



**THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF FEMINIST FANTASY:  
THE NOVELS OF IRMTRAUD MORGNER**

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis will undertake a study of the development of a feminist poetics of fantasy in the works of Irmtraud Morgner. It will investigate how fantasy is employed by feminists in the German Democratic Republic to both emancipatory and critical effect, the fantasy text constituting a type of feminist "political unconscious." Morgner's works both articulate a critique of socialist patriarchal practices through the introduction of fantasy narrative devices and characters, as well as fulfilling the function of feminist 'consciousness-raising.' The thesis will analyze how encounters with the fantastic set off quests for emancipation and self-realization in the working women of the GDR. As a means of articulating dissatisfaction with the double burden and the desire for an active subjectivity, the motif of the quest and its various functions will be analyzed. By means of a structural analysis of the quest narrative, it will be demonstrated how Morgner's modifications to the actors in the quest function to formulate a feminist critique of socialist discourses of science and history. The use of genre will also be shown to be an important tool in formulating feminist critiques of dominant representations of women in socialist realist narratives.

The quest for sexual liberation and control of "die Produktivkraft Sexualität" is of central interest in Morgner's works. The thesis will look at the interconnections between a feminist politics of the body and the feminist concern with the 'body politic,' as a crucial concern of Morgner's works in the eighties. Issues of peace and the threat of ecological destruction to the planet are seen as feminist concerns calling for specific oppositional strategies. In this context, the figures of the witch, the mother and Pandora, as figures of subversion and hope, will be discussed. Feminist alternatives to the principles of the scientific and technological revolution in the practice of magic and alchemy will be a further object of discussion. Finally, the thesis will address the question of female subjectivity and the use of fantastical strategies such as Vilma's "Leibrede" and their relevance for the formulation of a materialist feminist aesthetics.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if applicable if accepted for the award of the degree.

SIGNED,

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## INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Eighth Party Congress of the "Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands" (SED), held in 1971, a new body of women's writing emerged in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), a body of writing which presented a serious challenge to the dominant literary aesthetic of socialist realism. The challenge of this writing derived not only from its bold experimentation with a wide range of literary forms and genres but also from the nature of the social, political and aesthetic questions it broached and the social taboos it threatened to break. These works can be seen as a direct response to the period of liberalization precipitated by Erich Honecker's pronouncements at the Party Congress that there should no longer be any taboos in literature and art - provided one proceeded from a position of firm commitment to socialism. But much more than this, these works marked a long overdue response by women writers to the urgently-felt need for a critical reappraisal of what two decades of socialism had achieved for women.

Among the boldest innovations of the seventies and eighties are the literary experiments with fairytale and fantasy elements in the works of women writers. Throughout the post-war years and even into the seventies, women's fantasy fiction remained a doubly marginalized genre: as fantasy it was still tarred with the brush of 'bourgeois decadence' and as feminine fantasy it was often considered trivial. Accused of being either aggressive, clichéd, "pamphletenhaft" or "vegetativ wuchernd," "spontan,"<sup>1</sup> "zügellos" und unbridled,<sup>2</sup> the works of fantasy fiction written by women were greeted in the GDR either by a confused silence or by apologetic and rather defensive reviews from sympathetic female critics.<sup>3</sup> In the Federal

<sup>1</sup> Sigrid Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura*," *Weimarer Beiträge* 21.9 (1975), pp. 143-45.

<sup>2</sup> Irmtraud Morgner, "Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner," in *Aussage zur Person: Zwölf deutsche Schriftsteller im Gespräch mit Ekkehart Rudolph*, ed. Ekkehart Rudolph (Tübingen & Basel: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1977), p. 160.

<sup>3</sup> See the review by Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz*," pp. 138-48; and Annemarie Auer, "Gedanken beim Lesen: *Trobadora unterwegs oder Schulung in Realismus*," *Sinn und Form* 25 (1976), pp. 1067-1107.

Republic and the United States of America, the reception was initially enthusiastic, although a more detailed reception of the works themselves is still outstanding.

This thesis will focus on what I consider to be the major works of women's fantasy fiction written in the German Democratic Republic, namely the two major novels of Irmtraud Morgner, **Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura: Roman in dreizehn Büchern und sieben Intermezzos** (1974)<sup>4</sup> and **Amanda: Ein Hexenroman** (1983).<sup>5</sup> The selection of the works under discussion has not been made according to some notion of an authorial presence as the unifying force behind the individual works, but rather on the basis of the aesthetic features and political concerns they share. A major reason for focusing on the works of Irmtraud Morgner is the extent to which they address feminist concerns and formulate a feminist politics. The works written by Morgner after 1968 constitute by far the largest homogeneous body of literature in the GDR to postulate a feminist poetics and politics based on the critical and emancipatory use of fantasy.

One obvious context for a study of this kind could be found in the wave of feminist or woman-centred works of fiction to emerge from the various autonomous women's movements in Europe and America from the early seventies on. Undoubtedly the appearance of a 'feminist' body of writing in the German Democratic Republic in the seventies and eighties could be examined solely within the broader international context of contemporary feminist writing in the West, particularly since East German women's fiction raises many of the same political, theoretical and aesthetic issues as women's fiction in the West.

However, such previous discussions of the works of Christa Wolf or Irmtraud Morgner as aim to situate the works of East German women writers within the broader context of international or Western feminism have, on the whole, paid scant attention to the cultural and historical specificity of the concerns articulated by these

<sup>4</sup> Irmtraud Morgner, **Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura** (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1974; Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1976). Further references to this work will appear in the text as the abbreviation <T>.

<sup>5</sup> Morgner, **Amanda: Ein Hexenroman** (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1983; Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983). Further references to this work will appear in the text as the abbreviation <A>.

writers. Reception of East German women writers has therefore tended to overlook the quite different political and cultural constraints operating at the levels of production and consumption of women's literary texts in the East and West. Consequently, such writers as Morgner and Wolf have often been accused of not being sufficiently radical in their critiques of patriarchy and instrumental rationality. They have moreover been accused of adhering to outmoded forms of Marxist feminist thought long since abandoned by feminists in the West. Such charges are inevitably based on, at best, a lack of sensitivity towards the very different processes and patterns of reading and writing in the German Democratic Republic and, at worst, a poor understanding of the cultural and political determinants governing the production and consumption of East German texts. It is primarily such a lack that this thesis will attempt to remedy.

The prevalence of 'Westeurocentrism' in the reception of East German literature has frequently led to a denial of the cultural and political differences of East German cultural production and hence to often quite naive judgments of the validity of the feminist positions and strategies espoused in these works.<sup>6</sup> A chief focus of this thesis will therefore be on the socio-political and cultural context of the production of feminist fantasy in the GDR. At the same time, however, the thesis is concerned to situate arguments and positions put forward by Morgner within the broader framework of current debates within international feminism in order to elucidate more clearly the areas of common concern to women in capitalist and socialist countries as well as the specificity of feminist literature produced in the GDR.

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<sup>6</sup> One example of this can be located in an essay on feminist critiques of scientific rationality and the nuclear age by Maureen McNeil, "Being Reasonable Feminists," in *Gender and Expertise*, ed. Maureen McNeil (London: Free Association Books, 1987), pp. 48-52, which discusses Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* in the context of her contribution to the international women's peace movement. One of McNeil's criticisms of Wolf is that she has difficulties in being openly hostile to the achievements of science. The author's overhasty judgment of Wolf stems in my view from a lack of consideration of the very different ideological and cultural constraints affecting the production of Wolf's text which might induce Wolf to pay lip-service to dominant beliefs whilst criticizing them at the same time.

