

## The Means of Artistic Representation in the Novels of Herta Müller

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### ABSTRACT

*This article analyzes scientific views on the use of metaphors, allegories and symbols in the novels of the German writer Herta Müller. The role of Herta Müller's work in modern German literature is enormous. The study of the life and work of a German writer is an urgent topic in the field of literature.*

**Keywords:** The novels of Herta Müller, the meaning of an artistic image, metaphor, symbol, allegory, narrative image.

### INTRODUCTION

It is well known that in German literature J. W. Goethe, H. Heine, G. Lessing, F. Schiller, T. Mann is known as a sage. There are also more and more new stars appearing in modern German literature. Herta Müller is a representative of modern German literature. Until 2009, Herta Müller was practically unknown to most people. Everyone began to recognize the writer after Herta Müller published the novel *Atemschaukel*. The reason is that this novel was awarded the Nobel Prize. Herta Müller began to occupy a place in the hearts of readers for the fact that her philosophical ideas in the novels were written in such a way that they were understandable to everyone (Gürsoy 2019). In the course of this study, we tried to conduct a scientific analysis of terms such as metaphor, allegory and symbol, which are often found in the novels of Herta Müller *Herztier* and *Atemschaukel*.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Writer Dieter Schlesack expresses his opinion about Herta Müller: "Spiegel" has brought a convincing tribute to Herta Müller; it shows that a work that is surprisingly little known in the world, even in Germany, has received well-deserved recognition. It is a lonely work, the linguistic art of which stands apart, at the same time testifying and resisting, symbolizing any heartbreaking dictatorship. The Nobel Prize jury recognized this work as world literature; and now it is clear that she did a good job; just during the book fair with the guest of honor, China, the last communist dictatorship, which bans authors, even threatens resistance with death, uses fear as putty, as the red dictatorship once did in Romania. In a fascinating conversation on 3sat, the Nobel Prize winner showed how she can become dangerous for a colossus who, like all dictatorships, fears freedom of speech like the devil of holy water, with her rage and experience around the world. This brilliance also sheds light on the latest Romanian-German literature, which arose precisely on the basis of this experience (Leech 2023).

Analyzing the peculiarities of Herta Müller's artistic style, we consider it permissible to focus on the work of Professor Norbert Otto Ecke of the University of Paderborn in Germany. Because this scientist is considered one of the scientists who worked most on the creation of Hertha Müller. It is Norbert Otto Ekke's critical articles about the German sage that cause a lot of discussion. A review of literary criticism by Norbert Otto Ekke from 1982-1990 provides fragmentary assessments of Herta Müller's early works, which often reflect the relationship between the realistic and the fantastic in her prose. For the debate about the artistic style of Herta Müller, it is important, first of all, to briefly and clearly state the most accurate definitions of literary trends (Mamatov 2023).

Bernd Blashke: As a storyteller and writer, Herta Müller has reached a new peak in her prose with her documentary novel about Oscar Pastior's camp experiences, *Atemschaukel*. Their texts tell of the horrors endured by victims of dictatorship, totalitarianism, surveillance and emigration, both sensitive to

language and saturated with history. The Romanian-German author described with incomparable illustrative power in *Atemschaudel* the life-shaping traces of memories that such traumatic experiences leave, especially in the later dreams of survivors.

Shortly after the release of *Atemschaudel*, Müller received the Nobel Prize in Literature, originally awarded as the prize for the most important literary work of the previous year, but has long been awarded as an award for a work written in a lifetime. In the case of Herta Müllers, the decision of the Nobel Committee not only made the laureate worthy, but at some point she was really consistent in both respects: the author has been presenting a diverse work of fiction and poetry for more than 25 years. It is reflected in essays and lectures on aesthetics and poetics. Due to her life experience, Müller's art problems are always connected with politics and morality. To do this, she has just written a landmark book, *Breathing Swings*, about the deportation of Romanians of German origin to Russian labor camps, which has managed to combine documentalism with linguistic reflection in an artistically exciting manner (Müller 2021).

## RESULTS

If we carefully read the Novel by the German writer Herta Müller *Atemshaukel* and *Hertztier*, we will see the unique writing style of the writer. In the novels, the writer gets acquainted with Romanian and German literature through metaphors, allegories and symbols, which are now often used in the German language. Metaphors, allegories, and symbols in novels make works of art more meaningful.

A metaphor is a word or expression used figuratively, which is based on comparing an object or phenomenon with some other on the basis of their common feature. The term belongs to Aristotle and is associated with his understanding of art as an imitation of life. Aristotle's metaphor is, in fact, almost indistinguishable from hyperbole (exaggeration), from synecdoche, from simple comparison or personification and

likening. In all cases, there is a transfer of some meaning from one word to another.

1. An indirect message in the form of a story or figurative expression using a comparison.
2. A turn of speech consisting in the use of words and expressions in a figurative sense based on some kind of analogy, similarity, comparison.

There are 4 "elements" in the metaphor:

1. Category or context,
2. An object within a specific category,
3. The process by which this object performs the function,
4. Applications of this process to real situations, or intersections with them.

