

FROM INJURY TO SILENCE:
METAPHORS FOR LANGUAGE
IN THE WORK OF HERTA MÜLLER

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ABSTRACT

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From Injury to Silence: Metaphors for Language in the Work of Herta Müller

Herta Müller represents physical suffering and repression in her works, often reflecting on the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, and her constant interest in language and reflexivity towards writing have led her to develop sophisticated metaphors that she uses to illuminate language and its functioning under such subjugation. With reference to her fiction and non-fiction, I demonstrate how she uses concrete ideas to understand linguistic phenomena. She evokes injury, destruction, force, life, space, touch, silence, and other bodily experiences to make sense of language in the condition of suffering from social oppression. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory within the framework of cognitive literary studies, I argue that Müller both relies on and estranges the ways in which people speak and think about language. Language is imagined differently depending on the circumstances and in close relationship with various sensory experiences. The complexity of the relationship between language and thought problematises the process of metaphor building and makes it difficult to identify its key aspects across different contexts and sensory modalities. Müller's tropes are easy to experience, but difficult to analyse. The idea of language does not exist as a stable concept and is regularly reimagined in her texts; but its meaning is not arbitrary and depends on bodily experience. While Müller evokes such experience to understand language in the condition of suffering, she can also use linguistic concepts to elucidate more abstract ideas. Language can be regarded as an abstract or concrete phenomenon depending on the relevant bodily, linguistic, and cultural contexts. This project contributes to the study of Müller's poetics as well as to the literary critical interpretation of embodied cognition, and develops the use of conceptual metaphor theory for literary analysis. It also seeks to develop understanding of the role of bodily experience in the metaphorical conceptualisation of language.

PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

The text does not exceed the prescribed word limit of 80,000 words.

An earlier version of Chapter One has been published as ‘Metaphorical Conceptualization of Injurious and Injured Language in Herta Müller’ in the *Modern Language Review*. An extended version of Chapter Two has been accepted for publication and will appear as ‘Metaphorical Conceptualization of Destructive and Destructible Language in the Work of Herta Müller’ in the *Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur*. A version of Chapter Three has been accepted for publication as ‘Language as a Force for Good in the Work of Herta Müller’ and will appear in the *German Life and Letters*. In the last section of Chapter Four, I draw on the ideas first developed while reading for M.Phil. at the University of Cambridge and subsequently published as ‘Unpacking the Suitcases: Autofiction and Metaphor in Herta Müller’s *Atemschaukel*’ in *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*. A shorter version of Chapter Seven has been accepted for publication as ‘The Trope of Silence in the Work of Herta Müller’ and will appear in the *Oxford German Studies*. A part of the Conclusion has been published as ‘Is Language as We Know It Still Relevant for the Digital Age?’ on the *openDemocracy* media platform (see Bibliography).

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INTRODUCTION

Herta Müller writes about suffering caused by social oppression, often depicting the dictatorial regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Her literary works are marked by her first-person narrative perspective and a principled confrontation with totalitarianism and illiberalism. She is deeply interested in language and regularly uses metaphors to illuminate its functioning in the conditions of suffering and subjugation.

Doris Mironescu argues that Müller's interest in language stems from her early experiences 'marked by the encounter between German and Romanian words and meanings'. According to Mironescu, Müller, learning a new language, could see the world differently and deconstruct 'the most basic assumptions about words'.¹ Katrin Kohl also recognises that Müller is acutely aware of her own use of language: considering her poetological writing, Kohl observes that 'Müller eschews systematic theory, aesthetic philosophizing, and narratological jargon. [...] She regards poetics not as a stable system but as an ongoing process that is responsive to life and work.'² While Müller is highly interested in language, then, she does not have a systematic theory of it in her writing. Lyn Marven attributes this lack of system to the effects of trauma: she argues that trauma unites the body, language, and narrative, and leads to their fragmentation. Marven posits that '[t]raumatic events evident in Müller's texts are caused by, and rooted in, physical experience: torture and interrogation, threat of violence, and, ultimately, death.'³ These events preclude structural coherence. Therefore, both bilingualism and trauma might underlie the inconsistency in Müller's vision of language.

I will demonstrate that Müller highlights the tentative relationship between language and the world. Rather than presenting a systematic theory of language, she accentuates its multifarious meanings. In contrast to the Chomskyan paradigm of universal grammar and the structural approaches to language, I do not assume that language is a systematic phenomenon.

¹ Doris Mironescu, 'Uncomfortable Spaces: Language and Identity in Herta Müller's Work', *World Literature Studies*, 7.2 (2015), 60–70 (pp. 60, 63).

² Katrin Kohl, 'Beyond Realism: Herta Müller's Poetics', in *Herta Müller*, ed. by Brigid Haines and Lyn Marven (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 16–31 (p. 21).

³ Lyn Marven, *Body and Narrative in Contemporary Literatures in German: Herta Müller, Libuše Moníková, and Kerstin Hensel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 53.

The image of language as a system is a Saussurean metaphor. Müller does not represent language as a system, but uses concrete concepts, including injury and destruction, to illuminate linguistic phenomena – where such use of concrete ideas is a common strategy in meaning-making. Marven remarks that in Müller’s work ‘the body remains the predominant and primary concern. [...] The body also acts as the impetus to writing for Müller.’⁴ Her interest in the body could be motivated by language, as people commonly rely on bodily experience to understand speech and other linguistic concepts. I agree with Marven that ‘Müller’s narratives challenge textual conventions’,⁵ but my research will also show that she relies on linguistic and conceptual conventions.

Motivation, Research Questions, and Contribution

With reference to her literary works, critical essays, and interviews, I intend to show that Müller uses concrete ideas to make sense of language. Building on previous scholarship and developing the contributions of other scholars, I argue that in her writing and speech, Müller evokes categories of sensory perception and motor action to elucidate language.

I establish connections between literary criticism, cognitive science, and modern German literature. The approaches applied in this project are contemporaneous with the literary works that they are used to analyse: literature is brought into close relationship with the study of cognition. This project is not intended to provide a new theory of the mind, language, or metaphor, but it can support or problematise existing ones. As well as contributing to the study of Müller’s writing, I hope to advance knowledge about metaphor and language and engage meaningfully with the discussion on the relationship between language, literature, and thought.

Herta Haupt-Cucuiu posits that Müller’s texts are ‘rätselhaft, verschlüsselt, zuweilen dunkel und unheimlich’,⁶ and Paola Bozzi suggests that they do not privilege understanding and hence can be characterised as postmodern.⁷ Scholars have scrupulously researched how

⁴ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁶ Herta Haupt-Cucuiu, *Eine Poesie der Sinne: Herta Müllers ‘Diskurs des Alleinseins’ und seine Wurzeln* (Paderborn: Igel, 1996), p. 5.

⁷ Paola Bozzi, *Der fremde Blick: Zum Werk Herta Müllers* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), p. 141.

Müller's writing defies linguistic and literary conventions.⁸ Ricarda Schmidt applies conceptual metaphor theory for her analysis of figurative language in *Herztier* and states that the author's metaphors are unconventional and problematic to interpret; Schmidt posits a significant difference between poetic and conventional metaphors and identifies unique tropes in Müller's writing.⁹ Müller's language is highly poetic,¹⁰ and her metaphors open to different interpretations,¹¹ but at the conceptual level they are not an idiosyncratic invention. Her texts are not difficult to access for the reader; rather, they are challenging for literary critics to discuss. While some scholars draw attention to the nebulousness of her language, I will try to show that Müller's tropes are accessible to analysis within the cognitive paradigm and share the principles of everyday conceptualisation. Her figurative language is grounded in embodied cognition, and its study reveals that it is motivated by concrete experiences. The argument about the opacity of her metaphors is still valid – this phenomenon can be explained as an artistic technique of defamiliarisation, which is analogous to the cognitive processes of foregrounding and disrupting the automaticity of thought.

To understand language in Müller's texts, one should consider both the systematic use of conventional metaphor and creating original tropes for language. While the defamiliarised conventional metaphors conform to the predictions of conceptual metaphor theory and communicate the meaning of more abstract ideas through more concrete concepts, individual poetic metaphors might challenge the conventions of natural language and create new associations that violate the principles of the theory. Such poetic metaphors run the risk of failing to communicate because they establish new mappings. Unique poetic metaphors can be indispensable in understanding the contribution of the author to language and culture, but such tropes are most often reliant on linguistic and conceptual conventions. The difference between conventional and unconventional metaphors is not absolute and can be thought of as

⁸ See Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 102; Haupt-Cucuiu, pp. 67, 153.

⁹ Ricarda Schmidt, 'Metapher, Metonymie und Moral. Herta Müllers *Herztier*', in *Herta Müller*, ed. by Brigid Haines (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 57–74 (pp. 59, 71–72).

¹⁰ Graziella Predoiu, *Faszination und Provokation bei Herta Müller: Eine thematische und motivische Auseinandersetzung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 85; Astrid Schau, *Leben ohne Grund: Konstruktion kultureller Identität bei Werner Söllner, Rolf Bossert und Herta Müller* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2003), p. 52.

¹¹ Pavlo Shopin, 'Unpacking the Suitcases: Autofiction and Metaphor in Herta Müller's *Atemschaukel*', *Seminar*, 50 (2014), 197–215 (p. 207).

a spectrum, since even the most creative tropes depend on established conventions.¹² My research focuses on how Müller estranges such conventions, and encourages the reader to recognise the figurative nature of everyday language and thought. I agree with George Lakoff and Mark Turner that writers create poetic metaphors through ‘the masterful use of metaphorical processes on which our conceptual systems are based’.¹³ Viktor Shklovsky suggests that poets have distinct styles not because they create unique images, but because they arrange ordinary images in original ways: ‘The work done by schools of poetry consists in accumulating verbal material and finding new ways of arranging and handling it; it is much more about rearranging images than about creating them.’¹⁴ In an interview with the *Spiegel*, Müller discusses her writing and comments that ‘Ich nehme immer nur ganz gewöhnliche [Wörter], und wenn ich sie zusammenstelle, dann entsteht etwas, was neu ist.’¹⁵ My analysis of the metaphorical conceptualisation of language reveals that idiosyncratic metaphors are rare in Müller’s texts. She creatively defamiliarises conventional tropes through repetition, elaboration, linguistic reformulation, or relevant context. Conventional language and thought are the foundation for Müller’s creativity. She does not make metaphors out of arbitrary associations, but relies on the traditions inherent in language, literature, culture, and thought. In other words, Müller builds new metaphors based on existing conventions and estranges everyday figurative language, making its metaphorical meaning salient to her readers.

The study is driven by the following research questions: What is language? What is metaphor? What does figurative language accomplish in the text? How do metaphors enable the reader to empathise with narrators and characters, and understand the text? Do metaphors rely on bodily experience? How does sensorimotor experience help us understand language? Can readers interpret Müller’s writing through her metaphors for language? Are there any universal, culturally specific, or idiosyncratic metaphors for language in her works?

The focus on the metaphorical conceptualisation of language stems from the abundance of such figures in Müller’s texts, as well as from the advances in scholarship on

¹² See, for example, my analysis of the trope of ‘Atemschaukel’ in Chapter Four.

¹³ George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More Than Cool Reason: A Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 215.

¹⁴ Viktor Shklovsky, ‘Art, as Device’, *Poetics Today*, 36.3 (2015), 151–74 (p. 158).

¹⁵ Susanne von Beyer, “‘Ich habe die Sprache gegessen’: Die Literatur-Nobelpreisträgerin Herta Müller über ihre zusammengeklebten Gedichte und über die Macht und das Versagen der Wörter”, *Der Spiegel*, 35 (2012), 128–32 (p. 130).

such tropes in literary studies, psychology, linguistics, and neuroscience. Since Müller's language is highly poetic and reveals her careful work with basic linguistic and conceptual processes, the project might support (or at least illustrate) the proposition of conceptual metaphor theory that more abstract concepts are understood through more concrete ideas. My exploration of Müller's metaphors for language could give textual clues to how the relationship between language and thought is reflected in literary works. The analysis of literary texts is crucial to the study of embodied cognition, because higher order mental processes cannot be reliably tested by cognitive psychology without drawing on the products of those processes. Literature, therefore, provides an important medium for gathering evidence in support of cognitive theories which could later be tested with relation to the human body. This project does not engage scientifically in the exploration of the causal links between language and the body, but it gathers and interprets textual evidence of such a relationship.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of my research is formed by conceptual metaphor theory within the framework of cognitive literary studies. The theory was developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) and *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999). The three key tenets of the theory are that human reason is embodied, often metaphorical, and largely unconscious.¹⁶ First, reason is embodied, and the mind cannot be abstracted from the human body: 'what we call "mind" and what we call "body" are not two things, but rather aspects of one organic process, so that all meaning, thought, and language emerge from the aesthetic dimensions of this embodied activity.'¹⁷ Hence metaphors often rely on concepts that relate directly to the human body. Second, people use metaphor to understand and conceptualise new meanings; metaphors 'can give meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe' (*PF*, p. 139). Kohl suggests that ideas 'werden [...] durch die Wahl der Metapher strukturiert. [...] Indem sie [die Metapher] das Denken strukturiert, wirkt sie [...]

¹⁶ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 4 (henceforth abbreviated as *PF*).

¹⁷ Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 1.

auch limitierend, denn sie liefert dem Denken vorgefertigte Bilder und Verbindungen.’¹⁸ Finally, metaphors are often processed unconsciously,¹⁹ and thus can appear to describe reality as it is. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors ‘have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it.’²⁰ Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky give empirical evidence in support of conceptual metaphor theory and argue that ‘[m]etaphors in language [...] instantiate [...] knowledge structures and invite structurally consistent inferences. Far from being mere rhetorical flourishes, metaphors have profound influences on how we conceptualize and act.’²¹

Analysing metaphors for language in the texts of Herta Müller, I have found it helpful to follow Lakoff and Johnson and distinguish between target and source domains. *The source domain*, also known as *the vehicle*,²² is the more ‘intersubjectively accessible’,²³ and more concrete concept (such as ‘das Messer’) which makes the less comprehensible and more abstract concept of *the target domain* (e.g. ‘das Wort’) meaningful (e.g. ‘dieses Wort traf mich so klar wie ein Messer’).²⁴ Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser define conceptual metaphor as ‘a unidirectional mapping projecting conceptual material from one structured domain [...], called the source domain, to another one, called the target domain.’²⁵

¹⁸ Katrin Kohl, *Poetologische Metaphern: Formen und Funktionen in der deutschen Literatur* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), p. 2.

¹⁹ See in this context Robert Burton, *A Skeptic’s Guide to the Mind: What Neuroscience Can and Cannot Tell Us About Ourselves* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2013), p. 66: ‘Without unconscious cognition, there would be no complex thought.’

²⁰ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 145.

²¹ Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky, ‘Metaphors We Think With: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning’, *PLoS ONE*, 6.2 (2011), 1–11.

²² This term was introduced by Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936; repr. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 96–97.

²³ Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser, *Figurative Language* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 27.

²⁴ Herta Müller, ‘Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel* (2011; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2013), pp. 96–109 (p. 105). After the first full citation, I refer to primary works in the text when the source is clear.

²⁵ Dancygier and Sweetser, p. 14.

Figurative language and thought include metonymic transfer. Jeannette Littlemore defines metonymy as ‘a process which allows us to use one well-understood aspect of something to stand for the thing as a whole, or for some other aspect of it, or for something to which it is very closely related.’²⁶ Zoltán Kövecses gives a nuanced definition that relies on the terminology used in cognitive linguistics:

Metonymy is a cognitive process in which a conceptual element or entity (thing, event, property), the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity (thing, event, property), the target, within the same frame, domain [...]. We can conceive of this as a “within-domain mapping,” where the vehicle entity is mapped onto the target entity.²⁷

Metonymy as a cognitive process is common in human reasoning because people cannot think about or perceive all the aspects of the environment at once. Human beings adopt a perspective that employs a heuristic of associating particular aspects of the world with the larger picture. Littlemore suggests that people ‘think metonymically all the time in order to put the large amount of information that is available about the world into a manageable form’ (p. 1). Ronald Langacker first envisioned that all thinking is metonymic, as it always profiles a certain aspect of reality, which Langacker calls a ‘reference point’.²⁸ According to Littlemore, people use metonymy to make sense of less concrete concepts through more concrete concepts: ‘Metonymy often involves using a simple or concrete concept to refer to something that is more complex or more abstract, or even sensitive’ (p. 1). Consequently, metonymy is very similar to metaphor when it comes to making sense of the interaction between the human mind and the world. I agree with Littlemore that metonymy is common in language ‘simply because it is a property of our everyday thought processes’ (p. 5). Language relies on reference points, and hence it is always metonymic in the broad sense of the word. However, there is no practical use in treating all language as metonymic (or metaphorical) because it devalues linguistic analysis and makes impossible the distinction between literal and figurative meanings. Friedrich Nietzsche famously took the view that all truth (and language) is figurative:

²⁶ Jeannette Littlemore, *Metonymy: Hidden Shortcuts in Language, Thought and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 4. Further references are given in the text.

²⁷ Zoltán Kövecses, *Language, Mind, and Culture: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 99.

²⁸ Ronald Langacker, ‘Reference-Point Constructions’, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 4 (1993), 1–38 (p. 1).

Was ist also Wahrheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden, und die nach langem Gebrauche einem Volke fest, canonicisch und verbindlich dünken: die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind.²⁹

This generalisation obliterates the distinction between truth and fiction, and obscures meaningful relationships between language and the world. It is, therefore, more helpful to understand metonymy in the narrow sense, as a figure of speech where metonymic transfer is salient and involves mappings between two distinct concepts belonging to the same semantic domain or frame (e.g. voice can stand for the speaker: ‘jede Stimme ist anders müde’).³⁰

Drawing from the terminology of cognitive linguistics, I speak of conceptual domains and frames. While the idea of domain is rather broad, ‘frame’ can be understood more precisely. It was introduced into semantics by Charles Fillmore who defined it as

any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits; when one of the things in such a structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available.³¹

In contrast to categories (but similar to basic categories when it comes to gestalt perception), concepts, or semantic fields, frames should have gestalt properties, generate inferences, and thus exhibit more causal coherence (*PF*, pp. 116–17). Despite their alleged differences, all these terms (frames, concepts, categories, etc.) are still mostly interchangeable and should not be treated as independent linguistic and conceptual entities.

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne’, in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 3rd edn, 15 vols (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999), I, 873-90 (pp. 880–81).

³⁰ Herta Müller, *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2009), p. 204.

³¹ Charles Fillmore, ‘Frame Semantics’, in *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, ed. by The Linguistic Society of Korea (Seoul: Hanshin Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 111–37 (p. 111).

Ronald Langacker recognises the similarity between frames, concepts, and domains, and characterises the idea of domain as ‘a conception [...], ranging from the simplest notions (e.g. [...] a line) to elaborate systems of knowledge (e.g. [...] the Roman Catholic Church) [...] [that] has the potential to be invoked as an initial basis for characterizing lexical meanings.’³² According to Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff, concepts ‘are the elementary units of reason and linguistic meaning. They are conventional and relatively stable.’³³ But concepts, domains, frames, categories, and other terms for mental representations are necessarily imprecise and describe highly complex and interrelated psychological processes. Lawrence Barsalou et al. suggest that

[t]he difficulty of defining concept raises the issue of whether it is a useful scientific construct. Perhaps no discrete entity or event constitutes a concept. Perhaps conceptual functions emerge from a complex configuration of mechanisms in both the world and the brain. [...] The study of conceptual processing will be best served by discovering and describing the relevant mechanisms, rather than arguing about the meaning of lay terms such as concept.³⁴

Metaphor could be one such mechanism. Lakoff and Johnson posit that metaphor is a constitutive part of the human conceptual system and plays a significant role in thought processes (*PF*, p. 128). Conceptual metaphor theory facilitates the interpretation of essential ideas in literary texts because writers deal with ‘vital issues in our lives and help us illuminate those issues, through the extension, composition, and criticism of the basic metaphoric tools through which we comprehend much of reality.’³⁵ Metaphors help people make sense of more abstract concepts by associating them with bodily experience; authors use perception and motor activity as vehicles through which readers are able to understand more abstract ideas.

³² Ronald Langacker, ‘Culture and Cognition, Lexicon and Grammar’, in *Approaches to Language, Culture and Cognition: The Intersection of Cognitive Linguistics and Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. by Musataka Yamaguchi, Dennis Tay, and Benjamin Blount (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 27–49 (p. 28).

³³ Vittorio Gallese and George Lakoff, ‘The Brain’s Concepts: The Role of the Sensory-Motor System in Conceptual Knowledge’, *Cognitive Neuropsychology*, 22 (2005), 455–79 (p. 455).

³⁴ Lawrence Barsalou, with Kyle Simmons and others, ‘Grounding Conceptual Knowledge in Modality-Specific Systems’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7 (2003), 84–90 (p. 84).

³⁵ Lakoff and Turner, p. 215.

A relation between perception and conception is proposed in the framework of cognitive semantics:

Recent cognitive models of semantics hypothesize that [...] the same parts of the brain are activated (though not identically activated) in imagining or describing a situation as would be involved in perceiving and experiencing such a situation. This embodied view of meaning – that meaning is made of the same stuff as bodily experience – challenges the idea of language and thought as abstract. And this theory of meaning offers a context for reassessing the role and mechanisms of figurative language, seeing them as part of language rather than as decorative additions.³⁶

Regarding all meaning (and thought) as embodied, Langacker provides an interactional interpretation of embodiment as it is applied in cognitive linguistics:

all [linguistic] units are learned through interaction in a physical, social, cultural, and discourse context. In this respect, all aspects of language structure have a cultural basis. They are not however learned by disembodied minds. Learning takes place in the brain, consisting in neural adjustments which have an effect on subsequent processing activity. The brain is an integral part of the body, which in turn exists in a world with which it interacts at many levels. Brain, body, and world all have specific structural properties that shape and constrain their interaction and thus the nature of human experience. This is the notion of embodiment.³⁷

Langacker integrates language, the body, and the environment in the concept of embodiment, which stands for the complex interaction between these phenomena. After all, language is also part of human cognition, which is in turn the result of human interaction with the environment. Langacker's definition of embodiment resonates with the enactive approach to perception, as formulated by Alva Noë in *Action in Perception*: 'there is no sharp line where your perceptual awareness of something stops and your mere thought awareness of it starts.'³⁸ Conceptualisation is associated with active perception. Andrew Wilson and Sabrina Golonka have consistently formulated this view of embodiment: 'Embodied cognition (in any form) is

³⁶ Dancygier and Sweetser, p. 2.

³⁷ Langacker, 'Culture and Cognition', p. 30.

³⁸ Alva Noë, *Action in Perception* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2004), p. 118.

about acknowledging the role perception, action, and the environment can now play.’ They suggest that one logical consequence of embodied cognition is that mental representation becomes unnecessary: ‘Our bodies and their perceptually guided motions through the world do much of the work required to achieve our goals, replacing the need for complex internal mental representations.’³⁹ While I agree with Wilson and Golonka about the primacy of embodiment and understand that the construct of mental representation might be redundant in cognitive science, I consider concepts and other mental representations to be useful notions in literary criticism and regard the distinction between abstract and concrete concepts as both functional and meaningful.

Since perception is an early development in evolutionary terms, it can serve humans as a means to make sense of more abstract phenomena. This perceptual grounding of conceptual meaning is at the heart of Lawrence Barsalou’s theory of perceptual symbol systems.⁴⁰ In the framework of this theory, embodiment provides the necessary platform for abstract thought. Markus Kiefer and Friedeman Pulvermüller discuss this proposition and raise the question whether abstract concepts are grounded in sensorimotor experiences. They conclude that there is little evidence to support this claim:

At present, evidence regarding a modality-specific grounding of abstract concepts in sensory-motor, emotional and introspective brain circuits is scarce. [...] To further test the embodiment view of abstract concepts, the development of new experimental paradigms is needed, which are suited to demonstrate a possible involvement of the perception, action and emotional systems in the representation of abstract concepts. Research on the grounding of abstract concepts in perception, action, emotion and introspection would open a novel promising field, which helps to resolve the debate on the nature of conceptual representations.⁴¹

³⁹ Andrew Wilson and Sabrina Golonka, ‘Embodied Cognition Is Not What You Think It Is’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4 (2013), 1–13 (pp. 2, 1).

⁴⁰ Lawrence Barsalou, ‘Perceptual Symbol Systems’, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 22 (1999), 577–660 (p. 577).

⁴¹ Markus Kiefer and Friedeman Pulvermüller, ‘Conceptual Representations in Mind and Brain: Theoretical Developments, Current Evidence and Future Directions’, *Cortex*, 48 (2012), 805–25 (p. 821).

Almost a decade before this call to action, Barsalou et al. argued that ‘[b]rain research provides increasing evidence for modality-specific representations in the conceptual system’.⁴² While I cannot experimentally prove that sensorimotor experience is used to reason about abstract concepts, my research suggests that it is plausible. With reference to Herta Müller’s writing, I shall support the embodied view of meaning by showing how concrete sensorimotor experience is related through metaphor to the more abstract concept of language.

Two potentially intractable problems arise with regard to my ambition. First, it is controversial whether mental representations exist, especially in the form of concepts. If natural language with its unfalsifiable generalisations cannot do justice to the complexity of thought, my project is futile from the outset. Second, the distinction between abstract and concrete concepts appears problematic since all cognition is ultimately embodied. The first issue can be conditionally resolved by acknowledging the speculative nature of my research. The use of concepts and mental representations as tools for discussing thought is relevant for the humanities, because culture and language deal with human-scale categories. As for the second issue, there can be no doubt that some concepts are more abstract than others, if abstractness is understood in the context of embodiment. Adopting an empirical approach to this issue, Felix Hill et al., for example, argue that ‘abstract and concrete concepts are organized and represented differently in the mind. [...] concrete representations are more strongly feature-based than abstract concepts.’⁴³ I agree with Jonathan Dunn that ‘the study of metaphor assumes a distinction between abstract and concrete words/concepts’. Dunn suggests a ‘two-dimensional’ scale of abstractness: ‘fact-status and function-status together describe any given concept and contribute to the abstractness of that concept. Abstractness in this sense is defined as the degree to which a concept depends upon human beings for its existence.’⁴⁴ Abstractness is a matter of degree, and concepts can vary with regard to this property. In this context, Lawrence Barsalou and Katja Wiemer-Hastings acknowledge that ‘metaphors often augment the meanings of abstract concepts, and make certain aspects of their conceptual content salient’, but point out that abstract concepts are themselves grounded in embodied experience: ‘metaphors complement direct experience of abstract concepts,

⁴² Barsalou et al., p. 87.

⁴³ Felix Hill, with Anna Korhonen and Christian Bentz, ‘A Quantitative Empirical Analysis of the Abstract/Concrete Distinction’, *Cognitive Science*, 38 (2014), 162–77 (p. 162).

⁴⁴ Jonathan Dunn, ‘Modeling Abstractness and Metaphoricity’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 30 (2015), 259–89 (pp. 259, 263).

which often appears extensive.’ They argue that ‘[i]f an abstract concept has no structure based on direct experience, the concrete metaphor would have nothing to map into.’⁴⁵

Despite, or rather due to, its unfalsifiable generalisations, language allows humans to make fine distinctions and establish complex relationships with the environment. Abstract concepts thus make the world more functional (think of all the social and scientific advances made by abstract thought), whereas concrete experience makes it more meaningful (the meaning of pain is much more accessible than the meaning of money: ‘these funding cuts hurt’). My overarching assumption, then, is that there is no function without meaning. At the same time, the interactional approach to meaning necessitates that there is no meaning without function: ‘Experience has content only thanks to the established dynamics of interaction between perceiver and world.’⁴⁶ This dialectic of abstract and concrete thought remains relevant for both science and the humanities. I intend to show that metaphors allow people to understand abstract ideas, which do not directly relate to the body, through concrete concepts that activate sensorimotor experiences.

My use of conceptual metaphor theory will lead to insights into its applicability and illustrate its explanatory power. I intend to question the notions of metaphorical and literal relationships between ideas. Both metaphor and identity appear to have become problematic in view of the existing scholarship in cognitive semantics,⁴⁷ and my research shows how in the work of a literary writer language is understood through complex conceptualisation which is neither entirely metaphorical nor fully literal.

Limitations

The limitations of this research need to be acknowledged. First, I cannot test conceptual metaphor theory because I focus on literary analysis of linguistic metaphors and my engagement with mental metaphors is mediated by text. Text interpretation gives a different perspective from quantitative research. The current pressure on the humanities and social

⁴⁵ Lawrence Barsalou and Katja Wiemer-Hastings, ‘Situating Abstract Concepts’, in *Grounding Cognition: The Role of Perception and Action in Memory, Language, and Thinking*, ed. by Diane Pecher and Rolf A. Zwaan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 129–63 (pp. 133–34).

⁴⁶ Noë, p. 216.

⁴⁷ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), p. 6.

sciences to quantify their research comes not from scientific reductionism, but from business principles. It is dangerous to forget that the question ‘Does it count?’ has two different meanings in business and mathematics. Scholars risk being discounted by those who focus on the short-term monetary benefits of research. In this context, the ‘replication crisis’ is a symptom of the developing economic problems in social sciences.⁴⁸ As for the humanities, they might quantify themselves into irrelevance under this pressure.

Second, this study does not follow the chronological development of Müller’s metaphors for language since they do not make a coherent system that evolves through time. I consider common linguistic and conceptual processes that make possible her careful work with such tropes. While some scholars discuss the evolution of her poetic figures and their growing significance from one work to another,⁴⁹ this project shows how Müller consistently relies on and defamiliarises conventional language. I consider metaphorical association as a fundamental principle of meaning-making, and underscore its variability and context dependence when it comes to representing language in the work of Herta Müller.

Third, I do not analyse Müller’s collages as they are significantly different from her other works. They engage various senses and can be regarded as a medium distinct from her prose and poetological writing. Müller estranges language through cutting out individual words and images from newspapers and magazines, and then putting them together in surprising multimodal ensembles. While conceptual metaphor theory can help to make sense of such skilful use of language and visual art, this project does not focus on Müller’s collages because they are not confined to linguistic tropes and rely on visual metaphors. Her collages are highly poetic and multimodal, and hence they merit a separate discussion.⁵⁰

Finally, this project does not explicitly mark the distinction between the metaphors in her fiction and non-fiction works, because she uses poetic language across different modes of writing. Angelika Overath argues that Müller uses poetic license even when she writes

⁴⁸ Paul Smaldino and Richard McElreath, ‘The Natural Selection of Bad Science’, *Royal Society Open Science*, 3 (2016), 1–17 (p. 13).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Brigid Haines, ‘Return from the Archipelago: Herta Müller’s *Atemschaukel* as Soft Memory’, in *Herta Müller*, pp. 117–34 (p. 130): where Haines discusses the leitmotif of handkerchief in Müller’s early work and her latest novel *Atemschaukel*.

⁵⁰ In this context, see Lyn Marven, ‘“In allem ist der Riß”: Trauma, Fragmentation, and the Body in Herta Müller’s Prose and Collages’, *Modern Language Review*, 100 (2005), 396–411.

journalistic reports.⁵¹ And Anja Johannsen has observed that ‘Müller does not distinguish between a literary and a non-literary access to the world’.⁵² The author herself acknowledges in an interview for *Der Spiegel* that she does not distinguish between literary writing and political activism.⁵³ In the context of this study, it is problematic to differentiate between Müller’s literary and non-literary works – the writing is replete with metaphors and other tropes irrespective of whether it is an autobiographical essay, journalistic report, political commentary, or novel. It is, therefore, reasonable to look at both fiction and non-fiction texts in order to acquire a general understanding of the metaphorical conceptualisation of language in Müller’s oeuvre.

Metaphors for Language

Figurative expressions used when discussing language have long been in the focus of conceptual metaphor research. Michael Reddy, for example, has made a significant contribution to the subject in his essay ‘The Conduit Metaphor – A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language’ (1979).⁵⁴ Reddy identifies and challenges the use of the conduit metaphor in English. He observes that people conceive of communication as the process in which the speaker puts ideas (objects) into language (container) that can then be taken out by the listener. The meaning of the utterance is construed as contents inside a container: language becomes a container holding thoughts, feelings, and concepts. In this framework, the listener’s task is to extract the given meaning from the language used to convey it. The meaning is thus readily available as a physical object and independent from the interlocutors, whereas language serves as a conduit for the transfer of such meaning (pp. 290–91). Communication becomes the physical transfer of ideas, and the metaphor leaves no room

⁵¹ Angelika Overath, ‘Emblematische Not: Die Reporterin Herta Müller’, *Text und Kritik*, 155 (2002), 85–94 (p. 94).

⁵² Anja Johannsen, ‘Osmoses: Müller’s Things, Bodies, and Spaces’, in *Herta Müller: Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. by Bettina Brandt and Valentina Glajar (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 207–29 (p. 227). For an alternative view, see Kohl, ‘Beyond Realism’, p. 17.

⁵³ Martin Doerry and Volker Hage, “‘So eisig, kalt und widerlich’ – Die Schriftstellerin Herta Müller über eine Aktion deutscher Autoren gegen den Fremdenhaß”, *Der Spiegel*, 46 (1992), 264–68 (p. 264).

⁵⁴ Michael Reddy, ‘The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in Our Language about Language’, in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 284–310. Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

for interpretation or collaborative meaning-making (p. 287). Hence Reddy finds this trope misleading: ‘Actually, no one receives anyone else’s thoughts directly in their minds when they are using language. [...] If we could indeed send thoughts to one another, we would have little need for a communications system’ (pp. 286–87). He regards the conduit metaphor as an implicit bias that distorts and impedes social interaction: ‘the conduit metaphor is leading us down a technological and social blind alley’ (p. 310). As an alternative, Reddy suggests conceptualising communication as the process of collaborative toolmaking, which highlights the interactional nature of meaning (pp. 292–97). Lakoff acknowledges Reddy’s constructive role in the establishment of conceptual metaphor theory and recognises that ‘Reddy showed [...] that the locus of metaphor is thought, [...] that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience.’⁵⁵

Drawing on Reddy’s research, Lakoff and Johnson have explored the metaphorical conceptualisation of argument as war.⁵⁶ Lakoff later refined this association and presented it as the metaphor for argument as physical struggle.⁵⁷ While war is a socially complex phenomenon whose use as a source domain is culturally contingent, physical struggle is more concrete and closely related to bodily experience. Sarah Mattice posits that the association between argument and combat is deeply entrenched in philosophy: ‘The metaphor of philosophers as soldiers or combatants waging war against one another is one that has deep roots in many western philosophical narratives.’⁵⁸ According to Mattice, this trope ‘tends to privilege particularly combative individuals, and to encourage victory by any means necessary, all the while implying that one who is victorious is necessarily so because of superior philosophical acumen’ (p. 31). Mattice establishes that the metaphor of argument as combat has far-reaching consequences: it contributes to hostility and symbolic violence in public discourse, and marginalises women in philosophy. As an alternative, she proposes the

⁵⁵ George Lakoff, ‘The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor’, in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 202–51 (p. 204).

⁵⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, pp. 4–6.

⁵⁷ George Lakoff, ‘The Neural Theory of Metaphor’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Raymond W. Gibbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 17–38 (p. 28).

⁵⁸ Sarah Mattice, *Metaphor and Metaphilosophy: Philosophy as Combat, Play, and Aesthetic Experience* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), p. 21. Further references are given in the text.

trope of philosophy as art (p. 110). Mattice suggests that ‘[b]y searching for less violent ways to structure our thinking and engagement with one another, we can help to create more productive and less violent civil discourse’ (p. 41). James Howe questions such views on the impact of metaphor when he defends the proposition that the meaning of argument is not constrained by its metaphorical associations: ‘Claims for the primacy and greater experiential grounding of war and physical violence as compared with verbal conflict are at best unproven.’⁵⁹ He argues that we are free to choose the means to build and express our thoughts:

our cognitive and discursive needs concerning topics and objects of concern, whether argument or marriage or time, motivate us, individually and collectively, to seek out and draw on domains and distinctions through which to think and talk about them. It is the cognitive and discursive utility and fruitfulness of source domains and not just their immediacy or ease of apprehension that suggests them to us.⁶⁰

This observation raises the question about the degree to which metaphorical associations shape human thought, language, and behaviour. This issue remains at the forefront of cognitive linguistics and psychology. In Chapter One, I shall demonstrate that Müller strongly associates language with violence and uses this trope to convey her vision of communication (e.g. ‘der Schmerz, der aufkommt, in einem Moment, wo dieses Wort [Normal] einem ins eigene Gesicht schlägt’).⁶¹ In this context, the metaphorical association between language and violence is both useful and easy to comprehend as it is motivated by embodiment.

Scholars have also studied the metaphorical conceptualisation of creative writing. Barbara Tomlinson, for example, has investigated how writers use metaphors to describe their work in interviews and identified four major tropes: cooking, mining, gardening, and hunting. Tomlinson concludes that ‘the figurative stories writers tell function to emphasize and suppress different aspects of the composing process’ and that such stories build ‘a web of relationships [...] linking the various figurative themes used to describe writing. [...] These networks of meanings and relationships offer clues about writers’ interpretations of their

⁵⁹ James Howe, ‘Argument is Argument: An Essay on Conceptual Metaphor and Verbal Dispute’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 23 (2007), 1–23 (p. 2).

⁶⁰ Howe, p. 21.

⁶¹ Herta Müller, ‘Das Ticken der Norm’, in *Hunger und Seide* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995), pp. 88–100 (p. 91).

writing processes.’⁶² My research resonates with and advances Tomlinson’s early scholarship as I analyse metaphors into basic constituents and identify those source domains that evoke sensorimotor experiences (e.g. smell: ‘Mein liebstes Wort [...] roch nicht nach Quitten’).⁶³

Elena Semino has done a comprehensive corpus-based study of the metaphorical conceptualisation of speech in English. She observes that ‘spoken communication is mainly structured via a set of source domains that conventionally apply to a wide variety of target domains’.⁶⁴ She distinguishes between the following basic source domains used to make sense of speech (but also of many other concepts): motion, transfer (conduit), construction, support, visual representation, proximity, pressure, and aggression. I agree with Semino that identifying basic source domains, which relate to fundamental sensorimotor experiences, is a productive approach because ‘a relatively small number of simple and basic mappings can explain the production and reception of a very large number of linguistic expressions in many different contexts’ (p. 66). I identify some such source concepts in my research (e.g. touch: ‘Das Wort “König” klingt weich’)⁶⁵ but their complex interrelations are difficult to untangle. While Semino concludes that ‘speech activity is conceptualized in English in terms of a range of physical actions and interactions, which, at a general level, are compatible with each other and can be integrated into a single scenario’ (p. 66), I cannot formulate a scenario that would encompass all Müller’s metaphors for language. Semino posits that in English, communication is conceptualised metaphorically as ‘a physical space containing entities corresponding to the interactants, their speech acts, their utterances/texts, their views/ideas, and so on’ (p. 66). Her discussion of this ‘space’, however, does not need to be understood as a single scenario. This synthesis could be a case of post-hoc rationalisation. Scholars are often compelled to give a totalising narrative on their research. Reddy reduced the complexity of metaphors for language to one main image, and Semino continues this tradition of productive synthesis. I question the validity of this unifying perspective. My research indicates that metaphors for language do not form a single scenario in Müller’s works. I shall instead argue

⁶² Barbara Tomlinson, ‘Cooking, Mining, Gardening, Hunting: Metaphorical Stories Writers Tell About Their Composing Processes’, *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 1 (1986), 57–79 (pp. 57, 77).

⁶³ Herta Müller, *Herztier*, 5th edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2009), p. 176.

⁶⁴ Elena Semino, ‘The Metaphorical Construction of Complex Domains: The Case of Speech Activity in English’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 20 (2005), 35–70 (p. 35). Further references are given in the text.

⁶⁵ Herta Müller, ‘Der König verneigt sich und tötet’, in *Der König verneigt sich und tötet*, 6th edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2010), pp. 40–73 (p. 40).

that there is a motivated diversity of tropes. Ludwig Wittgenstein argues for the context-dependence of linguistic meaning and the variability of understanding language, and uses the concept of ‘game’ as a metaphorical vehicle for language to highlight its multiple but interrelated meanings.⁶⁶ Taking into consideration the tropes used and analysed by Semino, Reddy, Wittgenstein, and other scholars, I shall argue that language does not exist as a single coherent image in Müller’s texts.

The study of metaphors for language is not limited to English. For instance, Rob Wiseman considers Ancient Roman metaphors for communication and argues that ‘Latin provided Europe with its primary vocabulary to discuss communication well into the Modern Age. And the metaphors on which this vocabulary were established committed Europe to a view of communication that still dominates our language today.’ He shows that Romans relied on the conduit metaphor for language and reveals its association with breath, ‘since it is impossible to speak without breathing. Once words had been breathed out of the chest, they entered in the listener’s ears.’⁶⁷ This explains the motivation behind the conduit metaphor and relates it to bodily experience. I shall examine the association between breath and language in Chapter Four when I discuss Müller’s novel *Atemschaukel* (2009). In another study on the metaphorical conceptualisation of communication and language, Hümeýra Can and Nilüfer Can support Wiseman’s argument about the role of culture in metaphor building when they present a cross-cultural contrastive analysis of metaphors for chat in Turkish and English. They suggest that ‘the communication words used metaphorically tend to vary across languages because the understanding of “communication” changes across cultures’.⁶⁸ Zhuo Jing-Schmidt has explored Chinese figurative language for speech and concluded that ‘the interaction between metonymy and metaphor is an important cognitive strategy in the conceptualisation of verbal behaviour’.⁶⁹ In Chapter Six, I come to the same conclusion with

⁶⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text with a Revised English Translation*, trans. by Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 27^e–39^e (sections 66–100).

⁶⁷ Rob Wiseman, ‘Ancient Roman Metaphors for Communication’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 22 (2007), 41–78 (pp. 42, 45).

⁶⁸ Hümeýra Can and Nilüfer Can, ‘The Inner Self Desires a Friendly Chat: Chat Metaphors in Turkish and English’, *Metaphor and Symbol*, 25 (2010), 34–55 (p. 35).

⁶⁹ Zhuo Jing-Schmidt, ‘Much Mouth Much Tongue: Chinese Metonymies and Metaphors of Verbal Behaviour’, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 19 (2008), 241–82 (p. 241).

regard to German spatial metaphors for voice. Jing-Schmidt identifies metonymies of organ of speech articulation for speech and distinguishes between the following metaphorical vehicles for speech: physical action, container, war, and food. These categories are similar to the ones used by the studies based on tropes in other languages and by this research project.

While language and culture are essential for the metaphorical conceptualisation of communication and contribute to its diversity, the human body is still the common means for figurative thought and might provide universal vehicles for understanding language. As for the unique role of language, I agree with Roman Jakobson that ‘[l]anguages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey’.⁷⁰ I do not study metaphors across languages and cultures, and primarily focus on the role of the body in the metaphorical conceptualisation of language. In this context, Daniel Casasanto contends that linguistic relativity has often overshadowed many other factors shaping cognition: ‘linguistic relativity studies have often focused on relationships between language and thought that are presumed to be privileged, if not exclusive’.⁷¹ Notably, Casasanto shows that linguists also use metaphors to understand language, and one of them is the idea of language as the mold, which is associated with linguistic relativity:

the language-as-mold metaphor has entailments that reflect – and may even contribute to – two mistaken beliefs about the ways in which language can influence thought. First, it suggests that language influences cognition at only one point in time: in the moment that the wax of the mind is being poured into the mold of language. [...] Once the wax has cooled, language has done its job, and the mind has been cast permanently in either one form or another. Second, this metaphor suggests that language plays a unique role in shaping thought – that language is the mold. (p. 715)

While Casasanto challenges the metaphor underlying the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and argues that ‘it is time to break the mold’ (p. 715), I look at the ways language is conceptualised metaphorically and analyse such tropes into those constituent parts that relate to embodiment. I thus hope to interpret, and not to deconstruct, metaphors for language in Müller’s texts.

⁷⁰ Roman Jakobson, ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’, in *On Translation*, ed. by Reuben Arthur Brower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 232–39 (p. 236).

⁷¹ Daniel Casasanto, ‘A Shared Mechanism of Linguistic, Cultural, and Bodily Relativity’, *Language Learning*, 66 (2016), 714–30 (p. 715). Further references are given in the text.

Finally, Günter Radden has examined the metonymic representation of communication across languages. In good agreement with Jing-Schmidt, he speaks about the common metonymy of articulation and speech organs for speech. Radden also looks at the associations between voice and other concepts, and states that voice can be associated metonymically with the place of sound articulation, such as the throat or the neck.⁷² Therefore, voice can become a metonymic target represented by parts of the body which participate in speech production. In Chapter Eight, I shall examine the figurative conceptualisation of silence through articulation and speech organs, and briefly look at such metonymies (e.g. ‘Die Lippen standen offen und sagten nichts’).⁷³ In support of Radden’s insights about the use of voice as a metonymic vehicle, I consider the metonymy of voice for the speaker in Chapter Six (e.g. ‘wie heißt du, hat seine Stimme gefragt’).⁷⁴

In conclusion, the figurative conceptualisation of language has been studied in depth by philosophers, linguists, psychologists, and literary scholars, which provides a strong theoretical platform for my research. To the best of my knowledge, little substantial work has been done on the representation of language by a literary author, and this will be my contribution to the field of literary criticism and the study of metaphors for language.

Outline

In the first four chapters, I focus on the common source domains (injury, destruction, force, and life) used by Müller to conceptualise language. In this part of the dissertation, I do not limit the target domains associated with the researched vehicles and look at various concepts related to language (writing, word, speech, etc.). Chapters One and Two explore the source domains (injury and destruction) that can be associated with death, whereas Chapters Three and Four elucidate the association between language and life. In the last four chapters, I consider particular linguistic concepts (voice and silence) and examine their associations with different source domains. In Chapters Five and Six, I investigate the metaphorical

⁷² Günter Radden, ‘The Metonymic Folk Model of Language’, in *Imagery in Language: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Ronald W. Langacker*, ed. by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk and Alina Kwiatkowska (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 543–65 (p. 543).

⁷³ Herta Müller, *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989; repr. Munich: Carl Hanser, 2010), p. 96.

⁷⁴ Herta Müller, *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*, p. 221.

conceptualisation of voice, whereas in Chapters Seven and Eight, I study how Müller approaches the idea of silence in her writing.

In Chapter One, I demonstrate how Müller uses the concept of physical injury to reason about language (e.g. ‘den Worten fehlte der Haß, sie konnten nicht verletzen’).⁷⁵ The metaphorical conceptualisation of injurious and injured language is associated by Müller with suffering and oppression. While injurious language can bring about the death of the human being, injury is conceptualised as a possible factor in the metaphorical death of language which leads to silence. The concrete concept of injury allows Müller to convey to the reader the dangers and limitations of art and communication.

Chapter Two analyses the metaphorical mapping between language and destruction (e.g. ‘wenn es [das gewöhnliche Wort] dann zerrieben ist in der Metapher’).⁷⁶ I show how Müller evokes the more concrete concepts of destruction and damage in order to make sense of language and to communicate effectively her understanding of it to readers. The trope of destruction allows Müller to present the impact of and influence on language. I conclude that the metaphorical conceptualisation of destructive and destructible language is an integral part of Müller’s poetics, and relies on conceptual and linguistic conventions.

In Chapter Three, I explore how Müller uses the idea of forceful language (e.g. ‘In Rumänien haben sich viele Menschen an Gedichte gehalten. Gedichte [...] sind ein tragbares Stück Halt im Kopf’).⁷⁷ I regard it as a survival mechanism and as resistance to social oppression. Language is understood as a force that provides support and protection to the author and her characters. I conclude that the metaphorical image of force enables Müller to represent language as a means to lighten the burden of oppression, to put up resistance, and to help the victims of persecution cope with their suffering and survive.

Chapter Four deals with the metaphorical conceptualisation of life-saving language (e.g. ‘Man musste [...] im Kopf angenehme Wörter finden gegen das Gift’).⁷⁸ I focus on major ideas that Müller uses to communicate to readers her complex association between language and survival, and thus consider the following source domains: life, breath, therapy, protection, and nourishment. These concrete concepts help establish mappings between

⁷⁵ *Herztier*, p. 137.

⁷⁶ ‘Gelber Mais und keine Zeit’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 125–45 (p. 138).

