

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series9.2021.22.06>.

UDC: 811.112.2'4:821.112.2-3Мюллер Г.



Pavlo Yu. Shopin

National Pedagogical Dragomanov University,
Kyiv, Ukraine

THE MEANING OF SILENCE IN THE WORK OF HERTA MÜLLER

Bibliographic Description:

Shopin, P. Yu. (2021). The Meaning of Silence in the Work of Herta Müller. *Scientific Journal of National Pedagogical Dragomanov University. Series 9. Current Trends in Language Development*, 22. 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series9.2021.22.06>.

Abstract

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. This paper will 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 paper 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. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory within the framework of cognitive literary studies, the author suggests that the meaning of silence is not random and relies on conceptual and linguistic conventions; Müller estranges these conventions, and thus foregrounds the figurative yet motivated meaning of silence.

Keywords: *Herta Müller, metaphor, conceptual metaphor theory, linguistic convention, silence, figurative meaning, sensory experience.*

1. 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 (2015) argues that Müller's interest in language stems from her early experiences "marked by the encounter between German and Romanian words and meanings" (p. 60). According to Mironescu, Müller, learning a new language, could see the world differently and deconstruct "the most basic assumptions about words" (p. 63). Katrin Kohl (2013) 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" (p. 21). While Müller is highly interested in language, then, she does not have a systematic theory of it in her writing. Lyn Marven (2005) 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" (p. 53). These events preclude structural coherence. Therefore, both bilingualism and trauma might underlie the inconsistency in Müller's vision of language.

2. Aim and Objectives.

With reference to her literary and critical works, I intend to show that Müller uses concrete ideas to make sense of language and hope to demonstrate that Müller highlights the tenuous relationship between language and the world. Rather than presenting a systematic theory of language, she accentuates its multifarious meanings. To this end, I shall 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 paper 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. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory within the framework of cognitive literary studies, I suggest that the meaning of silence is not random and relies on conceptual and linguistic conventions; Müller estranges these conventions, and thus foregrounds the figurative yet motivated meaning of silence.

3. Results.

3.1. 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 the novel *Herztier* (1994), 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" (Müller, 2009a, 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” (1992), Müller (1995) 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 the novel *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger* (1992), 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” (Müller, 2009b, 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 the novel *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989), 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” (Müller, 2010c, 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 Irene’s 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 her 2009 Leipziger Poetikvorlesung *Lebensangst und Worthunger*, Müller (2010b) 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" (Müller, 2009a, 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 the autobiographical essay "Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich" from the collection *Der König verneigt sich und tötet* (2003), 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" (Müller, 2010a, 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.

3.2. *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 the 2009 novel *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" (Müller, 2013a, 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 (2010a) 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 autofictional short story "Niederungen" (1982) from the eponymous collection, 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" (Müller, 2011, 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" from the collection *Der König verneigt sich*, 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" (Müller, 2010a, 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 sitzen andere Augen” from the collection *Der König verneigt sich*, Müller (2010a) 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 the novel *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* (1997), 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” (Müller, 2013b, 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” (Müller, 2011, 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” (Müller, 2010c, 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 the novel *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* (1986), 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” (Müller, 2009c, 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 mahlen 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” (Müller, 2009a, 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.

3.3. 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” (Müller, 2013a, 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” (Müller, 2009b, 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” (Müller, 2013b, p. 107). The protagonist’s 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, ist es meist nichts Gutes” from the collection *Der König verneigt sich*, self-perception of the body similarly serves as a source domain mapped on to the experience of silence. Müller (2010a) 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 palpating 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 “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 fuhren, 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” (Müller, 2011, 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”, Müller (2010a) criticises the depiction of violence on advertising boards and highlights their psychological impact: “Die Plakate verleumdten ihr Produkt in der Absicht, es zu überhören. 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”, 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” (Müller, 2010a, 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” (Müller, 2013b, 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” (Müller, 2009c, 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” (Müller, 2013a, 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” (Müller, 2010a, 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” (Müller, 2013b, 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.

3.4. *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" (Müller, 2010c, 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" from the collection *Hunger und Seide*, 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" (Müller, 1995, p. 146).

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" (Müller, 2013b, 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 (Casasanto & Boroditsky, 2008, p. 579). 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. 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” (Müller, 2010a, 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” (Müller, 2009b, 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” (Müller, 2013a, 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 (Shopin, 2014, p. 197). 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” (Müller, 2013a, 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” (Müller, 2009a, 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 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” (Müller, 2010a, 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.

3.5. 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 Ireas Blick und dem leuchtenden Fenster lag Kälte und Starrsinn. Und eine angestrenzte Stille” (Müller, 2010c, 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 (Deroy, Spence, & Noppeney, 2016, p. 744). 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” (Müller, 2013b, 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” (Müller, 2013a, 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 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” (Müller, 2009a, 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 “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” (Müller, 2011, 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” (Müller, 2013b, 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” (Müller, 2009a, 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.

