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## Herta Muller's Modeling Estacade in the Novel "The Hunger Angel"

### Естакада моделювань Герти Мюллер у романі «Гойдалка дихання»

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#### Abstract

The article analyses the novel "The Hunger Angel" ("Atemschaukel" in original) by a German writer Herta Muller (Herta Müller in original), who received a Nobel Prize dedicated to literature. To achieve the paper purpose the following methods are used: the method of conceptual analysis, the method of science fiction analysis, the comparative method. In the novel the mentality of a dominant narrator is being observed. The narrator himself is genetically incorporated in the German ethno culture and his fate is bound to the specific Romanian, Ukrainian and Austrian realities. The novel can be freely associated with a special modeling estacade where the main directions of route-visual movement are verified. The events and figurative associations that are set out in the novel are actually being interpreted through the narrator's conscience. A mental collision with senses of otherness, personal, different, counter-reality and parallel reality in the novel are shown. The geo mental collisions of the main character Leopold Auberg are made in a way that they can touch and consume personal and intimate feelings together with wide and global social

#### Анотація

У статті аналізується роман «Гойдалка дихання» («Atemschaukel» мовою оригіналу) німецької письменниці Герти Мюллер (Herta Müller), лауреатки Нобелівської премії з літератури. Для досягнення мети статті використовуються такі методи: метод концептуального аналізу, метод аналізу художньої літератури, порівняльний метод. У метафоричному романі обсервується ментальність домінант-наратора. Самого наратора генетично інкорпоровано в німецьку етнокультуру, а долею пов'язано із специфікою румунської, української й австрійської реальності. Роман невимушено асоціюється із своєрідною естакадою, в якій продумано змодельовані й вивірено сконструйовані основні напрями маршрутно-зорового руху. Крізь призму свідомості домінант-наратора в романі викладаються усі події й образні асоціації. У романі показані ментальні колізії з відчуттями іншості, особистого, не-свого, не-нашого, свого-чужого, контр-реальності та пара-реальності. Геоментальні колізії головного героя Леопольда Ауберга сконструйовані таким

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tendencies that are inherent to the daily life events of second half of the XX century.

**Keywords:** association, “Atemschaukel”, Herta Muller, literature, narrator, “The Hunger Angel”.

## Introduction

A German writer Herta Muller (Herta Müller in original) received a Nobel Prize dedicated to literature. The prize was awarded for the metaphorical mentality novel “The Hunger Angel” (“Atemschaukel” in original) (Müller, 2009). It was published in 2009 and translated in different languages. In English it is translated in 2012 by Philip Boehm (Müller, 2012), in Ukrainian the novel was translated in 2011 (Müller, 2011). The novel got rapidly the status of an intercultural art event.

In the “The Hunger Angel” novel the mentality of a dominant narrator is being observed. The narrator himself is genetically incorporated in the German ethno culture and his fate is bound to the specific Romanian, Ukrainian and Austrian realities. A dominant narrator’s point of view in modern literature (Demchenko et al, 2021), (Kryvoruchko et al, 2021) are analyzed nowadays. The article **purpose** is to discover the novel “The Hunger Angel” by Herta Muller from the dominant narrator’s view and the main directions of its route-visual movements.

## Theoretical Framework

In Herta Muller’s creativity the novel “The Hunger Angel” is a very specific novel. There are a lot of novels about working camps, especially, about the Stalinist camps. But her novel is written very poetically, despite the fact that the subject of description is a camp life, it does not dispose to poetics and lyrics at all.

The very hard work is described in the novel: a quarry, a blast furnace, a convict’s clothes and wooden blocks as shoes on feet. However, the circumstances of the working camp life, despite the authenticity, do not play a fundamental role in the novel. The main efforts are aimed at reproducing the language and thinking of the main character, his specific, distorted by hunger and fears of the world perception. It is emphasized that the experience of the main character’s disposition on several parallel levels that create his identity is the underpinnings in the novel.

чином, щоб увібрати в себе як суто особистісні душевні порухи й глибоко інтимні переживання, так і широкі, навіть глобальні соціотенденції, властиві життєвими явищам другої половини ХХ століття.

