[33] The term *Paragraph[en]* recalls the German anti-homosexual laws known as the Paragraph 175 and 175a.

that is now related to the natural will of survival.

During the *Hautundknochenzeit* the *Lager*, the only law that counts for the inmate community is the "law of the bread" (Bannasch 139). As Bannasch states, "when faced with the plight of hunger, a burden which usually makes any form of sociability among the inmates impossible, only one kind of crime is recognized by this community, and that is the stealing of bread" (139). For inmates, this means that the relevance of all other forms of deviance are now put into perspective. Bannasch further explains that "the distinction between right and wrong [should be maintained], even if this presents itself in its most rudimentary forms as a 'senseless' act of charity (as 'bread justice'), and between those who are complicit in the totalitarian system and profit from it and those who resist such a system" (142). Bannasch makes here a distinction between inmates who are victim in the *Lager* and the guards who enact the humiliating mechanisms of deprivation in the *Lager*. The victims, those who resist the totalitarian system, defy the inhumane conditions to which they are bound and through their collective effort, they create a sense of solidarity that allows for a form of moral innocence that is not constructed on *Schein*, but one that is based on genuine solidarity and human dignity. And as Bannasch observes, this genuine form of moral innocence that comes naturally to inmates who share the plight of starvation is undermined only if the "'bread justice'" (142) is breached.

Since all inmates of the *Lager* are facing hunger together, each of them is also facing the dilemma of solidarity versus individual survival. In the extreme situation of acute hunger, Leo witnesses instances of treachery unfolding among inmates in the *Lager*. Through his capacity to see through the *Schein* of deceit, Leo witnesses how an

inmate, Paul Gast, has been stealing food from his own defenseless wife Heidrun Gast, letting her die so that he, himself, can benefit from her food rations and survive: “Die nackte Wahrheit ist, dass der Advokat Paul Gast seiner Frau Heidrun Gast aus dem Essgeschirr die Suppe stahl, bis sie nicht mehr aufstand und starb, weil sie nicht anders konnte” (230). Although victim of stolen food rations, Heidrunn Gast’s victimization and subordination as a wife and woman takes place without upheaval, as she has lost the will to survive. This is exemplified by Leo who on one occasion benefits from Heidrunn’s soup ration as a result of her refusal to eat: “Den leeren Teller schon ich zur Heidrunn Gast, an ihre linke Hand, bis er an ihren kleinen Finger stieβ. Sie leckte ihren unbenutzten Löffel ab und wischte ihn an der Jacke trocken, als hätte sie gegessen, nicht ich” (225). However, as Bannasch remarks, “[f]or if on the one hand the inmates look on passively when Heidrun Gast is dying, on the other hand they intervene decisively and in harmony with each other when the deranged Planton-Kati is about to be deprived of bread ration” (138). Through the case of Planton-Kati, a helpless mentally challenged girl who remains oblivious to the life-threatening and inhumane conditions of the *Lager*, inmates reflect on the true nature of power dynamics in times of survival and realize that the enemy is not the fellow inmate who shares the plight of hunger, but rather a foreign authority ruling over an underground community bound together by collective confinement. Leo himself also reflects on what he calls the “bread trap” (Boehm 112), a consequence of the inmates’ self-imposed “Brotgesetz,” and points out: “Jeder tappt die Brotfalle. Aber aus dem Wangenbrot der Planton-Kati darf niemand sein Eigenbrot machen. Auch dieses Gesetz gehört zum Brotgericht” (122). As Leo underlines here, solidarity in the *Lager* functions as a law that protects those who

are weak and defenseless. In the *Lager*, Planton-Kati is neither oppressed, nor marginalized for being mentally challenged. On the contrary, inmates make it their moral duty to include and protect her. Through such instances of humanity witnessed in the *Lager*, Leo reflects on *Heimat* and its moral discourse of virtue based on the *Schein* of homogeneity and normative conformity. The *Lager-Heimat* dichotomy that is dissolved by Leo's own contradictory experiences as an individual who feels rejected and threatened at home, as opposed to feeling included and accepted in the *Lager*, makes Leo question the true nature of his relationship with *Heimat*.

The existential question that Leo then asks himself in relation to the *Heimat* construct implies the acknowledgement of his true sense of belonging to the *Lager* community: "Waren Heimfahren und Hierbleiben überhaupt noch Gegensätze?" (163) The association he makes is provocative, as *Lager* usually stands for a place of complete alienation and destruction, just as the idea of home usually evokes a comforting sense of security and shelter. As suggested in the case of Planton-Kati, the nuance, here, may lie in the fact that Leo distinguishes the underground solidarity of his inmates from the pernicious conduct of *Lager* administrators. The distinction between the inmates he trusts and the administrators that he mistrusts becomes evident each time Leo returns from his work shifts in the fields back to the *Lager*. Yet despite being aware of this distinction, he remains fearful and distrustful throughout his time of incarceration in the forced labour camp. Looking back in time, Leo now sees how he was deceived by the preconceived roles he initially associated with both *Heimat* and *Lager*. Whereas the *Lager* was perceived to enforce shame, humiliation, and mistrust through starvation and forced labour, *Heimat* was perceived to harbour a sense of a

sense of community, as well as a sense of innocence, shelter, and trust. Leo's preconceived notions of both places give way to an ironic twist, namely the reversed sentimental value of *Heimat* and *Lager*.

It is while still incarcerated in the *Lager* that Leo becomes aware of how his five years of deportation have cut the umbilical cord that connected him to the three seemingly inseparable socially constructed imaginaries that are mother, family and *Heimat.* It is at this stage that Leo realizes that he is truly *heimatlos*. From Leo's point of view, however, it is not he who has chosen to cut ties with his mother and family, but rather they who have cut ties with him. As a result, his relationship to mother, family and *Heimat* becomes hostile. This hostility, but also the emotional detachment and self-sufficiency that results from it, is precisely what enables his survival for his remaining time in the camp.

Leo's stoic behaviour also accompanies him once he is set free and allowed to return to his homeland. Liberated from the *Lager*, Leo soon realizes that there can be no such thing as a 'homecoming' to a place of non-belonging; to a mythical and illusionary place that never was. Back to his native household and hometown, Leo develops a sentiment of disgust towards the notion of *Heimat*. This sentiment of disgust leaves him feeling *heimatsatt.* In other words, the conflated feelings of rejection and saturation confirm the build-up of an emotional rupture separating him from mother, family and *Heimat*. Leo's disgust of *Heimat*, however, also alludes to the malaise he feels when witnessing the overabundant comfort of those who have not shared his traumatic experience of starvation. *Heimatsatt*, Leo now longs for the "mageren Winter" – the "lean winters" (Boehm 86) he associates to the unlikely and unforeseen sense of

belonging acquired through instances of solidarity experienced during his five years spent in the *Lager*. Hence, the *Lager* has, both emotionally and physically speaking, become a 'replacement' for *Heimat*. For there, the inmates bound together by the shared genuine plight of loss and suffering provided Leo with an unexpected comforting sense of unity and belonging that helped compensate for the genuine feelings of displacement incurred in the so-called *Heimat*; a false idyll he now associates with *Schein*.

No longer blinded by the *Schein* of *Heimat*, Leo now sees how the instances of true companionship and solidarity he witnessed in the *Lager* clearly outshine the constructed and normative virtues of *Heimat*. As a result, Leo does not experience *Heimweh* for a *Heimat* that never was, but rather a form of '*Lagerweh'* for the comforting sense of community and belonging he once found in the forced labour camp. In his chapter on "Heimat and Concepts of Identity," Blickle observes: "If we understand *Heimweh* as a longing to return home not only to one's house – which is usually not all that is missed – but also to the social situation left behind, then *Heimweh* becomes *Heimatweh*" (*Heimat* 68). What Blickle makes here is a nuanced distinction between the localized longing for 'home' and the longing of a social situation that can remain independent from specific locality - and therefore better reflected through the imaginary concept of *Heimat*. Here, I argue that Leo's *Heimweh* indeed does not read as the longing for his actual home and homeland, which are places from which he remains estranged, but rather as the longing for the social situation he experienced in the *Lager*: an enlightening lesson of humility and humanity he still carries with him, sixty years later.

Leo's unforeseen sentiment of longing for a preconceived place of displacement, confinement and oppression shows how personal emotions can defy normative perceptions entrenched in social constructs, as exemplified in Leo's rejection of *Heimat* and nostalgic longing for the *Lager*. Reflecting on his counterintuitive *Heimweh*, Leo ponders: "Es gibt Wörter, die machen mit mir, was sie wollen […] Sie fallen mir ein, damit ich denke, es gibt erste Dinge, die das Zweite schon wollen, auch wenn ich das gar nicht will. Heimweh, als ob ich es bräuchte" (232). The passage here shows how Leo is reliving the desire to escape from *Heimat*, even if this longing for escape evokes nostalgia for his years of confinement in the *Lager*. Leo's longing for the *Lager* resonates with Svetlana Boym's interpretation of what it means to belong somewhere and to feel at home. She states that "[t]o feel at home is to know that things are in their places and so are you; it is a state of mind that doesn't depend on an actual location" (251). While Boym's claim emphasizes *Heimat*'s problematic interrelation with an actual location and its dependence on an "idealization of a home ground" (Blickle, *Heimat* 158), it also helps to elucidate the roles associated with *Heimat* and *Lager* in *Atemschaukel.* Since Leo paradoxically longs for a place and time associated with near-death starvation, he also underlines the role which shared traumatic experience and solidarity plays in sentiments of longing and nostalgia. By insisting that his object of longing is not *Heim* (home), but rather the "sense of intimacy with the world" (Boym 251) he once found in the *Lager*, Leo also implicitly argues against the specific spatial location of *Heimweh*, thereby rejecting *Heimat* as a socially constructed entity rooted in a "Blut und Boden" myth.

As a son who has been repeatedly at odds with his mother, family and *Heimat*,

Leo's finding of "intimacy with the world" in the community of the *Lager* inevitably redefines his own notion of identity. According to Margaret Littler, identity, "is a retrospective notion; it is not built upon separation and domination, but made up of the map of where one has already been, an 'inventory of traces'" (39). Littler's definiton corresponds to a new, non-traditional and therefore redefined idea of *Heimat* that has emerged since 1990 and which proposes a more fluid and inclusive discourse related to questions of identity and belonging ever since the "spatial turn" that re-questions the role and influence of space in the humanities. This definition also allows for a better understanding of potential inversions, paradoxes, and unexpected equations that might surface when dealing with the anti-traditionalist notion of *Heimat* that emerges in *Atemschaukel*. Indeed, Littler's observation helps identify Leo's own "inventory of traces" in the novel. In the chapter "Von den Schätzen," Leo explains: "Kleine Schätze sind die, auf denen steht: Da bin ich. Größere Schätze sind die, auf denen steht: weißt du noch. Die schönsten Schätze aber sind die, auf denen stehen wird: Da war ich" (289). The dearest treasures are hence to be found in Leo's memories of a place to which he belonged, with which he identified, and of which he can say: "I was there". When considering Leo's acknowledgment: "Ich weiß seit 60 Jahren, dass meine Heimkehr das Lagerglück nicht bändigen konnte," (248) it becomes clear that "I was there" alludes to the inventory of traces he still carries with him through the rejection of *Heimat* and the remembrance of the *Lager*; haunting but nevertheless precious memories that continue to provide him with bittersweet reminiscences of hardships, humility and solidarity.

3.2 The Unpredictable *Schein* of the City in *Reisende auf einem Bein*

> *Östlich überwacht bis zum Geht-nichtmehr oder westlich frei bis zum Verzweifeln an der Richtungslosigkeit der Freiheit.*
> (Müller, "Ist aber jemand" 156)

Like in *Atemschaukel*, Müller's earlier novel *Reisende* portrays the process of emotional and physical detachment from a place of surveillance and confinement.[34] However, the issue here is not deportation, but rather the selfdetermined experience of exile. The novel revolves around Irene and the hardships she encounters through the various stages of migration. Once ostracized by the *Staatsheimat* and its "Diktator," (25) Irene's sense of displacement appears to continue in exile once she sets foot in West Germany. "[V]ertrieben" (25) from her native home and homeland, Irene now finds herself uprooted and exposed to a new, unpredictable reality that initially overwhelm both her physical and emotional senses. Her fear of the unknown, which now stands in contrast to the intrusive familiarity of the dictatorial 'Marionettentheather' she fled from, now provokes an estranged gaze; a *fremde Blick* that stems from the emotional scars incurred in the Romanian state as a result of surveillance, tyranny and perpetual deceit. Used to the fixed and prescribed role assigned to her through the dictates of dictatorship, Irene becomes disorientated by the improvised role she must adapt to in the West, and especially in the Kaleidoscope[35]-like city of West Berlin; a new stage of

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[34] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novel *Reisende*.

[35] In *Die komplexe Stadt : Orientierungen im urbanen Labyrinth* (2009), sociologist Frank Eckardt compares the urban space of a city to a Kaleidoscope and justifies his comparison by explaining:

life that eventually grants her mobility, diversity and unpredictability, thereby awakening her senses and putting an end to the lethargic life she lead in “dem anderen Land” (25).

As she waits for “den Paβ” (14) that will allow her to flee the oppressive conditions she faces in “dem anderen Land,” (25) Irene glares at the topography of surveillance and confinement surrounding her: “[Z]wischen den kleinen Dörfern unter Radarschirmen, die sich in den Himmel drehten, standen Soldaten. Hier war die Grenze des anderen Landes gewesen. Die steile Küste, die halb in den Himmel reichte, das Gestrüpp, der Strandflieder waren für Irene das Ende des anderen Landes gewesen” (7). The reference to the monitoring system composed of *Radarschirme* and *Soldaten* evokes a parallel comparison with Müller’s essay “Wenn etwas in der Luft liegt, ist es meist nichts Gutes,” in which she describes the stress of living under constant surveillance and authoritarian rule. It is also in this text that Müller brings to light the emotional burden endured by victims of political oppression who have suffered the fixed and prescribed policies of totalitarianism. In her essay, Müller explains: “Im Falle von

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“Kaleidoscop bezeichnet im Griechischen ‚Schönheitsbilder’ und stellt ein optisches Gerät dar ; metaphorisch wird der Begriff für bunte und vielschichtige Zusammenhänge benutzt, die sich nicht auf einen Nenner bringen lassen. Die Stadt als Objekt der Forschung ist zweifelsohne ein solcher schillernder und widersprüchlicher Gegenstand, der sich einer schnellen und eindeutigen Beschreibung entzieht. [...] Das Kaleidoscop ist [...] erfunden wurden, um die doppelte Strahlenbrechung (Brechung von Licht und Prismen) und die Polarisation von Licht [...] zu untersuchen. Licht und Stadt stellen gleichermaβen erhebliche Herausforderungen dar, um sie als Gegenstände zu beschreiben und abzugrenzen” (Eckardt 15). The comparison of the city with colouration and light anticipates the discussion that will follow in Chapter 4: *Heimat* Space as *Widerschein*, in which I explore the interrelaled imagery associated with objects and places, as well as colouration and light in my readings of selected works by Müller.

politischer Verfolgung […] gehört [diese Angst] zu einem selbst, fertig eingeschlichen in alle Augenblicke, lasziv gestreckt begleitet sie alles, was man denken kann" ("Luft" 187). For Müller, this type of fear belongs to what she calls the "LANGE Angst [die] gröβer wird als man selbst, daβ man ihr gehört, nicht mehr jemand sein kann, der Angst hat, sondern jemand geworden ist, den sich die Angst genommen hat" ("Luft" 187). The assumption that fear adopts agency, so that it is not the individual that feels fear, but rather fear that colonizes the individual, remains the most troubling consequence of *Staatsheimat* tyranny for Müller. In her essay "Die Anwendung der dünnen Straβen", she writes: "Ich hatte keine Angst mehr, ich gehörte ihr" ("Anwendung" 110). The consequences of fearing the threatening familiar and the unexpected unknown are behind Irene's double form of impediment while waiting for her exile: the familiar "LANGE Angst" of the dictator that already inhabits her, and the "KURZE, unerwartete Angst, die spurlos weggeht, wenn ihre Ursache verschwunden ist" ("Luft" 187) that captures her fear of the unknown that awaits her abroad.

Whereas fears incurred in the *Staatsheimat* remain fixed, familiar and predictable, the idea of migrating to a new and uncertain reality provokes feelings of the nauseating unknown for Irene, who imagines herself falling adrift in a new and unfamiliar territory. As she anticipates the tide of change that will bring a wave of estrangement and displacement upon her, Irene stands "[a]n den Treppen der Steilküste, wo Erde bröckelte" (7) and stares at the Black Sea coast of the *Staatsheimat*. Looking out onto the coastal margins of the Romanian state, it appears as though Irene imagines herself in unchartered seas abroad. Haines points out that for the landlubber, the coast usually stands for openness, infinity, perhaps danger" (Haines,

"Boehmen" 7), whereas for the sailor, it "signals geographical certainty, orientation and safety" (ebd). When applied to *Reisende*, one could argue that of the two, Irene initially embodies the first, rather than the latter, as she dreads the harsh process of adapting to the unknown upon setting foot in exile. As an oppressed citizen of dictatorship, her everyday existence was up to this point entrenched in totalitarian reality. As she faces the possibility of losing all point of reference abroad, the narrator reveals how Irene feels "zum ersten Mal das Wegflieβen des Wassers weit draußen näher als den Sand unter den Füβen"(7). Whereas "das Wegfließen des Wassers weit draußen" evokes Irene's hope of a migratory path towards escape, the "Erdrutschgefahr" (7) warning perched on the edge of the cliff reminds Irene of her impending danger as a dissident of the state, so too does the sign warn Irene of the risk of falling adrift in a sea of new and unpredictable possibilities abroad.

Shortly before her departure, Irene's fear of the unknown is momentarily appeased once she meets Franz, a drunken German tourist whom she meets at a café and with whom she begins an affair. Subconsciously, Irene's short-lived romance with Franz appears to provide her with the illusion of anchoring and stability amidst a disorientating state of anticipation and uncertainty. As such, Franz also embodies the hope of change for Irene, who until this point, submissively and routinely gave herself to voyeuristic trysts that took place clandestinely on the Black Sea coast with an anonymous exhibitionist. Her desire to join Franz and establish a steady romance with him is significant, as it is what propels her to launch the necessary procedures to migrate to Germany and move away from existential torpor under the state's dictatorial grip. Irene, it seems, falls victim to the enticing *Schein* of a romantic ideal by seeking to

associate herself with Franz.