⁷⁷ ‘In der Falle’, in *In der Falle*, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), pp. 5–24 (p. 19).

⁷⁸ *Atemschaukel*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2013), p. 183.

language and survival; they illuminate the life-saving power of language and its vital potential in Müller's texts.

In Chapter Five, I examine tactile metaphors for voice (e.g. 'eine rauhe Stimme') and consider the process of multisensory perception to argue that such metaphors can activate multiple senses (sharpness, for example, can activate vision, touch, and injury: 'ein zweischneidiges Wort').⁷⁹ While multisensory perception enables the author to associate creatively her characters' voices with different sensory phenomena, it simultaneously problematises scholarly efforts to analyse metaphorical language and categorise figurative associations according to sensory modalities. In her works, tactile metaphors for voice appear conventional, but Müller effectively defamiliarises them. I conclude that Müller's texts might be challenging to interpret as she focuses the reader's attention on the figurative meaning of language.

In Chapter Six, I focus on spatial metaphors for voice in Müller's texts and argue that she estranges conventional spatial language used to reason about voice (e.g. 'Seine Stimme klang tiefer, als sein Hals lang war').⁸⁰ She encourages her readers to recognise the figurative meaning of such language and invites them to build new and original associations between space and voice. I look at verticality, figure-ground organisation, motion, and container image schema as source domains for voice. My research shows that voice does not exist as a purely acoustic image. I claim that it has different meanings depending on the context and is a complex physical, linguistic, and cultural phenomenon. I conclude that Müller both relies on and estranges the tentative yet motivated associations between space and voice.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss how the trope of silence is engaged to make sense of more abstract concepts, including language (e.g. 'Von der großserbischen Landkarte, von der modernen Staatsarmee der Serben und den leeren Händen der Moslems schweigt das Wort "Bürgerkrieg"').⁸¹ I argue that Müller uses silence as a means to personify phenomena and to realise the communicative potential of the environment. Müller humanises the world when she ascribes to its inanimate entities the ability to keep silent. Silence can also metonymically stand for the mental states of those keeping silent or for their complex social actions; it serves as a central reference point for trauma, fear, guilt, suffering, writing, and language. I conclude that silence refers to the absence and failure of (but also implies the potential for) language

⁷⁹ 'Der König verneigt sich', p. 57.

⁸⁰ 'Inge', in *Niederungen* (2010; repr. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), pp. 160–66 (p. 162).

⁸¹ 'Auf die Gedanken fällt Erde', in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 164–71 (p. 169).

and communication; and its use as a trope brings to the fore the search for meaning, expression, and social interaction.

In Chapter Eight, I investigate metaphors for silence and study its meaning as part of language in Müller's works (e.g. 'Das Reden fliegt weg, das Schweigen liegt und liegt und riecht').⁸² I categorise the metaphors into those sensory modalities and concrete phenomena that serve as source domains (smell, touch, injury, force, etc.). My research shows that Müller must be aware of using such metaphors and deliberately establishes figurative connections between silence and those ideas that commonly relate to bodily experience. While it is problematic to speak about a coherent interpretation of silence throughout Müller's oeuvre, the meaning of silence is not arbitrary and relies on conceptual and linguistic conventions. Müller estranges these conventions and highlights for her readers the figurative yet motivated associations between silence and more concrete concepts.

In the concluding part of the dissertation, I synthesise the findings of the project and consider the role of metaphor in understanding the meaning of language in Müller's fiction and non-fiction, as well as in cognitive literary studies in general.

⁸² 'Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich', in *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 74–105 (p. 83).

1 INJURIOUS AND INJURED LANGUAGE

Herta Müller represents physical suffering and repression in her works, often reflecting on the Ceaușescu regime, and her constant interest in language and reflexivity towards writing have led her to develop sophisticated metaphors that she uses to reason about language and its functioning in the conditions of such subjugation. There is a substantial critical literature on these facets of Müller's work, beginning with the earliest reviews, which identified that her writing was motivated by her traumatic experiences.¹ In the 1990s, Hannes Krauss maintained that Müller's writing stems from her personal suffering, and Valentina Glajar observed that 'her texts are [...] literary documents [...] of suffering'.² While Graziella Predoiu regards pain as a profound theme in Müller's work: 'Schmerz und Angst [...] erscheinen im Oeuvre der rumäniendeutschen Autorin im Innersten ihrer "Topographie" als Grundbedingung menschlicher Existenz verankert', Astrid Schau goes further, claiming that physical pain is sometimes presented by Müller as the very motivation for writing: 'Einen Schmerz [...] macht Herta Müller als Motivation ihres Schreibens aus, das sich aus einer Haltung der Verweigerung gegenüber der Diktatur speist.'³ Physical suffering is frequently caused by violence, whose importance in Müller's literary works is discussed by Paola Bozzi and Katja Suren.⁴ Iulia-Karin Patrut argues that violence is in fact omnipresent in Müller's texts as they offer 'die literarische Darstellung einer Welt [...], in der Gewalt stets von vornherein

¹ See, for example, Peter Motzan, "'Und wo man etwas berührt, wird man verwundet.'" Zu Herta Müllers Niederungen', *Neue Literatur*, 3 (1983), 67–72 (p. 67).

² Hannes Krauss, 'Fremde Blicke. Zur Prosa von Herta Müller und Richard Wagner', in *Neue Generationen – Neues Erzählen: Deutsche Prosa-Literatur der achtziger Jahre*, ed. by Walter Delabar, Werner Jung, and Ingrid Pergande (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993), p. 69; Valentina Glajar, 'Banat-Swabian, Romanian, and German: Conflicting Identities in Herta Müller's *Herztier*', *Monatshefte*, 89 (1997), 521–40 (p. 522).

³ Predoiu, p. 345.

⁴ Bozzi, *Der fremde Blick*, p. 88; Katja Suren, 'Sprechen über Gewalt', in *Ein Engel verkleidete sich als Engel und blieb unerkannt: Rhetoriken des Kindlichen bei Natascha Wodin, Herta Müller und Aglaja Veteranyi* (Sulzbach: Ulrike Helmer, 2011), pp. 173–93.

dazugehört.⁵ There is also substantial critical reflection on Müller's poetic use of language,⁶ but in particular on the influence of psychological trauma on the textures of her writing,⁷ and Anja Johannsen points out the original contribution of British scholars to this field.⁸

The scholarship on suffering in the works of Herta Müller has primarily focused on the concept of psychological trauma, and Lyn Marven offers insightful analysis of the relationship between trauma and the body in Müller's prose and collages. She foregrounds the link between trauma and physical suffering: 'Müller's corporeal images of trauma [...] are explicitly linked to physical threat',⁹ and indeed it is difficult to understand psychological trauma without the implied domain of physical injury. The literary concept of trauma is not immediately grounded in sensorimotor experience, however, and has to be construed with the help of more concrete concepts such as pain or injury which relate directly to the body.

Beverley Driver Eddy develops an unconventional metaphor for trauma as 'a reconstructed life-story intended to overcome a troubling, recurring memory by locating that memory within its larger, historical context'.¹⁰ This conceptualisation of trauma as narrative highlights the abstract nature of psychological trauma but also its dependence upon more concrete experience. The implied autonomy of the psyche in relation to the body enables people to construe the concept of psychological trauma metaphorically. In general, the juxtaposition of the psychological and the physical constitutes a productive but problematic dichotomy which relies on the metaphorical divide between the mind and the body.¹¹ This chapter, therefore, does not aim to discuss psychological trauma in Müller's works, but focuses on injury and its metaphorical use to interpret language. Although physical and psychological suffering in Müller's texts has always been in the focus of literary criticism, the

⁵ Iulia-Karin Patrut, *Schwarze Schwester – Teufelsjunge: Ethnizität und Geschlecht bei Paul Celan und Herta Müller* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), p. 210.

⁶ See Kohl, 'Beyond Realism'.

⁷ This line of argument can be found in Beverley Driver Eddy, 'Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller's *Herztier*', *German Life and Letters*, 53 (2000), 56–72.

⁸ Anja Johannsen, *Kisten, Krypten, Labyrinth: Raumfigurationen in der Gegenwartsliteratur: W.G. Sebald, Anne Duden, Herta Müller* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), p. 13. See, for example, Brigid Haines, "'The Unforgettable Forgotten': The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller's *Reisende auf einem Bein*", *German Life and Letters*, 55 (2002), 266–81.

⁹ Marven, 'In allem ist der Riß', p. 399. See also Marven's monograph, *Body and Narrative*, p. 53.

¹⁰ Eddy, 'Testimony and Trauma', p. 56.

¹¹ Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 1.

relationship between language and injury has not previously been analysed through the prism of conceptual metaphor theory, a lacuna which this chapter seeks to fill.¹² It will analyse Müller's complex metaphorical conceptualisation of language as both injurious and injured. With reference to Müller's literary works, critical essays, and interviews, I will demonstrate how the concrete concept of injury, which relates directly to sensory perception, can be used to reason about the more abstract concept of language in the condition of oppression.

While some scholars posit that Müller's metaphors are unconventional and reflect her unique style,¹³ I argue that the metaphor for language as injury is not an idiosyncratic invention of the author. Its explanatory power is not confined to literature. For example, injury is commonly used by critical thinkers to reason about everyday speech. Discussing the vocabulary of theoretical works on hate speech, for example, Judith Butler explicates the metaphorical conceptualisation of language as injury and identifies a generic parallelism between these concepts: 'The use of a term such as "wound" suggests that language can act in ways that parallel the infliction of physical pain and injury.'¹⁴ She simultaneously problematises the distance between the concepts of injury and language by highlighting the metaphorical nature of injurious speech. For Butler, linguistic and physical injuries 'can be compared only metaphorically. Indeed, it appears that there is no language specific to the problem of linguistic injury, which is, as it were, forced to draw its vocabulary from physical injury' (p. 4). As a result, the concept of physical injury becomes constitutive of the linguistic injury: 'the metaphorical connection between physical and linguistic vulnerability is essential to the description of linguistic vulnerability itself' (p. 4). For this reason, Müller uses injury as a source domain to reason about the influence of speech upon the characters and herself, as well as about the influence of extralinguistic phenomena upon language.

This chapter first considers how language (speech, insults, literature) can be imagined as capable of harming (hurting, injuring, cutting, stabbing, killing) people, and then it explores how language can be construed as an injured or vulnerable entity.

¹² See Ricarda Schmidt, pp. 62-63: where she has briefly discussed the metaphorical association between speech, silence, and violence in Müller's novel *Herztier* using conceptual metaphor theory.

¹³ See, for example, Ricarda Schmidt, pp. 71-72.

¹⁴ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), p. 4. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

1.1 Injurious Speech

Language as an injurious physical force¹⁵ is a repeated motif in Müller's works. Writing about her childhood experience of rural life in the Banat and the villagers' penchant for silence, Müller explains that speech gains the injurious tangibility of a physical force in interaction with people in the village. A question is metaphorically presented as an attack on the person to whom it is addressed: 'Die Frage "was denkst du jetzt" wäre wie ein Überfall gewesen.'¹⁶ The violence and direct impact of an attack are symbolically transferred to the target domain of speech. The question becomes a physical force that exerts sudden and immediate pressure on the interlocutor. Because silence is the default mode of life in the village, a single question can become a threatening action: speech is presented as an attack which could also imply that the question is unexpected and metaphorically stuns the listener.

In the novel *Herztier* (1994), a first-person narrative, injury can be inflicted with the help of a question that does not require articulation: 'Wir mußten uns fragen ohne ein Wort, ob Edgar und Georg, wenn sie wieder in die Stadt kommen, noch lebendig sind, um zu verletzen' (p. 137). The protagonists live in constant danger of being arrested or killed by the Romanian secret police, so asking the question about the wellbeing of friends is potentially injurious because it opens the possibility of an answer that will cause suffering to the listener. However, even the question itself causes pain to the speaker, because empathy means that the person who conceptualises the suffering of the other person may experience a similar embodied feeling of pain. Compassion and empathy are part of what makes it possible for language to be injurious, as the experience of injury and pain is activated in the human mind in order to reason about the effects of language. Hence embodied reasoning is indispensable for conceptualising injurious language.

In Müller's autobiographical short story from the collection *Barfüßiger Februar* (1987), the cry of the mourning woman causes physical suffering to the public: 'Sie stellt sich auf den letzten Streifen Gras, neben den Hagebuttenstrauch, meidet die Wartenden und quält sie doch mit ihrem Schrei.'¹⁷ The mourning cry is conceptualised as an instrument with which the speaker causes suffering to the people who are waiting for the train. In the above

¹⁵ For a discussion of physical force as a source domain, see Leonard Talmy, 'Force Dynamics in Language and Cognition', *Cognitive Science*, 12 (1988), 49–100.

¹⁶ 'Wenn wir schweigen', p. 83.

¹⁷ 'Überall, wo man den Tod gesehen hat. Eine Sommerreise in die Maramuresch', in *Barfüßiger Februar* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1987), pp. 101–21 (p. 103).

quotation, it is difficult to distinguish between the literal and the metaphorical. On the one hand, the voice cannot literally cause physical harm to the person, and the conceptualisation appears to be metaphorical, where the concepts of voice and physical pain belong to two different domains of experience. Hence it is possible to speak about the metaphorical construal of the target concept of speech through the frame of injury. However, speech is a physical action, and sound on its own can literally inflict injury and cause pain to humans. Perhaps the cry of the woman caused physical discomfort to the listeners. That renders the use of the verb 'quälen' literal. While it is difficult to identify whether the association between injury and language is metaphorical here, the conceptual integration process, which involves the blending of the two concepts, is at work. Speech is a physical act, but it would be an oversimplification to take literally the connection between injury and language.

In the below quotation from the novel *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* (1997), the negative effects of a conversation between the characters are construed by Müller as an invisible injury. While on her way to meet the secret service officer, the protagonist recollects a conversation with her best friend Lilli. The interlocutors are said to harm one another via language, and the resulting injury is not visible to the outside observer: 'Wir hätten uns verletzt, ich sie und sie mich. Aber, von außen gesehen, hätten wir gemütlich im Café gesessen. Oder wir wären spaziert.'¹⁸ As a result of this metaphorical conceptualisation, the perils of speech are subjectively tangible and yet invisible in the eye of the observer. The protagonist's conversations in the novel have injurious potential because she readily engages in confrontation and endows language with metaphorical meaning. Moreover, the narration takes place before the meeting with the secret police officer, and the context of interrogation influences the protagonist's perception of speech as an injurious activity.

The act of interrogation is experienced by the characters in Müller's novel as a physical act of injury to the human body. In the office of the secret agent Pjele, the protagonist of the novel *Herztier* is forced to undress and sing. The narrator shares her experience of this intimidation: 'Ich stand ganz nackt in der Ecke, sagte ich. Ich mußte das Lied singen. Ich sang wie Wasser, es kränkte mich nichts mehr, ich hatte auf einmal fingerdicke Haut' (p. 145). The act of singing metaphorically flows without tripping over anything and produces an impression of continuous motion. Singing is simultaneously a distraction from the interrogation process: the language of oppression causes physical pain to the character, and her enforced singing actually diverts her from her predicament and

¹⁸ *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2013), p. 157.

metaphorically makes her skin so thick that she is no longer vulnerable to the injurious language of interrogation. The negation of the injurious effect of interrogation at the end of the passage – ‘ich hatte auf einmal fingerdicke Haut’ (p. 145) – helps the reader understand the conditions of subjugation. The process of interrogation is understood through the source domain of pain, for in contrast to ‘verletzen’, the verb ‘kränken’ does not automatically evoke the frame of injury but conveys the experience of physical pain which may or may not be caused by injury. Conceptualising the language of oppression as physical injury, the protagonist conveys through bodily experience the interrogator’s power to subjugate.

1.2 Adding Injury to Insult

The injurious power of swearing is a theme in several of Müller’s literary works. Swearing is conventionally understood as hostile conduct and injurious speech, and it is commonly perceived as capable of hurting other people’s feelings – physical injury is used as a source domain to supply a meaningful relation for the negative effects of swearing.

Inflicting injury upon one another with offensive words becomes a necessity for the narrator and her close friends in *Herztier*. They loathe each other, but their common resistance to the dictatorial regime and their free thinking bring them together: ‘Wir konnten uns oft nicht ertragen, weil wir aufeinander angewiesen waren. Wir mußten uns kränken’ (p. 83). The characters pierce each other with injurious language, and do so effectively because they know each other well, and understand how to inflict pain: ‘Das Lachen war hart, wir bohrten den Schmerz an. Es ging schnell, denn wir kannten uns von innen. Wir wußten genau, was den anderen verletzt’ (p. 83). Injurious language is conceptualised as an instrument that can pierce the bodies of the characters; the narrator thus enables readers to see the mechanism of injurious language and its effects through concrete concepts, highlighting the physicality and tangibility of injurious language. The reader is alerted to the essential role of language in personal relationships between the protagonists, and made aware that the ultimate effect of injurious language is not mere pain, but unequivocal damage done to the victim of mockery by his friends: ‘Er [one of the friends] sollte unter der rohen Liebe zusammenbrechen und spüren, wie wenig er aushielt. Jede Beleidigung fädelt die nächste ein, bis der Getroffene schwieg’ (pp. 83–84). The idea of psychological damage is conveyed through the source domain of structural damage. The victim is conceptualised as a container with a hard shell subjected to physical force until it breaks apart. Moreover, injurious speech is conceptualised as a process of sewing in order to show its fluidity and cohesion and its end result is the

silence of the victim. This final state implies that speech is a symptom of the person still resisting the forces of injurious language; when the pressure is too great, the characters break into silence. Later in the text, the narrator rethinks her language use with her friends and qualifies the effects of friends mocking each other, because the words lacked hatred and the intention to injure: ‘Wir überraschten uns damit, daß wir noch böse, lange Wörter erfinden konnten. Aber den Worten fehlte der Haß, sie konnten nicht verletzen’ (p. 137). The experience of suffering from oppression and persecution has changed the friends’ perception of injurious language.

Language also becomes an instrument of injury when Müller discusses the role of kitsch as an offensive literary term in her poetological and autobiographical essay ‘Gelber Mais und keine Zeit’ from the collection *Immer derselbe Schnee* (2011). Recounting her discussion of kitsch with Oskar Pastior,¹⁹ Müller juxtaposes the positive aspects of kitsch as a creative writing style with its conventional use as an insult, taking the view that kitsch is generally perceived as a derogatory term, used intentionally to injure the person whose work is thus described: ‘Das Wort KITSCH ist ein Schimpfwort, ein Begriff, den wir anwenden, um absichtlich zu verletzen’ (p. 143). Kitsch writing can therefore be seen as a deliberate challenge, and Müller shows that the conventional use of the word fails to do justice to its ambiguous meaning.

1.3 Cuts and Stab Wounds

The capacity of language to harm is conceptualised by Müller as the process of cutting, wielding a sharp object, or piercing. Cutting involves a subject who cuts an object that is fragmented or otherwise loses its integrity. The cut itself, made by a sharp object, is a division into two surfaces of something that used to be whole. Furthermore, the concept of the cut relates to the embodied experience of injury and fragmentation, for it can irreversibly change the human body. The schema for the action of cutting is concrete and is based on human motor activity and sensory perception, but at the same time, it can be enriched with social and cultural context and be used to interpret not only language but the human condition in

¹⁹ Oskar Pastior was a Romanian-born German poet with whom Müller initially collaborated on the novel about the deportation and forced labour of ethnic Germans from Romania in the Soviet labour camps. After Pastior’s sudden death in 2006, Müller completed the project on her own, publishing the novel *Atemschaudel* in 2009. See in this context Shopin, ‘Unpacking the Suitcases’.

general.²⁰ Cutting is also related to creating collages, although Müller's collages are closely associated with cutting as creative destruction, and merit a separate discussion.

When the protagonist of *Heute* witnesses a heated quarrel between an old couple, she describes it using the source concept of sharpness: 'So ging das von vorn, wie ein Wirbel im Wasser, der Ton wurde schärfer [...]. Gift stach ihnen aus den Augen' (p. 185). The conversation is first conceptualised as a vortex in the water, which explains the return of the conversation to the starting point and its repetition; then the tone of the conversation becomes sharper, and soon it turns into a heated quarrel in which the speakers are hurling insults at each other. The sharpness of the conversation relates to its potential to cause harm: the narrator says that poison came 'stabbing' from the interlocutors' eyes. Thus, the argument is construed as a physical struggle where the speakers can stab each other with sharp and poisonous objects. Müller uses the source concepts of cutting, stabbing, and sharpness to construe speech as an extremely dangerous and injurious action.

In the novel *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (1992), language in sound form is also conceptualised as injurious via the concept of sharpness. One of the minor characters, an unnamed fisher, describes a dream in which he sees his wife at the river bank plucking unripe hazelnuts and crushing them with a stone, while he is saying a prayer. First, the force of speech is understood as the force of natural world, when words are implied to produce the same sound as the stone crushing nuts. Speech is conceptualised as something more dangerous than just sound waves: 'Vater unser, der du bist im Himmel und auf Erden, sagte ich. Ich hörte bei jedem Wort den Stein klopfen aus meinem Mund. Ich konnte nicht weiterbeten, ich fühlte mich vernarrt' (p. 45). Paradoxically, the prayer that is supposed to provide relief and help is perceived as the ominous sound of the stone hitting nuts and crushing them. The speaker's decision to stop praying and his feelings of confusion reinforce the intuitive reading of the sound of the stone as something negative. The character's voice becomes an injurious force when he turns around and shouts: 'Ich drehte mich zu ihr und schrie so laut, daß mir die Stimme in den Augen stach' (p. 46). Here the shout, while theoretically merely offensive for the listener, is unequivocally harmful to the speaker.

In her Berliner Literaturpreis speech, Müller recollects her childhood in the Banat and describes a moment when she gave away a petty secret of her father's which had the potential to send him to prison, realising that he could be put behind bars: 'Gefängnis – dieses Wort traf

²⁰ For an analysis of the metaphorical association between cutting and oppression in *Herztier*, see Ricarda Schmidt, pp. 65–66.

mich so klar wie ein Messer.’²¹ Müller construes the effect of the word as stabbing with a knife; a concrete bodily experience of pain is used to interpret the effects of language. The knife metaphorically pierces the author, inflicting more damage than a mere cut, which is only a peripheral meaning in this context. The piercing of the human body with a knife is an unambiguous metaphorical description of language.

The concept of the sharp object as a source domain of experience that informs the reader about the target domain of speech is employed by Müller throughout her literary works. The metaphorical relationship between sharp objects and language is established in *Herztier*, when the tailor’s tools are conceptualised as language: ‘Die Nadeln hatten wie die Sätze nacheinander im Mund der Schneiderin gesteckt, bevor sie neben ihrem Arm auf der Maschine lagen’ (p. 201). Language informs readers about the use of needles by serving as a source domain in this quotation. Because the sentence is a more abstract concept than the needle, it is possible to reverse the logic of the text and consider the needle to be the source concept. The tailor and the hairdresser engage with sharp objects used by Müller as source domains to explain the effects of language and perhaps also serve as metaphors for writing itself. In the following example, words are conceptualised as the fabric cut by the tailor: ‘Wörter sind zugeschnitten auf Reden, vielleicht sogar präzise zugeschnitten.’²² Language can be both a sharp object used to injure and the object shaped with sharp tools or weapons.

1.4 Literature and Pain

Pain is used by Müller in her non-fictional works as a vehicle for thinking about her personal experience of creative writing. When the author discusses writing one of the chapters of the autofictional novel *Herztier*, she conceptualises the creative process through the sensory experience of pain, calling it ‘[das] schmerzhafteste, weil persönlichste Kapitel des Buches’.²³ The implication is that the writing of the whole book was a painful experience for Müller, and the more personal the writing, the more the author will have had to suffer while engaged in the creative process. In order to recollect her past suffering, the author has to return to the emotions and feelings she experienced in the past. Cognitive science provides evidence that

²¹ ‘Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 96–109 (p. 105).

²² ‘In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen’, in *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 7–39 (p. 20).

²³ ‘Welt, Welt, Schwester Welt’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 231–43 (p. 231).

memory and imagination might trigger essentially the same cognitive processes as the original experience.²⁴ Hence creative writing is associated with the experience itself and becomes understandable through the metaphors which use this experience as the source domain.

One may be left wondering whether reading can likewise become a painful experience, as empathy enables human beings to feel something of what other people do. Empathy as simulation of experience is essential for reading because the reader's involvement is necessary for her understanding of the message. Consequently, the concept of pain is not a hermetic and inaccessible source domain for the reader, and its metaphorical use corroborates the argument that pain in literature can be conceptually reconstructed in the process of reading. Interestingly, recent findings in cognitive linguistics and psychology lend support to the idea that reading can simulate pain: in a provocatively titled paper, 'Reading Words Hurts', Kevin Reuter et al. establish that people who are more sensitive to pain associate words more strongly with it.²⁵

The very title of Müller's collection of poetological essays *In der Falle* can be read as a reference to the injurious nature of language and literature. The public are caught in the trap when they read literature: 'Es ist Schreiben so eng und ausweglos wie die Gefahr selber. Beim Lesen schnappt die Falle wieder zu. Die Bewunderung vor diesen Texten tut weh. Es ist beim Lesen Angst im Spiel.'²⁶ Reading becomes a painful process, which brings fear into play. Both the concrete concept of the trap and the sensory experience of pain and the feeling of fear are vehicles for the author's thinking about creative writing. Literature is conceptualised with the help of the frame of hunting, where the writer is the hunter using her texts as traps in order to catch readers who are her prey, implying ultimately the detrimental influence of literature upon the reader through the source concepts of pain, fear, and danger.

The pain of reading emerges again when Müller discusses the poetry of Theodor Kramer: 'Den ersten Schmerz, den Theodor Kramers Gedichte in meinem Schädel aufrissen, war der, daß mein Vater ein SS-Soldat war.'²⁷ The injuriousness of Müller's reading is conveyed through a graphic and corporeal image that transforms poems into subjects who tear open the reader's skull. Müller construes reading as an injurious experience in other

²⁴ Dancygier and Sweetser, p. 2.

²⁵ Kevin Reuter, with Markus Werning and others, 'Reading Words Hurts: The Impact of Pain Sensitivity on People's Ratings of Pain-Related Words', *Language and Cognition*, 2016, 1–15 (p. 1).

²⁶ 'In der Falle', p. 16.

²⁷ 'In der Falle', p. 8.

poetological essays. Kramer's poems, she suggests, were unequivocal and allowed no possible interpretations which would make them less injurious, and that is why they were shunned by the public for so long: 'Bei Kramer sind die behelfsmäßigen Fluchtwege nicht vorhanden. Man konnte die Gedichte nicht angehen, ohne sich dem Thema direkt zu stellen. Um sich zu schonen, wurden die Verfolgungs- und Exilgedichte Kramers gemieden.'²⁸ The nature of the potential harm can be inferred from the metaphors used to explain the reasons for avoiding the poems, and alternative interpretations are metaphorically conceptualised as escape routes. This metaphor entails construing reading as motion through the space of the poem, which is in its turn presented as a spatial entity. Motion (reading) causes harm to the traveller (reader) as she encounters objects (poems and their themes) on her way without any escape routes (alternative interpretations which would help eschew the harmful themes).

1.5 Injury and Death

Müller expresses the belief that language in its omnipotence is capable of killing people: 'Sie kann sich mit allem verbünden. Sie kann auch töten, sie kann retten, in einer Situation, in der es auf das richtige Wort ankommt.'²⁹ Language is presented as an active agent and its power is said to straddle the poles of survival and murder. Language is the focus of the writer's attention, and she develops an overwhelming sense of the omnipotence of language through approaching experience via literature. The statement that language can connect to anything attests to her belief that the abstract concept of language can be interpreted using any other domains of experience. As a result, the power of language is its ability to make sense of lived experience and employ embodied experience to make literature meaningful. The wealth of metaphorical associations and ensuing meanings figuratively endows language with omnipotence, while the ultimate injurious power of language is construed as the act of killing in Müller's work. In *Herztier*, for example, the narrator understands speech as a virus that can cause death: 'Auch wir gaben die Gerüchte weiter, als wäre der Schleichvirus des Todes drin, der den Diktator zuletzt doch erreicht: Lungenkrebs, Rachenkrebs flüsterten wir, Darmkrebs, Gehirnschwund, Lähmung, Blutkrebs' (p. 69). Language becomes a biological weapon to eliminate the dictator.

²⁸ 'Lebensangst und Liebesgier – An einen imaginären Freund', in Theodor Kramer, *Die Wahrheit ist, man hat mir nichts getan. Gedichte* (Vienna: Zsolnay, 1999), pp. 187–91 (p. 190).

²⁹ Beyer, p. 131.

The language of the dictatorial state is seen by Müller as both injurious and injured.³⁰ On the one hand, it is a deadly ‘Mördersprache’ and has adverse effects because of oppression and ideology: ‘Ich war gezwungen zu sehen, daß die Landessprache und meine Muttersprache, auch wenn sie die Welt noch so verschieden ansehen, zur Mördersprache taugen. Und bin gezwungen zuzusehen, daß alle Sprachen in allen Ecken der Welt dazu taugen.’³¹ On the other, this language is itself a dead language, ‘[eine] tote Sprache’,³² so the language of the dominant party and of the dictatorial state becomes both deadly and dead. Reading Müller’s texts, it is possible to infer that the death of murderous language comes when this language loses its relationship to the sensory domain of experience. Moreover, the senses of sight and sound as human faculties are obliterated in a language, ‘in der es nie ums Riechen und Schmecken ging, nie ums Hören und Sehen’.³³ The language that has nothing to do with human physical experience is devoid of the human body and hence of life itself.

In contrast to the living nature of offensive words in public use, the language of the regime is construed by Müller as a dead entity. She also presents a metaphorical image of language as a spatial object which can be identified as a cover or a veil: ‘wenn sie ihre tote Sprache über das Land legten’.³⁴ That metaphorical description of the use of language rests upon several source domain concepts. First, language is conceptualised as an entity with a large surface. Second, language is construed as a dead entity, with the rulers seen as those who manipulate it, and the country (society) understood as a surface. Such a figurative conceptualisation activates the metaphorical mapping between control and verticality.³⁵ Language is laid as a cover over the land, and its superior position evokes power and control: the language of dictatorship oppresses people and controls their lives. These inferences are possible because of the particular metaphorical conceptualisation of power and verticality that

³⁰ For a discussion of the relationship between dictatorship and language in Müller’s texts, see Jenny Watson, “‘Reden ist Silber, Schweigen ist Gold’: German as a Site of Fascist Nostalgia and Romanian as the Language of Dictatorship in the Work of Herta Müller”, in *New Literary and Linguistic Perspectives on the German Language, National Socialism, and the Shoah*, ed. by Peter Davies and Andrea Hammel (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014), pp. 143–58.

³¹ ‘Und noch erschrickt unser Herz’, in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 19–38 (p. 38).

³² ‘Hunger und Seide. Männer und Frauen im Alltag’, in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 65–87 (p. 77).

³³ *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, p. 100.

³⁴ ‘Hunger und Seide’, p. 77.

³⁵ For a discussion of power as verticality, see Dancygier and Sweetser, p. 166.

makes sense of language use in the dictatorship. Müller creates a vivid image to which the reader can relate through embodied experience and basic concepts, such that the power of language becomes corporeal and tangible for those who think in terms of these metaphors. On the other hand, the intellectual nature of such language is denied because it is construed as a dead body, lacking meaning, communicative message, and creativity. While oppressive and powerful in its subjugation of people, the dead language of the regime also contrasts with the language of the people who want to be free. The oppressive language of the state is both deadly in its subjugating power and dead in its meaninglessness and inauthenticity.

Müller's focus on the power of language, and her overt sensitivity to it, make her especially attentive to the effects of speech. In this context, the metaphorical force of the threat is of interest because the threat may strongly influence the person, often as a performative speech act, which means that the action of threatening is realised through speech and does not necessarily entail any further action. The performative nature of the threat lies in the fact that by pronouncing it, humans purposefully commit an action, a speech act. Speaking about her friends who committed suicide as a result of death threats issued by the Romanian secret service, Müller says that the 'Todesdrohungen zerrten sie in den Suizid'.³⁶ Death threats are the agent, and Müller's friends become victims of language. This scenario is fully consonant with Butler's explanation of the process of conceptualising injurious speech: 'We ascribe an agency to language, a power to injure, and position ourselves as the objects of its injurious trajectory' (p. 1). In order to show the causal power of language and the direct link between life threats and later suicides, Müller metaphorically presents causation as object manipulation.³⁷ In her utterance, death threats, acting as powerful agentive forces, drag people against their will into the act of suicide, construed as a kind of container.

1.6 Injured and Vulnerable Language

In addition to being injurious and deadly, language is understood by Müller as itself a vulnerable entity. Speaking about one's native language, Müller metaphorically interprets its immediate presence and directness through the source domain of skin: 'Die Muttersprache ist

³⁶ *Lebensangst und Worthunger: im Gespräch mit Michael Lentz: Leipziger Poetikvorlesung 2009* (2009; repr. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), p. 31.

³⁷ Lakoff and Johnson discuss object manipulation in *PF*, pp. 37–38.

momentan und bedingungslos da wie die eigene Haut.’³⁸ Skin is an organ of the human body that is regulated unconsciously. More importantly, skin is responsible for communicating a variety of sense impressions, including pressure and heat. This is implicitly mapped on to language in Müller’s metaphor, presenting to the reader the image of immediacy and directness of language. The source domain for such a metaphorical interpretation is the human body because it is concrete and directly accessible to the reader.

Müller elaborates the metaphor for ‘language as skin’ when she observes that one’s native language is like skin in its susceptibility to injury: ‘Und genauso verletzbar wie diese, wenn sie von anderen geringgeschätzt, mißachtet oder gar verboten wird.’³⁹ The mother tongue is metaphorically injured through underestimation, contempt or a ban on its use, and such actions are construed as inflicting injury on one’s native language. The vulnerability of language becomes a tangible image open to embodied conceptualisation by the reader. Significantly, language is no longer in the subject position when it is discussed as something vulnerable; it becomes an object under the harmful influence of society.

Once the vulnerability of native language is presented to the reader in the vivid image of the skin, Müller elaborates the metaphor by applying it to set the limitations of language vulnerability: ‘Es tut keiner Muttersprache weh, wenn ihre Zufälligkeiten im Geschau anderer Sprachen sichtbar werden.’⁴⁰ Languages in general are metaphorically construed as embodied visible entities; in this particular case, though, one’s native language is construed not just as an organ of the body but as an agent that can be hurt and can feel pain. Instead of causing pain to the native language, other languages confirm one’s relation to – and affection for – the native language. Hence Romanian, which is Müller’s second language, is not alien to her and helps to relate to her native German.

Literature is understood by Müller as vulnerable and fragile, and hence both animate and inanimate in its susceptibility to injury and damage, as is evident from the essay ‘Der König verneigt sich und tötet’. That its sound is susceptible to damage emerges from her consideration of Theodor Kramer’s and Inge Müller’s poetry: ‘Erst später las ich die spröden Reime von Theodor Kramer und Inge Müller. Ich spürte behutsame, verletzbare Takte darin, als würde einem der Atem in der Schachtel der Schläfen klopfen bei dieser Art zu reimen.’⁴¹

³⁸ ‘In jeder Sprache’, p. 26.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴¹ *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 40–73 (p. 55).

The rhymes of poems are conceptualised as fragile objects; their articulation can destroy form and cause harm to the poem, which is conceived as an animate entity. The source concepts of entities – fragility and vulnerability are used in these metaphors – collate the animate with the inanimate to convey to the reader the qualities of poetry that Müller cherishes. Since language is often seen as deformed in times of oppression, she attributes high value to the poetry that is fragile and yet intact. Poetry conceptualised metaphorically as a fragile and vulnerable entity appeals to Müller because it contrasts starkly with the experience of oppression and persecution, which she construes as destructive of language. The vulnerability of creative writing is also mentioned in Müller's discussion of Jürgen Fuchs' novel *Fassonschnitt* (1984), which she interprets through the schema of creating a vulnerable being in the nexus of sentences as Fuchs 'erzeugt das Verletzbar im Zusammenhalt der Sätze'.⁴² The work can be wounded, harmed, or damaged, but as it is presented to the public it is whole even if its fragility is revealed to the reader.

Speaking about her own poetic language, Müller states that poor translation into Romanian crippled her spied-on private discussions with friends: 'Was mich innerlich störte, unsere Geschichten waren durch die schlechte Übersetzung ins Rumänische politisch zwar nicht ungefährlicher geworden, aber literarisch verstümmelt. [...] Das Poetische war wie weggeblasen.'⁴³ Translation becomes physical violence, causing corporeal damage from which poetic language, understood as a living body, cannot fully recuperate. The secretly recorded conversations remained dangerous because they were critical of the regime and could be used to persecute Müller and her friends, and while the disappearance of the poetic nature of speech is conceptualised as an act of blowing away an object, the source domain of breath and a physical force associated with it evoke a vivid image for understanding the detrimental influence of poor translation. Through concrete experience, the author makes sense of the harm caused to language.

1.7 Conclusion

In her insightful commentary on the complex issue of injurious language, Judith Butler asks the reader: 'Could language injure us if we were not, in some sense, linguistic beings, beings who require language in order to be?' (pp. 1–2). Human beings are linguistic beings, and our

⁴² 'Der Blick der kleinen Bahnstationen', in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 200–14 (p. 202).

⁴³ 'Der König verneigt sich', p. 66.

language faculty is embodied and developed after millions of years of evolution; language can physically affect people. Yet words cannot ‘enter the limbs, craft the gesture, bend the spine’ (p. 159) without metaphor. Injurious language is possible because human beings are capable of metaphorical thinking, which can be considered an integral part of our language faculty. Through an analysis of metaphors for language in Herta Müller’s literary works, critical essays, and interviews, this chapter has demonstrated how the concept of physical injury can be used to reason about language. The metaphorical conceptualisation of injurious language is associated by Müller with suffering and oppression, where the terminal effect of injurious language is the death of the person. Injurious language becomes a subject which manipulates people as objects. Moreover, it is understood as a force or a weapon that can be employed to inflict injury or even bring death to the author, narrator or characters. At the same time, construing language as an injured body highlights its failure under conditions of subjugation. In the most extreme scenario, the injury inflicted upon language metaphorically kills it and silences the speaker, where silence is construed as a symptom of a lethal injury to language. While injurious language can bring about the death of the human being, injury is conceptualised by Müller as a possible factor in the metaphorical death of language, leading to silence. Ultimately, the metaphorical conceptualisation of injurious and injured language allows Herta Müller to convey to the reader the dangers and limitations of art and communication in the condition of oppression.

2 DESTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIBLE LANGUAGE

Fragmentation – a form of destruction – is one of the concepts Müller regularly employs to describe language metaphorically; the same concept has been productively used by literary critics to discuss her writing and explain her style and aesthetics. For example, Norbert Otto Eke relies on the image of fragmentation to understand Müller’s style, considering her writing as ‘eine aus “Rhythmuseinheiten” konstruierte Prosa, die Wirklichkeit in einer kaleidoskopartigen Wahrnehmung fragmentarisiert’.¹ In his discussion of Müller’s poetics, Friedmar Apel employs the metaphor of a destructive and reconstituting gaze to describe her authorial perspective: ‘Der eigensinnige Blick der Erzählerin Herta Müller versucht, die Risse in den Bildern zu sehen, den Verblendungszusammenhang aufzulösen. Er zerschneidet und trennt und setzt neu zusammen.’² Likewise, Claudia Becker associates destruction with loss of identity, the result of disruptive perception in Müller’s *Niederungen*.³ In a way that resonates with Becker’s study, Karl Schulte has invoked fragmentation to characterise Müller’s perception and the structure of her novel *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989).⁴ According to Thomas Roberg, metaphors in Müller’s writing demonstrate her ‘Poetik der Risse und Aussparungen’; and Lyn Marven has contributed to the discussion by proposing fragmentation as a principle of the author’s aesthetics, viewing it as a symptom of trauma: ‘Trauma becomes visible in the texts’ content, and also in the aesthetic of fragmentation

¹ Norbert Otto Eke, ‘Augen/Blicke oder: Die Wahrnehmung der Welt in den Bildern. Annäherung an Herta Müller’, in *Die erfundene Wahrnehmung: Annäherung an Herta Müller*, ed. by Norbert Otto Eke (Paderborn: Igel, 1991), pp. 7–21 (p. 17).

² Friedmar Apel, ‘Schreiben, Trennen. Zur Poetik des eigensinnigen Blicks bei Herta Müller’, in *Die erfundene Wahrnehmung*, pp. 22–31 (p. 27).

³ Claudia Becker, ‘“Serapiontisches Prinzip” in politischer Manier. – Wirklichkeit- und Sprachbilder in “Niederungen”’, in *Die erfundene Wahrnehmung*, pp. 32–41 (p. 36).

⁴ Karl Schulte, ‘*Reisende auf einem Bein*. Ein Mobile’, in *Der Druck der Erfahrung treibt die Sprache in die Dichtung: Bildlichkeit in Texten Herta Müllers*, ed. by Ralph Köhnen (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 53–62 (p. 57).

which structures their linguistic and narrative syntax.’⁵ Brigid Haines supports Marven’s association of ‘the aesthetic of fragmentation’ and trauma in Müller’s works and argues that such an aesthetic is a result of loneliness.⁶ Finally, Sarah Schmidt uses fragility and destruction as tropes to elucidate the relationship between things and words in *Atemschaukel*.⁷

Despite the frequent and illuminating discussion of the relationship between language and destruction in Müller’s works, and the use of fragmentation or destruction as a trope to describe her language, no one has yet studied her perception and use of destructive and destructible language in the framework of conceptual metaphor theory. This chapter will build on scholarship to date by demonstrating the complex interplay between the metaphorical representation of language, speech, and literature as both destructive and destructible in Müller’s texts, thereby contributing a new perspective to the analysis of language and destruction in her oeuvre.

Müller, even more than most literary writers, communicates something that can only be said in those particular words and images, because only they trigger the relevant physical experience. This chapter shows how she achieves this, and how her metaphors for language rely on conceptual and linguistic conventions and can be illuminated with reference to conceptual metaphor theory. More specifically, I argue that the more concrete concepts of destruction and damage are used by the author to make sense of language and to convey effectively her view of it to her readers. This chapter thus explores how Müller imagines language as a destructive and destructible entity.

2.1 Destruction as a Frame

Müller uses the concepts of destruction and damage as source domains to reason about the influence of language upon her characters and herself, and conversely about the influence of extralinguistic phenomena upon language. Destruction and damage constitute a certain cause-and-effect frame which allows the reader to empathise with the author and her characters. It

⁵ Thomas Roberg, ‘Bildlichkeit und verschwiegener Sinn in Herta Müllers Erzählung *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt*’, in *Der Druck der Erfahrung*, pp. 27–42 (p. 34); Marven, ‘In allem ist der Reiß’, p. 397.

⁶ Brigid Haines, “‘Die akute Einsamkeit des Menschen’: Herta Müller’s *Herztier*”, in *Herta Müller: Politics and Aesthetics*, pp. 87–108 (p. 101).

⁷ Sarah Schmidt, ‘Vom Kofferpacken: Zur fragilen Allianz der Dinge mit den Worten im Werk Herta Müllers’, *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 22 (2012), 115–28.

relates to the experience of psychological suffering through sensory perception and motor control of the body. The basic frame of destruction commonly stands for severe damage to an inanimate entity which in some cases causes its irreversible deformation. Damage is a form of object manipulation. It can be inflicted by an agent (who may use an instrument) upon an object where the latter is deformed and loses its integrity. Damage can also be the result of particular circumstances, or even be caused by the object itself when it collapses or implodes. While damage does not necessarily entail irreversible changes in the object, destruction means a high degree of damage and can entail the terminal demolition of the entity.

In Müller's work, both language and its users are presented as agents performing destructive actions; both, too, can be the object of destructive action. In this conceptual integration framework, language becomes the agent or instrument of destruction; conceptualised as a fragile object, it can also be the object of destruction (destructible). The frame of destruction can be evoked to convey the damage done either to the person-object by language or to the language-object by an actor, depending on whether language is seen as the subject or object of the destructive action.

2.2 Destructive Language

Müller repeatedly engages with the destructive potential of language. In *Heute*, there is a vivid scene in which inappropriate and unintentionally funny language metaphorically destroys one of the characters and harms the totalitarian regime. The narrator-protagonist of the novel is married to Paul, a worker, whose father is a prominent representative of the ruling party. Paul's mother is a woman from the village, who slept with the party officials in order to make a career and then was able to marry 'einen Helden der sozialistischen Arbeit' (p. 100). During a party meeting, Paul's mother speaks in public and embarrasses her husband, whose efforts to teach her the language of the regime have obviously been fruitless. She says that there is a draught in the hall, and while it is not an issue for men who are sitting with their trousers on, women are wearing skirts. At this point, she uses first a vulgar word 'Schnecke', acceptable for colloquial use in an everyday conversation, and then an inadequate substitute 'Angelegenheit' – all of this produces a comic effect because genitals are taboo, in whatever wording, in the frame of a political party meeting (p. 102). Paul's mother destroys her public image, and her words threaten to damage the reputation of her husband. After the meeting, her husband slaps her face with the words: 'Begreifst du nicht, daß du auch mich völlig ruinierst' (p. 103). The mother's speech metaphorically destroys the father because it is irreconcilable

with the ideological language of the party.⁸ Simultaneously her destructive speech can be seen as liberating the unwitting speaker and inadvertently dismantling the oppressive regime. Paul's mother disrupts the setting in which ideological language is exercised. Her husband is a loyal member of the ruling party and a representative of the authorities, and hence his metaphorical destruction stands metonymically for harm done to the whole regime. Thus, her unwitting humour not only destroys the public image of the speaker and the authority of her husband, but also harms the dictatorship.

This interpretation is consonant with Müller's views on humour in her poetological writing. In the essay 'Der König verneigt sich', she notes that the jokes about the Ceaușescu dictatorship helped her survive the oppression and mount resistance against the regime. She discusses '[d]rastische Witze als imaginäre Demontage des Regimes' (p. 66). With regard to Müller's focus on detail, Haines argues that it is 'a basic survival mechanism in the face of the life-denying master plots of totalitarianism' and that her 'texts [...] are documents of [...] resistance';⁹ humour likewise allows Müller to exercise her authority, resist the power of the regime, and damage it symbolically by revealing its incongruities and absurdity: 'Da wo sich Witz einschleicht, Sarkasmus, da hab ich gesiegt. Das ist wie Ohrfeigen bekommen haben und irgendwann, wenn auch zu spät und nur in Worten welche austeilten, zurückschlagen.'¹⁰ In this context, destruction is a source concept to present the effects of humorous language on the dictatorship.

In her short story 'Die Straßenkehrer' from *Niederungen*, Müller vividly demonstrates the metaphorical destruction of the narrator through language. The shouts of street cleaners shatter the narrator as she is walking down the street: 'Jetzt reden alle Straßenkehrer alle Straßen durcheinander. Ich gehe durch ihre Schreie, durch den Schaum ihrer Zurufe, ich zerbreche, ich falle in die Tiefe der Bedeutungen.'¹¹ The shouts could be read as the cause of the narrator's destruction ('zerbrechen'). But no direct causation is established in this scene, and it is unclear whether the calls of the street cleaners or the text itself produce the experience of the metaphorical disintegration of her body. The text's fragmenting power can

⁸ For an analysis of the relationship between language and ideology in Müller's oeuvre, see Watson.

⁹ Brigid Haines, "'Leben wir im Detail': Herta Müller's Micro-Politics of Resistance", in *Herta Müller*, pp. 109–25 (p. 109).

¹⁰ Beverley Driver Eddy, "'Die Schule der Angst' – Gespräch mit Herta Müller, den 14. April 1998", *German Quarterly*, 72 (1999), 329–39 (p. 333).

¹¹ *Niederungen*, pp. 155–56.

be inferred from the narrator's experience of destruction, and the destruction of the subject proceeds metaphorically through the language of the essay: the narrator falls apart into the plethora of meanings. This process could be visualised as the fracturing of a fragile object, whose pieces then fall into the depths of various containers representing different meanings. The expression 'die Tiefe der Bedeutungen' (p. 156) allows the reader to reason about meaning through the source domain of space, and in particular, the concept of depth. Although the associations between the various entities in the scene and the destruction of the narrator do not lend themselves to a definitive interpretation, they are sufficient grounds to believe that the focus of the essay 'Die Straßenkehrer' is the destructive power of language.