Allegory is a literary and artistic method or type of imagery; the expression of an abstract concept or reasoning by means of a specific image. Based on the proximity between the two concepts, a new conditional expression is created in the metaphor. Along with general concepts denoting spiritual values (such as Truth, love, conscience), certain typical phenomena, characters, mythological characters, even specific personalities can take the place of metaphors. There are two sides of the metaphor: figuratively-objective and semantic, with the significant side being primary, and figuratively-objective-secondary. Because a known thought is always noted in the image as an attractive image, unlike an ordinary artistic image which requires special comment.

A symbol is a conventional way of artistic reflection of reality; one of the forms of artistic convention. The symbol, unlike the metaphor, will be associated with the figurative construction of the content and is characterized by ambiguity. The symbol has been present in folklore and literature of all peoples since ancient times. Symbolic images form a certain system and in some cases represent the general content in the literature and art of most peoples.

There is also a system of symbolic images that has been used for centuries in the history of literature: Lion — bravery, fox — cunning, wolf — greed, etc. Herta Müller uses metaphors, allegories and symbols in all her works. In the works "lowlands" and "travelers on one leg", as well as in the works "breath" and "beasts of the heart" we get acquainted with the lives of film fans who lived in Romania in the period from 1945 to 1990. Herta Müller clearly showed the social situation in which the main characters found themselves in Romania and Germany. We can also get to know Romania's socio-economic structure and way of life intimately. Characters such as Leopold Augenbergs, Lola, Teresa, Kurt, Georg, Edgar and Iran are the main characters in the novel.

#### DISCUSSIONS

From the novels of Herta Müller, we conducted a scientific analysis of three terms. Herta Müller tried to explain metaphors, allegories and symbols in very simple language. In each image, Herta Müller showed the characters through the phenomena of nature.

The grass is in the head. If we talk, it will be mowed. But also when we are silent. And the second, third grass grows back as it wants. And yet we are lucky (Müller 2021).

Tereza wiggled his back against the thin tree trunk. The antler swayed, left his animal and found it again. Tereza wagged his head, the animal left his antlers and came back (Müller 2021).

A small quadrangle as a room, a window, six girls, six beds, a suitcase under each bed. Next to the door there is a cabinet built into the wall, on the ceiling above the door there is a speaker (Müller 2021).

And when I think about it, it's as if every dead person leaves a bag of words behind him. I always think of the hairdresser and the nail scissors because they don't need any more. And that the dead will never lose a button again (Müller 2021).

For sixty years I have wanted to remember the items from the warehouse at night. They are my night suitcase things. Since returning home from the camp, the sleepless night has been a

suitcase made of black skin. And this suitcase is in my forehead. I just haven't known for sixty years if I can't sleep because I want to remember the objects, or if it's the other way around (Müller 2021).

Through the presented character, through the narrator, we can feel the atmosphere of that time.

Herta Müller invents a new literary form of storytelling. A story in collages. Scenes are shown in the reception camp of a small German town. One of the officials in the story is a certain Mr. Fröhlich from the testing center B. Another spreads his arms like a bird at every encounter and says Oh, Oh, Oh. Crazy conversations with them turn into an involuntarily funny exchange of blows. And then there is the homesickness of the refugees, which is getting bigger and bigger and growing to heaven. Herta Müller masterfully knows how to find images for how powerlessness feels, and what arbitrariness does. They are enigmatic, abysmal, sometimes funny, and always highly poetic (Shopin 2021).

In the novels of Herta Müller, the main priority is the narrative image. Let's analyze some of the plot images in the novels *Atemschaukel* and *Hertztier*.

It was still war in January 1945. In the horror that I have to go to the Russians in the middle of winter, who knows where, everyone wanted to give me something that might be of some use, if it already helps nothing. Because nothing in the world helped anything. Because I was always on the list of Russians, everyone gave me something and thought about their part in it. And I took it and thought to myself with my seventeen years that this driving away comes at the right time. It wouldn't have to be the list of Russians, but if it doesn't get too bad, it's even good for me.

I wanted to get away from the thimble of the small town, where all the stones had eyes. Instead of fear, I had this hidden impatience. And a guilty conscience, because the list that my relatives were desperate for was an acceptable condition for me. They were afraid that something would happen to me in a foreign country. I wanted to go to a place that doesn't know me (Müller 2021).

In the ashtray next to the Blaupunkt, my father, who was a drawing teacher, had triangular red victory flags mounted on pins with colorful heads. For 18 days the father moved his flags on the map eastwards. Then, grandfather said, it was over with Poland. And with the flags. And with the summer. The grandmother plucked the flags from the map of Europe and from the pins and put the pins back in her sewing box. And the Blaupunkt wandered in the bedroom with my parents. Through three walls I heard the wake-up signal from Radio Munich in the early morning. The program was called Morning gymnastics, and the floor began to vibrate rhythmically. The parents did gymnastics in the Blaupunkt under the direction of the gymnastics teacher. And me because I was too chubby and wanted to become a soldier, the parents sent me to private gymnastics lessons, the cripple gymnastics, once a week (Müller 2021).