At this point, she still finds herself in the fixed mind-set of the authoritarian state, and continues to perceive her reality through black and white dichotomies. She believes that aligning herself with Franz will ensure her escape from the past, secure her process of integration abroad, and eventually allow her to appreciate "the glittering prize of capitalist freedom" (McGowan 68). What she does not yet anticipate behind the illusionary *Schein* of romance is how Franz is luring her into a vortex of disorientation and misunderstandings. Accordingly, her much anticipated romantic reconnection with Franz never really takes place. Upon setting foot in Germany at the airport, Franz already fails Irene's expectations by not showing up to greet her. Instead, Irene is welcomed by the face of tyranny itself, as the first man she sets eyes on eerily resembles the Romanian "Diktator" (24) she just fled from. What is more, Franz does not show up and sends his friend Stefan to pick up Irene in his place. Feeling betrayed, Irene eventually drifts away from Franz and becomes drawn to his friends Stefan and Thomas. Yet, they too, do not provide her with a sense of grounding, but also contribute in making Irene feel debilitated by the vicious circle of deception.

Each in their own way, Franz, Stefan and Thomas all push Irene deeper into a downward spiral of bafflement and uncertainty. Entangled in crippling relationships, Irene is bereft of a sense of direction and remains, at this point, with neither a sense of belonging, nor an end destination in sight. Eke develops this argument by claiming that:

> Irene [wird] von den drei Männern, mit denen sie sich einlässt, gleichermaβen verraten – von dem Studenten Franz, der ihre Sehnsucht nicht erfüllt, von dem Homosexuellen Thomas, der mit ihr schläft, ihre

> Intimität aber verrät, und von dem Soziologen Stefan, der ihr dieses Verhältnis aus Eifersucht zynisch vorhält und ihre Gesprächsbasis zerstört. (90)

Here, Eke sheds light on the emotional impact associated with all three failed relationships. He does so by associating distinct characteristics to each of the three men with whom Irene develops emotional ties, and who each in their own way leave her 'all at sea' and further astray. To begin with, he associates the character of Franz with a romantic love story that remains unfulfilled. For Irene, the relationship she fails to anchor with Franz makes her feel an emotional void of an unfulfilled "Sehnsucht" (Eke 90). In the same line of reasoning, Thomas' demeanour, Eke claims, is associated with betrayal, as he robs her of her intimacy. He then finally associates Stefan's deceptive demeanour towards Irene with jealousy: "Eifersucht". Irene, Eke argues, remains 'entfremdet' through these three different forms of deceit.[36] The distinction between the betrayal incurred through Irene's relationships and those encountered in Ceausescu's Romania are brought to light when Eke's above-mentioned observations are paralleled with Irene's own reflections on the distinct colour bands of the Romanian flag. Pointing to the flag's red, blue and yellow colours, Irene recalls: "Als ich klein war […] hab ich immer gehört, daβ die Liebe rot ist, die Treue blau und die Eifersucht gelb. Damals habe ich die Welt verstanden" (163). As those colours no longer define the realms of

[36] This evokes Peter Blickle's argument that "[The traditional gendered idea of Heimat's] power extends to notions of alienation (Entfremdung), which can be understood in its widest sense as an experience of separation from a Heimat space" (Blickle, "Gender" 57). Irene's alienation (Entfremdung), a mixture of the familiar and foreign, is made visible through Irene's compound sense of acquaintance and displacement, which recalls here once again Freud's idea of the uncanny.

love, fidelity and jealousy, Irene is left disoriented by a lack of cultural reference that leaves her inhibited by a blur of emotions; “bunte und vielschichtige Zusammenhänge [...] die sich nicht auf einen Nenner bringen lassen” (Eckardt 15). This emotional blur, however, is distinct from the political blurs she used to encounter in the dictatorship. Referring to the latter, Gail Kligman associates political forms of blurriness to “the state’s intrusion into private life” and to the implied “blurred boundaries between public and private spheres of everyday life [that defined] relations between citizens and the state” (34). Nevertheless, a link between the emotional blurs encountered abroad and the political blurs left behind in the dictatorship can also be observed. Indeed, when Irene refers to the three colours of the Romanian flag before exclaiming “damals habe ich die Welt verstanden,” she incidentally also refers to the state and its obstructive intrusion into her own, private and emotional sphere. For Irene, who in exile is seeking to unshackle herself from political tyranny, the consequence of no longer being able to rely on prescribed emotional certainties leaves her without predictable points of references. From this perspective, her relationships with Franz, Thomas and Stefan each metaphorize her incapacity to see through Western society and its world of unpredictable realities; a hindrance she herself acknowledges when she explains:

> In dem anderen Land, sagte Irene, habe ich verstanden, was die Menschen so kaputtmacht. […] Es hat sehr weh getan, täglich die Gründe zu sehn. [...] Und hier, sagte Irene. Ich weiβ, es gibt Gründe. Ich kann sie nicht sehn. Es tut weh, täglich die Gründe nicht zu sehn. (138-39)

Now abroad, Irene recalls how she was able to see through instances of corruption and duplicity that were part of her everyday life in a state of oppression and surveillance.

Whereas the reasons for misery and discontent in Ceausescu's Romania were clear, Irene appears unable to decipher the reasons causing Franz, Thomas and Stefan to feel anxiety and melancholia, which leaves her entangled in an emotional pattern of misunderstandings. Her incapacity to settle down and build a solid and mutual relationship with Franz, Thomas and Stefan reflects this.

It is only once Franz visits Irene in Berlin that she is able to see through the *Schein* of unpredictability. As the narrator explains, Franz lashes out and complains to Irene about the lack of parking lots available on the streets of Berlin: "Franz fand keinen Parkplatz in der Straβe. Er zerrte am Lenkrad und beschimpfte die Stadt. Er beschimpfte die Stadt, in der Irene lebte, und sah Irene an [.] Da sich die Stadt verweigerte, brauchte er den Staat" (124). Through her estranged gaze, Irene sees how Franz verbally abuses the city (the feminine *Stadt*) because the city deprives him of space (der Parkplatz) and control. This gives Irene the impression that in order to be satisfied, Franz needs the more familiar and traditional order of the state (the masculine *Staat*). In her reference to this passage, Paola Bozzi highlights the discrepancy taking place between Irene's rejection of the state, and Franz' rejection of the city by explaining: "Irene [bleibt] skeptisch gegenüber einem egozentrischen Begriff von nationaler Identität, da sie die negativen Aspekte der nationalen Identität unter einer Diktatur erlebt hat" (124). This, Bozzi argues, explains why Irene has no sympathy for Franz and his frustration with the city, as well as why Irene finally retorts: "Wo trägst du es, dein Vaterland, wenn es plötzlich gegen deinen Willen da ist" (ebd). The difference in perception in regards to spatial identity points out once again to Irene's sense of disorientation in a new and unpredictable world.

For Irene, the *Staatsheimat* was “ein Bühnenbild für das Verbrechen” (31). Now in exile, she does not know what to expect behind the unfamiliar and unpredictable stage setting of the West. This becomes especially evident when Irene undergoes an interrogation at the “Bundesnachrichtendienst,” (27) a federal interrogation centre. There, a civil servant summons her with the purpose of investigating her suspected connections to the *Staatsheimat*’s secret service, Romania’s *Securitate*. While she awaits her interrogation, Irene observes how the “Vorhang [sich] bewegte” (27). Experiencing a moment of déjà vu, the “Vorgang” reminds Irene of interrogations she endured behind the iron curtain in her native Romania; a thought that leaves her to ponder on her own performative role as a monitored and summoned subject. Thus, when the German immigration officer asks her: “Hatten Sie vor Ihrer Übersiedlung jemals mit dem dortigen Geheimdienst zu tun,” (27) Irene cynically replies: “Nicht ich mit ihm, er mit mir. Das ist ein Unterschied” (27). The difference for Irene is that her connections to the *Securitate* were not those of an informant, but rather those of a victim caught under the spotlight of a *Marionettentheater* orchestrated by the *Securitate*. Although Irene is now physically “lostgelös[t]” (7) from the grip of the *Securitate,* facing scrutiny in Germany by immigration officials reminds her of her past. Yet once another state official later asks her “Haben Sie Heimweh,” (55) she retorts by a firm and consequent “Nein”. When the man further enquires: “Denken Sie nie zurück,” (55) Irene acknowledges and replies “Sehr oft” (ebd). Seeing the man puzzled, Irene clarifies: “Sie haben Heimweh gesagt,” (55) thereby underlying how being haunted by the past does not imply the nostalgic longing of *Heimweh*. In the same line of reasoning, Irene rejects the notion of *Heimatlosigkeit*, as she does not long for a sense of *Heimat* she never had

to begin with. Therefore, when an Italian man tells her “Ich bin heimatlos,” Irene retorts: “Ich bin nicht heimatlos, nur im Ausland” (65).

In an article entitled “Diesseitige Wut, jenseitige Zärtlichkeiten”, that was published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 2011, Müller warns against the deceptive *Schein* of *Heimweh*, when she states: “Diese Heimat bleibt der intimste Feind, den man hat. Man hat alle, die man liebt, zurückgelassen. […] Aber das bittere Glück ist schlau – es verwechselt absichtlich Heimweh mit Heimwehlosigkeit” (“Diesseitige Wut”). Although she claims not to have *Heimeh*, Irene is soon baffled by the sudden, unpredicted realization that she might simply be repressing her *Heimweh* now that she is “losgelöst” in the West: “Auch einen zweiten Verdacht hatte Irene. Daβ sie das Heimweh klein und versponnen hielt im Kopf, um es nicht zu erkennen. Daβ sie ihre Wehmut, wenn sie aufkam, unterwanderte. Und auf ihre Sinne Gebäude aus Gedanken stellate, um sie zu erdrücken” (68).

No longer in Romania, Irene now finds herself on a foreign stage, unsure of emotions she feels and the role she must perform while she awaits German citizenship. This is exposed in the passage immediately following her interrogation. Leaving the “Übergangsheim,” Irene reflects on her new condition as “eine Ausländerin im Ausland;” (65) a condition that leaves her feeling alienated and unable to be categorized: “Keine Rubrik hätte mich beschreiben können, dachte Irene” (29). This existential ambiguity, however, leaves her experience a certain lightness of being. Upon leaving the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, “Irene schaute mit kleinen Augen in die Neonschrift der Stadt, in den flimmernden Kanal der Straβenkreuzungen, in die verlorenen, kurzen Straβen. Irene lachte stumm” (29). This unforeseen sense of pleasure as a result of

seeing her senses awaken is made even clearer in another passage, in which Irene indulges in the unpredictable joys she experiences in the city:

> Irene überquerte die Straβe bei Rot. Lief knapp vor den Autos her. Atmete rasch, hatte sowohl das Gefühl, sich in Lebensgefahr zu begeben, als auch sich das Leben zu retten. Weder tot noch lebendig, dachte Irene. Es war fast Freude. An manchen Tagen verlieβ Irene das Haus, als wäre sie auf einen Unfall vorbereitet. (171)

Although Irene anticipated the unknown with fear, she now appears enthralled by the sudden sense of freedom she discovers in the city of Berlin; a city stage that allows her to defy the forbidden, and which exposes her to a space of fluidity, arbitrariness, and chromatic change. This change is visible when Irene strolls around the city, thereby gazing at stores, gas stations and parks that create a nonchalant, polychromatic environment:

> Die Einkaufswagen blinkten neben dem Ausgang […] Vor der Ladentür Gemüse. Über den Orangen und dem Blumenkohl flirrte das Licht. Irene hatte den Eindruck, daβ in diesem Licht Salat, Zitronen und Champignons zusammenflossen und Blumen bildeten. […] In der Mitte des Parks lagen Leute auf bunten Tüchern. Sie waren nackt und hatten die Augen geschlossen. Wenn sie den Arm oder das Bein oder eine Falte im Gesicht bewegten, war es ohne Absicht. […] Hinterm Park lag die Tankstelle. Über dem Dach stand: Tag und Nacht. Die Wände waren aus Glas. Werbung, löwenzahngelb und kein Auto im Mittag, kein Mensch. (115-16)

Beyond the pallet of colours formed by the fresh produce in the grocery store and the

colourful towels used by sunbathers in the park, the passage also brings forth manifestations of freedom; a new and unfamiliar reality which Irene witnesses around her in the city. This is exemplified by the naked people who Irene sees sunbathing in the park and who are free to carelessly move their limbs "ohne Absicht" and as they please. For Irene, this form of liberty was unconceivable in "dem anderen Land". Furthermore, the opening hours of the gas station bearing the name "Tag und Nacht" make Irene realize that the gas station offers a twenty-four hour service. Reflective of a capitalist economy, these business hours facilitate the access to an available commodity, a favourable condition that stands in stark contrast with the frequent and duplicitous "Benzinkrise[n]" that hindered the general population's access to petrol in the corroding and corrupt country from which Irene chose to flee.[37]

Although overwhelming at first, the city eventually provides Irene with "Erregung, die [sie] durch die Straβen trieb" (75). Berlin, then, even provides Irene with a certain lightness of being: "Die Schritte waren ungleichmäβig, aber leicht" (75). Unlike a smaller provincial town like Marburg, which Irene discovers when visiting Franz, Berlin provides her with awakening unpredictability and "Freiraum für neue Gedanken" (101). Its diversity provides room for liberty and unpredictability. This is further exemplified in a

[37] In *Lebensangst und Worthunger,* Müller recalls: "Es gab so eine groβe Benzinkrise im Land, man hat nur auf *Sonderscheine* (my emphasis) Benzin gekriegt. Das ging sogar ins Surreale, führte zu absurden Realitäten. Ins Theater ging zum Beispiel niemand mehr. Denn das Theater, das Repertoire, war nur Parteiprogramm. Um die Theater zu füllen, hat man die Leute geködert, zur Theaterkarte gab es auch einen Benzintankschein. Ich weiβ aus der Fabrik, daβ die Leute dann massenweise Theaterkarten kauften. Ins Theater ist trotzdem niemand gegangen, aber alle schnellstens zur Tankstelle" (10).

passage in which the narrator explains Irene's state of mind, as well as her progressive ability to guide her own thoughts while casually strolling around the city: "Wenn der Schädel stillstand, wuchs der Asphalt. Wenn der Asphalt stillstand, wuchs die Leere im Schädel. Mal fiel die Stadt über Irenes Gedanken her. Mal Irenes Gedanken über die Stadt" (63). Thoughts imposed upon Irene by the city are now giving way to Irene's own thoughts that form her perception and appreciation of the city.

Irene's need for movement and her rejection of fixity is further exemplified by the perception of displacement she experiences in the rustic city of Marburg. Marburg – the city in which Franz lives, reminds Irene of a fixated and fixating place. Indeed, as a small, provincial city, it reminds Irene of a confining setting that recalls the regressive traditions and ideals of homogeneity found in the idea of *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*. Berlin, however, provides her with "Gewißheit" and bespeaks her conception of a real "Reiseziel" (145). Accordingly, the city soon becomes the safe harbour from which she eventually refuses "an Abschied zu denken" (176). Precisely because it is geographically and ideologically 'at the margin', Berlin represents an alternative of diversity, as opposed to traditional German towns that, typical of *Heimat* constructs, often "arouse intense local patriotism" (Blicke,"Gender" 48). Unlike Marburg, West Berlin evokes room for transition, non-conformity, and diversity, urban qualities addressed in Italo Calvino's novel *Invisible Cities*, cited in *Reisende auf einem Bein*. In Calvino's novel, the protagonist Marco Polo reveals that his ideal city is "eine Stadt, die nur aus Ausnahmen, Ausschlüßen, Widersinnigkeiten, Widersprüchen besteht;" (Kristeva 79 qtd. in Bozzi 102) a stance that reflects Berlin's fragmented geo-political and demographic composition in the final stages of the Cold War, the time period in which

Reisende is set.

When compared to the *Staatsheimat* and put in relation with *Heimat* discourse, Berlin embodies a metropolitan space that recalls Elizabeth Boa's notion of a "mobile modern society or Gesellschaft," (36) which she opposes to the concept of *Heimat*. As such, Berlin proves antithetical to the concept of *Heimat*, a concept that "is often associated with rootedness in a traditional small community or "Gemeinschaft" (Boa 36). Based on Boa's observation, the difference lies in the distinction separating *Gesellschaft* from *Gemeinschaft*. Whereas *Gesellschaft* speaks for collective social experience, *Gemeinschaft*, Boa argues, speaks for the idolization of sameness. In this same line of thought, Littler postulates that "[m]etropolitan life consists of a "knot" of spatial experience, a point at which the most elementary distinction of space – the distinction between Inside and Outside, which is the very distinction between "I" and "the world" – grows weaker" (40). For Littler, Irene stands for the "city nomad," (40) further stressing that Irene is a protagonist "in whom chaotic urban diversity is intrinsic to her subjectivity, rather than that against which she identifies herself" (40). Along Littler's line of thought, I suggest that for Irene, the city encompasses a substitute for *Heimat* integration, as it does not function around borders of exclusion. Neither does the city, as exposed in *Reisende*'s portrayal of Berlin, impose a prescribed and collective form of identity upon its subject.

For Irene, the *bunt* city of Berlin becomes a space of unpredictability. It is a city that shines through its glitter, as well as through its heterogeneous and unfixed fabric, qualities recognized by Irene when she describes the city as a space composed of mobile "Menschen, die nicht mehr wuβten, ob sie nun in diesen Städten Reisende in

dünnen Schuhen waren. Oder Bewohner mit Handgepäck" (175). The observation Irene makes in association with people living in the city seems to provide an alternative to *Heimat*, thereby answering Müller's rhetorical question in her essay "Ist aber jemand abhandengekommen", in which she states:

> Bringt man sich mit aus einem Land in ein anderes, wird man oft gefragt, ob man seine "Heimat" hinter sich gelassen hat oder neu gefunden hat. Als müsste man es besser wissen als jene, die ihre Füβe nicht vom Boden weggehoben haben, als müsste das Weggehen und Ankommen etwas klären, was mit den Fuβsohlen nicht zu betreten und mit keinem Gedanken zu treffen ist. Vielleicht ist Heimat kein Ort für die Füβe und keiner für den Kopf. ("Ist aber jemand" 147)

As she is no longer tied to the dictates of a *Heimat* that is now dissolved in a floating mobility, she no longer finds herself haunted by the impression that she is standing at the edge of an unstable existence she once associated with the crumbling coast of the Romanian Black Sea. In the end, Irene is no longer threatened by the danger of "Erdrutschgefahr," (7) as she can let herself drift away into a sea of colour and plurality embodied by the eclectic and ever changing city.

