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‘SCHNAPS AUS DEN DUNKELSTEN PFLAUMEN’<sup>1</sup>: THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE  
AND THE CENTRALITY OF THE HOLOCAUST IN THE WORK OF HERTA MÜLLER

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ABSTRACT

Herta Müller’s work is permeated with images of death and violence associated with the natural world. Plants, processes of growth and decay, and even the earth itself are represented as sentient and threatening, as collaborators with the Ceaușescu regime and enemies of humanity. This trope, part of a wider denaturalisation of food, eating and the natural cycle I term obscene consumption, is particularly evident in the 1994 novel *Herztier* but can be traced back through earlier works to the author’s first and most enduring artistic preoccupation: the Holocaust. Building on theories of the concentrationary imaginary and Lazarean art, this article explores the role of cultural memory in the creation of Müller’s imagery and argues for a re-evaluation of her writing as a significant contribution to the literature of post-fascism both within and beyond Germany.

Herta Müllers Schreiben ist von Bildern des Todes und der Gewalt durchtränkt, die stark mit der Naturwelt verbunden sind. Pflanzen, Prozesse des Wachstums und des Verfalls und sogar die Erde selbst werden als empfindungsfähig und bedrohlich dargestellt und fungieren verschiedentlich als Kollaborateure des Ceaușescu-Regimes und Feinde der Menschheit im Allgemeinen. Dieser Tropus ist Teil einer Denaturalisierung von Lebensmitteln, Essen und dem natürlichen Zyklus, den ich als obszönen Konsum bezeichne, und ist in ihrem Roman *Herztier* (1994) besonders auffällig. Er lässt sich allerdings zurückverfolgen bis hin zu den frühen Schriften als Müllers erstes und dauerhaftestes künstlerisches Interesse: die

Geschichte des Holocausts. Auf der Basis von Theorien wie *concentrationary memory* und 'Lazaristische Kunst' wird dieser Aufsatz die Rolle des kulturellen Gedächtnisses in der Bildsprache Müllers untersuchen und für eine Neubewertung ihres Schreibens als wichtiger Beitrag zur postfaschistischen Literatur innerhalb und außerhalb Deutschlands plädieren.

## INTRODUCTION

Herta Müller is best known to the public as a post-communist writer and outspoken critic of present-day human rights abuses. To date, critical readings of her prose have also tended to focus on her representation of state terror under the Ceaușescu regime and identify trauma as the guiding structural principal and central thematic concern of her writing. This focus, although fruitful, has functioned to obscure the similarly significant role of the Nazi past and cultural memories of the Holocaust in her creation of images and the circulation of metonyms within and across her texts. The legacy of Nazism is not an additional or marginal interest in Müller's writing but rather a foundational concern, underpinning not only the thematic dimensions of her texts – the Nazi regime is often held in productive tension with late Romanian communism and other oppressive systems – but also their very fabric. The interpretative demands she places upon her reader are predicated upon the visual and structural dimensions of fascism that have been ingrained into the post-1945 European imaginary and therefore form a shared repertoire of non-narrative cultural memory.

Analysing the complex and interrelated webs of images across her writing as a product of a specifically post-Holocaust awareness of dehumanisation and destruction opens up fresh avenues for interpreting her texts as works dealing not only with individual trauma and totalitarianism or with universal patterns of degradation and suffering – as discussed by Brigid Haines and Karin Bauer in this volume – but with the experience of cultural memory itself.

In order to introduce this approach to Müller's writing, and to trace the image networks of later texts back to her earlier writing and personal response to the fascist past, this essay focuses on the trope I term 'obscene consumption'. Throughout her novels and non-fiction prose writing, Müller returns to images of plants and the natural world that subvert and denaturalise both human and non-human nutrition, rendering self-sustenance violent and disturbing. In doing this, I argue, Müller appeals to a sense of essential wrongness and violation that is intimately connected to cultural memories of the Holocaust – including specific texts such as 'Todesfuge' by Paul Celan – and to the complicity of normal people in the violence of National Socialism. Images of cannibalism, contamination, decomposition, parasitism and force-feeding throughout her work function as a complex network of association that alerts the reader to structural and secret violence through both universal body horror and the evocation of cultural memory. Her works uncover the potential of collective non-narrative memory, of gesture, object, emotion and affect, as a conduit for communication and recognition of the historical Other that transcends concrete knowledge, specificity and the need for narrative, even while being built on our common awareness of a particular past.

#### THE SHOCK OF REVELATION: MÜLLER'S DELAYED DISCOVERY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO HER WRITING

While it is true that texts such as *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (1992), *Herztier* (1994) and *Heute wäre ich mich lieber nicht begegnet* (1996) are fictionalisations of the author's experience of persecution at the hands of the *Securitate*, the focus in secondary literature on surveillance, interrogation and intimidation, and on stylistic fragmentation as a product of trauma has been at the cost of a fuller understanding of her *oeuvre*. In particular, interpretations of her works as, above all, responses to her personal experience of persecution under communism have failed properly to account for the prominence and function of the

National Socialist past in the complex image networks that are the hallmark of her writing. Although scholars have consistently recognised the importance of this history to Müller's biography – her father fought in the 10th SS Panzerdivision Frundsberg in France and on the Eastern Front, her maternal uncle Matthias (Matz) was killed whilst serving in the SS in Yugoslavia – there has been little thorough engagement with her fiction as part of the literature of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'. Marven discusses the child narrator in *Niederungen* as a 'traumatised individual' but does not identify the source of her trauma other than in relation to Müller's later experience of repression.<sup>2</sup> Eddy discusses the Nazi past as a direct influence on the narrator in *Herztier*, yet implies that the first of 'the two traumas' is somehow completed or passed, by talking in terms of the narrator's 'present as a citizen of Romania and her past as the daughter of a Nazi soldier'.<sup>6</sup> Haines rightly relates the trauma of the child narrator in *Niederungen* to the legacy of fascism and introduces the theory of transgenerational trauma as a means of interpreting her nightmares but does not bring this to her subsequent analysis of *Reisende auf einem Bein*, even though the Nazi past plays a similar (although less prominent) role in the creation of images there.<sup>3</sup>

In her non-fiction writing, newspaper columns and in interviews, Müller has repeatedly discussed her traumatic introduction to the history of Holocaust as an older teenager at boarding school in Timișoara, and the research this revelation, which she at first struggled to believe, led her to undertake:

In erster Linie war das Sachliteratur; auch Zeitschriften, Zeitungen aus dem Bundesrepublik, etwa im Spiegel Fotos von den KZs, es waren Berge von Brillen, es waren Berge von Schuhen, es waren Berge von Leichen. Die Tatsachen waren so beschrieben, daß ich mich nicht mehr wehren konnte, also habe ich auch das, was

man mir in der Schule gesagt hat, hinterfragt und begonnen, mich damit auseinanderzusetzen.<sup>4</sup>

A large part of her initial resistance and later profound personal response to the history of the German fascism came from the narratives of heroism and sacrifice that were the sole focus for discussions of the Second World War in her family and local community, which saw the Nazi era as a time of adventure and German racial ascendancy. Her father's service in the Waffen-SS and unapologetic regret at the German defeat were suddenly cast in a new light and she, and many of her contemporaries from German communities in Banat and Transylvania, began to question their upbringing and the values of their parents. In fact, Müller has identified this confrontation with the Nazi past as the initial impulse behind her starting to write:

Als mein Vater gestorben war und ich diese Einsichten alle hatte, haben die mich zum Schreiben getrieben. Ich habe überhaupt nicht an Veröffentlichung gedacht, 'Niederungen' als Tagebuch geschrieben und Bekannten gezeigt, die selbst geschrieben und mich darauf hingewiesen haben, daß ich, wenn ich diese Art von Beschreibung fortsetzte, damit ein Buch machen könnte. Ich glaube, daß das Schreiben der ersten Prosatexte damals geholfen hat, daß ich an den Sachen nicht verrückt wurde, weil ich sie aufschreiben konnte.<sup>5</sup>

Writing through the shock of this discovery, which, significantly, she has yet to fictionalise, Müller also began a lifelong engagement with the fascist era as a parable or yardstick for her own and others' behaviour in the contemporary world. The precedent of the Nazi regime and what she regarded as her father's moral compromise guided her decision-making when it

came to refusing to collaborate with the Romanian communist regime: ‘Aus der Beschäftigung mit seiner Schuld [...] habe ich die erste Warnung für mein eigenes Leben gezogen: Mitschuld ist niemals Folge, sondern Gleichzeitigkeit in dem, was man tut’.<sup>6</sup> The experiences of those persecuted by the Nazis, such as writers Jorge Semprun, Carl Zuckmayer and Ruth Klüger, as well as non-Jews who resisted collaborating or publicly examined their conscience in the aftermath of National Socialism, such as Inge Müller, have been centrally important to her moral universe and engagement with totalitarianism. Images, situations and characters throughout her work evoke the experience of those who are ‘überrollt’ by history and the insidious structures of exploitation which those who wish for a safe and just world must resist.<sup>7</sup>

#### CONCENTRATIONARY MEMORY AND THE POST-HOLOCAUST *GRUNDREGISTER* OF MÜLLER’S WRITING

Rather than discussing the Nazi past only in relation to texts such as *Niederungen* and *Herztier*, in which it is also an obvious thematic concern, an approach to Müller’s writing that adequately accounts for the impact of the legacy of fascism must also consider its role at the level of image, gesture, emotion and affect. A strong historical awareness of the degradation and dehumanisation inflicted on human beings in the name of National Socialism shines through in descriptions of Romanian cities, scenes of rural ethnic German life and observations of oppression at the political and personal level. Müller’s narrators reinforce the function of this historical knowledge as a basis for interpreting the contemporary world by referencing their own (often limited) knowledge of the history of fascism. Shared and individual conceptions of the nature of fascism and the suffering of the Holocaust become a touchstone for exposing and decoding the submerged violence of Romanian communism, Western capitalism and political systems across the globe. Müller herself provides a useful

term for making such an analysis, in her discussion of a 'Grundregister' or range of significant images, metaphors and pieces of historical knowledge that is the product of every individual's formative experiences and informs their interpretation of the world:

Ich glaube, es gibt bei jedem Menschen ein Grundregister, das sich eingepägt hat, das man sich nicht bewußt, aber wahrscheinlich durch die gefühlsmäßige Veranlagung angeeignet hat. Und es ist wahrscheinlich bei jedem Menschen anders. Und dieses Grundregister ist etwas, was wiederkommt.<sup>8</sup>

Images, metaphors and ideas that, through their memorableness, personal relatability or incomprehensibility become formative elements of this imaginary universe function as touchstones for processing new information and are confirmed in their significance by their recurrence in other contexts. Repetition is unquestionably one of the most prominent features of Müller's writing and the circulation of images within and across her texts means that her readers are able to detect, and attempt to decipher the logic of, this 'Grundregister'.

Familiarity with what is a carefully restricted, although seemingly limitless, repertoire of images or objects means that their recurrence at certain moments creates a sense of *déjà vu* or inevitability, as if the paranoid perspective of her narrators has uncovered a code or pattern that, to quote Karin Bauer in this volume, 'remain mobile and ungraspable by conventional reasoning' but in which the reader is nevertheless partially able to share. Although Müller asserts that the 'Grundregister' differs from person to person, a large number of these recurring images are also related, either through Müller's writing or in wider culture, to events and symbols memorable to larger groups, in particular the history of fascism, and the associative links between her images rely in part on a shared knowledge of European history.



Historical knowledge is important when understanding the use and effectiveness of the recurring image of ‘Milchdisteln’ as a metonym for exploring state-sponsored violence in *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* and *Herztier*, texts in which Müller creates an associative connection between thistledown, the disposal of bodies by the Romanian communist regime and memory of the Holocaust in the region. In *Fuchs*, the river Danube is a focus of contemporary collective awareness of state violence because of its use by the regime as a means for disposing of the bodies of murdered opponents and because of the numerous deaths of those who attempt to flee the country across the river-border with Yugoslavia. Early on in the novel, the horrific function of the river is established by the narrator, who renders it as a cloth covering over disembodied flesh: ‘Der Wind blies und hob das Wasser in die Luft, es war nur ein Tuch mit Falten, kein Wasser. Darunter lagen keine Steine, unter dem Tuch lag Fleisch.’<sup>9</sup> Although the rest of the characters, and society at large, do not speak of the deaths, or of the river in the same way, the narrator’s perception is reinforced by details of the landscape and pieces of folk wisdom that are apparently innocent of the violence they assist in revealing. In particular, the image of thistledown floating on the surface evokes the physical reality of the human remains in the river:

Liviu ist Pauls Schulfreund, er ist seit zwei Jahren Lehrer in einem kleinen Dorf im Süden, wo die Donau das Land abschneidet, wo die Felder in den Himmel stoßen und die verblühten Disteln weiße Kissen in die Donau werfen. (*Fuchs*, p. 57)

Distelflaum ist für die Kissen der Toten, sagen die Mütter, wenn die Kinder abends spät vom Feld kommen. (*Fuchs*, p. 71)

The image of coffin pillows establishes a link between the landscape of the Danube, represented in the plant life, and the crimes of the Ceaușescu regime through which seemingly unremarkable physical details are able to reveal hidden violence; the fragility and numerousness of the seed casings alludes to the vulnerability of the many unknown people who died or were killed beyond the knowledge of their fellow citizens. Also at work in this image is the resonance of the older, and internationally more widely known, history of the Holocaust along the river and the numerous massacres of Jews along its banks which have led historian Martin Pollack, citing Hungarian author Lazlo Vegel, to suggest that the Danube should be thought of as a mass grave in the context of Holocaust history.<sup>10</sup> The mass shootings of around 20,000 Jews in Budapest between December 1944 and January 1945 by the Hungarian Arrow Cross organisation, famously commemorated in the memorial ‘Shoes on the Danube Bank’ are the most well-known atrocities in which the Danube was exploited for the disposal of bodies.<sup>11</sup> However, a massacre in 1942 in Novi Sad, less than 130 kilometres from Müller’s hometown of Timișoara, saw Hungarian forces use machine guns to drive Jewish and Serbian civilians out to the frozen river, shelling the ice on its surface to throw corpses and live prisoners into the water.<sup>12</sup> Müller’s revelation of the presence of the dead through details of the landscape, although focused in *Fuchs* on the cover-up of escapee deaths and political murders, draws upon submerged cultural associations with the use of the river for the disposal of bodies by previous regimes.

The association between thistle-down, death and human vulnerability is further developed and complicated in *Herztier*, where thistles reappear in relation to the narrator’s SS-veteran father and his obsessive weeding of his garden:

Ein Vater hackt den Sommer im Garten. Ein Kind steht neben dem Beet und denkt sich: Der Vater weiß was vom Leben. Denn der Vater steckt sein schlechtes Gewissen

in die dümmsten Pflanzen und hackt sie ab. Kurz davor hat das Kind sich gewünscht, daß die dümmsten Pflanzen vor der Hacke fliehen und den Sommer überleben. Doch sie können nicht fliegen, weil sie erst im Herbst weiße Federn bekommen. (*Herztier*, p. 21)

Here, the identity of the father and the positioning of the thistles as his victims aligns the plants with the victims of National Socialist violence, their fragility and helplessness in the face of his strength, avid energy and quasi-weapon evoking the vulnerability of target populations following Nazi invasion. As Michel Mallet demonstrates in his discussion of reflectivity in his contribution to this special issue, it is not only the object itself but also qualitative details such as, in the case of the thistle, fragility, brittle dryness and diffusion that contribute to the affective resonance and meaning of the image, which varies from context to context. Here, for example, Müller once again zeroes in on the feathery seed casings, but rather than being a potentially comforting or recognising gesture towards the dead (by identifying their presence and imaginatively reasserting elements of formal burial as in the image of the coffin pillows in *Fuchs*), the seed pods represent futility and failure as well as remembrance, their parachute-like qualities resonating with their metaphorical function as a (thwarted) means of escape.

The association between the thistles and the history of the Holocaust is further strengthened by an allusion to the wartime experience of the narrator's Jewish neighbour, Herr Feyerabend. When the narrator discloses her father's past as a member of the Waffen-SS, Herr Feyerabend becomes introspective, recalling having eaten the weeds. Although he gives no further details as to the context in which this happened, the juxtaposition of Herr Feyerabend and the narrator's father in the passage, as well as the narrator's preoccupation

with Herr Feyerabend's Jewishness, point towards his having been forced to subsist on thistles at some point during wartime, presumably as a result of Nazi racial policy.

Ich hatte ihm, als er ohne Bibel in der Sonne saß, erzählt, daß mein Vater ein heimgekehrter SS-Soldat war und seine dümmsten Pflanzen abhackte, daß es Milchdisteln waren. Daß mein Vater bis zu seinem Tod Lieder für den Führer sang. Die Linden blühen im Hof. Herr Feyerabend sah seine Schuhspitzen an, stand auf und sah in die Bäume. Wenn sie blühen, fängt man an zu grübeln, sagte er. Alle Disteln haben Milch, ich habe viele gegessen, mehr als Lindenblütentee. (*Herztier*, p. 143)

The complex range of interpretative possibilities and associations surrounding the image of the thistle across these two novels relies on meaning created within the texts themselves but also draws on established symbolism and cultural memory. The seed pods on the water recall funerary traditions as well as the contemporary and historical disposal of bodies by oppressive regimes. The father's violence towards the weeds in his gardens identifies them with the victims of National Socialism and the allusion to Herr Feyerabend's having eaten thistles during the war evokes general cultural memories of survival in famine conditions as well as potential scenarios in which he in particular suffered under fascist rule. Müller's meaning-creation relies on a weaving-together of the historically familiar and of the interpretative instincts of the reader with her own imaginary universe. In other words, the 'Grundregister' that she establishes through her texts is carefully designed to render the over-determined mental universe of her narrators recognisable, believable and persuasive by agitating the reader's existing historical awareness. Each recurrence of the thistles seems like a confirmation of their significance in their previous appearances, as if the meaning of the

thistle itself is being revealed rather than established throughout the texts, thereby also validating the historically-influenced interpretative instincts of the reader.