We have been sitting on the floor for too long in front of the pictures. My legs had fallen asleep from sitting. With the words in our mouths we trample as much as with our feet in the grass. But also with the silence (Müller 2021).

I was afraid that the captain Pjele would come to the factory. Immediately after the call, I carried the books from the summer cottage to Tereza's office. She talked and laughed with the colleagues and put the box in her closet on the side. She didn't ask what was in the box (Müller 2021).

Kurt didn't think anything of Tereza, she couldn't be trusted, he said and hit the edge of the table with his bandaged hand. His thumb had popped open, an iron bar had fallen on his hand. A worker dropped them on my hand, Kurt said. That was intentional. It was bleeding (Müller 2021).

Georg raised my chin with his thumbs up: You and your Swabian heart animal, he laughs. His saliva droplets splashed into his face. I lowered my gaze and saw George's fingers standing under my chin. His finger joints were white and his fingers were blue from the cold. I wiped the drops of saliva from the cheek. Lola had said monkey fat to the spit in the eyelash soot. I said to help me: You are made of wood (Müller 2021).

My father made a lot of effort, he wanted to teach me how to whistle and how to tell the direction by the echo when someone is

whistling who got lost in the forest. And how to find him by whistling back. I understood the benefits of whistling, but not how to blow the air out of the mouth pointedly. I pulled it inwards incorrectly, so that the chest blew up, instead of the sound on the lips. I never learned to whistle. As often as he showed me the whistling, I thought only of what I saw, that in men the lips shine inside, like pink quartz. Actually, the cuckoo clock belonged to the hunger angel. It wasn't about our time at all here in the camp, just about the question: Cuckoo, how long will I live (Müller 2021).

It was the skin and bone time, the eternity of the cabbage soup. Kapusta in the morning when getting up, Kapusta in the evening after the appeal. KAPUSTA is herb in Russian, and Russian herb soup means that there is often no herb in it at all. Kapusta, without the Russian and without soup, is a word of two things that have nothing in common, except this word. CAP is the Romanian head, PUSTA is the Hungarian plain. And you think of it in German, and the camp is Russian, like the cabbage soup. With such nonsense stuff you want to be a show. But the disassembled word KAPUSTA is not suitable for the word of hunger. Hunger words are a map, instead of country names you say the names of food in your head. Wedding soup, meatballs, ribs, pork knuckle, roast rabbit, liver dumplings, roe deer leg, sour rabbit, etc (Müller 2021).

Tur Prikulich never goes to work, in no battalion, in no brigade, in no shift. He rules, that's why he is agile and pejorative. If he smiles, it's an ambush. If you return his smile, which you have to, you are embarrassed. He smiles because he has entered something new in the column behind the name, worse. Between the barracks on the camp parade, I avoid him, preferring a distance from which it is impossible to talk. He places the shiny shoes like two paint bags on the sidewalk from high up, as if the empty time is falling out of him through the soles. He remembers everything. They say that even what he forgets becomes an order (Müller 2021).

German writer Herta Müller brilliantly used artistic images when writing novels. From the above artistic fragments, we can learn that Herta Müller clearly described the events of the novel so that everyone could understand them.



If we look closely at the novel by Herta Müller, all the events of the novel take place between 1945 and 1990. The main points show us the socio-economic situation of Romania. In addition, since Herta Müller was born in Romania, the German nationality living in Romania also plays key roles in the novels.

#### CONCLUSION

Each epoch will have its own star. The representative of modern German literature, Herta Müller, is also considered a star of German literature. Currently, the study of the works of the German writer Herta Müller is also relevant. In the novels of Herta Müller, the main idea has always been human value as the main issue. The images in the works of *Niederungen*, *Atemschaukel* and *Herztier* by Herta Müller are easy for every reader to understand thanks to the skillful use of metaphors, allegories and symbols. The problems in the lives of the main characters named Georg, Edgar and Lola make everyone think. Especially the depiction of the angel of hunger in the novel by Herta Müller *Atemschaukel* awakens in the reader an even greater love for works of art.

Every day the angel of hunger ate my brain. And one day he raised his hand to me. And with this hand I almost killed Karli Halmen – it was about the criminal case with the bread. Karli Halmen had a whole day off and already be for breakfast ate whole bread. Everyone was at work (Müller 2021).

We can also take the clock as a symbol in the novel, because this clock reminds us of the labor camp. He wanted to regulate the worldly cuckoo on Russian day and night discipline. By narrowing the glottis in the cuckoo mechanism, he wanted to add a short dull night voice to the cuckoo, one octave lower, as well as a longer bright daytime singing. But before changing the habits of someone had torn the cuckoo out of the clock (Müller, 2021).

In the novel *Herztier*, the death of some of the characters makes the reader cry throughout the work. I have not been able to lie in the dark since George's death. Mrs. Margit said: When you sleep, his soul also finds peace, who should pay for the electricity. Even if you can't sleep, it's better to rest in the dark.

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