Chapter 4: *Heimat* Space as *Widerschein*

> *Die erinnerte Zeit von damals und die heutige, die ja an jedem nächsten Tag auch schon erinnerte ist, streunt nicht chronologisch durchs Gedächtnis, sondern als Facetten von Dingen.*
>
> (Müller, *Der König* 130)

4.1 Placing Müller's Work in the *Spatial Turn*

The following discussion investigates how the realm of space creates a visual lens for investigating Müller's critical discourse of *Heimat* in her narratives. Building on Michel Foucault's rediscovered value of space, as well as on the *spatial turn* that has emerged since the late nineties, this chapter examines the role which objects and places, as well as colouration and light play in forming Müller's narrative landscapes across her works. Müller provides an example of how Romania's spatial landscape mirrored the living conditions of those who were trapped within its territorial and ideological borders: "Jeder für sich war eine Insel und das ganze Land noch einmal – ein nach auβen abgeschottetes, nach innen überwachtes Gelände. Es gab also auf der groβen festen Insel, die das Land war, die kleine umherirrende Insel, die man selber war" ("Insel" 160). In this passage, Müller illustrates through verbal imagery her sense of isolation and displacement in a tyrannical state that was isolated from the rest of the world, thus revealing a double form of existential detachment. In another essay entitled "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," she recalls how she felt alienated from her

social environment. She also recalls how in order to compensate for this form of estrangement, she relied on her spatial environment composed of objects and places to give sense and orientation to a life she once perceived to be bereft of logical meaning:

> Das Gefühl, in dieser Dorfkiste dem Fraβ der Gegend ausgeliefert zu sein, überkam mich genauso an zu grellen Hitzetagen im Fluβtal, wo ich Kühe hüten muβte. Eine Uhr hatte ich keine, meine Uhr war die Bahnstrecke in die Stadt. Es fuhren am Tag vier Züge durchs Tal, erst nach dem vierten durfte ich mich auf den Heimweg machen. [...] Ich aβ Blätter und Blüten, damit sie mit meiner Zunge verwandt sind. Ich wollte, daβ wir uns ähneln, denn sie wuβten, wie man lebt, und ich nicht. Ich redete sie mit ihren Namen an. (“In jeder Sprache” 12)

Although referring to her childhood perception, this passage nevertheless indicates how in Müller’s *Weltanschauung*, objects and places are not just random parts of the environment. Instead, they become personified entities that reveal an agency of their own in the spectrum of everyday life. Müller makes a clear point of this: “Orte und Gegenstände stehen nicht nur herum, sie sind ein Teil der Handlung,” (*Lebensangst* 26) thereby underlining how they are part of the broader stage of human interaction.

Before moving on to a close reading of Müller’s texts, this first sub-chapter places Müller’s oeuvre in relation to the *spatial turn*, and explores foundational theories by scholars Edward Soja and Sigrid Weigel who have put forward the importance of space as an epistemological category of investigation. This discussion also builds upon recent scholarship by Friedmar Apel and Gisela Ecker that has focused on the semiotic meaning of objects and places in Müller’s narratives. It then takes into account general

theories on colouration and light brought forth by Walter Benjamin, and looks into Beverly Driver Eddy's essay "A Mutilated Fox of Fur" (2011) that touches upon the aspect of colouration in Müller's novel *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger.* Subsequently, chapter 4.2 explores the materiality and agency of objects and places, while chapter 4.3 portrays the chromatic dimension of colouration and light found in Müller's representations of space in her essays and narratives.

Foucault insightfully pointed out that "La grande hantise qui a obsédé le XIX' siècle a été, on le sait, l'histoire" ("Des espaces autres" 752). Whereas Foucault saw the historical lens as a haunting obsession that inhibited the capacity of academic scholars to 'see differently', he also foresaw a shift in perception that would recognize the value of space as a lens through which existential questions could be answered: "L'époque actuelle serait peut-être plutôt l'époque de l'espace" ("Des espaces autres" 752). Most likely inspired by his predecessor Gaston Bachelard, another French philosopher whose foundational poetics of space appeared in his seminal work *La poétique de l'Espace* in 1957, Foucault's statement preluded a growing interest in using the epistemological category of space as a dimension to study the human condition and its relation to past, present, and future. Similar to Foucault, geographer Edward Soja brought forth new conceptions and theories related to space that lead to the *spatial turn* in the humanities. In his work *Thirdspace* (1996), he declares that:

> Contemporary critical studies have experienced a significant spatial turn. In what may be seen as one of the most important intellectual and political developments in the late twentieth century, scholars have begun to interpret space and the spatiality of human life with the same critical

> insight and emphasis that has traditionally been given to time and history on the one hand, and to social relations and society on the other. (Verso: cover text)

Like Foucault before him, Soja explains here that during the last 150 years, thinkers and intellectuals have analysed the world through the lens of history, rather than through the lens of space (Soja 243). But what is exactly meant by the notion of the 'spatial turn'? Karl Schlögel, a German historian, explains that: "Der *turn* ist offenbar die moderne Rede für gesteigerte Aufmerksamkeit für Seiten und Aspekte, die bisher zu kurz gekommen sind, zufällig oder aus systemisch-wissenschaftslogischen Gründen" (265). The term *turn*, therefore, is to be perceived as a modern expression to express the idea of shift in the way things are intellectually and scientifically interpreted and analysed. In their anthology entitled *Spatial Turn – Das Raumparadigma in den Kultur-und Sozialwissenschaften* (2008), Jörg Döring and Tristan Thielmann argue that across the humanities, specific distinctions have emerged, and this has lead to the creation of subcategories found within the spatial term, including the *topographical turn*.

The notion of *topographical turn*, perceived as less abstract in its definition, was coined by Sigrid Weigel, a scholar working in the field of German literature. Weigel's cutting edge approach binding space and literature puts emphasis on the "graphien" (Döring and Thielmann 19) found in the concept of topography. The nuance allows for a different discourse of space analysis, since "[d]er Raum ist hier nicht mehr Ursache oder Grund, von der oder dem die Ereignisse oder deren Erzählung ihren Ausgang nehmen, er wird selbst vielmehr als eine Art Text betrachtet, dessen Zeichen oder Spuren semiotisch, grammatologisch oder archäologisch zu entziffern sind" (Weigel

160). As Döring and Thielmann underline, “Graphie” (19) should not be understood “im Buchstäblichen Sinne als Schrift” (19) but rather as a kind of architecture, a permanent cultural inscription onto space through which potential activities are coded: “Orte [werden] nicht mehr nur als narrative Figuren oder Topoi, sondern auch als konkrete, geographisch identifizierbare Orte in den Blick genommen” (Weigel 158). Thus, just as space can be read through time, time can just as well be read through space. This interrelated – and sometimes interchangeable - interpretation of time and space is visible in Müller’s works, especially in her novel *Der Fasan*, where time and space are fused together in stagnation through the novel’s leitmotiv: “die stehende Zeit” (*Der Fasan* 5).

Also insightful for an investigation of space in Müller’s works is Miriam Kanne’s interpretation of spatio-temporal characteristics found within the notion of *Heimat*. In her work entitled *Andere Heimaten: Transformationen klassischer ‘Heimat’-Konzepte* (2011), she points out that the social construct of *Heimat* “scheint nur über einen Raum zu etwas Zeitlichem aufgehen zu können, da die zyklische Zeit einen Ort (der Sesshaftigkeit und Genealogie) benötigt” (171). In Kanne’s opinion, *Heimat* appears to be only able to expose time through space. In her statement, she argues that the cycle of time found in *Heimat* is deeply rooted in the spatial and ideological locus of blood and soil. In the same vein as Kanne, Gisela Ecker explores the role that objects play when conceptualizing memory and mapping space in her article “Prozesse der ‘Beheimatung’: Alltags- und Memorialobjekte” (2012). Basing her discussion on the “mitgenommenen Dinge und ihre Funktionen in den Akten der Relokalisierung” (Ecker 212), she raises the following questions “Welche Dinge […] werden an den Ort der Migration, des Exils, der

Umsiedlung, der Heimkehr mitgenommen? Welche Geschichte, Dingbiographie haben Dinge selbst?" (212) These rethorical questions brought forth by Ecker appear pertinent for an investigation of the relationship binding space, objects and places in Müller's narratives.

By first underlining the importance of questioning the biography and history of objects, Ecker reveals the deeper - and often overlooked- meaning associated with objects and personal belongings in the context of migration. In this migratory context, she argues, carried or abandoned memorabilia are inevitably connected to the paradigms of time and space. Among the literary examples she uses to support her claim, she relies on Müller's text *Herztier.* In her analysis, Ecker argues that *Dinge* (things), an all-encompassing material category to which *Gegenstände* (objects) belong, are to be interpreted as complex symbols that can also stand for double meaning. On the one hand, she sees "Dinge, die den Raum strukturieren," while on the other hand, she also sees "Dinge" that turn into objects of memory and that create a "Verbindung zwischen zwei Räumen und zwei Zeiten" (214). The semiotic complexity of these "Dinge," she argues, amplifies when associated with a migratory context. For Ecker, all types of *Heimat*, be it the *Ursprungsheimat* (provenance), the transitory *Heimat* or the adoptive *Ersatz-Heimat* are all heavily impregnated with ideological fantasies of an 'imaginary homeland' (Ecker 214); a nostalgic locus that is also tied to objects. Ecker underlines that these objects oftentimes play a crucial role in the *Heimat* identity process, since "[es] lässt sich an den Dingen ein voranschreitender Prozess der Beheimatung ablesen" (215). As exemplified through the baby carriage in Müller's novel *Atemschaukel* that deals with the breakup of *Heimat*, it is often through emotionally tied

objects that a nostalgic longing for the past emerges, inhabits the displaced individual, and lingers over time and space.

In this line of thought, Ecker argues that "Alltagsdinge," everyday objects and things "die auf den ersten Blick banal erscheinen" (217) become impregnated with symbolic meaning, depending on when and where they became part of the individual's environment. In her investigation, she also stipulates that objects help construct a new quotidian life in the *Ersatz-Heimat*, a new locus of belonging that emerges first and foremost in the imaginary. However, all objects do not share the same function, and this is especially true in the context of migration. This is why Ecker distinguishes three specific categories of *Dinge*, separating them based on whether they are "nützlich," "unnütz," or "phantasmatisch" (216). In doing so, her investigation touches upon psychoanalyst Tilmann Habermas's investigation on the function of objects in situations of crisis. From a psychological angle, Habermas calls such objects and things "Rite-de-passage-Objekte," "Verlustsouvenirs," and "Übergangssouvenirs" (Ecker qtd Habermas 298-99) and further explains that:

> je mehr unterschiedliche biographische Bezüge ein Objekt auf sich vereint, umso umfassender repräsentiert es seine Biographie und um so bedeutsamer ist es der Person. Ein Ding kann also zugleich Übergangs- wie Verlustsouvenir wir auch Trophäe in einem sein. (298-99)

As exposed here, an object is infused with connotation, and the personal meaning that an object may have for the individual can shift and expand depending on the influential epistemological categories of time and space. Such a relationship is witnessed in Müller's novel *Atemschauke*l, in which Leo wonders why the objects he borrowed in the

Lager are more present in his memory than the ones he carried along with him from home into deportation:

> Kann es sein, dass ich die von zu Hause mitgebrachten Sachen eher vergessen habe als die im Lager erworbenen. Und wenn, liegt es daran, dass sie mit mir mitgekommen waren. Dass ich sie besaβ und weiter benutze, bis sie abgenutzt waren und darüber hinaus, so als wäre ich mit ihnen nicht woanders, sondern zu Hause. Kann es sein, dass ich mich an die Gegenstände der anderen besser erinnern kann, weil ich sie ausleihen musste. (*Atemschaukel* 33)

Beyond the aspect of memory, Leo's reflections also evoke the psychological and emotional significance attached to objects and personal belongings. In light of these observations, it appears as though Ecker's psychological categorization of objects provides further insight on the role which *Gegenstände* and *Orte* play in Müller's narratives. For Müller, places and things are no less the extension of a person's identity. In her interview *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, she insists on this fact by arguing that everyone defines themselves through their material possessions: "Wir definieren uns über Gegenstände," (26) since the latter have the effect of bestowing people with exterior, complementary qualities that reflect who they are. Müller develops her claim by arguing that objects are like visible external character traits that are complementary to our identity. Her argument is based on the notion that when people encounter other people for the first time, what they first see is often not the person standing next to them *per se*, but rather their personal possessions or belongings that mirror their social status and own personal stories as individuals. In this line of reasoning, Müller points out:

> Auch wenn wir andere Menschen beurteilen, die wir zum ersten Mal sehen,taxieren wir doch vom Scheitel bis zur Sohle: Was haben die an? Was steht in der Wohnung? Und wir taxieren um so genauer, je mehr wir uns ein genaues Bild machen wollen. Kleidung und Wohnung sind ein Bild von uns selbst. Auch andere Sachen, Gebrauchsgegenstände unterwegs, Autos oder Hunde. (*Lebensangst* 26)

The agency Müller grants to objects –*Gegenstände* as she calls them - also applies to places, as these defined areas of space also form the backdrop of human interaction. She further argues that places, too, become an extension of the self :

> Orte spielen mit, bei allem, was Menschen tun. [Orte] befinden sich zwischen uns und mischen sich auch in die Sache ein. Wir reagieren auf sie. Wenn sie uns stören und wenn sie uns gefallen. Und selbst wenn wir sie gar nicht extra wahrnehmen, sind sie doch in unserem Blick vorhanden. (*Lebensangst,* 26)

As Müller argues here, although *Gegenstände* and *Orte* are often taken for granted, they remain part of the stage of life and as such, they are to be perceived as silent accomplices of everyday human interaction. Accordingly, “Orte” and “Gegenstände” influence the way people interrelate with one another. In Müller’s opinion, people also react differently depending on the place they find themselves in: “Wir reagieren auf [Orte]. Wenn sie uns stören und wenn sie uns gefallen. Und selbst wenn wir sie gar nicht extra wahrnehmen, sind sie doch in unserem Blick vorhanden” (26). Yet she insists that this also applies to objects that are part of the spatial environment that form these places. Regardless of whether or not these objects are personal possessions,

and regardless of whether or not people acknowledge them, appreciate them or despise them, objects and places are nevertheless always part of a person's visual field. In other words, objects and places are always there, as part of a socio-spatial environment. As such, there is always a spatial and by extension visual dimension that is to be considered when looking into any form of social interaction.

In Müller's works, there is, however, a distinction to be made between the socio-spatial reality of the *Dorfheimat* and the one specific to the *Staatsheimat*. In his work *Zu einer Theorie der literarischen Sichtbarkeit* (2011), Friedmar Apel explores the visual dimension associated to the notion of space in German literary works. His analysis also looks into Müller's narratives, granting special attention to the role which space (*Raum*) plays in relation to the type of perception for which Müller is characteristically known, her *erfundene Wahrnehmung*. In this context, Apel notes in his chapter "Das Sichtbare der Diktatur" that the "Beschreibungen der Beziehungen zwischen Menschen" found in Müller's works "zeigen die Diktatur als Dorf und umgekehrt, denn Überwachung verengt den Raum und erzeugt zugleich eine fiktive Wirklichkeit" (171). As Apel points out here, the omnipresent surveillance found in the village evokes characteristics of dictatorship. Similarly, the dictatorship's all-pervasive control ensured through instrusive and duplicitous state policies evoke the confining narrowness and familiarity of the village. Apel's observation resonates here with Müller's own claim made in *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, in which she emphasizes that the end-effect of two different forms of surveillance found in two distinct socio-spatial entities that were the state and the village remained the same: "Aber alles hatte mit allem zu tun, auch dieses Dorf war ein Stück vom Staat" (*Lebensangst* 22). Yet although the consequences of corrupt ideologies and

pervasive surveillance were similar, distinctions separating conditions in the village and those found in the state were nevertheless visible. Such distinctions were, as argued here, found in the material and spatial components that were specific to the geo-political realities of the village and the state. As portrayed in Müller's works, objects and places are deceptive visual entities that change in meaning - oftentimes through colouration and light - depending on the geo-political (village vs city), or ideological (*Dorfheimat* vs *Staatsheimat*) spatial entities in which they are found.

To underline these chameleon-like changes found amidst objects and places, Müller relies on two interrelated chromatic dimensions that contribute in forming the fabric of space: colouration and light. Indeed, both colouration and light provide silent visual cues that help unveil the hidden meaning of objects and places in her narratives. In his fragment entitled "A Child's View of Color," (1914-1915) Walter Benjamin explains how colour and light grant life to space and materiality. Where there is life, he argues, there should also be light and colour, as the production of colour derives from the spectrum of light. Both provide individuality and character to otherwise bland and lifeless subjects, objects and spaces. As Benjamin points out:

> Where color provides the contours, objects are not reduced to things but are constituted by an order consisting of an infinite range of nuances. Color is single, not as a lifeless thing and a rigid individuality but as a winged creature that flits from one form to the next […] Color is something spiritual, something whose clarity is spiritual, so that when colors are mixed they produce nuances of color, not a blur. (50)

Benjamin's reflections on the enlightening properties of colour help expose the dark and

livid conditions plaguing Müller's characters throughout her narratives. Both colouration and light function as visual indicators used to unveil what lies beneath the surface of objects and places.

In light of Benjamin's observations, Müller's narratives portray the lack of life plaguing her protagonists who are destitute of hope; a negative state of mind mirrored through the lack of colouration and light found in their spatial environments. As Beverly Driver Eddy observes, Müller's imagery in her narratives exposes the "environmental influence or colouration" (94). Here, I wish to expand on Driver Eddy's observations by showing how where the only forms of light are presented as *Schein*, the spatial environment remains one of blandness and darkness. In Müller's narratives set in Romania, colours are neither lively nor spiritual, but rather portrayed throughout as being either livid or obscure. Here, instances of *Schein* and distorted colours do not form nuances in a Benjaminian sense of perception, but portray rather blinding and indistinct blurs deprived of life.

Focusing on objects and places, as well as on the colouration and light, which set the tone for both of these spatial entities, the following two discussions aim at exposing how objects and places and the "spiritual contours" of colouration and light are central in providing a visual dimension that allows the reader to see through deceptive *Schein* in Müller's "Landschaften der Heimatlosigkeit", as labelled by the Nobel Academy. Under the motto "Der Schein trügt," my investigation sheds light on how Müller relies on the verbal imagery portrayed through objects and places, as well as through colouration and light to lay bare instances of hypocrisy, duplicity, and tyranny found across her portrayals of *Heimat*.

4.2 Unveiling the "*trügerische Schein*" of *Heimat* Through *Orte* and *Gegenstände*

> *Ich glaube, daß die Orte genausoviel dazutun wie wir selbst. Daß wir von diesen Orten beeinflußt werden, während wir etwas tun. Von Gegenständen und Orten gleichermaßen. Orte sind auch Gegenstände. Auch ein Raum ist ein Gegenstand, auch die Leere. Sogar der Himmel ist hoch oder tief, einfarbig oder gemustert mit Wolken, starr oder mobil – also ein Gegenstand.*
>
> (Müller, *Lebensangst* 27)

This passage taken from *Lebensangst und Worthunger* exposes the crucial, if not primary role, which the spatial properties of *Orte* and *Gegenstände* play in Herta Müller's narratives. In her essays and novels, Müller grants special attention to places and objects, as both contribute in defining the environmental setting of situations that unfold before her protagonists. Throughout her narratives, Müller relies on objects and places to metaphorize the situations at hand. In doing so, she uses the spatial properties of objects and places to provide a real, material and demonstrable dimension to validate the sentiments experienced by her characters. In other words, objects and places confirm - or betray - what would otherwise remain hushed or silenced.