In many ways, women's fiction of the seventies can be read as the "non-dit" of the socialist realist text with its positive working heroine, its happy end and its facile resolution of conflicts. In this way, many women writers attempt to uncover the hidden text of a female "political unconscious" which has been excluded or repressed from the official narratives about women's public emancipation.<sup>7</sup> But in borrowing Jameson's term the "political unconscious," I mean to refer not just to the historical and social contradictions affecting women's daily lives which the socialist realist narrative had previously censored and repressed but rather to those collective female desires and longings which have been censored - either by editors or the women themselves<sup>8</sup> - in dominant representations of women and which, until the seventies, could not find an expression at an official level of public consciousness. In many cases this censored text of a female "political unconscious" does not break with socialist realist literary conventions, whereas in others the ideological 'rupture' which brings this literature to the fore is accompanied by formal innovations through the introduction of fantasy and fairytale elements into the socialist realist text. The main focus of this thesis will be on those works which register the emergence of this censored subtext at a formal level and which thus challenge both the dominant ideals of emancipation of the fifties and sixties and their forms of representation. The relevance of a poetics of fantasy for feminist politics derives in the case of Morgner from the extent to which she perceives the fantastic as already comprising a crucial, life-sustaining part of women's daily lives under socialism. The miracles women perform daily, she argues, are proof that "Hexerei längst in unseren Alltag integriert ist."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The term "political unconscious" derives from Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> On self-censorship see Christa Wolf: "Der Mechanismus der Selbstzensur, der dem der Zensur folgt, ist gefährlicher als dieser: Er verinnerlicht Forderungen, die das Entstehen von Literatur verhindern können, und verwickelt manchen Autor in ein unfruchtbares und aussichtsloses Gerangel mit einander ausschließenden Geboten . . ." in Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben: Neue Sammlung* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1980), p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> Irmtraud Morgner, "Interview mit Eva Kaufmann," *Weimarer Beiträge* 30 (1984), p. 1499.

The oppositional function of much of women's literature can best be explicated with reference to the social context of the production and consumption of women's texts in the German Democratic Republic. This oppositional status has primarily to do with the specific functions literature serves in the cultural and political life of the GDR and the institutionalization of a literary and cultural public sphere ("Literaturgesellschaft") which functions as a mediator between the Party and author and the Party and reader. The concept of a socialist public sphere or a "Literaturgesellschaft" is generally conceived in East Germany as a model for the formation of class consciousness and the ideological education of the working classes rather than in the Habermasian sense of a forum for "herrschaftsfreier Dialog."<sup>10</sup> Despite the pre-eminent function of the "Literaturgesellschaft" as a body which controls and regulates the interaction between consumer and producer of texts through the mediation of the Party, the cultural and literary public spheres in the GDR of the seventies can also be seen as performing the function - admittedly somewhat paradoxically - of a critical alternative public sphere.<sup>11</sup> The officially sanctioned public spheres of literature and culture can, I would argue, provide women in the GDR with one of the very few possibilities for the articulation of a critical public discourse. Until the momentous events of October and November 1989, literature functioned as one of the few forums for critical dialogue and therefore as one of the few authentic forms of mediation between the public and the private.<sup>12</sup>

The close connection between the political and cultural organs of the Party in the GDR has afforded literary cultural products, and therefore literary production and consumption, a status it entirely lacks in West German society. Literature, despite Party control, had in the first four decades of the Republic the potential to become a vital cultural and political medium of communication for a wide range of groups in East German society. The absence of alternative public spheres in the seventies and eighties (such as the autonomous women's movement in the West) as a

<sup>10</sup> David Bathrik, "Kultur und Öffentlichkeit," *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*, ed. P. U. Hohendahl und P. Herminghouse (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 57, 64.

<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 65.



social space in which to take up the debate on feminist issues has meant that women's literature was able to fulfil a crucial function in offering one of the few public forums for the collective articulation of women's changing needs. It thus provides a significant avenue for the expression of a growing sense of dissatisfaction with the real changes brought about by the course of socialism in women's everyday lives.<sup>13</sup> Women's literature in the German Democratic Republic assumes therefore many of the functions of, say, the autonomous women's movement in the West, ranging from the articulation of discontent with oppressive patriarchal structures in society, the identification and formulation of feminist strategies of intervention, to the attempt to forge a collective consciousness as a prerequisite for political and social change.

It has also largely been left to literature to provide the theoretical impulses which Western feminism has continued to supply from its place within academic institutions, the media and the popular press. In this sense, literature such as Morgner's represents an important contribution to general debates in feminist theory and aesthetics, whilst also providing impulses within the GDR itself for the formulation of a feminist politics and the cultivation of oppositional cultural practices.

Since the foundation of the German Democratic Republic as a separate state in 1949, the resolution of the "Frauenfrage" or the "woman question" has figured high on the agenda of the SED's party programme. The Party's line with respect to women is orthodox Marxist and regards the resolution of the "woman question," or what is known as the "secondary contradiction," as inseparable from the general socialist project of the liberation of the working classes, the abolition of private property and the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. As the roots of women's subordination are located, according to Engels' treatise on the rise of the monogamous family *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staates*

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<sup>13</sup> Christine Lemke, "Women and Politics in East Germany," *Socialist Review* 81 (1985), pp. 130, 121.

(1884),<sup>14</sup> in the rise of private property and capitalism, then true equality for women is only possible once the socialist revolution has been achieved and once the primary contradiction, which is the fundamental one of class conflict, has been resolved.

In the "Aufbau" years of construction and rebuilding, the emancipation of women was conceived primarily in economic terms. Consequently, in the immediate post-war years Party efforts focused on directing women into the spheres of production on a large-scale, partly out of the need to replenish a severely depleted workforce and to hasten post-war economic recovery. The SED's policy on the status of women was characterized in the early years by a type of crude economic reductionism or determinism. It was thought that total equality between the sexes would eventually come about as a further consequence of the economic independence of women and the changes to the economic base of society or to the modes of production. This particular way of conceptualizing the relationship of the base to the superstructure is now widely recognized as a dominant feature of Stalinist socialism and it was this form of "productionist ideology"<sup>15</sup> that was largely responsible for the tendency in the GDR to think of women's emancipation in purely economic terms.

The primacy of the economic sphere in East German social and political theory during the fifties and sixties meant that those traditionally female domains of social life - the private home and the nuclear family - retained the same function in the social structure they had under capitalism. Moreover, because it was envisaged that these private spheres of socialist life would eventually also be transformed by changes to the economic base of society, the East German state adopted a predominantly non-interventionist attitude to women's traditional role in the family. In saying this, I in no way want to play down the many social and political reforms introduced in the GDR to guarantee women's full participation in the workforce. Without the help of social welfare in the form of government child-care centres, maternity leave, the baby year, shorter working hours for women with more than

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, *Marx und Engels Werke*, Vol. 21 (1962; Berlin: Dietz, 1984), pp. 25-173. <MEW>

<sup>15</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 37.

three children, a day's paid leave a month for house work, as well as the various re-education and positive discrimination programmes for women, women's considerable contribution to the workforce in the post-war years would not have been possible. Notwithstanding all the practical benefits of these welfare programmes, it must nevertheless be said that these measures were not designed to abolish the sexual division of labour but instead to keep it firmly in place. Despite official pronouncements that men were to share house duties equally with women, the traditional sexual division of labour has remained until today one of the fundamental contradictions underpinning official East German discourses on women's emancipation.

The new stereotype of the emancipated working woman which was propagated at all political and cultural levels during the first two decades of the Republic meant that the socialist woman was required to perform her traditional duties in the family as wife and mother in addition to participating actively in the community and the workforce. The formation of this new female socialist personality required the harmonizing of two "non-synchronous" ideals - the integration of the traditional feminine role of housewife and mother and the newer role of worker, comrade and socialist activist.<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, to paraphrase Morgner, women suddenly had not only twice the rights of men, they also had twice as many duties.<sup>17</sup>

The literature written by both men and women during the early years of the German Democratic Republic presented an idealized picture of women's liberation with a single focus on women's successful participation in the workforce, in particular in traditionally male-dominated professions. The problem of the "Doppelbelastung" or double burden of a family and a profession remained curiously absent from early literary representations of the positive socialist heroine. The conflicts between women's public and private lives were regarded much in the same

<sup>16</sup> For Bloch's theory of "Ungleichzeitigkeit" or "non-synchronicity" see Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1962), pp. 45ff.