The rejection of randomness and attention to recurring details exhibited by Müller's narrators bears a strong resemblance to the post-Holocaust 'Lazarean' art described by Jean Cayrol, a practice of defamiliarisation and critical paranoia designed to 'open up the becalmed aftermath of the war to the persistence of horror'.<sup>13</sup> Cayrol identifies the source of horror as the ongoing contamination of human life resulting from what David Rousset termed the '*universe concentrationnaire*' the world of the Nazi camps in which dehumanisation and destruction of people by people reached a nadir which permanently shifted the limits of the possible. This potential for the destruction of not only lives but humanity itself, the turning of human beings – conceptually – into things, or, through starvation and psychological torture, into predictable creatures, 'that even animals are not',<sup>14</sup> cannot be removed but can, Cayrol argues, be submerged and forgotten. The mission of Lazarean art – art returned from the realm of death – is to jolt 'our faulty memory, which sees the concentrationary as passed [...] into recognition of humanity's new state of concentrationary contamination.'<sup>15</sup>

Building on these ideas, Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman have proposed a theory of 'concentrationary memory', which describes both an automatic response to the history of the Holocaust and a form of remembrance and active awareness that recognises the unprecedented dehumanisation of the concentrationary universe as 'a permanent presence shadowing modern life' and is watchful against its return.<sup>16</sup> This watchful perspective that is one born of fearful knowledge and, like Lazarus, is prevented by experience from being able to ignore indications that the world is 'disfigured, tainted permanently by the presence of death and oblivion.'<sup>17</sup> The idea of the past as passed is rejected as an illusion, the repression of the threat to humanity presented by the novelty of mechanised mass killing: 'Fearful vision is not fooled by this deception [...] It knows that death lurks behind the most banal of images

[...] and it is aware of man's capacity, now that "everything is possible", to turn fellow humans into everyday objects (fabric, fertilizer, soap).<sup>18</sup> Daily reality is, from this perspective, never innocuous or safe, but rather 'a husk or stage-set hiding unimaginable horror', which relies on the complacency produced by familiarity to conceal violence and dehumanisation, both past and present.<sup>19</sup> To the Lazarean, this false sense of security is obvious and alarming but for the uninitiated the concentrationary may remain unseen until it can no longer be fought off, until another regime or system of power enacts destruction on a mass scale.

Pollock and Silverman draw most of their examples of the spontaneous recognition of the concentrationary from visual culture, discussing how certain images (whether in film or literature) function as cultural memory cues and can be employed by those engaged in the active practice of concentrationary memory to alert and place on their guard those for whom suspicion is not natural. The non-Lazarean nevertheless shares a basic 'Grundregister' when it comes to memory of the Holocaust:

European civilisation, even in its most banal manifestations, reveals traces of the horror of the Holocaust. The architecture of buildings, the smoke from the factory chimneys, a landscape, mundane objects, scars on the body, recall, in Proustian fashion, the death camps, as if the thin veneer of everyday life is liable, at times, to dissolve into the overwhelming trauma of genocide.<sup>20</sup>

As they observe, these reminders of the camps are not restricted to the cultural shorthand of watchtowers, cattle trucks and barbed wire that Antoine de Baeque identifies as the 'bedrock' of modern cinema,<sup>21</sup> but rather include images, gestures and details whose affective as well as visual dimensions evoke cultural memories of the psychological and physical effects of Nazi

violence. The slippage between the present and the past that these cues produce, and the potential they hold for bringing shades of meaning to the present are features that Müller recognises and exploits as part of her mission to uncover and warn against abuses of power and threats to humanity.

In an interview conducted shortly after her emigration to the Federal Republic in 1987, she related to Klaus Hensel how these kind of slippages occurred for her during her father's final illness, revealing how important these momentary visual observations are to her as the catalysts for complex, subtle and productive considerations:

Nur es ist mir in der Zeit schon, als er vor dem Tod war, immer öfter eingefallen. Er ist von einem Krankenhaus ins andere überwiesen worden und auf dem Weg sind wir zum Friseur, weil er sich das Haar scheiden lassen wollte. Ich saß dabei; als ich das Haar fallen sah, sind mir die Bilder aus dem KZ eingefallen. Es ist mir ständig was dazu eingefallen, auch früher, wenn er sich die Schuhe putzte, der SS-Drill mit den glänzenden Stiefeln. Ein Tag, bevor er gestorben ist, war das Gesicht ganz spitz geworden, es war eigentlich nur noch ein Knochengestüst, und das hat mich dann an die Menschen auf den KZ-Bildern erinnert. Ich mußte plötzlich diese Identität herstellen und ich sah einen Täter und ein Opfer in zeitlicher Verschiebung nebeneinander.<sup>22</sup>

The relationship between the present and the remembered images is not one of straightforward comparison in the sense of quantifying similarity and difference but rather of comparison in the sense of unresolvable juxtaposition. The two images reverberate without conclusion, drawing attention to the tension between the guilty father and the remembered images of the concentration camp survivors, and between the sick old man and the imagined

young SS soldier but also to the impact of cultural memory on interpretation and emotional response in the present. Cultural memory limits and directs our response to experience even in the realm of the pre-verbal; the past and the present become iterations of one another and the human body itself can never be freed from the presence of its abused counterpart.

## CARNIVOROUS PLANTS AND THE COMPLICIT EARTH: THE CONCENTRATIONARY PASTORAL IN *HERZTIER*

Müller's works contain numerous examples of scenes in which evocations of the Holocaust have an impact on meaning and direct the response of the reader. Most obviously, the deportation of 17-year-old Leo Auberg to a Soviet labour camp in *Atemschaukel* (2009) introduces images of cattle trucks, barbed wire, soldiers and watchtowers which exist in productive tension with cultural memories of the Nazi concentration camps. The extreme hunger of the camp inmates, their struggles with ill-fitting shoes and dangerous cold, and their deaths from illness and malnutrition all resemble details from accounts by concentration camp survivors. In one particularly jarring scene, the camp commander's mistress requests the hair of a dead woman in order to make herself a draught excluder, evoking one of the most notorious uses of human beings as products by the National Socialists.<sup>23</sup> In *Niederungen*, by contrast, more diffuse evocations of the Nazi past arise in the daily routine of village life. The father's boots recall army boots as he crushes delicate frost patterns in the grass,<sup>24</sup> and he uses 'nerve burning' poison to rid his land of 'de[m] verfluchte[n] Pilz' (*Niederungen*, p. 24). The boots, in which the men of the village are laced 'bis zum Hals' also appear in a scene in which a stray dog is kicked to death, an example in which the normalised brutality of rural, farming life with regards to animals that are perceived as burdensome or unnecessary tips over into almost orgiastic violence (*Niederungen*, p. 24).