Already in her first work *Niederungen*, objects and places mirror the dreary reality of life in the *Dorfheimat*, and provide a visual cue for the sentiments of confinement and displacement experienced by the young female narrator. The crude and detailed descriptions of objects and places exposed in this collection of short stories provide the

reader with visual answers that help elucidate the young narrator's naïve reflections on life. In *Niederungen*, this is made especially evident in the passage in which the young narrator refers to one of her featureless dolls; a converted cob of corn that reveals the dearth of life in the village as witnessed from a child's perspective: "Meine schöne Maispuppe, mein braves stummes Kind ohne Hals, ohne Arm, ohne Beine, ohne Hände, ohne Gesicht" (22). Telling here are the positive adjectives that she attributes to a doll and which appear contradictory to the image of deficiency conveyed by the converted corncob. Because she has no throat, no arms, no legs, no hands and no face, the doll metaphorizes the objectification of women and children, as well as their lack of agency. Yet although her doll is mute, immobile, and incapacitated, the young narrator nevertheless associates its deficiency with goodness and moral virtue, as exemplified by her compliments: "mein braves, stummes Kind" (22). Ironically, the young narrator's debilitated doll epitomizes the ideal behaviour of children in her village.

In Müller's narratives, it seems that objects are not only metaphors that reflect the condition of people, but are also to be considered extended parts of the individual. In this line of thought, the objectification of people – in other words, the treatment of people as objects deprived of agency and dignity– is unveiled through the inverted phenomenon of objects that become personified. In *Niederungen*, the inversion of roles that is made visible through the objectification of people and the personification of objects is especially applicable to women, who lose all agency and dignity whenever they find themselves naked. This is made evident in the story "Niederungen," in which the young bride-to-be explains to her younger sister: "In Kleidern ist man ein Mensch, und ohne Kleider ist man keiner. Die ganze groβe Fläche Haut" (66). This biased and

predisposed gender perception appears to be a traditional belief that has been transmitted from mother to daughter in the village. In reference to *Niederungen*, Bauer observes that even if the young women portrayed in the village appear to have "overcome the Swabian mothers' traditional dresses, their 'brains' remain dressed by them as they walk obediently next to their mothers to attend funerals" ("Gender" 159). The image of dressed brains conveyed in the sentences "[die] Töchter haben die Tracht nur scheinbar überwunden […] Ihre Gehirne aber damit angezogen" (*Niederungen* 67) suggests that young women in the village are still monitored by their mothers and their traditional beliefs. Still burdened by the cloak of tradition, village "daughters" remain compliant and submissive. Through Müller's literal and metaphorical portrayal of clothing, it appears that for women, to be covered with garments is more than a material testimony of decency; it is the very foundation of their human value and identity.

As it appears that clothing – a material *Gegenstand* – is at the base of identity for women, this means that clothing also plays a role in defining the social fabric of the village. For women, the traditional wardrobe defines women's inclusion and exclusion in village society. The type of dresses women wear can indeed determine whether they belong to the village or not. For example, despite her young age, the young narrator is aware that women who are well dressed do not belong to the village, as they are simply too respectable and delicate for the village's rustic and dusty conditions. This perception is portrayed in the novel when the young narrator watches a train from the city pass through the village. She describes the scene as such:

> Manchmal waren Frauen in den Fenstern, die hatten schöne Sommerkleider an. Ihre Gesichter sah ich nie genau, aber ich wusste

> dennoch, dass sie so schön wie ihre Kleider waren und dass diese Frauen nie aussteigen würden in unserem Bahnhof, der zu klein für sie war, weil er nun einmal so klein war. Sie waren einfach zu schön, um in diesem Bahnhof auszusteigen. (*Niederungen* 84)

The passage underlines the self-depreciating attitude and the low self-esteem the young narrator has towards both her village and herself. She associates the beautiful dresses that the women wear on the train with prestige and high social rank. As the train does not stop in her village, she believes that it is because these women are simply too important and pristine to get off at the small provincial train station of her village, which she insists is simply too small to welcome such stateliness and grandeur. But what the image of the moving train also conveys is the idea of mobility and liberty associated with high social status – a privilege which stands in stark contrast to the sentiments of immobility and entrapment experienced by the young narrator who compares her village to a place of narrowness and confinement.

For the young narrator, the *Dorfheimat* is indeed a closed entity: “[es] steht wie eine Kiste in der Gegend” (*Niederungen* 100). For her, the village is a not just a place rooted in earth; it is a remote *Gegenstand*, a confining box found amidst a landscape of dirt and stagnation. In the young girl’s perception, its limits are at the boundaries of where life, portrayed through thriving vegetation, begins: “Ich gehe zum Dorf hinaus, und irgendwo mitten im Gras sage ich, hier ist der Rand. Das Feld ist nicht das Dorf, es ist was anderes. Der Rand ist keine Linie, aber es gibt ihn und er ist aus vielen grünen Pflanzen” (*Niederungen* 23). As exposed here, the spatial environment is key in determining whether one is inside or outside the limits of the village. This observation is

not only pertinent literally speaking in relation to the physical locus of the narrator, but it also metaphorically speaks for the emotional sense of claustrophobia and displacement she experiences in relation to her village. This is made visible in the following passage, in which the young narrator ponders on the lack of orientation she senses when looking at the village from the outside:

> Aus den Feldern sieht man das Dorf als Häuserherde zwischen Hügeln weiden. Alles scheint nahe, und wenn man darauf zugeht, kommt man nicht mehr hin. Ich habe die Entfernungen nie verstanden. Immer war ich hinter den Wegen, alles lief vor mir her. Ich hatte nur den Staub im Gesicht. Und nirgends war ein Ende. (*Niederungen* 23)

The young narrator's reflections clearly expose how she lacks spatial orientation in her village environment. For her, the village is as perplexing and entrapping as an endless maze. Yet this portrayal of a village that evokes a place of bewilderment and disorientation also illustrates how the young narrator feels towards the hypocritical and corrupt conditions effecting her social milieu. By means of topography and metaphor, the young narrator portrays how both her spatial and social environment leave her feeling lost and confined.

These conflated sentiments of disorientation and confinement experienced by the young narrator make her feel claustrophobic in her own village. The weight of ideologies – moral and religious – is portrayed in the village by means of material places and objects. This is made especially clear when the narrator follows the women of the village to church. In this place of worship, she suddenly finds herself under the impression of being crushed under the spatial environment surrounding her: "Die

Wände, die Bänke, die Sonntagskleider, die murmelnden Frauen fallen über mich her, und ich kann mich auch betend nicht wehren, auch nicht vor mir selbst" (*Niederungen* 59). Although she does not openly criticize the Church and the religious doctrines it stands for, her obvious malaise in relation to the surrounding spatial environment mirror her sense of displacement and confinement. Unlike the women who pray next to her, she does not see the promised path to moral salvation and remains disillusioned by the symbolism of heavens portrayed in the church: "In der Kirche ist auch der Himmel eine Mauer. Er ist himmelblau und mit Sternen besät" (*Niederungen* 58). As exposed here, the young narrator's haunting sense of confinement and displacement makes her question her reality and her scrutinizing gaze makes her see things differently. Her instincts inform her that appearances are deceptive and that the truth is to be found beneath the cloaks of sanctimony and duplicity shrouding the village and its ideological and political institutions. Unable to reconcile the ideological and moral codes of *Heimat* with the actual social and spatial conditions of the village, she remains disillusioned by the *trügerische Schein* of the *Dorfheimat*.

Müller also shows how objects and places have a non-verbal way of revealing one's background and identity in her short story "Das Land am Nebentisch" (2001). As the narrator of the story waits for her next departure at a train station café in Vienna, she observes the people sitting and waiting next to her. Her gaze sets on a man sitting alone, next to her. Through the man's demeanour, but also through his clothing and accessories, she observes how the stranger is more familiar than initially expected:

> Wie der Mann den Kopf hielt, wie er den Ellbogen auf den Tisch stützte und die Stirn an die Hand lehnte, wie er die Kaffeetasse hielt, wie seine

> Füβe unterm Stuhl standen. Sein Haar, seine Ohrläppchen. Auch sein Hemd, sein Anzug, seine Socken an den Knöcheln. Nicht das Einzelne an dem Mann war so fremd, daβ ich es kannte. Es war das Einzelne aufeinander bezogen, was sich mir heiβ hinter die Schläfen legte: die Armbanduhr und die Socken, die Hand auf der Stirn und der Hemdkragen, der Knopf an der Jacke und der Rand der Kaffeetasse, der Scheitel im Haar und der Absatz des Schuh. ("Das Land" 9)

The 'alien gaze' – the 'fremde Blick' that leaves the narrator confronted with simultaneous feelings of familiarity and estrangement is reminiscent of Müller's "HINTERSINN des zurückliegenden Landes" (*Hunger* 31). The narrator, who by staring at a stranger realizes that his demeanour and attire nevertheless appear familiar, recognizes the telling attributes of material belongings. In doing so, she unveils the symbolic meaning and to a certain extent, the memorabilia of objects and lays their "Hintersinn" bare (*Hunger* 31). By staring at the man sitting next to her and combining the various visual cues such as "die Armbanduhr und die Socken, [...] der Hemdkragen, der Knopf an der Jacke und der Rand der Kaffeetasse, der Scheitel im Haar und der Absatz des Schuh," ("Das Land" 9) she deduces that her neighbour, too, is from Romania. What was initially a mere suspicion through the visual *Schein* of outward appearance is confirmed when the man departs upon the announcement of the train departing for Bucharest: " [Der Mann] stand auf und ging" ("Das Land" 9).

The situation exposed here in "Das Land am Nebentisch" provides a visual example of how the traumatic experience of living in a totalitarian state has left its toll on the narrator, who as a consequence, has learned to see through the *Schein* of things.

This, she reveals, is what makes her see her spatial environment through symbolism and metonymy: “es war ein *Schimmer* (my emphasis) wie lauter Dinge hinter den Dingen, was mir vor den Augen stand: ein ganzes Land hing an einem Menschen. Ein ganzes, mir bekanntes Land, saβ am Nebentisch. Ich hatte es sofort wiedererkannt” (“Das Land“ 10). As suggested here, the man is not just a fellow countryman, he personifies the country and what more, he embodies the memory of the land she has left behind. Yet it is not the man himself, but rather his attire that betrays his national background. This observation is reminiscent of Müller’s claim: “Wir definieren uns über Gegenstände” (*Lebensangst* 26). For the narrator, the objects worn by the stranger sitting at the table next to hers are to be seen as “Memorialobjekte” (Ecker 223) who evoke memories of her past, but even more so as “*inalienable objects (sic)*” (Ecker 223) that are to be seen as irrevocable visual signifiers of identity. As such, they are loaded with symbolic meaning and resonate beyond the temporality of the present. What appears at a first glance to be nothing else but mere clothing and accessories worn by a stranger, unleashes a Pandora’s box of visual reminders and past memories for the narrator. In “Das Land am Nebentisch,” the clothing and accessories worn by the man betray his nationality and in doing so, they also evoke the memory of the country of origin, as made clear when the narrator transforms the man sitting at the table next to her into a metonymic “Land am Nebentisch”. Thus like people, objects and places speak for the events unfolding at the crossroads of time and space, “[…] wie wenn Nähe und Ferne übereinander herfallen und sich zerschneiden” (“Das Land” 10). Exemplified here through the text “Das Land am Nebentisch,“ this narrative proximity of the familiar and the foreign and the past and the present through objects is found

throughout Müller's works. Yet it is perhaps most predominant in Müller's novel *Der Fasan*.

In *Der Fasan*, the proximity of the domestic and the foreign is materialized through the process of migration that leads Windisch and his wife to return to the *Heimat* for a visit shortly thereafter. In this novel, several examples unveil how "lauter Dinge [stehen] hinter den Dingen" (9). Here too, objects play a crucial role in unveiling the *Schein* behind the glitter of things, and a clear example of this form of perception would be made visible through the 'shiny' and ostentatious objects Windisch and his wife bring along with them on their homecoming to their *Dorfheimat*. Their return is considered a provocation, especially for those in the village who have remained either forcefully or faithfully bound to their village roots and who now consider the couple as foreigners visiting from Germany. Indeed, although Windisch and his wife left their homeland with practically nothing but their passports, they now return to their village with goods that have the effect of flaunting their material gains and financial prosperity recently acquired in the West. This is exemplified through their new means of transportation. Although they left the village by train, Windisch and his wife have now returned by means that reflect their social ascension: "Windisch sperrt das Auto zu. Auf dem Auto glänzt ein silberner Kreis. Darin sind drei Stäbe wie drei Finger" (109). The details provided by the narrator suggest that the car in which Windisch and his wife return is a Mercedes-Benz, the German luxury brand that provides the *Schein* of capitalist success. This status symbol exemplifying Windisch's assumed prosperity stands in stark contrast to the neighbouring villagers who have remained behind. Providing a scenario of both ridicule and disparity, the narrator adds: "Ein Pferdewagen

rasselt. Die Pferde sind knochig. Der Wagen ist aus Staub" (109). Whether it is the *Pferdewagen,* or the Windisch's Mercedes that has turned to "Staub," the visible discrepancy underlines the conflict of class and culture unfolding between the Windishes who now 'travel in class', as opposed to the villagers who still rely on quasi-archaic means of transportation.

The couple's status upgrade appears, however, to be nothing more than a deceptive *Schein*. This is reflected through the clothing they wear: "Windisch und Windischs Frau gehen in einem Stoffballen. Er hat einen grauen Anzug. Sie hat ein graues Kostüm aus demselben Stoff" (109). The ironic tone exposed here through the description "in einem Stoffballen" (109) reveals how the couple presents themselves in entire bolts of the same fabric. Mirroring the belief suggesting that outward appearance stands as a symbol of inner worth, it seems that Windisch and Katharina's outward appearance is reflective of their spurious nature. An elderly woman in the village, known as "Die dürre Wilma," is aware of this hypocritical deceit: "Sie neigt den Kopf. 'Der hat einen Wehrmachtanzug an', sagt sie zum Schneider. 'Die gehen zur Kommunion und haben nicht gebeichtet'" (111). The words spoken by the "dürre Wilma" suggest that she still believes in the traditional German saying "Kleider machen Leute". Seeing Windisch and Katharina in army-grey outfits that evoke the memory of a Fascist past, she sees how the couple's new German outfits betray their actions; the immoral sacrifice that was made for the purpose of social ascension.

In line with the couple's perceived rise of social status, Eke associates Windisch and his wife Katharina's demeanour with remnants of the Nazi occupation: "Zyklisch [ist] der Epilog der Erzählung: im (für die Zurückgebliebenen) Feldgrau der Besiegten

kehren die Windischs als Besucher in der Pose des Siegers in das Dorf zurück" (87). Once victims of a stagnating, marginalizing and oppressing reality, Windisch and his wife Katharina now return to the village with what appears, in the eyes of the village's "Zurückgebliebenen," to be an almost vindictive demeanor. As such, they no longer embody the image of *Verlierer* conveyed through the Romanian saying that compares man to a large pheasant on earth. Instead, Windisch and Katharina, as new residents of West Germany, have now adopted the bragging *Prahler* attitude which Müller herself associates with the German cultural perception of pheasants.[38] Now seen by other villagers as chauvinistic Germans, the couple's matching grey outfits evoke the memory of infamous "Wehrmachtanzüge" worn by proud German soldiers that once occupied this remote German enclave.

This vindictive demeanour is also made apparent through Katharina's condescending attitude when looking at her native village. Once again, Müller uses space and materiality to convey her message. As she considers the village's "geneigten roten Dächer," Katharina comments: "'als hätten wir nie hier gewohnt' [...] Sie sagt es so, als wären die geneigten Dächer roter Kiesel unter ihrem Schuh" (110). Here, Katharina compares her native village to "roter Kiesel," red pebbles. In doing so, she not only indicates her sense of superiority towards the village which she now compares to worthless, microcosmic stones she could easily walk on, but also evokes the *Schein* of emotional rupture with her past by associating the village with a still-life portrait, an entity petrified in its temporal fixity. Now seeing her village from the outside, she no

[38] As pointed out earlier, Müller makes a clear distinction between the Romanian and German perception of pheasants: "Man sagt in Rumänien sehr oft, ich war wieder mal ein Fasan, das heiβt: ich habe wieder mal versagt, ich habe es nicht geschafft, ich bin wieder mal gescheitert. Also ist der Fasan ein Verlierer, und im Deutschen ist der Fasan dagegen ein arroganter Prahler" ("Der kalte Schmuck" 28, qtd in Müller, *Akzente* 409).

longer needs the dearth of the *Dorfheimat*, as she now has access to a greater and more prominent *Staatsheimat* idyll found in the entity of the German nation. This resonates with Boa and Palfreyman's statement in which they explain that: "[Heimat] is the notion of a linking or connecting of the self with something larger through a process of identification signified by a spatial metaphor. Heimat is, then, a physical place, or social space, or bounded medium of some kind which provides a sense of security and belonging […]" (Boa and Palfreyman 23). For Katharina, the native *Dorfheimat* is no longer an entity she looks up to, but rather a place she now looks down on with condescendence, as it has failed to provide her with a "sense of security and belonging" (23). Instead, Katharina looks up to an *Ersatz-Heimat*, which she sees in the German nation, as it evokes in her the image of a land that promises sentiments of security, rootedness and belonging.

Thus for Katharina, the dream of *Heimat* is "an achievement […] won through effort;" (23) an effort that promises material wealth and abundance found amidst long-desired objects and places. On the wake of her daughter's prostitution, Katharina does not feel the burden of remorse for having sacrificed her daughter and her own moral virtue. Instead, she is already blinded by the dream of *Heimat* and material prosperity, a dream she can already see materialize once on board the train: "Ihre Augen schauen starr und sicher. Sie sieht den Bahnhof. Untern den Dauerwellen, in der Schädeldecke, hat Windischs Frau sich ihre neuer Welt, in die sie ihre groβen Koffer trägt, schon eingerichtet" (108). Katharina's new hairdo and the material goods she carries with her in her large suitcases provide a visual dimension to the new phantasmagorical world she anticipates abroad. In other words, her '*Heimat* dream' has already come to life in

her imaginary. Yet it is also through material symbolism that Müller reveals how Katharina's '*Heimat* dream' came at the cost of corruption and deceit. She does so by turning Katharina's new green dress into a metaphor of luscious green landscapes and Amalie's victimization into a golden cross. As Katharina looks out of the train window and dreams of her new *Heimat*, the narrator underlines how "unter Katharinas grüne[m] Kleid hängt das goldene Kreuz der Halskette. Soviel Grün liegt um das Kreuz" (107). Whereas the green dress symbolizes the pristine, palpable green landscapes of an imagined and anticipated *Heimat*, the golden cross betrays the true corrupt nature of a mother who sacrificed her own daughter for the sake of social ascension.