<sup>17</sup> Irmtraud Morgner, "'Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen': Ein Gespräch mit der DDR-Schriftstellerin von Karin Huffzky," in *Grundlagentexte zur Emanzipation der Frau*, ed. Jutta Menschik (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1976), p. 331.

way as other contradictions in the social structure; they were seen as essentially "non-antagonistic," that is, they were not reducible to conflicts between classes, and were the province of "Erziehungsarbeit" or re-education of the populace. Furthermore, because the difficulties women were experiencing in reconciling the two disparate halves of their lives were not of the order of class conflicts, it was assumed they could be resolved chiefly through the help of social welfare and other forms of institutional support as well as gradual changes in the nature of social consciousness.

In the late sixties and early seventies, women writers such as Irmtraud Morgner, Sarah Kirsch, Christa Wolf and Maxi Wander began to express their dissatisfaction with the impossible demands the double burden of a family, husband and a job placed on working women and the unrealistic feminine "Wunschbilder" projected in the literature of the fifties and sixties. In addition, their works articulate a growing disillusionment with the prevailing interpretation of the project of women's emancipation as the abolition of all sexual difference. Christa Wolf indicates in a discussion with Hans Kaufmann in 1968 the need for a radical break with popular conceptions of the aims of women's emancipation away from notions of emancipation as equality between the sexes towards a recognition of the need to reaffirm a sense of a feminine difference. Women had hitherto been encouraged to identify with what Wolf terms "dem auch in sich überholten Männlichkeitsideal."<sup>18</sup> Given men's own need for emancipation, she asks: "Ist es denn das Ziel der Emanzipation, kann es überhaupt erstrebenswert sein, daß die Frauen 'werden wie die Männer' . . .?"<sup>19</sup> There is, she feels, a very real danger in stagnating in self-congratulatory rhetoric about the existing achievements of the state for women, thereby ignoring the urgent necessity for more radical changes to the status of women in East German society. The rejection of images of masculinity as a suitable ideal for women was accompanied by a more critical look at the "Sitten," those patriarchal values and attitudes which were now seen as the main hindrance to

<sup>18</sup> Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p. 93.

women's self-realization. Morgner attributes the longevity of the traditional sexual division of labour in the family to the perpetuation of patriarchal "Sitten" - those disconcerting remnants of an earlier pre-socialist era which display an alarming resistance to other changes in the social formation.

Many of the works of a younger generation of writers such as Brigitte Martin,<sup>20</sup> Helga Königsdorf<sup>21</sup> and Charlotte Worgitzky,<sup>22</sup> as well as some of the more established writers writing in the fifties such as Elfriede Brüning,<sup>23</sup> directly address the problem of the double burden and the sexist attitudes which help to keep it in place. There are, however, apart from the works of Morgner, only isolated instances of the use of fantasy as a narrative means of resolving the double burden, such as in the short stories by Monika Helmecke ("Lauf weg! - Kehr um!")<sup>24</sup> and Charlotte Worgitzky ("Karriere Abgesagt").<sup>25</sup> Without ever doubting the value of work outside the home, these novels and short stories are concerned to highlight the immense personal sacrifices entailed in the process of economic emancipation. As women's official emancipation has been achieved for the most part at considerable cost to either their children or their personal relationships,<sup>26</sup> the focus of many of these works is often on the disjunction between women's public and private lives and the inability to reconcile both public and private halves of their personalities. Morgner's

<sup>20</sup> See Brigitte Martin, *Nach Freude anstehen* (Berlin/GDR: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1983).

<sup>21</sup> See Helga Königsdorf, *Mit Klischmann im Regen* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> See Charlotte Worgitzky, *Meine ungeborenen Kinder* (Berlin/GDR: Verlag Neues Leben, 1982); Worgitzky, *Vieräugig oder Blind* (Berlin/GDR: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1978).

<sup>23</sup> See Elfriede Brüning, *Partnerinnen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

<sup>24</sup> Monika Helmecke, "Lauf weg! - Kehr um!" *Klopfzeichen* (Berlin/GDR: Verlag Neues Leben, 1979), pp. 76-87.

<sup>25</sup> Worgitzky, "Karriere Abgesagt," in *Vieräugig oder Blind*, pp. 69-82.

<sup>26</sup> See Brüning, *Partnerinnen* for an account of the sorts of personal compromises the working heroines of the fifties were forced to make in order to succeed in their professions. The three stories in the volume offer three different versions of the official story of women's emancipation. In two instances success in a career has been achieved at considerable cost to the women's children (who were brought up in institutions and orphanages) and to their marriages or personal relationships. The one woman of the three colleagues who did not sacrifice her personal relationships and the welfare of her children for her career remains forever unfulfilled because of the missed opportunities to follow the career of her dreams.

works and various stories by Christa Müller<sup>27</sup> and Monika Helmecke<sup>28</sup> emphasize the contradictory nature of women's dual roles in socialist society and implicitly criticize the normative role literary representations and "Wunschbilder" have played in entrenching these stereotypes. In focusing on those areas of women's everyday lives excluded from the dominant forms of socialist realism in the fifties and sixties, these texts offer alternative narrative accounts of women's emancipation and develop alternative discourses on women's experience.

Morgner's particular blend of fantastic realism, unlike much feminist fantasy and science fiction in the West and the East, takes as its starting point axioms of classical Marxism and its resolution of the "Frauenfrage," whilst offering at the same time a critique of the androcentric bias of certain central tenets of orthodox Marxism and its practices in the GDR. In doing so, her works implicitly encourage a reconsideration of the much quoted remark by Marx in a letter to Kugelmann, where Marx states that the social progress of a nation can be measured exactly by the social standing of the "schönes Geschlecht."<sup>29</sup> Thus, by taking Marx at his word, that is, by questioning Marxism in its own terms, Morgner is calling for a re-evaluation of the existing achievements of socialism, its past attainments as well as its future goals. Her works present therefore a more critical view of the everyday praxis of orthodox Marxism in the GDR. At the same time, however, this literal re-reading of Marx should not be regarded as harking back to an outmoded form of socialist feminist analysis or as symptomatic of the extent to which Morgner's works can be seen as lending complicit support to the official goals of state Marxism. Literalism serves both a pragmatic and an ideological function here; it represents an endeavour, not unlike much socialist feminist theory in the West, to move beyond the classical Marxist precept that the solution to the "Frauenfrage," or the "secondary contradiction," will automatically follow on from the resolution of the "primary contradiction."

<sup>27</sup> Christa Müller, "Candida," *Vertreibung aus dem Paradies* (Berlin/GDR, Weimar: Aufbau, 1981), pp. 7-56.

<sup>28</sup> See Helmecke, "Lauf weg! - Kehr um!"

<sup>29</sup> Karl Marx, *Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann in Hannover*, London, 12. Dez. 1868, *MEW*, Vol. 32 (Berlin/GDR: Dietz, 1965), pp. 582-83.

In the context of Eastern bloc countries, Marx' and Engels' classical prophecy that the abolition of private property and the transformation of the modes of production of a society will eventually bring about a revolution between the sexes must necessarily assume a centrality in feminist debates which similar questions no longer occupy in socialist or Marxist feminist analyses in the West. Despite grave doubts among feminists in Australia, Britain and the United States as to the continued relevance of Marxist analyses of modes of production to questions of gender,<sup>30</sup> I would argue that in the context of a state where the mode of production has at least been transformed in name, this question must still provide a necessary point of departure for feminist analyses. The classical Marxist thesis becomes particularly problematic in a context where the resolution of the primary Marxist contradiction has not satisfactorily solved the "Frauenfrage." This becomes especially acute when, in fact, gender relations appear to have assumed a relative degree of autonomy over the economic spheres of socialist life.