The way in which the child narrator of *Niederungen* reacts to the utilitarian treatment of animals by adult members of the Banat-Swabian community is one example of the way in which the Lazarean perspective of hypervigilance perceives the structural dimensions of National Socialism in the post-war environment. Their brutality is connected through this critical attentiveness not only to their personal ideology but to the still-present concentrationary universe, in which living beings are regarded and treated as superfluous beyond the ability of their bodies to perform required functions. The utilitarian relationship between humans and animals in the rural settings of texts such as *Niederungen*, *Drückender Tango* and *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* is both a true depiction of agricultural life and a means of exposing the violent potential of the parent generation and their unreconstructed fascist views. The connection between utilitarian perspective on the value of life with the history of the village fathers' history as SS-men is established in part through the reader's cultural awareness of Nazi ideology and reinforced in more gratuitous incidents such as the scene with the stray dog. This historical resonance in turn increases the affective potential of a range of imagery related to farming and the natural world used to draw attention to violence and cruelty inherent to society at large. Marvin identifies the representation of the countryside as a way for Müller to express ideas incompatible with the communist regime:

In these (pre-1987) texts, the projection of violence onto nature also functions as a veiled reference to the political repression which cannot be depicted directly. Just as descriptions of the rural Banat also function as a microcosm of the repressive political situation, Müller's consciousness of the violence of the Ceaușescu regime is displaced onto seemingly unpolitical, pastoral scenes.<sup>25</sup>

However, this projection of violence onto pastoral scenes is not limited to the early texts and in fact intensifies, or rather crystallises, in later works such as *Herztier* and *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, in which it is nature itself, rather than those whose livelihoods rely on it, that presents a threat to human life. In particular, the potential for plants to obliterate traces of human beings, to turn human remains into food *for* humans and to disguise violence by creating an innocuous surface is not only related to the actions of the Ceauşescu regime but also intimately connected to concentrationary memory and the legacy of Nazi violence, as closer analysis of the development of this trope in Müller's writing demonstrates.

This manufactured sense of unease around agriculture and nature is obvious in Müller's explicitly autobiographical texts. She has repeatedly characterised the natural cycle as something she associates with destruction, identifying the threat of decomposition and the reliance of living things on each other's deaths as a source of fear in her early years:

Ich dachte in der Landschaft immer an den Tod, kannte vom Besuch der Toten den grünlichen Knorpel an den Ohren, wo die Pflanzen schon die Zähne drin haben, ungeduldig mit der Verwesungsarbeit loslegen, mitten im schönsten Zimmer der Häuser, nicht erst im Grab.<sup>26</sup>

Es war ein Ekel, es war eine Art von Angst [...] Auch dass die Pflanzen uns fressen [...] habe ich auf dem Feld den Eindruck gehabt, dass die Pflanzen uns fressen, dass im Grunde genommen jetzt bist du auf dem Feld, du arbeitest und irgendwann bist du auf dem Friedhof... dann wachsen die auf dir und auf den Gräbern. Und wir essen das jetzt, den Mais und den Weizen, und das Gemüse, die Melonen: und wir essen das jetzt und die ernähren uns, aber die ernähren uns doch nur, weil sie uns später haben wollen und weil sie uns später auch auffressen wollen oder so.<sup>27</sup>

In her fiction, the connection between this fearful denaturalisation of the life-cycle and knowledge of the Holocaust is evident in the language surrounding the narrator's father and his (imagined) experiences as an SS soldier. As demonstrated in the scene of gardening described above, the father's daily activities of weeding become an abstract iteration of the violence in which the narrator imagines he has participated, evoking the bodily experience of the perpetrator in the act of killing.

The haunting image of the obsessive father hacking at the ground to uproot weeds is expanded in the repeated metaphor of 'making graveyards', which appears throughout *Herztier*: in contrast to the plants, the father 'mußte nie fliehen. Er war singend in die Welt marschiert. Er hatte in der Welt Friedhöfe gemacht und die Orte schnell verlassen' (*Herztier*, p. 21). As is typical of Müller, 'making graveyards' functions combines metaphor with the disturbingly concrete, as the father's labour in the garden and determination to escape the sites of his crimes also evoke the physical reality of mass killing on the Eastern Front, in which the systematic concealment of bodies by the Nazis relied on the manual labour and botanical expertise of soldiers and bystanders.<sup>28</sup> Allied observers such as Vassily Grossman<sup>29</sup> recorded the German use of particular plants to cover up mass graves:

Sie wollten die Leichen und mit ihnen die Gräber verschwinden lassen. Für immer. Oft verlangt das geradezu gärtnerische Fähigkeiten. Welche Bäume, welche Sträucher eignen sich, über den Totengruben gepflanzt zu werden [...] ? [...] In den deutschen Vernichtungslagern Treblinka und Belzec in Ostpolen zum Beispiel wurde der Boden an den Stellen, wo die Überreste der Opfer vergraben worden ware, zuerst umgeackert wie ein Feld, das der Bauer zur Aussaat vorbereitet, dann wurden

Lupinen, auch Wolfsbohnen genannt, ausgesät und Jungwald gepflanzt. Kiefern, die auf dem sandigen Grund gut gedeihen.<sup>30</sup>

Seen in this context, the compulsive weeding of the father in *Herztier* becomes a grotesque parody of Nazi efforts to disguise their crimes. The objects of the father's guilt literally spring from the soil and his summer-long efforts to cut them down are suggestive of both abstract violence against human beings and actual historical efforts to prevent traces from rising to the surface.

The potential for interpreting the phrase 'making graveyards' as a reference to concrete reality is increased through its repetition in relation to the Romanian communist regime: 'Ein paar Jahre nach Hitler weinten sie alle um Stalin. (...) Seither helfen sie Ceausescu Friedhöfe machen.' (*Herztier*, p. 183) *Herztier* and its predecessor *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* contain examples of the Romanian communist regime exploiting features of the landscape and the natural cycle to disguise the murder of its citizens, both actively – in threatening to drown opponents in the river – and passively, by exploiting agricultural and natural processes to destroy evidence:

Mährescher sind hoch, sagt der Fahrer, das ist gut, wenn man oben sitzt, sieht man im Weizen nicht die Toten liegen. [...] auch der Weizen ist hoch, sagt er, von den Hunden der Soldaten sieht man nur die Augen. Nur für die Flucht ist der Weizen zu klein. [...] wenn man GOTTESACKER sagt, meint man den Friedhof, sagt er. Ich war auf dem Mährescher, drei Sommer war ich an der Grenze, beim Ernten allein auf dem Feld, und zwei Winter beim Ackern, beim Ackern nur in der Nacht. Das Feld stank süß, zum Weizenfeld müßte man GOTTESACKER sagen (*Fuchs*, p. 73).