**Ключові слова:** асоціація, Герта Мюллер, література, оповідач, «Гойдалка дихання».

The naturalistic meticulousness of hyperrealism is shown in the novel as well as Herta Muller’s lyrical unity like her previous poems. Herta Muller is definitely the language master, she feels the language thinner than many of her German-born and raised writers. She finds in the language completely unexpected details and colors, turns and combinations, probably because she looks at it partly from the sidelines.

A pervasive metaphor for Herta Muller novel is the hunger angel. It is it who swings the human breath, who accompanies the main character constantly. Several parts of the novel are written strongly and succinctly, they are devoted to this fictional figure. The hunger angel becomes the main character’s ‘alter ego’.

Among the sensations experienced by a person in the working camp conditions, a sense of hunger is interpreted as the strongest and most destructive, striking, constant feeling. It determines people behaviour when moral principles are destroyed. In the novel the hunger angel acquires a very significant object; it constitutes the main character’s state.

The life and self conscience of the narrator in the novel “The Hunger Angel” is controversially united archetypes of different and even opposite mentalities that were inherent to these places. It dramatizes partly internal dimensions of the dominant narrator that are represented as mono stories about the most memorable events and periods of his life. Herta Muller’s novel induces a strong appeal with its multifaceted subjectivities (Nesmeyanov, 2015).

If we carefully observe “The Hunger Angel” (Goloborodko, 2021) then we can freely associate it with a special modeling estacade where the main directions of route-visual movement are verified. In this estacade the first thing that we see is modeling socio-mental coordinates of the dominant narrator. In addition, the events and figurative associations that are set out in the novel are actually being interpreted through the narrator’s conscience.

## Methodology

To achieve the paper purpose the following methods are used: the method of conceptual analysis, the method of science fiction analysis, the comparative method.

The method of conceptual analysis is used to study the main concepts in the novel "The Hunger Angel"; it is relevant for the study of literary terms such as *otherness*, *personal*, *different*, *counter-reality* and *parallel reality*. Some techniques in the article such as prototype theory, metaphor theory, cultural theory, linguistic and cultural theory are used to investigate the novel text.

The method of science fiction analysis is used in the novel "The Hunger Angel" as a formal technique. It helps to discover the novel characters, especially the main hero. It shows the characters' feelings and inside struggles, the inner novel conflict is considered, the novel plot is described. The internal organization of the artistic world in the novel "The Hunger Angel" is studied by the formal technique. It is seen as an organic unity of content and frame in the novel "The Hunger Angel".

The comparative method allows studying the novel "The Hunger Angel" as literary criticism by comparing different similar phenomena in the novel in particular, and in literature studies. This allows identifying genetic, genetic and contact connections and typological coincidences, analogies, convergences in the novel "The Hunger Angel" and in the literature in general. The comparative method helps to establish patterns of novel development in the higher inter-literary content.

## Results

### *The first life period of the character*

The situations in the novel "The Hunger Angel" with personal feelings of protection and stability change due to the physiological growth. Leopold Auberg, whom we also know from the novel realities as Leo, understands his mentally-genetic and mentally-historical relation to the German nation. He also realizes that he lived outside his ethical reality for a while. He had been living in Romania, in Transylvania, in the city of Hermannstadt. He had spent his childhood and adolescence there. Pre-war Romanian realities are regularly exposed in the inner consciousness of the dominant narrator.

In the monologue chapter "On Chemicals" ("Von den chemischen Substanzen") Leopold Auberg remembers "at 11 years old, being in Buharest, it was in 1938" (Müller, 2011, p. 175), but the markers of such exposition reflect only his self-identification in the area of his historical ethnoculture. The feeling and awareness of German-centrism, German-polarity is important for him because together they serve as a matrix basis for mental security and psycho mental stability of his personal existence.

The physiological growth altogether with this mental collision is obvious; Leopold Auberg is not ready for it. Leo starts to feel this physical difference from all his relatives and people who surround him. He begins to realize his atypical sexual nature, sexual orientation and enters into regular intimate relationships with other men. It traumatizes him and brings forbidden pleasure, revealing his physicality to himself.

There are multiple areas of internal tension in Leopold Auberg's mental sensations. The reality of his own otherness begins to surface in young Leo's mind that he is forced to restrain in himself and it does not give the feeling of freedom. The nature of the dominant narrator is already outlined in the youth life stage. A mental collision with a sense of otherness in the novel "The Hunger Angel" is being planned, and it will wait for its development.