Not surprisingly, Morgner's position in this regard is itself equivocal. While in interviews she appears to defend the necessity of solving the primary contradiction in the victory of the socialist revolution, before addressing the question of such secondary contradictions as the "woman question," her works in fact exhibit a more critical attitude towards the primacy of the transformation of the means of production. The solution she offers in a rather enigmatic statement in an interview with Ursula Krechel - "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen"<sup>31</sup> - seems particularly vague on the order of the problems to be solved. One should read this remark, it seems to me, not so much as a dogged refusal to abandon the orthodox Marxist insistence on history as a necessary progression through pre-given stages, but, instead, as the attempt to demonstrate a cultural and ideological difference in her writings.

<sup>30</sup> See recent issues of *Australian Feminist Studies* on the relevance of the term socialist in socialist feminism in particular Rosemary Pringle, "Socialist-Feminism' in the Eighties: Reply to Curthoys," *Australian Feminist Studies* 6 (1989), pp. 25-30.

<sup>31</sup> Irmtraud Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen: Interview mit Ursula Krechel," *Konkret* 8 (1976), p. 44.

The adherence to classical Marxist dogma serves in many instances in Morgner's interviews as a means of defense against the threat of appropriation by her (German) sisters in the West. In fact, the return to Marx's dictum concerning the measure of human progress signals paradoxically a leaning towards more liberal feminist ideas of women's emancipation such as equality of opportunity and access to all spheres of social and political life. Equality can only be achieved once women's influence comes to bear on the realm of politics - both domestic and foreign. Only then, according to Morgner, "wird das Maß des sozialen Fortschritts wirklich gegeben sein mit dem des 'schönen Geschlechts.'"<sup>32</sup>

Morgner's reformulations of classical Marxism have much in common with contemporary Western socialist feminist writing on the role of women's work in the home - the link between the oppression of women and the relations of production and reproduction at different moments in history and the role of the public/private, nature/culture split in the perpetuation of women's subordination. Her discussions, however, of issues of major importance to feminists in the East and West - the debates around women's sexuality, the role of technology and science in the domination of women (chapter 6), the ecofeminist debates about the environment and peace (chapters 7 & 8) - all participate in broader debates than those specifically marked in the West as pertaining to socialist feminist concerns. In the following analyses I will attempt to point to areas of convergence and divergence between the theories expounded in Morgner's literary works and feminist literature and theory in the West, whilst always bearing in mind the difficulty of comparing fictional texts with theoretical discourse.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Morgner, "Weltspitze sein und sich wundern, was noch nicht ist," *Kürbiskern* 1 (1978), p. 97. Here her remarks contain echoes of some of the ideas put forward by Lily Braun in the socialist feminist movement in Germany at the turn of the century, ideas, moreover which were vehemently opposed by Clara Zetkin, the leader of the official women's movement of the SPD. See Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1865-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 107-33.

<sup>33</sup> Much feminist work, particularly the work of poststructuralist French feminists, has already set precedents for the deconstruction of the theory/fiction generic opposition by writing theory as fiction and fiction as theory. In Morgner's case, writing theory as fiction springs not so much from a postmodern deconstructive gesture, directed at setting into motion all fixed categories of writing, but



Morgner's works, through the intrusion of an array of both historical and legendary female characters from Greek, Nordic and medieval mythology into the historical present of the GDR, investigate lines of continuity between feudal, capitalist and socialist stages in the history of women's subordination. The confrontations of real and mythical women, of the feudal past and the socialist present, allow Morgner to investigate points of conjunction between the position of women at various historical moments and the status of women in East German society. In all her works since her first, socialist realist work, **Das Signal steht auf Fahrt** (1961), Morgner uses the confrontation of female characters from distinct time zones or periods of history to shed critical light on women's position in the present and to reassess the goals of emancipation. The coexistence of characters from different stages in the history of the subordination of women provides therefore a means of examining the phenomenon of "Ungleichzeitigkeit" or non-synchronicity in the theory and practice of "Frauenbefreiung" in the GDR. The technique of the montage of characters from 'real' historical as well as mythical times into the historical and mythical present of the GDR of the seventies and eighties emphasizes the contradictions in official rhetoric about equality and its everyday practice. The juxtaposition of different time zones highlights anachronisms and inconsistencies between the ideal and the reality of women's situation.

Morgner's return to medieval literary topoi and feudal power relations in both the main novels to be analyzed here seems to be arguing for the transhistorical nature of the oppression of women;<sup>34</sup> her stories testify to the necessity for a category such as patriarchy to explain the inveterate character of women's oppression under socialist and capitalist systems. While the term patriarchy may well be the "missing link"<sup>35</sup> in socialist theories of oppression, Morgner's treatment of the oppression of women reveals an awareness of the historical specificity of women's

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instead from the lack of alternative forums in the GDR for debating feminist issues.

<sup>34</sup> See Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, "Feminism and Materialism," in **Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production**, ed. Kuhn and Wolpe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> See Laura's remark in the **Trobadora** on the missing link theory (T. 104).

oppression at different historical conjunctures. She points to the need for a more critical scrutiny of the way property relations - an anachronistic remnant from the capitalist past - are closely connected with other forms of control over women, their bodies and sexuality and their labour power in the home. Morgner's approach to these fundamental questions will be shown to be unique to the specific historical context of Eastern socialism, despite some few areas of overlap with theories advanced by socialist or Marxist feminists in the West.

As distinct from much socialist feminism in the West, Morgner displays a reluctance to depart from the humanism of classical Marxism, a reluctance to relinquish entirely the official goal of SED socialism of "Menschwerdung," - the emancipation of humankind rather than the emancipation specifically of women. Both Morgner and Christa Wolf consider the aim of "Frauenbefreiung" to be the "Menschwerdung" of both men and women, in sharp contrast to the antagonistic "Geschlechterkrieg"<sup>36</sup> characteristic of the women's movement in capitalist societies. In this respect, their views mirror almost exactly the official position of the Party on the differences between women's position in the East and the West. The emphasis on communality of interests between men and women and on 'peace' rather than 'war' between the sexes<sup>37</sup> seems to be shared by writers and ideologues alike. Kuhrig and Speigner write in their work, **Wie emanzipiert sind die Frauen in der DDR?**:

Sie <die Frauenfrage> kann nicht im Geschlechterkampf, im Kampf der Frauen gegen die Männer, erreicht werden - wie das in der Gegenwart lautstark von den Vertretern der feministisch orientierten Frauenbewegung verkündet wird -, sondern nur im gemeinsamen Kampf der Frauen und Männer für den sozialistischen Fortschritt . . .<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Morgner, "Weltspitze sein und sich wundern, was noch nicht ist," p. 97.

<sup>37</sup> Morgner's early insistence in interviews on the peaceful relations between the sexes participates, it seems to me, in a style of rhetoric reminiscent of the cold war, especially when she attributes peaceful intentions to her own country and aggressive ones to the capitalist enemy. She sees the "Geschlechterkrieg" as a "Widerspiegelung der allgemeinen Kriegssituation" (ibid, p. 97), unwittingly revealing the emphasis in the GDR on peaceful relations between the sexes as part of the official party's policy on peace. By the same token, her understanding of the relations between the sexes as a general "Beitrag zur Erhaltung des Friedens" (ibid) can equally be placed in the context of peace movements in the sixties or as a rather idiosyncratic reading of the popular slogan "Make love not war."

<sup>38</sup> Herta Kuhrig and Wulfram Speigner, eds., **Wie emanzipiert sind die Frauen in DDR?** (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1979), p. 14.