Once again, the graveyards made by the regime are metaphorical and real at the same time; the open fields are not consecrated and the presence of bodies is something the local people are required to ignore, yet the use of those fields as a location for state killing and for covering up that killing is established and organised. Similarly, the appearance of dead bodies in the river (*Herztier*, 114) could be understood as the result of failed escape attempts or suicides but the threats of the secret police ('wir stecken dir ins Wasser') confirm that they actively exploit the river as a means of disposing of enemies (*Herztier*, 106). The open secret of the killing zones is one in which the regime and its citizens share, with the latter forced into complicity in the obliteration of evidence:

Das fließende Wasser, die fahrenden Güterzüge, die stehenden Felder waren Todesstrecken. Im Maisfeld fanden Bauern beim Ernten zusammengedorrte oder aufgeplatzte, von Krähen leergepickte Leichen. Die Bauern brachen den Mais und ließen die Leichen liegen, weil es besser war, sie nicht zu sehen. Im Spätherbst ackerten die Traktoren. (*Fuchs*, p. 69)

The phrase 'making graveyards' not only functions as a metonym for all activities that contribute to the realisation of the goals of oppressive regimes but also refers directly to the concrete reality of the perpetration and concealment of crimes against humanity, past and present. Once again, the complex associations evoked by the ambivalent images Müller deploys are influenced by cultural memory in its affective, bodily and abstract imaginative dimensions.

## ENCOUNTERING THE ROMANIAN HOLOCAUST: CONTAMINATED LANDSCAPES

### IN 'EINE SOMMERREISE IN DIE MARAMURESCH'

The close association between the rural landscape and state-sponsored mass murder in Müller's writing was established long before she was able to address the crimes of the Ceaușescu regime openly, in reflections on an entirely different history. In her 1986 piece 'Überall wo man den Tod gesehen hat: Eine Sommerreise in die Maramuresch', Müller follows in the footsteps of fellow Romanian-German authors of the 1970s and 1980s, including Claus Stephani, Franz Hodjak and Horst Fassel, by producing a travelogue of a visit to sites associated with the Holocaust in northern Romania. During the Second World War, Maramuresch was occupied by fascist Hungary, whose forces collaborated with the Third Reich in ghettoising and deporting Jewish citizens of the region. In this account, which includes visits to a number of small towns close to the Hungarian-Romanian border, Müller can be seen experimenting with the depiction of landscapes and the natural cycle in direct response to the history of the Holocaust:

Und unterm Himmel, eingeschlossen in hohe, gemauerte Zäune seh ich die jüdischen Friedhöfe. Graue Steine im Wiesengras am Straßenrand. Zwei Männer mähen die rotbraunen Rispen wie Haar. Menschen wie Gras. Wilde Margareten mit weißen Zähnen, blaue Glocken und Blätter wie Pfeile. Wie ist dieser Kreislauf der kleinen, dunkelroten Kirschen in den Friedhofsbäumen. Große Krähen sitzen auf den Ästen und spucken blutige Kerne aus.<sup>31</sup>

The blurring of boundaries between human hair and grass is particularly striking here as a symbolic expression of the legacy of fascist mass murder. The phrase 'Menschen wie Gras' conveys the scale of Nazi exterminatory policy as well as its biological motivations, while the

focus on hair recalls one of the primary symbols of the ‘emerging iconography’ of Holocaust memory.<sup>32</sup> This equation of hair and grass is suggestive of the presence of bodies just beneath the surface of the soil and the associated action of mowing seems directly to anticipate later images of the father’s obsessive hoeing in *Herztier*. The dry red-brown of the fronds of grass reverberates with the luscious crimson of the cherries, evoking dried and fresh blood, with the use of the term ‘Kreislauf’ suggesting that the source of the cherries’ colour and association with violence lies beneath the earth’s surface, which is unable – as demonstrated by the growing ‘hair’ and the contamination of the fruit on the trees – to contain the horror of its history. The ambivalence in the juxtaposition of the fragile, vulnerable grass and the carnivorous cherry trees anticipates the representation of plants as both victims (the thistles) and accomplices (the wheat that disguises human remains) in later texts. The presence of the crow, a bird associated with carrion and battlefields, reinforces the impression of the graveyard as a space of recent death or even a dismembered and still-bleeding body, reminiscent of the river in *Fuchs*, while the rendering of the petals of the daisies – a possible reference to the ‘Margarete’ of Celan’s ‘Todesfuge’ – as teeth and the leaves of the bluebells (a flower associated with blood<sup>33</sup>) as arrows likewise suggests that the threat to life has not passed.

In addition to the obvious imagery of violence and horror, the contamination of food within the landscape of death implies that the narrator, along with any other person who occupies that space, is at risk of unwitting complicity in the violence of the scene. Once again, the natural cycle of nutrition becomes a source of horror when submitted to examination by concentrationary awareness. Unable to find evidence of the history of the Holocaust in Maramuresch – the graveyard she visits predates the Holocaust – Müller’s traveller finds proof of the submerged history of the region in the taste of its fruit: ‘Wie schmecken die Kirschen, wie schmeckt dieses Heu. Woher sind die schwarzen Heidelbeeren,

die ich von einer Bäuerin mit dunkelblauen Händen kauf. Ich eß. Meine Zähne sind schwarz und der Mund ist mir bitter.' (*Februar*, p. 105) Not only the peaceful cemetery but the entirety of the rural landscape is rendered threatening and potentially contaminated through this concentrationary perception, which recognises the insufficiency of memorials to convey what occurred in the region, either practically or emotionally: 'Denkmäler, Friedhöfe, Kirchen. Zweimal war Himmler persönlich in Oberwischau, hat das Judenghetto besucht und die Todeslisten überprüft. Unfälle, Krankheiten. Die Wiesen wiegen sich.' (*Februar*, p. 115) The everyday deaths of the people in the cemetery are held in a state of tension with the knowledge of victims of the Holocaust whose deaths, and the location of their remains is unknown. The phrase 'die Wiesen wiegen sich' hints at the co-presence of sites of historical murder in the local area and the ongoing presence of those deportees who were denied a final resting place. The restlessness of earth suggests, as the bleeding cherries and the flesh-filled river did elsewhere, that the entire landscape is a charnel house disguised by the everyday rhythms of rural life and the collective amnesia, or feigned ignorance, of the population.