As seen here in *Der Fasan*, colouration reveals the *Hintersinn* – that is, the hidden significance lying beneath the materiality of objects. The above-cited passage clearly underlines that in order for objects and places to accurately portray the events unfolding on the narrative stage, they also need the assistance of colouration and light, chromatic entities that set the tone and atmosphere of the events unfolding before the protagonists in their socio-spatial environment. In this perspective, whereas the silver crosses worn by the *Milizman* and the *Pfarrer* symbolize their link to corruption, so too does Katharina's golden cross. As a material good acquired on the wake of her daughter's sexual trade-off, Katharina's golden cross speaks for Katharina's reward in trading her daughter in exchange for a new *Heimat* in the West. Reminiscent of the saying "reden is Silber, schweigen is Gold", the *Milizmann*'s and the *Pfarrer*'s accountability is openly discussed and criticized by the couple: "der Pfarrer macht sie katholisch und der Milizmann macht sie staatenlos," (51) yet both Windisch and Katharina fail to acknowledge and confess their own accountability in sacrificing their

daughter for their own personal gains. Instead, they hush their treason and remain oblivious to the fact that they have made their own daughter *heimatlos*. In light of Katharina's hypocritical silence, the colour of Katharina's cross is, unlike the *Milizmann*'s and the *Pfarrer*'s not silver; instead, hers is one made of gold. Once again, Müller relies on a single object to encapsulate the situation at hand. In doing so, she not only uses the material form of the object to convey her message, but also uses the dimension of colour and light through the shiny glitter of a golden cross to confirm an instance of betrayal that would otherwise remain silenced.

4.3 On Colouration and Light, or When the *Schein* of *Heimat* Turns to Blur

> *Hier stand das Panoptikum der Sterbetage als glattpoliertes, kantiges Material. Eine Klarheit in gedeckten Farben von Dreckigweiβ über Honiggelb bis zu Dunkelbraun, Farben, die nicht mehr wanderten, sondern nur um einen Stich in sich selber dunkler wurden, statt als Landschaft zu flattern und sich zu vergeuden. Sie hatten eine stumme Beschaffenheit, eine ruhige Bestimmtheit.*
>
> (Müller, *Der König* 55)

Throughout her works of fiction, Müller describes the spatial reality of her characters as being deprived of light and colour. Be it in the *Dorfheimat* or *Staatsheimat*, archaic tradition and duplicitous corruption distort the natural colouration and light of objects and places portrayed in her narratives. Reflective of how the ideology of 'pure' morality is corrupt, it appears that whiteness is often stained. An example of this in *Niederungen* is found in the passage in which the whiteness of snow is sullied by the urine of dogs: "Drauβen glitzert der Schnee. Neben den Wegen haben die Hunde gelbe Flecken in den Schnee gepisst" (37). Another example would be the intertextual reference to the fairy-tale "Snow White" where the snow-like white cheeks of the heroine are perceived by the young narrator to be stained with blood: "Blutflecken auf dem Schnee. Schneewitchen hatte Haut, so weiβ wie Schnee, und Wangen, so rot wie Blut. Schnee mit Blut bespritzt, Schnee und Blut über sieben Bergen" (35). Thus, in her representations of a *Dorfheimat*, where black already casts shade over whiteness, it

appears that the few remaining traces of genuine colouration and light available to the un-enlightened population of the German-speaking village - a backward community that remains stuck in its black and white *Weltanschauung* – remain concealed as a result of moral and political forms of oppression.

Although the Church imposes 'black and white' doctrines upon its worshipers, it itself indulges in the visual comfort of bright and shiny colours. Accordingly, this visual privilege is only found within the walls of the Church and otherwise nowhere to be found within the spatial environment of the *Dorfheimat*. Through these bright and shiny colours found only inside the village church, the narrator depicts a case of double standards. In doing so, the young narrator also divulges an example of *Scheinheiligkeit* hiding behind the veil of religious and moral institution. The unequal access to colouration and light is also made visible in Müller's representations of *Staatsheimat* through her depictions of urban reality in Romania under Ceausescu's dictatorship. In the context of *Staatsheimat*, bright and shiny colours such as silver and gold reveal the double standard of granting material privileges to state authorities and depriving the general population of material goods. Whereas bright and shiny colours point out to the threat of surveillance and duplicity, rust and corrosion mirror the deteriorating infrastructure of a self-proclaimed modern state. Here too, the lack of natural colouration and light reveals how the Romanian state is built on deceptive *Schein* through the duplicity of ideological propaganda. Although portrayed differently in the spatial context of the *Dorfheimat* and the *Staatsheimat*, colouration and light, or the lack thereof, become non-verbal indicators of lies, corruption, and deceit in Müller's "*Landschaften der Heimatlosigkeit*".

In Müller's collection of short stories *Niederungen*, the colourless black and white

norms of patriarchy appear to set the chromatic tone of objects and places that form the spatial environment of the village. In these stories, the young narrator expresses her sentiments of disillusionment and displacement towards her *Dorfheimat,* and these sentiments are in turn mirrored through the topography of the village. Speaking for the lack of colour and light found in the microcosmic spatial entity, the young narrator describes the latter as being "flach und schwarz und stumm" (111). With its lifeless topography, the village mirrors the bland and monochromatic social reality of the people who live on its premises and who appear to be frozen in time and space: "Die Eiszapfen sind verzweigt, sie tragen groβe Spiegel in sich. In jedem Eiszapfen sieht man ein eingefrorenes Bild - Das Dorf" (44). Here, cold and livid colours leave villagers frozen in a chromatic blur. The narrator sees how the frigid ambiance she witnesses in the village comes from the rigid moral virtues imposed upon villagers; an archaic black and white way of life that appears to be frozen in time and space through tradition and religion.

Mirroring this black and white reality, the young narrator notes that when women mourn the loss of life in the village, they dress themselves completely in black. Mothers, the role models and moral authorities for young women, "ziehen sich fürs Weinen an, Schwarz von den Schuhen bis zu den Fransen der knochigen Kopftucher […]" (*Niederungen* 66). Metaphorically portraying how darkness casts shade over lightness in the village, the women incidentally wear "weiβe, gebügelte Taschentücher unterm Schürzenband […]" (47). Like their mothers, the younger women of the village also dress in black to ensure the rite of tradition when mourning the loss of villagers. The young narrator highlights the perverse burden of tradition imposed on these young women when she observes: "Die Töchter haben trotz der drückend heiβen Hitze

schwarze Kopftücher umgebunden, weil ihre Haare entweder blond oder schwarz, aber dennoch nicht schwarz genug sind, um damit zu weinen. Sie ziehen wie Scharen schwarzer Vögel" (67). Considering that these young women "ihre Gehirne [mit schwarzen Kopftüchern] angezogen [haben]" (67) to form a monochrome unity of mourning, the passage also underlines through the absence of nuanced colours how women are deprived of individuality. Although dressing in black for funerals and mourning is a fairly universal Christian tradition, Müller's ironic tone suggests that the women dressed in the same traditional black attire remain unenlightened through the collective pressure of tradition that inhibits their capacity to think as single individuals. As such, they are compared to a flock of undistinguishable black birds that form a single and united flock.

The black and white reality of women in the village also sheds light on the aspect of difference through colouration and light that is perceived to be a menace to collective unity in the village. In the village kept in darkness through its unenlightened traditions, colouration becomes a motive for stigmatization and marginalization. This form of stigmatization and marginalization is embodied in *Niederungen* by a young woman who is shunned by the rest of the community for being different than the other women of the village. Although prejudice against the young woman stems from her unknown background as a new resident of the community, her rejection and ostracization only worsen once her hair turns prematurely grey; a colour deemed unnatural for her young age: "Das Haar der Frau blieb grau, und die Leute aus dem Dorf hatten endlich den Beweis, dass sie eine Hexe war. Sie gingen ihr aus dem Weg und beschimpften sie weil sie ihr Haar anders kämmte, weil sie ihr Kopftuch anders band […]" (42). Unlike other

villagers, the young narrator sees through the deceit of traditional beliefs and refrains from judging the young woman. In doing so, she also unveils the cause behind her premature grey hair: it has lost its colouration as a result of the tragic death of her baby that was killed by a snake as it was sleeping in a basket while the young woman was hanging her laundry outside, as did other young mothers in the village. Unlike the villagers that are blinded by tradition, the young narrator sees through the deceit of normativity and appears to feel empathy for the ostracized woman. Reflective of how for Müller, “Objects und Gegenstände sind Teil der Handlung,” (*Lebensangst* 26) the young woman who has fallen victim of a witch hunt in the village is not only judged for having grey hair, but also for remaining oblivious to the local traditional colour pattern of houses in the village. Hence, “weil sie ihre Fenster anders anstrich als die Leute im Dorf” (42), she is further marginalized and remains literally constrained to her distinctively coloured house and parcel of land found “am Dorfrand” (41). As the women of the village are scared of the woman they call “Die Hexe,” (43) they rip apart white bed sheets suspended on their clothing lines to demarcate their territory and place scarecrows dressed in their husbands’ black suits to scare the ‘witch’ away: “Über den Streifen war der Himmel Schwarz von Vogelscheuchen. Alle Gärten waren damit vollgestellt” (43) As exposed here in the passage that underlines the fear of difference, the village protects itself from otherness through black and white normativity, which Müller criticizes by revealing how the black scarecrows cast shade over the whiteness of the bed sheets. This once again underlines the dichotomies on which the social-construct of *Heimat* are based, and by extension, it is an additional example of how all things that fail the normative principles of *Heimat* must be excluded.

Although the Church imposes strict moral traditions upon its pious villagers, the church building itself appears to be unaffected by this dark and colourless binary. As she attends mass, the young narrator observes how there is "[…] eine schwere Holztür da und dicke blinde Wände, die ganz oben kleine Fenster haben mit buntem Glas, das Farben zeigt, die es weder in der Kirche noch auf der Straβe gibt" (*Niederungen* 56). The passage appears to refer to the daily reality for villagers, who are blinded by moral codes, portrayed here through the metaphor of "dicke blinde Wände". For them, colouration and light is out of reach while on earth. As preached by the gospel, such beauty shall be accessible "ganz oben," in heaven. As a place of worship, the church building reflects this belief through unaccessible coloured windows that are placed high up towards the ceiling. In this context, the young narrator notices the discrepancy between the privileged church that beholds colouration and light in contrast to the village parishioners that remain deprived of both. She is aware that only the Church can benefit from such lavishness and enlightenment: "Die Messe darf nicht hinaus auf die Straβe, und die Straβe darf nicht hinein in die Kirche" (56). Accordingly, the verbal imagery associated with "Die Messe" should be understood as a metonymy that encapsulates more than just the evangelical ceremony it usually stands for. Instead, the mass, as a ceremony, also symbolizes and encompasses the privileges reserved for the institution of the Church.

Through her youthful innocence that has not yet blinded her capacity to see through deception, the young narrator exposes the *Scheinheiligkeit* of the Church through its sacramentals; religious objects that she scrutinizes while attending mass. Bored by the prayer rituals, she starts gazing at the religious material objects that

compose the church's spatial environment:

> Ich lehne den Hinterkopf ins Genick. In der Kirche ist auch der Himmel eine Mauer. Er ist himmelblau und mit Sternen besät. Ich frage Groβmutter, welches der Abendstern ist, und sie zischelt noch Dummkopf und betet dann weiter. Und ich denke weiter, dass die Maria keine richtige Maria ist, sondern eine Frau aus Gips, und dass der Engel kein richtiger Engel ist und die Schafe keine richtigen Schafe sind und das Blut nur Ölfarbe ist. Die lange Leni betet mir ins Ohr, sie ist die richtige Leni. (*Niederungen* 58)

As exposed here, the young narrator becomes aware of the falseness of sacramental objects standing all around her in the religious and moral institution of the church. She sees how the ceiling is just as confining as the walls around her, although its blue-sky colour and glittering stars project the false illusion of heavenly freedom. For her, the ceiling does not convey the illusion of eternal paradise, but evokes rather the idea of yet another deceptive barrier, as suggested in her analogy comparing the church's ceiling with a confining wall. In the same line of thought, she does not perceive the sheep and the virgin Mary as allegorical figures, but simply as false and lifeless artefacts that betray the moral hypocrisy of the Church. Their semblance is most clearly exposed when the young narrator compares their fake nature with the real presence of the devout, tall and skinny woman praying next to her on the bench.

In another passage also taking place inside the church, the young narrator reveals, through her perception of colours, the discrepancy between religious dogma and its symbolic representation. Colouration is a major component in the evolution of a

child's *Weltanschauung*: "In a child's life, colour is the pure expression of the child's pure receptivity, insofar as it is directed at the world. […] Children are not ashamed, since they do not reflect but only see" (Benjamin 51). Through her unbiased perception of colour, the young narrator sees the beautiful colours of the Virgin Mary: "Die Muttergottes […] trug auch immer dieses lichtblaue lange Kleid und hatte schöne rote Lippen" (*Niederungen* 86). As she suspects the Virgin Mary's lips to be covered with lipstick, the young girl is baffled, as the red colour of the lips contradicts the local diatribes against supposedly immoral female conduct. When the priest explains in his preachings that "[…] Lippenstifte aus dem Blut der Flöhe und anderer abscheulicher Tiere hergestellt werden," (86) the young girl wonders why the Virgin Mary is wearing the forbidden red lipstick: "Ich fragte ich mich, weshalb sich die Muttergottes auf dem Seitenaltar die Lippen färbt" (86). Although her question is naïve, innocent, and without any trace of irony, she is punished for questioning the double standards she observes when comparing the beautiful colours worn by the Virgin Mary with the bland and deprived reality of women's condition in the village: "Ich fragte auch den Pfarrer und, und er schlug mir mit dem Lineal die Hände rot und schickte mich nach Hause" (86). Lost for words at the nature of the young narrator's question, the priest's response is to strike her with a ruler that leaves her marked with red bruises. Unlike the red lips of the statue of the Virgin Mary, the red on the young narrator's bruised hands is anything but fake. From this perspective, they also reveal the *Hintersinn* – the hidden sense of things, namely: the *Scheinheiligkeit* of religious discourse in the village.

As colouration and light reveals moral *Scheinheiligkeit* in the *Dorfheimat*, so too does colouration and light unveil political duplicity in the spatial entity which Müller calls

the *Staatsheimat*. In her later novel *Der Fuchs*, instances of political duplicity are made visible through instances of *Schein* found amidst objects and places that are endowed with bright and shiny colours that have the capacity to reverberate light. As the story's leitmotiv "Was glänzt, das sieht" suggests, all things that shine are deceptive and threatening, as they are ultimately associated with dictatorial surveillance. People, objects, and places that produce *Schein* are described here as belonging to the political elite; a select few that perform authoritarian surveillance and who are rewarded by the dictator for keeping the mass population blinded and subdued.

The discrepancy separating the elite from the mass is clearly exposed in a passage in which the narrator reveals the grim and dire conditions plaguing the country's ordinary people:

> In der Stadt ist oft kein Strom, die Taschenlampen gehören wie Finger zu den Händen. Auf sackdunklen Straβen ist die Nacht aus einem Stück, und ein Gehender ist nur ein Geräusch unter einer beleuchteten Schuhspitze. [...] Nur wenn es ganz dunkel ist, wird der Strom abgestellt. (*Der Fuchs* 25)
>
> Das Licht der Taschenlampe reicht nicht zum Sehen, es reicht nur zur Gewiβheit, daβ die Nacht nicht den ganzen Rücken fressen kann, nur den halben. (*Der Fuchs* 26)

As exposed here, light is a commodity that is not made readily available for those who belong to the state's underprivileged masses. This is not the case for those who belong to the *Nomenklatura*; the political elite that ensured the application of double standards across the corrupt and duplicitous state.

Mirroring this political hypocrisy and corruption is the portrayal of a spatial environment that remains marked by colours of rust and decay. As Berverly Driver Eddy underlines in her essay “A Mutilated Fox Fur”, in Müller’s *Der Fuchs*, the environment speaks for the state of mind of Müller’s characters and as such, it appears that all the characters “are endangered – even attacked- by their environment” (Eddy 95). This is also the case of the novel’s protagonist Adina, whose spatial environment is portrayed as a desolate and threatening space that reflects her own fragile mindset as a victim of interrogations and surveillance: “Am Anfang der Straβe liegt die Schule, am Anfang der Straβe steht eine zerbrochene Telefonzelle. Die Balkons sind aus rostigem Wellblech und halten nichts aus [...]” (Müller, *Der Fuchs* 55). In the same passage, the narrator uses the landscape and its colouration as a metaphor to further denounce the hypocrisy and oppression of the state: “Hier blüht keine Dahlie. Hier zerfranst Clematis ihren eigenen Sommer, verheuchelt und blau. Wo Schutt liegt, wo alles rostet, zerbricht und zerfällt, blüht sie am schönsten” (55-56). The blue and hypocritical clematis portrayed here symbolizes the Romanian secret police agency *Securitate*, which rampantly and intrusively entangles itself with the life of the weakened Romanian population. Considering that the spatial environment reflects the conditions of life, the *Securitate* relies on the weakness of its population to bloom and thrive.

Overshadowed by the *Securitate*, the population remains bereft of both light and colouration: “Der Himmel ist grau, das ist keine Farbe, weil alles grau ist. Die Wohnblocks drüben sind grau, anders grau als der Tag, anders farblos” (*Der Fuchs* 229). Where natural manifestations of colour and light are to be found, they are portrayed as being either livid or shady. As such, these colours that reflect the

consequences of corruption and decay contribute in creating an atmosphere of lividity and darkness, which eventually leads to blindness of perception. As she is sceptical of the state, Adina, the novel's protagonist, is able to see through this blindness. This is made obvious in the telling passage in which she sees how the topography surrounding her reflects the dire living conditions in the dictatorial state. Here, the bland landscape before her evokes the disillusionment of living in dire and confining conditions: "Hinter der Stadt ist keine Richtung. Weizenstoppeln ohne Ende, bis die Augen diese blasse Farbe nicht mehr sehen. Nur das Gestrüpp und der Staub auf den Blättern" (62). The blinding livid colour of the never-ending wheat fields found behind the city remind Adina that behind the surface of things lies deceit. Through her "erfundene Wahrnehmung," the wide and open fields surrounding the city are turned into a closed entity; an isolated space deprived of hope and escape. Indeed, beyond the confines of the city, where only dust and bad weeds thrive, the land is still deprived of light and colouration, as it is part of the isolated *Staatsheimat*; a national (and nationalist) entity disconnected from the rest of the world that leaves its population in desolate and oppressive life conditions.