In the modeling socio-mental coordinates of the dominant narrator, the origin-event occurs at the beginning of 1945, when he, as an interned seventeen-year-old boy, enters an unfamiliar country, located in the unknown eastern part of the world. He was put there for the restoration labor, where the main character spent harsh five years.

After returning to his native land, Leopold Auberg became much more deeply and multi dimensionally aware of his own otherness. This prompted him, after some period of time, according to novel realities, in 1968 to travel to Austria (Österreich), to the city of Graz, as if to visit his aunt Fini (meine Fini-Tante). But, in fact, to move from Romania to another country and where it is mentally safer and more comfortable to stay with the awareness of his own otherness identity. Geo mental collisions of Leopold Auberg are made in a way that they can touch and consume personal feelings together with wide and global social tendencies that are inherent to the daily life events of second half of the XX century.

The completion of the dominant narrator does not exclude his specific biographical matrix. Herta Muller started working on the text of “The Hunger Angel” together with a German poet and translator Oskar Pastior who also was a representative of the old literary and artistic generation. In this case, particularly, it is crucial to combine the main biographical markers with Oscar Pastior’s life matrix.

While being a 17-year-old boy, Oscar Pastior was interned to the labor camp to the East. After the camp time ended he started living in Romania and in 1968 he received a scholarship in Vienna. As a matter of fact, he never came back to the country where he was born, he just moved to Germany. Undoubtedly, there is no need to draw unambiguous parallels between the dominant narrator and Oscar Pastior or even to identify them. But, at the same time, there is no doubt that Oscar Pastior’s life experience became eventually the basis for modeling the social coordinates of Leopold Auberg. Leopold Auberg always comes back to the past through his thoughts and constant reflection.

The first life period starts until January 15, 1945, when the dominant narrator focused on the intra family and personal psychological events, the predominant emotional comfort, the sufficient comfort in the dominant narrator’s life. The surrounding world seemed quite stable and relatively prosperous, even in spite of his discovery of own otherness masculine identity.

### ***The second life period of the character***

The second life period starts from January 15, 1945, the exact time of Leopold Auberg’s internment to the unknown East. The period lasted until January, 1950, when he was finally able to come back home. These are the main visual and mental perceptions of the dominant narrator. The period is based on the intellectual facts about the camp life and metaphorical facts about the camp way of existence.

As it is mentioned above, the dominant narrator was forced to immerse himself in these events to reproduce them in the major part of the novel. This reproduction allowed him to determine the mental condition and the way of Leopold Auberg’s behavior. By doing it the dominant narrator is rooted his own self-identification as a true otherness self-identification.

### ***The third life period of the character***

The third life period starts in the 1950s and is still ongoing. The period is characterized by detailed scenes saturated with numerous daily and mental details. These details are merely rough sketches, they contain almost no outlining. The period is playing a very important role, thus we can describe it as a kind of reflective dome that summarizes the main results and life meanings for Leopold Auberg. Besides this in the “The Hunger Angel” novel we can contemplate the period that is not connected with the return simulations in time.

### ***The ongoing life period of the character***

This period is the peak of Leopold Auberg’s life and we can describe it as a timeline of lived 60 years since he came back from the internment camp. This period is described in the novel in a very frugal and careful way. Sometimes it may seem that the description of this period fits into the novel, so subtly that we cannot see it. This period reminds with slight barely noticeable invasion in the narrative process. In Herta Muller’s novel the return simulations in time serve as a basis for modeling different ethno mental dimensions. These dimensions we can divide into two generalized categories: personal and somebody’s.

Talking about this personal ethno mental dimension it is important to mention that this is the dimension of the historical and genetic origin and Leopold Auberg had made a unique connection with it during his familial life in Romania, in Transylvania.

Talking about somebody’s dimension it is necessary to say that this dimension is opened for Leopold during his travel to unknown countries and being in the strange East, where he was doing arduous physical labor. The foreign environment has a tastefully expressed national color in the novel narrative and is perceived by Leopold Auberg as predominantly Russian.