3.6. *Life and Death.*

Müller imagines silence as a living being. I have previously analysed such metaphors, approaching them from different perspectives. In her poetological and autobiographical essay "Gelber Mais und keine Zeit" from the collection *Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel* (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" (Müller, 2013c, 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" (Müller, 2010a, 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" (Müller, 2009a, 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” (Müller, 2009b, 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.

4. Conclusion.

In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), Wittgenstein (1922) concludes that “[w]ovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen” (p. 162). 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 (Fasold & Connor-Linton, 2013; Hurford, Heasley, & Smith, 2014; Yule, 2010). 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 tenuous yet motivated relationships with various concepts (e.g., vision, touch, force), most of which relate to sensorimotor experience.

References

- Casasanto, D. & Boroditsky, L. (2008). Time in the mind: Using space to think about time. *Cognition*, 106(2), 579-593. doi: 10.1016/j.cognition.2007.03.004
- Deroy, O., Spence, C., & Noppeney, U. (2016). Metacognition in multisensory perception. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20(10), 736-747. doi: 10.1016/j.tics.2016.08.006
- Fasold, R., & Connor-Linton, J. (Eds.). (2013). *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hurford, J., Heasley, B., & Smith, M. (Eds.). (2014). *Semantics: A Coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Kohl, K. (2013). Beyond realism: Herta Müller's poetics. In B. Haines & L. Marven (Eds.), *Herta Müller* (pp. 16-31). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marven, L. (2005). *Body and narrative in contemporary literatures in German: Herta Müller, Libuše Moníková, and Kerstin Hensel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mironescu, D. (2015). Uncomfortable spaces: Language and identity in Herta Müller's work. *World Literature Studies*, 7(2), 60-70.
- Müller, H. (1995). *Hunger und Seide*. [Hunger and silk]. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2009a). *Herztier*. [The land of greed plums]. Frankfurt am Main : Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2009b). *Der Fuchs war damals schon der Jäger*. [The fox was ever the hunter]. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2009c). *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt*. [The passport]. Frankfurt am Main : Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2010a). *Der König verneigt sich und tötet*. [The king bows and kills]. Frankfurt am Main : Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2010b). *Lebensangst und Worthunger*. [A thirst for life, a hunger for words]. Berlin : Suhrkamp. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2010c). *Reisende auf einem Bein*. [Traveling on one leg]. Munich: Carl Hanser. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2011). *Niederungen*. [Nadirs] Frankfurt am Main : Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2013a). *Atemschaukel*. [The hunger angel]. Frankfurt am Main : Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2013b). *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*. [The appointment]. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. [in German].
- Müller, H. (2013c). *Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel*. [Always the same snow and always the same uncle] Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. [in German].
- Shopin, P. (2014). Unpacking the suitcases: Autofiction and metaphor in Herta Müller's *Atemschaukel*. *Seminar*, 50 (2), 197-215. doi: 10.3138/sem.50.2.197
- Wittgenstein, L. (1922). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co.
- Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Бібліографічний опис:

Шопін, П. Ю. (2021). Значення мовчання в творчості Гerti Мюллер. *Науковий часопис Національного педагогічного університету імені М. П. Драгоманова. Серія 9. Сучасні тенденції розвитку мов*, 22. 77–94. <https://doi.org/10.31392/NPU-nc.series9.2021.22.06>.

Анотація

Герта Мюллер пише про страждання, спричинені соціальним пригнобленням, часто зображуючи диктаторський режим Ніколае Чаушеску. Її літературні твори відзначаються особливою наративною перспективою від першої особи та принциповим протистоянням тоталітаризму та нелібералізму. Мюллер глибоко цікавиться мовою і регулярно використовує метафори, щоб висвітлити її функціонування в умовах страждань і поневолення. Ця стаття зосереджується на метафорах для мовчання та розділяє їх на ті сенсорні модальності та конкретні явища (зір, дотик, запах, їжа, мовлення, соматичний досвід, сила, простір, рух, контейнер, фізичні об'єкти, маніпуляції, руйнування, життя та смерть), які стають вихідними доменами. Незважаючи на свої обмеження, ця категоризація допоможе зрозуміти причини використання асоціації між цільовим доменом мовчання та його метафоричними образами. Мюллер підкреслює образний характер зв'язку між мовчанням і більш конкретними поняттями, встановлюючи зв'язки між ним і тими мовними засобами, які зазвичай позначають тілесний досвід. Ця стаття демонструє, що у творчості Мюллер мовчання не існує як чітко визначене поняття і набуває нових значень залежно від контексту та метафоричних образів, які використовуються для його пояснення. Спираючись на теорію концептуальної метафори в рамках когнітивного літературознавства, автор стверджує, що значення мовчання не є випадковим і ґрунтується на концептуальних та мовних конвенціях; Мюллер оприявнює ці конвенції і таким чином висуває на перший план образне, але вмотивоване значення мовчання.

Ключові слова: Герта Мюллер, метафора, теорія концептуальної метафори, мовна конвенція, мовчання, переносне значення, чуттєвий досвід.