In the autobiographical essay 'Einmal anfassen – zweimal loslassen', Müller reflects on the concepts of past and present and notes the adverse influence of her writing on her parents' view of her future. She explains the effects of writing through the metaphor of destruction: 'Mein Schreiben machte ihre Vorstellungen von meiner Zukunft zunichte, ruinierte die Aussichten auf eine gute "Profession" in der Stadt.'¹² Müller presents writing as an agent that performs a ruinous action, and her parents' hopes are implicitly conceived as destructible objects. Müller is a self-reflexive writer who pays close attention to various ways in which literature affects life, and here she uses the frame of destruction to explain her parents' attitude towards writing as a trade and her writing's effect on their aspirations and plans with regard to her future.

2.3 Subject and Object

The dichotomy of destructive and destructible language stems from its subjective and objective roles in the literary text. The distinction between the subject and object is not a universal truth, because the concepts of the subject and object are affordances used by human beings in order to make sense of the world. Conceptualising this abstract dichotomy is consonant with the way we perceive and interact with physical objects: 'Objects, as we experience them, are actually stable affordances for us – stable patterns that our environment presents to creatures like us with our specific capacities for perception and bodily action.'¹³ Language can be regarded as a destructive force or a subject capable of causing damage when the writer discusses its negative influence on people's mental state and wellbeing. Placing

¹² *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 106–29 (p. 124).

¹³ Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, p. 47.

language in the role of the object, the writer can present it as a fragile, damaged, or broken physical entity. In this case, the text profiles how language is influenced by people and environment. Because the metaphorical mapping between language and destruction allows role reconfiguration, the author can reverse the roles of the subject and object within the frame of destruction. The possibility of role reversal in the subject-object dichotomy allows Müller to consider language as both destructive and destructible.

In her poetological essay ‘Sag, daß du fünfzehn bist’, Müller discusses the writing of Ruth Klüger and comments on the destructive power of sentences in Klüger’s autobiography *weiter leben: Eine Jugend*: ‘Jeder Satz zerstört die Ruhe des vorherigen, in der wir uns eingerichtet haben.’¹⁴ Sentences are personified, and each individual one becomes the agent of destructive action which changes the mental state of the preceding sentences. Reading is conceived here as the process of taking refuge in the text and immediately abandoning it with every following sentence. Reading becomes the metaphorical destruction of the peace and quiet which language temporarily provides to readers. Müller employs the frame of destruction to reason about the role of language in literature because it highlights the power of the text by construing it as a physical force. The concept of ‘Ruhe’ becomes a fragile container in which readers situate themselves during the reception process. The destruction of the container by the sentence can then be experienced by the reader as an existential threat. The sentence in this instance becomes a subject which is capable of destroying the calm of the reader. Instead of disturbing the calm, the sentence metaphorically causes physical damage. The concrete concept of destruction is much more vivid for the reader and indicates the extent to which language is capable of exerting a negative influence on people. At the same time, sentences destroy the calm of the previous sentences, which implies that language is self-destructive. The dichotomy of destructive and destructible language is played out in Müller’s commentary on Klüger with relation to literary writing, where language is both the subject that causes damage, and the implied object of symbolic destruction.

In another essay, ‘Mein Kleid bringt die Post zurück’, Herta Müller writes about the poetry of Inge Müller and at one point imagines the poet as a physical object damaged by language. Herta Müller develops a complex metaphor where history is the sum of personal stories and biographies: ‘Geschichte als Summe von Biographien, als Kette von persönlichen Geschichten. [...] Sie [Inge Müller] ist eine, die in die Geschichte hineingenarrt und von ihr

¹⁴ *In der Falle*, pp. 25–40 (p. 35).

beschädigt wurde.’¹⁵ History becomes a narrative¹⁶ capable of inflicting harm and metaphorically damages Inge Müller, something which is reflected in her writing: ‘So kommt es zu dieser tiefen Erschütterung in den Gedichten, zu dieser hüpfenden Zerbrochenheit.’¹⁷ Herta Müller conveys the destructive power of language using the concepts of shaking and breakage. The poems of Inge Müller can be seen as containers holding the poet’s destroyed self. The conceptual mapping between language and the physical actions of shaking and breaking provides a framework for sensorimotor reasoning about the abstract concept of poetry. Analysing a war poem by Inge Müller, Herta Müller presents the protagonists as fragile objects that break in the poetic space of the literary work: ‘Hier zerbricht sie wie er.’¹⁸ Herta Müller imagines that the two people break apart in the poem. They are conceptualised as broken things, damaged and destroyed entities. Language contains this destruction, reflects the damage, and can be interpreted as the cause of it. Although language is not identified as the destructive subject, the reader can infer it from the larger context of the whole essay on Inge Müller with its numerous instances of mapping out the associations between language and destruction. But language is both the subject and object of destruction in this essay, and, reversing the subject and object, poetic language can be conceived as a destroyed entity: ‘Die Zerbrochenheit, die aus diesen Gedichten herausieht, agiert in der verkürzten Logik, im Kurzschluß der Sinnlichkeit. Es gibt keinen Ruhepunkt mehr.’¹⁹ Inge Müller’s poems can be read as damaged and broken language, and Herta Müller evokes the dichotomy of destructive and destructible language to convey the suffering of Inge Müller and her protagonists and to discuss her writing style.

In her 2001 speech ‘Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird’, Müller creates a salient metaphorical conceptualisation of destructive and simultaneously destructible language when she discusses silence as part of lifestyle in her home village. According to Müller, silence was the most common form of communication in the village. The author compares silence and speech, arguing that the former ‘ist keine Pause zwischen dem Reden, sondern eine Sache für

¹⁵ *In der Falle*, pp. 41–60 (p. 42).

¹⁶ For a discussion of history as literary narrative, see Hayden White, ‘The Historical Text as Literary Artifact’, in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 81–100.

¹⁷ ‘Mein Kleid bringt die Post zurück’, p. 46.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁹ ‘Mein Kleid bringt die Post zurück’, p. 51.

sich'.²⁰ While language is presented linearly in speech, silence allows the simultaneous containment of multiple messages: 'Im Schweigen kommt aber alles auf einmal daher, es bleibt alles drin hängen, was über lange Zeit nicht gesagt wird' (p. 31). In order to highlight the contrast between the linearity of speech and the polysemy of silence, Müller construes speech as 'ein reißenader Faden, der sich selber durchbeißt und immer neu geknüpft werden muß' (p. 31). The linearity of speech is visualised with the image of a thread. Speech can be conceived as a physical link between the interlocutors that can be broken. The physical qualities of the thread allow the author to reason about speech as a fragile object, and the disruption of speech is conceptualised in this context as the tearing of the thread. Moreover, speech is personified and endowed with an ability to destroy itself. The act of destruction leads to the necessity of reestablishing the discourse, which is conveyed metaphorically as tying the thread together. Because silence is conventionally juxtaposed with speech, it is plausible to infer that the former is implicitly understood as the outcome of the self-destruction of the latter. Yet in this particular passage, as I noted above, silence is presented as a distinct form of language which allows the simultaneous expression of multiple meanings. Language encompasses both speech and silence, because silence is said to be capable of communicating meanings in a manner alternative to speech. The concept of the thread is concrete and enables the reader to grasp the author's idea of destructive and destructible speech through the sensorimotor experience of object manipulation. Speech is both destructive and destructible in the framework of the conceptual association which maps the source concept of thread on to the target concept of speech, and although the thread is literally an object which can be destroyed, its personification makes it a subject capable of causing its own deformation. In her poetological essay 'Der ganz andere Diskurs des Alleinseins', Müller characterises the representation of conversation in her writing and likewise evokes the dichotomy of destructive and destructible language to reason about speech: 'Die Aussagen sind durchbrochen durch die Beschreibung der Dinge.'²¹ The utterances in a conversation are regarded as destructible objects, whereas spoken accounts of events are seen as the agents destroying them. Thus, speech is conceived simultaneously as the subject and object of destruction.

²⁰ *Heimat ist das, was gesprochen wird: Rede an die Abiturienten des Jahrgangs 2001*, 2nd edn (Merzig: Gollenstein, 2009), p. 29.

²¹ *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel: Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1991), pp. 57–73 (p. 69).

In Müller's essay 'Gelber Mais' from the collection *Immer derselbe Schnee*, language is endowed with a power to deform the author's experience when she interprets Pastior's original poetry as destructive of his past suffering. Müller recounts her interaction with the poet and states that he could remember his experience in the Soviet labour camp extremely well and could describe it to her in detail. Yet in his literary works all the harm from his past experience was 'poetisch gebrochen in seiner Sprache, zur Unkenntlichkeit verdeutlicht' (p. 129). In his poetry, Pastior metaphorically destroyed his suffering. It is considered as a breakable object, and the language of poetry is understood as a space or container in which the breaking down of the experience takes place. Destruction is associated with the impossibility of comprehending Pastior's texts.

In her essay on Pastior's lifelong silence about his collaboration with the Romanian secret service in the 1960s, Müller reverses the subject-object relation and presents language as an object of destruction. Destruction is applied as a source domain to explain Pastior's silence. He never told Müller about his collaboration with the secret service, and learning about it after his death had a strong impact on her. The metaphorical conceptualisation of destructible language allows Müller to reason about Pastior's poetry and silence: 'Er sagte, die Sprache sei ihm im Lager zerbrochen. Heute weiß ich, Pastior ist die Sprache nicht nur einmal, sondern noch ein zweites Mal zerbrochen.'²² Here physical suffering is construed through the source domain of language; Müller works with language, and her acute awareness of it makes it an apposite source domain through which to express the suffering. She describes the tribulations of Oskar Pastior through the effects upon his language. Second, language, now as the target domain, is mapped out through the source domain of breakable objects: language is regarded as a fragile entity which is destroyed in the oppressive conditions of suffering. The Romanian dictatorial regime harmed Pastior, persecuting him and forcing him into collaboration with the secret service. The metaphorical damage to Oskar Pastior is realised by Müller through the medium of language. Language is broken apart by his experience in the labour camp and later in the Romanian dictatorship. The ultimate breakdown of language, its complete destruction, can be inferred to stand for silence, the result of suffering and harm²³ which are, in their turn, associated with destructive language. Thus, the dichotomy of destructive and destructible language in Müller's writing becomes a

²² 'Aber immer geschwiegen', in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 165–71 (pp. 170–71).

²³ See Eddy, 'Testimony and Trauma', p. 58.

productive conceptual nexus, established through masterful evocation of the concept of destruction with regard to language.

2.4 Destructible Language

In her 2009 Leipziger Poetikvorlesung *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, Müller assesses the seriousness of the harm done to Pastior's and her language by the totalitarian regime. She equates the influence of external oppressive circumstances on existence and language and imagines the two as destructible objects, employing physical force as the source domain to explain such deleterious effects: 'Also mir hat es die Sprache und die Existenz täglich geschüttelt – aber Oskar Pastior hat es die Sprache und Existenz täglich zerbrochen' (p. 15). Language is understood as a fragile object, which can be manipulated by an oppressive society. Depending on the circumstances, the degree of influence on language is seen as a physical force ranging from shaking to actually shattering an object. In this context, the verb 'schütteln', which means applying a certain immediate force to displace an object repeatedly without necessarily damaging it, is understood by the reader as a less destructive influence than the one evoked by the image of language that is daily shattered. In the former case, language can be deformed and misplaced but its damage is only implied and is not directly denoted by the verb, whereas in the case of shattered language the consequences of the detrimental effects are irreversible. Müller explains the difference in the degree of the harm done to language by inviting the reader to employ embodied experience that is both subjective and well-recognisable. While the oppressive circumstances and their deleterious effects are not directly accessible to the reader and the differences between the effects can hardly be measured and discussed in literal terms, the metaphor makes them understandable and meaningful. Only through metaphor can Müller give an insight into the oppressive influence of the state on life and language. On the whole, the concatenation of life and language, 'Sprache und Existenz', in their shattered and shaken state, can be interpreted as another indication of the validity of the argument about the strong link between suffering and writing in Müller's work.

The construal of language as something that can be deformed leads to the similar conception of language units in Müller's autobiographical and poetological essay 'In jeder Sprache sitzen andere Augen' from the collection *Der König verneigt sich und tötet*. She considers words and sentences as physical objects that can be damaged through misuse. Discussing the metonymy 'SPRACHE IST HEIMAT', she remarks that 'Leute, deren Heimat

sie nach Belieben kommen und gehen läßt, sollten diesen Satz nicht strapazieren' (pp. 28–29). What is interesting in the framework of this analysis is the use of the verb 'strapazieren' in its metaphorical meaning in relation to the sentence. This verb provides the source domain of physical force to reason about the concept of the sentence, where the sentence is presented as a physical object that can be stressed, worn off, and destroyed through pressure and overuse. This concrete physical concept enables the writer to make a strong argument by evoking a lucid image in the imagination of the reader. 'In jeder Sprache' demonstrates how words can also be susceptible to physical damage: 'Wenn am Leben nichts mehr stimmt, stürzen auch die Wörter ab'; and this happens because all dictatorships 'nehmen die Sprache in ihren Dienst' (p. 31). The functional impotence of words is understood as their fall. Words fall from their rightful positions into dysfunction under the influence of dictatorial regimes which contract language for service. Through metaphor, language units are interpreted as destructible objects, and language itself is implied to be damaged by totalitarian regimes. Life and language are inextricably linked, since dictatorships metaphorically damage language when they cause harm to its speakers.

In the poetological essay 'Der König verneigt sich', Müller associates the damaged nature of ideological language with the monstrosity of the party vocabulary. Speaking about the vocabulary of the GDR, she argues that the pronunciation of the words revealed their damaged structure and impotence to transmit meaning: 'Wortmonster, wenn man sie laut und korrekt im eigenen Mund wiederholte, wurden sie unfreiwillig komisch – vermurkst im Aufbau, verkorkst im Inhalt' (p. 44). The comic effect of the words was due to their inadequateness, which is explained to the reader through metaphor. GDR words are understood as buildings, and just as the structure of the building can be incomplete when the builders are sloppy, so is the structure of the GDR words; hence the language of the GDR can also be imagined as a damaged or incomplete structure. The metaphor makes the author's criticism of ideology clear and tangible for the reader. Literary scholars have also used the source concept of destruction to reason about the relationship between language and ideology in Müller's texts: Jenny Watson, for example, discusses Müller's attitude to 'language's potential to be damaged by dictatorial regimes'.²⁴

Similarly, in the collection of essays *Der König verneigt sich und tötet*, Müller conceives the speech of the party officials and the dictator as damaged and destructive language, where the damage is caused by constant recycling of ready-made collocations

²⁴ Watson, p. 143.

which lose their sense and can be put together without communicating meaning; and in the autobiographical essay ‘Die rote Blume und der Stock’, Müller writes about the influence of the language of the Ceaușescu dictatorship on young children and uses the process of chewing the cud to explain metaphorically its repetitiveness and meaninglessness: ‘das Wiederkauen der immerselben, gestanzten Fertigteile’.²⁵ The language of the dictator becomes meaningless mastication, a selfish act which does not allow authentic interaction. Elsewhere in *Der König verneigt sich*, the act of mastication metaphorically explains the process of interrogation of the author by the Romanian secret police, highlighting its repetitiveness and harmful influence. On the one hand, this bodily action renders the repetition of interrogation less threatening than the original process. While interrogation is seen as a destructive action which damages the victim, its repetitiveness is regarded as a training activity when the interrogator is metaphorically chewing his speech: ‘Oft trainierte er das Kaputtmachen an mir, weil sein Arbeitstag noch Stunden dauerte, um nicht allein im Büro zu sitzen, behielt er mich dort, kaute alles ironisch oder zynisch wieder, was schon tausendmal wütend gesagt worden war.’²⁶ Repetitive interrogation as a training practice is implied to be less dangerous, because the act of chewing the cud draws the reader’s attention to the ineffectiveness and lack of interactional force of such speech. On the other hand, mastication implies physical destruction of food and this destructive quality may reinforce the negative influence of interrogation. ‘Kaputtmachen’ becomes more effective through repetition because it enables the interrogator to fragment the victim through reiteration of his speech: ‘Sein Zerstörungstraining funktionierte nur in der Routine, er mußte also den Fahrplan einhalten.’²⁷ If the practice of symbolic destruction is possible only as a routine activity, then repetition should reinforce its efficacy and could even be the only way to cause damage. Once again the negative influence of language is understood as a concrete concept of destruction which leads to irreversible damage to a material object. All in all, the source domain of digestive rumination enriches the reader’s understanding of the interrogation process and conveys the complexity of destructive and destructible language of the dictatorial regime, especially when it is wielded by the forces enlisted to subjugate and oppress the public.

In the beginning of *Der Fuchs*, Clara, the protagonist, swears in pain after accidentally pricking her finger with a needle (p. 8). The narrator reflects on swearing in general and

²⁵ *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 151–59 (p. 152).

²⁶ ‘Der König verneigt sich’, p. 53.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

associates invectives with fragile objects: ‘Wenn Flüche gebrochen sind, hat es sie nie gegeben’ (p. 9). Because swearing is a performative utterance, it ceases to be if it fails to achieve its goal. In this framework, the form of the objects defines them, and if this form is compromised, the objects lose their identity. When swearwords are seen as fragile objects and once they are broken, the swearing itself is obliterated not only at the moment of fracture but also from the time when the invective was first used. The metaphorical damage of language affects the perception of the invectives in the past. The relationship between destructive and destructible speech becomes an irreconcilable dichotomy, because swearing cannot be effective if it is damaged, which means that destructive speech of invectives fails if it is itself destroyed. It is fundamental to keep in mind the context of the use of swearing by Müller’s personages. Swearing is used mostly by common people who are not versed in ideological language. Swearing becomes one of the domains of freedom, and while it is potentially destructive, its directness and authenticity appeal to the writer, and she associates the vestiges of freedom in totalitarian society with the potentially destructive but liberating obscene vocabulary. Watson considers such vocabulary ‘a means of expressing true emotions outside the bounds of the regime’s world-view’.²⁸ However, even invectives can be broken and rendered ineffective in the state of totalitarian control over the society and its language.

2.5 Voice, Sound, and Silence

In the book of short stories *Barfußiger Februar*, Müller presents voice as a destructible object. Although voice is a concrete and intersubjectively accessible concept, it is common to reason about it metaphorically. In the short story ‘Die große schwarze Achse’, the voice of one of the minor characters is characterised the following way: ‘Er sang mit gebrochener Stimme.’²⁹ The image of the broken voice is not a unique metaphor, and is in regular use in the German language. In the context of Müller’s texts, it strengthens the association between language and destruction, and contributes to the ubiquitous occurrence of the source concept of destruction with relation to the target concept of language. The voice is commonly seen as broken when its pitch suddenly changes. Thus, the formal qualities of the sound waves are associated with physical damage. In another short story from the same collection, Müller elaborates this conventional metaphor and construes voice as a thin fragile object: ‘Matthias Vater hat nie

²⁸ Watson, p. 153.

²⁹ *Barfußiger Februar*, pp. 6–23 (p. 19).

gesungen. Hatte Angst vor dem Ton. Vor dem Klang in den Liedern. Vor der dünnen Stimme. Die manchmal reißt.³⁰ The voice of the protagonist's father is presented as a thread which can be torn. The terminal damage of voice becomes a moment of silence – where the voice tears and thus fails, silence prevails. However, the tearing of voice can also stand for a dramatic change in its physical qualities which do not necessarily map on to silence. In 'Die kleine Utopie vom Tod', the protagonist describes how the thump of the drum overpowers the voices of the guests at her wedding: 'Der Trommelschlag [...] brach die Stimmen.'³¹ The sound of the drum disrupts the perception of voices, and their breakage metaphorically explains to the reader the protagonist's experience of not being able to hear other people while the music is playing. Given that voice can be conventionally understood as damaged and broken to a certain degree and for particular ends, Müller uses this potential and develops salient metaphorical associations between voice and destruction to reason about speech. From the point of view of reception, the concrete concept of destruction helps the reader simulate the narrated experience of voice.

In the poetological essay 'Wie Wahrnehmung sich erfindet', Müller recounts how a friend once made a bitter joke and referred to state surveillance by cutting out Ceaușescu's eye from a photograph. The author writes that they 'haben gelacht, schallend gelacht, weil uns das Auge jetzt noch mehr bedrohte'.³² And then she maps destruction on to the acoustic characteristics of laughter: 'Die kleinen zerbrochenen Laute, die wir noch zustande brachten, waren schon traurig' (p. 28). The sounds of laughter become fragile objects which are broken as the speakers gradually stop laughing: 'Ich weiß noch, wie wir aufhörten zu lachen. Nicht plötzlich. Wir versuchten die Souveränität des Lachens noch zu halten' (p. 28). It can be inferred that when all the sounds are finally broken, laughter is destroyed and gives way to silence. Silence becomes the result of the destruction of laughter, whereas laughter can be conceived as a destructible entity. In the passage, silence makes the speakers sad and conveys their powerlessness against the totalitarian regime: 'Wir hatten schon begriffen, womit wir uns konfrontierten, bevor wir schwiegen. Es war zynisch geworden, wie immer, wenn gleich daneben die Ohnmacht stand' (p. 28). In this context, laughter can be seen as a form of resistance and affirms the interlocutors' sovereignty.

³⁰ 'Viele Räume sind unter der Haut', in *Barfußiger Februar*, pp. 50–74 (p. 54).

³¹ *Barfußiger Februar*, pp. 35–43 (p. 36).

³² *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel*, pp. 9–31 (p. 27).

In her poetological essay ‘Sag, daß du fünfzehn bist’, Müller regards the autobiographical details in Ruth Klüger’s *weiter leben: Eine Jugend* as destructible objects: ‘Dieses Buch fordert Takt für Takt eine ethische Position ein. Seine Details sind zusammengewürfelt und spröd’ (p. 33). The detail is a pivotal concept in Müller’s poetics.³³ The construal of the detail as a fragile object allows the inference that literature is also fragile. Sensorimotor experience is used to explain the literary qualities of the book. The image of fragile literature is a metaphorical concept that stipulates embodied logic for its functioning. If literature is fragile in its details, language can be inferred to be fragile as well. In the following quotation from another poetological essay, ‘Der ganz andere Diskurs des Alleinseins’, Müller discusses the difference between conversations in literature and life, and regards speech as a fragile entity: ‘Und das Gespräch [...]. Es ist spröd im Gesagten. Und lange Pausen von einem Mund zum anderen’ (p. 68). Spoken things are seen as fragile objects whose destruction is implicitly associated with silence.

In *Atemschaukel*, Leopold Auberg, the narrator-protagonist, recounts his traumatic experience of working with cement in the Soviet labour camp and presents to the reader the juxtaposition of speech and silence through the fragility of language and its destruction. He once writes a couple of poetic lines on the paper of a cement bag, but the intended poem remains unwritten: ‘Das habe ich mir dann geschenkt, ich hab es mir still in den Mund gesagt. Es ist gleich zerbrochen, in den Zähnen hat mir der Zement geknirscht. Dann habe ich geschwiegen’ (p. 41). It is implied that the poem which Leo recites to himself is made of cement. It is imagined as a destructible object manipulated by the protagonist – since it is destroyed in his mouth, the poem can also be seen as food. The metaphorical destruction of the poem is implicitly associated with hunger, forced labour, and silence. Silence becomes a symptom of the damage done to the person, while the damage is conceptualised as the destruction of language. This interpretation is well developed in ‘Gelber Mais’ (2011). Discussing the silence of her mother about the life in the Soviet labour camp, Müller implicitly attributes the mother’s reticence to the destruction of her language. The ‘Schweigen in der Beschädigung’ (p. 129) can be understood as the result of harm done to Müller’s mother. Given that silence in this particular case stands for the absence of speech, the word ‘Beschädigung’ inevitably relates to language. In the same essay, silence itself becomes detrimental when it is associated with an unusual emotional state and is juxtaposed with speech: ‘Die verkniffene Normalität und das verstörte Schweigen waren immer da und

³³ Herta Müller, ‘Zehn Finger werden keine Utopie’, in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 50–61 (pp. 60–61).

wurden mit der Zeit monströs, wühlten mich auf, gaben keine Ruhe' (p. 129). Silence is regarded as a living subject which is capable of feelings and can manipulate the person as an object. The effect of silence is interpreted through the image of destroying a surface structure and scattering the components of the surface. The person is symbolically put into disarray by silence, and silence is thus presented to the reader as a destructive force that exerts a tangible influence over the person, whereas speech could then be inferred to serve the opposite purpose and to help preserve the metaphorical integrity of the speaker. Müller employs silence as a source domain to interpret the harm caused to the person: 'Ich glaubte immer, Beschädigung ist stumm: sie begleitet alles und verbietet jedem den Mund' (p. 129). The harm is interpreted as a dumb human who silences others; hence silence is understood as one of its effects, and the harm itself is metaphorically construed as damage. Language can then be read to be destroyed by the damage caused to the person: linguistic destruction constitutes one of the features of psychological damage. As we can see, silence is a useful concept for Müller who applies it as a source domain to interpret the nature of the harm done to the person. She also uses various vehicles to convey to the reader her understanding of silence. Whether silence is applied as a source domain to interpret such target concepts as trauma and suffering, or other source domains, such as damage, are used to reason about the concept of silence, language is implicitly juxtaposed with silence which becomes the result of its symbolic destruction.

In her poetological essay 'Der ganz andere Diskurs des Alleinseins', Müller discusses communication and its limits, reflecting on the interaction between spoken and unspoken things. The dichotomy between the two is shown to be dynamic through the image of deformed objects. Deformation is not as extreme as destruction and can be less deleterious than damage, but it is a related concrete experience of object manipulation that allows Müller to reason about speech and silence, and their representation in literature. The author imagines communication as a subject keeping the deformation of spoken and unspoken things: 'Das Zusammenfinden der Aussagen ist da, um die Unruhe, die Verzerrung des Gesagten und Verschwiegenen zu halten' (p. 69). Speech and silence are presented as interacting material objects that can be deformed and manipulated by outside forces.

2.6 Destruction as a Creative Principle

Although fragility allows terminal damage and ultimate destruction, this source concept can be employed to characterise productive qualities of language and literature. In the essay 'Mein

Kleid bringt die Post zurück’, Herta Müller discusses the influence of trauma on the poetry of Inge Müller and at one point implies that fragility of language is a precondition for successful narration: ‘Zum Erzählen fehlt jede Ursache, es geht nichts mehr *voran*. Das Leben wird von *hinten* gestoßen. Es reißt sich Worte aus dem Verstand und läßt sie gleich fallen. Nur solange sie zerbrechen, klingen sie’ (p. 50). Object manipulation, physical force, and the frame of destruction inform the reader about the target domain of language. Words are seen as inherent parts of cognition which can be separated from it and manipulated as physical objects. Metaphorical fragility and destruction emerge as necessary conditions for effective communication. The act of destruction is creative and initiates the narrative, whereas silence can be inferred to indicate not the demolition of language, but its intactness. While words can produce sound only if they break, unbroken words remain silent. Writing poetry becomes the act of destroying words and deforming language to elicit meaning. Thus, Müller maps the frame of destruction on to literature and speech to argue that communication and poetic expression are possible only if language changes its form in the process of articulation. The metaphorical image of destructible language is also used by literary critics to elucidate the aesthetic principles of her work.³⁴

In the poetological essay ‘Das Auge täuscht im Lidschlag’, Müller describes her aesthetics in terms of destruction. She associates with destruction not only language but also bodily experience of breathing, eating, grasping, and walking: ‘Züge, Bissen, Worte, Griffe, Schritte: in allem ist der Riß.’³⁵ The author states that the metaphorical rift in the physical experience of reality is compensated by our perception: ‘unsere beiden Augen verbergen den Riß’ (p. 77). Words are seen as damaged physical objects that do not fully represent reality, and the task of the writer, according to Müller, is to highlight this feature of language and to destroy metaphorically the conventions hiding the rift from the reader:

Beim Schreiben, will man [...] all die Brüche fassen, muß man das, was sich im Fort-Schreiben des Gedankens zusammenfügt, zerreißen. Man zerrt am Geflecht der Sätze, bis sie durchsichtig werden, bis in der Reihenfolge der Worte im Satz und in der Reihenfolge der Sätze im Text die Risse durchscheinen. (p. 81)

³⁴ See, for example, Sarah Schmidt, pp. 115, 117; Marven, ‘In allem ist der Riß’, pp. 408, 411.

³⁵ *Der Teufel sitzt im Spiegel*, pp. 75–88 (p. 77).

Writing is associated with object manipulation; it is seen as a destructive action that metaphorically damages human cognition and language. Written sentences and the text as a whole are conceptualised as visible objects obstructing the view of unwritten sentences, and writing becomes the process of destroying the written sentences to reveal those that were left out (p. 81). On the one hand, it is paradoxical that Müller uses the frame of destruction to communicate the key creative principle of her writing because these processes are antithetical to each other. On the other, it is conventional because the more concrete concept of destruction is mapped on to the more abstract concept of writing.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate how Müller uses destruction to make sense of language. There is no single association between language and destruction which can explain Müller's writing, style, or aesthetics, and she does not create a coherent system of metaphors.³⁶ In this respect, I agree with Kohl who states that 'Müller's theory of language is characteristically unsystematic'.³⁷ But at the conceptual and linguistic levels each individual metaphor analysed in this study is far from unstructured and relies on conventions. The author employs a flexible dichotomy of destructive and destructible language in order to discuss political, literary, social, psychological, and cultural aspects of language use.

The metaphorical conceptualisation of destructive and destructible language is an integral part of Müller's poetics. Throughout her oeuvre, Müller associates destructive and destructible language primarily with social oppression, suffering, and creativity: destructive language can have agency and manipulate people as destructible objects. Alternatively, she imagines it as a force or an instrument used by the subject. The terminal effect of destructive language is seen as the death and metaphorical demolition of the person. Reversing the subject and object, Müller conceives language as a damaged entity, highlighting its inadequacy to express suffering. In the extreme scenario, the damage inflicted upon language metaphorically kills, or destroys it and forces the speaker to relapse into silence. Silence becomes the symptom of the complete destruction of language in the condition of oppression. Damage and destruction can also be a precondition for successful communication and literary writing – in this case, the damage done to language elicits meaning and allows creative

³⁶ Roberg, p. 34; Kohl, 'Beyond Realism', p. 24.

³⁷ Kohl, 'Beyond Realism', p. 28.

processes to take place. That supports the notion that Müller's texts present writing as the process of fragmentation, justifying her literary engagement with the details.³⁸ Overall, Müller evokes the tropes of destruction and damage to convey to her readers the power and infirmity of language, and to share her vision of art and communication.

³⁸ See Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 97.

3 FORCEFUL LANGUAGE

In this chapter, I explore how Müller uses the idea of forceful language. As I have sought to show in previous chapters, she creates complex metaphors to convey her vision of language and its relationship to suffering and subjugation. This chapter analyses the metaphorical conceptualisation of forceful language that makes possible survival through resistance to social oppression. I will demonstrate how language is understood as a force that provides support and protection to the author and her characters. In other words, I will show how Müller evokes the image of force to associate language with such psychological and socio-political phenomena as support, protection, resistance, and survival. I will thus delineate how the concrete concept of force informs the complex power of language.

The idea of force arises through the encounter between the human body and the environment: it is a perceptual image of bodily interaction with the world. People apply force to manipulate objects in their environment, while the environment exerts forces upon them. Interaction between the body and the environment is subjectively experienced as a force when it causes tangible changes (e.g. motion, deformation) and activates sensory perception (e.g. vision, touch, pressure, pain). This bodily experience is then used to make sense of the observed interactions between things in the world (e.g. seeing the hammer hit the nail).

Lakoff and Johnson (*PF*, p. 206) argue that the trope of force provides different routes to intuitive understanding of various causal relationships (e.g. ‘war pushes people out of their country’). From early childhood on, the exertion of force accompanies the achievement of results in everyday experience (e.g. picking up a ball), and hence humans tend to associate causes with forces and explain causation through the metaphorical vehicle of force (e.g. ‘her words lift me up’).

In his seminal essay ‘Force Dynamics in Language and Cognition’ (1988), Leonard Talmy introduced the concept of force to cognitive semantics, using the framework of force dynamics to explain causation in language: ‘force dynamics figures significantly in language structure. It is, first of all, a generalization over the traditional linguistic notion of “causative.”’¹ He argues that force dynamics ‘extends to social force interactions’, including communication (p. 75), and Lakoff suggests there is a primary metaphorical association

¹ Talmy, pp. 49–50. Further references to this article are given after quotations in the text.

between communicative causation and force.² Causation in social interaction is commonly understood as power. Because power is an abstract concept, its interpretation often depends on the perceptual image of force. The idea of forceful language thus evokes the trope of force to elucidate language's causal potency.

Force, then, is conventionally used to make sense of causation in social interaction; and Müller consistently presents the power of language as a physical force. Some literary critics posit that Müller's metaphors are nebulous, and that her tropes do not lend themselves to definitive interpretation, reflecting the unique creativity of the author.³ I argue that her tropes for the impact of verbal communication are neither idiosyncratic nor opaque: they evoke the perceptual image of force, thereby relying on linguistic and conceptual conventions which are accessible to the reader.

Müller often writes about the dangers and limitations of language, yet she also attributes to it protective and supportive powers, which can ensure survival⁴ and initiate resistance.⁵ Scholars have previously studied the traumatic and injurious impact of language in Müller's literary texts,⁶ whereas the metaphors for the supportive power of language have not yet been in the spotlight of research. These tropes are the subject matter of the present investigation. Haines posits that Müller's works 'document and are documents of the seemingly impossible, namely of resistance to inhuman and deadly social and political orders.'⁷ I will argue that in Müller's texts, survival is imagined as an effect of language, and resistance is construed as the power that counteracts the destructive force of oppression. In this network of figurative associations, force stands for the causal power of language and its potential to counter social and psychological subjugation.

Force can be conveyed through a wide range of German expressions. I will focus on 'der Halt', 'die Kraft', 'halten', 'ertragen', and other words when they explicitly or implicitly relate to language and activate the subjective experience of force. Scholars sometimes use Müller's own vocabulary when discussing the power of her language. Friedmar Apel, for

² Lakoff, 'The Neural Theory of Metaphor', p. 28.

³ See, for example, Haupt-Cucuiu, p. 5.

⁴ Paola Bozzi, 'Facts, Fiction, Autofiction, and Surfiction in Herta Müller's Work', in *Herta Müller: Politics and Aesthetics*, pp. 109–29 (p. 125).

⁵ Haines, 'Leben wir im Detail'.

⁶ Eddy, 'Testimony and Trauma'.

⁷ Haines, 'Leben wir im Detail', p. 109.

example, speaks about her poetics and mentions the ‘innere Halt, den der widerständige Blick der Poesie [...] geben kann’.⁸ Rather than adopting Müller’s metaphors to interpret her texts, I will break down her figures into their constituent parts (language and force), in order to explore how she uses force as a trope to explain the impact of language. I categorise these figurative associations according to the forms of language (poetry, writing, and speech) illuminated by the trope. These categories are necessarily imprecise, since force can relate to multifarious aspects of language and simultaneously stand for protection, support, resistance, and survival. Müller uses the trope of force skilfully, but there is no overarching coherence in its associations with language – its meaning depends on the context.

3.1 Poetry

Müller associates poetry with physical support. The idea of support evokes a cause and effect scenario where a physical force from one direction is countered with an opposite force of equal strength. The two forces cancel each other out. When physical support counters the force of the burden, it helps the entity to stay upright. Staying upright can be read as a therapeutic effect of poetry because of the common metaphorical association of health with being in an upright position. Lakoff and Johnson point to the figurative association between being upright and staying healthy and well: ‘When one is healthy and in control of things, one is typically upright and balanced’ (*PF*, p. 299).

In her poetological essay ‘In der Falle’ from the eponymous collection, Müller explains that common people in the Romanian dictatorship sought support in poems. The shortness of poems is foregrounded to match the daily insecurity of the oppressed nation:

In Rumänien haben sich viele Menschen an Gedichte gehalten. Durch sie hindurch gedacht, um eine Weile nur für sich zu sein: kurze Zeilen im Kopf, kurzer Atem im Mund, kurze Gesten im Körper. Gedichte passen zur Unsicherheit, man hat sich durch ihre Wörter im Griff. Sie sind ein tragbares Stück Halt im Kopf. Man kann sie ganz, wortgenau und lautlos aufsagen. (p. 18)

The poems allow people to maintain self-control. The subject and the self become separate entities since the subject can physically manipulate the self as an object. Talmy observes that

⁸ Friedmar Apel, ‘Wahrheit und Eigensinn: Herta Müllers Poetik der einen Welt’, *Text und Kritik*, 155 (2002), 39–48 (p. 44).

the subject and the self are commonly construed as two distinct entities (p. 95): the metaphorical conceptualisation of the psyche through the vehicle of force dynamics relies on the imaginary divide between the mind and the body, as well as on the construal of the subject and the self as independent of each other. Lakoff and Johnson discuss the figurative nature of the split between the subject and the self. While the subject is regarded as the ‘the locus of reason, will, and judgment’, the self encompasses ‘the body, social roles, past states, and actions in the world’ (*PF*, p. 269). The self becomes ‘either a person, an object, or a location’ (*PF*, p. 269). According to Müller, poetry helps people as subjects keep the balance and uprightness in their mind. The silent reading of the poem to oneself by the subject secures the integrity of the self and guarantees its support. Poems are interpreted as portable objects inside the container of the mind. These objects can be used for support and keeping oneself under control. While support implies the application of force outwards from the subject (to counter external forces), having control over the self indicates the use of force in the opposite direction (to contain internal pressure). The author locates support in the container of the mind, which makes it possible that the physical force providing support is also directed inwards to keep in check deleterious emotions and feelings as well as to prevent the possible disintegration of the self under the conditions of subjugation.

Müller interprets oppression as a force that bears down on the victim. The oppressed individual either withstands this burden or is crushed under its weight. In her poetological essay ‘Sag, daß du fünfzehn bist’, Müller discusses the autobiographical text *weiter leben* (1992) by Ruth Klüger and describes writing as alleviating the force of oppression: ‘Dann schrieb die Überlebende selber Gedichte, um sich auszuhalten’ (p. 38). As in the previous example, the subject and the self become different entities. The subject (Klüger) experiences oppression, while the self becomes the burden (a heavy object). Loss of identity is a key motif in concentration camp literature,⁹ and here the self could be regarded as the identity of the subject who cannot afford to keep it, as it becomes a heavy burden in the camp. From this perspective, Klüger’s poems help her – as a subject – bear the burden of identity (self) and keep it despite all the tribulations. Poetry writing is understood as a survival activity which enables the person to withstand the alienating force of oppression. Müller imagines poetry giving Klüger the strength to stand during the line-up in the yard of the camp: ‘An dieser Sprache, die es vorher gab als sensibles Wort, hielt sie sich fest, an den Fetzen der Balladen,

⁹ See, for example, Sophia Richman, ‘Finding One’s Voice’, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 42 (2006), 639–50 (p. 639).

unverständlich für ein Kind. Dennoch ließen sie sich aufsagen im Kopf.’ As she recites the poems to herself, they give her strength: ‘Und sie gaben den Füßen die Kraft, stundenlang reglos im Hof bei den Appellen zu stehen.’¹⁰ As long as Klüger holds on to the poems, they allow her not to fall to the ground. In her essay ‘In der Falle’, Müller again suggests that reciting poems holds Klüger in an upright position: ‘Mit Gedichteaufsagen im Kopf hielt sie sich aufrecht bei stundenlangen Appellen in Auschwitz’ (p. 18). To convey the sustaining power of poetry and its use for survival in the condition of suffering and subjugation, Müller invokes the trope of physical force.

Elsewhere in ‘In der Falle’, Müller discusses the poetry of Theodor Kramer and, at one point, states that poetry in Eastern Europe had a special status and was widely used for psychological protection. She explains how poems helped people cope with fear, and evokes the trope of force to make sense of poetry. Poems metaphorically exert a containing force upon fear of the repressive regime: ‘Gedichte fassen die eigene Angst in fertige, fremde Wörter’ (p. 18). The physicality of the action reveals the poems’ power and their ability to contain fear with words. Poems acquire agency and manipulate fear as an object that can be put into words. Words become containers holding fear – in this case, Müller relies on the conventional conduit metaphor for language. Overall, the conduit metaphor, personification, and force dynamics help Müller communicate her vision of the beneficial power of poetry.

Müller employs the metaphorical vehicle of physical force to describe the poetry of Theodor Kramer when she writes in ‘In der Falle’ that the Austrian poet created a support for himself through rhyming: ‘Besessen und manisch reimte er sich einen Halt’ (p. 8). The poet’s persecution and exile can be understood as physical forces that weighed down on him, whereas poetry provided support in the face of those forces. Müller likewise found support against her own persecution reading Kramer’s poems. She was ‘sehr oft auf die Gedichte Kramers angewiesen, sie machten und nahmen mir Angst. Sie gaben mir Halt, ohne zu täuschen.’¹¹ The sustaining power of the poems counters Müller’s fear, but the poems also prove her fear to be justified as they do not mislead her. In this context, the poems become agentive forces that support Müller. Therefore, she creatively uses the image of physical force, associated with the noun ‘der Halt’, to reason about the psychological impact of poetry.

Müller observes that the poems of Theodor Kramer empower her and help her to survive. In her commentary on the collection of Kramer’s poems, she presents his poetry as

¹⁰ ‘Sag, daß du fünfzehn bist’, pp. 37, 38.

¹¹ ‘Die Angst kann nicht schlafen’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 219–30 (p. 230).

directly related to the experience of life: ‘Theodor Kramers Gedichte kommen in unzähligen Gefühlslagen daher, und immer im Pulsieren des Erlebens. In meinem Kopf haben sie sich viele Jahre gesprochen und gesungen.’ And while the poems are personified as able to speak and sing, they also lift the burden of fear from Müller: ‘Sie haben meine Ängste, ohne zu täuschen, bestätigt und dadurch erträglich gemacht. [...] Wenn Literatur eine “Wirkung” hat, wird es wohl das sein, was Kramers Gedichte mit mir getan haben.’¹² She implicitly presents the fear as a burden. The confirmation of the fear through poetry alleviates the oppressive force of the feeling – and that, Müller suggests here, is a primary function of literature.

When she discusses the songs of the Romanian singer Maria Tănase, Müller wonders how the songs manage to provide lightness through their hopelessness: ‘Ich habe bis heute und an mir selbst nicht verstanden, wie diese Lieder es schaffen, durch ihre Trostlosigkeit zu erleichtern.’ The absence of consolation is conventionally associated with weight, but in this passage Tănase’s songs bring lightness and help people cope with heavy feelings: ‘Über all die Jahre hab ich nicht nur an mir gemerkt, dass sie der Schwermut beikommen, ohne zu verharmlosen.’¹³ The noun ‘die Schwermut’ foregrounds the force dynamics of the situation, where the mood of the author is understood as a heavy object. The songs provide lightness, whereby the contradiction of their capacity both to enable lightness and to recognise the existence of harm becomes a productive conflict which generates further associations and allows the author to represent the complex therapeutic impact of art.

In the autobiographical essay ‘Die rote Blume und der Stock’, Müller recounts her experience of working in a kindergarten and observing the influence of ideology on small children. She is appalled when she finds out that they knew only party poems and have never learnt poetry free from ideology and propaganda. She states that the wonder evoked by poetry protects and gives support, yet the children were intentionally deprived of the sustaining power of art: ‘Das Staunen, das behütet, auch wenn es verängstigt, das durch poetische Bilder zusammengefaßte Hören und Sehen, das auch dort noch Halt gibt, wo es sentimental macht – es wurde mit Absicht von ihnen ferngehalten’ (p. 155). Müller presents censorship in the kindergarten as an external force that keeps the wonderment associated with poetry away from the children, because it could provide protection and support. She thus paints a dreary picture of powerful control over the children. The trope of force allows readers to understand

¹² ‘Lebensangst und Liebesgier’, p. 191.

¹³ ‘Welt, Welt, Schwester Welt’, p. 241.

the positive impact of poetry, relate to the consequences of censorship, and empathise with the author in her consternation about the oppressive nature of the Ceaușescu regime.

3.2 Writing

In her 2009 Leipziger Poetikvorlesung, Müller presents writing as something that provides support, protecting the author: ‘Darum nimmt einem das Schreiben ja auch die Angst, darum gibt es Halt – einen imaginären Halt, keinen wirklichen. Halt nach innen, nicht nach außen. Aber der Halt nach innen behütet nach innen’ (p. 15). Support is a physical force that protects the self of the author. While writing cannot protect the writer from the outside, it exerts a counterforce directed inside which protects the writer from her fear. Fear becomes an inner force directed outwards and capable of causing damage. This image is consonant with the metaphors for emotions as dense liquids or gases exerting a force on the pressurised container of the self, a common but complex metaphor first identified and studied by Zoltán Kövecses.¹⁴ The physical force that protects the inside of the author does not counter the external forces of subjugation, but serves as protection from the author’s fear; the latter acts as a physical force upon the self, implicitly construed as a container. Although Müller admits that writing as support is only imaginary, she uses the trope of force to elucidate the supportive role of writing and hence creates a tangible image that directly relates to bodily experience.

In the autobiographical essay ‘Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich’ from the collection *Der König verneigt sich*, Müller underscores the physicality of support provided by writing in her memories of her grandfather. She wonders why her grandfather kept records of his everyday shopping in the receipt-book for wholesale purchases: ‘wie kommt er dazu, in die Rubriken für Tonnengewichte seinen winzigen, täglichen Einkauf zu notieren’ (p. 91). The receipt-book used to be relevant when he made large purchases as a major farmer and trader before the expropriation of his property by the socialist regime. The receipts in the book include the weight rubric, but the wholesale scale is incommensurate with the meagre amounts of everyday shopping. Instead of tons, the grandfather writes down the everyday items he buys: ‘Die zweite Rubrik heißt: Menge Waggons/Tonnen – und er schreibt hinein: “1 Päckchen”’

¹⁴ See Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

(p. 91). The expropriation was a humiliating experience that hurt the grandfather and affected his self-esteem: ‘In dieser Demütigung begann mein Großvater seinen Kleinkram in die Rubriken hineinzuschreiben’ (p. 92). Müller believes that her grandfather started to keep the records to counter his oppression by the state: “‘Damit mir der Kopf nicht einrostet,’ sagte er. Aber er suchte Halt in dieser Praktik, die seinen Niedergang dokumentierte. In der Konfrontation mit seinem Sturz suchte er Würde’ (p. 92). State oppression causes the grandfather metaphorically to decline and fall. Müller presents the writing down of shopping items as an abortive attempt on the part of her grandfather to find physical support that could arrest his fall. The source domain of force is implied by the discrepancy between the weight indicated in the receipt-book and the possible weight of retail shopping. The discrepancy between the weights metaphorically rationalises the ultimate failure of writing to save the grandfather: the counterforce is not strong enough to prevent the fall and provide support. But writing still allows some degree of resistance and documents the downfall. The grandfather can keep his dignity via writing. Because the grandfather writes down everyday purchases, he daily finds support for his dignity and puts up resistance to subjugation. Writing is presented as a means for physical resistance against oppression, even though there are limitations to its successful application.

Müller observes similarity between her grandfather’s writing practice and her reading of poems for the sake of finding support:

Das gedruckte der Rubriken und das, was er dann als Habenichts in Handschrift eintrug, zeigte ihm vielleicht ohne ein Wort soviel, wie mir nach dem Verhör die Dahlien im Garten zeigten. Oder soviel, wie mir die Gedichte zeigten, die ich mir aufsagte für den täglichen Halt. (p. 92)

Both everyday purchases and poems can be imagined as small entities, and read as discrete physical forces providing daily support – ‘den täglichen Halt’ – to the person under the burden of oppression. Writing serves as a means for daily resistance and is a force that can potentially counter oppression and help the person maintain balance and stay upright despite the physical force bearing down on her. Consequently, writing is understood as a force that ensures resistance to oppression and thus helps the person survive.