In the verbal texture “Atemschaukel” is full of phrases and expressions such as “lists of the Russians” (Müller, 2011, p. 4), “go to the Russians” (Müller, 2011, p. 13), “served to the Russians” (Müller, 2011, p. 15), and so on. In Herta Muller’s novel, those who live in this foreign, eastern environment, for whom this land is theirs, are almost always «Russians» («die Russen»). In the novel realities, the ethnic identification of the territory where the internees are and, accordingly, experiencing their multi-

year camp period is constantly actualized, emphasized and singled out.

***Two generalized categories in the novel: personal and somebody's***

Verbal definitions and verbal expression forms of another's terra-identity and more, precisely, East Slavic terra-identity, are always near. The dominant narrator's perception of another's ethno mental and geo mental space is marked by ethno cultural paradox. The landscape in the novel "The Hunger Angel" is about the «wide steppe» (Müller, 2011, p. 54). The camp itself, where the internees live, is located near the "small town of Novohorlivka" (Müller, 2011, p. 57) ("die kleine Stadt NowoGorlowka"). Herta Muller's novel contains situational mentions about Dnepropetrovsk city and three mentions about Odessa city.

In Leopold Auberg's internal narrative, this foreign and unknown country is perceived as a completely Ukrainian living environment: Donbass region that is now the territory of Ukraine.

The paradox of Leopold Auberg's perception of another's ethno mental environment is that he treats actually the Ukrainian territory of Donbass not as Ukrainian, but as inhabited by "Russians" ("die Russen"), which is constantly emphasized in his monologues. Geographically, the events in the novel "The Hunger Angel" take place on the territory of Ukraine, more precisely, in the Ukrainian East, but in the textual realities the dimension "Ukrainian", in fact, does not correspond to the East of Ukraine.

Moreover, in the verbal-semantic context, the dimension mentioned in Herta Muller's novel is rather connected with the territories far from the East of Ukraine, where the main novel events take place. We can see that in some narrative lines and mentions, which from time to time breakthrough eloquently in the words of Leopold Auberg: «The hairdresser and Tur Prikulich were from the village, from the Carpathian Ukraine» (Müller, 2011, p. 24) and others.

In the dominant narrator's conscience, the geo mental and ethno-value dimension "Ukrainian" is superimposed rather on lands located far from the West of those lands where the camp events take place. The people who live in the East of Ukraine, more precisely, in the Donbas region, are identified by Leopold Auberg, needless to say, in the postwar period, mainly as

representatives of the non-Ukrainian national and ethno mental environment.

The narrative realities revealed in Herta Muller's novel retransmit the East-West opposition, presented in the format of a single Ukrainian territory. The pulsation of this opposition is intensified by the fact that verbal forms submitted in Latin, but from the Russian lexical depository, are more or less regularly implanted in the novel texture of "The Hunger Angel".

The division into substantial categories of personal and somebody's takes place in the novel "The Hunger Angel" quite rigidly, not only without semantic half-tones, overtones or possible ambiguity, but also with the imposition of a clear shading in the form of undisguised opposition. The researcher (Khairulina, 2013) substantiates, the opposition of personal and somebody's is generally an attributive feature of Herta Muller's work and it realizes itself not only on the artistic-intellectual, but also on the linguistic-stylistic levels (Khairulina, 2013, p. 3; Khairulina, 2013, p. 9).

In Leopold Auberg's value coordinate system somebody's means not ours, and this is already a direct pass to the substantial category of somebody's. And from the category somebody's, by the logic of novel realities, there is no return to the category personal. Mental and value spaces in the novel "The Hunger Angel" are divided on the principle of consistent opposition.

However, after home returning, to his usual Hermannstadt society, Leopold Auberg undergoes mental-conceptual metamorphoses. He begins to feel his immanent attachment to the recently completely foreign environment that surrounded him in the camp near Novogorlivka, and his own incompatibility, and even his own real redundancy in the environment that he considered previously as his own. There is a radical movement of substantive categories personal and somebody's, there is a kind of mutual migration, in the minds of the dominant narrator.

The tectonic shift, more precisely, the shift affects the transformation of the universal consciousness matrix of Leopold Auberg, the feeling of being stability disappears, dies out as a practical necessity, and the organic life awareness increases. In the sensitive mind of the dominant narrator, this awareness is expressed the most in psychological dependence on the paradoxical camp background, as well as on the sexual otherness of their masculine nature.