Similarly, Morgner is at pains to distinguish her variety of feminist politics from those of Western feminists. When asked whether she would consider herself a feminist, Morgner makes the following response to Ursula Krechel, a fellow author and feminist from the Federal Republic of Germany:

Ich bin eine Kommunistin, die die speziellen Forderungen der Frauen außerordentlich bewegt. Ich glaube, es ist wichtig für die Frauen zu erkennen, daß man zu allererst mal die Gesellschaft ökonomisch verändern muß in dem Sinn, daß man die hierarchischen Strukturen, die ausbeuterischen Strukturen beseitigt, die ja immer wieder Unterdrückung und Hierarchie wecken. Der erste große Schritt für die Frauenbefreiung ist die sozialistische Revolution. Und dann kommt noch ganz viel Arbeit.<sup>39</sup>

She prefers to see the aims of a "Kommunistin" as compatible with those of feminism, denying the existence of any contradictions between the project of communism as the creation of humane conditions for both sexes and the specific aims of feminism: "Bin ich damit Feministin? Ich habe keinen Grund einerseits Kommunistin, andererseits Feministin zu sein."<sup>40</sup> Equality of the sexes, she stresses repeatedly, is a "Menschheitsproblem" and "ein Fundamentalsatz des Sozialismus;" both projects are theoretically if not yet historically reconcilable.

On another occasion, when asked if she would consider herself as a "Feministin der DDR," Morgner rejects the epithet 'feminist' because of its fashionable and unpolitical connotations and because it seems to her to carry the implication that the emancipation of women is somehow of less relevance to society if it is only a matter for women:

Das Wort 'Feministin' gefällt mir nicht, weil es einen modischen, unpolitischen Zug hat für mich, weil es die Vermutung provoziert, daß die Menschwerdung der Frau nur eine Frauensache sein könnte. Da wird aber ein Menschheitsproblem aufgeworfen. Emanzipation der Frauen ist ohne Emanzipation der Männer unerreichbar und umgekehrt. **Trobadora Beatriz** ist von einer Kommunistin geschrieben.<sup>41</sup>

In a later interview, however, Morgner retracts her disapproval of the fashionable nature of the women's movement in the West, emphasizing the very different conditions for the emergence of a women's movement in the GDR. The

<sup>39</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 43.

<sup>40</sup> Morgner, "Weltspitze sein und sich wundern, was noch nicht ist," p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Morgner, "Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 328.

task of a feminist politics and literature in the East must necessarily be different from feminisms in the West in its formulation of oppositional strategies and in its quest for legitimacy. Morgner's reply to Ekkehart Rudolph once again underscores her fear of colonization by her feminist sisters and Marxist brothers in the West:

Ich bin in einer andern Lage, ich lebe in einem Land, wo man sich die Frauenbefreiung auf die Fahnen geheftet hat. Ich kann die Regierung beim Wort nehmen.<sup>42</sup>

This thesis will attempt to explore the contradictions and tensions inherent in the dual commitment to feminism and Marxism, in particular the way Marxist rhetoric is used as a polemic to challenge the gender politics of orthodox Marxism and its practice. Indeed any consideration of the uneasy "marriage of Marxism and feminism"<sup>43</sup> must pay particular attention to the question of how a feminism in the GDR can specifically advocate feminist struggles whilst simultaneously appearing to adhere to an official party ideology which regards the resolution of the "Frauenfrage" as secondary to the historical mission of liberating the working class.<sup>44</sup> Feminism under socialism cannot afford to jettison its continual and persistent critical engagement with the dominant political and cultural discourses of Marxism as a powerful means of exposing the contradictions between official rhetoric and everyday praxis. The marriage between feminism and Marxism is both necessary and productive, since, in the case of Morgner, it concerns the quest for a space both within and alongside dominant discourses in the GDR for a feminine difference - for the female imagination and creativity, feminine sexuality and productivity and a feminization of global politics.

The following chapters will investigate the peculiar problems East German women face devising strategies to circumvent the material and ideological constraints placed on the formulation and practice of an alternative feminist politics by those

<sup>42</sup> Morgner, "Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner," in *Aussage zur Person*, p. 172.

<sup>43</sup> See Heidi Hartmann, "An Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981), pp. 1-42.

<sup>44</sup> "Die Lösung der Frauenfrage ist untrennbar mit der Erfüllung der historischen Mission der Arbeiterklasse verbunden." See Kuhrig and Speigner, eds., *Wie emanzipiert sind die Frauen der DDR*, p. 14.

dominant Marxist discourses which are actively engaged in the denial of sexual difference.<sup>45</sup> The lack of a feminist public sphere, or a "Hinterland," as Morgner calls it in *Amanda*, presents particular difficulties for the testing of oppositional strategies thematized in the works. In the light of official disincentives to experiment with oppositional practices at a public level, Morgner's texts explore a variety of ways in which women can effect an attack on patriarchal structures and subvert official representations from within a society that in those years allowed for no public spheres that could be overtly oppositional, no space on official levels for alternative discourses on gender or on the gender politics of science and technology or peace research. Given the monopolization of the cultural public sphere by the SED and its cultural organs, Morgner turns to the private spheres - none the less ideologically overdetermined - as those spaces which through their perpetuation of gender inequality and anachronistic practices are most indicative of the ideological contradictions in SED socialism and which are in most need of radical change.

The private sphere, the private dwelling or the family home, plays a significant role in the articulation of a feminist consciousness in the GDR because it in part constitutes a sphere separate from the public, although no less subject to ideological influence. The shift away from the spheres of work and production to the realm of the private and the domestic does not constitute, however, a withdrawal into an apolitical, idyllic space as a form of refuge from the burdens of women's public lives.<sup>46</sup> Nor should it be construed as a return to traditional female values of nurturing and mothering and as a renunciation of women's more or less compulsory involvement in public life. Its real significance stems instead from the fact that it is also the site of the other side of women's emancipation in the GDR, the place where the other history of women's official emancipation, the story of their unpaid second and third shifts in the service of children and families, is played out.

<sup>45</sup> The denial of sexual difference can perhaps be traced back to Marx' statement in the *Das Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, MEW, Vol. 4 (Berlin/GDR: Dietz, 1959), p. 469: "Geschlechts- und Altersunterschiede haben keine gesellschaftliche Geltung mehr für die Arbeiterklasse."

<sup>46</sup> See Dorothee Schmitz-Köster, "DDR-Frauenliteratur der siebziger und achtziger Jahre," *Feministische Studien* 5.1 (1986), p. 161.

The reactivation of myths and legends serves the dual purpose of uncovering and reconstructing a tradition of a feminine resistance to male power, a "positive Ketzertadition,"<sup>47</sup> which can provide East German women with historical and mythical support for future strategies of resistance. Morgner's particular use of a type of fantastic realism with its intrusion of mythical and historical images of women, of fantastic or supernatural events and eventually whole peopled spaces into the 'real' world of the German Democratic Republic constitutes a means of subverting the official party rhetoric on women's emancipation as well as the dominant literary aesthetic of socialist realism.