In her poetological essay ‘Zehn Finger werden keine Utopie’ (1995), Müller constructs figurative scenarios in which physical force is applied to language units as objects, in order to secure survival: ‘Ich will mir beim Zuhören und Lesen die Sätze behalten, die nicht einmal

wissen, wo der Augenblick endet' (p. 61). To survive, the author holds on to the details and individual language units: 'Ich halte mich daran fest, daß Eugène Ionesco schreibt: "Leben wir also. Aber man läßt uns nicht leben. Leben wir also im Detail"' (p. 61). Müller chooses to hold on to those sentences that do not show the overview of the whole situation. Sentences are imagined as subjects that can acquire knowledge and have the sense of vision. The author metaphorically applies a physical force to stay close to the sentences and even to remain inside them. The statement of Eugène Ionesco establishes a strong connection between life and the holding on to individual sentences and details in Müller's writing. Notably, it is well established that detail is a pivotal concept in her poetics.¹⁵

In the Leipziger Poetikvorlesung, Müller associates life with writing when she argues that the latter forces the author into the thick of things. Even though writing does not make life easier, the author still clings on to art because it brings her closer to life: 'Auch wenn das Leben nicht einfacher wird, weil das Schreiben einen bis über die Ohren in die Tiefe der Dinge drückt, klammert man sich ans Schreiben' (pp. 7–8). Müller uses the source domain of force to represent the relationship between life and writing. Force is evoked as a vehicle to interpret the effort to stay alive via writing, and hence clinging to writing stands for survival.

3.3 Speech

For Müller, speech is a survival strategy and a liberating force when it comes to insults. Watson comments that 'Müller sees the common Romanian language as inherently liberating [...]. Unlike the language of the state, which she describes as prudish, Romanian "as used by the people" makes constant use of rude words.'¹⁶ In the essay 'Hunger und Seide. Männer und Frauen im Alltag', Müller considers Romanian insults to comprise a living language: 'Ich habe diese Sprache immer um diese Lebendigkeit beneidet' (p. 75). The obscene vocabulary is absent from the language of the Romanian authorities: 'Im Wörterbuch der rumänischen Sprache kommen diese Wörter und Redewendungen nicht vor. In den offiziellen Medien, für die Zensur gehörten diese Wörter und Redewendungen in die Schublade der Pornographie' (p. 75). Although the obscene words were banned from public use, they allowed speakers a unique lightness in everyday life: 'Im Alltag waren diese Wörter und Redewendungen für die Menschen, die die leeren Gänge in den Blicken trugen, die einzige Leichtigkeit' (pp. 75–76).

¹⁵ Haines, 'Leben wir im Detail', p. 109.

¹⁶ Watson, p. 153.

Obscene speech mitigates oppression and helps people survive in the condition of subjugation by the state dictatorship: ‘Ich glaube, sie halfen den Menschen zu überleben, den Wahwitz von Hunger und Seide zu ertragen’ (p. 76). The wellbeing of the individual is associated with being able to carry the burden and withstand the deleterious force of subjugation. Obscene speech, therefore, helps the speaker survive as it becomes the means to withstand the burden of social oppression. Interestingly, research in cognitive psychology indicates that swearing increases pain tolerance.¹⁷

Müller presents speech as a force that helps Leopold Auberg, the narrator-protagonist of the novel *Atemschaukel*, to survive in the labour camp in Soviet Ukraine. Leo observes that those inmates who cannot cry any more risk becoming monsters, and language (in the form of a farewell sentence uttered by his grandmother) appears to be the only force that prevents him from losing his identity: ‘Man kann zum Monstrum werden, wenn man nicht mehr weint. Was mich davon abhält, falls ich es nicht längst schon bin, das ist nicht viel, höchstens der Satz: Ich weiß, du kommst wieder’ (p. 191). The states of monster and human are implicitly conceptualised as containers. The human is the object in this schema. The change from one state to another becomes the movement of the object from one location to another. The sentence is imagined as a force that stops the movement of the object. The change from a human being to a monster is not desirable and cannot be associated with self-propelled motion, from which it follows that the destructive force of the camp makes the person change involuntarily into a monster. Forced motion is stopped by the stabilising force of language. Keeping identity and countering the dehumanising force of suffering becomes possible thanks to language, which acts as a counterforce and thereby facilitates the protagonist’s survival.

Leo Auberg attributes his survival to speech. He presents the sentence ‘ICH WEISS DU KOMMST WIEDER’ as a sustaining force that keeps him alive. Leo remembers this sentence, uttered by his grandmother as he was being deported, and takes it to the labour camp: ‘Ich habe mir diesen Satz nicht absichtlich gemerkt. Ich habe ihn unachtsam mit ins Lager genommen’ (p. 14). It becomes a subject that follows the protagonist: ‘Ich hatte keine Ahnung, dass er mich begleitet’ (p. 14). The sentence is independent and works inside the self of the narrator: ‘Aber so ein Satz ist selbständig. Er hat in mir gearbeitet, mehr als alle mitgenommenen Bücher’ (p. 14). The sentence is perceived as an ally of the ‘Herzschaukel’ and an opponent of the ‘Hungerengel’: ‘ICH WEISS DU KOMMST WIEDER wurde zum Komplizen

¹⁷ Richard Stephens, John Atkins, and Andrew Kingston, ‘Swearing as a Response to Pain’, *Neuroreport*, 20 (2009), 1056–60 (p. 1056).

der Herzschaufel und zum Kontrahenten des Hungerengels' (p. 14). Hence the sentence is among those constructs that help Leo survive in the labour camp: 'Weil ich wiedergekommen bin, darf ich das sagen: So ein Satz hält einen am Leben' (p. 14). Leo managed to survive and come back from the camp, but he attributes his survival not to himself but to speech. The subjectivity of language converts it from a means of communication into a sustaining power. Thus, language is understood as a subject that can apply physical force to a person to secure their survival. Here Müller considers the power of speech, and metaphors allow her to reveal to the reader the causal potential of speech to save lives.

3.4 Conclusion

Müller carefully works with linguistic and conceptual conventions to imagine language as a force for good; at the same time, she draws attention to the figurative nature of this association. She presents oppression as a force levied upon the victim, whereas poetry, writing, and speech act as counterforces that alleviate this burden. She thus uses the image of force to characterise resistance, which is interpreted as being able to carry the burden and withstand the weight of oppression by exerting a counterforce of the same magnitude. Resistance makes survival possible, as people use language to protect and support themselves against social oppression. Furthermore, Müller employs the act of lifting the burden as a metaphorical vehicle to shed light on the liberating impact of language. Weight and lightness, commonly associated with oppression and freedom, become aspects of language. Ultimately, the trope of force enables Müller to represent language as a means by which to lighten the burden of oppression, to put up resistance, and to help the victims of persecution cope with their suffering and survive.

4 LIFE-SAVING LANGUAGE

As a writer, Müller is fascinated by language, and as an outspoken political critic, she relates language to life in the condition of oppression. In this chapter, I explore Müller's metaphorical conceptualisation of life-saving language. I focus on major ideas that she uses to communicate her complex association of language and survival, considering the following source domains: life, breath, therapy, protection, and nourishment. These concrete concepts illuminate the life-saving power of language. In the Leipziger Poetikvorlesung, Müller establishes the scope of such power when she ascribes omnipotence to words: 'Wörter können alles. Die können schikanieren und die können schonen und die können einen besetzen und die können einen leerräumen' (p. 51). Words are agents that can both harm and help people; the ambivalence of their power is reinforced through the juxtaposition of the verbs 'besetzen' and 'leerräumen', in parallel with the previous opposition between 'schikanieren' and 'schonen'. Words empty a person and thereby either provide relief or deprive the person of the necessary language. And when words occupy somebody, they could again be seen either as helpful for finding the right language or as a detrimental physical force. While the first opposition in the utterance ('schikanieren'/'schonen') assigns definite value judgments to both poles (both actions cause harm), the second opposition ('besetzen'/'leerräumen') contradistinguishes two spatial verbs which serve as metaphorical vehicles for two different effects ('occupying' and 'emptying' can both harm and help). The potential variety of associations activates the interlocutor's imagination and gives the listener an opportunity to decide for herself how to assign meaning. Müller demonstrates her point through her own words: 'So was haben die Wörter schon. Potentiell haben und können sie alles. Sie sind latent zu allem fähig' (p. 51). To illustrate the omnipotence of words, Müller does not speak about the power of language to create and convey meanings, feelings, or emotions – instead, she chooses to set the spectrum of linguistic power between harm and help. In what follows, I focus on the latter side of the spectrum and demonstrate how language can be associated with survival and acquire life-giving power.

4.1 Life

The clearest case of the metaphorical conceptualisation of life-saving language is when life is mapped on to the power of language. Language secures the life of the person or is itself

construed as life. The feeling of being alive is associated with text, and survival obtains a textual dimension. Life as a source domain endows language with the characteristics of the human condition. Texts can be construed as a human body, a sentient being, or a human subject who can make decisions, perceive, and act. Writing can be imagined as living a life with all its corporeal symptoms. Müller builds mappings between life and language to demonstrate how the latter could play a role in the survival of the subjugated.

She imagines language as a subject that can either save or kill: ‘Sie [Sprache] kann sich mit allem verbünden. Sie kann auch töten, sie kann retten, in einer Situation, in der es auf das richtige Wort ankommt.’¹ Müller is not naïve and does not claim that language can always save human lives despite any dangers. The implicit limitations to the power of language render her message conditional upon the situation and the understanding of survival.

Müller suggests that soldiers in the war sing in order to save their lives: ‘Ich dachte mir oft, daß Armeen so viele Lieder brauchen, weil die einzelnen Soldaten um ihr Leben singen, gegen den Tod.’² Through the juxtaposition of songs with death, Müller highlights the tangibility and extreme power of language. If soldiers can endow language with life-saving power because they desperately need hope and can lose their lives any moment, then writers can do the reverse and associate life with language because they need the latter to create.

In Müller’s critical essays, poetry stands out among other varieties of life-saving language. In her essay ‘Und noch erschrickt unser Herz’ (1995), she recollects how a poem by Sarah Kirsch helped her survive in the dictatorial Romania: ‘In meinem Zimmer in Rumänien [...] klebte jahrelang ein Gedicht am Schrank. Sarah Kirsch hatte es in der DDR geschrieben’ (p. 34). The poem guarantees Müller survival which she imagines first as the passage of time and then as a container whose closing stands for the death of the person: ‘Dieses Gedicht garantierte mir, daß ein Tag nach dem anderen kommt, daß dieses Drecksleben nicht zuschnappt und weg ist’ (p. 35). Through concrete concepts, Müller conveys the abruptness of death. In the construal of life as a container, the latter can suddenly close, and then life – imagined as an object – instantaneously disappears. The closing container may be seen as a trap, in which case poetry prevents the author from being trapped metaphorically; the open container also implies freedom which poetry guarantees its reader. Thanks to poetry, life is not overshadowed by the certainty of death: ‘*Und noch erschrickt unser Herz* [the poem] wurde zur Garantie, daß der Tod noch nicht beschlossene Sache ist’ (p. 35). Poetry is

¹ Beyer, p. 131.

² ‘In der Falle’, p. 21.

construed as a guarantee for life and features prominently in several of Müller's works as part of this metaphorical conceptualisation.

In the essay 'Mein Kleid bringt die Post zurück', poetry becomes a habitat for the deceased friends of the poet: 'Freunde, die es nicht mehr gibt, geistern als Initialen durchs Gedicht. Eine Behutsamkeit zieht sie zu sich, eine Scheu vor der Preisgabe des Namens, ein Geheimnis, in dem die Liebe noch Platz hat' (p. 56). Poems give a second life to people and protect them. This power, however, is recognised to be metaphorical: figurative survival is ephemeral in the above excerpt. For Müller, reading poems becomes a life-saving technique as it allows the reader to imagine an alternative existence and to relate to the other person.

Müller endows reading with life-saving powers. The protagonist of *Reisende*, a third-person narrative, explains to her lover how memory can change sentences that people remember after reading literary texts: 'Man verändert diese Sätze, man macht sie so, wie man selber ist, sagte Irene. Man glaubt, man kann von diesen Sätzen leben, weil sie waghalsig sind' (p. 99). The sentences are implicitly presented as human beings, capable of mental states. Language can be imagined as the cause and reason to live, and the sentences can be inferred to secure survival. At the same time, these sentences are seen as malleable material that can be changed by the reader. Not only memory, but also reading might change the sentences; thus, reading and memory become creative and life-saving processes that enable the reader to construct and sustain her own self linguistically and conceptually.

In the autobiographical and poetological essay 'Lalele, Lalele, Lalele oder Das Leben könnte so schön sein wie nichts', Müller conflates reading with life based on the visual similarity of their graphic representation in German: 'In meinem Fall könnte man statt LESEN immer LEBEN sagen, es ändert sich sowieso nur ein Buchstabe.'³ The minimal difference in spelling is metaphorically understood as similarity in meaning. Müller thereby implicitly presents reading as a mode of life. In the condition of oppression, reading can give freedom to the imagination and presents an opportunity to survive. Interestingly, the direction of the metaphorical conceptualisation is reversible because the passage does not make it clear whether life or reading is the source domain. If life is understood through the source concept of reading, it becomes less tangible and corporeal. Conversely, reading, imagined as a form of life, becomes more palpable and grounded in embodiment. This ambiguity allows the reader to build her own relationship between life and reading.

³ *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 76–83 (p. 80).

In *Der Fuchs*, Müller describes a surreal riverside scene in which, at one point, two fishermen are standing still and keeping silent: ‘Die Angler stehen reglos, wenn sie schweigen. Wenn sie nicht miteinander reden, leben sie nicht. Ihr Schweigen hat keinen Grund, nur daß die Wörter stocken’ (p. 39). Silence is imagined as the absence of life. The metaphor conveys the seeming lifelessness of the people and highlights the phantasmagorical nature of the scene. In this lucid image, speech is implicitly associated with life.

4.2 Protection

Müller demonstrates how language can protect the author, readers, and characters from social oppression. The frame of protection describes a situation in which an object or a person stays whole or unharmed due to the counterforce that cancels out the effects of the destructive external or internal influence, object, or force. Protection can also be imagined as a surface or a shield that prevents any damage or injury coming from a dangerous object or a living being.

In the Leipziger Poetikvorlesung, Müller expresses a belief that precision in writing can protect her: ‘Ich glaube, Genauigkeit ist Selbstschutz’ (p. 24). She can protect herself when she raises her self-awareness and observes herself and surroundings. Protection is presented as clothes, or a fabric made from the material of observation and self-observation: ‘Man schützt sich, indem man sich soviel wie möglich bewußtmacht. Dadurch wird man eingekleidet in Beobachtung, auch in Selbstbeobachtung’ (p. 24). Müller regards precision as a reaction against danger: ‘Ich habe die Genauigkeit als Reaktion auf Gefahr und sogar auf Gefährdung empfunden’ (p. 24). She develops a writing technique that is aimed at countering the dangers of oppression and ensuring survival. While creating collages and singling out details in writing can be understood as destruction and fragmentation (see Chapter Two), these techniques are also seen as protective of the author, creating a cover and offering resistance to the force of subjugation.

In the essay *Cristina und ihre Attrappe*, Müller recounts how one of her Western friends defined silence as protection: ‘Rolf Michaelis wollte uns “schützen” und schrieb über die Attacke gegen ihn erst nach unserer Ausreise’ (p. 27). After the publication of *Niederungen*, Michaelis wanted to interview Müller for *Die Zeit*. When he came to Romania to meet her, he was brutally beaten by the secret police, but decided to keep silent about it until Müller had left Romania. According to Michaelis, his silence about the assault on him was supposed to protect Müller and other Romanian authors.

When Müller was interrogated by the secret police, denying everything in monosyllables was ineffective and gave no protection from abuse: ‘Das Wort NEIN wäre naheliegend, es könnte und müßte zur Verteidigung immer wieder gesagt werden. Doch bei der Verteidigung ist NEIN das dümmste Wort.’⁴ The word is too short and allows the interrogator to develop his accusations: ‘Es ist zu kurz, es verliert sich und läßt den Ankläger nicht aufhören’ (p. 18). Speech can protect the person but one word is not enough, and it becomes a losing strategy, which is the opposite of protection. Müller implies that the short word ‘no’ harms the person: ‘NEIN ist beim Verhör das Gegenteil von Verteidigung, der Beschuldigte hat sich aufgegeben und läßt die Anklage über sich rollen, wenn er NEIN sagt, statt zu reden’ (p. 18). The accusations roll over the victim like waves, and speech could potentially serve as a force or a dam that would stop them. Implicitly, speech is imagined as physical protection against the ruinous force of interrogation.

Discussing the difference between her literary language and the language she spoke during interrogation by the secret police, Müller associates the latter with the protective function of skin: ‘Darum ging es, aber nicht um Schreibsprache, sondern um das Retten der Haut, Schutzsprache.’⁵ The metaphorical conceptualisation of ‘Schutzsprache’ is delineated through the source concepts of skin and physical protection, which language provides to the body. Language metaphorically saves her skin and thus saves the victim of state oppression.

The narrator-protagonist of the novel *Atemschaukel* considers protection through language to be impossible in the Soviet labour camp. Leo Auberg smiles helplessly when he meets Fenja, the woman who dispenses food in the labour camp: ‘Den Mund ließ ich offen, dass Fenja meine Zähne lächeln sieht. Man lächelte notgedrungen und grundsätzlich, echt und falsch in einem lächelte man, wehrlos und hinterhältig, um sich Fenjas Gunst nicht zu verscherzen’ (p. 108). His smile could potentially protect Leo under other circumstances, but in the camp it is impossible: ‘Man kann sich nicht schützen, weder durchs Schweigen noch durchs Erzählen. Man übertreibt im Einen wie im Anderen, aber DA WAR ICH gibt es in beidem nicht’ (p. 294). Leo is harmed by the experience of forced labour and hunger, and language hardly mitigates the damage: since neither speech nor silence can protect the protagonist, he must sustain harm.

⁴ Herta Müller, *Der Fremde Blick oder Das Leben ist ein Furz in der Laterne*, 3rd edn (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), p. 18.

⁵ *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, p. 38.

4.3 Therapy and Medicine

The salubrious properties of language are not a given and appear as a result of its metaphorical conceptualisation. Language cannot literally heal wounds, but its positive impact can be presented metaphorically.

Psychotherapists, whose interest lies in treating patients through verbal interaction, reverse the metaphor and regard therapy as language. Michael White and David Epston, for example, develop the metaphor of therapy as writing in *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (1990). The authors know that they are constructing an analogy between the two concepts in the framework of social sciences.⁶ They argue that if social scientists can regard human life as a text, then the text becomes a constitutive part of human beings:

If we accept that persons organize and give meaning to their experience through the storying of experience, and that in the performance of these stories they express selected aspects of their lived experience, then it follows that these stories are constitutive – shaping lives and relationships. (p. 12)

Hence therapy can be ‘situated within the context of the narrative mode of thought’ (p. 83). Therapy is seen as retelling and rewriting people’s narrative lives:

an acceptable outcome would be the identification or generation of alternative stories that enable them to perform new meanings, bringing with them desired possibilities – new meanings that persons will experience as more helpful, satisfying, and open-ended. (p. 15)

The concept of psychotherapy is conveyed through the more concrete idea of writing, which allows the authors to build a complex and multi-faceted practice based on the discursive theory of social sciences and the textual framework.

While the metaphor of therapy as writing is productive in the social and cultural context, conventional medicine cannot be expected to present itself as language or text because its practice is concrete and deals directly with the human body. People rely on this association of medicine and the body when they speak of language as therapy: they choose

⁶ Michael White and David Epston, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York and London: Norton, 1990), p. 5. Further references are given in the text.

therapy as a source domain to make sense of language because conventional medicine directly relates to bodily experience. Consequently, the principle of unidirectionality (asymmetry) of metaphor stays in force ('therapy as language' is not equivalent to 'language as therapy'),⁷ but both concepts, therapy and language, can inform each other depending on the context.

Beatrix Busse has analysed the conceptualisation of writing as medicine in the framework of conceptual blending theory. This theory, developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, characterises both literal and figurative associations in terms of blended spaces, emergent structure, and conceptual integration: 'Conceptual integration is at the heart of imagination. It connects input spaces, projects selectively to a blended space, and develops emergent structure through composition, completion, and elaboration in the blend.'⁸ Monika Fludernik explains that it allows for 'a functional transfer of the generic pattern which can be traced in both source and target domains and results in a blending of these, in which the aspects of both domains begin to coalesce into a new whole.'⁹ Busse has studied novels by the Austrian writer Paul Auster and argues that metaphor influenced their narrative structure. In her discussion of the theoretical foundations of her analysis, the source and target domains are blended: 'The space that results from the blending of the target and the source input is highly creative and idiosyncratic because of the polysemy of meanings of both writing and medicine.'¹⁰ For Busse, the blending of writing and medicine structures a number of different concepts. This description relies on metaphorical reasoning because the blend is thus used as a source domain to structure different target domains:

The blend WRITING IS MEDICINE structures the processes of identity construction in which the psychological issues of healing, mental disorders, of transformation, of pleasure, but also purely physical experience, are involved. It moreover structures the process of narration, that is the activity of writing. Finally, it also structures the product of writing which relates to the reader.¹¹

⁷ See Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, p. 55.

⁸ See Fauconnier and Turner, p. 89.

⁹ Monika Fludernik, 'Introduction', in *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor Theory: Perspectives on Literary Metaphor*, ed. by Monika Fludernik (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 1–16 (p. 4).

¹⁰ Beatrix Busse, "'One should never underestimate the power of books": Writing and Reading as Therapy in Paul Auster's Novels', in *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor*, pp. 176–95 (p. 184).

¹¹ Busse, p. 184.

The argument that the blend structures the process of narration and the text itself can be read as a direct indication of the directionality of the reasoning when the more concrete concept of medicine structures and constructs the more abstract concept of writing.

The metaphor of language as medicine evokes a certain frame that encompasses the doctor-patient relationship. The writer, readers, or characters can be placed in the role of the patient, whereas language can be understood as a medicine, a doctor, or a therapy. Alternatively, the role of the doctor could be filled by the writer or the speaker. Müller seldom uses the frame of medicine to illuminate the life-saving power of language because the former was a controversial concept under the conditions of state control and oppression. Medical institutions and doctors served the regime and could be implicated in harming people instead of providing health care. There are numerous instances when doctors are feared or mistrusted by Müller's characters. In *Atemschaukel*, for example, the narrator-protagonist explains that the inmates of the Soviet labour camp were mistreated by the authorities: 'Medizin war bei den Russen nur ein halbgutes Wort' (p. 161). In *Der Fuchs*, the doctor's presence silences the people in the scene and induces fear as he is about to examine the body of one of the minor characters who committed suicide: 'Das Schweigen verzerrte jedes Gesicht, als hätte der Arzt den Tod mitgebracht' (p. 52). The negative representation of doctors is a motif in Müller's works. Her distrust of the complicit state healthcare system, especially with reference to abortions¹² and recording the cause of death of the victims of the totalitarian regime,¹³ could explain why she rarely associates life-saving language with medicine.

The protagonist of the novel *Atemschaukel* recounts how he had to find alternative names for poisonous substances in order to render them benign: 'Man musste im Schrott Namen suchen und im Kopf angenehme Wörter finden gegen das Gift, weil man spürte, dass diese Substanzen ihre Attacken fortsetzen und ihr Komplott auch gegen uns Internierte richten' (p. 183). Words are implicitly conceived of as substances: pleasant words become useful substances that neutralise poisonous chemicals. Forced labour is likewise construed as a poisonous substance, and hence pleasant words serve as substitutes for harmful experience:

¹² For a detailed discussion, see Herta Müller, 'Tod oder Knast oder Kinder', *Die Tageszeitung*, 9 October 2009 <<http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/print-archiv/printressorts/digi-artikel/?ressort=sw&dig=2009%2F10%2F09%2Fa0063&cHash=77c0951570>> [accessed 4 April 2015].

¹³ See, for example, Herta Müller, 'Lügen haben kurze Beine – die Wahrheit hat keine. Das wahre Engagement in der Fälschung', in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 107–14 (p. 111).

‘Und gegen unsere Zwangsarbeit. Auch für die Zwangsarbeit hatten die Russen und die Rumänen schon zu Hause auf der Liste ein angenehmes Wort gefunden: WIEDERAUFBAU. Dieses Wort war entgiftet’ (p. 183). Müller highlights the word ‘Wiederaufbau’ and imagines it as a substance that has been rectified and is now devoid of poison. However, the effects of such renaming are questionable because the actual experience contradicts the language.

In her account of everyday resistance to state oppression in dictatorial Romania, Müller tells the reader that people invented jokes to counteract state violence. She endows jokes with medicinal properties: ‘Witze sind entstanden, die keine sind, die beim Aussprechen den Schmerz zwischen den Worten schlucken, bevor ein Satz entsteht. Witze, die Angst zeigen und verstecken.’ Jokes acquire subjectivity and act as living beings. They relieve pain and help speakers manage their fear. Jokes can be understood as an anaesthetic that works by absorbing pain. Pain is visualised as an object that can be swallowed. Speech as a medicine is only one of the facets of the constructed meaning; salubrious language is presented to the reader in its complexity through a number of intersubjectively accessible concepts. Müller assigns the right to invent the jokes about the regime to those who were most affected: ‘Diese Sätze dürfen und können nur die erfinden, die neben dem Tod gestanden sind.’¹⁴ That implies that language is closely associated with survival because it helps the victims to challenge the regime, manage their fear, and soothe pain.

In the essay ‘Ist aber jemand abhandengekommen, ragt aber ein Hündchen aus dem Schaum’, Müller discusses the poetry of Oskar Pastior and elaborates a sophisticated metaphor for one of his poems, presenting it first as a physical object, and then as a human being and, more specifically, an apothecary:

Dies Gedicht war damals und ist bis heute das, was ich gerade bin: Fabriktag oder Zugfahrt, Streit oder Schuhladen, U-Bahn-Schacht oder Supermarkt. Dies Gedicht ist nervös, es steht mit dem Rücken zur Wand, mit der Nase im Nichts. Es bittet von vorgestern und für übermorgen um einen Ausweg. Das nervöse Gedicht hat mich gelesen, taxiert und festgestellt, dass ich, um nicht aus dem Verstand zu gehen, etwas Nervöses brauche. Mit Apothekerhand hat dies Gedicht die Genauigkeit eines Rezepts befolgt und seine Nervosität an der meinen dosiert.¹⁵

¹⁴ ‘Soldaten schossen in die Luft – die Luft war in den Lungen. Temeswar nach der Revolution’, in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 115–26 (p. 121).

¹⁵ *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 146–64 (pp. 153–54).

Müller identifies herself with the poem. The poem and the author become physical objects and processes. The poem is now embodied and has feelings and human body morphology. It pleads for a way out of the quandary: space is used to reason about the condition of oppression. The poem is transformed into a human being who reads Müller like a book and identifies the cure for her condition. The author uses the frame of therapy where the poem plays the role of the apothecary who meticulously follows the recipe and delivers the precise dose of the medicine in order to treat the patient. Müller is in the role of the patient; her nervousness is the illness, and the nervousness of the poem is the medicine. The poem thus assumes the roles of the apothecary, the medicine, and even the illness. Müller employs the metaphorical conceptualisation of language as medicine to demonstrate the positive effects of poetry and to elucidate its role in her resistance to oppression and survival in the dictatorial regime. Through embodied experience, she characterises poetry as transformative and therapeutic. The reader can empathise with the writer thanks to the use of concrete images. Müller develops a complex network of associations that can be transformed and adjusted by the reader to grasp the role of language in the condition of oppression.

Müller demonstrates how language can be both a poison and a medicine when she discusses the songs appropriated by the Nazi regime. First, songs are imagined as contaminated substances: ‘Lieder, die man bis heute nicht mehr singen kann, weil sie kontaminiert sind. Sie wurden planmäßig eingebaut in Hitlers Raub und Mord, mitgenommen ins Verbrechen der Soldaten.’¹⁶ While the songs are toxic to Müller and the general public, they are a medicine to the German veteran soldiers: ‘Und für die mittlerweile gealterten Kriegskameraden der Wehrmacht und der SS waren sie 40 Jahre später, und im tiefsten Sozialismus und im abgelegensten Kaff, immer noch Balsam für die Erinnerung’ (p. 33). The veterans can recollect their youth and feel no remorse about their past. The songs are objectively neutral and considered to be gentle (p. 33), but they are also a balsam for the memory of the perpetrators. The word ‘Balsam’ has a negative connotation in this passage because the same songs are poisonous to the author. Müller conceptualises songs as contaminated substances to demonstrate how the past can render language unfit for ethically responsible use. She invokes concrete concepts to develop the ethics of language use and to demonstrate why the negative attitude to the contaminated songs is well-grounded. She uses

¹⁶ ‘Denk nicht dorthin, wo du nicht sollst’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 25–41 (p. 33).

metaphor not as an embellishment but as an essential part of the argument, which supports Lakoff and Johnson's thesis about the fundamental role of metaphor in human reasoning.

Müller rarely uses medicine to explain the life-saving power of language because she attributes a controversial role to doctors; she did not trust them during the Ceaușescu regime and saw their complicity with the dictatorship. Furthermore, she generally writes more about the injurious effects of language, and her focus on injury and suffering might inhibit and limit the use of the metaphorical conceptualisation of language as medicine and therapy. Finally, she can imagine language as both a poisonous substance and a medicine, which reveals her ambiguous attitude to therapy and language as they can both harm and help people.

4.4 Nourishment

Language can be imagined as food that nourishes the person. Müller presents the life-saving power of language via its metaphorical conceptualisation as nourishment¹⁷ and the appeal to the experience of hunger. Evolutionarily, hunger developed much earlier than language; it is concrete and directly related to the body. Hence its use as a source domain to reason about the target domain of language is both productive and meaningful.

In her Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Müller says that her hunger for life was the hunger for words. First, speech is seen as resistance to the regime: 'Ich habe in der Diktatur viel geredet, meistens weil ich mich entschlossen hatte, die Trompete nicht zu blasen.'¹⁸ The effects of such speech were detrimental to the author: 'Meistens hat das Reden unerträgliche Folgen gehabt' (p. 18). But writing was different from speech because she could remain silent and avoid confronting the regime directly; hence writing is said to begin with silence: 'Aber das Schreiben hat im Schweigen begonnen, dort [...], wo ich mit mir selbst mehr ausmachen mußte, als man sagen konnte' (p. 18). Writing allows her to come to terms with herself: the subject establishes a relationship with the self through writing. Speech could not articulate the events any longer, and the author had to write to take account of the oppressive reality: 'Das Geschehen war im Reden nicht mehr zu artikulieren. Höchstens die äußeren Hinzufügungen, aber nicht deren Ausmaß. Dieses konnte ich nur noch stumm im Kopf buchstabieren, im Teufelskreis der Wörter beim Schreiben' (p. 18). She develops a fear for her life because of suffering and persecution, and experiences the fear as hunger for life. Life becomes food –

¹⁷ See also Suren, p. 153: she speaks about '[e]ine Verbindung zwischen Essen und Erzählen'.

¹⁸ 'Jedes Wort weiß etwas vom Teufelskreis', in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 7–21 (p. 18).

this association appears to be both metonymic and metaphorical. Food is an important factor of human life, but the author reverses the cause and effect frame: life is conceived of as food and coveted by the individual. Finally, the persecution by the totalitarian regime induces the fear of death. When Müller feels it, she craves life: ‘Ich reagierte auf die Todesangst mit Lebenshunger. Der war ein Worthunger’ (p. 18). Müller experiences the hunger for life as the hunger for words; language thus becomes a life-giving source of nutrients for the body.

In *Atemschaukel*, language is associated with food. Words referring to it are called ‘Hungerwörter’ and relate to the concrete experience of hunger in the Soviet labour camp:

Es gibt stumme und laute Hungerwörter, so wie es am Hunger selbst das Heimliche und das Öffentliche gibt. Hungerwörter, also Esswörter, beherrschen die Gespräche, und man bleibt doch allein. Jeder isst seine Wörter selbst. Die anderen, die mitessen, tun es auch für sich selbst. (p. 158)

Müller uses hunger to explain communication. The public aspect of hunger corresponds to spoken language, whereas its personal nature as a bodily experience conveys silence. Despite being talked about, hunger is a private experience, and hence everyone in the camp ‘isst seine Wörter selbst’ – in this scenario, suffering cannot be shared. Food is also experienced individually, and cannot be shared because it is imaginary and constructed by language. Notably, language evokes vivid images of food as people are suffering from hunger – words are consumed as food and acquire a taste:

Jedes Hungerwort ist ein Esswort, man hat das Bild des Essens vor Augen und den Geschmack am Gaumen. Hungerwörter oder Esswörter füttern die Phantasie. Sie essen sich selbst, und es schmeckt ihnen. Man wird nicht satt, ist aber wenigstens beim Essen dabei. Jeder chronisch Hungrige hat seine eigenen Präferenzen, seltene, häufige und ständige Esswörter. Jedem schmeckt ein anderes Wort am besten. (p. 157)

Words become food for thought, and since they have different tastes, people prefer different words. Furthermore, words are personified as able to eat each other; Müller thus creates a complex metaphor in which different facets of hunger are mapped on to aspects of communication. At the same time, the metaphor can be reversed, and communication can elucidate hunger: silence and speech, for example, help understand why hunger is both a public and a private experience. Müller, therefore, intimately associates language with food in the condition of suffering from hunger.

Hunger is often caused by poverty, and Müller redefines this idea to integrate it into her image of language: ‘Diese Armut war nicht nur Hunger im Magen. Sie war auch Hunger als Lebensgefühl. Hunger nach Sätzen und Gesten. Nach lautem Sprechen. Hunger nach Lachen. Hunger nach Lärm, den das Leben macht.’¹⁹ While language metaphorically creates life, poverty can cause hunger because of the absence of language. Language is implicitly conceived of as food, and its lack induces hunger and symbolises poverty.

The trope of taste helps Müller express her emotional response to language. In one of her interviews, she explains her relationship with the Romanian language: ‘Als ich die Sprache gelernt habe, war ich schon 15, es war, als würde ich sie essen. Sie hat mir geschmeckt, ich kann es nicht anders sagen.’²⁰ She presents the process of learning a second language as eating; readers can thus relate to her experience through their senses.

In the essay ‘Der König verneigt sich’, Müller evokes the sense of taste to make sense of writing. The words which she cuts out of the printed press may accidentally rhyme: ‘Es waren Worte, die einander kennenlernten, weil sie sich den Ort, wo sie lagen, teilen mußten. Ich konnte sie nicht wegzagen und kam auf den Geschmack des Reimens’ (p. 56). Müller metaphorically acquires a taste for poetry as she finds words that rhyme. Taste allows her to evoke a conventional image that explains her initial motivation for creating collage poetry: if rhyming has a taste, then writing becomes eating and language is associated with food. In everyday language, the use of taste as a source domain to reason about more abstract ideas may be well-established (e.g. ‘auf den Geschmack kommen’), but its explanatory power does not diminish because of conventionality. Furthermore, the trope of language as food is recognisable because Müller creates an extended metaphor that personifies words (‘Worte, die einander kennenlernten’) and thus foregrounds the figurative meaning of the text.

The use of the source domain of taste in relation to language and literature is a repeated motif in Müller’s writing. In this conceptual framework, those who love language will love its taste; Germanists thus become ‘die Feinschmecker der Analyse’.²¹ As a result of the conceptual integration of the frames of eating and studying language, readers understand that Germanists enjoy engaging in language analysis.

In the essay ‘Zehn Finger werden keine Utopie’, Müller implicitly conceptualises the word ‘utopisch’ as food: ‘Und da haben wir noch das Adjektiv “utopisch”. Es gibt sich ohne

¹⁹ ‘Hunger und Seide’, p. 66.

²⁰ Beyer, p. 130.

²¹ ‘Ist aber jemand abhandengekommen’, p. 164.

den gelehrten Beigeschmack noch ungespreizter für alles her, was uns beim Turnen aus dem Haar, dem Hemd, der Tasche oder aus dem Herzen fällt' (p. 52). Although she denies that the word has a certain 'Beigeschmack', this negation means that its taste can be a complex experience with a variety of flavours. The complexity of sensory experience and the possibility of acquiring a certain taste are elaborations of the metaphor of language as food. The author creatively engages the figure in her texts and develops sophisticated reasoning about language through the bodily experience of eating. In the following example, the shelf life of food is mapped as a source domain on to language: late conversations are conceived of as food that has gone bad and has a repugnant taste: 'Die Gespräche aller Personen haben den Geschmack des Widerwillens, weil das Reden spät dran ist. Weil die Worte zu lange auf der Zunge saßen, zu oft in den eigenen Mund geschluckt wurden.'²² Conversations are associated with an unpleasant taste because words have stayed with the speaker for too long. Communication is implicitly understood as eating; the concept of language acquires concreteness and logic when it is mapped out with the source domain of food. The activation of taste is a straightforward appeal to the sensory experience of the reader, which conveys the author's attitude to speech; language thus becomes food and a vital source of nourishment (psychological support).

In a basic metaphor, taste can be understood as a different sense. This process can be called metaphorical synesthesia or multisensory metaphor. Discussing the songs of August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Müller reflects on her experience of poetry and singing with the help of the source domain of taste: 'Das Lied ist fragend, also unsicher. Und es gibt keine Antwort. Es hält mit sich selbst auch den Mund, der es singt, in der Schweben. Es steigt einem ein dunkler Geschmack in den Gaumen.'²³ Vision illuminates the taste of the poem and the psychological state of the singer, and darkness might be associated with psychological suffering, perhaps with bitterness. This example demonstrates that sensory experience can be regarded as less concrete when several senses are evoked and one sense is used as a source domain to describe another – the reader, of course, can relate to the association and simulate it, because of its embodiment and the multisensory nature of perception. I will come back to the discussion of multisensory metaphors in the next chapter, when I consider the association between voice and touch.

²² 'Dass jeder Gegenstand den Platz einnehmen muss, den er hat – dass ich der zu sein habe, der ich bin', in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 185–97 (p. 196).

²³ 'Denk nicht dorthin, wo du nicht sollst', p. 26.

The metaphorical conceptualisation of speaking as eating is evoked in *Heute*, when the narrator says that she and her partner swallowed a song about death while they were laughing: ‘wir lachten durch das Lied, in dem der Tod daherkommt wie der geschenkte Teil des bezahlten Lebens. Wir schluckten das Lied im Lachen’ (p. 106). The song is first associated with life and death, and then transformed into food that can be eaten by the protagonist. The source concept of food establishes a relationship between life and language, and the song that can provide such nourishment is implied to be an important source of psychological support for the protagonist.

Müller associates gullibility with food consumption. In her essay ‘Auf die Gedanken fällt Erde’, propaganda is conceptualised metaphorically as food consumed by the uncritical public: ‘Die Kampagnen haben gewirkt und wirken weiter. Menschen hängen an seinen Lippen und schlucken die mit Nationalismus und Irrsinn getränkten Brocken, sie hungern danach. Sie brauchen die Verführung und haben beschlossen zu glauben.’²⁴ Müller visualises the effects of propaganda through the frame of eating. People who are subjected to propaganda become food consumers, whereas nationalistic ideas are conceived of as food. People crave nationalistic dogmas because they need deception and believe in what sounds flattering to them. The wish to find a convenient truth becomes the hunger for self-deception. Language can be seen as a poisonous food with a pleasant taste and the ability to preserve life in its perverted form. The process of consuming propaganda relates to the reception of texts and speeches; the frame of eating engages readers’ bodily experience.

Müller uses the idea of hunger to discuss her experience of reading *Masse und Macht* (1960) by Elias Canetti. As she finds a way to relate to the text by exchanging the words ‘Masse’ and ‘Macht’, she grows hungry for the sentences in the book: ‘Ich wurde regelrecht hungrig auf die Sätze.’²⁵ Reading is conceived of as eating, and Müller craves the sentences in the book because they nourish her and give food for thought.

At the end of the essay ‘Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel’, Müller comes to a definition of writing based on metaphor. She associates writing with food by stating that she has to eat everything she writes: ‘So könnte man auch das Schreiben definieren. Wer weiß: Was ich schreib, muss ich essen, was ich nicht schreib – frisst mich. Davon, dass ich es esse, verschwindet es nicht. Und davon, dass es mich frisst, verschwinde

²⁴ *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 164–71 (p. 165).

²⁵ ‘Man will sehen, was nach einem greift. Zu Canettis “Masse” und Canettis “Macht”’, in *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 172–84 (p. 175).

ich nicht' (p. 109). Müller presents the metaphor as a definition. The trope of writing as food is experienced as tangible reality: the author construes the association between writing and food in terms of identity. This highlights the complexity of the notion of identity and supports the argument about the centrality of metaphor in reasoning. The metaphor does not allow full identity in the relationship between food and writing because some inferences which are true for food consumption do not hold for writing. Such inferences are inhibited without conscious effort on the part of the reader. In conceptual metaphor theory, this is known as the *invariance principle*: metaphor transfers only those components of meaning from the source domain that remain coherent in the target domain.²⁶ For example, when you give your love to someone, you do not lose it. The source domain of manipulating physical objects does not fully map out the experience of love. Some inferences are unconsciously inhibited because they contradict the target domain – the logic of object manipulation does not fully work for love. Similar limitations apply to the mappings between food and writing. While eating means that food disappears in the mouth, Müller consciously prohibits this inference from being mapped on to the target domain of writing. By explicitly outlining the inhibitions that apply to the mapping, she problematises the definition and shows that she is aware of the tentative nature of the relationship of identity. Writing, unlike food, does not disappear when Müller consumes it, and the writer does not vanish when she is eaten by the texts that she has not written. She thereby reveals one of the principles of metaphorical conceptualisation and alerts the reader to the artifice of her language.

4.5 Breath

The association between life and language can be realised in bodily concepts that are common to both frames. Breathing is a precondition for human life. In a similar way, breathing is essential for speech because we need breath to speak. Usually we are not aware of our breathing, but speaking is a conscious effort. Müller conveys the close relationship between language and life by drawing the reader's attention to breathing during speech. In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist judges the seriousness of her father's threats to kill her husband based on his breathing: 'Wie ruhig er das sagen, wie leicht er atmen und den Takt im Walzer halten konnte, wie einer, der tut, was er sagt' (p. 193). The metaphorical lightness of breathing

²⁶ Lakoff, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', p. 215.

during speech indicates to the protagonist that her father could be serious about his threat. Breath is a paralinguistic feature and simultaneously a symptom of life.

The metaphorical conceptualisation of poetry as breath helps Müller explain the style of those authors who use few poetic metaphors in their writing. The poetry that is said to contain fewer tropes is conceived of as ‘ein lyrischer Hauch aus dem Trockenen’.²⁷ Müller imagines poetry as gentle dry breathing. The absence of metaphor is associated with dryness; hence metaphor is implicitly identified with breathing which has more moisture in it. Light breathing becomes a source of meaning for understanding poetry.

The association between breath and poetry could be metonymic, because reciting poetry and singing are impossible without breathing. In the novel *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* (1986), Müller alerts the reader to the breath of the singers: ‘Den Buchsbaumzaun entlang stand der Kirchenchor und sang lange Lieder. Es war kalt, und der Hauch der Lieder zog zum Himmel hinauf.’²⁸ The scene is cinematic in its vividness: the singers’ breath is visible to the outside observer because of the cold weather.

Breath and language are initially co-occurring phenomena, but the elaboration of their relationship can produce the primary metaphor of language as breath. Breath is a concrete bodily action that can be mapped on to speech, poetry, or creative writing to make sense of those concepts. The narrator of *Der Fuchs* gradually construes speech as breath, when the boy whose mother tells him about surveillance does not really understand what it means to be followed by the secret police. The third-person narration allows Müller to construct an anonymous description of a situation when speech is conceptualised metaphorically as breath. First, the narrator describes breath as it is perceived visually, then the image of breath condensate is mapped on to speech and metonymically refers to the speaker:

Ein warmer Dunst kommt aus dem Mund des Kindes. Man sieht ihn nicht. Draußen, unter den spitzen Pappeln, würde man ihn sehen. Er würde kurz danach im Schweigen in der Luft hängen. Und sich selber wegtragen. Man würde sehen in der Luft, was der Mund gesagt hat. Das würde nichts ändern. Auch, was man sehen würde in der Luft, wäre nur für sich und nicht vorhanden. Wie alles in den Straßen nur für sich und nicht vorhanden ist, die Stadt nur für sich, die Menschen in der Stadt nur für sich. Es ist nur diese aufgeschlitzte Kälte, die für alle da ist, nicht die Stadt. (p. 229)

²⁷ *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, p. 53.

²⁸ *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2009), p. 36.

The condensation of the breath vapour can be seen hanging in the air; it is personified as it carries itself away and disappears. Whatever is being said outside can be seen: the visibility of breath is associated with the intelligibility of speech. The well-researched metaphor of vision as knowledge²⁹ elucidates the association between speech and breath. Seeing the breath, however, does not mean that the observer understands the speaker: speaking outside could be safe from surveillance even though it is visible. Breath and speech also symbolise the presence of the person; both life and language are, therefore, imagined as breath.

The co-occurrence of speech and breath can also be found elsewhere in *Der Fuchs*. At one point, breath is personified and said to produce speech: ‘Ihr Atem hetzt jedes Wort, ich weiß, warum du ihn versteckst, sagt sie, lüg mich nicht an, dein Anwalt ist beim Geheimdienst’ (p. 222). Breathing metonymically stands for speaking. There is no metaphorical conceptualisation of breath as speech, but these two concepts are strongly associated in the passage due to the personification of breath.

When the person speaks, she exhales through the mouth. The absence of such breath metonymically stands for silence. The protagonist of *Der Fuchs* asks a bold question about Ceauşescu, then stops breathing through the mouth and metaphorically swallows her breath: ‘Er schlürft, sieht ihre Augen über der Kaffeetasse stehen, was macht ihr mit dem, der Ceauşescu erschießt, fragt sie, bläst keinen Rauch aus dem Mund, sie schluckt ihren Atem’ (p. 172). The breath is understood as part of the physiological process of speaking, and its absence refers to the expectant silence of the protagonist. Silence is not mere absence of speech, but a complex phenomenon with multiple facets such as the absence of breathing.

In *Der Fuchs*, the individual character of human voice is transferred to human breath, when breathing is conceived of as an animal: ‘Antreten, abzählen, jede Stimme ist anders müde, jedes Atemholen vor jedem Mund ein anderes dunstiges Tier’ (p. 204). The different kinds of fatigue define the differences between individual voices, which can be imagined as tired people. The image of breath as an animal is a metaphor in which individual breaths are visualised as distinct living beings made of vapour: the agility and movement of the animal is mapped on to the changing shape of the exhaled air. The individuality of voice and breath are collated in the passage, and the tiredness of the voice correlates with a different breath. It is

²⁹ See Eve Sweetser, *From Etymology to Pragmatics: Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 33.

common to speak of tired voices (e.g. ‘seine müde Stimme’), but Müller defamiliarises the convention linguistically and conceptually.

Elsewhere in the text the protagonist interacts with the breath and attempts to take it into her hands: ‘Vor Adina geht ihr Atem, sie greift mit der Hand danach, sie fängt ihn nicht mehr ein’ (p. 198). It can be inferred that Adina used to be able to take the breath in her hand and manipulate it as a solid object. She fails to do it this time and is unable to grasp her breath. If breath is mapped on to speech, then the protagonist is implied to lose control over her speech. Losing control over breath is associated with speech when the narrator discusses a character’s paralinguistic: ‘Aus dem Mund des Vaters kommt ein Seufzen, ein verbotenes Atemholen’ (p. 185). When the character sees the border between Yugoslavia and Romania while travelling by train, he sighs because he wishes to leave Romania. The sigh is a forbidden breath, because of the patriotic pathos of the regime and its control of the border. Any criticism of the state is punishable, and even a breath can be a threat to the regime: breathing becomes a speech act that can be policed.

After Irene, the protagonist of *Reisende*, leaves Romania and moves to Germany, she receives a letter from her old friend Dana. The protagonist opens the letter and reads the sentence where Dana says that she misses her: ‘Ich hab Sehnsucht, fast eine körperliche Sehnsucht nach dir’ (p. 83). Irene imagines hearing Dana’s voice read the sentence. Her voice metaphorically proves the authenticity of the letter: ‘Das war ein Satz, aus dem Danas Stimme kam. Doch mit Danas Stimme auch ein Atem, von dem Irene wußte, daß er Dana nicht gehörte’ (p. 83). The protagonist, however, feels someone else’s breath coming from the sentence: the secret police must have asked Dana to write the letter. The breath stands for the person who asked Dana to write the letter; this metaphorical image informs the reader about the feelings of the protagonist and her suspicions. Notably, the sentence is personified and granted both a voice and a breath. Language and breath thus become closely connected as the latter provides extralinguistic information about the former.