The duplicity of the land reflected here through the country's topography is, however, also reflected ideologically through the country's national flag. On the eve of Ceausescu's fall, the narrator describes a patriotic soccer match that arises nationalistic pride: "Die Fahnen sind oben irr, die Köpfe der Männer darunter besoffen, die Schuhe verwirrt" (*Der Fuchs* 225). However, outside the stadium, an old drunken man sees through the deceit of this national victory and starts singing a forbidden hymn that calls for the awakening of the lethargic Romanian spirit: "Erwache Rumäne aus deinem Schlaf, singt ein alter Mann. Das Lied ist verboten, er stellt sich auf den Randstein, er

sieht die Schnauze eines Hundes die Schuhe eines Polizisten, er singt sich weg von der Angst, er hebt das Kinn so hoch" (225). Instead of feeling pride for his country, the man feels shame:

> Mein Gott, sagt er, an der kahlen Akazie, was könnten wir sein auf der Welt, und wir haben kein Brot zu essen. Ein Polizist geht auf ihn zu und ein Hund, und noch ein Polizist. Da hebt er die Arme und schreit in den Himmel hinauf, Gott verzeih und, daβ wir Rumänen sind. Seine Augen glänzen im schütteren Licht, im Augenwinckel beeilt sich der Glanz. (226)

Reminiscent of the story's leitmotiv "Was glänzt, das sieht," the man, whose eyes shimmer in the dim light, is no longer blinded by the blur of deceit associated with the Romanian state. The moment of empowerment found in the 'glänzen' of that which shines is to be understood here as threatening, as it has the capacity to see. Yet here, it is not the state that scrutinizes the victim, but rather the dissident who scrutinizes the state. As he is perceived by the authorities to be a threat to national order, the man's scorn and outspoken criticism leads to his victimization: "Der Hund jault und springt an seinen Hals hinauf. Zwei, drei, fünf Polizisten tragen ihn weg […] Der Kopf des Mannes hängt ganz unten" (226).

With this case of inverted national pride and victimization, the narrator sheds light on broader forms of duplicity and oppressive tactics exercised by the totalitarian state. Exposing the oppressive conditions plaguing the ordinary citizens of the state is the narrator's depiction of the Romanian national flag. Pointing out to the latter, the narrator recognizes three distinct forms of oppression that can each be associated with one of the three coloured bands that constitute the flag: "Die Trikolore, drei eigene Streifen.

Den hungrigroten, den stummgelben, den blaubewachten Flicken im abgeschnittenen Land" (*Der Fuchs* 225). Here, the red band symbolizes the hunger of the population. More graphically, however, the colour red also implies the violence incurred, as well as the blood spilled by those who defied the ideologies of the regime. Yet as exposed in the propagandist text entitled *Tomatenernte* discussed earlier in Chapter 2: *Was glänzt, das sieht*: *Schein* as *Panopticon* in *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, the *Staatsheimat* duplicitously and shamelessly praises the country's abundance of food supplies. The yellow band of the flag symbolizes the utter silence to which the Romanian population is confined under authoritarian dictatorship, as evoked in the passage "Hinter der Stadt ist keine Richtung. Weizenstoppeln ohne Ende, bis die Augen diese blasse Farbe nicht mehr sehen. Nur das Gestrüpp und der Staub auf den Blättern" (62). As the yellow wheat fields are endless and uninhabited, they also conjure the incapacity of the population to communicate with the outside. Isolated by this spatial void, they remain helpless and their cries remain unheard. The colour blue found in the Romanian flag, as already underlined through the description of the blue clematis flower by the narrator of *Der Fuchs* in the sentence "Hier zerfranst Clematis ihren eigenen Sommer, verheuchelt und blau," (55) embodies here the hypocritical and oppressive forms of surveillance orchestrated by the state to keep its grip on the Romanian population. Through the three colours of the flag, the national emblem of the state, the narrator unveils the duplicity, corruption, and threat of violence that form the true fabric of Ceausescu's totalitarian state. Where language is corrupt and speech is silenced, objects and places, but also colouration and light, speak for that which cannot be said.

Chapter 5: Language and Silence as *Schein*

5.1 Refuting the Formula *Sprache ist Heimat*

> *Das instinktive Vertrauen in die Muttersprache kann leider durchkreuzt werden. […] Denn alle Diktaturen, ob rechte oder linke, atheistische oder göttliche, nehmen die Sprache in ihren Dienst.*
>
> (Müller, *Der König* 32)

Herta Müller has many times repeated that she does not have faith in *Heimat* and language, two identity-based cultural templates that are intrinsically connected.[39] Whether in her novels or in her essays, her relationship to *Heimat* and language reveals sentiments of mistrust and disdain. In line with her rejection of *Heimat,*[40] she reveals in her 2009 interview "Ich glaube nicht an die Sprache" how she also does not believe in the inherent moral innocence of language. In doing so, she argues against the traditional German belief claiming that language, "like nature, […] is accepted as given [and] looked at as basically innocent" (Blickle, *Heimat* 139). On the contrary, Müller considers *Heimat* and language to be deceptive, corruptible concepts that hide beneath the cloak of innocence. Her critical stance towards both *Heimat* and language stems from witnessing how either can easily become propaganda tools that operate with

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[39] Elisabeth Boa underlines the connection between *Heimat* and language in the following *Heimat* definition: "Heimat designates a felt relationship enduring over time between human beings and places that can extend metaphorically to connote identification with family or nation, cultural tradition, local dialect or native tongue" (34).

[40] Müller underlines this several times in her essay "Heimat oder Der Betrug der Dinge" (1997).

nationalistic boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. More specifically, she criticizes the traditional misconception that has allowed *Heimat* and language to both be used or interpreted as essentialist, fixed, and normative concepts that generalize identity, rather than allowing for subjectivity, individuality, and diversity. When manipulated as such, *Heimat* and language can easily omit or discard the role which local, regional or national differences, along with their political and historical baggage, play in the articulation of identity.

In her various essays referring to her personal experience with *Heimat* and her native German language, Müller explains how historical events that occurred in her own *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat* have modified the language's form and construction. She also explains how these same events have left a permanent scar on the language's resonance. In these two distinct yet entwined *Heimat* settings, Müller witnessed how language and all forms of communication were bereft of moral innocence. In her essay "Der König verneigt sich und tötet," she provides a portrayal of both, explaining how "Die einen [in der Dorfheimat] waren die schwäbischen Polka-Herren und Tugendexperten der Dörfer, [wobei] die anderen [in der Staatsheimat] die Funktionäre und Lakaien der Diktatur [waren]" (34). For her, the hypocrisy of moral discourse that inhibited communication in the *Dorfheimat* and the tyranny of the "verordnete Sprache" ("Heimat ist das was gesprochen wird" 28) used to corrupt language in the *Staatsheimat* breached her confidence in language, and fostered her disbelief in the German concept of *Heimat*.

In her interview *Ich glaube nicht an die Sprache* (2009), Müller also explains how her detachment from both *Heimat* and language stems from an irrevocable sense of

shame and guilt that she associates with the racist ideologies of *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*: “Die Rassengesetze, die Ghettos: Rumänien hat die Rassengesetze gemacht, genauso wie Nazideutschland” (32). Although she was born after the War, Müller feels that she has been left to carry the burden of shame and guilt she inherited from both her native German-speaking village and her native Romania, and confides: “Ich wurde von der Geschichte zur Verantwortung gezogen” (32). As a member of the German-speaking community that lived in Romania, she grew up feeling what could be perceived as the so-called *Nachgeschmack der Zeit*; the bitter aftertaste of shame, guilt and accountability for the atrocious crimes committed by the generation that preceded her in the two *Heimat* spaces she was bound to through birth.

The vice of *Scheinheiligkeit*, found in both the *Dorfheimat* and *Staatstheimat*, appears in Müller’s essays and novels. Here, she denounces how in contrast to her own sense of culpability, the Romanian state and the German-speaking village community repeatedly sought to hush their active participation in crimes against humanity committed before, during, and after the Second World War. In light of this, she condemns both the German-speaking village and the Romanian state, two collective entities that sought to brush off any sense of guilt or accountability related to their active support and participation in the enactment of fascist crimes. In her essay “In jeder Sprache sitzten andere Augen,” she reproaches both *Heimat* concepts to be “provinziell, xenophobisch und arrogant” (34). She also explains here how both *Heimat* spaces “[…] bedienten sich der Sippenhaft,” thereby denouncing how despite the scar of history, regressive condescending and racist ideologies remained part of *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat* reality: “[beide] witterten überall den Verrat [,] urteilten gehässig,

pauschal und unverrückbar" (34). Nevertheless, she notes an important distinction found between the German-speaking minority and the larger Romanian majority that belonged to the state in *Lebensangst und Worthunger*. In this interview, she notes that unlike the German-speaking community who was punished and stigmatized through massive deportation to Soviet forced labour camps in the immediate aftermath of the war, "Rumänien hat seine Partizipation am Nationalsozialismus durch seinen eigenen Faschismus nie diskutiert und weigert sich natürlich bis heute" (32). In her essay "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen", she therefore posits: "War dieser Ort Heimat, nur weil ich die Sprache dieser beiden Heimatfraktionen kannte. Es war doch, gerade weil ich sie kannte […] so weit gekommen, daβ wir nie diesselbe Sprache sprechen wollten und konnten. Unsere Inhalte waren schon im kleinsten Satz unvereinbar" (36), and underlines here the irrevocable sense of displacement and mistrust she feels towards both her native tongue and homeland.

Ironically yet unsurprisingly, when Müller was invited to take part in the conference entitled *Sprache ist Heimat* organized by the *CDU/ CSU Fraktion* in Berlin in 2011 as a guest of honour, the stance adopted in her speech proved antipodal to the very claim asserted in the conference's title. In her presentation entitled "Wenn sich der Wind legt, bleibt er stehen oder Wie fremd wird die eigene Sprache beim Lernen der Fremdsprache," she criticized the essentialist and reductionist formula *Sprache ist Heimat*, thereby criticizing both concepts at their core. Her speech was mainly extracted from an earlier address given in 2001 entitled "Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird," inspired by Spanish author Jorge Semprun. In his autobiography written under the pseudonym *Frederico Sanchez* that describes the communist underground movement

in Spain, Semprun uses similar words to describe the sentiments binding language and the notion of homeland as a person who experienced the socio-political reality of the Franco era. In her speech, Müller borrows Semprun's words to refute the equation "Sprache ist Heimat". The reason for her appreciation of Semprun's sentence appears to be related to its clear emphasis on words (*das Detail*) rather than on a general concept of language itself. In other words, Müller recognizes in "Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird" the importance of subjectivity expressed through that which is being said, rather than through a generic, nationalistic, and therefore de-individualizing concept for which language perceived as a whole (das Ganze) often stands.

In the presentation she read at the conference entitled "Sprache ist Heimat", Müller hence argued against what she deems is the seductive and deceptive idea that a native language alone can be used to construct or enforce an all-encompassing sense of national identity. Consciously oblivious to the *schöner Schein* of political correctness most likely expected of her as a guest-speaker, she bluntly explains in her speech how some German authors still naively believe in the illusion that language can encapsulate a holistic sense of identity:

> Viele deutsche Schriftsteller wiegen sich in dem Glauben, daβ die Muttersprache, wenn's darauf ankäme, alles andere ersetzen könnte. Obwohl es bei ihnen noch nie darauf angekommen ist, sagen sie: "Sprache ist Heimat". Autoren, deren Heimat unwidersprochen parat steht, denen zu Hause nichts Lebensbedrohliches zustöβt, irritieren mich mit dieser Behauptung ("In jeder Sprache" 33).

Even towards authors who, like her, experienced the plight of political exile and sought

refuge in a language-based identity, Müller remains sceptical. Her stance appears to be contradictory to Thomas Mann's, as he once famously postulated "Meine Heimat ist die deutsche Sprache" (Mann 1949). As a consequence of censorship and political exile, Mann sought refuge in the German language. For Mann, and others who experienced censorship and exile as a result of Nazi ideologies, language became a *Heimat* alternative; an equally ideological *Ersatz-Heimat* that he could carry with him in exile. In her essay "In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen," Müller criticizes this ideological perception of language and stresses: "Man kann nicht, man muβ seine Sprache mitnehmen. Nur wenn man tot wäre, hätte man sie nicht dabei - aber was hat das mit Heimat zu tun" (34). The reason why Müller polemically disagrees with the equation *Sprache ist Heimat* appears to be founded on its ideological principle, since for her, every "Ideologie hat das Ganze im Auge" ("Wenn wir schweigen" 106). She further explains her disagreement of an all-encompassing perception of language based on the following arguments:

> Auf [Exilanten] bezogen, schrumpft "Sprache ist Heimat" zu einer blanken Selbstvergewisserung. Er bedeutet lediglich: "Es gibt mich noch." "Sprache ist Heimat" war den Emigranten in einer aussichtslosen Fremde das in den eigenen Mund gesprochene Beharren auf sich selbst. […] ["Sprache ist Heimat"] suggeriert, daβ Emigranten vom Zusammenbruch der Existenz, von der Einsamkeit und dem für immer zerbrochenen Selbstverständnis absehen könnten, da die Muttersprache im Schädel als tragbare Heimat alles wettmachen kann ("In jeder Sprache" 33-34).

Based on these reflections, it appears that Müller's disapproval of the predication "Sprache ist Heimat" relates to its misleading illusion of shelter and comfort. In her experience, language did not turn into a safe haven replacing the lost *Heimat*, but rather a haunting burden that reminded her of her emigrant status and of the hardships incurred in the *Heimat* from which she had been chased. Those who consider both language and *Heimat* to be inherently virtuous and innocent irritate her with their naiveté. As she underlines in her essay "Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird," how can victims who experienced life under dictatorship relate to both language and *Heimat* concepts in the same way as those who never experienced life-threatening tyranny? This explains why she criticizes the illusion of shelter that some emigrants blindly associate with *Heimat* and language: two entities that have left her scarred with bitter sentiments of betrayal and deceit. Because she rejects the saying "Sprache ist Heimat," Müller's stance is more closely related to her predecessor Celan, who, like her, once belonged to the German-speaking minority in Romania, that Müller narrates the complex and often precarious relationship between language and ethnic identity in her novels, thereby exposing how in certain contexts, *Heimat* and language can neither encompass the idea of ideological virtue, nor truly provide a sense of shelter and refuge. Instead, Müller believes that both *Heimat* and language stand for politically malleable tools that can easily serve the purpose of tyranny and duplicity.

For those who, like Müller, have experienced the mistrust of language and the effects of censorship, silence becomes a tool of dissimulation, camouflage and even survival. Through her lyrical statement "Jedes Wort im Gesicht – weiβ etwas vom Teufelskreis – und sagt es nicht," (Müller "Nobelvorlesung") Müller sheds light on the

causality of living in fear where language is corrupt and freedom of speech silenced. The sentence refers to an existential vicious circle (*Teufelskreis*) that revolved around instances of fabulation, corruption and deceit that has left its toll on a scarred (*Wort im Gesicht*) population. Providing further insight on the consequence of living in an environment in which language was misused and speech censored, Müller recalls the uneasy relationship she had while growing up in her German-speaking community. Her sense of displacement also affected her relation towards language and speech in the Romanian context. In her interview "Ich glaube nicht an die Sprache," (2009) she explains that: "Das Erleben ist die Last, und danach die Erinnerung […] An der Erinnerung kann man genauso zerbrechen, und dieses 'Nicht-reden' darüber ist ja für die Leute wahrscheinlich genauso eine Schonung wie für die anderen das 'Reden' darüber" (16). Her words suggest here the emotional balm which silence can provide for those who coexist in a social environment scarred by political tyranny and censorship. Hence, where language is corrupt and speech censored, silence is more than an instinctive form of communication, it is a form of existence.

Whether in her essays or works of fiction, Müller exposes how language can easily become an accomplice in creating an existence of corruption, oppression and rejection. When she explains "Gesprochen oder geschrieben – die Sprache verlangt von uns seine Gratwanderung zwischen den Worten, die wir uns zu eigen machen und jenen, die wir meiden," ("Heimat" 43) she insists on the thin line between words, thereby underlining the importance of choosing the latter properly, as well as on the earnestness of reflecting carefully on the language that is written or spoken. Yet at the same time, she also shows how silence plays an equally significant role in defining the terms of

social interaction, especially in circumstances of bigotry, political tyranny or overall bleak life conditions. Through the interplay of language and silence, Müller's works adopt an anti-*Heimat* stance that lay bare the duplicity of *Heima*t and the potential misuse of language.

The following will discuss the binding roles that unite the corruption of language and the function of silence, thereby demonstrating how both are found at the core of Müller's critical portrayal of *Heimat* in her essays and works of fiction. Chapter 5.2 exposes how the formula "Sprache ist Heimat" fails to illustrate the reality of the German-speaking minority group depicted in *Der Fasan*, and shows how, instead, the sentence "Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird" conveys more accurately the various forms of speech found within the geo-political context of the novella. The focus here is on regional figures of speech that contribute in unveiling the all-pervasive inertia plaguing life conditions in the German-speaking village. The novel also reveals concrete instances of how language became manipulated and coerced under Ceausescu, a corruption of language which Müller calls the "verordnete Sprache" in her essays. In chapter 5.3, the discussion shall then move on to the role which silence plays in Müller's works *Der Fasan*, *Niederungen* and *Atemschaukel*. In *Der Fasan*, corruption and the prescription of language lead to various instances of silence that affect the village and its inhabitants, as made visible through the various forms of silence that characterize Windisch's daughter Amalie. In *Der Fasan*, as well as in *Niederungen*, silence is multifaceted and appears to stand for corruption, submissive allegiance, betrayal, hypocrisy, gender subordination, paralysing fear or existential disillusionment, whereas in *Atemschaukel*, silence speaks for camouflage, the unspeakable trauma of near-death

experience, and for the enduring and stoic force of resistance.

5.2 "*Heimat ist das,was gesprochen wird*" in *Der Fasan*

> *Die verordnete Sprache wird so feindselig wie die Entwürdigung selbst. Von Heimat kann da nicht die Rede sein.*
>
> (Müller, "Zeugnis" 13)

Der Fasan[41] is a short novella in which Müller critically dissects the formula 'language equals national identity'. Set in a remote German-speaking village, its story builds upon Romania's socio-political landscape of the 1980s and expounds the problems of hindered mobility associated with *Heimat* and *Heimweh*, the nostalgic affect for one's native soil. Borrowed from the imagery of Romanian folklore[42], the title - "man is a large pheasant on earth" - is a regional proverb that literally compares human beings to pheasants—birds whose awkward flight mostly confines them to the ground.[43]

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[41] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novella *Der Fasan*.

[42] Herta Müller herself explains: "Die Sprachbilder, die Metaphorik, die Redewendungen, die Folklore haben immer viel mehr strukturell zu mir gepaßt als das, was in meiner eigenen Sprache vorhanden ist" (qtd in Haines and Littler 15).