Chapter 1 will trace the rehabilitation of literary fantasy in the GDR and the emergence of a feminist poetics of fantasy as a form of critical opposition to socialist realism and dominant masculine forms of fantasy in the GDR. Chapter 2 will examine how encounters with the fantastic in the *Trobadora* provide the impetus for a critical analysis of women's position in socialist society. Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss the effects of *Trobadora* Beatriz's "arrival" in the GDR through a detailed analysis of the narrative structure of the quest. In these chapters the variations to the actors of the quest narrative will be investigated in Morgner's choice of subjects, objects, helpers and opponents in the quest for female emancipation. Chapter 5 will explore the ways the *Trobadora* novel parodies the generic conventions of the socialist "Bildungsroman" and "Ankunftsroman" to effect a feminist critique of socialist models of female development. In chapter 6 the quest for sexual liberation and for control over women's bodies, as a central component in women's quest for self-realization in both novels, will be the object of investigation. The interconnections between a feminist politics of the body and the feminist concern with the 'body politic' will be discussed with reference to *Amanda*. Chapters 7 and 8 will show how in *Amanda* the issues of peace and ecology become specifically feminist concerns; the significance of the figures of the witch, the mother and Pandora for a feminist blueprint for the survival of the human race will be demonstrated in this context. Chapter 8 will look at the gender politics of science

<sup>47</sup> Morgner, "Interview mit Eva Kaufmann," p. 1497.

and technology in the context of the arms race of the eighties, in particular at the oppositional strategies of magic and alchemy proposed in *Amanda* to correct the gender bias of socialist science and to ward off the threat of a nuclear holocaust. Finally in chapter 9 and the concluding chapter I will address what implications the models of female subjectivity expounded in both the texts via the use of such fantastical strategies as Vilma's "Leibrede" have for a feminist politics of subversion and the formulation of a materialist feminist aesthetics.



## I. LITERARY FANTASY IN THE GDR

### A. The Rehabilitation of a Genre

Ich würde sagen, das, was ich schreibe, das ist Sozialistischer Realismus; denn ich bin ein Sozialist. Und: das Phantastische ist kein Gegensatz zum Realismus, sondern es ist eine Art des Realismus. (Morgner, "Interview mit Ekkehart Rudolph," p. 163)

Die Wirklichkeit dieses Jahrhunderts selbst wendet sich gegen die Prosaschreiber. Sie ist phantastischer als jedes Phantasieprodukt. Ihre Grausamkeit und ihre Wunderbarkeit sind durch Erfindung nicht zu übertreffen. (Christa Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 17)

When reality itself is seen as more fantastic than the wildest fantasies and the use of fantasy in literature as another more realistic form of realism, the relationship between reality and realism as the objective and faithful representation of that reality through mimesis becomes tenuous to say the least. But if, as I will argue, both fantasy and realism can be regarded as equally valid modes of representation of reality, even socialist reality, then the clearly defined borders between the dominant aesthetic of the GDR and other non-canonical forms of literature which have been habitually discredited as decadent and formalistic become effaced. Both Wolf's and Morgner's polemic defense of fantasy as offering in many cases a more adequate portrayal of a reality which itself has become as incredible and implausible as the most radical "Phantasieprodukt," has as its target dogmatic prescriptive conceptions of literary socialist realism as propagated during the antifascist-democratic and "Aufbau" years of the German Democratic Republic. Both remarks by Wolf and Morgner challenge dominant conceptions of reality and its officially approved representations as well as the notion of a canon.

In insisting on the partisan nature of her form of socialist realism, Morgner departs from a definition of socialist realism based on formal-aesthetic criteria,



arguing in favour of a categorization of the official aesthetics of the GDR in terms of only one of its components - "Parteilichkeit." Socialist realism becomes in Morgner's reformulation merely a collective term for all works of literature written by socialists under socialism. Her remarks are, of course, intended to be polemical. Whilst appearing to discount all definitions of realism which single out those specific literary features distinguishing realism from other non-mimetic modes of writing, Morgner is in fact arguing for a less ideologically determined definition of realism. Her concern, it would seem, is for the way in which formal criteria are frequently employed as a form of aesthetic pretext for disqualifying works of literature on what are essentially ideological rather than aesthetic grounds. At the heart of Morgner's remarks lies the central paradox which beleaguers all forms of formal innovation in the GDR. To gain acceptance into the realist canon a poetics of fantasy must play down those aspects which deviate too radically from prevailing literary norms, stressing instead the lines of continuity and convergence with the dominant realist aesthetic. The condition for the inclusion of works of fantasy and other non-mimetic modes of writing into the realist canon is paradoxically the erasure of their markers of textual difference, that is, of precisely those formal features that constitute fantasy as transgressive and subversive *viv-à-vis* dominant modes of realism. In the course of this chapter, the "gestus" of fantasy evident in Morgner's works will be demonstrated to be at once transgressive and subversive with respect to consensus notions of reality; yet at the same time this transgression is one that always returns to the world of the real and to a notion of the real as a point of departure. The reasons for Morgner's strategic denial of the specific textual and ideological features which characterize her use of fantasy and for her peculiar reluctance to acknowledge the formal aspects of innovation in her works are to be found in the history of the reception of utopian and fantasy fiction in the GDR and its peculiar androcentric bias.

Ever since the transformation of the Soviet Zone into a republic in 1949, works of fantasy fiction, like the literary innovations of modernism, expressionism, surrealism and the avant-garde have epitomized that marginalized 'other' of socialist

realism. Works which deviated too radically from Zhadanov's cultural politics of socialist realism, which were enforced relentlessly in the GDR in the post-war Stalinist years, were branded variously as decadent, schematist, formalistic and subjectivistic. According to Lukács' model of classical realism, literature should reflect the organic totality of society in its objective determinations through the use of typifications by which the totality of social phenomena is represented. Reformulated by Zhadanov at the "Allunionskongress" in Moscow in 1934, the representation of the general through the typical became reduced to the doctrine of the positive exemplary hero of the revolution and socialist production. Lukács' argument for a critical appropriation of classical realism in a socialist literature became submerged in the cries from voices calling for the working classes to become immediate heirs to the cultural heritage of German classicism and, more significantly, to become its only legitimate "Vollstrecker."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the fifties, writers in the Democratic Republic were instructed by the exiled antifascist writers, Alexander Abusch and Johannes R. Becher, who were now, in their positions as cultural functionaries, the leading exponents of the new "Erbe-theorie," to orient themselves on Lukács' model of classical realism. Ulbricht announced at the Fifth Party congress of the SED in 1958 that writers were to storm the heights of German classicism and classical realism, appropriating the bourgeois "Kulturerbe" for socialism and the working classes.<sup>2</sup> Realism thus became functionalized in the services of the ideological education and indoctrination of the working masses to the economic and political goals of the Party. The harnessing of literature for cultural politics in a type of "kulturelle Planwirtschaft" which prevailed in the fifties,<sup>3</sup> resulted, in the first two decades, in a dominant orientation towards

<sup>1</sup> Robert Karl Mandelkow, "Die literarische und kulturpolitische Bedeutung des Erbes," in *Hansers Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur: Die Literatur der DDR*, Vol. 11, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (München: Carl Hanser, 1983), pp. 92-97.

<sup>2</sup> Elimar Schubbe, ed., *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED, 1949-70*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1972), p. 536; Mandelkow, "Die literarische und kulturpolitische Bedeutung des Erbes," pp. 89-99.

<sup>3</sup> John Milfull, "Die Literatur der DDR," in *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart, 1945-1980*, Vol. III/2, ed. Viktor Zmegac (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1984), p. 594.

the spheres of production in the "Betriebsromane" and "Literaturreportagen" of the fifties and in the "Ankunftsromane" of the sixties.