#### OBSCENE CONSUMPTION AND CONCENTRATIONARY BODY HORROR

Human consumption – as introduced in the above example of the blueberries – is a key semantic field in Müller's writing. Eating is consistently associated with disgust, coercion and the brutalisation of human beings, as well as the experience of repressing guilt. A foundational image in trying to understand Müller's use of food and eating can be found outside her work, in perhaps her most important intertext and literary inspiration: Paul Celan's 'Todesfuge'. This key text of post-war German-language literature, which contains some of the most enduring metaphorical expressions of the reality of the Holocaust, was of central importance in Müller's personal coming to knowledge with regards to the Nazi past as a teenager and must be understood as a strong influence on certain elements of her works'



'Grundregister'. In particular, the image of 'die schwarze Milch der Frühe' that the Jewish prisoners are compelled to drink sets an example of subverting human relationships with food and removing the association with nutrition that identifies food with life: "wir trinken dich nachts / wir trinken dich morgens und mittags / wir trinken dich abends / wir trinken und trinken." Beyond the perverted image of the milk itself, it is the compulsive drinking of the poem's protagonists that encapsulates powerlessness and violation, the permeation of their bodies with the corruption and death of their surroundings.

Compulsive drinking as a form of obscene consumption is a noticeable trope in texts such as *Herztier* and *Fuchs*, where it functions variously as a method of suppressing guilt and as evidence of complicity with, or corruption by, the regime. Poverty-stricken abattoir workers steal blood to feed their children, agents of the secret police eat poisonous, unripe plums and sparrows descend from their barbed-wire nests to drink from puddles of oil. Much like in Celan's text, drinking is transformed from a life-giving action to a form of self-harm which is a parody of the natural cycle of life. This is made most obviously in the father in *Herztier* whose alcoholism is strongly related to his history in the 'Waffen-SS'. The image of 'black milk' is subtly evoked in the description of the alcohol he uses to repress his guilty conscience and maintain his silence regarding his wartime experiences:

Die Friedhöfe hält der Vater unten im Hals, wo zwischen Hemdkragen und Kinn der Kehlkopf steht. Der Kehlkopf ist spitz und verriegelt. So können die Friedhöfe nie hinauf über seine Lippen gehen. Sein Mund trinkt Schnaps *aus den dunkelsten Pflaumen*, und seine Lieder sind schwer und besoffen für den Führer. (*Herztier*, p. 21, my emphasis)

The 'dunkelsten Pflaumen' – whose colour distantly evokes the unnatural milk of 'Todesfuge' – not only epitomise the extremity of the father's need to obliterate his past in terms of practical considerations (dark fruit is sweeter and therefore produces stronger schnaps) but also suggest an unnamed horror in their provenance akin to that of the blueberries in 'Sommerreise'. The relationship between consumption and culpability is cemented in this passage by the location of 'his' graveyards in his oesophagus, but Müller's extension of the image from her earlier text on the Holocaust in Northern Romania hints that the plums may be contaminated by the very graveyards that they serve to repress. In subsequent passages, the connection between the Schnaps and the father's Nazi past is further developed through images of gluttony and force-feeding, which reinforce the evocation of choking and nausea at work in the image of the graveyards that obstruct the father's throat.

Seine Leber ist vom Saufen so groß wie die einer gestopften Gans, hatte der Arzt gesagt. [...] Der Vater war dürr wie eine Bohnenstange. Nur seine Leber war gewachsen, seine Augen und seine Nase. Und die Nase des Vaters war ein Schnabel, wie bei einer Gans'. (*Herztier*, pp. 71-2)

The visceral description of the father's cirrhotic and cancer-damaged liver as a force-fed goose communicates the powerlessness of the alcoholic whose consumption has led to deathly illness but, when considered against the backdrop of the father's guilt as a former SS-man, also evokes his corruption. The spasmodic swallowing in Celan's poem is mirrored yet inverted in the image of the perpetrator as a deformed and monstrous creature who has subjected himself to a lifetime of voluntary poisoning in order to repress his past. His transformation into an animal choking down death and guilt stands in marked contrast to the

protagonists of Celan's poem, whose abjection harms them but does not rob them of their humanity.

Elsewhere in *Herztier*, Müller uses these ideas of force-feeding and eating without nourishment, which communicate the powerless and abjection of the individual through obscene consumption, to create her epitomising image of the Romanian communist regime:

Georg schenkte mir ein grünes rundes Brett mit einem Griff. Auf dem Brett saßen sieben gelbe, rote und weiße Hühner. Durch ihre Hälsen und Bäuche liefen Schnüre. Sie waren unter dem Brett mit einer Holzkugel aneinander gebunden. Die Kugel schaukelte, wenn man das Brett in der Hand hielt. Die Schnüre spannten sich wie die Speichen eines Regenschirms. Ich schwenkte das Brett in der Hand, und die Hühner senkten die Köpfe und hoben sie wieder. Ich hörte ihre Schnäbel auf dem grünen Brett klappern. Auf die Rückseite des Bretts hatte Georg geschrieben:

Anleitung: Bei zu viel Kummer schwenken Sie das Brett in meine Richtung

Ihr Neuntöter (*Herztier*, p. 165)

The wooden chicken game, which the protagonists seem to regard as a metaphor for their own experience and nickname the 'Hühnerqual', represents birds pecking seed from the ground as they would in reality but the toy's superficial mimetic intentions are undermined through the critical, Lazarean perspective of the narrator. Rather than replicating an everyday scene, the toy reproduces the structures of power that render the everyday of the dictatorship horrific and exploitative. Here Müller evokes the Arendtian vision of 'ghastly marionettes' discussed by Brigid Haines in this volume, a deformation of the human being through suffering and deprivation into something predictable, robbed of its natality. The tapping of

the chickens' beaks on the board becomes a parody of sustaining consumption in which the motions of eating are divorced from nourishment and wellbeing. In this way it is a variation on the compulsive drinking of the father and an expression of structural violence akin to that found in 'Todesfuge'.