[43] In the booklet "Herta Müller. Der kalte Schmuck des Lebens" that accompanied the eponymous exhibit held in the *Literaturhaus München* from 24 September to 21 November 2010, Müller explains in detail the imagery conveyed by the sentence 'Der Mensch ist ein groβer Fasan auf der Welt': "Das ist eine rumänische Redewendung. Man sagt in Rumänien sehr oft, ich war wieder mal ein Fasan, das heiβt: ich habe wieder mal versagt, ich habe es nicht geschafft, ich bin wieder mal gescheitert. Also ist der Fasan ein Verlierer, und im Deutschen ist der Fasan dagegen ein arroganter Prahler. Mich hat fasziniert, was macht die eine Sprache aus dem Vogel, was für eine Metapher. Der Fasan ist ja ein Vogel, der nicht fliegen kann, er lebt im Feld. Wenn du anfängst zu jagen und noch nicht gut jagen

In *Der Fasan*, Müller illustrates through "das, was gesprochen wird", the linguistic consequence of being part of a minority group that is being oppressed and intimidated through lies, bribes and corruption. The segregation incurred by the German-speaking villagers within their own *Heimat* contributes in fostering painful disillusionment towards the homeland, while, on the other hand, reaffirming ethnocentric pride and desire to leave the country. As they witness the growing power discrepancy between their Romanian neighbours and themselves, the German-speaking minority now blame the former for their plight, accusing them of having trespassed, stained and therefore destroyed the moral and territorial virtue of their *Dorfheimat*. The territorial and ownership disputes taking place between the German-speaking community and their Romanian neighbours are portrayed as igniting linguistic altercations. These altercations, revolving around the novel's main character Windisch, are impregnated with verbal imagery that exposes the conditions plaguing the *Dorfheimat* and its socio-spatial environment.

Windisch's name, an alliteration of wind, hints to the importance of words and the attention to detail in Müller's novel *Der Fasan*. In her essay "Wenn sich der Wind liegt, bleibt er stehen," (2001) Müller sheds light on wind's metaphorical value: "Den Wind selber sieht man nicht, sondern das Schlagen oder Fliegen der Dinge, die er anfasst. [Die Dinge] werden stumm oder lauthals WINDIG" ("Wenn etwas" 186). The adjective

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kannst, dann jagst du Fasane, die sind die leichteste Beute, weil der Fasan sich nicht retten kann. Das haben die Rumänen in ihrer Metapher drin, und was haben die Deutschen in der Metapher? Die Federn wahrscheinlich, das Gefieder, das ist doch ganz oberflächlich. Das Leben des Tieres interessiert die deutsche Metapher nicht, die Rumänen interessiert die Existenz des Vogels, und das hat mich fasziniert ("Der kalte Schmuck" 28, qtd in Müller, *Akzente* 409).

windig used here by Müller to describe a situation of confinement and oppression, resonates with the protagonist's surname: Windisch. Despite the difference in spelling, they are phonetically similar and are bound through semantic association. The potency of wind to make things become either "stumm" or "windig" in the novel gains significance when put in relation with Müller's essay, in which she explains that "Zu Menschen, die verschlagen sind, sagt man auch, sie seien WINDIG. Hier schließt sich ein Kreis: Wenn etwas in der Luft liegt, hat das mit Gefahr zu tun, die von Menschen ausgeht" ("Wenn etwas" 186). As it portrays how the adjective *windig* is to be associated with man-made situations of menace and oppression, Müller's essay can be used here to unveil the construction of her character Windisch and the existential plight that affects him and his neighbours in the novella.

The name Windisch also recalls another passage of her essay "Wenn sich der Wind liegt," in which she then compares her own German dialect to standardized German, as well as to the majority language of the land, Romanian. To underline the nuances found between her native dialect and "foreign" languages, namely high German and Romanian, she compares the way in which they all differ from one another when describing the motion of wind. The nuance found between these three linguistic codes is important for an understanding of the role which cultural specificity plays on one's relation with language. In this line of thought, the words used in the Banat German dialect to describe the wind convey a more accurate metaphorical portrayal of the condition of plight incurred by Windisch and other characters in the novel. In her essay "In jeder Sprache sitzten andere Augen," Müller explains:

> Im Dialekt des Dorfes sagte man: Der Wind GEHT. Im Hochdeutschen,

> das man in der Schule sprach, sagte man: Der Wind WEHT. Und das klang für mich als Siebenjährige, als würde er sich weh tun. Und im Rumänischen sagte man: Der Wind SCHLÄGT, *vintul bate*. Das Geräusch der Bewegung hörte man gleich, wenn man schlägt sagte, und da tat der Wind nicht sich, sondern anderen weh. So unterschiedlich wie das Wehen ist auch das Aufhören des Windes. Auf Deutsch heiβt es: Der Wind hat sich gelegt – das ist flach und waagerecht. Auf Rumänisch heiβt es aber: Der Wind ist stehengeblieben, *vîntul a stat*. Das ist steil und senkrecht. (28)

In this paragraph, Müller shows how a borderless and invisible element such as wind can be interpreted differently based on cultural and linguistic nuances found amidst a same language - in this particular case between high German and her own German dialect. Whether from one language to another, or between two varieties of a same language, transformations occur: “Von einer Sprache zur anderen passieren Verwandlungen” (“In jeder Sprache” 30). Underlining the geo-political specificity of the story, it is not a coincidence that in Windisch’s village, the mobility of wind is not defined by the verb to blow (*wehen*), but rather through the verb to go (*gehen*). Windisch’s verbal reflections on the motion of wind, which he recognizes as having reached a standstill (*stehengeblieben*), is thus indicative of his own fate as a victim of political stasis. Both the wind and Windisch that have reached an existential standstill are part of the broader leitmotiv found throughout the novel: the all-pervasive corruption and inertia plaguing the German-speaking village.

When Windisch speaks to the *Nachwächter* and observes that “Es geht kein

Wind" (78), he uses the verb "gehen"; a regional idiom that echoes Müller's explanation in her essay "Wenn sich der Wind legt, bleibt er stehen". In the same line of thought, the verb that would describe the point when the wind comes to a halt is not 'sich legen' (to lay down), as standardized German implies, but rather *stehen bleiben* (to reach a standstill). Through a regional linguistic detail that would not apply to the German language as a whole, the motionless wind portrayed in *Der Fasan* becomes a metonymical figure that mirrors the stagnating reality inhibiting the German-speaking minority, who now faces the plight of tyranny and corruption under the intrusive duplicitous tactics of the Romanian state. Indeed, the idea of stagnation conveyed by the wind that has come to a standstill overlaps into the epistemological categories of time and space; die *stehende Zeit* which Windisch witnesses all across the village. Like a domino effect, the impression of temporal fixity has its impact on the topography and infrastructure of the village, described as falling in ruins as a consequence of political stasis. Reflecting the vicious circle of this all-pervasive spatio-temporal inertia, the wind that has come to a standstill mirrors the village that has become paralysed in both time and space.

This existential crisis affecting the village is also made clear verbally through Windisch's colleague, the *Nachwächter*, who is the first to exclaim the pessimistic proverbial sentence "[d]er Mensch ist ein groβer Fasan auf der Welt" (8). Giving insight on the metaphorical meaning it intends to convey, David Midgley observes that "[a]s a proverbial saying, it is part of the common linguistic currency of the land, a readily available expression of something about the human condition" (28). The predicament of immobility that affects Windisch's existence is "the human condition" shared by the

villagers, who, like him, experience a profound sense of "[…] displacement, and by implication the yearning for the end of displacement, for a truer homeland" (Midgley 27). This disheartening condition, conveyed through the image of a bird perceived to use flight only when frightened and threatened,[44] is what fosters Windisch and his neighbours' yearning desire to emmigrate.

Beyond a sentiment of displacement, the proverbial sentence *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* also brings forth the paradoxical notion of 'foreign proximity' commonly found amidst multicultural societies. As exposed in *Der Fasan,* the *Banatschwaben* share their geo-political territory with the neighbouring ethnic-Romanians, as well as with other ethno-linguistic minorities. Although expressed in German in the novel, its allegorical meaning stems from a multicultural context, and as such, it provides a clear indicator that it is delicate and often erroneous to reduce language, in this particular case German, to a generalizing concept that discards linguistic specificity. As made evident in *Der Fasan*, language adapts and changes according to its given environment, ever shifting through time and space, and by extension, to the geo-political setting it evolves in. As Müller puts it: "Sprache war und ist nirgends und zu keiner Zeit ein unpolitisches Gehege, denn sie last sich von dem, was einer mit dem anderen tut, nicht trennen. Sie lebt immer im Einzelfall, man muss ihr jedesmal aufs neue ablauschen, was sie im Sinn hat" ("In jeder Sprache" 46). Whereas the Romanian proverb would prove difficult to decipher in any other given German-speaking context, its meaning is understood without any misconception by the German-speaking population who experiences the plight of living in a tyrannical dictatorship and

[44] This would be especially true in the absence of wind to help propel their flight.

who recognize themselves in the hopeless existential image the Romanian proverb seeks to convey.

In addition to the mistreatment by authorities who work for the state, the German-speaking community's unwelcome presence in the land is also made clear by ethnic Romanian neighbours who are proud to oblige nationalist policies that ensure the state's uniformization. As one patriotic ethnic-Romanian bluntly tells Windisch in a local bar: "Nix mehr Deutsch," adding in his native tongue "hier ist Rumänien" (65). This statement exemplifies the power discrepancy between the majority and minority populations composing the state. It is also a clear example of linguistic chauvinism that echoes with Müller's reflections on the fragility of one's language, when she observes: "Die Muttersprache ist momentan und bedingungslos da wie die eigene Haut. Und genauso verletztbar wie diese, wenn sie von anderen geringgeschätzt, missachtet oder gar verboten wird" ("Wind" 18). The racism to which Windisch and his neighbours fall victim is also a testimony of the policies of assimilation that create an ethno-linguistic hierarchy in which the law of the strongest prevails.

Thus further refuting the equation *Sprache ist Heimat* in *Der Fasan* is the manipulation of language used to demoralize ethnic Germans who face injustice and perceive themselves as victims. Müller associates this manipulation of language with the prescribed "verordnete Sprache," ("Heimat" 28) which she describes as a coerced form of language that imposes a discourse shaped by domination and corruption. In her essay "*Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird*," Müller recollects how she encountered the "verordnete Sprache" while growing up in Romania, and reveals which purpose this coercive usage of language served:

> Die verordnete Sprache begegnete mir schon im Kindersalter täglich in der Schule. Einerseits als Wiederholung von Lobgesängen und Feiertagsritualen für Partei und Vaterland, als mitten in die Kindheit gelegte Einübung ins bedingungslose Gehorchen und als Verhinderung des eigenen Denkens und aller individueller Eigenschaften. (28)

For Müller, the "verordnete Sprache" stood for a linguistic tool used by Ceausescu's duplicitous political regime to favour propaganda and ensure ideological homogeneity.

The *verordnete Sprache* surfaces in the chapter "Ein grosses Haus". Here, Windisch's daughter Amalie is performing her duty of alliance towards the Romanian state by respecting the state and its "Verordnete Sprache". Through the prescribed linguistic code of the state that has also imposed itself on her native German language, Amalie inevitably transmits to her pupils the false-idyllic portrayal of the Romanian state, as imposed by the dictator himself. In a telling passage that portrays the totalitarian policies of the land, Amalie says: "Alle Kinder wohnen in Wohnblocks oder in Häusern […] Jedes Haus hat Zimmer. Alle Häuser bilden zusammen ein groβes Haus. Dieses groβe Haus ist unser Land. Unser Vaterland" (61). The illusion of a united and egalitarian nation is made even more obvious when Amalie, using a map of the country, explains to her pupils how the cities of the "Vaterland" are analogue to the rooms of the big and all-encompassing house in which they live in, and how the patriarch of the house is none other than the dictator:

> Die Städte sind die Zimmer dieses groβen Hauses, unseres Landes. In unseren Häusern wohnen unser Vater und unsere Mutter. In unseren

> Häusern wohnen unser Vater und unsere Mutter. […] Genosse Nicolae Ceausescu ist der Vater aller Kinder. Und Genossin Elena Ceausescu ist die Mutter aller Kinder. Alle Kinder lieben den Genossen und die Genossin, weil sie ihre Eltern sind. (*Der Fasan* 61-62)

As exposed here through Amalie's class lesson, the state has taken "die Sprache in [seinen] Dienst" (27). Through Amalie's words, it becomes evident how the Romanian state used the *verordnete Sprache* to infantilize its citizens and perpetuate propagandist ideologies that aimed at fostering and enforcing an imposed collective identity, thereby inhibiting the individual's capacity to speak freely outside the box of linguistic prescription. Although Amalie is portrayed here as obeying the rules of a prescribed language that fosters the duplicitous idea of an idyllic nation, the passage ends with a few ironic twists that underline the duplicity of words, as well as the intrusiveness of state ideologies. When Amalie concludes her lesson by explaining how Nicolae Ceausescu, the father of all Romanians, is the "Generalsekretär [des] Landes," a pupil innocently exclaims: "Mein Vater ist der Generalsekretär unseres Hauses" (62). The image conveyed by the young boy's analogy is thus a further indicator that shows how the state's policies and the prescribed language that served its execution "intruded into the most intimate realm of social relations," namely, the family household (Gal and Kligman 25). Through its portrayed discourse on *Heimat* and language, Müller's anti-*Heimat* novel *Der Fasan* provides insight on how one can neither positively relate to a corrupt *Heimat,* nor to its accomplice in duplicity, the "verordnete Sprache". As a means of pervasive propaganda, this coerced language reigns across the land, "überall wie faule Luft" (*Lebensangst* 13). While Müller acknowledges that some people continue

to seek shelter and refuge in the romanticized “Verklärung” (“Heimat” 214) of *Heimat* that replaces “jedes Schuldgefühl,” (“Heimat” 214) she herself rejects the social construct, which for her, resonates rather with a haunting form of impediment, as suggested in her reflection “Ich glaube, Heimat ist das, was man nicht aushält und nicht los wird” (*Ich glaube nicht* 39); a reflection which also applies to the binding relationship she has to her native language. For Müller, both *Heimat* and language evoke the memory of a place that relied on the “verordnete Sprache” to ensure homogeneity and submissiveness; a place where language remained corrupt and speech silenced.

5.3 On Silence

> *An diese Einstellung gewöhnt, merkt man gar nicht, daβ man nicht spricht. Man denkt gar nicht ans Reden, man ist mit sich ins Schweigen eingeschlossen und behält die anderen im Auge.*
>
> (Müller, *Der König* 82)

In *Der Fasan*,[45] the corruption of speech and deterring life conditions effecting Windisch and other neighbours in the village lead to several instances and forms of silence. A first example of silence appears at the beginning of the novella, when Windisch witnesses the wind that has come to a standstill. Reflective of the vicious circle of stagnation plaguing the village, the narrator stipulates that Windisch's watermill is no longer turning, and as a result, it is silenced by the lack of wind: "Die Mühle ist stumm" (6). From a metaphorical perspective, the muteness of the windmill is a further indicator that mirrors the looming danger of extinction believed to be awaiting the German-speaking village community. The German-speaking population's minority status and persisting sense of punishment and victimization ever since the War, blinds their capacity to acknowledge that their plight is one shared by all who live in the Romanian state[46]. Their misconception of reality is related to the nostalgic recollection

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[45] Unless otherwise specified, this chapter will refer to Herta Müller's novella *Der Fasan*.

[46] Müller explains the multicultural mosaic that was the region she grew up in, pointing out that: "[es] leben bis heute in Rumänien viele Nationalitäten mit den Rumänen beisammen: groβe – wie Ungarn und Zigeuner. Und kleine – wie die Serben, Türken, Juden, Ukrainer, Slowaken, Armenen. Und sie waren über Jahrzehnte alle eng beieinander und mit den Rumänen im Land eingesperrt. […] [der

of a forlorn and prosperous past. Privileged by their ethno-linguistic roots during the country's Nazi-Occupation, the German population, still bearing the stigma of shame and defeat as the losers of the war, is now looked down upon, manipulated and silenced by Romanian bureaucrats who impose their domination and political authority through lies and corruption. The pessimistic predictions shared between Windisch and the Nachwächter like "Hier wird's immer schlimmer" (79) or "Sie nehmen uns sogar den Mais, der noch nicht mal gewachsen ist. Das Haus werden sie dir auch noch nehmen, und den Hof," (79) are verbal reminders of the hostility and oppression the German minority has become exposed to since the Communist regimes of Antonescu and Ceausescu took over the country's governance after the Second World War. In this passage, '*Sie*' refers to the Romanian "Funktionäre" and "Lakaien" (see Müller, *König* 34) perpetuating lies and who, as corrupt authority figures, have become notorious in the village for having disowned many members of the German-speaking villagers of their possessions. Outnumbered and marginalized, the German-speaking community must now yield to Romanian domination.

For Windisch's daughter Amalie, silence resonates with submissive allegiance. As a teacher, she relies on silence to protect herself from potential altercations with empowered local authorities. This is exemplified in a passage in which she must hush her frustration when one of her pupils, eager to add his personal observation to the lesson, stumbles and breaks her vase. Although banal in appearance, the issues at stake are greater than they appear: "Sie darf nicht schreien. Claudius' Vater ist der

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bittere Geschmack] hatten wir alle auf der Zunge liegen, egal welche Sprache wir sprachen – er war in all unseren Verschiedenheiten ein bedrückendes gemeinsames Gefühl" ("Heimat" 13).

Verwalter des Fleischladens an der Ecke." (62) Amalie knows that scolding the boy, who, by guessing from his first name, *Claudiu*, does not belong to the German-speaking minority but rather to the Romanian community, could lead to troubling consequences. Claudiu's father is the local butcher, and she knows that in a village that still relies on kin liability, she risks the danger of her entire family being denied the right to purchase meat, a fundamental need that would only worsen already dire conditions. Although she is in a position of authority as a teacher, Amalie thus must rely on subordination to protect her personal interests. In doing so, she becomes stifled by a corrupt dictatorship that oppresses its ethno-linguistic minorities and forbids freedom of speech.

It is also through Amalie's silence that the novella exposes the power discrepancy unfolding in the novel between the ruling Romanian majority and the subjugated German-speaking minority. Amalie, who must trade her own body in exchange for the passports that will allow her and her family to abandon a life of stasis in exchange for a better life in West Germany, submissively accepts her own sexual trade-off with the corrupt militia officer and the local priest. Flaunting his ethno-linguistic domination, the militia officer tells Amalie "Ce dulci esti" (103). These condescending words, pronounced in Romanian and which mean "how sweet you are," emphasize not only the militia officer's patronizing attitude by belittling Amalie as his female victim, but also his perceived ethno-linguistic superiority as a member of the ruling Romanian-speaking majority. In this passage of the novel, Amalie is pinned down and sexually exploited. She appears shamed by the degrading situation and is accordingly portrayed as having lost all sense of agency. Silenced by her conscious duty of submission and allegiance, she does not cry out for justice, but rather complies and sacrifices herself for the sake of

the possibility of emigration. Amalie's silence resonates here with what Müller refers to as being "die letzte Konsequenz unerträglicher Zumutungen – Das Schweigen" ("Heimat" 47). For Müller, this condition is the final culmination of existential disillusionment, a claim she asserts by then declaring: "Wenn am Leben nichts mehr stimmt, stürzen auch die Wörter ab" ("Heimat" 47).