In her discussion of the truth and lies, Müller associates the lie with a particular discourse and breath: ‘Nur sie [die Lüge] hat einen langen Atem, einen glatten fertigen Diskurs.’³⁰ Breath is used metonymically to describe a calm speech where the speaker is not worried and breathes slowly. It is one of the features of the lie, which highlights the physiological nature of speech and associates the lie with a particular medium. Furthermore, the lie can be personified and thus have a characteristic breath and discourse. In another

³⁰ ‘Lügen haben kurze Beine’, p. 114.

instance, the lie is said to be just a breath away from fact: ‘Die Fälschung hielt sich fast immer in Atemnähe der Tatsache auf’ (p. 108). If breath can be understood metonymically as speech, then it vividly symbolises the closeness of (similarity between) the lie and the truth.

Breathing can be mapped on to other bodily functions which are experienced as less direct, relating more to the metaphorically construed psychological self of the subject. Breath is thus often associated with the emotions of the speaker. In the following example, the politicians are said to speak calmly about the situation in Europe: ‘Die Theoretiker und Pragmatiker könnten wieder über das “wetterfeste Haus” Europa reden. Vielleicht sogar mit einem ruhigeren Atem als jetzt.’³¹ The calm breath metonymically stands for the speaker’s emotions; it is an effective source domain that clearly delineates the emotional charge of speech.

The title of the novel *Herztier* relates to the notion of breath and its metaphorical associations with language.³² The concept ‘Herztier’ is explained as the visible breath in the cold air: ‘Aus jedem Mund kroch der Atem in die kalte Luft. Vor unseren Gesichtern zog ein Rudel fliehender Tiere. Ich sagte zu Georg: Schau, dein Herztier zieht aus’ (p. 89). The heart animal is the visible result of human breath and relates to speech: ‘Unsere Herztiere flohen wie Mäuse. Sie warfen das Fell hinter sich ab und verschwanden im Nichts. Wenn wir kurz nacheinander viel redeten, blieben sie länger in der Luft’ (pp. 89–90). The heart animal is a poetic metaphor that does not lend itself to a definitive interpretation from the point of view of language motivation, but it clearly refers to breath. The visible condensed vapour of the human breath is the key image of the novel which connects life and language. The link between the two concepts becomes visual and highly significant: the breath relates to both life and language and is used as a link between bodily and verbal experience, although the difference between the two is due to the metaphorical conceptualisation of the body and the mind as separate entities. Müller thus problematises the distinction between the mind and the body. The heart animal is a metaphor which relates to the bodily experience of speech and the

³¹ ‘Die Tage werden weitergehen’, in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 157–63 (p. 162).

³² For a well-established definition of the concept, see Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler, ‘Gespräch mit Herta Müller’, in *Herta Müller*, pp. 14–24 (pp. 21–22): Müller agrees that it can be framed as ‘der Kern der Persönlichkeit’. See also Predoiu, p. 132: ‘Die rumänische Entsprechung für “Herztier” lautet “inimal”. Herta Müller fügte, um das Wort zu schaffen, die Substantive “inima” (Herz) und “animal” (Tier) ineinander. Der neue Titel, mit seinen beiden Bestandteilen verdeutlicht die Ambivalenz des Tierischen und der Gefühle.’

construction of the self as a verbal being. Breathing is simultaneously indicative of life and speech, in which case speech becomes the inextricable part of life.

In *Atemschaukel*, breathing is an important symbol of survival and language. The narrator-protagonist explains how his breath struggles with memories and objects which haunt him many years after the experience in the labour camp. The objects from the camp acquire agency and threaten to harm Leo. They metaphorically attack the protagonist when he remembers them all at once: ‘Manchmal überfallen mich die Gegenstände aus dem Lager nicht nacheinander, sondern im Rudel. Darum weiß ich, dass es den Gegenständen, die mich heimsuchen, gar nicht oder nicht nur um meine Erinnerung geht, sondern ums Drangsalieren’ (p. 34). The objects which Leo claims not to know are construed as subjects who are looking for him and can deport him back to the labour camp: ‘Gegenstände, die vielleicht nichts mit mir zu tun hatten, suchen mich. Sie wollen mich nachts deportieren, ins Lager heimholen, wollen sie mich’ (p. 34). The objects which are imagined in the mind metaphorically enter the other parts of the protagonist’s body, and cause bodily discomfort because they simultaneously confront the protagonist: ‘Weil sie im Rudel kommen, bleiben sie nicht nur im Kopf. Ich hab ein Magendrücken, das in den Gaumen steigt. Die Atemschaukel überschlägt sich, ich muss hecheln’ (p. 34). The objects cause the protagonist to lose his breath when he faces them all at once; their recollection could be taking place in speech. If the protagonist tried to say all the words at once as one word such as ‘Zahnkammnadelscherenspiegelbürste’ (p. 34), he could lose his breath. On the one hand, the metaphor of the breathswing relates to the emotional state of the narrator and his psychological stress. On the other, the breathswing could relate to speech and the struggle of the protagonist to say all the objects in one word. The metaphor of the breathswing relates to both survival and speech in the novel. The narrator struggles to survive and resorts to the breathswing as a technique by which he can metaphorically exhale his self and transfer it to the objects around him. At the same time, the breathswing relates to the writing technique and speech in the novel. The protagonist describes how the objects which he recollects influence his breath. The objects strangle Leo: ‘Wenn mich nachts die Gegenstände heimsuchen und mir im Hals die Luft abdrosseln, reiße ich das Fenster auf und halte den Kopf ins Freie’ (p. 34). Leo opens the window to breathe fresh air; his breath returns to the normal rhythm: ‘Mein Atem findet wieder seinen Takt. Ich schluck die kalte Luft, bis ich nicht mehr im Lager bin. Dann schließe ich das Fenster und leg mich wieder hin’ (pp. 34–35). In this scene, breathing is an important concomitant action of speech, recollection, and life. The protagonist’s breath is an essential part of his identity.

The breathswing is conceived of as a means for survival in the labour camp. Together with the shovel, the breathswing is a metaphorical image that brings together survival and creativity: 'Ich halte die Balance, die Herzschaufel wird zur Schaukel in meiner Hand, wie die Atemschaudel in der Brust' (p. 82). The other metaphors are associated with the breathswing as the pivot of the novel. The 'Hungerengel' is said to rely on the 'Atemschaudel': 'Der Hungerengel geht offenen Auges einseitig. Er taumelt enge Kreise und balanciert auf der Atemschaudel' (p. 144). The author thus uses figurative language to inform the reader about the precarious conditions of the characters in the labour camp.

The interpretation of 'Atemschaudel' as a metaphorical pendulum movement of the subject in order to preserve his self – when he momentarily identifies his self with other objects which are safer than him in the labour camp – is corroborated by the following passage where 'Atemschaudel' and the pendulum movement are conceptually integrated in the narrator's mind. Leo observes that '[n]eben dem Schrank tickte die Uhr. Das Pendel flog und schaufelte unsere Zeit zwischen die Möbel vom Schrank zum Fenster, vom Tisch zum Diwan, vom Ofen zum Plüschsessel, vom Tag in den Abend' (p. 265). The pendulum directly relates to objects and manipulates time. It is associated by Leo with the breathswing: 'An der Wand war das Ticken meine Atemschaudel' (p. 265). The pendulum movement reminds the protagonist of his survival technique in the labour camp, when he would conceptualise his self as outside objects in order to preserve his integrity. As his association with the outside object was reversed, he experienced the pendulum movement of the self back and forth between his body and outside objects. This survival technique is conceptualised metaphorically in its turn as a breathswing when exhaling is associating the self with outside objects and inhaling is returning the self to the body.

For the narrator of *Atemschaudel*, breathing is metonymically associated with living, and breath is imagined as life. When Leo Auberg returns to his hometown from the labour camp, he observes the people in the street and describes them as satiated with home. He sees their breaths in the cold air, and the visible condensate of breath is conceived of as human life escaping the subject: 'Den Passanten schaukelten die Atemfetzen aus dem Mund und verrieten: Alle Heimatsatten machen hier ihr Leben, aber jedem fliegt es davon' (p. 285). The image of the 'Atemfetzen aus dem Mund' appears to be similar to the metaphor of the 'Herztier'. The visible breath in the above passage is mapped on to life escaping people. It helps better understand the metaphorical meaning of the 'Herztier', which can also be considered to relate to the human life.

When Leo Auberg personifies the language formula of identity between work and food, he attributes to it an ability to breathe: ‘Es waren aber nicht meine Hände, sondern der flache Atem der russischen Norm. 1 Schaufelhub = 1 Gramm Brot verwandelte sich in 1 Nagelkopf = 1 Gramm Brot’ (p. 284). The flat breath most probably relates to calm exhaling while saying the formula. Life, language, and breathing merge in this figure. The language of the labour camp is now used by Leo in everyday life, and breathing is associated with both life and language.

‘Atemschaukel’ is key to deciphering the poetics of the novel. *Atemschaukel* as the title of the novel underlines the creative process of expressing the inexpressible and metaphorically relates to the reader the protagonist’s subjective experience of oppression. The ‘dissociation, the experience of the self as other’,³³ which is present in *Atemschaukel*, as well as in Müller’s earlier works, could be overcome only at the moment of silence when the narrator breathes in. Victims of totalitarian oppression ‘können sich selbst erhalten nur, wenn sie auf ihr Selbst verzichten’,³⁴ and silence is the watershed moment when the victim’s identity may be finally crushed and obliterated or can put up resistance. Silence is a breathless moment of narration, when the protagonist stands up for conveying his suffering and securing his identity. He is able to achieve it only through the constant ‘Schaukeln’ of his psyche between his starving body and the intact objects of the real world.

Paul Celan – in his famous Büchner Prize speech – compared poetry to an ‘Atemwende’: ‘Dichtung: das kann eine Atemwende bedeuten. Wer weiß, vielleicht legt die Dichtung den Weg – auch den Weg der Kunst – um einer solchen Atemwende willen zurück?’³⁵ In *Atemschaukel*, it is a repetitive process of identification of the self with other objects: ‘Atemschaukel’, or breathing in and out, emphasises the search for self-identity for the sake of self-preservation. At the meta-narrative level, it may stand for the permanent struggle to express the inexpressible. One has every reason to pose an existential question about the nature of such a metaphor: why should poets and writers be fascinated with

³³ Marven, ‘In allem ist der Riß’, p. 396.

³⁴ Theodor Adorno, ‘Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?’, in *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit. Vorträge und Gespräche mit Helmut Becker 1959–1969*, ed. by Gerd Kadelbach (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp. 10–29 (p. 22).

³⁵ Paul Celan, ‘Der Meridian. Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises. Darmstadt, am 22. Oktober 1960’, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Beda Allemann, Stefan Reichert, 7 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), III, 187–202 (p. 195).

breathing? Why did Celan compare poetry to the turn of one's breath? The answer to this question is most obvious if we turn to the etymology of the word 'breath' in Ancient Greek, where 'Psyche' (ψυχή) is both breath and soul. In this context, I agree with Bettina Bannasch that for poets 'the existential dimension of breathing' cannot be underestimated, as it is 'a necessity of life'³⁶ and a permanent companion. Poets write as they breathe. Every line of the poem may correspond to an 'Atemstoß', and every new line is necessarily a new breath with an 'Atemzug' in between. The moment of breathing in is the moment of silence and self-identity – that is why Celan states that poems ostensibly demonstrate 'eine starke Neigung zum Verstummen'.³⁷ Because Leo cannot afford self-identity, both his breath and his soul oscillate around him and the world. *Dum spiro spero* could be one of Leo's survival mottos.

The key metaphor of the novel simultaneously serves several interconnected and well-orchestrated ends. 'Atemschaukel' is the metaphor for the protagonist's living to and fro, trying to be here and there. It is the form of activity resulting from his communication with the world, and the life-saving exchange with things around him. Leo identifies himself with objects and animates the perceived world. Thanks to this creative exchange of identity, Leo secures his self. This exchange can take place only for a brief moment, and then it is time for a new abortive attempt. The constant pendulum movement of the protagonist's identity promises to become a road towards survival. However, the dislocation of the self, as a survival technique, has the unfortunate consequence of damaging it. When the self is alienated, it becomes reified. After sixty years, reification of the self continues to haunt the protagonist. 'Atemschaukel' becomes a painful experience of reliving the memory of the identity loss that leads to losing one's breath. 'Schaukeln' now describes the process of recollecting the oppressive past, and memories return to the protagonist through the memorable objects that used to save him through the identity exchange. Memories take the hero back into the past and make him relive his subjugation again and again. Leo's psyche had been relocated so often in the camp that now – just like a limb that has been twisted out of joint too many times – it becomes unstable. 'Atemschaukel' is experienced as a delirium: 'Die Atemschaukel ist ein Delirium und was für eins' (p. 87). The protagonist's breathswing as

³⁶ Bettina Bannasch, 'Zero – A Gaping Mouth: The Discourse of the Camps in Herta Müller's *Atemschaukel*', trans. by David Midgley, in *Other People's Pain: Narratives of Trauma and the Question of Ethics*, ed. by Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 115–44 (p. 118).

³⁷ Celan, p. 197.

extrapolation of his psyche is not only a salvation strategy but also painful reification and dissolution of his self. Ultimately, the narrator's 'Atemschaukel' could be considered a metaphor for creative writing as resistance to oppression in general, and for autofictional writing as an attempt at self-preservation in particular. Leo uses metaphor as a salvation strategy that allows for preservation of his identity and survival. In her Nobel Prize lecture, Müller speaks of a vicious circle of words.³⁸ I believe that 'Atemschaukel' is a metaphor for such a vicious circle – described by the psyche's to and fro movement – which attests to the constant danger of Leo's metaphorical loss of and damage to the self. It is explicated in language, and the language of the novel reflects this instability and fragility of the self. The duality of 'Atemschaukel' cannot be avoided, and it becomes both a route to survival and a source of suffering for the protagonist. Readers do not have direct access to his traumatic experience, but they can empathise with him through metaphors, which help Leo express his suffering, recollect his past, put up resistance, and survive the oppression in the labour camp.

4.6 Conclusion

Wittgenstein argues that 'to imagine a language means to imagine a life-form'. I agree with him that the meaning of language can be as diverse as the functions of the tools in a tool-box.³⁹ Müller also imagines language as a tool: 'Sprache ist [...] das Werkzeug.'⁴⁰ She employs different tools to make sense of the association between life and language: she creatively uses concrete concepts such as breath, nourishment, life, and protection in order to communicate to her readers the life-saving power of language. There is no single interpretation of this power, and its different facets are illuminated through various source domains, which commonly relate to bodily experience. While there is no stable definition of life-saving language, its meaning is characterised by embodiment and hence can be easily understood by the reader. Therefore, the metaphorical conceptualisation of life-saving language is both functional and meaningful, conventional and motivated by embodiment. Finally, Müller estranges conventions and draws the reader's attention to the figurative meaning of language and its embodiment.

³⁸ 'Jedes Wort', p. 7.

³⁹ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 7^e, 6^e (sections 19 and 11).

⁴⁰ Beyer, p. 131.

5 TACTILE LANGUAGE

5.1 Voice, Multisensory Perception, and Metaphor

In this chapter, I examine the metaphorical conceptualisation of touchable language in the works of Herta Müller. To that end, I focus on and analyse how she uses tactile metaphors for voice. I use the concept of voice as a metonymic vehicle for language and regard tactile experience as an aspect of multisensory perception. I consider the process of multisensory perception to argue that tactile metaphors can activate multiple senses. This chapter will challenge my initial assumption that voice literally stands for a purely acoustic phenomenon and will show that it is conceptualised ad hoc and does not exist in isolation from other sensory experiences and, more generally, from various contexts. This is in accord with the view of Daniel Casasanto and Gary Lupyan that all concepts depend on contextualisation.¹ Kohl has likewise emphasised the role of context in metaphorical conceptualisation.² Antonio Damasio asserts that perception, ‘in whatever sensory modality, is the result of the brain’s cartographic skill’.³ What follows is that the mind can create perceptual images.⁴ Even as a perceptual image, voice is not just sound and can be understood only in the relevant linguistic, bodily, and cultural contexts.⁵ At the very least, it is associated with those sensory impressions perceived simultaneously with sound.

It is not entirely clear why different modes of sensory experience are evoked to reason about auditory perception. *Multisensory metaphor* may be a suitable term for this situation,

¹ Daniel Casasanto and Gary Lupyan, ‘All Concepts are Ad Hoc Concepts’, in *The Conceptual Mind: New Directions in the Study of Concepts*, ed. by Eric Margolis and Stephen Laurence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), pp. 543–66 (p. 543).

² Katrin Kohl, *Metapher* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007), p. 52.

³ Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain* (London: William Heinemann, 2010), p. 70.

⁴ For a discussion of the non-pictorial mental imagery, see Emily Troscianko, ‘Reading Imaginatively: The Imagination in Cognitive Science and Cognitive Literary Studies’, *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 42 (2013), 181–98 (pp. 184–86).

⁵ This role of context is well established for the perception of music. For this reason, Jonathan Friedman argues that music is not just sound: *Music in Our Lives: Why We Listen, How It Works* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2015), pp. 96–97.

but it does not explain why exactly this happens. Ning Yu refers to this trope as ‘synesthetic metaphor, i.e., metaphor that maps across various sensory domains’.⁶ Synaesthesia, however, is a distinct and rare cognitive phenomenon that does not correlate with the conventionality and ubiquity of metaphors that map across different senses. Hence I prefer the term *multisensory metaphor*. In contrast to synaesthesia, multisensory perception is common and may help understand the motivation for such metaphors: the nature of human perception can provide a causal explanation for multisensory metaphor. Human perception routinely involves more than one sense. In the course of human interaction with the environment, the sense of hearing works in synchrony with other senses. When two sensory experiences co-occur, they can be bound together to form a multisensory image and can hence be associated with each other as parts of the same conceptual frame. Humans have evolved to perceive and explore the environment through multiple sensory channels; therefore, different sensory perceptions can correlate and later be used to explain auditory experience metaphorically.

Thinking about voice, people engage different senses due to the multisensory nature of perception.⁷ Sounds constantly occur along with other sensory stimuli. Human senses work together as ‘observers integrate signals from multiple sensory modalities into percepts’.⁸ The construal of multisensory images (percepts) enables people to succeed in their interaction with the world because it allows them to identify and deal with those things that can harm or benefit them. Vanessa Harrar et al. remark that ‘[i]ntegrating information from individual senses increases the chance of survival by reducing the variability in the incoming signals, thus allowing us to respond more rapidly. [...] This response facilitation is [...] attributed to multisensory integration.’⁹ A falling mortar shell, a jumping tiger, or a skidding car are not just auditory or visual images, they are more than that in terms of sensory perception and are conceived of as potential life threats.

⁶ Ning Yu, ‘Synesthetic Metaphor: A Cognitive Perspective’, *Journal of Literary Semantics*, 32 (2003), 19–34 (p. 20).

⁷ Raymond W. Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 229–31.

⁸ Ophelia Deroy, Charles Spence, and Uta Noppeney, ‘Metacognition in Multisensory Perception’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20 (2016), 736–47 (p. 744).

⁹ Vanessa Harrar, Laurence R. Harris, and Charles Spence, ‘Multisensory Integration Is Independent of Perceived Simultaneity’, *Experimental Brain Research*, 235 (2017), 763–75 (p. 763).

The relationship between perception and conception is well established in the framework of cognitive psychology. Lawrence Barsalou, the author of the perceptual theory of knowledge, argues that ‘cognition is inherently perceptual, sharing systems with perception at both the cognitive and the neural levels.’¹⁰ Gallese and Lakoff posit that ‘rational thought is an exploitation of the normal operations of our bodies’ and that ‘language makes direct use of the same brain structures used in perception and action’.¹¹ These tenets of cognitive psychology are fundamental to my analysis of figurative language. In this chapter, I will show how a writer can use tactile experience to present metaphorically the complex image of voice, and thereby my study will support the embodied view of meaning and cognition.

Multisensory perception makes metaphor a natural way of thinking about things, but also makes it difficult to break down metaphors into their constituent parts. Metaphors provide us with an opportunity to reason about relatively abstract things with the help of more concrete concepts. Sensorimotor experiences can be the prime example of such concrete phenomena. Indifference or hostility are complex social concepts that can be conveyed through the experience of cold. If someone’s voice is said to be cold, people associate this sensory image with the emotional state of the speaker. The experience of cold is tangible and vividly communicates the message. In a similar vein, the acoustic properties of voice can be associated with other sensory experiences. A sharp voice can refer to both vision and touch. Multisensory perception leads to situations when there is nothing that could explicitly tell us which sensory experience to prioritise or how to isolate it from other stimuli. Importantly, multisensory perception could be the causal mechanism behind the formation of primary metaphors. The concept of *primary metaphor* was developed by Joseph E. Grady in his doctoral thesis ‘Foundations of Meaning: Primary Metaphors and Primary Scenes’ (1997) and involves two minimal concepts that are associated with each other by way of co-occurrence: ‘Each primary metaphor has a minimal structure and arises naturally, automatically, and unconsciously through everyday experience by means of conflation, during which cross-domain associations are formed’ (*PF*, p. 46). Multisensory perception and neural binding could explain how these associations are established.¹² Since sensory experiences are routinely bound together and possibly integrated into multisensory images, perception can

¹⁰ Barsalou, p. 577.

¹¹ Gallese and Lakoff, p. 473.

¹² For a neural theory of language, see Jerome A. Feldman, *From Molecule to Metaphor: A Neural Theory of Language* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006).

organise conceptual frames and hence lay the foundation for cross-domain associations. The multisensory nature of metaphors should not be confused with *multimodal metaphors*, defined by Charles Forceville as ‘metaphors in which target, source, and/or mappable features are represented or suggested by at least two different sign systems (one of which may be language) or modes of perception.’¹³ In this dissertation, the term *multisensory* refers to the sensory modalities evoked by metaphors and not to the sign system or medium of metaphor representation. After all, I focus exclusively on verbal metaphors and their conceptualisation. While multisensory perception could well be the cause of the formation of metaphors, it is also the confounding factor in readers’ efforts to analyse metaphors and categorise their experiences into sensory modalities.

It is important to bear in mind that all the terms in this dissertation are conceptual affordances (potentially useful resources) in the intellectual landscape of the field of literary analysis and cannot accurately represent the cognitive processes in the mind due to the complex nature of these processes. Advances in neuroscience might make redundant and obsolete such terms as image, metaphor, mental representation, frame, and even concept. I agree with Casasanto and Lupyan that ‘the word *concept* is [...] problematic (though hard to avoid) insomuch as naming something with a noun seems to imply it is an object, but conceptualizing is a process.’¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is reasonable to use these terms while discussing literary texts since they are instrumental in analysing the human-scale concerns of literature and psychology. Mental representations are a useful heuristic in the context of metaphor research. I rely on such categories as concept and frame, even though I have found that voice does not exist as a well-defined concept or frame in Müller’s texts. Voice relates to various experiences and acquires different associations depending on the relevant bodily, linguistic, and cultural contexts. The ad hoc nature of conceptualisation (as propounded by Casasanto and Lupyan), the possible influence of non-representational embodied cognition,¹⁵ and the constitutive role of multisensory perception problematise the process of metaphor building and make it difficult to identify its key aspects across different contexts and sensory

¹³ Charles Forceville, ‘Metaphor in Pictures and Multimodal Representations’, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, pp. 462–82 (p. 463).

¹⁴ Casasanto and Lupyan, p. 546.

¹⁵ This view of cognition is defended by Robert Epstein, ‘The Empty Brain’, *The Aeon*, 18 May 2016 <<https://aeon.co/essays/your-brain-does-not-process-information-and-it-is-not-a-computer>> [accessed 19 April 2017].

modalities. To analyse metaphor, I must distinguish between its target and source domains, but the complex nature of perception and conception impedes such analysis and instead reveals that voice is imagined and understood contextually and in close relationship with various sensory experiences.

Analysing the voice metaphors in the fiction and non-fiction works of Herta Müller, I found that there is no overarching stable concept of voice in her texts; it is a mosaic of different meanings, not a single coherent frame. Müller decides how to present voice depending on the context. I agree with Zoltán Kövecses, who posits that ‘variation in metaphorical conceptualisation is a result of the various types of contexts’.¹⁶ While such views on the role of context and use in language and meaning, and on the fuzziness of conceptualisation resonate with and build on Wittgenstein’s original ideas in the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953),¹⁷ cognitive linguistics also emphasises the motivated nature of language and its embodiment: ‘It is a fundamental hypothesis of cognitive linguistics that meaning involves motivated mappings from conceptualisation to expression.’¹⁸ Consequently, voice is not an arbitrary collection of ideas and associations. Cognitive psychology demonstrates that meaning is motivated by the body, social interaction, and the environment.¹⁹ Metaphorically speaking, Wittgenstein argued that language allows people to quench their thirst (achieve their goals),²⁰ whereas contemporary cognitive linguistics and psychology show that it also tastes good (is motivated by embodiment). Since metaphor establishes mappings between different domains of experience and commonly relies on sensorimotor images, it is a natural way of thinking, speaking, and writing about voice.

Conceptual metaphor theory postulates that metaphors fundamentally rely on sensorimotor experiences. And indeed, Müller consistently evokes such experiences for the metaphorical presentation of voice. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the metaphorical conceptualisation of voice through the source domain of tactile experience and shows how

¹⁶ Zoltán Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 156.

¹⁷ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 27^e–39^e (sections 66–100).

¹⁸ Chris Sinha, ‘Grounding, Mapping, and Acts of Meaning’, in *Cognitive Linguistics: Foundations, Scope, and Methodology*, ed. by Theo Janssen and Gisela Redeker (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 223–55 (p. 229).

¹⁹ Casasanto, p. 715.

²⁰ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pp. 2^e–6^e (sections 1–12).

these metaphors rely on and challenge conceptual and linguistic conventions. It demonstrates how a literary author uses more concrete concepts to reason about voice and to communicate effectively her vision of it to her readers.

5.2 Literature Review

The metaphorical conceptualisation of voice in Müller's oeuvre has only briefly been analysed by literary critics. This lack of interest can be explained by the fact that she does not overtly refer to voice as a major concept in her poetological writing, nor does voice become a topic for explicit discussion among the characters in her literary works. At the same time, some scholars use voice as a source domain to create metaphors of their own and to speak about the authorial style of Herta Müller, because voice is a well-established vehicle in metaphors for literary writing. Thus, Anja Johannsen expresses a wish to investigate how Müller's 'literary and political voice maintains its distinctive and unmistakable sound'.²¹ Likewise using voice as a metaphor for individual style, Iulia-Karin Patrut describes Müller's novel *Herztier* as 'eine Darstellung der Schritte zur künstlerischen Artikulation einer eigenen literarischen Stimme'. Patrut construes Müller's creative style as 'eigene[n] (künstlerische[n]) Stimme'.²² Marven also uses voice as a trope when she comments that 'Müller's distinctive poetic vision and narrative voice [...] are in part the product of the repressive conditions in Romania'.²³ In a slightly different manner, Katja Suren invokes the perceptual image of losing one's voice as a vehicle to describe the possibility of communication and resistance as an essential theme in the works of several writers including Müller: 'wird der Verlust der "Stimme", bzw. der Möglichkeit, sich der gemeinsamen Sprache zu bedienen und auf die gewaltsame Anrede zu antworten, [...] von Müller [...] thematisiert'.²⁴ The above examples remain isolated conventional uses of voice as a metaphorical vehicle, and none of these scholars consistently extends the metaphor or discusses Müller's conceptualisation of voice.

Some critics examine voice in Müller's works without explicitly identifying its metaphorical potential. For example, Haupt-Cucuiu undertakes an insightful but rather brief analysis of the psychological aspects of voice representation in Müller's texts. Starting with

²¹ Anja K. Johannsen, 'Osmoses: Müller's Things, Bodies, and Spaces', p. 208.

²² Patrut, pp. 200 and 201.

²³ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 244.

²⁴ Suren, p. 33.

the well-known fact that loudness and pitch belong to the individual features of the human voice, she gives a psychological interpretation of loudness: ‘Bezüglich der lauten Stimme ist sich die Ausdruckspsychologie einig. Personen mit lauter Stimme wird Dominanz zugeschrieben, sei es eine charakterlich angelegte oder eine intentionale.’²⁵ This interpretation is relevant for the role of voice in character description. Haupt-Cucuiu posits that the quiet voice in Müller’s texts is ‘nicht nur ein Signal für Unterordnung, Unterlegenheit ist, sie wird auch mit “warm”, “gefühlvoll”, “menschlich” in Zusammenhang gebracht’ (p. 58). In particular, Haupt-Cucuiu reviews the symbolic role of the acoustic properties of voice during the communication between the secret police and the protagonist in *Der Fuchs*. The critic observes that the loud and deep voices belonging to the interrogators possess acoustic properties which can be mapped on to their inhumane behaviour and create their correspondent images (p. 58). While Haupt-Cucuiu makes an early contribution to the study of voice in the works of Herta Müller, her focus is on just a few aspects of character description with relation to voice. She explores voice as a vehicle for understanding the psychological aspects of the characters and does not discuss the role of metaphor in this process. The present chapter, therefore, builds on the scholarship to date and adopts a more focused perspective on Müller’s metaphorical conceptualisation of voice.

5.3 Tactile Metaphors for Voice

The sense impressions of touch and heat must be much earlier evolutionary developments than speech and are vital in daily life. Brian O’Shaughnessy considers touch to be the most primordial sense because ‘it is scarcely to be distinguished from the having of a body that can act in physical space’, and Robin Dunbar argues that touch plays a significant role in social bonding in primates (including humans).²⁶ Drawing from Dunbar’s research, Steven Phelps comments that the use of touch for strengthening social relationships among primates could be thirty million years old.²⁷ Fundamental to perception and evolutionarily associated with

²⁵ Haupt-Cucuiu, pp. 57–58. Further references to this book are given after quotations in the text.

²⁶ Brian O’Shaughnessy, *Consciousness and the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 658; Robin Dunbar, ‘The Social Role of Touch in Humans and Primates: Behavioural Function and Neurobiological Mechanisms’, *Neuroscience and Behavioral Reviews*, 34 (2010), 260–68.

²⁷ Steven M. Phelps, ‘Touched’, *The Aeon*, 4 April 2017 <<https://aeon.co/essays/it-takes-neuroscience-and-poetry-to-map-the-tributaries-of-touch>> [accessed 15 April 2017].

social interaction, touch provides direct bodily experience to understand voice, which can be imagined as soft, flat, cold, sharp, hard, rough, etc. Müller explores these possibilities in her descriptions of the characters' speech. She creatively uses the vocabulary associated with both touch and voice, and deliberately engages tactile experience to describe voice.²⁸

At one point in *Der Fuchs*, Müller presents the voice of one of the minor characters as flat and cold: 'Die Stimme bleibt leise, fast flach, aber kalt' (p. 96). Flatness is a multisensory concept as it is both tactile and visual, and because it relates to the potentialities of exploring the environment.²⁹ Raymond W. Gibbs characterises flatness as an *affordance*³⁰ that potentially engages different sensory modalities: 'To see that something is flat is to see it as giving rise to certain possibilities of sensorimotor contingency.'³¹ In other words, flatness affords multisensory and motor interaction with the environment. While the narrator evokes a multisensory image to describe voice, tactile experience is foregrounded in this conventional metaphor. Voice is imagined as a flat and cold object. These sensory impressions inform readers about the acoustic characteristics of voice, implying that it does not have variation in tone. Notably, these tactile qualities convey lack of sympathy and emotion on the side of the speaker towards the listener.

Softness is a conventional way to present the auditory perception of sound. Perhaps some literary scholars would not recognise a 'soft voice' as a metaphor and could argue that it activates a different meaning of the adjective 'soft'. But Müller is aware of the metaphorical nature of this association. She consciously uses the tactile impression of softness in relation to voice in her works. For example, the protagonist of *Reisende* perceives a stranger's voice as soft, and here the association appears to be limited to the acoustic qualities of the sound: 'Der Mann flüsterte, als Irene vorbeiging. Seine Stimme war weich. Seine Augen glänzten. Sein Blick war kalt' (p. 63). The voice is soft only in its physical sound but not in the attitude of the speaker. The latter is expressed through the sense of temperature and contrasts with softness. There is a specific connection between softness and voice which conceptually contrasts with the larger context of the encounter and the cold look of the stranger. The

²⁸ For a discussion of deliberate metaphors, see Gerard Steen, 'The Paradox of Metaphor: Why We Need a Three-Dimensional Model of Metaphor', *Metaphor and Symbol*, 23 (2008), 213–41 (p. 214).

²⁹ This enactive approach to perceptual phenomena is defended by Alva Noë, p. 2.

³⁰ The term was introduced by James J. Gibson: *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), p. 127.

³¹ Gibbs, p. 64.

contrast between softness and cold makes the metaphorical nature of the association between softness and voice more recognisable to the reader. In other words, Müller estranges the familiarity of softness as a source of meaning for voice and enables the reader to see the metaphor behind the conventional language.

In Müller's first major short story 'Niederungen', the father of the narrator often reminisces about the war and his comrades. In one of his drunk and nostalgic moments, he sings a song about war and death. His voice 'wird weicher'.³² Softness describes the change of the sound quality and, more importantly, informs the reader about the singer's emotional state. The moment when the narrator's father expresses sadness and appears most humane is conveyed through tactile experience, but the momentarily change of voice does not alter the overall nature of the song. The narrator uses the same sensory medium to highlight this contrast: 'Vater hat das Gesicht, hat die Augen, hat den Mund, Vater hat die Ohren voll mit seinem eigenen rauhen Lied. Vater ist ein todtrauriges Tier' (p. 93). Despite the moment when his voice becomes softer, the song remains rough. This juxtaposition foregrounds touch as a source of meaning for the acoustic properties of voice and its emotional context. Consequently, variations in tactile experience map on to the subjective perception of voice and on the emotional states of the characters.

Müller can emphasise the metaphorical association between tactile experience and voice by placing its conventional expression in the direct vicinity of the literal experience of touch. At the end of *Heute*, the unnamed narrator-protagonist encounters her mentally disordered neighbor Frau Micu who says incomprehensible things. For a moment, the protagonist imagines going insane. Perhaps it would allow her to avoid persecution by the totalitarian state: 'jetzt aber wär ich gerne wie Frau Micu, die das Unerhörte mit weicher Stimme plappert' (p. 239). Here softness is closely associated with acoustic and social qualities of voice. Softness can imply a voice lacking authority and confidence. The softness of voice resonates with the soft flesh of the apricot given to the protagonist moments before this observation. Within one short paragraph, Müller employs tactile experience first literally and then metaphorically, and hence the metaphorical nature of the association between softness and voice comes to the fore. She shows understanding that tactile perception is both a highly concrete bodily experience and simultaneously a rich source of meaning for such concepts as voice, love, fear, and death.

³² 'Niederungen', in *Niederungen*, pp. 17–103 (p. 93).

In *Atemschaukel*, Müller effectively estranges the conventional association between tactile experience and voice by attributing a negative value judgement to the generally positive image of softness. Leo Auberg has a dream in which he is a child. The dream is intermingled with the harsh reality of the Soviet labour camp barrack where he is sleeping: ‘Aus dem leichten Schnarchen der Schwachen, die nicht mehr tanzen gehen, höre ich meine Kinderstimme. Sie ist so samtig, dass sie mich gruselt’ (p 152). In the context of the labour camp, the child’s velvety voice scares and disgusts the protagonist. He evokes softness to reason about the acoustic quality of the voice, but this metaphorical association has certain conventions of use where a soft voice generally produces a pleasant impression. In contrast, Leo feels disturbed by the experience of softness since it contradicts his environment. Life in the labour camp must be extremely rough. This discrepancy between the soft voice from the past and the rough present can be recognised as the cause of Leo’s fear and disgust.

The primary meaning of the German adjective ‘rau’ is related to tactile experience, but its other established meaning is associated with the general feeling of something unpleasant without a direct link to the sense of touch. In *Atemschaukel*, there is a salient example of using ‘rau’ to describe metaphorically voice through touch. The inmates of the Soviet labour camp are allowed to sing and dance on Saturday evenings, and one evening the narrator remarks that the voice of the singer was ‘rauh wie der Sog von tiefem Wasser’ (p. 146). This unconventional comparison highlights tactile experience as a source of meaning for voice. Here the conventional association is reinvigorated through extending the metaphor and hence activating tactile perception in the reader’s mind. The author creates a complex multisensory image that relates not only to tactile experience, but also to vision, spatial orientation, and force dynamics. It is unclear what ‘der Sog von tiefem Wasser’ stands for, and its opacity foregrounds the metaphorical nature of the association between roughness and voice.

Not only human voice, but also other sounds can be associated with touch. For example, the narrator-protagonist of *Atemschaukel* reasons about birdsong through the sensory experience of touch. When Leo Auberg imagines a bird made of cement in the labour camp, he compares hearing the bird sing to tactile experience: ‘Und auf dem Appellplatz am Brunnenrand saß abends ein Vogel aus Zement. Sein Gesang war kratzig, ein Lied aus Zement’ (p. 40). Interestingly, this ‘scratchy’ birdsong can be implicitly related to voice because both the author and the narrator regularly anthropomorphise animals, personify physical objects, and objectify living beings. Yet first and foremost, the birdsong is metaphorically presented as a physical object made of cement. Listening to the song is conceived as touching the rough surface of the cement. The protagonist works at the cement

plant and has constant exposure to it. As a result, the metaphorical mapping between the birdsong and cement evokes multisensory images, complex sensorimotor scenarios, emotions, and social concepts. This association is, therefore, non-arbitrary, and both highly metaphorical and well-motivated in the context of the novel.

Müller construes voice as a slippery object in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech ‘Jedes Wort weiß etwas vom Teufelskreis’ (2009). She recounts how a secret police officer intimidated her and his voice ‘war glitschig’ (p. 8). This metaphorical conceptualisation not only maps tactile experience on to voice but also implicitly presents hearing as a complex multisensory activity of manipulating physical objects. In the context of interrogation, the voice of the officer is imagined as a slippery object that the listener cannot control. The same multisensory metaphor is used by the narrator of *Atemschaukel*, when he describes, at the end of the novel, how his partner Emma was mugged in the street on a rainy day. Emma is approached by a stranger who makes disturbing confessions about his personal life before stealing her wallet: ‘Dann wurde seine Stimme glitschig und brabbelte etwas’ (p. 289). The tactile experience of handling a slippery object is amplified by the context of the scene as it takes place in the rain. Rain can make objects wet and slippery, and the perpetrator’s voice is likewise slippery when he makes a self-critical remark that feels out of place. In contrast to the previous quotation, here touch conveys incomprehensibility of the utterance. The listener cannot metaphorically grasp either the form or meaning of the statement and conceives of the speaker’s voice as slippery. Consequently, tactile experience and manipulation of objects not only explain the physical properties of voice but also communicate the attitude of the listener to the speech in social and personal contexts. While both cases of the use of the adjective ‘glitschig’ appear to be conventional, their textual contexts differ and allow for variation in and salience of the metaphorical understanding of voice.

Sharpness is a multisensory concept that relates to tactile and visual experience, and connects to the scenario of injury. With this concept, Müller creatively evokes physical injury to reason about language. In the following passage from *Heute*, the modulations of voice are vividly presented through the tactile experience associated with injury: ‘So ging das von vorn, wie ein Wirbel im Wasser, der Ton wurde schärfer. [...] Gift stach ihnen aus den Augen’ (p. 185). Sharpness is mapped on to the pitch of the voices of two people quarreling with each other. If it were not for the later comment about stabbing poison, the metaphorical meaning of ‘scharf’ would be difficult to register since it is a rather conventional use of the adjective. However, the extended metaphor of stabbing as quarreling emphasises tactile experience as a source of meaning for the physical properties of voice. And once again, touch relates not only

to the acoustic characteristics of speech but also to the message and its influence upon the listeners. The voice is perceived as sharp due to the aggression and animosity expressed by the speakers. Sharpness helps the reader understand the nature of the quarrel, and simulate the feeling of danger and harm inflicted by the speakers.

5.4 Conclusion

Müller regularly and deliberately evokes tactile experience to reason about voices in her works. Writing about her characters' voices, she consciously employs metaphors when she uses such adjectives as 'weich', 'rau', 'glitschig', 'scharf', 'samtig', 'kalt', and 'flach'. These seemingly modality-specific metaphors relate voice to more than one sensory impression. While multisensory perception enables the author to associate creatively her characters' voices with different sensory phenomena, it simultaneously problematises scholarly efforts to analyse metaphorical language and categorise figurative associations according to sensory modalities. In short, sensory metaphors are easy to experience but difficult to analyse. I agree with Yu that multisensory (synaesthetic) metaphors in literature 'conform to the same cognitive constraints as they do in ordinary language'.³³ In Müller's literary works, tactile language for voice appears to be well-established and even conventional, but its textual context creates variations in meaning and highlights tactile experience as a source for metaphor. Müller defamiliarises linguistic conventions and foregrounds metaphorical reading of tactile language. This line of argument is consistent with Marven's proposition that 'Müller's narratives challenge textual conventions, [...] presenting the text as a physical artefact.'³⁴ Müller encourages readers to see the figurative nature of everyday language and invites them to imagine her characters' voices as something that can be touched in her texts.

³³ Yu, p. 31.

³⁴ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 102.

6 SPATIAL LANGUAGE

This chapter examines the metaphorical conceptualisation of spatial language in the works of Herta Müller. In particular, I analyse how she uses spatial metaphors for voice, which is one of the underexplored themes in her writing and serves well as a metonymic vehicle for understanding how she conceptualises spatial language. Müller regularly evokes spatial experience to convey her vision of voice to her readers, and defamiliarises conventional spatial language used to reason about voice. She encourages her readers to recognise the figurative meaning of such language and invites them to build new and original associations between space and voice. In this chapter, I focus on verticality, figure-ground organisation, motion, and container image schema as source domains for voice. My research demonstrates that voice is associated with different sensory experiences and does not exist as a purely acoustic image. Metaphors help understand voice because it has different meanings depending on the context and is a complex physical, linguistic, and cultural phenomenon.

According to cognitive linguists, the processing of the language associated with space appears ‘to overlap significantly with that of spatial cognition’.¹ In cognitive linguistics, it is a well-established assumption that ‘metaphorical language uses space as a source domain for a number of basic conceptual target domains’.² As space is regularly used to reason about other more abstract concepts such as time and quantity, the language used to describe space ‘can progressively acquire new conventionalised non-spatial meanings, and it can also be used in novel ways to describe non-spatial scenarios with figurative expressions’.³ Some cognitive scientists believe that for spatial cognition ‘the three-dimensional Euclidean construction is inherent in the human nervous system’.⁴ Spatial cognition must have developed much earlier than language in the process of evolution. Therefore, its use as a source domain for describing language conforms to conceptual metaphor theory. In what follows, I will demonstrate how Müller uses conventional spatial language for voice and either foregrounds its spatial

¹ Benjamin Bergen, Carl Polley, and Kathryn Wheeler, ‘Language and Inner Space’, in *Language, Cognition and Space: The State of the Art and New Directions*, ed. by Vyvyan Evans and Paul A. Chilton (London: Equinox, 2010), pp. 79–92 (p. 87).

² *Ibid.*, p. 83.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴ Paul Chilton, ‘Introduction’, in *Language, Cognition and Space*, pp. 1–18 (p. 2).

meanings, which have become secondary in specific contexts, or creates new original metaphorical associations, which are possible due to the existing potential in the conventionalised spatial language used to describe voice.

6.1 Voice and Verticality

It is common to speak about voice as low or high in German, English, and many other languages.⁵ Consequently, verticality is a conventional vehicle for voice; its use is entrenched in everyday language and is neither poetic nor original. Müller often evokes verticality to reason about voice, and sometimes her language use is also conventional and primarily performs the communicative function. As she does for tactile language, however, she regularly estranges established metaphors, foregrounds the sensory perception of verticality, and highlights the mappings between space and voice.

In the following quotations, verticality and depth seem to be in the background, and the foregrounded meaning appears to relate exclusively to the acoustic properties of voice:

er [...] wiederholte mit hohem und feierlichem Ton⁶

Bea Zakel darauf mit einer ungewöhnlich hohen Stimme sagte⁷

Paul [...] singt mit tiefer zittriger Stimme das verbotene Lied.⁸

Mit seiner tiefen, leisen Stimme sagte er: Habe die Ehre, mein Fräulein.⁹

The meanings of ‘hoch’ and ‘tief’ in these passages are conventional. Since spatial vocabulary is commonly used to make sense of auditory experience, one could argue that such German adjectives as ‘tief’ and ‘hoch’ are polysemous and can be conventionally employed to describe voice literally without any conscious association with space. Yet one of the assumptions of conceptual metaphor theory is that metaphors are largely unconscious (*PF*, p. 4), and experimental psychology provides evidence that musical pitch is

⁵ Casasanto, p. 717.

⁶ *Atemschaukel*, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁸ *Der Fuchs*, p. 268.

⁹ *Heute*, p. 64.

conceptualised metaphorically through the source domain of space.¹⁰ Several studies support the notion that speakers of the languages in which sound can be described using spatial vocabulary activate the metaphorical association between space and pitch.¹¹ This association is not limited to vertical space and can involve the mapping between thickness and musical pitch in other languages.¹² Neither is this metaphor arbitrary since it appears to have an experiential basis.¹³ Some scholars posit that the association between space and musical pitch could be a human universal.¹⁴ Thus, Müller’s use of vertical space as a vehicle to reason about voice does not need to be salient or unconventional. In her texts, the spatial words describing musical pitch are not merely conventional labels but give a glimpse into the metaphorical conceptualisation of voice through the vehicle of space. Müller is aware of this metaphor since she consistently defamiliarises the association between vertical space and voice.

Depth is conventionally used as a source domain for reasoning about low frequency sounds and usually remains non-salient in the everyday language for voice. In contrast, Müller deliberately foregrounds its metaphorical meaning in her texts. For example, in *Niederungen*, Müller gives an original interpretation of why a character’s voice is deep: ‘Seine Stimme klang tief. Er musste einen sehr tiefen Hals haben.’¹⁵ She highlights the spatial meaning of the adjective ‘tief’, associating the metaphorical depth of the character’s voice with the literal depth of his throat. Ralph Müller defines such tropes as *hyperliteralist*

¹⁰ Casasanto, pp. 717–21.

¹¹ Carroll C. Pratt, ‘The Spatial Character of High and Low Tones’, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 13 (1930), 278–85; Suzanne K. Roffler and Robert A. Butler, ‘Localization of Tonal Stimuli in the Vertical Plane’, *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 43 (1968), 1260–65; Sarah Dolscheid, with Sabine Hunnius and others, ‘Prelinguistic Infants Are Sensitive to Space-Pitch Associations Found Across Cultures’, *Psychological Science*, 25 (2014), 1256–61.

¹² Shakila Shayan, Ozge Ozturk, and Mark A. Sicoli, ‘The Thickness of Pitch: Crossmodal Metaphors in Farsi, Turkish, and Zapotec’, *The Senses and Society* 6 (2011): 96–105.

¹³ Cesare V. Parise, Katharina Knorre, and Marc O. Ernst, ‘Natural Auditory Scene Statistics Shapes Human Spatial Hearing’, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111 (2014), 6104–08.

¹⁴ Zohar Eitan and Renee Timmers, ‘Beethoven’s Last Piano Sonata and Those Who Follow Crocodiles: Cross-Domain Mappings of Auditory Pitch in a Musical Context’, *Cognition*, 114 (2010), 405–22.