The largest text segment in the novel “The Hunger Angel” is given to the reproduction of Leopold Auberg’s internment period. Of the 64 monologue chapters about Leopold’s life in the conditions of the mysterious-mental east, only the 56th tells about it, starting from the monochapter “Loboda” (“Meldekraut”) and to “Someday I will walk past the elegant shop windows” (“Einmal werde ich aufs elegante Pflaster kommen”).

Leopold Auberg's forced stay in Eastern Ukraine is associated with the simulation of various anomalies caused by extreme survival conditions. First of all, the existence of consciousness and human nature caused by chronic hunger is modeled. At the very beginning of the novel’s narrative, the image-symbol of the «the hunger angel» («Hungerengel») appears, which begins to move from chapter to chapter alive and accompany the physiological and psychological states of most who lived in the camp near Novogorlivka.

#### ***Counter-reality and parallel reality of modeling segments and sections in the novel***

In the modeling overpass developed in the novel “The Hunger Angel” to combine different structural blocks and semantic constructs, another level is singled out, probably the most difficult, the level of modeling segments and sections of counter-reality. Modeling is made possible by the fact that Leopold Auberg’s nature tends to the complexity and variability of thinking, to the complex configurability of thinking.

This attraction is expressed in the all-encompassing metaphor feelings and views, in the condensed perception of the surrounding realities and the apparently invisible connections between them. From this point of view, it is important to emphasize the functionality of metaphor thinking. The researcher notes rightly that «a metaphor is considered as a phenomenon that allows penetrating into man’s deep values and society as a whole» (Khairulina, 2013, p. 7). A metaphor is a format of different life and thoughts, it is one of the many ways to avoid civilizational self-destruction and preserve the chance for global civilizational salvation.

With the presence of the dominant narrator in the East of Ukraine, in the camp near Novogorlivka, his sensitive receptors sharpen strongly, and brain ideas are ruthlessly activated. Metaphorical pictures and interpretations appear in his imagination much more often and

correspondingly consciousness strains. Extreme circumstances of hunger, exhaustion, self-preservation, survival, death mobilize all Leopold Auberg’s sensory and mental resources, provoke the appearance in his brain of the irrational, surreal.

In Herta Muller’s novel, the loci of counter-reality are characterized by foreign hyperbole, affective surrealism, dense phantasmagoria, organic absurdity, they make possible everything that is impossible in the ordinary life; and give the dominant narrator the attributes of parallel reality. Clusters of characteristic parallel reality appear as a contextual prolongation of the binomial “traditional image reality vs counter-reality”. The surrounding world environment in the novel “The Hunger Angel” is even more structured and complicated, closing with streams of traditional reality, fragments of counter-reality and clumps of parallel reality, which seem to oppose and fiercely conflict with each other, then grow into a single quietly screaming uniformly phantom integrity through a filigree metaphorical strategy.

And another essential constructive solution is contained in the German-Ukrainian novel by Herta Muller, it is modeling of the reflection-metaphorical finale, where the semantic phonics of individual lines, phrases, images, situations, motives, collisions are found in the text or they are reduced and condensed as a leitmotif (the monologue “About treasures” (“Von den Schätzen”).

#### **Discussion**

Many German (Eke, 2020; Mallet, 2020; Vinter, 2020; Watson, 2020) and English-speaking researchers discuss different issues of Herta Muller’s creativity: from general problems as her creativity connection with the currents of European history (Bauer et al, 2020), German cultural memory (Bauer, 2020), the critical reception (Stringham, 2011), testimony and trauma (Eddy, 2000), humanity in dark times (Haines, 2020) to specific and private problems as understanding her creativity in Romania (Bizuleanu, & Conkan, 2020), some zones of her novel indistinction (Hoeg, 2020), many aspects of her creativity translations (Denemarková, n.d).

#### **Conclusions**

The material of the narrative that previously looked like a step in the process of turning-immersing the dominant-narrator into his past. In the final chapter the monologue seems to be

imperceptibly transformed into an observation stage, it makes sense to look closely not only at what was experienced and left behind, but also in the present, with all its flaws, sore spots and bloody wounds that do not heal as long as they nourish the body's mind and the spirit's corporeality. This is what the main character does, reflecting in his last monologue on the psycho mental enigma, the most complex and dramatic life periods are forever written in the lymph, membranes, enzymes, arteries of memory as the most important and most precious for a person.

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