Müller's words explaining how speech is silenced when life conditions have become unbearable resonates with the inhibition of speech affecting the young female narrator in Müller's short story "Grabrede" found in her novel *Niederungen*. Here, the overthrow of words is a result of the village's persistent belief in kin liability, their *Sippenhaft*, which endorses the shame and condemnation of innocent people through association (*Niederungen* 10). In this passage, the young female narrator dreams of her father's funeral and in this dream, she becomes a target of ostracization for the village community who persecute her for her dead father's unpunished immoral acts. When she is suddenly asked to speak at the funeral, the young female narrator remains speechless: "Ich wusste, dass ich jetzt eine Rede halten musste. Alle sahen mich an. Es fiel mir kein Wort ein. Ich führte die Hand zum Mund und zerbiss mir die Finger. Meine Hände waren heiß" (*Niederungen* 10). Inhibited by fear, her incapacity to speak reflects a greater sense of inner paralysis: "Mein Arm war nackt. Ich spürrte, wie er an der Luft versteinte" (*Niederungen* 11). Like a freezing cold that debilitates the body, silence appears to be the verbal consequence of an all-pervasive and debilitating fear.

In *Atemschaukel* too, silence is the result of Leo's debilitating fear. Moreover, silence also speaks here for the void of deprivation and the paradoxical compounded feelings of shame and pride. Multifaceted, silence plays a detrimental role in

determining Leo's social interaction and integration, and it is also a telling testimony of his will to survive the *Panopticon* of fear incurred at home and in the *Lager*. Leo's dependence on silence begins at home, prior to his deportation. At this early stage of the novel, it is already made clear that Leo must rely on silence to hide his closeted homosexuality. Silence, for Leo, becomes a strategy to deceive and camouflage his true identity in order to conform with the hetero-normative norms imposed by his family and the German-speaking *Heimat* community he was born and raised in. The sense of shame his sexual 'deviance' burdens him and leaves him with a sense of shame that Leo calls "das Schweigen im Nacken" (*Atemschaukel* 10).

For Leo, "das Schweigen im Nacken" (*Atemschaukel* 10) alludes to the emotional weight of silence. The analogy refers to the statue of a saint with a sheep draped around its neck as a collar and which Leo witnesses in a church prior to his deportation. He relates to this image every time he is reminded of the burden of silence he must carry with him as a strategy to keep his true identity undisclosed. Silence may prove crucial in decoding and understanding a person's level of interaction, trust or concealment within a given social context: "Im Schweigen […] bleibt alles drin hängen, was lange Zeit nicht gesagt wird, sogar was niemals gesagt wird" (Müller, "Heimat" 31). Thus for Leo, silence is also camouflage. Leo himself refers to this type of silence when he asserts: "Es gibt Dinge, über die man nicht spricht. Aber ich weiβ, wovon ich rede, wenn ich sage, das Schweigen im Nacken ist etwas anderes als das Schweigen im Mund" (*Atemschaukel* 10). Determined to hide his moral breach and keep his sense of shame to himself, Leo, through camouflage, eventually deceives his own *Heimat* as a strategy to protect himself from punishment and ostracization.

Even once Leo is detached from the *Heimat* through deportation, silence continues to define the boundaries of his undisclosed identity through camouflage. During the initial months of confinement in the *Lager*, he remains haunted by the shameful secret of his closeted homosexuality. As Sigrid Grün remarks: "Die Angst vor der Entdeckung seiner wahren Identität ist so groβ, dass die Verleugnung des eigenen Selbst sich bis zum gefühlten Selbsverlust steigert. […] Im Lager wird er deshalb zum 'Nichtrührer' [...] der innerlich unererreichbar bleibt" (81). Grün's observation suggests that Leo's self-imposed silence grants him the reputation of being physically, mentally, and – by extension – socially beyond reach to those who surround him in the camp. Yet this perception of strength is nothing but camouflage, as Leo himself confides: "Ich trage stilles Gepäck. Ich habe mich so tief und so lang ins Schweigen gepackt, ich kann mich in Worten nie auspacken. Ich packe mich nur anders ein, wenn ich rede" (*Atemschaukel* 9). Whether at home in the *Heimat* or during his deportation in the *Lager*, silence is relied on to prevent shame and ensure his chances of survival.

While the repression of identity through silence is a deceptive strategy of survival, it also comes at the cost of deprivation. The emotional void experienced in the *Heimat* and the self-imposed social barrier, on which Leo relies through secrecy, resonates with the physical deprivation awaiting Leo in the forced labor camp: starvation. Just as silence, a deprivation of words, robs Leo of an authentic and dignified identity, the *Lager* denies him the fundamental right to sufficient food rations, thereby depriving him of the very essence that keeps any human being alive. The analogy of hunger for food and hunger for words becomes especially visible when Leo receives a postcard from his mother informing him of the birth of a baby boy. Reflective of the proverb "out of sight,

out of mind," the absence of attention and comforting words in the postcard leads to Leo's acute hunger for comforting words while confined in the *Lager*.

The causality of the absence of words found in the postcard resonates with the functional use of silence specific to Müller's style of narration. In her essay "Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel," she points out that in her writings, unspoken words are just as powerful as spoken ones, and argues that "der geschriebene Satz ist ein nachweisbarer Satz zwischen vielen verschwiegenen Sätzen. Nur seine Nachweisbarkeit unterscheidet ihn von den verschwiegenen Sätzen" (qtd. in Grün 36). In her interpretation, Sigrid Grün develops on this aspect and adds: "Entscheidend ist oft nicht der semantische Gehalt der Aussagen, sondern das Verschwiegene, das ausgespart bleibt" (36). Once light has been shed on the importance of "das Verschwiegene," the role that silence plays in Müller's narration, the reader can better conceive what lies beneath Leo's heartbreak upon receiving the above-mentioned postcard. Most likely unaware that correspondence between inmates and their families was censored by *Lager* authorities, Leo is left with the disheartening impression that he has been abandoned by his mother and replaced by his baby brother, which leaves him ponder: "Schämt sich die Mutter nicht mit ihrer akkuraten Steppnaht aus weiβem Zwirn, dass ich unter der Zeile lesen muss: Meinetwegen kannst du sterben, wo du bist, zu Hause würde es Platz sparen" (*Atemschaukel* 213). Already feeling detached from his family through deportation and the alienating fear of being disgraced for his undisclosed homosexuality, Leo now feels all together forgotten by a mother whom he believes has cold-heartedly replaced him for good. Although heartbroken and humiliated, Leo turns his emotional chagrin into stoic pride that gives him the strength to overcome the remaining two years of confinement in

the *Lager*. As the narrator of his own story who looks back and reminisces of his time of confinement in the *Lager*, he recalls: “Bei der Mutter um Erwähnung betteln wollte ich nicht. In den zwei verbliebenen Jahren habe ich mich gezwungen, nicht auf die Karte zu antworten. [Der] rauh[e] Stolz […] war so roh wie das Standhaftbleiben vor dem Brot” (*Atemschaukel* 214). Now standing as a testimony to his unbreakable discipline and stoicism, Leo’s decision to further pack himself into silence out of pride is yet a further example of camouflage to cover up the disappointment, hurt and anger caused by his own mother.

The deprivation of comforting words that leaves Leo yearn in silence also provides an example for the interplay of hunger and words in *Atemschaukel*. The situation recalls Müller’s 2009 interview entitled *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, in which she describes the various forms of hunger a person can be faced with, and the consequences these forms of hunger leave on the individual. In her interview, she points out that hunger is not only a physical reaction to starvation, but instead, it can also stand for a form of nostalgia for places, people and—as depicted in *Atemschaukel*—for the empowering force of words. In *Atemschaukel*, it is neither *Heimat*, nor language that helped Leo overcome the void of physical starvation, but rather five small words: “ICH WEIβ DU KOMMST WIEDER” (*Atemschaukel* 12), uttered to him by his grandmother on the night of his deportation, as he was being picked up by the Soviet authorities. If anything, these few words are a clear example in the novel of how the nourishment of the soul helped compensate for the scarcity of food and human indignity in the *Lager*. Their force and significance is made clear though the particularity that they are written in capital letters in the novel. In line with Müller’s pithy observation “Heimat ist das, was

gesprochen wird," when Leo explains: "Ich habe [diesen Satz] unachtsam mit ins Lager genommen. Ich hatte keine Ahnung, dass er mich begleitet [.] Weil ich wiedergekommen bin, darf ich sagen: So ein Satz hält am Leben," (*Atemschaukel* 20) Leo acknowledges that under the deceptive strength of silence, his grandmother's few words, addressed to him on the night of his deportation, not only appeased his *Worthunger,* they also granted him the strength and will to survive.

Concluding Remarks

> *'Heimat' war immer ein anderes Wort als Mensch, Haus oder Baum. Es ging an allem Konkreten, an jedem Detail von Menschen, Häusern und Bäumen vorbei, ohne sie zu streuen. Es hatte nur mit sich selbst zu tun. Seine Identitätsstiftung war eine Täuschung.*
> (Müller, "Betrug" 214**)**

By reading the spatial entities of *Dorftheimat* and *Staatsheimat*, I wished to build upon existing scholarship and expose how in Müller's narratives characters who 'see differently' reject *Heimat* and its mechanisms of betrayal. As I hope to have shown in this dissertation, my own contribution was to explore Müller's anti-*Heimat* stance through the lens of gender, space, and morality. By focusing on Müller's figures who 'see differently', my specific aim was to debunk the *Täuschung* of *Heimat* in her narratives, thereby unveiling its ideological veneer through the leitmotif of *Schein*. My close readings of Müller's essays and autofictional works demonstrate how instances of *Schein* allow the reader to perceive the web of lies and corruption that leave Müller's characters caught in a trap of fear and silence. As Müller herself stresses in her essays and portrays in her works of fiction, *Heimat* imposes a constructed and prescribed identity upon those who blindly believe in its normative ideologies. The impact of hetero-normative rules connected to the regressive notion of *Heimat* brings about traumatic experiences of shame, guilt and humiliation for those who fail to meet its standards.

What I aimed to demonstrate in this dissertation is how those who dare to 'see differently' are sooner or later targeted, marginalized, and oppressed for contradicting or rejecting the ideologies of *Heimat*. To confirm this, I first explored Müller's portrayal of *Dorfheimat* as a confining space of patriarchal tradition and moral hypocrisy. In this traditional manifestation of *Heimat*, men are perceived to be the natural rulers and women and children are at the bottom of the family and social hierarchy. By unveiling the gender and hierarchical discrepancy, I also exposed how the rejection of the principles of *Dorfheimat* by *Niederungen*'s young female narrator comes through the sense of alienation she experienced as a result of seeing herself trapped in a confining spatial landscape tainted by fear and dispossession. Through her scrutinizing gaze, the young narrator unveils the *Scheinheiligkeit* of the lies and corruption behind the deceptive and seemingly immaculate *Schein* of *Heimat.* To her own dismay, the narrator sees how alcoholic men control the corrupt village economy, whereas guilt-ridden women are subjugated to their prescribed gender roles that bind them to both Church and household.

While I have demonstrated how Müller's *Niederungen* exposes female discrimination through a "child's-eye views of rural Romania" (Haines and Marven 30), my reading of *Der Fasan* has especially focused on exposing the betrayal of the idealized *Heimat* through sexual dishonour, as exposed by the daughter figure of Amalie. Unlike her parents Windisch and Katharina, Amalie's clear-sightedness and profound sense of disillusionment enables her to see beyond the immaculate *Schein* of *Heimat*. As a victim of the power shift taking place between *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*, the figure of Amalie is shamelessly used as a 'sexual object of trade'

(Bauer, “Objektwerdung” 143) to fulfill her parents’ dream of establishing a new life in West Germany, the territory of the original *Heimat* of their ancestors. In my analysis, I also wished to depict how Müller uses the verbal imagery of *Schein* to lay bare the hierarchical web of corruption and hypocrisy to which Windisch, Katharina, and their daughter Amalie are subjected and in which they are forced to participate.

As in my analysis of *Dorfheimat* and its hypocritical moral discourse, I showed how Müller’s portrayal of *Staatsheimat* in *Herztier* exposes deceit and the abuse of power found in academic institutions and the urban space surrounding them. My reading of this novel highlighted how perfidious and intrusive state policies are mimicked by university authorities who speak in the name of Ceausescu’s nationalist party, exercising control through mob justice and public humiliation. Through the critical lens of the anonymous narrator, my investigation focused on the character of Lola who is lured by the *Schein* of progress she expects to find in the city by studying at the local university; a move motivated by her relentless desire to associate herself romantically with a successful white-collared employee of the state. I have shown here how in the end, her defiance of patriarchal authority and her suspicious suicide leave her with nothing but a *Todesschein* – and further stigma of shame, humiliation and exclusion, even in death.

Through Müllers novels *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* and *Atemschaukel*, I have shown how Müller uses the imagery of *Schein* to depict panopticon-like forms of surveillance. In my reading of *Der Fuchs*, I suggested that Müller relies on the metonymy of *Schein* to portray instances of betrayal and surveillance plaguing her protagonists. In this novel, the duplicitous politics of the

Staatsheimat are found in the novel's leitmotiv "Was glänzt, das sieht"; a leitmotiv that encapsulates both *Schein* and surveillance. Although it is not explicitly expressed in *Atemschaukel*, I argued that the verbal imagery of surveillance behind the sentence "Was glänzt, das sieht" is also operative in this novel. The connection between *Heimat* and surveillance becomes clear through Leo's fear of being scrutinized, exposed, and condemned for his secret homosexuality by a town "wo alle Steine Augen hatten" (Atemschaukel 7). This claustrophobic sense of confinement that stems from the fear of being watched and feeling oppressed in a space of surveillance partially explains why those who escape *Heimat* choose to cut emotional ties with their past. As I have argued in my readings of *Atemschaukel* and *Reisende auf einem Bein*, *Heimat* becomes a false idyll associated with betrayal. It is drained of positive affection for those who have been marginalized and subjected to surveillance and control. Although they have escaped the physical confinement of *Heimat*, those who have left its borders remain haunted and burdened by its emotional and psychological grip. This explains why although the characters Leo (*Atemschaukel*) and Irene (*Reisende*) intentionally repress their *Heimweh*, the *Heimat* is nevertheless still very present in their minds. This repression of *Heimat* is what allows Leo to see an *Ersatz-Heimat* in the *Lager*, whereas it allows Irene to adjust her mindset to a new life of independence and mobility in the city.

In my dissertation, I have also explored how objects and places, as well as colouration and light, give a visual dimension to Müller's oeuvre in order to better grasp that which remains silenced under the surveillance mechanisms, strict moral codes, and political oppression of *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*. I hence argued that space, like gender and morality, is also a lens through which the reader can read the *Hintersinn* of

human interaction dictated by village morality and political ideology in Müller's works. As Müller provides an example of this in her essay "Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich," in which she confides how the landscapes and natural environment awaken her senses and enable her to reflect on her inner state:

> Wenn ich nach quälenden Verhören wieder auf der Straβe ging, der Kopf zerwülhlt, die Augen starr wie eine Gipsfüllung […] [W]enn ich in diesem Zustand auf dem Heimweg war, zeigten mir diese Pflanzen was mit mir los – und mit Wortern nicht zu sagen war. Sie brauchten, um das zu zeigen, nichts als die Düfte, Farben und Formen, die sie sowieso hatten. Sie vergrösserten das Geschehene zur Ungeheuerlichkeit, fügten dieser Vergrösserung, aber schon das Schrumpfen bei, das zum Sichdreinfinden nötig war, um das zuletzt Geschehene einzuordnen ins Voerherige". (93-94)

The passage exemplifies here one of the main contributions I aim to bring to Müller scholarship through this dissertation. Namely, the claim that objects and places, as well as colouration and light provide a visual dimension that articulates rampant hypocrisy and corruption on the one hand, as well as the exploited subject's attempts to cope with it on the other hand. In itself, the passage also captures the imagery associated with Müller's "*landscapes of the dispossessed,*" the distinctive description chosen by the Nobel Prize academy to portray Müller's essays and works of fiction.

I concluded my dissertation with an investigation of the roles that both language and silence play in Müller's *Heimat* discourse. Relying on Müller's essays, I aimed to

expose Müller's relationship to language as one of scepticism and mistrust, an uneasy relationship she developed after seeing how language was easily manipulated and distorted to ensure regressive nationalist ideologies in both the *Dorfheimat* and the *Staatsheimat*. It is in the context of the notion of *Heimat* that I explored the effect of silence found as a recurring theme across Müller's works of fiction. Through a close reading of selected works, I explored the various forms of silence that either protect or burden Müller's characters, yet always constitute a defining trait.

In this regard, behind the deceptive *Schein* of silence found in Müller's essays and narratives lies a plea to reject the traditionalist German concept of *Heimat*. As I wished to demonstrate through my analysis of *Dorfheimat* and *Staatsheimat*, Müller denounces a notion of *Heimat* that is "based on a spatial concept of identity" (Blickle, *Heimat* 15) and which functions on regressive ideologies "constructed by men for men" (*Gender* 55). In this line of reasoning, Müller also rejects the gender inequalities inherent to *Heimat* that revolve around "black and white contrasts between genders—with obvious consequences for dichotomous concepts as varied as city-country, public-private, domestic-foreign, etc" (Blickle, *Gender* 54). Hence, Müller's rejection of the traditional notion of *Heimat*, I argue, should also be seen as a call for a new, feminist notion of *Heimat*; one that aims to break the hetero-normative molds of gender, space and morality by espousing a more progressive, ecclectic and encompassing understanding of *Heimat*; one that ultimately allows for liberty and freedom of speech.

Since she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009, Müller's engagement has lead her to write outspoken interventions on behalf of political dissidents such as Liao Yiwu and Ai Wei Wei who, like her, use artistic creation to call

out and condemn corruption, censorship, and surveillance in authoritarian regimes. In her thank you speech to the Nobel Academy, Müller expressed the hope that the award granted to her might draw attention to the dispossession of peoples around the globe.

> Denn dieser Preis hilft, die geplante Zerstörung von Menschen durch Repression im Gedächtnis zu rufen, die sie Gott sei Dank nicht erleben mussten. Denn es gibt bis heute Diktaturen aller Couleur. Manche dauern schon ewig und erschrecken uns gerade wieder aufs neue, wie der Iran. Andere, wie Russland und China, ziehen sich zivile Mäntelchen an, liberalisieren ihre Wirtschaft – die Menschenrechte sind jedoch noch längst nicht vom Stalinismus oder Maoismus losgelöst. Und es gibt Halbdemokratien Osteuropas, die das zivile Mäntelchen seit 1989 ständig an – und ausziehen, so dass es schon fast zerrissen ist. ("Tischrede" 23)

In the five years since her Nobel Prize speech, Müller's engagement at readings, events, and in the media indicates that she uses her prominence to raise international awareness against duplicitous states. Although still in the making, Müller's legacy is to give a voice to victims of tyrannical regimes that continue to silence opposition while promoting nationalist ideologies for the *schöne Schein* of outward reputation and inward oppression.

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