The first of the "serious" writers to advocate a less doctrinaire and more flexible interpretation of realism argued for more experimentation with modernist and expressionist literary forms on the basis of the fact that socialist reality comprised of a plurality of individual experiences which required a plurality of literary forms, ranging from "den nüchternen Bericht" to "das luftigste Phantasiegebilde."<sup>4</sup> Writers such as Franz Fühmann and Anna Seghers who took up the debate on the need for a more dynamic and less prescriptive concept of realism could draw of course on a significant tradition of opposition to the poetics of socialist realism in the Brecht-Lukács debates and the correspondence between Anna Seghers and Georg Lukács in the thirties. A normative poetics, argued Franz Fühmann after the failure of the Bitterfelder project, would only lead to greater inauthenticity in literature during a phase where writers were called upon to make their writings both more authentic and more relevant to the working classes.<sup>5</sup> Writers should be able to draw on the whole of the tradition of German literature and its wealth of genres, to give full reign to their imagination and their "Fabulierkunst."<sup>6</sup>

Until the end of the sixties, the use of fantasy had been largely restricted to popular literature, most notably in the science fiction and factory sabotage novels of the cold war period. Works of greater literary merit which mixed fantasy with realism, such as Franz Fühmann's "Der Traum" (1958), Anna Seghers' *Der Bienenstock* (1953) and the satirical dystopian works by Günter Kunert were rare.<sup>7</sup> It was in fact not until well after the Eighth Party Congress that entire works employing science fiction and fantasy motifs such as Fühmann's "Die Ohnmacht"

<sup>4</sup> Franz Fühmann, "Brief an den Minister für Kultur, März, 1964," in Fühmann, *Erfahrungen und Widersprüche: Versuch über Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Kunert's works first appeared in the Federal Republic of Germany and with considerable delay in the GDR, see Horst Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR: Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung eines unterhaltungsliterarischen Genres von 1945-1979* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1982), p. 60.

(1974), Anna Seghers' *Sonderbare Begegnungen*, (1973), Christa Wolf's "Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll" (1972) and Morgner's *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel* (1968),<sup>8</sup> began to appear, thus lending credence to the use of fantasy in serious literature as a legitimate means of articulating constructive social criticism.

The reception of fantasy was perhaps most aided by the gradual rehabilitation of German Romanticism which occurred in the course of the seventies. The discovery of the emancipatory and socially critical impulses of the Romantics was largely motivated by the concern to expand the boundaries of the Lukácsian canon of classical realism to include writers from the "reactionary" tradition such as Kleist, Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Hölderlin in a broader understanding of the cultural heritage.<sup>9</sup>

Of further significance in the struggle for recognition of non-realist forms was also a gradual reassessment of the socially critical impulses at the heart of German modernism and the avant-garde which was to gradually emerge in the wake of the Kafka conference held in 1963 in Liblice near Prague.<sup>10</sup> In an influential piece of fictional prose, titled "Reisebegegnung," (1972) which presents a fictitious meeting in a Prague cafe between Gogol, Kafka and E. T. A. Hoffmann, Anna Seghers mounts a convincing defense of the use of fantasy and other non-mimetic devices as a valid means of social criticism. Fantasy and dreams form an integral part of the reality of every historical age, all the characters agree, and are therefore a legitimate means of

<sup>8</sup> Morgner, *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel* (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1968; Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979). All further references will appear in the text as <HK>.

<sup>9</sup> See Patricia A. Herminhouse, "Die Frau und das Phantastische in der neueren DDR-Literatur: Der Fall Irmtraud Morgner," in *Die Frau als Heldin und Autorin*, ed. Wolfgang Paulsen (Bern: Francke, 1979), p. 263; and Herminhouse, "Die Wiederentdeckung der Romantik: Zur Funktion der Dichterfiguren in der Neueren DDR-Literatur," in *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*, ed. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), pp. 217-48. For a study of the history of the reception of Romanticism and modernism and the change in the function of the cultural heritage in the GDR see Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "Theorie und Praxis des Erbens: Untersuchungen zum Problem der literarischen Tradition in der DDR," in Hohendahl, *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*, pp. 13-52.

<sup>10</sup> See for the consequences of the Kafka conference; Mandelkow, "Die literarische und kulturpolitische Bedeutung des Erbes," pp. 101-103. See also Werner Mittenzwei, "Brecht und Kafka," in *Wer war Brecht?: Der Realismusstreit um Brecht - Grundriss zu einer Brecht-Rezeption der DDR, 1945-1976*, ed. Werner Mittenzwei (Westberlin: Verlag das europäische buch, 1977), pp. 318-25.

conveying a writer's dissatisfaction with existing social and political conditions and his or her vision of a better world. As Seghers' Hoffmann maintains:

Symbolische oder phantastische Darstellungen, Märchen und Sagen wurzeln doch irgendwie in der Wirklichkeit. Genausogut wie greifbare Dinge. Ein richtiger Wald gehört zur Wirklichkeit, doch auch ein Traum von einem Wald.<sup>11</sup>

As the stronghold of the Lukácsian legacy slowly weakened, rigid notions of socialist realism began to give way in the late sixties to a more Brechtian variety of realist poetics, seen as the commitment to changing reality through the use of techniques of alienation which dissect the illusory "Schein" of the appearance of reality to reveal the socio-historical "Kausalnexus" beneath it.<sup>12</sup> Writers could become "Anwälte der Wirklichkeit," guardians of reality not by any adherence to fixed formal-aesthetic categories but by adopting a variety of aesthetic forms which enabled a critical and interventionist stance towards existing social structures.<sup>13</sup> The use of fantasy as a form of Brechtian alienation or "Verfremdungseffekt" holding up a critical mirror to the fascist past and aspects of the socialist present gained currency throughout the seventies, providing that the socially critical intention was clearly constructive. Bernd Ulbricht writes in 1981 in summary:

Es ist ein legitimes literarisches Mittel, die Realität, wie ich sie täglich erfahre, visionär zu verfremden, sie zeitlich oder räumlich in andere Dimensionen zu verpflanzen. Doch sie bleibt meine Wirklichkeit.<sup>14</sup>

Instrumental in the legitimation of fantasy and science fiction was the introduction of the category of "das Spiel" and "das Spielerische" into Marxist aesthetics via the Schillerian notion of the aesthetic domain as a domain of play.<sup>15</sup> The addition of playful elements in literature was made possible by the recognition of the value of "Verfremdung" as a "zusätzliches Erkenntnisorgan" and as an

<sup>11</sup> Anna Seghers, "Reisebegegnung," *Sonderbare Begegnungen* (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1973), pp. 142-43.

<sup>12</sup> An important milestone in this process was the work by Werner Mittenzwei see Mittenzwei, *Wer war Brecht?: Der Realismusstreit um Brecht*.

<sup>13</sup> See Erwin Pracht, "Was verstehen wir unter Wirklichkeit," *Weimarer Beiträge* 32 (1986), pp. 1413-30.

<sup>14</sup> Bernd Ulbricht, "Die sogenannte utopische Methode oder Vehementes Plädoyer für eine SF," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 29.11 (1981), p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> See for a similar view Siegfried Streller, "Wiedereroberung des Phantastischen zur Wirklichkeitserhellung," *Weimarer Beiträge* 32 (1986), p. 690.

"Erweiterung der Möglichkeiten des Realismus."<sup>16</sup> Playfulness, however, must never be allowed to become mere "Selbstzweck" and must always be subordinated to the "Annahme und Analyse sozialer Wirklichkeit."<sup>17</sup> Writing in 1966, Alexander Abusch, is equally adamant that modernist experimentation with form must never be permitted to become an end unto itself; it must always remain a "Mittel zur tieferen sozialen Durchdringung der Welt durch die Kunst."<sup>18</sup> Exponents of the technique of alienation as a type of "dialektische Gestaltungsweise"<sup>19</sup> were careful to point out that distancing oneself from reality was not to be understood as a form of liberation from social reality. Heinz Plavius writes:

Freier Umgang mit Wirklichkeit heißt nicht Befreiung von Wirklichkeit, sondern weitere Entfernung von ihr mit dem Ziel ihrer tieferen Erfassung. Entfernung von der Wirklichkeit in der Kunst erfolgt über die vielfältigen Formen der künstlerischen Verallgemeinerung (Auswahl, Typisierung, Symbol, Parabel, Metapher, Charakterzeichnung, Figuren- und Erzsälersprache, Komposition, Montage usw. usf.), die unter dem Begriff der Verfremdung zusammengefaßt werden können.<sup>20</sup>

In theory, fantasy as alienation had to engage productively with reality rather than provide a means of escape. Escapist literature had, since the founding of the GDR, been closely identified with the culture industry in the West and the resulting trivialization and commodification of art and literature under capitalism. Alienation, understood primarily in terms of creating a greater critical distance from reality, generally gained respectability throughout the seventies, as a type of magnifying glass or telescope through which the reader could see society in a new perspective. The effect of distancing the reader from reality through the technique of "phantastische Verfremdung" did not lead the reader away from the banality of the everyday as did escapist "Schmutz- und Schundliteratur" in the West, nor did it function as compensation for the insufficiencies of the socialist system. Instead it

<sup>16</sup> Heinz Plavius, "Tendenzen und Probleme der Prosa," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 24.1 (1976), pp. 28-30.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Abusch, "Erkennen und Gestaltung," *Sinn und Form, Sonderheft II* (1966), p. 1308.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1289ff.