¹⁵ ‘Inge’, in *Niederungen*, pp. 160–66 (p. 162).

metaphors.¹⁶ The secret police officer has a deep voice. Its depth is associated with its acoustic properties and the spatial characteristics of his throat or neck. Here voice could be imagined as an entity located in the throat of the speaker. Furthermore, Herta Müller presents voice as immediately embodied and establishes its initial location outside the speech organs: ‘Seine Stimme klang tiefer, als sein Hals lang war. Sie klang so dumpf, als käme sie aus seinem Magen.’¹⁷ Voice becomes viscerally tangible. Because the motivation behind the conventional association between depth and voice is not obvious, Müller’s rationalisation of the relationship between these two concepts foregrounds the metaphorical meaning of depth. She gives a seemingly literal explanation that focuses on the body and simultaneously makes the metaphor salient to the readers. An attempt at deconstructing the convention reinvigorates the metaphor and extends its meaning. What seemed to be a literal use of a polysemic word becomes a clear case of metaphorical conceptualisation due to the defamiliarisation of the conventional expression. Notably, depth describes not only the physical characteristics of the officer’s voice but also emphasises his authority over the protagonist. This deep voice can be associated with the superior power of the officer interrogating the protagonist.

When the narrator-protagonist of *Heute* describes the voice of her friend’s partner, she places the conceptualisation of deep voice next to the construal of the self of the singer as a container: ‘Daß er überhaupt sang, so tief und wiederum gar nicht in sich hineinschauen ließ, war schon genug. Daß er dieses Lied kannte, gab mir einen Stich’ (p. 67). While the adjective ‘tief’ conventionally collocates with voice, its spatial meaning is activated by the construal of the container image schema. The singer’s voice can be imagined as an entity coming from the depth of his self, presented as an opaque or inaccessible container. The interaction between conventional representations of two different concepts through the source domain of space foregrounds the source domain and reinvigorates the metaphorical use of space for reasoning about both voice and self. The two source concepts, depth and container, can create a complex integration framework where the relationship between self and voice is established through space. Müller implicitly defamiliarises conventional language and enables the reader to see the original metaphorical association between voice and depth. The fact that the song metaphorically causes pain to the protagonist highlights her attitude to the experience and her sensitivity to the song. Depth, therefore, is not an opaque secondary meaning of a dead

¹⁶ Ralph Müller, ‘Hyperliteralist Metaphor: The Cognitive Poetics of Robert Musil in His Novella “Die Portugiesin”’, in *Beyond Cognitive Metaphor*, pp. 224–38 (p. 230).

¹⁷ ‘Inge’, p. 162.

metaphor in this context but a recognisable vehicle that organises the listener's experience, and correlates with her thinking about the singer's psychological state. Granted, it is difficult to posit that this metaphorical association is either idiosyncratic or even unconventional. But Müller enables her readers to recognise the figurative meaning of the expression and deliberately defamiliarises the metaphor, which cannot be overlooked by a careful reader.

In her essay 'Niederungen', Müller describes owl hooting as deep voice. Here depth is foregrounded as a spatial perception concept used to reason about voice. The narrator-protagonist describes how she heard the owls one night: 'Ich hab sie die ganze Nacht gehört auf den Dachziegeln. Sie haben zweierlei Stimmen, höhere und tiefere. Aber auch die höheren sind sehr tief, und die tieferen sind noch viel tiefer' (p. 101). Repeating 'tief' and 'hoch' multiple times within two short sentences, Müller draws attention to these words and disrupts the automaticity of reading. Instead of taking the words for granted, the reader has to pause to process the passage, and thus the conventional meaning is estranged and the implicit metaphorical association can come to the fore. Müller does not use an unconventional metaphor, but she estranges established meanings through repetition and syntax. The text makes clear that the sounds produced by the owls are not perceived as something ordinary when the protagonist comments that the owls have 'eine regelrechte Sprache' (p. 101). The metaphorical reading can thus be recognised by the reader. While associating depth with sound properties is reasonable, it is difficult to identify any other target concepts. The overall context establishes a symbolic relationship between the owls and death. Her neighbour dies during the night when the protagonist sees nothing but the owls' eyes in the dark yard (p. 101). The depth of the owl hooting could then be associated with death. Darkness, opaqueness, and depth correlate in visual experience. Because darkness is conventionally mapped on to death, it could also be possible to establish a metaphorical connection between depth and death. This, however, is a highly speculative reading, whereas the relationship between depth and voice is salient.

In *Der Mensch*, conventional spatial language used to describe voice is defamiliarised through placing it in the midst of an extended multisensory metaphor: 'Das Lied ist schwer. Die Stimme ist tief. Es ist ein Stein im Lied. Kaltes Wasser rinnt über den Stein' (p. 39). A range of different sense impressions are activated to reason about the song heard by the protagonist. Because of the focus on sensorimotor experience, the spatial meaning of the adjective 'tief' can be recognised by the reader. On its own, the second sentence in the quotation does not highlight the figurative background of the conventional language use. The immediate textual context, however, emphasises the metaphorical nature of the association

between space and voice. The first sentence in the passage is understood metaphorically, since the song cannot be literally heavy. The next sentence could be perceived as literal, but the sentences before and after it are metaphorical. Therefore, the reader can recognise that, despite its conventionality, the deep voice is conveyed as something more than just a low frequency sound. The reader becomes aware of the mapping between depth and voice, and looks for a metaphorical interpretation of the sentence. Notably, depth appears to relate not only to the acoustic properties of the song, but also to the psychological impact of the voice.

When the night watchman in *Der Mensch* talks in his sleep and then wakes up, his voice is presented as deep:

Der Nachtwächter redet im Traum. Er zuckt mit den Beinen. Der Hund bellt. Der Nachtwächter wacht auf. Erschrocken nimmt er seinen Hut vom Kopf. Seine Stirn ist naß. ‘Die bringt mich um’, sagt er. Seine Stimme ist tief. Sie geht zurück in seinen Traum. (p. 95)

Motion and space serve as source domains and help the writer vividly convey the scene to the reader. Müller enables the reader to visualise the voice as a physical object entering the night watchman’s sleep. Moreover, voice is not only a target concept of metaphor but also metonymically stands as a vehicle for the night watchman. It is the night watchman who goes back to sleep and not his voice. While the metonymy of voice for speaker is highly conventional, it is unusual to use the vehicle of voice to refer to someone falling asleep. Thus, Müller situates a familiar metonymy in an unfamiliar context. This metonymy is further defamiliarised due to the metaphorical presentation of voice throughout the passage. In this context, the conventional metonymy of voice for speaker appears to be at odds with the metaphorical construal of voice as a moving object. This incoherence of the images also emphasises the figurative nature of the text. The dream is a container, and the voice metonymically stands for the speaker in the last sentence. Alternatively, it can be construed metaphorically as a living being. Imagining voice as a physical object or an animate being moving into the container activates spatial perception. In this context, the deep voice, rather than being a linguistic cliché, evokes the metaphorical mappings between verticality and acoustic properties of sound. Müller simultaneously employs several different strategies to create poetic imagery and to estrange the metaphorical and metonymic associations underlying conventional language.

In *Der Fuchs*, the spatial meaning of the adjective ‘tief’ is obvious and foregrounds the figurative nature of its association with sound: ‘Seine Stimme ist tief unter Maras Rock’ (p. 117). As the factory director is sexually harassing his employee, he goes under her skirt, and Müller presents his voice as an object deep under the skirt. At the same time, the adjective ‘tief’ can relate to the acoustic properties of the director’s voice while he is under the skirt. Voice is implicitly conceived as a physical object in a container, and its description as deep could be associated with its acoustic characteristics.

By far the most remarkable use of the metaphorical association between verticality and voice in Müller’s texts unfolds on the pages of *Der Fuchs* when Albert, one of the main characters of the novel, is being interrogated by the secret police, and their voices metonymically stand for the speakers. The deep voice of one of the officers acquires special salience and conveys his dominance and authority, whereas the quiet voice of the protagonist symbolises submission, inferiority, and insecurity.¹⁸ This metonymic representation of the interlocutors through their voices, and through the distinctive features of their appearance, creates a distance between them and the readers. In the chapter ‘Gesicht ohne Gesicht’, two secret police officers, one of whom is Pavel, are interrogating Albert, who has publicly performed subversive songs perceived as dangerous for the regime (pp. 144–56). The opening paragraph of the chapter does not explain to whom the deep and the low voices belong. The second short paragraph introduces the interrogator Pavel, but he is not the owner of the deep voice. The deep voice belongs to another interrogator who remains unnamed and is later metonymically referred to as ‘die Schnittwunde’, whereas Pavel is presented as ‘das Muttermal’. For the most part of the chapter, the voices perform the subject roles; Müller persists in this metonymic transfer throughout the scene. Albert is introduced in the third paragraph of the chapter, when he gives his first name. In what follows, the narrator refers to Albert as ‘die leise Stimme’ and to the unnamed secret police officer as ‘die tiefe Stimme’:

Vorname, sagt die tiefe Stimme. ALBERT, sagt die leise Stimme. Und ABI, fragt die tiefe Stimme. Die leise Stimme sagt, meine Freunde nennen mich so. Und dein Vater, sagt die tiefe Stimme. Er hat mich auch ABI genannt, er lebt nicht mehr, sagt die leise Stimme. (p. 144)

¹⁸ Haupt-Cucuiu, p. 58.

Quantitatively speaking, on the first page of the chapter, there are eleven instances of the metonymy ‘eine/die tiefe Stimme’ and eight examples of the expression ‘eine/die leise Stimme’, which together comprise over a third of the word count on the page (p. 144). This kind of metonymy is commonly used in everyday communication to refer to the people whose names we might not know, or whose voices we do not recognise. Although Müller employs conventional metonymy here, the repetition of the same trope makes it highly salient. Notably, such use of metonymy also highlights the metaphorical nature of the quoted expressions. Müller, therefore, foregrounds verticality as a metaphorical source domain for the acoustic properties of voice, and effectively dissociates the voices from the speakers.

In *Reisende*, there are similar examples of dissociation. In the following quotation, the protagonist Irene does not immediately recognise her friend on the phone, and he is thus first introduced as a deep voice: ‘Ich bin ein Zauderer, sagte eine tiefe Stimme. Wer sind Sie, fragte Irene. Zauderer. Sie haben sich verwählt. Die Stimme lachte, und es war die Stimme von Franz’ (p. 41). The dissociation between the character and his voice can be explicitly stated, and Müller can deliberately rely on the metonymic transfer of voice to person. For instance, the dissociation between two metaphorical selves of one subject is highlighted by depth, when Irene is presented as another person because she has a different voice: ‘Es war die andere Irene. Sie hatte eine tiefe Stimme’ (p. 163). Müller regularly writes about the alienation and dissociation of her mostly female protagonists in the condition of oppression.¹⁹ Since the metonymy of voice for speaker creates a distance between them and implies their dissociation from one another, it can play a symbolic role in Müller’s texts.

In the case of the interrogation scene from *Der Fuchs* (pp. 145–50), the readers do not know one of the characters, and the interrogators distance themselves from the protagonist. The metonymy has a dehumanising effect on the perception of the characters, as it conveys that the speakers are not so well-known to the reader. The acoustic properties of the characters’ voices are mostly stable, and they are referred to respectively as the quiet voice for Albert and the deep voice for the unnamed interrogator. When the interrogator changes his voice to express mock empathy, his voice is said to become like the quiet voice. The deep voice could become acoustically similar to the quiet voice, but this comparison indicates a change of attitude as well. The officer is not only assuming authority and trying to intimidate

¹⁹ For a discussion of this motif in *Reisende*, see Margaret Littler, ‘Beyond Alienation: The City in the Novels of Herta Müller and Libuše Moníková’, in *Herta Müller*, edited by Brigid Haines (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 36–56.

Albert, but also ironically expresses sensitivity to his personal life. When Albert's quiet voice is said to become like the deep voice of the interrogator, a literal comparison is unlikely. For a moment, Albert is defiant of the authority, and his anger is reflected in his voice becoming like that of the interrogator. Later in the interrogation process, the comparison between the deep and the quiet voices is mostly literal and foregrounds the physical properties of sound. The secret police officer imitates Albert's voice and sings parts of the song performed by Albert: 'Die tiefe Stimme hustet. [...] die tiefe Stimme [...] wird wie die leise Stimme: ich bin verrückt geworden, ich habe mich verliebt, in eine, die mich liebt' (p. 145). The officer could be mocking Albert. He claims that there is a contradiction in the song, and Albert replies that it is only a song: 'Das ist doch ein Lied, sagt die leise Stimme laut' (p. 146). The quiet voice is oxymoronically described as loud and becomes dissociated from its acoustic properties. The apparent contradiction between 'leise' and 'laut' effectively communicates the protagonist's emotional response and could signal the dissociation of the protagonist from his voice. Overall, the interrogation scene from *Der Fuchs* can foreground verticality because the speakers are metonymically presented as their voices. The frequent use of this metonymy and the constant repetition of the adjective 'tief' alert the reader to the figurative nature of these expressions. As the reader metonymically associates the deep voice with the unnamed interrogator and state authority, the spatial meaning of the adjective can also be recognised.

In her poetological essay 'Dass jeder Gegenstand den Platz einnehmen muss, den er hat – dass ich der zu sein habe, der ich bin' (2011) about the novel *Adventures in Immediate Irreality* by the Romanian writer Max Blecher, Müller describes the dialogues in the novel and imagines the characters' voices via the vehicle of verticality:

Gerade weil Worte in den Rang der Liebe zu Frauen gehoben werden, sind die Dialoge in diesem Buch allesamt so knapp, dass es kürzer nicht mehr geht. Der Ton ist schroff. Die Gespräche aller Personen haben den Geschmack des Widerwillens, weil das Reden spät dran ist. (p. 196)

The spatial meaning of the adjective 'schröff' is salient because of the use of space to reason about Blecher's attitude to words. He is said to elevate metaphorically words to a special status. This vertical motion is followed by the adjective 'schröff' that has several different meanings, one of them referring to a steep surface. While both expressions are conventional and could be read as non-deliberate and even dead metaphors, their consecutive appearance

and the following metaphor for conversations as food draw the reader's attention to the implicit association between verticality and voice evoked by the adjective.

The source domain of verticality is likewise implicitly activated in Müller's Nobel Prize acceptance speech. She describes how her mother would ask her every day when she was leaving the house whether she had taken a handkerchief: 'Die Liebe hat sich als Frage verkleidet. Nur so ließ sie sich trocken sagen, im Befehlston wie die Handgriffe der Arbeit. Daß die Stimme schroff war, unterstrich sogar die Zärtlichkeit.'²⁰ Language is first conceptualised as clothes, then it is presented as something dry. The sense of touch is used to make sense of the mother's voice, who expressed her love to Herta through a question about a handkerchief. The whole passage is highly metaphorical and highlights source domains mapped on to language. Consequently, the otherwise conventional meaning of 'schroff' becomes ambiguous, and the metaphorical mapping between verticality and voice is more accessible to the reader.

The use of this kind of spatial language for voice is highly conventional in the German language. In everyday conversations, such language can often be treated as having another arbitrary meaning rather than establishing metaphorical mappings between two different domains. In contrast, Müller does not take for granted the spatial language used to speak about voice and makes salient the source domain of verticality as a meaningful contributor to the understanding of sound. She defamiliarises conventional language and foregrounds the source domain of verticality via such means as repetition, extending established metaphors, hyperliteralist interpretation of these metaphors, and situating conventional language in a highly metaphorical linguistic environment. Müller crafts passages where the source domain of space is continuously activated relating to different other concepts, which creates a certain resonance between the images being built and foregrounds spatial concepts as metaphorical vehicles that illuminate voice. Finally, she collates spatial concepts and voice, building complex and seemingly paradoxical conceptual integration networks. Müller is acutely aware of the metaphorical associations existing in language, and certainly recognises verticality as a vehicle employed for the conventional representation of voice.

Space orientation is not limited to verticality or depth, and I will next analyse figure-ground organisation, motion, and container image schema as spatial vehicles for voice.

²⁰ 'Jedes Wort', p. 7.

6.2 Voice and Figure-Ground Organisation

The *figure-ground organisation* is an essential characteristic of human perception. It enables us to isolate entities in our environment and interact with them to achieve our goals. Vyvyan Evans defines it as the ‘ability to perceive certain aspects of any given spatial scene as “standing out” from other parts of the scene’.²¹ Since it is fundamental to perception and gives rise to many more salient spatial concepts, the figure-ground organisation is rarely profiled as the key source domain in spatial metaphors. When I speak about Müller *foregrounding* spatial language, I employ the figure-ground organisation to analyse the process of defamiliarisation.

In *Der Mensch*, Müller likewise relies on the figure-ground organisation to reason about voice. She deliberately foregrounds this perceptual grouping as a source domain for understanding the interaction between different sounds. Voice is imagined as a spatial entity when the protagonist’s daughter Amalie is listening to her friend Dietmar while they are watching an action film in the cinema: ‘Dietmar redet. Amalie hört hinter seiner Stimme den Schuß’ (p. 67). Dietmar is telling Amalie that they will not see each other again since he is going to the army and she is emigrating. The sentence where Amalie hears the gunshot is the last one in the short chapter about her relationship with Dietmar. The gunshot can symbolise the end of their relationship and resonates with Dietmar’s future death during military exercises. Dietmar’s voice serves as a ground, whereas the gunshot is conceived as a figure behind it. Müller employs the figure-ground visual grouping of objects as a source domain to reason about the sounds in the scene; she uses spatial language to present auditory experience. The gunshot is conceptualised metaphorically and profiled as an object behind another object. In other words, spatial perception is used as a source domain to explain auditory experience. Importantly, the overall symbolic salience of the sentence highlights the metaphorical mappings between space and sound.

6.3 Voice and Motion

Voice as a sound wave literally moves through space. Because humans are aware of this motion, they conventionally use spatial language to speak about the dynamics of oral communication. Given that there is a literal sense in which voice and motion are related, it is common to construe voice via the source domain of motion. For example, the propagation of

²¹ Vyvyan Evans, ‘The Perceptual Basis of Spatial Representation’, in *Language, Cognition and Space*, pp. 21–48 (p. 31).

sound can be presented metaphorically through engaging sensory experiences beyond hearing. In *Reisende*, the voices of the junk dealers are implied to be moving visible objects: ‘Vom Flohmarkt her kamen mit dem Wind die Stimmen der Trödler durch die Bäume’ (p. 68). The wind cannot be seen but its swaying of the tree branches is visible. Voice is implicitly visualised through the image of the swaying branches. The metaphor of voice as a moving and visible object is related to its literal propagation in space.

In the dream of the protagonist of *Der Mensch*, his cry is transmogrified into the voice of his wife: ‘Der Schall seiner Stimme kommt als die Stimme seiner Frau zurück’ (p. 70). The propagation of voice in space is endowed with an additional sense of changing the voice. Moving through space, Windisch’s voice magically becomes the voice of his wife. Spatial experience highlights motion as an important contributor to the radical change of sound quality that goes beyond any rational explanation. Consequently, the magical change of voice through motion adds a new metaphorical meaning to the propagation of sound.

Voice can be implicitly visualised as a physical object through the changes in the perception of its motion. In the essay ‘Niederungen’, the child narrator-protagonist recounts the dreams she had after witnessing the slaughter of a calf by her family and having the calf hide hung in her room. In one of her dreams, she is forced by her father to ride the calf: ‘Vater trieb uns durch den Fluss, Vater johlte, und wir ritten hinter seinem Echo durch den Wald’ (p. 64). A literal interpretation cannot do justice to the narrator’s conceptualisation of this scene. In the dream, the calf is alive and is implicitly personified by the narrator as a fellow traveller. Because the narrator says that she was riding the calf behind the echo of her father’s voice, his voice can be imagined as a visible entity moving through space. Given that the father’s voice is presented as a physical entity moving in front of the narrator, its motion highlights the physicality of the sound, and its proximity to the narrator implies visibility.

When Müller uses motion as a source domain in metaphors for voice, she predominantly describes horizontal motion. She employs the source domain of motion to speak about the propagation of voice through space that establishes a certain connection and interaction between the speaker and the listener. This interaction unfolds on the horizontal plane. In contrast, the following sentence from *Der Fuchs* is an example of vertical motion: ‘Paul läßt die erwachenden Rumänen mitten im Ton fallen’ (p. 268). Vertical motion is different because it explains not the propagation of voice but the modulations of its pitch: here the high frequency sound becomes a low frequency one. While both horizontal and vertical motions belong to the same experiential domain, they create different space configurations and relate to different target aspects of voice and sound. As we have just seen, vertical motion

can be used as a metaphorical vehicle to describe the acoustic properties of voice. Notably, this passage foregrounds the container image schema, which I discuss in the next section of the chapter. The image schema can be recognised if the reader imagines the subject matter of the song as a physical entity moving inside the protagonist's voice. The singer's voice can be conceived of as a container in which the contents of the song are moving due to the change in the acoustic properties of the voice. 'Die erwachenden Rumänen' can simultaneously be the song's lyrics, its protagonists, and moving entities inside the container of the singer's voice. This complex metaphorical conceptualisation makes salient both the container image schema and motion, and there is something poetic and humorous about the excerpt as it challenges established linguistic and conceptual conventions.

As the narrator-protagonist of the short story 'Das Fenster' describes having sexual intercourse with her friend Toni under the bridge, she conceptualises sound as a vertically moving entity: 'Die Brücke ist hohl und stöhnt, und das Echo fällt mir in den Mund.'²² The bridge is personified as it is said to groan; this must be a figurative transfer of the human voice to the bridge. Perhaps the protagonist's voice travels upwards and returns as an echo back to her after being reflected by the bridge. The narrator creates a highly sensual image of voice perception which highlights her experience of sexual intercourse, employing vertical motion and spatial perception as source domains to reason about her auditory experience. Because the echo metaphorically falls into the protagonist's mouth, it can be inferred that gustatory experience is also involved in the perception of the voice; consequently, the voice becomes a multisensory phenomenon and evokes various sensorimotor experiences. Furthermore, there is a strong dissociation of the speaker from the voice through the figurative transfer. The protagonist says that it is the bridge that produces the sound. Because she describes Toni's heavy breathing later in the text, it could be his voice falling into her mouth as an echo. The sound could belong to either the protagonist or her friend Toni, and the overall context does not resolve this ambiguity. The key point is that voice is imagined as a moving object and that different senses are evoked in reasoning about its auditory perception.

Motion can be identified as a source domain for voice in the following complex metaphor for speech from *Der Fuchs*. One of the characters of the novel describes a dream in which his wife is cracking nuts with a stone at the river bank while he is praying:

²² *Niederungen*, pp. 118–21 (p. 120).

Vater unser, der du bist im Himmel und auf Erden, sagte ich. Ich hörte bei jedem Wort den Stein klopfen aus meinem Mund. Ich konnte nicht weiterbeten, ich fühlte mich vernarrt. Der Herrgott hörte auf den Stein und auf die Haselnüsse, nicht auf mich.
(pp. 45–46)

The sound of the prayer can be imagined as an object falling out of the speaker's mouth. His voice is associated with the stone with which his wife is cracking the hazelnuts. The voice is, therefore, dissociated from the speaker, and its propagation is construed through the image of a moving object. That the god pays attention to the sound of the falling stone and not to the voice could be understood as either a cause or an effect of the figurative association between these sounds. The ambiguity cannot be resolved, and the passage underspecifies which targets are mapped out by such a wide range of source domains. Müller creates a vivid metaphorical image, and its multisensory symbolism allows different interpretations.

To conclude, Müller consistently augments the literal meaning of motion as sound propagation by establishing metaphorical mappings between motion and voice through context and original language use. Her texts defamiliarise conventional language for speaking about voice and draw attention to the metaphorical association between motion and sound.

6.4 Voice and Container Image Schema

I will now analyse the metaphorical association between voice and a cognitive structure known as a *container image schema*. According to Johnson, *image schemas*

are recurring patterns of organism-environment interactions that exist in the felt qualities of our experience, understanding, and thought. Image schemas are the sort of structures that demarcate the basic contours of our experience as embodied creatures. [...] Their philosophical significance, in other words, lies in the way they bind together body and mind, inner and outer, and thought and feeling. They are an essential part of the embodied meaning and provide the basis for much of our abstract inference.²³

²³ Mark Johnson, 'The Philosophical Significance of Image Schemas', in *From Perception to Meaning: Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. by Beate Hampe (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 15–33 (p. 31).

Evans posits that image schemas engage ‘experience of the world directly mediated and structured by the human body’. They are ‘pre-conceptual in origin’ and relate to different sensory modalities (‘cross-modal’). What is important in the framework of conceptual metaphor theory, image schemas ‘serve to structure more complex concepts and ideas’.²⁴ Consequently, image schemas are mental representations which belong to both perceptual cognition and conception.

Container is one of the most, if not the most, studied image schemas. Lakoff and Johnson define it the following way:

A container schema has the following structure: an inside, a boundary, and an outside. This is a gestalt structure, [...] the parts make no sense without the whole. There is no inside without a boundary and an outside, no outside without a boundary and an inside, and no boundary without sides. The structure is topological in the sense that the boundary can be made larger, smaller, or distorted and still remain the boundary of a container schema. (*PF*, p. 32)

The use of the container image schema as a source domain in metaphors for language is ubiquitous in both German and English. Every time we read ‘in the following passage’, ‘in this novel’, ‘in this quotation’, the directly accessible and easily comprehensible container image schema makes these expressions meaningful. There is no deliberate or poetic metaphor involved, but the conventional association between language and the container image schema is not exclusively literal. As for voice, it is conventionally presented as a container when we speak about its characteristics and contexts of use. For example, emotions and feelings are often imagined as objects inside the container of voice. Voice can also be presented as containing its acoustic properties and the pragmatic intentions of the speaker. Because of its efficiency at conveying different meanings, voice as a container is a frequent figurative image in Müller’s texts.

In *Der Mensch*, the metaphorical conceptualisation of sound as a container is realised in the scene in which a glass container is literally filled with rainwater. Here Müller describes rain in a highly poetic and surreal manner: ‘Im Regenwasser war auch Wind. Er trieb gläserne Glocken durch die Bäume. Die Glocken waren trüb, es wirbelten Blätter darin. Der Regen sang. Es war auch Sand in der Stimme des Regens. Es waren auch Baumrinden drin’ (p. 26).

²⁴ Evans, pp. 42, 43, 46.

Rain is personified, and its sounds are imagined as a human voice. The voice of the rain is construed as a container holding physical objects. This multisensory image activates the sense of vision in reasoning about the sound of the rain. The author creates a complex metaphor which engages image schematic conceptualisation and multisensory experience in speaking about sound. Here voice is both a source and target domain. It is a target domain when it is interpreted as a container. But voice is also a source domain when it is used to explain the sound of the falling rain. The conventional conceptualisation of voice as a container becomes a highly poetic and deliberate metaphor due to the originality of the image. The elaboration of the implicit association and its repositioning in a new linguistic environment highlight the metaphorical nature of the relationship between the sound and the container image schema. At the same time, it is problematic to identify the target domains of the physical objects in the container. The voice of the rain likewise appears to stand for more than just its sound. This figurative description of rain can convey the acoustic properties of the sound and its social and cultural meanings, but the exact target concepts remain unclear.

In *Heute*, Müller presents a character's voice as a container holding industrial sounds. After drinking schnaps, the narrator's partner Paul would sometimes sing: 'Manchmal pfiß Paul sich ein Lied, da war mehr Eisenfeilen als Musik drin, es klang so falsch' (p. 215). The unconventional metaphorical conceptualisation of the song containing industrial noise relies on the container image schema. While the metaphor helps the reader understand the acoustic properties of the sound, it primarily conveys how annoying the narrator finds her partner's drunk singing. In the same paragraph, she talks about Paul's illicit business of making TV antennas and selling them at the flea market. The sounds that she associates with Paul's singing resonate with the sounds he must have produced while making the TV antennas. The song metaphorically contains a multimodal scenario of manual labour which involves motor control and object manipulation. Thus, the container image schema is a building block for the complex conceptualisation of the character's voice.

In *Atemschaukel*, a character's voice is conceptualised as a receptacle for sound, when the train with the Romanian Germans, being deported into the Soviet labour camps, stops in the field in the winter night. They are taken off the train and ordered to relieve themselves outside. One of the deportees is telling jokes and shouting: 'In seiner Stimme hallte ein Echo' (p. 21). The echo is presented as the sound located in the speaker's voice. In the open field, there could hardly be an echo since it is produced when sounds are reflected from an obstacle. However, the container image schema serves as such an obstacle for the character's voice. Therefore, imagining an echo inside a container validates its occurrence in the scene. The

container image schema is integral to a meaningful interpretation of the quoted sentence; otherwise, it is difficult to understand how the echo can literally reverberate in the speaker's voice. Only a metaphorical reimagining of the description can make it comprehensible.

In the essay 'Auf die Gedanken fällt Erde', Müller presents voice as a container holding the speech act of warning: 'Die Popen hängen in ihre Gebetsstimmen die Warnung vor einem islamischen Gottesstaat der Moslems' (p. 169). It is common to speak of speech acts as physical objects inside the container of voice, but the author defamiliarises the established convention by elaborating on the process of containment. The warning is hung into the praying voices of the priests. Introducing force dynamics, object manipulation, and motion to reason about speech, Müller highlights the metaphorical nature of the association between voice and the container image schema. Sensorimotor experience is evoked to convey the speakers' intentions and their expression of these intentions through their voices, creating a vivid multisensory metaphor that builds on linguistic conventions. By foregrounding the figurative nature of the conventional association between voice and the container image schema, Müller encourages the reader to think critically about communication.

In German and other European languages, voice is regularly presented as a container holding emotions and feelings implicitly understood as physical objects. Müller estranges this convention through a variety of strategies. In *Herztier*, fear plays a prominent role in the life of the protagonists who are being persecuted by the dictatorial regime. In the following passage, the relationship between fear and voice is explained through a complex metaphor that incorporates the container image schema:

Doch Angst schert aus. Wenn man sein Gesicht beherrscht, schlüpft sie in die Stimme. Wenn es gelingt, Gesicht und Stimme wie ein abgestorbenes Stück im Griff zu halten, verläßt sie sogar die Finger. Sie legt sich außerhalb der Haut hin. Sie liegt frei herum, man sieht sie auf den Gegenständen, die in der Nähe sind. (p. 83)

Voice is understood as a container, and fear is a moving entity entering this container. The container and contact image schemas – as well as the vehicles of motion, force dynamics, and physical object – enable Müller to present her vision of how fear affects people. She highlights the way fear is conveyed by the speaker's voice and her body. The speaker is trying to control her voice and can be imagined closing the container; as a result, fear is unable to slip into it and lands on the speaker's body. This complex metaphorical scenario foregrounds the figurative association between voice and the container image schema.

In *Atemschaukel*, Müller implicitly presents voice as a container holding hatred, when Leo Auberg compares his work in the factory of the Soviet labour camp to a work of art. His interlocutor Tur Prikulitsch, who enjoys privileges as a liaison person for the camp authorities and as a supervisor of the other inmates, does not understand Leo:

Er lächelte über die Schulter des Rasierers, hatte aber keine Ahnung, dass es stimmte.
Man hörte den dünnen Hass in seinem Ton, seine Nasenflügel schimmerten rosa, in
seinen Schläfen Marmoradern. (p. 169)

Tur Prikulitsch's tone of voice is said to contain hatred, which is metaphorically construed as a narrow physical object. This spatial image of hatred defamiliarises its conventional objectification and draws the reader's attention to the figurative nature of the association between hatred and a physical object. This original image could also make the reader aware of the fact that voice cannot literally contain hatred.

In *Der Fuchs*, the metaphorical association between voice and the container image schema comes to the fore when voice is imagined as a container holding a body part:

Adina fängt im Dunkeln laut zu zählen an, zählt statt der Treppen ihren linken, ihren
rechten Schuh. Und wie jeder Schuh sich ohne sie einzeln hebt und einzeln auftritt. Bis
jede Zahl nur noch ihre Stimme ist, dann eine fremde Stimme. In der fremden Stimme
beginnt ihre eigene Stirn. (p. 112)

It is a highly poetic way of describing subjective experience, which defamiliarises the container image schema. The reader cannot interpret literally the last sentence in the excerpt and should understand it metaphorically, exploring the potential mappings between different concepts. As a result, the container image schema becomes more salient as a source domain for reasoning about voice. As with the conceptualisation of voice, the human body is conventionally imagined as a container. In the above scene, this parallelism between the voice and the body closely relates the character's speech to bodily experience; yet the whole passage describes the alienation of the mind from the body. Since voice is a less concrete concept than the body, the metaphorical conceptualisation of voice as a container holding the body contributes to the alienation of the latter from the human subject. Finally, the protagonist's voice is likewise alienated from the subject through close association with the

dissociated body. The container image schema serves as one of the source domains for a complex multisensory metaphor conveying the psychological state of the protagonist.

6.5 Conclusion

Herta Müller defamiliarises conventional spatial language used to reason about voice. She encourages her readers to recognise the figurative meaning of such language and invites them to build new and original associations between space (verticality, motion, figure-ground organisation, and container image schema) and voice.

This metaphorical association is much more common in Müller's literary works than in her autobiographical or poetological essays. The reason may be that there are more dialogues and descriptions of oral communication between characters, with more attention paid to their voices during the interaction. I do not intentionally mark the distinction between the metaphors from Müller's fiction and non-fiction works, because she uses highly poetic language and very similar style in all her writing. Her texts contain a plethora of metaphors and other tropes irrespective of whether it is an autobiographical essay, political commentary, or novel. Yet voice is presented metaphorically mostly in her fiction works, and this fact indicates that they are more mimetic than her non-fiction texts. After all, Müller writes more about voices and face-to-face communication in her literary works.

The richness of social and cultural meaning associated with voice makes this concept the target for explanation and description. It is not that the concept is highly abstract, but rather voice has rich personal and social context. Spatial language enables the author to reason not only about the acoustic properties of sound but also about the mental states of the speakers and listeners, as well as about the social and cultural context of communication. Metaphorical conceptualisation helps understand voice because the latter has different meanings depending on the context and is a complex physical, linguistic, and cultural phenomenon. Not abstractness, but rather complexity and the need to contextualise voice make it an apt target for metaphor. It is a complex concept which is fashioned differently depending on the context. Voice is associated with different sensory experiences and does not exist as a stable concept. Nor can it be a purely acoustic image. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein argued that 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language'.²⁵ This chapter has shown that the meaning of voice depends on its use and is far from arbitrary. In general, the metaphorical

²⁵ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 18^e (section 43).

conceptualisation of voice is motivated by established conceptual and linguistic conventions. My research supports the fundamental assumption in cognitive linguistics that meaning emerges from motivated associations between thought and expression.²⁶

Although I have tried to draw a boundary between source and target domains, this distinction appears to be blurred at times, allowing voice to be interpreted as either a source or target. Source and target domains interact to create a new meaning of voice in some of the analysed examples. It is an interesting issue that deserves further investigation, and relates to Fauconnier and Turner's theory of conceptual blending and Max Black's interaction view of metaphor.²⁷ Most recently, this subject has been explored in the special issue 'Bidirectionality and Metaphor' of the journal *Poetics Today*.²⁸

There is a clear interaction between metaphors and metonymies with regard to spatial language for voice in Müller's texts. Some expressions can be both metaphorical and metonymic, and one of these figurative aspects can profile the other. For example, the use of metonymy can highlight the metaphorical nature of the expression: I have shown how Müller repeatedly employs the metonymy of voice for speaker in one of the chapters of *Der Fuchs*, which eventually foregrounds the use of verticality as a metaphorical source domain for the acoustic properties of voice. She uses such interactions between metaphor and metonymy to emphasise the figurative nature of everyday language and to create original images which communicate her messages and convey her poetic visions to the reader.

Scholars sometimes acknowledge the difficulty of interpreting Müller's texts.²⁹ Yet her metaphorical representation of voice does not defy everyday language or the tenets of conceptual metaphor theory. My analysis indicates correlations between her tropes and the principles of the theory. Ambiguity and vagueness are indeed deeply entrenched in Müller's writing, but her language and thinking rely on conventions. She succeeds in estranging these conventions and making the reader aware of the figurative nature of the language used to describe voice. Ultimately, Müller both depends on and defamiliarises the tentative yet motivated associations between space and voice.

²⁶ Sinha, p. 229.

²⁷ Fauconnier and Turner; Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

²⁸ Chanita Goodblatt and Joseph Glicksohn, 'Bidirectionality and Metaphor: An Introduction', *Poetics Today*, 38.1 (2017), 1–14.

²⁹ See, for example, Bozzi, *Der fremde Blick*, p. 141.

7 SILENT LANGUAGE

7.1 The Trope of Silence

In this chapter, I explore how Herta Müller uses the trope of silence to present more abstract ideas, including language. In contrast to voice, Müller has discussed silence extensively in her poetological essays and literary works; it is a vital motif in her writing. Literary scholars have previously explored the meaning of silence and its thematic role in her poetics. They have expanded Müller's interpretations and contributed to the understanding of silence in her texts. Speaking about Müller's views on language expressed in her poetological essays, Kohl remarks that Müller reflects on 'the significance and power of language [...] when language gives way to silence in response to a life-threatening situation'.¹ According to Kohl, Müller sees silence as a psychological response to danger and implicitly associates it with death and suffering.

Brigid Haines recognises the centrality of silence in Müller's writing, positing that 'the silences surrounding the Third Reich' have defined the author and her literary works. From childhood, Müller witnessed people's silence in the face of past atrocities committed by totalitarian regimes. Haines suggests that 'Müller's initial motivation to become a writer had been to overcome the silences with which she grew up'.² In the essay 'Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich. Kann Literatur Zeugnis ablegen?', Müller says her writing began not as witness testimony, but as an exercise in silence, since she could keep her views to herself in her texts. In the beginning, she recalls, she could freely express herself in writing and yet keep silent: 'Ich habe das Schreiben gelernt vom Schweigen und Verschweigen. Damit begann es.'³ Müller thus began her writing as a confrontation with the silences surrounding her; but writing also provided a safe space to express social criticism that she could not voice in public. Given that writing made possible and occurred along with 'keeping silent' ('das Schweigen'), it could itself be regarded as a mode of silence. Hence both overcoming and engaging in silence can be understood as constitutive of Müller's motivation to write.

¹ Kohl, 'Beyond Realism', p. 28.

² Haines, 'Return from the Archipelago', pp. 119, 122.

³ *Text und Kritik*, 155 (2002), 6–17 (p. 6). This is the only reference to this edition of the essay.

In her essay on trauma in *Herztier*, Eddy emphasises the importance of overcoming silence through writing, and considers the conflict between silence and writing as the central dilemma of the novel:

The dilemma [...] is whether to preserve silence and thereby grant victory to the forces of terror, or to speak out from a standpoint of incomplete knowledge, and thereby risk betrayal of their victims. *Herztier* confronts this issue head-on in the ways the narrator of the novel relates her personal story of trauma to her testimony about the damage done to her friends.⁴

Silence is contrasted with narration and figures the loss of the ability to speak on the part of the person suffering from trauma. Sophia Richman associates losing one's voice with trauma: 'The shame that follows trauma and the despair about ever being understood leads to a profound sense of isolation and inability to express one's feelings.' Silence, then, is one possible effect of trauma: 'one of the common reactions to traumatic events is the inability to talk about what has happened.'⁵ That makes narrating a way to overcome trauma: 'Telling one's story is a healing experience for anyone who has suffered and longed for a witness to that suffering.'⁶

The interplay between silence and telling is often seen as foundational for Müller's poetics. Roberg argues that 'das konstruktive Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Sprache und Schweigen, Mitteilung und Auslassung' constitutes 'ein Kernpunkt von Müllers Poetologie'.⁷ In this context, silence is associated with the limitations of literary writing. It stands for the things that remain unsaid, or are left out of the text because it is impossible to express them in writing.⁸ Müller, however, is aware of the limitations of writing and foregrounds the space left by the absence of those things.⁹ Anja Johannsen points out that Müller consciously

⁴ Eddy, 'Testimony and Trauma', p. 58.

⁵ Richman, p. 641.

⁶ Ibid., p. 648.

⁷ Roberg, p. 30.

⁸ For a discussion of the inadequacy of language as a means of expression in Müller's writing, see Predoiu, p. 161: 'Aus Bildern setzt sich nach den Aussagen der Autorin die Wahrnehmung zusammen, sie bilden die Grundlage ihres Schreibens. Bei der Transposition der Bilder in Sprache, stoßen diese auf die Unzulänglichkeit des Wortes als Kommunikationsmittel, auf die Verarmung der Sprache.'

⁹ See Marven, 'In allem ist der Riß', p. 400.

highlights the interaction between speech and silence: ‘Das beschriebene Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Sprechen und Schweigen, zwischen geschriebenem und nicht geschriebenem Satz muss hergestellt werden, um die Unruhe fühlbar zu machen – letztlich auch für den Leser.’¹⁰

Scholars who regard silence as one of the key motifs in Müller’s poetics find support for their argument in her poetological writing, and often borrow her own vocabulary and metaphors. Literary critics follow Müller when writing is implicitly conceptualised as speech, or when the things that are left out of her literary texts are presented as silence. Holger Bösmann, for example, uses silence and speech as tropes for Müller’s writing. In his essay about the collection of short stories *Barfußiger Februar* (1987), Bösmann conceives of silence as something that can be heard during the reading process: ‘Das Schweigen, die verweigerte Kommunikation, [...] ist gerade dasjenige, was durch die geschriebenen Sätze gehört werden soll.’¹¹

I do not adopt Müller’s metaphors of silence to explain her texts; instead I dissect her figures into their constituent parts, in order to explore how she uses silence as a trope. To that end, I draw again on conceptual metaphor theory, assuming that writers use concrete concepts, often related to sensorimotor experience, as source domains through which readers are helped to access more abstract ideas. Notably, silence as the bodily experience of refraining from vocal sound production is a concrete concept, and can serve as such a source domain (e.g. ‘das Schweigen der Liebe’).

Silence can be conveyed through a wide range of German expressions, and my analysis adopts an inclusive perspective on it as a contextually constructed trope. I will analyse the metaphorical conceptualisation of both ‘das Schweigen’ and ‘die Stille’ when they explicitly or implicitly relate to the absence of speech. While ‘das Schweigen’ stands for the experience of keeping silent, ‘die Stille’ generally refers to the absence of sound – but can also be associated with the absence of human speech.

Where silence is a source of meaning for more abstract phenomena, I categorise these figurative associations according to their target domains: materials, physical objects, body parts, language, complex social actions, and mental states. These categories are necessarily imprecise, and silence as a source domain can simultaneously elucidate several of them: in Müller’s literary and non-literary texts, silence stands for different things depending on the

¹⁰ Johannsen, *Kisten, Krypten, Labyrinth*, p. 210.

¹¹ Holger Bösmann, “‘Hermetisches Rätselreich’? Das Suchen einer Reiseroute in *Barfußiger Februar*”, in *Der Druck der Erfahrung*, pp. 43–52 (p. 51).

context. The trope is carefully used, and seems deliberately protean. This resonates with Kohl's argument that Müller's representation of language is distinctly unstructured,¹² because silence is a core part of the writer's meticulous work with language.

First, I examine how the trope of silence is used to personify inanimate entities (materials, physical objects, body parts, and language); in the second part of the chapter, I consider the metonymic and metaphorical associations between silence, complex social actions, and mental states.

7.2 Personifying Inanimate Entities

7.2.1 Materials

Müller personifies inanimate entities by ascribing to them the ability to keep silent. In the autobiographical essay 'Immer derselbe Schnee', she remembers her mother's comments about the snow preserving people's footprints: 'Demnach hätte jedes Material geschwiegen, außer dem Schnee' (p. 101). Silence stands for keeping no human traces that might communicate a message to those who find them. Sand, grass, earth, and even air are said to keep silent about the people who walk on or through them; but snow cannot keep silent, because it retains footprints and thus reveals a person's location. Müller uses her mother's metaphor in *Atemschaukel*: one of the main characters, Trudi Pelikan, recounts how she tried to hide in a hole in the ground in her neighbour's garden in order to escape deportation to the Soviet labour camps; but when the snow fell, every step became visible and her mother could not bring her food in secret: 'Der Schnee denunzierte, sie musste freiwillig aus dem Versteck, freiwillig gezwungen vom Schnee. Das werde ich dem Schnee nie verzeihen, sagte sie. [...] Wegen dem Schneeverrat bin ich hier. [...] Alles, außer dem Schnee hätte geschwiegen' (p. 18). In foregrounding the personification of snow, Müller weaves her mother's memory of deportation into the fabric of her novel. Her mother too tried to hide from the Soviets to avoid deportation, but the snow made it impossible: 'Meine Mutter saß schon vier Tage in einem Erdloch im Nachbargarten. [...] Doch dann kam der Schnee. [...] Man konnte im ganzen Schnee, im ganzen Dorf zu jedem Versteck den Weg sehen. [...] Der Schnee denunzierte.'¹³ In real life and in the fictional world, the snow cannot keep silent and gives away the victims to their pursuers.

¹² Kohl, 'Beyond Realism', p. 28.

¹³ 'Immer derselbe Schnee', p. 100.

Likewise in her essay ‘Hunger und Seide’, Müller describes how people carry chunks of frozen meat from the butcher’s while the animal’s blood is dripping on the hot asphalt: ‘Dann war der ganze Gehsteig voller Tropfspuren. Die trockneten so rasch, als wolle der heiße Asphalt verschweigen, was hier geschah. Wie hätte die Straße sonst ausgesehen: rotblaue Tropfen wie Regen’ (p. 66). She personifies the asphalt, ascribing to it a motivation to hide the traces of blood, and endowing it with the human ability to keep silent; it becomes a subject capable of mental states such as volition and complex social actions such as keeping a secret. Müller thus creates a vivid image of the environment.

In *Herztier*, she confers the ability of keeping silent on the earth (ground) when one of the characters recounts how his co-workers at the slaughterhouse silently watched him suffering from a work-related injury: ‘Die schweigen wie die Erde, auf der sie stehen’ (p. 134). The earth is thus personified, while the people keeping silent are dehumanised, because compared to the inanimate earth; the speaker thereby expresses his frustration and dissatisfaction with their reaction. The personification of ‘die Erde’ through the trope of keeping silent is both salient and original, without being arbitrary, since the earth is usually perceived as an entity that does not produce sound and hence can be imagined to keep silent. The metaphor communicates the complex social context of the scene, as well as the absence of sound in a situation when speech is desired and expected. It is interesting that the association between the earth and keeping silent, while unconventional in German, is an established metaphor in Romanian¹⁴ and, more specifically, can be found in the fairy tale ‘Capra cu trei iezi’ (‘The Goat with Three Kids’; 1875) by Ion Creangă.¹⁵ It could be coincidence that the same metaphor is employed by two different writers, but Müller regularly uses fairy tale motifs in her texts¹⁶ and would be aware of this classic work of Romanian

¹⁴ I thank James Morris for clarifying this point in personal communication: Müller obviously adopts the uncommon Romanian idiom *a tăcea ca pământul* (to keep silent like the earth).

¹⁵ Ion Creangă, ‘Capra cu trei iezi’, in *Amintiri din copilărie*, ed. by Anatol și Dan Vidrașcu (Chișinău: Litera, 2002), pp. 19–27 (p. 21): ‘tace ca pământul’ (‘keeps silent like the earth’). The relevant excerpt from the German translation by Gerhardt Csejka can be found in Ion Creangă, *Die Geiss mit den drei Geisslein und andere Tiermärchen*, trans. by Gerhardt Csejka (Bucharest: Ion Creangă, 1984), pp. 3–36 (p. 17): ‘[Das mittlere Geißlein] schweigt wie die Erde, und vor Angst schlottert ihm das Fleisch auf den Knochen.’

¹⁶ See, for example, Marven, *Body and Narrative*, pp. 111–12. See also Jean Boase-Beier, ‘Herta Müller in Translation’, in *Herta Müller*, pp. 190–203 (p. 191): Müller’s ‘images are often those of childhood and fairy tales are a favourite source’.

children's literature. Personification, of course, is deeply entrenched in the magical thinking of fairy tales, as well as in the 'magical' dimension of Müller's language.¹⁷

Even cotton wool can be personified. In the essay 'Die Anwendung der dünnen Straßen', Müller describes the effects of fear induced by death threats and persecution in the totalitarian state: 'Übermüdete Wachheit, Raserei, ausgestopft mit Watte. Man lernt, dass die Watte nicht still, sondern bloß unerbittlich ist.'¹⁸ Cotton wool could stand for psychological and physical weakness (e.g. 'die Beine wie aus Watte'), as well as loss of sensitivity (e.g. 'wie in Watte gepackt'), including the sense of hearing (e.g. 'wie Watte im Ohr'). But Müller emphasises that in this case the cotton wool does not alleviate the victims' suffering. Rather than bringing calm or silence, it relentlessly heightens the victims' perception of sensory stimuli and induces them to see danger lurking everywhere. It can be imagined as a human being spreading fear and suspicion. Its personification and unconventional function shed light on the effects of fear and the impact of death threats made by the secret police. Müller uses a complex multisensory metaphor to explain the experience of fear under the totalitarian regime, and silence is one of the facets of this figurative image.