The image of the chicken game is further complicated and affirmed as a central, epitomising image of the novel by Georg's choice of the word 'Neuntöter' as the sign-off to his accompanying note. The red-backed shrike (or 'butcher bird' in colloquial English) is notorious for its method of storing live prey in order to maintain access to fresh food. Impaling mice, insects and smaller birds on thorn bushes and, where available, barbed wire, the shrike creates a 'larder' in which injured yet living creatures are kept and consumed at leisure. The powerless and futility established in the image of the wooden chickens tied down and forced to peck is extended in the associated image of immobilised, helpless but conscious prey animals held at the mercy of a hungry predator to communicate the vulnerability of human beings to oppressive regimes. The tension between the superficial normality of the action of eating and the horrific reality of the chickens' immobilisation and coercion is redolent of Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the football game between Auschwitz guards and members of the 'Sonderkommando' as the epitome of abjection.<sup>34</sup> Their illusory freedom only serves to underline their powerlessness when seen in the full context of a totalitarian regime.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout her work, Herta Müller demonstrates acute awareness of the function of cultural memory and our reception of the past. In her texts, metonymic objects such as barbed wire, army boots and sacks of human hair are combined with the depictions of powerlessness and oppression, such as force-feeding or the disposal of literal and metaphorical bodies, to evoke

history not merely as it is recorded or formally learned but also as it is lived with, known and felt by contemporary subjects. Müller exploits the familiar pathways of our historically-determined collective imaginary to increase the efficacy and interconnectedness of her imaginary world, creating networks of original and found images that build upon a fundamental post-Holocaust ‘Grundregister’ to explore the nature of oppression throughout time and space. These networks move the ‘dialogue’ between reader and text beyond the level of narrative and the directly symbolic into the realm of affect and intuition, promoting a process of decoding reality that is strongly reminiscent of the Lazarean gaze described by Cayrol. Her virtuoso control in subtly evoking history in order to create contrasts, connections and interpretative possibilities developed out of her early personal confrontation with the Nazi past but finds fullest expression in novels such as *Herztier* and *Atemschaukel*. Although not yet fully appreciated as an author of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Müller is unparalleled in her exploration of the internal, personal mechanisms of cultural memory in the aftermath of German fascism.

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<sup>1</sup> Herta Müller, *Herztier*, Frankfurt am Main 2010, p. 183. Further references appear in the text as *Herztier*.

<sup>2</sup> Lyn Marven, “‘In allem ist der Riss’: Trauma, Fragmentation, and the Body in Herta Müller’s Prose and Collages”, *MLR*, 100 (2005), 396-411, (397).

<sup>3</sup> Brigid Haines, “‘The Unforgettable Forgotten’: The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller’s *Reisende auf einem Bein*”, *GLL*, 55 (2002), 266-81 (267).

<sup>4</sup> Herta Müller in Klaus Hensel, “‘Alles was ich tat, das hieß jetzt: warten’. Die ausgewanderte rumäniendeutsche Schriftstellerin Herta Müller im Gespräch mit Klaus Hensel”, *Frankfurter Rundschau* (August 6 1987), ZB p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Herta Müller in Hensel, “‘Alles was ich tat’, ZB p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Herta Müller, *In der Falle*, Berlin 1996, p. 8.

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<sup>7</sup> Herta Müller, *Eine warme Kartoffel ist ein warmes Bett*, Hamburg 1991, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Beverley Eddy, 'Schule der Angst: Gespräch mit Herta Müller', *GQ*, 72 (1998), 329-39 (331).

<sup>9</sup> Herta Müller, *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1992, p. 13.

Further references appear in the text as *Fuchs*.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Pollack, *Kontaminierte Landschaften*. 2nd edn. Vienna 2014, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> Pollack, *Kontaminierte Landschaften*, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945*, Oxford 1990, p.503.

<sup>13</sup> Max Silverman, 'Fearful Imagination: 'Night and Fog and Concentrationary Memory'', in *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics as resistance in Alain Renais's Night and Fog*, ed. Max Silverman, New York 2011, pp. 199-213 (p. 205).

<sup>14</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *On the Origins of Totalitarianism*, Orlando 1976, p. 438.

<sup>15</sup> Silverman, 'Fearful Imagination', p. 205.

<sup>16</sup> Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, 'The Politics of Memory: From Concentrationary Memory to Concentrationary Memories', in *Concentrationary Memories: Totalitarian terror and cultural resistance*, ed. Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, London 2014, pp. 1-28 (p. 16).

<sup>17</sup> Silverman, 'Fearful Imagination', p. 201.

<sup>18</sup> Silverman, Max, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, New York 2013, p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Silverman, 'Fearful Imagination', p. 203.

<sup>20</sup> Silverman, Max, 'Horror and the Everyday in Post-Holocaust France: *Nuit et brouillard* and concentrationary art', *French Cultural Studies*, 17 (2006), 5-18 (7).

<sup>21</sup> Antoine de Baeque,

<sup>22</sup> Herta Müller in Hensel, "Alles was ich tat", ZB p. 2

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<sup>23</sup> Herta Müller, *Atemschaukel*, Frankfurt am Main 2011, p. 208. Further references appear in the text.

<sup>24</sup> Herta Müller, *Niederungen*, Frankfurt am Main 2011, pp. 47-48. Further references appear in the text.

<sup>25</sup> Lyn Marven, *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German: Herta Müller, Libuse Moníková, Kerstin Hensel*, Oxford 2005, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> Herta Müller, 'Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich. Kann Literatur Zeugnis ablegen?', *T+K*, 155 (2002), 6-17 (8).

<sup>27</sup> Herta Müller, *Die Nacht ist aus Tinte gemacht. Herta Müller erzählt ihre Kindheit im Banat*, ed. Thomas Böhm and Klaus Sander, Berlin 2009.

<sup>28</sup> See Father Patrick Desbois, *In Broad Daylight: The Secret Procedures Behind the Holocaust by Bullets*, New York 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Vasily Grossman, 'The Hell of Treblinka', in *The Road: Stories, Journalism, and Essays*, London 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Pollack, *Kontaminierte Landschaften*, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Müller, Herta, 'Überall wo man den Tod gesehen hat: Sommerreise nach Maramuresch', in *Barfußiger Februar*, Berlin 1990, pp. 101-21 (pp. 104-05). Further references appear in the text as *Februar*.

<sup>32</sup> Later in the piece, the narrator directly addresses the history of the Nazi use of human bodies as natural resources, a reversal and completion of Müller's paranoia about the natural cycle: 'Und wenn ich jetzt sterben müßte, wär mein Haar keine Bürste, meine Knochen kein Mehl. Mein Tod wäre deutsch wie der Tod meines Vaters.' *Februar*, p. 105.

<sup>33</sup> In Greek mythology, the hyacinth was said to have sprung from the blood of the god Hyacinthus following his accidental slaying by Apollo. The flower of the story has also been identified as the bluebell and as the iris in different retellings.

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<sup>34</sup> Max Silverman, 'Haneke and the Camps', in *Holocaust Intersections: Genocide and Visual Culture at the New Millennium*, ed. Axel Bangert, Robert S. C. Gordon and Libby Saxon, New York 2013, pp. 84-97 (p. 88).