7.2.2 Physical Objects and Body Parts

When Müller uses the adjective 'stumm' to describe inanimate objects, she is aware of the association between keeping silent and the absence of sound. In *Der Mensch*, the narrator speaks about the mill where the protagonist Windisch works, and emphasises silence as its key characteristic:

Die Mühle ist stumm. Stumm sind die Wände, und stumm ist das Dach. Und die Räder sind stumm. Windisch hat auf den Schalter gedrückt und das Licht ausgelöscht. Zwischen den Rädern ist es Nacht. Die dunkle Luft hat den Mehlstaub, die Fliegen, die Säcke geschluckt. (p. 6)

Regarding this passage, Lyn Marven observes that '[s]imple repetition [...] contributes to the density of the text'.¹⁹ The repetition of the polysemous word 'stumm' activates its various meanings – muteness, absence of sound – and draws attention to its figurative potential.

¹⁷ See Kohl, 'Beyond Realism', p. 30.

¹⁸ *Immer derselbe Schnee*, pp. 110–24 (p. 119).

¹⁹ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, pp. 100–1.

Müller invites her readers to think about possible interpretations. Muteness is mapped on to the absence of sound, and this mapping enables the author to personify the mill. Darkness and silence might be associated with death, and hence the mill can be imagined as a dead person.

In *Der Fuchs*, a hill is assigned a human quality of muteness. The narrator describes the military training of Ilije, who is the lover of the protagonist Adina, and how Ilije attempts to run away from the military camp at night: ‘Die Hügelspitze wird stumm dastehen und nicht mehr wissen, daß sie die Nacht in einer Stirn verbracht hat, daß sie es war, die einen durchsichtigen Schädel vor Angst zur Flucht getrieben hat’ (p. 206). The hill provides Ilije with an opportunity to hide from the view of the military, and the personification of the hill leads to the shift of subjectivity from the character to the landscape. The metaphor allows the narrator to imagine that it was the landscape that forced Ilije to flee; responsibility is transferred from the character to the environment.

In the autofictional short story ‘Das Fenster’, Müller describes dancing with different partners, and personifies the clarinet playing the music through the vehicles of voice and silence. At first, she evokes the trope of voice to characterise the sound of the clarinet: ‘die schwarze Klarinette schreit’ (p. 118). Later in the scene, the silence of the clarinet is voluntary: ‘Die schwarze Klarinette schweigt’ (p. 119). The association between the absence of music and keeping silent is a relatively conventional metaphor in the German language (it is common to speak about musical instruments keeping silent). Yet the author foregrounds the figurative nature of the association by using both voice (‘schreit’) and silence (‘schweigt’) as source domains to conceptualise the music in the scene. The alliteration and assonance of the words ‘schreit’ and ‘schweigt’ further accentuate the personification of the musical instrument. In that context, keeping silent becomes salient as a trope. The clarinet is imagined as a being that can both shout and keep silent. Personified through metaphor, it covertly acquires a degree of independence from the musician and becomes one of the focal points of the scene.

At the beginning of the essay ‘Wenn etwas in der Luft liegt, ist es meist nichts Gutes’ (2003), Müller observes that the wind can only be seen or heard through the things with which it interacts. When the wind comes into contact with physical objects, they can move and produce sound: ‘Den Wind selber sieht man nicht, sondern das Schlagen oder Fliegen der Dinge, die er anfaßt. Sie werden stumm oder lauthals WINDIG.’²⁰ First, the author implicitly personifies the wind, ascribing to it the ability to touch objects and attributing to it the role of

²⁰ *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 186–99 (p. 186).

the human subject. Second, the things moved by the wind are presented as capable of speech and keeping silent. Müller creates a multisensory image where physical objects are metaphorically conceptualised as human beings capable of speech and keeping silent. Furthermore, the adjective ‘windig’ can relate to the psychological trait of unreliability, which means that these objects are implied to have mental states. Müller accentuates the figurative meaning of ‘stumm werden’ and defamiliarises this conventional expression to present a lucid metaphorical image. She personifies both the wind and the objects with which it interacts; she uses speech, silence, and mental states as vehicles to characterise the impact of the wind.

In *Der Fuchs*, Müller personifies the characters’ eyes as able to keep silent when the mothers and children interact after the children come back home late from the fields where they were picking tomatoes:

Sie [die Mütter] streicheln ihren Kindern eine Weile übers Haar. Sie schlagen ihnen mitten im Streicheln ins Gesicht. Dann schauen die Augen der Kinder und die der Mütter eine Weile stumm ins Kerzenlicht. Die Augen sind schuldig, vor der Kerze sieht man das nicht. (p. 61)

The eyes can be imagined as human beings, who keep silent because they feel guilty. A similar case of personification through silence occurs when the protagonist Adina is silently crying in front of her friend Paul: ‘Sie trinkt nicht, sie weint nicht, ihre Augen rinnen und ihr Mund ist stumm’ (p. 196). Adina’s mouth acquires the independent ability to keep silent. As in conventional language, however, body parts can metonymically stand for the whole body and the people to whom they belong; hence the eyes and the mouth can also be interpreted as metonymic reference points. It is, after all, the characters who keep silent in both passages. If the eye and the mouth stand for the people keeping silent, then silence is not a metaphorical source domain but the literal absence of speech. Although the metonymic reading is more conventional and informative in both scenes, it is still possible to interpret silence as a metaphorical vehicle.

7.2.3 Language

In the essay ‘Das Auge täuscht im Lidschlag’, Müller invokes silence as a trope to describe the sentences left out of her texts: writing challenges perception ‘[b]is die verschwiegene Sätze zwischen den geschriebenen Sätzen überall ihr Schweigen hinhalten. Bis man das

Gefühl hat beim Schreiben, daß der Text jetzt atmet, daß der Satz, jeder, so ist, wie er sich selber sieht' (p. 81). She personifies the sentences that remain unwritten as able to keep silent. Since the sentences keep silent, they might also speak and must be human. Müller relies on the experiences of vision, hearing, and breathing as metaphorical source domains to shed light on writing, and silence is one element in a complex multisensory image she uses to characterise her work.

In *Herztier*, the narrator-protagonist and her friends correspond with each other using a secret code in their letters because they know that the letters are read by the secret police. The code of the letters allows them to communicate freely about state persecution and surveillance. The protagonist describes how she uses a comma to send a message that she hopes will be overlooked by the secret police:

Das Komma sollte schweigen, wenn der Hauptmann Pjele die Briefe las, damit er die Briefe wieder zuklebte und weiterschickte. Aber wenn Edgar und Georg die Briefe öffneten, sollte das Komma schreien. Ein Komma, das schweigt und schreit, gab es nicht. Das Komma hinter der Anrede war viel zu dick geworden. (p. 107)

The narrator personifies the comma. If it keeps silent when read by the secret police, they will not notice the hidden message; but the narrator's friends will see it. Her fear is that the comma after the greeting stands out, and the secret police will recognise its function as a hidden message. Silence is associated with secrecy, and the author foregrounds this figurative connection with the help of the extended metaphor.

In 'Auf die Gedanken fällt Erde', Müller discusses the meaning of the word 'Bürgerkrieg' and implicitly personifies it by granting it the ability to keep silent:

Von der großserbischen Landkarte, von der modernen Staatsarmee der Serben und den leeren Händen der Moslems schweigt das Wort 'Bürgerkrieg'. Schweigt auch von der Eroberung als Staatserhaltungsidee. Auch davon, daß eine jugoslawische Diktatur und Machtelite aus Betonköpfen weiter handlungsfähig bleiben will, daß eine korrupte, von sich selber besessene politische Klasse ihre Ideologie nicht revidiert, sondern verschlimmert hat. (p. 169)

Silence is conventionally associated with the absence of information: it is common to speak about the silence of books or documents on particular issues. Müller defamiliarises this association by anthropomorphising the word 'Bürgerkrieg' and focusing readers' attention on

its ability to keep silent. Keeping silent serves as a vehicle mapped on to the absence of contextual information. The conventional meaning of the word does not offer the details about the civil war she discusses. Silence is a trope to explain that the word does not express the many concomitant meanings and associations that are established in the context of war. In other words, it stands for the failure of the word to convey relevant information about the war.

In the essay ‘Wenn wir schweigen’ from *Der König verneigt sich*, Müller discusses the prevalence of silence in her family and personifies words as able to keep silent:

Unter Schweigenden hatten unser aller Augen gelernt, welches Gefühl der andere mit sich durchs Haus trägt. Wir horchten mehr mit den Augen als mit den Ohren. Es entstand eine angenehme Schwerfälligkeit, ein in die Länge gezogenes Übergewicht der Dinge, die wir im Kopf herumtrugen. So ein Gewicht geben die Wörter gar nicht her, weil sie nicht stehenbleiben. Gleich nach dem Sprechen, kaum zu Ende gesagt, sind sie schon stumm. (p. 74)

Silence stands for the temporal limitations of speech: after the speaker utters the words, they are said to become silent. Müller uses silence to anthropomorphise communication and present it as the subject of action. Words speak only during the conversation, whereas the silence prevalent in the family is a constant presence and conceived of as a physical force. Words are personified as able to speak and keep silent; they can also refer metonymically to the people uttering them. Consequently, metaphor and metonymy can interact and thereby help readers grasp the meaning of the text.

The metaphorical conceptualisation of silent language does not necessitate personification. In the autobiographical essay ‘Bei uns in Deutschland’, Müller describes her initial confusion about the German language in Germany and uses silence as a source domain to explain the lack of meaning of certain expressions:

Deutsch ist meine Muttersprache. Ich verstand von Anfang an in Deutschland jedes Wort. Alles durch und durch bekannte Wörter, und doch war die Aussage vieler Sätze zwispältig. Ich konnte die Situation nicht einschätzen, die Absicht, in der sie gesprochen werden. Ich ging den flapsigen Bemerkungen wie ‘Ist ja lustig’ nach, ich verstand sie als Nachsätze. Ich begriff nicht, dass sie sich als beiläufiges Seufzen verstanden, nichts Inhaltliches meinten, sondern bloß: ‘Ach so’ oder ‘Tja’. Ich nahm sie als volle Sätze, dachte, ‘lustig’ bleibt das Gegenteil von ‘traurig’. In jedem gesagten Wort, glaube ich, muss eine Aussage sein, sonst wäre es nicht gesagt worden. Ich

kannte das Reden und das Schweigen, das Zwischenspiel von gesprochenem Schweigen ohne Inhalt kannte ich nicht.²¹

In this passage, the expressions whose meaning changes in the context of colloquial communication are described as spoken silence because they lack a literal meaning and are used to facilitate the conversation flow. Spoken silence can be an oxymoron if both words are understood literally. The author implies that the speakers do not mean what they say and fail to do justice to the words they use. Spoken silence stands for language without content. Silence becomes a source domain which maps on to the absence of meaning. As a result, meaning is implicitly imagined as speech. Spoken silence is not a mere wordplay, but an effective image for the vicissitudes of language use as perceived by the author. Speech is implicitly understood as a container holding its meaning. Its meaning becomes its content. If it is empty, it is no longer speech, but spoken silence. Consequently, silence becomes an empty container. Müller, therefore, relies on the conventional conduit metaphor for language and the container image schema to create the original concept of spoken silence.

In the following passage from the essay ‘Inge’, the protagonist Inge, who resembles the author in her relationship with the repressive state authorities, breaks down in despair while walking through the park: ‘Inge schrie. Der Schrei war stumm und schmerzte in ihrem Hals’ (p. 165) The scene reminds of Edvard Munch’s painting *The Scream*. The concept of a silent scream is neither clearly literal, nor figurative. It is best described in terms of conceptual blending.²² While the scream loses part of its core meaning, silence is the key attribute of the scene. The protagonist articulates the scream with her body but does not actually produce sound. There is a combination of features borrowed from screaming and keeping silent that merge to produce a lucid image of emotional breakdown. The protagonist loses her voice in the scene. The whole essay reads as a metaphor for state persecution and surveillance. While the text does not explicitly refer to either of these features of the totalitarian regime, the character’s emotions and her silent despair help the reader imagine the effects of such oppression. Ultimately, Müller uses the remarkable multimodal image of the silent scream to convey the brutal impact of the totalitarian state upon the individual.

When the narrator-protagonist of the novel *Herztier* does not recount the relevant information about another character’s diary to her friend Edgar, her speech is metaphorically

²¹ *Der König verneigt sich*, pp. 176–85 (p. 177).

²² See Fauconnier and Turner.

associated with silence: ‘er spürt, daß ich im Reden schweige’ (p. 44). Her friend Edgar is not taking notes during her speech, and hence the narrator thinks that Edgar intuitively senses her keeping silent about key facts in the diary of her deceased roommate Lola. While the narrator mentions keeping silent in speech, the association between the two concepts is less figurative than it appears to be at first sight. The narrator keeps silent about certain details in her speech, and this silence is not a figurative image. Nevertheless, speech and silence inform each other and create an emergent meaning in the scene which highlights the speaker’s reluctance to share the information. This experience of silence in speech is then conveyed through a vivid image: ‘Und ich spürte beim Reden, daß mir etwas wie ein Kirschkern auf der Zunge liegen blieb. [...] Doch das Wort [...] ging mir nicht über die Lippen’ (p. 44). The narrator evokes a multisensory image to present to the reader her silence about Lola’s diary. The things left out from the speech are experienced by the narrator as a physical object on the surface of her tongue. Tactile and gustatory senses help convey the tangibility of silence. In this scene, silence and speech are closely intertwined and their relationship is both literal and figurative. There is no single overarching concept of silence as speech in the scene, but rather a contextually integrated network of meanings that encompasses several lucid images of both speech and silence.

In ‘Wenn wir schweigen’ (2003), Müller describes her interaction with her grandmother and uses silence as a source domain to explain the grandmother’s succinct manner of speaking: ‘Und dann auf dem Heimweg kam sie so verkürzt darauf zurück, daß im Reden schon das Schweigen war’ (p. 85). Her grandmother does not repeat Müller’s earlier observation about the figure of Mary in the village church: ‘das Herz der Maria ist eine halbe Wassermelone’, and refers to it as ‘DAS’: ‘DAS mit der Maria sollst du niemandem sagen’ (p. 85). Silence in speech stands not for the absence of meaning, but for the brevity of the reference. On one hand, the grandmother literally avoids repeating Müller’s statement and speaks about it less than expected. On the other, silence cannot be fully literal since the grandmother still voices her opinion and makes a reference to Müller’s earlier statement. Alternatively, silence in speech can be associated with the grandmother’s request to keep silent about the heart of the Mary. This request resonates with the silence in speech perceived by the author and foregrounds silence as a theme of discussion. Müller respects her grandmother’s request: ‘Ich hielt mich daran, auch als sie tot war, auch als ich in der Stadt war. Bis ich zu schreiben begann, gab es darüber nichts zu reden’ (p. 85). Overall, the image of silence in speech highlights the shortness of the statement and implicitly relates to the fact that the grandmother was reluctant to speak about Müller’s observation. In this context,

silence can be seen as having both literal and metaphorical meanings. Notably, Müller did not keep silent about this scene in her writing. She often engages with silence in her texts, and this working through silence is essential for understanding her poetics and vision of language.

7.3 Metonymy and Metaphor: Actions and States as Silence

Silence can refer to complex social actions. In the essay ‘Schmeckt das Rattengift’, Müller distinguishes between Hitler’s willing executioners and those who remain silent about Nazi crimes: ‘die Täter und Schweiger Hitlers’.²³ She considers the latter group to be implicated in Nazi crimes through their silent support. Silence is collaboration and guilt; as a metonymic vehicle, it refers to the more complex social action of political and moral support. It is a more concrete concept than the socially complex idea of collaboration. Müller gets at the meaning of collaboration by associating it with the silence about the crimes of the Nazi regime. Metonymy thus allows her to identify and morally judge a complex social action and its agents.

In the essay ‘Der König verneigt sich’, Müller reflects on the nature of the Ceaușescu regime and describes how people were persecuted and killed by the state. She uses silence to explain the consequences of the murders perpetrated by the dictatorship: ‘Wo ein Mensch verschwand, blieb Stille’ (p. 50). The absence of sound is the absence of life. Death is implicitly construed as silence. Müller uses silence to engage the reader’s imagination and make the atrocities of the totalitarian regime tangible. She does not delineate the meaning of silence, and readers can freely establish associations between silence, absence, and death to empathise better with the victims.

In *Der Fuchs*, the narrator invokes the trope of silence and personifies death when she describes how one of the characters kills cockroaches in the kitchen: ‘Bei den großen knackte der Tod, bei den kleinen blieb er stumm. Ilije zählte nur die rotbraunen Kakerlaken, die knackten’ (p. 113). Müller presents death as the subject of action: the death of the small cockroaches can be imagined as someone keeping silent. Although the metonymic association between death and silence is rather conventional, the author defamiliarises it through the unusual context and creative use of personification.

In her 1994 Kleist Prize speech, Müller discusses writing and uses silence as a metaphorical source domain to conceptualise life and experience:

²³ *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 39–49 (p. 42).

Ob man was das Leben ausmacht, durch sich selber oder durch andere erfährt, ob man es als Schweigen für sich behält oder als Satz aus dem Schädel hinausshickt, es kann seinen Ausgangspunkt nicht behalten, seine eigene Absicht nicht einlösen. Es gibt für das, was das Leben ausmacht, keinen Durchblick. Nur gebrechliche Einrichtungen des Augenblicks. Und Zurechtlegungen, die nicht bis zum nächsten Schritt halten.²⁴

Silence is used as a source domain for life experiences. At the same time, it is conceived of as a physical object that can be possessed by the human subject. On the one hand, silence stands for life. On the other, the source domain of physical objects is used to construe silence. Müller employs a complex multisensory metaphor to explain her vision of writing and its potential to represent life. She effectively uses figurative language to associate silence and writing with life and to highlight the tentative nature of this association.

In *Atemschaukel*, the narrator-protagonist reflects on the nature of homesickness and presents it metaphorically through various source domains: ‘Manche sagen und singen und schweigen und gehen und sitzen und schlafen ihr Heimweh, so lang und so umsonst’ (p. 233). Homesickness is imagined as something that can be sung, spoken, danced, or kept silent about; silence becomes an aspect of the complex multisensory phenomenon of homesickness. Notably, both metaphor and metonymy are crucial for understanding the passage. It is reasonable to interpret the quoted sentence as stating that some people can choose to keep silent about their homesickness. In this interpretation, silence metonymically refers to the feeling of homesickness. Silence is just one of the bodily experiences associated with homesickness and contributes to the original figurative conceptualisation of this complex mental state.

Müller uses silence to personify psychological states: they acquire the ability to keep silent and thus can be imagined as human beings. In ‘Gelber Mais’ (2011), she discusses her mother’s silence about the suffering in the Soviet labour camp and construes psychological trauma as a human being: ‘Ich glaubte immer, Beschädigung ist stumm: sie begleitet alles und verbietet jedem den Mund’ (p. 129). Trauma is imagined as a human subject able to keep silent but capable of such speech acts as prohibition. At the same time, ‘Beschädigung’ can metonymically refer to the person suffering from it. Here again, metaphor and metonymy

²⁴ ‘Von der gebrechlichen Einrichtung der Welt. Rede zur Verleihung des Kleist-Preises 1994’, in *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 7–15 (p. 7).

participate in the construction of the meaning of the sentence. Müller presents the victim of trauma as the object of manipulation, whereas trauma acts as the subject of action who influences the person. The metaphorical conceptualisation of psychological trauma allows the author to create a vivid image that conveys its effects on the victim. While silence becomes a metaphorical source domain when readers imagine trauma as a human being, trauma can also relate to the literal experience of keeping silent. Consequently, both the literal and figurative meanings of silence are essential for understanding the sentence. The literal meaning is integral to the text as silence is one of the effects of trauma, whereas its figurative use suggests that the victim does not freely choose to keep silent, but is forced to do so by trauma. The personification highlights the victim's suffering and alienation. The metaphor enables Müller to communicate effectively the reasons why her mother kept silent about her experience in the Soviet labour camp.

Throughout her oeuvre, Müller personifies relatively abstract concepts by attributing to them the ability to keep silent. Such personification commonly occurs along with the use of these concepts as metonymic vehicles for the people keeping silent.

7.4 Conclusion

In Herta Müller's fiction and non-fiction, silence is not only a central theme, but also a key means to illuminate other vital ideas. She relies on linguistic and conceptual conventions that make her vision of silence clear and engaging; at the same time, she defamiliarises those conventions, and foregrounds the figurative associations between silence and other concepts. For Müller, the quotidian is infiltrated by the violence and destabilisation that characterise the experience of totalitarianism.²⁵ She is fully aware of figurative language and reveals this sensitivity to her readers. She creatively engages readers' imaginations to make accessible her representation of different phenomena through silence. When Müller uses silence as a trope to personify inanimate entities and to associate them with speech, she is realising the communicative potential of the environment. Language and meaning become inherent in the nature of things. She humanises the world when she imagines that its inanimate entities can keep silent. Furthermore, she invokes figurative associations to relate silence to writing, and writing helps her confront the many silences in her life. Silence, art, life, and language are intimately related, and metaphors help accentuate the intimacy of this relationship. Figurative

²⁵ *Der Fremde Blick*, p. 12. See also Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 244.

language likewise enables Müller to establish a causal link between silence and the mental state of the person keeping silent: silence becomes a symptom of trauma and metonymically refers to the psychological suffering of the individual. Metaphor and metonymy can interact, and contribute to the understanding of silence. She can thus associate silence with feelings of guilt, powerlessness, submissiveness, and vulnerability, establishing a close connection between silence and fear. Her characters can keep silent because they are afraid of punishment for speaking out against the totalitarian regime or for voicing their ideas, which are irreconcilable with the oppressive social norms. Metaphorical language and thought relate silence to loss of identity, agency, and humanity. Silent characters can become lifeless and vulnerable to the dehumanising power of social oppression. Müller also relies on metaphors to elucidate the significance of silence in resisting social oppression and to explain its role in social power relations. Silence can be a sign of both suffering and resistance, and can symbolise either a strength or a weakness. Finally, the trope of silence refers to the absence and failure of (but also implies the potential for) language and communication; and its use brings to the fore the search for meaning, expression, and social interaction.

8 THE MEANING OF SILENCE

In this chapter, I focus on metaphors for silence, and categorise them into those sensory modalities and concrete phenomena (vision, touch, smell, eating, speaking, somatic experience, force, space, motion, container, physical objects, manipulation, destruction, life, and death) that serve as source domains. Despite its limitations, this categorisation will help understand the motivation behind the associations between the target domain of silence and its vehicles. Müller highlights the figurative nature of the relationship between silence and more concrete concepts, establishing connections between it and those ideas that commonly relate to bodily experience. This chapter will reveal that silence does not exist as a well-defined concept and acquires new meanings depending on the context and the metaphorical images that are used to explain it. I suggest that the meaning of silence is not arbitrary and relies on conceptual and linguistic conventions; Müller estranges these conventions, and thus foregrounds the figurative yet motivated meaning of silence.

8.1 Silence and the Senses: Vision, Touch, and Smell

Müller evokes vision to elucidate silence: visible objects convey the nature, effects, and causes of silence. In *Herztier*, the narrator visualises the silence of her friends when they do not tell her about the identity of the man who is hiding the German-language books that they read from the secret police: ‘Ihre Augen standen schief, und in den weißen Winkeln, wo Äderchen zusammenliefen, glänzte unruhig das Schweigen’ (p. 44). Silence is imagined as a visible entity inside the characters’ eyes, and is implicitly personified as capable of anxiety; it is associated with the appearance of the speakers and their emotional state: they are afraid to reveal the identity of the person. The metaphor thus explains that silence is caused by fear.

In the essay ‘Schmeckt das Rattengift’, Müller uses the conventional association between understanding and seeing to discuss the causes of silence: ‘Um einer Einheimischen nicht zu zeigen, daß er Bekannte hat, die anderer Meinung sind, schweigt er. Aber auch, um zu verbergen, daß neben ihm jemand steht, die Ausländerin ist’ (p. 39). The speaker’s knowledge is construed as something visible that can be shown through speech and hidden by silence. Speech is conceptualised as the process of showing things to the listener, and understanding is presented as seeing. Conversely, keeping silent is associated with hiding

objects. The juxtaposition of the verbs ‘zeigen’ and ‘verbergen’ with regard to speech and silence foregrounds the figurative association between communication and vision.

In *Der Fuchs*, the narrator describes a moment of silence after the secret police officer throws a woman to the floor of the interrogation room: ‘Es ist so still, daß sich die Gegenstände hinlegen ins Licht’ (p. 152). Silence could be imagined as a light that shines on the objects in the room. Vision is thus used to present the effects of silence. Light and silence are indirectly associated, and this association is unconventional and salient.

Müller also associates silence with tactile experience. Touch serves as a source domain for the perception of silence and its impact on observers. In *Reisende*, silence becomes a bodily sensation when she describes a moment at the underground station: ‘Es war eine Stille wie zwischen Hand und Messer gleich nach der Tat’ (p. 35). Müller conveys the salience and meaningfulness of silence in the scene, presenting it as a tactile experience. Silence is imagined as a visceral sensation and becomes part of the frame of stabbing someone with a knife. The metaphor evokes bodily experience, emotional tension, and social transgression. Underground stations can be crowded and noisy, and hence silence stands out and produces a strong impression on the observer. It is an effective image that opens opportunities for different meanings: despite its lucidity and robustness, the image does not give a definitive interpretation to the absence of sound. At the end of the novel, Müller also invokes tactile experience to present the absence of sound. The protagonist Irene is looking through her window at another window at night, and her look is metaphorically presented as touch: ‘In der Berührung zwischen Irenes Blick und dem leuchtenden Fenster lag Kälte und Starrsinn. Und eine angestrenzte Stille’ (p. 176). The image of silence is both visual and tactile, since the protagonist comes into contact with it while she is looking at her neighbour’s window. Visual perception is explained as a tactile experience, and silence is conceptualised as a visible object accessible to touch. Tactile experience is also foregrounded through the sensation of cold, which is perceived through Irene’s gaze. It is conventional to speak about visual perception in terms of tactile experience, but silence is not a physical object that can be seen or touched; therefore, both vision and touch are source domains in this context. Overall, the metaphors help highlight the salience of silence and present it as a tangible experience.

In the *Leipziger Poetikvorlesung*, Müller speaks about her home village and mentions the prevalence of silence among its inhabitants: ‘dieses unendliche kalte Schweigen in diesem Dorf. Bauern reden ja nicht viel’ (p. 19). Silence is implicitly conceptualised as a physical object experienced through the sensory modality of temperature. The metaphorical coldness of silence relates to the mental state of the inhabitants – it metonymically stands for the

emotional coldness of the people. Thermoception serves as a vehicle and helps reason about the psychological features of keeping silent: coldness stands in contrast to warmth and conventionally conveys indifference, rudeness, and even hostility. It usually relates to people, but here it is used with regard to the silence itself – thus it becomes more salient as a metaphorical source domain.

In *Herztier*, the narrator-protagonist is offended by her friend's comment about her smile but keeps silent about it. She uses a vivid metaphorical image to describe her mouth and evokes tactile and visual experiences to convey to the reader her self-perception: 'Vielleicht wurde mein Mund eine reife Erbsenschote. So dürr und schmal stellte ich mir Lippen vor, die ich nicht haben wollte' (p. 84). The image of a dry and narrow pea pod is mapped on to the protagonist's mouth; she evokes a vivid image of an edible object to explain the motor experience of keeping her mouth shut. The associations between silence and its source domains are both metonymic and metaphorical: the association between speech and the mouth is metonymic, whereas the association between the mouth and the pea pod is metaphorical. Through metaphor, the speaker implicitly creates a distance between her silence and her self, describing her mouth as an object potentially independent from the rest of her body. Notably, the pea pod is not imagined as food: instead of the peas' taste and edibility, the pod's ripeness foregrounds its tactile and visual properties. Although the protagonist is deeply affected by her friend's words, her mouth remains closed and her lips are tightly together; the dryness of the lips can metonymically stand for the speaker's mental state. Consequently, tactile experience could represent her negative self-perception which has led to silence. The ripe peas in the pod could also stand for the words and thoughts that the speaker wants to express, yet chooses to suppress.

Müller evokes tactile experience to describe various qualities of silence, its causes, and effects. The sense of touch effectively conveys the salience, meaningfulness, and impact of silence; the metaphorical association of silence and tactile experience also communicates the characters' emotional states. Since tactile experience is highly concrete, its association with silence makes the latter more tangible.

In 'Wenn wir schweigen', Müller discusses how thoughts can be non-verbal and emerge in silence. She contrasts silent thinking to speech and conveys the experience of prevailing silence in her home village through the sense of smell:

Das Reden fliegt weg, das Schweigen liegt und liegt und riecht. Es roch wie der Ort im Haus, an dem ich neben mir selbst, bei den anderen stand. Im Hof roch das Schweigen

nach Akazienblüten oder frisch gemähten Klee, im Zimmer nach Mottenpulver oder einer Reihe Quitten auf dem Schrank, in der Küche nach Teig oder Fleisch. (p. 83)

Smell is rarely associated with silence, and here it comes across as an original and expressive metaphorical vehicle. I found no other examples of the conceptualisation of silence (or voice) as smell in Müller's writing. 'Das Schweigen' here relates to the absence of auditory experience, and at the same time it can be imagined as a quality of space. Keeping silent is localised in different spaces, and the smells in those spaces are associated with it.

Alternatively, silence can be imagined as a physical entity occupying those spaces and possessing the quality of smell. Perceptually, silence and smell are bound together in the imagination. Since silence is a target domain open to cross-sensory associations and is the subject of discussion, the narrator treats it as an abstract concept and explains it through the vehicle of smell. While the metaphor does not necessarily explain the experience of keeping silent, it introduces the sensory context in which silence finds its place: silence becomes physically tangible as olfactory perception is heightened in the absence of conversation.

When Müller uses vision, touch, and smell to illuminate silence, she both relies on and defamiliarises linguistic and conceptual conventions that underlie these associations.

However, it is problematic to isolate sensory modalities with regard to metaphors because of the multisensory nature of perception and conceptualisation: metaphors often evoke multiple senses. I have looked at those tropes in which the prevalence of a certain sensory experience is relatively clear and uncontroversial, but in most cases Müller's tropes are multisensory.

8.2 Eating and Speaking

The association between speech and eating is metonymic to some extent, as it can rest on the perceptual and motor similarity between these actions: eating and speaking similarly engage the mouth, tongue, and other parts of the body. The contiguity between speech and eating can be foregrounded by the similarity of the language forms used to describe them. The narrator-protagonist of *Atemschaukel* establishes an association between fear-driven silence ('kuschen') and eating, through phonetic resemblance:

KUSCHELTIER, was für ein Wort für einen Stoffhund, ausgestopft mit Sägemehl. Und jetzt im Lager nichts als KUSCHEN, oder wie nennt man das Schweigen aus Angst. Und KUSCHET heißt auf Russisch Essen. Jetzt will ich nicht auch noch ans Essen denken.
(p. 152)

The phonetic similarity between 'KUSCHEN' and 'KUSCHET' establishes connections between the words in two different languages and resonates with the perceptual and motor similarity between eating and speaking. The narrator's mind appears to be wandering through the linguistic landscape of different concepts and making arbitrary associations between them; nevertheless, the outlined contiguity between eating and speaking indicates that the protagonist's association is not based solely on phonetic resemblance.

Müller writes about silence as a form of communication. This association can be metaphorical when she uses speech as a source domain to explain the functioning of silence; it can also be literal since silence can be a meaningful response in communication and has its own pragmatic value in speech. In 'Wenn wir schweigen', Müller discusses the prevalence of silence in her home village in Romania and observes that '[d]as Schweigen ist keine Pause beim Reden, sondern eine Sache für sich' (p. 74). She does not clearly define silence, but her message is consonant with the view that silence has a communicative value. In the essay 'Niederungen', the narrator-protagonist describes a scene in which her father mutilates a calf to acquire the right to slaughter it and keep the meat without giving it over to the state. In the village, the slaughtering of cattle is not permitted, and the father has to bribe the veterinarian who visits the household and gives a permit to kill the animal due to the 'accident'. Nobody mentions the obvious fact that the calf must have been intentionally mutilated by the owner, and this silence is perceived as a communicative action by the narrator: 'Alle, die da standen, logen durch ihr Schweigen' (p. 62). She strongly disapproves of the silence and finds it outrageous, presenting it as a morally wrong speech act and not as a passive reaction.

The association between silence and the inability to speak is an established trope in German. Keeping silent can be conveyed as muteness ('stumm'); it can also be associated with having no language ('sprachlos'). Müller relies on this conventional mapping and makes its figurative nature salient. In the autobiographical essay 'Einmal anfassen – zweimal loslassen', the author recounts her confrontation with two secret police agents at the railway station and comments that nobody spoke during their physical struggle: 'Es fiel in diesem Gerempel kein Wort zwischen uns, als hätten sie und ich keine Sprache' (p. 116). This association resembles the conventional hyperbole of the adjectives 'sprachlos' and 'stumm'; at the same time, it estranges the established hyperbole and highlights the figurative association between language loss and silence. It might imply that the author and the secret police agents do not have a common language in which they could communicate; it might

also point to her unwillingness to interact. Language loss is effectively used as a source domain for silence to describe the physical confrontation with the secret police.

In the essay 'In jeder Sprache' (2003), Müller writes about silence in her home village, and employs the frame of learning a language to explain the influence of labour on speech:

Wörter begleiteten die Arbeit nur dann, wenn mehrere zusammen etwas taten und einer auf den Handgriff des anderen angewiesen war. Aber auch da nicht immer. Schwerstarbeit wie Säcketragen, Umgraben, Hacken, mit der Sense mähen war eine Schule des Schweigens. Der Körper war zu beansprucht, um sich im Reden zu verausgaben. Manchmal dachte ich beim Zusehen, ich sehe jetzt zu, wie das geht, wenn die Leute das Sprechen verlernen. Sie werden alle Wörter vergessen haben, wenn sie aus diesem Schuften wieder draußen sind. (p. 8)

The prevalence of silence is explained as a result of unlearning natural language through excessively hard work. The complex frame of learning serves as a source domain to organise the author's experience of silence in the village. This frame provides a seemingly rational explanation why the villagers keep silent. But work does not literally lead to unlearning a language; this logic relies on a complex network of source concepts, one of which is the poetic image of the 'Schule des Schweigens'. Silence is presented as the result of losing language skills; it becomes a symptom of village life, with its own dynamics and logical coherence. The figurative association between silence and unlearning language is hyperbolic, but it is also a metaphor since it engages qualitatively different experiences as source and target concepts. The source domain provides a framework that helps the reader better understand the embodied and social context of silence: in the familiar accessible frame of school, silence becomes a subject that can be learnt through hard manual labour.

Müller regularly uses speech articulation – through lips, tongue, mouth, and voice – to refer metonymically to silence. In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist recounts how she could not express gratitude to her partner for his help: 'Der Staub flog uns in den Nacken, ich hätte mich für die Klotür bedanken müssen, meine Zunge hob sich nicht im Mund' (p. 167). The protagonist's partner helped her use a public toilet in the context of a heated argument with the people in the queue for the right to do it first. The inability of her tongue to rise indicates that the protagonist keeps silent despite her wish to speak – it metonymically stands for silence. It could also stand metaphorically for her reluctance to speak about the potentially

awkward topic (even though the protagonist of *Heute* generally does not avoid awkward or even painful conversations).

Movement of the tongue features again when a friend's partner sings a song the protagonist knows, and she wonders about the singer's possible reaction if she were to join in:

Daß er überhaupt sang, so tief und wiederum gar nicht in sich hineinschauen ließ, war schon genug. Daß er dieses Lied kannte, gab mir einen Stich. Mein Opa sang es auch, und er hatte es aus dem Lager. Lilli und ich waren zu jung, er verließ sich darauf. Oje, wie wär ihm die Zunge hängen geblieben, wenn ich mitgesungen hätte. So aber klang das Lied hier am Tisch verlegen, nur weil ich zwischen Lilli und ihm saß und mithörte.
(p. 68)

Here, the absence of tongue movement metonymically stands for the interruption of the song and the singer's relapse into silence. The protagonist believes that the officer would be surprised if she were to join him singing; the hanging tongue is not only indicative of the silence but also presents as its cause the singer's hypothetical emotional reaction, highlighting the psychological meaningfulness of the potential silence.

Biting the lips is a conventional metonymic image for keeping silent: it describes the situation when a person wants to suppress her speech. In 'Niederungen', the narrator-protagonist tells the story of travelling by car with her relatives, and how she keeps silent during the journey while her cousin is talking: 'Käthes Stimme sitzt neben mir und redet von weitem. Ich beiß mir stumm auf die Lippen, um meinen Mund in der Nacht nicht zu verlieren' (p. 106). The image of lip biting metonymically conveys the protagonist's efforts to keep silent; it might also be a literal description of the protagonist's actions, but the next image in the text is clearly figurative. Speech is construed as losing one's mouth, and hence keeping silent becomes keeping the mouth. While biting the lips could have both a literal and a metonymic meaning, keeping the mouth stands out as a deliberate metaphor for the protagonist's wish to keep silent. The narrator, therefore, foregrounds speech articulation as a figurative vehicle for the protagonist's silence and its psychological causes in the scene.

In *Reisende*, the narrator describes how the protagonist Irene observes two women in conversation at the railway station: 'Die Lippen standen offen und sagten nichts' (p. 96). Müller defamiliarises the conventional metonymy of lip movement for silence; furthermore, the expression is ambiguous because it is unclear whether the interlocutors keep silent with their lips open, or whether the protagonist cannot hear the women speak. As we have seen, the

motor control of the lips can conventionally stand for keeping silent, and Müller relies on and defamiliarises that conventional image.

In *Der Mensch*, the author describes a silent scene in which the protagonist Windisch opens his mouth but does not say anything: ‘Er hat keine Stimme im Mund’ (p. 72). Having no voice is both literal and figurative. The protagonist can speak, but in this scene, he keeps silent. Windisch executes certain articulatory actions essential for speech and yet does not say a word. The conventional association between silence and the absence of voice is defamiliarised through the original language in the text. Furthermore, the narrator highlights the figurative meaning of losing voice by imagining the protagonist’s voice as an entity in his mouth. Voice is construed as a physical object inside a container, and silence is associated with the absence of this object. Subverting linguistic and conceptual conventions, Müller creates an original trope for silence.

In *Herztier*, the narrator-protagonist presents speech and silence with the help of the metonymic vehicle of speech organs, when she describes how ordinary workers would get drunk in the bar and then worry about saying something politically dangerous:

Ihre Lippen waren vom Suff weiß aufgesprungen. Ihre Mundwinkel eingerissen. Sie stellten die Füße bedächtig ins Gras und mahlten im Hirn jedes Wort noch einmal durch, das sie im Suff geschrien hatten. Sie saßen kindisch in den Gedächtnislücken des vergangenen Tages. Sie fürchteten, daß sie in der Bodega etwas geschrien hatten, was politisch war. Sie wußten, daß die Kellner alles meldeten. Aber der Suff schützt den Schädel vor dem Unerlaubten, und der Fraß schützt den Mund. Wenn auch die Zunge nur noch lallen kann, verläßt die Gewöhnung der Angst die Stimme nicht. (p. 39)

The skull metonymically stands for thinking. Drinking protects the people from thought crimes, whereas eating prevents them from saying something that could attract the attention of the secret police. The mouth metonymically stands for speaking, and keeping silent is associated with self-protection and safety. Lips, tongue, mouth, and voice conventionally represent speech, but Müller defamiliarises these conventional metonymies to convey to the reader the importance of keeping silent in the totalitarian regime. After all, the regime persecutes people for their speech and would even punish them for certain thoughts if it could.

8.3 Somatic Experience and Force

At the beginning of the novel *Atemschaukel*, the narrator-protagonist discusses two kinds of silence and evokes lucid images to convey the difference between them:

Neben dem Seitenaltar auf einer Säule stand der Heilige im grauen Mantel und trug als Mantelkragen ein Schaf im Nacken. Dieses Schaf im Nacken ist das Schweigen. Es gibt Dinge, über die man nicht spricht. Aber ich weiß, wovon ich rede, wenn ich sage, das Schweigen im Nacken ist etwas anderes als das Schweigen im Mund. (p. 10)

The narrator creates a complex image metaphor to describe silence. Silence is first presented as an animal on the neck of the speaker; this kind of silence is more profound than regular silence, imagined as a physical object in the mouth of the speaker. The silence on the neck relates to the protagonist's silence about his homosexuality during a significant part of his life; it conveys a sense of pressure and vulnerability in the face of social oppression (Leo had to keep silent about his sexuality for fear of punishment and physical violence during his life in Romania and especially while being subjected to forced labour in the Soviet camp). But the silence on the neck could also relate to the protagonist's silence about his suffering in the camp: the image of the sheep on the neck of the speaker evokes an external physical force which prevents the person from speaking. Writing becomes the process of overcoming this forced silence, and the narrator uses a range of sensorimotor experiences as source domains to explain his silence in different contexts. These vivid multisensory metaphors play a pivotal role in leading the reader to an understanding of his mental state and the causes of his silence.

In *Der Fuchs*, the narrator conveys the experience of silence through bodily images while describing the riverside cafe and the nearby park often visited by the protagonist Adina:

Da im Park der Hauch der Angst hängt, wird man langsam im Kopf und sieht in allem, was andere sagen und tun, sein eigenes Leben. Man weiß nie, ob das, was man denkt, ein lauter Satz wird oder ein Knoten im Hals. Oder nur das Heben und Senken der Nasenflügel. (p. 46)

Fear of surveillance and persecution by the totalitarian state makes people highly aware of their speech: they cannot express many of the thoughts that come to their minds. This forced silence is presented metaphorically through the concrete images related to the perception of the body. Having a physical object in one's throat is a tangible bodily experience which

makes speech impossible. Visitors to the park, living in the totalitarian state, want to express their thoughts; their silence is effortful and involves a physical struggle to suppress speech. The narrator refers to this emotional engagement both metaphorically through the image of a physical entity in the throat, and metonymically through the movement of the nostrils. Keeping silent is presented metaphorically and metonymically as a forced action, and not only as the absence of speech. The characters have no power over their speech: fear organises the expression of their thoughts and silences them against their will. Metaphor and metonymy allow the author to vividly present silence as an involuntary action caused by fear.

In another scene from the same novel, the narrator describes how people react to the suicide of the tinsmith, and what they do when the doctor enters his shop. The tinsmith committed suicide by hanging himself in his shop. People calmly discuss the matter and act more like the tinsmith's customers, but they stop talking in the presence of the doctor: 'Das Schweigen verzerrte jedes Gesicht, als hätte der Arzt den Tod mitgebracht' (p. 52). Silence is presented metaphorically as a physical force that distorts their faces; the moment when they stop talking and react to the death is conveyed through a vivid multimodal metaphor that relies on somatic experience. In contrast to speech, silence does not usually require any articulatory effort. Here, however, the metaphor reveals that the people have to make an effort to keep silent and to express an appropriate emotional reaction.

In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist recounts how she was happy interacting with her partner Paul while dancing and singing about death: 'Diese Stille nach dem Glück, sie kam, als kriegten die Möbel eine Gänsehaut' (p. 107). The protagonists experience happiness while singing, and the silence afterwards is physically tangible. The narrator personifies the furniture in the room; since goosebumps conventionally stand for excitement and awe, silence can be a symptom of the psychological state of the protagonists. The author uses horripilation as a metonymic vehicle to foreground the emotional tension in the scene. That metaphorical conceptualisation of silence likewise highlights its significance for the protagonists: they are acutely aware of the absence of sound, and of their psychological state that has led to it.

In the autobiographical essay 'Wenn etwas in der Luft liegt' from the collection *Der König verneigt sich* (2003), self-perception of the body similarly serves as a source domain mapped on to the experience of silence. Müller recollects her childhood experiences in her parents' home and metaphorically conceptualises silence in one of the rooms through tactile and auditory experiences: 'Im Zimmer pochte eine Stille' (p. 193). The absence of sound is presented as a tangible experience. It could be imagined as a palpitating heart or some other body organ, thus activating somatic experience. Silence imagined as a body organ evokes

visual, tactile, auditory, and other sensory modalities. The verb ‘pochen’ relates the perception of silence directly to the body of the narrator and foregrounds the absence of sound as a salient feature of the environment.

In the autofictional short story ‘Niederungen’, the narrator-protagonist describes how the men in her village worked in the field. She construes their silence as hard manual labour: ‘Die Männer fahren, auf krächzenden Wagen zusammengedrängt, ins Feld hinaus und blieben bei der Arbeit stumm. Sie zogen die Sensen durchs Gras und schwitzten von der Arbeit und vom Schweigen’ (p. 43). Silence is metaphorically construed as hard manual labour that causes perspiration. In this scene, the source frame of labour is enacted literally, and the impact of silence is metaphorically associated with the actual effects of arduous work. The author creates a metaphor using the multisensory and motor image that is already literally present in the scene. She establishes an original association between silence and work (see a similar example in the previous section). Mowing grass is a complex activity that engages sensory perception and motor control, and has a rich social context as part of the daily work in the village. Silence is, therefore, presented as something that leads to physical exertion and perspiration, and keeping silent is implied to be an effortful and habitual activity.

Sometimes silence is construed as a physical object inside the head. In her essay ‘In jeder Sprache’ from the collection *Der König verneigt sich*, Müller criticises the depiction of violence on advertising boards and highlights their psychological impact: ‘Die Plakate verleumdten ihr Produkt in der Absicht, es zu überhöhen. Die Stille und Größe dieser Plakate nisten im Schädel’ (p. 35). Concrete bodily experience is used as a source domain to conceptualise the work of memory: Müller evokes the experience of having a physical object inside the body to explain the involuntary nature of her memory. At the same time, silence and size stand for the images of violence on the advertising boards: they are the reference points for the actual images that enter the skull of the author and remain there against her will.

In ‘Wenn wir schweigen’ from *Der König verneigt sich*, silence is similarly associated with an object inside the head: ‘wie unaufgebracht das Schweigen als innere Einstellung ein Leben lang im Kopf sitzen bleiben kann, wenn man es für abwegig hält, die Gedanken im Reden zu verbrauchen’ (p. 83). The unconventional multisensory image, which relates to somatic experience, allows Müller to present the psychological mechanism of keeping silent and its causes.

Finally, Müller uses the somatic experience of injury as a source domain to explain silence. In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist recounts how she went on a business trip and spent several nights in the hotel next to the railway. She describes how she was bothered by the

noise produced by the trains: ‘Züge rauschten von ganz weit wie Bäume, dann wie Eisen im Himmel, schließlich drinnen im Kopf zum Zerspringen. Danach war die Stille wund, es bellten Hunde, bis der nächste Zug fuhr’ (p. 176). Silence is presented as a vulnerable living being that can be hurt by sound. The brief periods of silence between trains are disrupted by the barking of dogs, and this disruption metaphorically inflicts injury upon silence. The narrator empathises with it, implying the value she places on those silent moments; the unconventional and vivid image of injury done to silence thereby conveys her own emotional suffering in response to the noise.

At one point in *Der Mensch*, the protagonist Windisch is listening to the night watchman making outlandish assertions about the ‘walachischen Baptisten’ and keeps silent: ‘Windisch spürt vom Wasser des Teiches und vom Flüstern des Nachtwächters in der Nase und in der Stirn einen brennenden, salzigen Schnupfen. Und auf der Zunge hat Windisch ein Loch vom Staunen und Schweigen’ (p. 76). The protagonist’s silence and wonder are presented as the causes of an imaginary hole in his tongue, which, the reader can infer, prevents Windisch from speaking. On one hand, he is irritated by the whispering of the night watchman. On the other, he is astonished by the speaker’s claims and keeps silent. The vehicle of injury conveys the protagonist’s emotional response and explains his silence.

In *Atemschaukel*, the narrator-protagonist recollects the aliases of his homosexual partners and presents them, and the silence about his homosexuality, as physical objects: ‘SCHWALBE, TANNE, OHR, FADEN, PIROL, MÜTZE, HASE, KATZE, MÖWE. Dann PERLE. Dass ich diese Decknamen im Kopf und im Nacken soviel Schweigen trug, traute mir hier niemand zu’ (p. 96). While the aliases of his partners are imagined as objects in his head, silence becomes a physical burden on his neck, which Leo has to bear for fear of punishment (this image is also evoked elsewhere in the novel; p. 10). Silence is construed as a quantifiable entity, and its quantity seems to correlate with the weight exerted upon the protagonist – weight serves as a source domain for the experience of silence. When Leo introduces himself at the beginning of the novel, he presents silence as his suitcase: ‘Ich trage stilles Gepäck’ (p. 9); keeping silent is conceived of as carrying around a physical object, and the size and weight of silence can be understood to correlate with the amount of information that the protagonist chooses to keep to himself. Furthermore, the sensory experience of weight can metaphorically stand for the intensity of his psychological suffering. The narrator’s writing becomes an exercise in unpacking the suitcase of silence and hence potentially alleviating his suffering.

In ‘Wenn wir schweigen’, Müller recounts how she talked to her friend about her interrogation by the secret police and uses the source domain of physical force to reason about

the balance between speech and silence: ‘Dem Reden hat das Schweigen die Waage gehalten. Wo das Schweigen von der Freundin falsch verstanden wäre, mußte ich reden, wo das Reden mich in die Nähe der Irren gestellt hätte, mußte ich schweigen’ (p. 78). Silence becomes an object that exerts a physical force on the imaginary weighing scales. The relationship between silence and speech is conveyed through the vivid image of force balance: the author must find the right balance between speech and silence to adhere to the requirements of adequacy in conversation with her friend. Therefore, weight and force dynamics serve as effective metaphorical vehicles for the speaker’s efforts to communicate her traumatic experience and for the relationship between speech and silence.

In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist describes her relationship with her co-worker Nelu and how she tried not to speak to him at work but ‘er hielt das Schweigen nicht aus’ (p. 61). Silence is conventionally presented as a burden to Nelu. He cannot keep silent sitting next to the protagonist while at work. Elsewhere in the novel, the protagonist remembers how she argued with her first husband and evokes the image of physical force to discuss the effects of silence: ‘Wenn wir stritten, hätten wir besser geschwiegen, um den Riß klein zu halten’ (p. 117). Silence holds together the protagonist and her husband. They do not get on well, and this issue is imagined as a gap between them; their arguments can be physical forces opening the gap, whereas silence acts as a counterforce and helps keep their relationship.

8.4 Space, Motion, and Container

In *Reisende*, Müller describes the protagonist’s travel on the bus and uses space as a source domain to juxtapose keeping silent in the bus with the absence of sound in the street:

Die Straße floß zusammen, daß der Bus nur knapp an den Häusern vorbeikam. Eine bis zum letzten Winkel ausgedachte Stille lag auf den Dächern. Nichts kam gegen sie an, kein Wind und kein Motor. Am wenigsten die kleinen, schwindligen Gesichter. Sie schwiegen. Es war kein ausgedachtes Schweigen. Das Schweigen im fahrenden Bus machte sich vor der ausgedachten Stille über den Dächern lächerlich. (p. 170)

The absence of sound is construed as an entity spanning over the roofs of the houses: space is evoked to conceptualise the silence outside the bus. At the same time, Müller ascribes to the silence in the bus the ability to perform complex social actions: embarrassment is mapped on to silence, which could also metonymically stand for the people in the bus. The passengers literally keep silent, and their silence (‘das Schweigen’) is juxtaposed with the imaginary

silence ('die Stille') in the street. Space plays a pivotal role in comparing the literal and imaginary silence, as well as in reasoning about the imagined absence of sound in the street.

In her essay 'Der Staub ist blind – die Sonne ein Krüppel. Zur Situation der Zigeuner in Rumänien', Müller discusses the silence of the Romanian historiography and public discourse about the country's collaboration with the Nazi regime:

Weder die Toten noch die Überlebenden der Vernichtungslager werden in der offiziellen rumänischen Geschichtsschreibung erwähnt. Das Kapitel 'Eiserne Garde', der rumänische Faschismus, liegt als kollektiver Gedächtnisschwund überm Land. Und die Tatsache, daß die Vernichtungslager in Transnistrien unter rumänischer Leitung standen. Darin sind sich Volk und Regierung einig: Man geht den Umweg des Schweigens, auf Fragen reagiert man aggressiv. Nur national-chauvinistische Blätter reden gerne darüber.¹

Speech is implicitly understood as a direct route towards a destination, whereas silence is a diversion. People prefer to avoid their past and choose to follow 'den Umweg des Schweigens' when dealing with traumatic memories. Müller relies on space as a source domain to explain why Romanians keep silent about their history of fascist government. Speaking about the past is presented as a traumatic and painful experience, and implicitly construed as travelling through space. The author uses a relatively unconventional expression to present silence, and hence the figurative nature of the association between silence and space can be recognised by the reader.

Müller conceptualises silence with the help of the source domain of motion. I have already analysed a few examples where motion plays a role in understanding silence, and now I shall focus on the passages where motion is the primary vehicle. In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist conveys her silence in conversation with her father through the source concept of motion: 'Mir war das Reden vergangen, ihm nicht' (p. 204). The verb 'vergehen' conventionally refers to the passage of time. Time is commonly associated with space, and the passage of time is presented as motion through space.² In the quoted sentence, speech is implicitly associated with time and motion: the speaker can be imagined as a subject moving through the space of the speech; once this space ends, the realm of silence begins.

¹ *Hunger und Seide*, pp. 136–53 (p. 146).

² Daniel Casasanto and Lera Boroditsky, 'Time in the Mind: Using Space to Think about Time', *Cognition*, 106 (2008), 579–93 (p. 579).

Alternatively, speech can be imagined as an object moving past the speaker, and silence is then the object which follows speech. Speech is a temporal activity, and its motivated association with motion provides a reference point for reasoning about silence. In other words, the author creatively uses the conventional associations between speech, space, motion, and time to explain the causes of silence.

In ‘Wenn wir schweigen’, Müller uses motion as a source domain to describe keeping silent, which was common in her family when she was a child: ‘Ich glaube, wir schwiegen uns, alle wie wir waren, in diesem Haus und Hof eng aneinander vorbei’ (p. 82). Keeping silent is construed as moving through space. In the conventional expression ‘aneinander vorbeireden’, the source domain of motion remains in the background. Due to the contrast with the conventional expression, Müller foregrounds the figurative nature of the association between silence and motion. The family members keep silent and do not verbally share their thoughts with each other. Yet they live together, and hence keeping silent is presented as moving close to each other. Spatial proximity can metonymically stand for social closeness. This association is originally presented, and hence its figurative nature is salient. Motion, applied as a source domain to understand silence, indicates both closeness and a certain distance between the family members.

Elsewhere in the essay, Müller describes the silence in her home village and construes it as a living being going up and down imaginary mental stairs: ‘Jeder trug seine Treppen im Kopf, auf denen das Schweigen auf und ab ging’ (p. 83). She evokes motion and ascribes subjectivity to keeping silent. The metonymic association between silence and thought can be inferred from the location of the stairs: the stairs in the head could stand for the thoughts that remain unsaid. Silent thought processes are thus associated with vertical motion, and silence is foregrounded as an essential phenomenon in the village.

One of the spatial concepts that Müller evokes as a source domain to reason about silence is the container image schema. In *Der Fuchs*, the narrator talks about the start of the working day and how music is being played while the workers are coming to the factory:

Morgens von sechs bis halb sieben kommt aus diesem Lautsprecher Musik.
Arbeiterlieder. Der Pförtner nennt sie: Morgenmusik. Sie ist für ihn eine Uhr. Wer
durchs Tor kommt, wenn die Musik verstummt ist, kommt zu spät zur Arbeit. Wer seine
Schritte beim Gehen nicht in die Takte stellt, wer in diesem Hof durch die Stille zu
seinem Webstuhl geht, wird aufgeschrieben und gemeldet. (p. 86)

Silence is construed as a container through which the workers are going. The source image of container allows Müller to present silence as the organising quality of the factory premises. The workers are late and may feel guilty walking through the premises in silence; they metaphorically walk through silence. The image of container provides an opportunity to blend spatial and auditory experiences into one scene; it is also associated with the feeling of guilt experienced by the workers. On one hand, silence can be conceived of as a container. On the other, it can metonymically stand for the premises of the factory. Thus, silence can be regarded as a target domain in the metaphorical association with the source domain of container, and it can also be understood as a metonymic vehicle for the premises of the factory. Readers can recognise the figurative nature of the association between space and silence, and bind these two qualities together in their interpretation of the passage. Silence is further associated with the social and psychological context of the scene: the absence of sound relates to a potential punishment and to such feelings as guilt.

At another point in the novel, Müller describes how ordinary people walk through '[d]ie stillen Straßen der Macht', where the authorities of the totalitarian regime live: 'Wenn hier einer geht, der nicht hier wohnt, der nicht hiergehört, ist für diese Straßen nichts gewesen' (p. 31). The author regards the silence of the streets as a permanent quality, and people walking through the streets are said to produce no sound while in the area. Sound becomes a physical entity that covers the people when they finally leave the silent streets and enter a different part of the city: 'Wenn die Gehenden dann auf der Brücke sind, deckt in unbekümmerten Geräuschen die Stadt sie zu' (p. 31). The city is endowed with subjectivity and manipulates sounds as physical objects, whereas sound is metaphorically conceptualised as something that can exert a physical force upon the observers. Speaking about the silent streets, Müller imagines silence as a container holding the people: 'Sie atmen auf, die Straßenbahn rauscht, zieht die Stirn und das Haar aus der Stille' (p. 31). Silence is strongly associated with the area and can be imagined as a container. Sounds become possible only when the people leave the area and hence exit the container of silence. The author, therefore, foregrounds the metaphorical association between silence and space by exaggerating the difference between the two parts of the city in terms of sound and focusing on how the people cross the clear-cut imaginary boundary between silence and sound. Silence is also associated with power in this passage: the power of the totalitarian regime forces passers-by to keep silent. They keep silent for fear of drawing attention or disturbing the peace and quiet of those wielding the punitive power of the state.

In *Atemschaukel*, the narrator-protagonist imagines his silence about the past as a container holding his experiences of the Soviet labour camp and other traumatic memories: ‘Ich habe mich so tief und so lang ins Schweigen gepackt, ich kann mich in Worten nie auspacken’ (p. 9). On one hand, Leo Auberg keeps silent because his experiences cannot be unpacked into words. Silence is imagined as a container holding these experiences and as a physical object always carried around by the protagonist. On the other, he tries to express his experiences in writing and associates speech with packing his suitcase: ‘Ich packe mich nur anders ein, wenn ich rede’ (p. 9). As a result, speech is also conceptualised metaphorically as a container. The process of writing can be imagined as the metaphorical unpacking of the suitcase. This image is supported by the fact that the protagonist takes an improvised suitcase with him to the Soviet labour camp and describes its contents in meticulous detail at the beginning of the novel (pp. 12–13). Both speech and silence are, therefore, presented through the source image of container, and this image relates to the protagonist’s suitcase. The reader can extend the metaphor to see the process of reading as the act of unpacking the narrator’s suitcase. Each new reading can then be a metaphorical unpacking of Leo’s suitcase that may reveal an entirely different vision of the work.³ While the container image schema relates to several possible target domains, silence remains the central concept associated with it – silence is presented as a container holding the narrator’s experience, whereas speech is seen as inadequate for expressing his suffering: ‘Mehr sag ich nicht, weil ich mich, wenn ich rede, nur anders einpacke ins Schweigen’ (p. 290). Paradoxically, speech is implied to be a form of silence. Silence becomes the pivotal experience of expression for the narrator – he often reflects on it and discusses his engagement with it. Overall, the container image schema often serves as a metaphorical source domain for keeping silent in the novel, whereas silence metonymically stands for a variety of experiences and actions.

In *Herztier*, the narrator-protagonist describes a confrontation in the bar between factory workers, who have moved to the city from rural areas, and then comments on the behaviour of rural inhabitants: ‘Bauern, dachte ich mir, nur sie fallen aus dem Lachen ins Weinen, aus dem Schreien ins Schweigen. Ahnungslos froh und abgründig wütend führen sie aus der Haut’ (p. 38). She uses motion as a vehicle to describe the dramatic changes of behaviour and mental state of the people: the change from shouting to keeping silent is presented as forced motion from one location to another. Speech and silence are conceptualised metaphorically as locations or containers. It is implied that the farmers do not

³ Shopin, ‘Unpacking the Suitcases’, p. 197.

control their behaviour as it is associated with caused motion: they fall from one container into another; silence is imagined as a location where they can find themselves. The narrator presents rural inhabitants as unaware of their behaviour and mental state – their loss of subjectivity through the image of caused motion deprives them of reflexivity and self-consciousness. The narrator denies their mental lives the psychological depth of self-reflection: they become objects involuntarily moving from one location (container) to another, and silence is a container into which the villagers can fall immediately after speech.

In ‘Wenn wir schweigen’, Müller discusses the dominance of silence in her home village and her family: ‘Man denkt gar nicht ans Reden, man ist mit sich ins Schweigen eingeschlossen’ (p. 82). Silence is presented as a container, and the image implies that people are lonely when they keep silent: the passage foregrounds the sense of being alone with oneself. The container image schema is likewise used to conceptualise silence in another passage from the same essay: ‘Im Schweigen kommt aber alles auf einmal daher, es bleibt alles drin hängen, was über lange Zeit nicht gesagt wird, sogar was niemals gesagt wird. Es ist ein stabiler, in sich geschlossener Zustand’ (pp. 74–75). Here silence holds all the things that remain unsaid: it holds multiple meanings simultaneously, whereas speech presents ideas linearly. Silence is also described as a state, and states are conventionally conceptualised as containers. Hence Müller foregrounds the association between silence and the container image schema.

In general, the source domain of container provides an effective means to reason about silence. Silence can metaphorically contain the things that remain unsaid, and relates to the literal spaces occupied by the people who keep silent and experience the absence of sound. In what is becoming a familiar manner, Müller relies on conceptual and linguistic conventions when presenting silence as a container, but simultaneously defamiliarises them through context and creative language use.

8.5 Physical Objects, Manipulation, and Destruction

Müller conceptualises silence as a physical object. I have already analysed several passages where silence is understood as a physical entity. In *Reisende*, for example, silence is a physical object that can be perceived through the sense of touch: ‘In der Berührung zwischen Irene's Blick und dem leuchtenden Fenster lag Kälte und Starrsinn. Und eine angestrengte Stille’ (p. 176). Silence is imagined as a visible object, whereas vision is construed through the source domain of touch. As a result, silence becomes a physical object accessible to touch.

The source domain of physical object allows multiple sensory modalities to be activated with regard to silence, because physical objects can be perceived simultaneously through different senses; that makes it difficult to separate out sensorimotor experiences and present the expressions as relying on a single sensory modality. At the same time, there are crucial differences between sensory experiences because different sensory stimuli are perceived by specialised organs, hence it is reasonable to categorise the source and target domains according to the sensory modalities they evoke. The analysis of the metaphors for silence according to sensory modalities is, therefore, both meaningful and problematic.

A physical object is a complex category. It is context-dependent and does not apply to reality as it is because objects are construed by human perception and conception. Physical objects relate to concrete experiences; they are commonly used as vehicles in metaphors because we are biologically prone to integrate different sensory experiences into multisensory images (percepts) and hence perceive physical objects in the environment.⁴ It is natural for our perception to carve up the world into objects since it allows us to achieve our goals. In the framework of conceptual metaphor theory, it is, therefore, clear that we can better understand more abstract concepts – such as silence – by associating them with objects.

In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist and her partner Paul use the source image of physical object to reason about the people keeping silent. The protagonist describes her confrontation with the alleged secret police agents that she meets in the street: ‘Sie war sofort gehässig, sie fühlte sich von mir ertappt. Er auch, sonst hätte er nicht klein und stumm wie ein Dreckhaufen dagesessen’ (p. 113). The silence of the secret police officer is imagined as the silence of a physical entity; it is associated with a complex multisensory image of a repulsive object. The metaphor allows different sensory and motor experiences associated with disgust to be mapped on to silence; the narrator thus expresses her attitude to the secret police.

Müller productively evokes the motor experience of manipulating physical objects to reason about silence. In *Atemschaukel*, Leo Auberg conceptualises dealing with silence via the source domain of object manipulation. He imagines his experience of keeping silent about his homosexual partners as carrying a physical object: ‘Dass ich [...] im Nacken soviel Schweigen trug, traute mir hier niemand zu’ (p. 96). He repeatedly associates keeping silent with carrying objects (pp. 9, 10). The experiences of physical pressure and object manipulation map on to the protagonist’s psychological experience of keeping silent for fear of punishment, mockery, and physical violence. The need to keep silent about his sexuality

⁴ Deroy et al., p. 744.

causes suffering to Leo, and he imagines it as the constant carrying of a heavy object, which relates to his experience of forced labour in the Soviet camp.

In *Herztier*, the narrator-protagonist recounts how she and her friends were on the verge of committing suicide because of persecution by the totalitarian regime. She describes their collective silence about their experiences: ‘So wurde jeder selbstgerecht und hatte das Schweigen zur Hand, das die anderen schuldig machte, weil er und sie lebten, statt tot zu sein’ (p. 229). Silence is implicitly construed as a physical object that the characters can manipulate. Keeping silent becomes a means to achieve a certain result, and the motor schema of manipulating physical objects conveys this meaning. Having something at hand is a conventional way of speaking about physical objects, but here it is creatively associated with keeping silent. Hence it can be recognised as a metaphorical source domain for silence. It is uncommon to speak about having silence at hand, and the author uses the strangeness of the association to highlight the psychological impact of silence on the characters.

Müller presents silence as a fragile and destructible object. The frame of breaking an object is mapped on to the action of speaking or producing sound: silence can be broken by speech. In the autofictional essay ‘Niederungen’, the narrator describes the daily life of the women in her home village: ‘Die Frauen in den dunklen Falten ihrer Röcke, sie gehen stumm in ihren Häuserwänden ein und aus [...]. Mittags brechen sie ihr Schweigen durch Zurufe, die den Hühnern gelten’ (p. 35). Speech is construed as breaking a physical object, whereas silence is imagined as a destructible entity.

In *Heute*, the narrator-protagonist observes delivery vehicles entering the street where she lives, and associates the sound they make with the process of tearing an object to shreds: ‘Sie zerreißen die Stille, brummen viel und liefern wenig, einige Kisten mit Brot, Milch und Gemüse und viele mit Schnaps’ (p. 12). Silence is imagined as a physical object that can be ripped to pieces; it could be a thread or fabric that is torn by sound. Destruction and force dynamics as source domains thus convey the impact of the trucks on the silence in the street.

The scenario of tearing up an object is likewise evoked as a source domain with regard to silence in *Herztier*, when the narrator describes her visit to the cemetery where her friend is buried: ‘Die Stille des Efeus war zum Zerreißen’ (p. 247). Silence is not torn up, but it is ascribed the quality of fragility. The metaphor communicates the mental state of the protagonist and her experience of the silence at the cemetery; it implies that there is anger in her mourning. Like the ivy, the silence can be ripped to pieces. Ivy and silence are commonly associated with graveyards, and their destruction could stand for confronting death. Müller creates a lucid image to convey the protagonist’s perception of and attitude to silence. She

estranges the conventional association between silence and destruction by shifting the focus on the potential nature of the action, introducing a new context and casting the metaphor in a different linguistic form. The metaphor relies on conceptual conventions, but Müller manages to foreground its figurative nature and engage the imagination.

Elsewhere in the novel, the narrator discusses the effects of silence and associates keeping silent with destructive actions: ‘Mit den Wörtern im Mund zertreten wir so viel wie mit den Füßen im Gras. Aber auch mit dem Schweigen’ (p. 7). Silence can be understood as an instrument with which the person can damage the grass. Consequently, keeping silent is associated with the physical force that inflicts the damage. Since ‘[d]as Gras steht im Kopf’ (p. 8), the metaphorical image of the grass could relate to mental processes such as thoughts and memories. The image of damaging the grass is evoked again at the end of the novel (p. 250). While the author foregrounds this metaphor as one of the central images in the text, its target domain remains unclear and open to interpretation. Müller uses the source domain of destruction to present metaphorically the effects of silence and speech, and highlights the fact that both silence and speech have a significant impact on the psychological state of the characters. In general, destruction relates to sensory experience and is one of the common source domains used by Müller to reason about silence and to highlight its causes and effects.

8.6 Life and Death

Müller imagines silence as a living being. I have previously analysed such metaphors, approaching them from different perspectives. In ‘Gelber Mais’ (2011), the writer recounts how her mother kept silent about her suffering in the Soviet labour camp; she explains the effect of her mother’s silence on her and presents it as a living being: ‘Die verkniffene Normalität und das verstörte Schweigen waren immer da und wurden mit der Zeit monströs, wühlten mich auf, gaben keine Ruhe’ (p. 129). Silence becomes the subject of action. It acts independently from the people involved in the scene and comes into physical contact with the author, having a psychological impact on her. Conceptualising silence as the subject of action divests the person who keeps silent of responsibility. Silence as a subject becomes independent from the speaker, and can be imagined as the result of circumstances. Consequently, the above metaphor implies that the author’s mother was not to blame for the effects of her silence on her daughter. The metaphorical conceptualisation of silence as the subject of action allows the author to establish a distance between her mother and the deleterious impact of silence.

In ‘Wenn wir schweigen’, Müller construes keeping silent as the subject of action: ‘Jeder trug seine Treppen im Kopf, auf denen das Schweigen auf und ab ging’ (p. 83). As I have already noted, silence can be imagined as a human being walking up and down the stairs. Since Müller creates this vivid scene, silence must have had a significant psychological impact on her and her family.

In *Herztier*, the narrator discusses the German-language books that her friends were hiding from the secret police and implicitly conceptualises silence as a human being:

Die Bücher aus dem Sommerhaus waren ins Land geschmuggelt. Geschrieben waren sie in der Muttersprache, in der sich der Wind legte. Keine Staatssprache wie hier im Land. Aber auch keine Kinderbettsprache aus den Dörfern. In den Büchern stand die Muttersprache, aber die dörfliche Stille, die das Denken verbietet, stand in den Büchern nicht drin. Dort, wo die Bücher herkommen, denken alle, dachten wir uns. (p. 55)

The author speaks about Romanian as the state language and presents as immature the German language that she experienced in her home village. In contrast, the language of the books is associated with freedom. The silence in the village is construed as a subject who can prevent people from thinking. Müller often speaks about the preponderance of silence in rural communities, and here she associates it with a subject who can forbid free thought. Silence is ascribed the ability to perform a complex social action – as a result, it can be a human being. Silence could also metonymically stand for the people who keep silent and hence cannot think critically. One of the reasons why the figurative meaning of the above expression stands out is the unusual target domain: it is impossible to police thought, and hence the power ascribed to silence makes salient the underlying metaphor.

Müller also conceptualises silence as death. For example, she defamiliarises the conventional association between silence and death in *Der Fuchs*, when the narrator describes fishermen at the river and construes their silence as death: ‘Die Angler stehen reglos, wenn sie schweigen. Wenn sie nicht miteinander reden, leben sie nicht. Ihr Schweigen hat keinen Grund, nur daß die Wörter stocken’ (p. 39). Death is used as a source domain to reason about silence. Müller evokes the source domain of death to create a vivid image of the silent fishermen and to highlight the significance of silence in the scene. Keeping silent is understood as being dead, whereas speech is implicitly associated with life. Silence can literally relate to death since we know that dead people do not speak; the metaphor helps imagine as causation this correlation between silence and death.

8.7 Conclusion

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Wittgenstein concludes that ‘[w]ovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen’.⁵ Some scholarly works on language appear to follow this proposition in their approach to silence: I was unable to find any substantive discussion of silence, beyond the study of pauses used for turn-taking, in several linguistics textbooks.⁶ Müller, however, identifies silence as a form of communication and is fascinated by its role in language. She often uses concrete concepts (e.g. eating and speaking) to make sense of silence and relies on linguistic and conceptual conventions to communicate to readers her vision of it. She simultaneously estranges those conventions and foregrounds the figurative nature of the meaning of silence. It is not a stable and well-defined concept in her work, and its meaning changes depending on the context and on the images that she chooses to evoke in order to reason about it – the reader grasps the meaning of silence through simulating its metaphorical associations with other ideas (such as physical objects, their manipulation and destruction). While there is no single concept that is exclusively mapped on to silence, the body is the key source of its meaning (e.g. somatic experience and smell), and readers understand silence in Müller’s texts when they recognise its tentative yet motivated relationships with various concepts (e.g. vision, touch, force), most of which relate to sensorimotor experience.

⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1922), p. 162.

⁶ George Yule, *The Study of Language*, 4th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Ralph Fasold and Jeff Connor-Linton, eds, *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics* (2006; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); James Hurford, Brendan Heasley, and Michael Smith, eds, *Semantics: A Coursebook*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE

In analytic philosophy, any meaning can be expressed in language. John Searle calls this proposition ‘the principle of expressibility, the principle that whatever can be meant can be said’.¹ Moreover, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein suggests that ‘[d]ie Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt’.² In contrast, Müller shows that language is not the only means of meaning-making: she observes that thought can be non-verbal, and does not limit her creativity to language as she works with images in her collages. Müller does not trust language: ‘Ich traue der Sprache nicht.’³ She speaks of language’s dependence on subjective experience: ‘Wenn der Großteil am Leben nicht mehr stimmt, stürzen auch die Wörter ab.’⁴ She also questions the power of language to express thought: ‘Welche Wörter sind es, und wie schnell müßten sie parat stehen und sich abwechseln mit anderen, um die Gedanken einzuholen. Und was heißt Einholen. Das Denken spricht doch mit sich selber völlig anders, als Worte mit ihm sprechen.’⁵ Finally, Müller highlights language’s tendency to distort meaning: ‘die Pantomime der Wörter [...] respektiert keine realen Dimensionen, schrumpft die Hauptsachen und dehnt die Nebensachen.’⁶ She thus represents artists who confront the limits of language and accept that it is not a perfect means of expression, but the privileged one. Such an acceptance also features in cognitive linguistics and psychology, which acknowledge the non-verbal nature of much thought and its potential inexpressibility in language.⁷ The limitations of language are thus recognised in both the arts and sciences. Language often cannot express the concrete experiences engendered by contemporary art, and

¹ John Searle, ‘Introduction’, in *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (1979; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. vii–xii (p. ix).

² Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p. 144.

³ ‘Immer derselbe Schnee’, p. 99.

⁴ ‘In jeder Sprache’, p. 15.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ ‘Jedes Wort’, p. 18.

⁷ See, for example, Wilson and Golonka, p. 11. Their theory of embodied cognition agrees well with Wittgenstein’s interpretation of meaning as use, and resonates with the theory of speech acts in presenting a vision of ‘language that replaces what words mean with what language lets us do’.

fails to formulate the kind of abstract thought characteristic of much modern science. It is not a flawless vehicle for conveying thought and feelings.

In the field of artificial intelligence, technology can be incomprehensible even to experts. In the essay ‘Is Artificial Intelligence Permanently Inscrutable?’, Aaron Bornstein discusses this problem with regard to artificial neural networks (computational models): ‘Nobody knows quite how they work. And that means no one can predict when they might fail.’⁸ This could harm people if, for example, doctors relied on this technology to assess whether patients might develop complications (pp. 69–70). Bornstein says organisations sometimes choose less efficient but more transparent tools for data analysis and ‘[e]ven governments are starting to show concern about the increasing influence of inscrutable neural-network oracles’ (p. 70). He suggests that ‘[t]he requirement for interpretability can be seen as another set of constraints, preventing a model from a “pure” solution that pays attention only to the input and output data [...], and potentially reducing accuracy’ (p. 71). The mind is a limitation for artificial intelligence: ‘interpretability could keep such models from reaching their full potential’ (p. 75). Since the work of such technology cannot be fully understood, it is virtually impossible to explain in language.

Ryota Kanai acknowledges that ‘given the complexity of contemporary neural networks, we have trouble discerning how AIs [artificial intelligences] produce decisions, much less translating the process into a language humans can make sense of.’⁹ To that end, Kanai and his colleagues are ‘trying to implement metacognition in neural networks so that they can communicate their internal states’. Their ambition is to give a voice to the machine: ‘We want our machines to explain how and why they do what they do.’ This form of communication is to be developed by the machines themselves. With this feedback, researchers will serve as translators who can explain to the public decisions made by the machines. As for human language, Kanai refers to it as ‘the additional difficulty of teaching AIs to express themselves’. (Incidentally, this assumes that computational models have ‘selves’.) Language is a challenge for artificial intelligence.

Elon Musk regards language as a problem and advances the idea ‘that we should augment the slow, imprecise communication of our voices with a direct brain-to-computer

⁸ Aaron Bornstein, ‘Is Artificial Intelligence Permanently Inscrutable?’, *Nautilus*, 40 (2016), 68–76 (p. 69). Page numbers in the text of this paragraph refer to Bornstein’s essay.

⁹ Ryota Kanai, ‘We Need Conscious Robots’, *Nautilus*, 47 (2017)

<<http://nautil.us/issue/47/consciousness/we-need-conscious-robots>> [accessed 2 May 2015].

linkup'.¹⁰ He has founded the company Neuralink that will allegedly connect people to the network in which they will exchange thoughts without wasting their time and energy on language. As Christopher Markou describes it, '[i]t would enable us to share our thoughts, fears, hopes and anxieties without demeaning ourselves with written or spoken language'.¹¹ Tim Urban presents Musk's vision of thought communication and argues that 'when you consider the "lost in transmission" phenomenon that happens with language, you realize how much more effective group thinking would be'.¹² This project makes sinister assumptions: instead of enhancing verbal communication, Musk suggests abandoning it as an inadequate means of social interaction. People generally appreciate improvement of the communication networks that transmit language, but instead they are offered a corporate utopian future of technotelepathy and an eerily dystopian present where language is an impediment to cooperation. It is both ironic and reassuring that such criticism of language can be successfully communicated by language.

In his essay 'The Kekulé Problem', Cormac McCarthy discusses the origins of language and is sceptical about its fundamental role in cognition: 'Problems in general are often well posed in terms of language and language remains a handy tool for explaining them. But the actual process of thinking – in any discipline – is largely an unconscious affair.'¹³ He defines the unconscious as 'a machine for operating an animal'. This is in accord with Alfred North Whitehead's view of the unconscious as 'important operations that we can perform without thinking of them'.¹⁴ McCarthy regards language as a relatively recent invention and compares it to a virus that rapidly spread among humans about a hundred thousand years

¹⁰ Antonio Regalado, 'With Neuralink, Elon Musk Promises Human-to-Human Telepathy. Don't Believe It', *MIT Technology Review*, 22 April 2017 <<https://www.technologyreview.com/s/604254/with-neuralink-elon-musk-promises-human-to-human-telepathy-dont-believe-it>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

¹¹ Christopher Markou, 'Neuralink Wants to Wire Your Brain to the Internet – What Could Possibly Go Wrong?', *The Conversation*, 2 May 2017 <<https://theconversation.com/neuralink-wants-to-wire-your-brain-to-the-internet-what-could-possibly-go-wrong-76180>> [accessed 8 May 2017].

¹² Tim Urban, 'Neuralink and the Brain's Magical Future', *Wait But Why*, 20 April 2017 <<http://waitbutwhy.com/2017/04/neuralink.html>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

¹³ Cormac McCarthy, 'The Kekulé Problem', *Nautilus*, 47 (2017), 22–31 (p. 25).

¹⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *An Introduction to Mathematics* (London: Williams & Northgate, 1911), p. 61.

ago.¹⁵ This vision of language is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. First, language is a human faculty developed due to the gradual evolution of communication; it is problematic to conceive of it as a virus or the result of a sudden invention. I agree with Steven Pinker that ‘it is fruitful to consider language as an evolutionary adaptation’.¹⁶ Second, thought does not need to be unconscious to be non-verbal. Much conscious thought does not rely on language.¹⁷ Finally, humans may be facing problems that are difficult to convey through language. This might be the key challenge for both the arts and sciences in the immediate future.

While language may not be a perfect medium for thought, it is the most important means of communication that makes possible modern societies, institutions, states, and cultures. Its resourcefulness allows humans to establish social relationships and design new forms of cooperation. It is a robust and highly optimised form of communication, developed through gradual change. For thousands of years, language has been a tool for social interaction. This interaction is facing existential threats (e.g. authoritarianism, isolationism, conflict) because the subjective experiences (think of the limits of empathy when it comes to migrants) and the knowledge (think of the complexity of global warming) that are engaged in the arts and sciences appear to have gone beyond the expressive power of language. Humanity depends on the capacity of language to communicate new complex ideas and thus integrate them into culture. If people fail to understand and discuss emerging global problems, they will not be able to address them in solidarity. In his essay ‘Our World Outsmarts Us’, Robert Burton highlights this conundrum when he asks the reader: ‘If we are not up to the cognitive task, how might we be expected to respond?’¹⁸ Individuals cannot stop climate change or curb the rising inequality of income distribution. These goals can only be achieved by concerted efforts. To work together, people need language.

¹⁵ For a discussion of this metaphor, see Mark Turner, ‘Language Is a Virus’, *Poetics Today*, 13 (1992), 725–36.

¹⁶ Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 24.

¹⁷ For a first-person account of conscious non-verbal thought, see Lauren Marks, ‘What My Stroke Taught Me’, *Nautilus*, 47 (2017) <<http://nautil.us/issue/47/consciousness/what-my-stroke-taught-me>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

¹⁸ Robert Burton, ‘Our World Outsmarts Us’, *The Aeon*, 3 May 2017 <<https://aeon.co/essays/the-complexity-of-social-problems-is-outsmarting-the-human-brain>> [accessed 3 May 2017].

In the arts, it is felt that subjective experiences are not always transmittable by language. Artists confront the limits of concrete expression. Scientists, in their turn, understand that language is a crude tool incapable of conveying abstract ideas. Science thus probes the limits of abstract thought. Both the arts and sciences are dissatisfied with verbal communication. To induce wonder, artists may forego language. To obtain knowledge, scientists often leave language behind. Ahmed Alkhateeb suggests outsourcing research to artificial intelligence because '[h]uman minds simply cannot reconstruct highly complex natural phenomena efficiently enough in the age of big data'.¹⁹ The problem is that language is a tool for the gathering of knowledge and appreciation of beauty by the whole society. Abandoning language marginalises the arts and sciences. Wonder and knowledge become inaccessible for the community at large. When people make decisions about the future, political processes may fail to register what is happening at the forefront of human thought. Without language, the arts and sciences lose cultural significance and political clout: there is less hope for the arts to move people's hearts, and less opportunity for sciences to enlighten the public. With the arts and sciences on the margins, humanity undermines its cultural safeguards. Today's dominant narratives foreground the progress of science and democratisation of art, but global challenges necessitate an even more active engagement with scientific, moral, and aesthetic dilemmas on the part of humanity. Language is one of the key tools that can realise this ambition.

It is important to strike a balance between pushing the limits of language and using it as a tool to communicate and collaborate. Artists and scientists might approach the public with ideas that cannot be easily understood and yet need to be conveyed by language. In his essay 'To Fix the Climate, Tell Better Stories', Michael Segal argues that science needs narratives to become culture. He posits that narratives can help humanity solve global problems.²⁰ Carrie Arnold reveals this potential as she explores how '[i]ndigenous peoples

¹⁹ Ahmed Alkhateeb, 'Science Has Outgrown the Human Mind and Its Limited Capacities', *The Aeon*, 24 April 2017 <<https://aeon.co/ideas/science-has-outgrown-the-human-mind-and-its-limited-capacities>> [accessed 4 May 2017].

²⁰ Michael Segal, 'To Fix the Climate, Tell Better Stories', *Nautilus*, 47 (2017) <<http://nautil.us/issue/47/consciousness/to-fix-the-climate-tell-better-stories>> [accessed 4 May 2017].

around the world tell myths which contain warning signs for natural disasters'.²¹ Today people can construct narratives based on an expert understanding of the world. These stories can relate unfathomable dangers to the frail human body; and language is the best political vehicle for this task. Timothy Snyder, for example, draws from the history of the twentieth century to relate the rise of authoritarian regimes to concrete threats to human life, encouraging his readers to stand up to tyranny. He asks them to take responsibility for the face of the world, defend institutions, remember professional ethics, believe in truth, and challenge the status quo.²² His language is powerful and clear. Such narratives can help address complex social and environmental problems by using human-scale categories of language.

I agree with Michael Erard that there is a need to design helpful metaphors because 'people [...] have trouble grasping forms of causality that aren't direct and linear' and 'our culture gives us crude models for understanding it'.²³ Artists and scientists depend on language to communicate subjective experiences and complex ideas to the public. Through language, they can empower people to tackle critical issues, and metaphors can enhance such communication and strengthen social interaction. Herta Müller uses metaphors to explain how people are traumatised by totalitarian regimes. Her tropes enable readers to understand the causes and effects of suffering and social oppression. She has effectively communicated to the public the dangers of totalitarian government and illiberal society. Her metaphors give a voice to those who might struggle to express their personal experiences, and they enable readers to empathise with the victims of the dictatorial regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu. She also uses metaphors to elucidate language under such subjugation, as I have shown in this dissertation.

When she employs such metaphors, Müller relies on linguistic conventions and creates her images on the firm ground of common cognitive processes. She uses human-scale concepts and vivid tropes to familiarise the reader with different experiences that are otherwise difficult to relate to. At the same time, she estranges familiar language and

²¹ Carrie Arnold, 'Watchers of the Earth', *The Aeon*, 13 April 2017 <<https://aeon.co/essays/indigenous-myths-carry-warning-signals-about-natural-disasters>> [accessed 4 May 2017].

²² Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017), pp. 22–72.

²³ Michael Erard, 'See through Words', *The Aeon*, 9 June 2015 <<https://aeon.co/essays/how-to-build-a-metaphor-to-change-people-s-minds>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

highlights the role of figurative thought. This dichotomy of metaphorical language and thought is an aspect of the old and artificial divide between tradition and innovation in art. This project has shown how Müller builds on conventional language and on the principles of metaphorical conceptualisation, and how she defamiliarises linguistic and conceptual conventions through original associations, poetic language, and context.

Defamiliarisation is a well-known principle of literary writing and art in general. In his seminal essay ‘Art, as Device’ (1919), Viktor Shklovsky argues that artists defamiliarise life:

Automatization eats things, clothes, furniture, your wife, and the fear of war. [...] And so this thing we call art exists in order to restore the sensation of life, in order to make us feel things, in order to make a stone stony. The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely recognizing, things; the device of art is the ‘enstrangement’ of things and the complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception, as the process of perception is, in art, an end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is the means to live through the making of a thing; what has been made does not matter in art.²⁴

This irreverence towards the result of artistic efforts might explain why Müller’s metaphorical language is unsystematic at the textual level, but conforms to cognitive and linguistic constraints at the level of individual tropes. Müller could defamiliarise language and thought, and foreground figurative associations, as an end in itself. Yet her works also express vital ideas and rely on conventions to deliver clear messages about suffering and oppression. Decades after Shklovsky’s germinal work, the dichotomy of familiarisation and estrangement remains essential to literature and literary works continue to enlighten readers and move them.

Since writers estrange ordinary language and life in their works,²⁵ literature can shed light on and question the things commonly taken for granted. In general, this view on the role of defamiliarisation in art resonates with the interpretation of poetic metaphor in cognitive literary studies: poetic metaphor is said to result from estranging conventional tropes.²⁶ This vision of art also relates to the current research on the role of automaticity in cognitive processes. For example, John Bargh et al. speak about ‘the automatic influence of concrete physical states and experiences on abstract psychological and interpersonal processes’, and

²⁴ Shklovsky, p. 162.

²⁵ Shklovsky, pp. 158.

²⁶ Lakoff and Turner, p. 215.

suggest that ‘activation automatically spreads from concepts activated by physical experiences to their metaphorically-related social and psychological concepts’.²⁷ Writers, then, disrupt such automaticity and help the reader see the figurative roots of language and thought. Yet they also rely on conventions to express vital ideas and deliver clear messages. Whether or not one acknowledges that familiarisation and estrangement, as well as automaticity and its disruption, are essential to literature, literary works will continue to educate their readers and induce wonder.

Literary scholars have observed that Müller sometimes creates metaphorical images whose meaning is unclear.²⁸ She can invoke a vivid multisensory scene or concept that has no obvious target domain. These metaphors invite the reader to look for possible interpretations. They are both salient and unconventional. Postmodern philosophy not only promotes the use of such metaphors as an aesthetic principle but also discourages their interpretation in favour of not-knowing.²⁹ For example, Miguel de Beistegui defines metaphor through the absence of the target domain when he argues that

metaphor [...] form[s] a particular type of experience and aesthetic position.

Specifically, it designates the experience of the foreign, the uncanny, and the loss of the proper. But that loss is no cause for lament or grief. On the contrary, it should be celebrated as the experience through which the world is revealed differently and as if for the first time, as the occurrence of the truth that is not cognitive, and thus not a matter of recognition.³⁰

This is a truly obscurantist position. Ironically, it makes postmodern philosophy indistinguishable from anti-intellectualism.³¹ These strange bedfellows, who loathe each other whole-heartedly, exhibit uncanny similarity in their attitude to knowledge. In the times of

²⁷ John A. Bargh, with Kay L. Schwader and others, ‘Automaticity in Social-Cognitive Processes’, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 16 (2012), 593–605 (pp. 593, 596).

²⁸ See, for example, Ricarda Schmidt, p. 72; and Shopin, ‘Unpacking the Suitcases’, p. 207.

²⁹ For a comprehensive discussion and consequential application of the aesthetic principle of not-knowing, see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. by John Goodman (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2005).

³⁰ Miguel de Beistegui, *Aesthetics After Metaphysics: From Mimesis to Metaphor* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), p. 171.

³¹ For a field exploration of the relationship between postmodern philosophy and the post-truth anti-intellectualism, see Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2014).

post-truth, such an approach to metaphor and critical thinking in general might be discredited. Adopting this aesthetic principle, some scholars attribute disproportionate value to the metaphors whose target domain is underspecified. While it is true that such images are evoked in Müller's texts and her writing can appear idiosyncratic and opaque, the absence of the target domain is rare in her metaphorical conceptualisation of language.

Whereas literary critics sometimes speak about the opaqueness and ambiguity of Müller's texts,³² my research indicates how reliant she is on existing conventions. Her works can be appreciated because she presents vivid images to her readers and engages their imagination. Literature deals with human-scale categories and is directly useful to human beings: its works bring pleasure through beauty and can educate the reader. Müller achieves these goals when she uses and estranges everyday figurative language in her works. Ambiguity and vagueness are present in her writing, but her language relies on conventions. The reader can understand the text because its messages are conveyed through the conventions and established principles of natural language. Importantly, the author succeeds in estranging these conventions and making the reader aware of the figurative meaning of language. Defamiliarising language, Müller makes her readers think about the very medium of creation. This is in good agreement with Marven's observation that in Müller's writing 'the words [...] themselves become the focus and the interest of the text'.³³ Since analytical reasoning about metaphors can be problematic due to multisensory perception, context dependence, and the limitations of natural language, Müller's works might be challenging to interpret as she focuses the reader's attention on the figurative nature of language and makes salient its tentative yet motivated relationship with the world.

In Müller's writing, language is not a stable concept. Its meaning depends on the circumstances. It is grounded in bodily, linguistic, and cultural contexts. Her metaphors for language are primarily characterised by embodiment. If language is part of human cognition, then the mind must rely on concrete concepts to make sense of abstract ideas because of the ubiquity and conventionality of such figurative associations in language. In Müller's texts, language acquires omnipotence and total licence when it comes to sensory experience: 'Das Kleben der Wörter ist so sinnlich, die Wörter können und dürfen alles.'³⁴ Müller uses multisensory images to illuminate language's sensuousness: 'Mit der Zeit wird jeder

³² Haupt-Cucuiu, p. 5; see also Bozzi, *Der fremde Blick*, p.141.

³³ Marven, *Body and Narrative*, p. 84.

³⁴ 'Gelber Mais', p. 128.

Wortgeruch taub.’³⁵ Words cause pain: ‘der Schmerz, der aufkommt, in einem Moment, wo dieses Wort einem ins eigene Gesicht schlägt’; and they have a taste: ‘Jedem schmeckt ein anderes Wort.’³⁶ Language alleviates suffering: ‘Im Alltag waren diese Wörter und Redewendungen [...] die einzige Leichtigkeit. [...] sie halfen den Menschen zu überleben, den Wahnwitz von Hunger und Seide zu ertragen’; and it causes damage by exerting physical force: ‘Ein zorniges Wort kann in einem Atemzug mehr zertreten [...] als zwei Füße in einem ganzen Leben.’³⁷ Language is sharp: ‘ein zweischneidiges Wort’; and it is a destructible entity: ‘Ich hab die Wörter abstürzen sehen.’³⁸ These images do not constitute a single scenario; but none of them is arbitrary, and all are motivated by embodiment. Müller both relies on and estranges such conceptual and linguistic conventions as she explores the meaning of language. She manages to shed more light on language by foregrounding its multifarious associations with other phenomena than if she were to develop a coherent theory of it. Her inclusive vision of language is both functional and meaningful, and is not limited to a single trope. In this context, I agree with her when she comments that ‘[d]urch diese unterbrochene Art zu erzählen habe ich mehr Möglichkeiten, als wenn ich an einem Faden entlang erzählen würde.’³⁹ While her tropes for language lack overall coherence, some of these figurative associations (e.g. the meaningfulness of silence in the village and the oppressive language of totalitarian regimes) remain consistent throughout her works – these stable metaphorical associations could be studied in more detail in the future.

This dissertation has explored the metaphorical conceptualisation of language in the condition of suffering from social oppression. It has examined ideas ranging from injury as one of the most significant vehicles for language to silence as one of the most salient linguistic phenomena in Müller’s oeuvre. My research proceeded from the common source of meaning for language (injury) to its representative target domain (silence). I encountered stylistic, cultural, and cognitive obstacles along the way. First, Müller’s use of metaphors for language as bodily experience may be her personal preference. Her tropes consistently illustrate conceptual metaphor theory, but this consistency might stem from coincidence if the writer’s style fortuitously converges with the premises of the theory. There is ample room for

³⁵ *Atemschaukel*, p. 191.

³⁶ ‘Das Ticken der Norm’, p. 91; *Atemschaukel*, p. 157.

³⁷ ‘Hunger und Seide’, pp. 75–76; *Der Fuchs*, p. 171.

³⁸ ‘Der König verneigt sich’, p. 57; ‘In jeder Sprache’, p. 15.

³⁹ Haines and Littler, p. 18.

confirmation bias, which throws into question the claim that embodiment motivates the figurative conceptualisation of language in her works. Furthermore, I do not quantify my research and cannot prove that there is a causal link between language and bodily experience when it comes to metaphors in Müller's texts. Second, some concepts and words do not correlate well across languages. For example, 'die Stimme' differs from 'voice' as it is not always associated with language and can relate to the sounds produced by animals. As I noted in Chapter Seven, 'silence' is not equivalent to 'das Schweigen' because the latter specifically communicates the embodied experience of refraining from vocal sound production. These linguistic and cultural differences can be negotiated through careful reading and their meaning can be understood in the relevant context. Finally, the cognitive challenges of the project stem from the insights of psychology and linguistics. The complexity of the relationship between language and thought problematises the efforts to analyse literary texts using common mental constructs such as frames, concepts, and domains. This problem is beyond the scope of my dissertation. Such limitations, however, must be considered if the discipline of literary studies is to preserve its intellectual integrity. I do not know how to resolve these issues and would like to investigate them in the future. In general, much remains to be understood about metaphor and language.

Metaphorically speaking, this study has progressed from the pain of ignorance to the silence of limited knowledge. From injury to silence, it has analysed metaphors to elucidate language. Sometimes people can question language, but cannot grasp knowledge. The result is ignorance without much to talk about. Such nescience and silence can be overcome: metaphors can help comprehend and communicate complex ideas, including language.

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