<sup>20</sup> Heinz Plavius, "Die Entdeckung des Ichs durch Phantasie: Zur DDR-Literatur der sechziger/siebziger Jahre," in *Ansichten: Aufsätze zur Literatur der DDR*, ed. Klaus Walther (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1976), p. 141.

made social conditions more transparent; by leading the reader away from reality into fantasy and fairytale worlds, a socialist realist use of fantasy should ultimately return the reader to reality with new insights and perspectives. As Klaus Walther states:

Es ist eine legitime Möglichkeit realistischer Literatur, wirkliches Geschehen ins Traumhafte zu transponieren, um eben in dieser Entfernung aus dem Wirklichen eine größere Deutlichkeit und Durchsichtigkeit von Realität zu erreichen.<sup>21</sup>

The work of Günther Lehmann also played a significant role in the sixties in the rehabilitation of fantasy through his emphasis on the historical compatibility of the human imagination and literary fantasy with the Marxist concept of work. Fantasy does not constitute an opposition to rational thought or to practical action; instead he sees the workings of human fantasy as an integral part of human production and cognition. Lehmann in fact goes so far as to seek to explain "die Motorik' der Phantasie aus der Arbeits- und Lebensweise des Menschen."<sup>22</sup> His linking of the mimetic tradition with the dance rituals of primitive humanity where the "Gestus der Arbeit" combined with playful experimentation and "leibhafte Nachahmung" to form a practical-intellectual form of cognition is an attempt to reverse the Platonic tradition of metaphysics as grounded in the separation of "Geist" and "Körper," "Logos" and "Physis." The elevation of contemplative reflection over practical-mimetic forms of cognition was seen to be responsible not only for the alienation of intellectual from physical labour but also for the declining significance of the practical physical aspects of mimesis as manifest in the carnivalesque rituals of the marketplace in the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup>

Lehmann's study represented a significant contribution to the rehabilitation of fantasy as a legitimate form of cognition and as a form of productive "Auseinandersetzung" with reality. The task of reversing Platonic dualism, of uniting "Logos" with mimesis, a mission already begun by German classicism, falls then to

<sup>21</sup> Klaus Walther, "Alpträume und Realität: Zu Klaus Schlesingers *Berliner Traum*," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 26.5 (1978), pp. 152-53.

<sup>22</sup> Günther K. Lehmann, *Phantasie und künstlerische Arbeit: Betrachtungen zur poetischen Phantasie* (Berlin/GDR, Weimar: Aufbau, 1966), p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 41ff.

the legitimate heirs to the classical tradition in the champions of the Marxist-Leninist revolution.<sup>24</sup> What was perhaps the most important innovation in Lehmann's alternative account of the development of fantasy was his concern to construct a place for the imagination in Marxist theory. A Marxist theory must therefore effect a radical break with bourgeois conceptions of fantasy as an essentially contemplative and escapist form of art. Such a theory of fantasy is therefore one that sees fantasy as an "ideelle Produktivkraft"<sup>25</sup> and as in no way incompatible with a rational or scientific world view. A legitimate poetics of fantasy under socialism found itself obliged to curry favour with orthodox Marxist notions of productivity, as demonstrated by Lehmann's study, as well as to prove its compatibility with Marxist notions of rationality and the "scientific-technological revolution."

Since Engels' infamous "Utopieverbot" contained in the work **Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft** (1882), models of future or alternative societies have been regarded with the suspicion duly afforded all revisionist tendencies within Marxism. Historical materialism no longer saw any need for the earlier unscientific social utopias of the likes of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen; since Marx had placed Hegel's idealist philosophy firmly back on its feet, humanity was no longer reliant on utopian ideas for change. Change was to be brought about instead through real transformations to the economic base of society by means of the class struggle and not through fanciful ideas of better worlds in people's heads. According to Engels, the way to the future lies not in people's heads but in the insights of scientific socialism:

Die materialistische Anschauung der Geschichte geht von dem Satz aus, daß die Produktion, und nächst der Produktion der Austausch ihrer Produkte, die Grundlage aller Gesellschaftsordnung ist. . . . Hiernach sind die letzten Ursachen aller gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen und politischen Umwälzungen zu suchen nicht in den Köpfen der Menschen, . . . sondern in Veränderungen der Produktions- und Austauschweise; sie sind zu suchen nicht in der Philosophie, sondern in der Ökonomie der betreffenden Epoche . . .<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Friedrich Engels, **Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft**, in **MEW**, Vol. 19 (Berlin/GDR: Dietz, 1962), p. 210.



A materialist view of history, those East German successors to Marx and Engels argued, could afford to dispense entirely with the concept of utopia since socialism itself became the living incarnation of all utopias past and present. This seems rather ironic considering the ways in which literary utopias and dystopias have in fact anticipated many of the more unsavoury aspects of twentieth century socialist societies. For Werner Krauss, however, socialism means the death of all utopias:

Utopie kommt nur zustande, wenn die wirklichen Verhältnisse von der Phantasie überflügelt werden. Da wir jedoch über den Sozialismus nicht hinausdenken, hat die Utopie ihre eigentliche Dimension verloren . . .  
27

Socialism was itself a utopia and the Soviet Union its concrete realization.<sup>28</sup> The final nail in the utopian-fantastic coffin was provided, however, by Lenin's announcement in "Two Utopias" in 1912 that "day-dreaming is the lot of the weak."<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the utopia debates of the second half of the fifties it was Lenin's and Engels' condemnation of utopias that set the tone for the reception of utopian literature, scoring a short-lived victory over the revisionism of Bloch's concept of "Das Prinzip Hoffnung." Against the reproach of unscientificity and schematism, Bloch argued instead for the value of dreams, hopes and wishful thinking, "die Kraft des geschulten Träumens, das Salz der konkreten Antizipation," as a legitimate factor in the progress of a society towards socialism.<sup>30</sup> Despite Bloch's fall from grace in the mid-fifties, his emphasis on the present and its utopian moments as forms of concrete anticipation was influential in later attempts to rehabilitate notions of subjectivity and the validity of subjective hopes and ideals. In Seghers' "Reisebegegnung," E. T. A. Hoffmann attempts to convince Gogol, whose concept of fantastic realism adheres most rigidly to the laws of verisimilitude, that just as

<sup>27</sup> Werner Krauss, "Geist und Widergeist der Utopien," *Sinn und Form* 14 (1962), pp. 769-99.

<sup>28</sup> See Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, p. 138.

<sup>29</sup> V. I. Lenin, "Two Utopias," in *Collected Works*, Vol. 18, April 1912 - March 1913 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1963), p. 356.

<sup>30</sup> Ernst Bloch, "Naturstimme und Klarheit," in *IV Schriftstellerkongreß. Januar 1956. Protokolle*, Vol. 2, ed. Deutscher Schriftstellerverband (Berlin: Aufbau, 1956), p. 84 in Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, p. 143.

dreams and fantasies belong to the subjective world of an author, so do "Vorahnungen und Hoffnungen und Ängste."<sup>31</sup> The legacy of Bloch's principle of hope is most strongly felt in the works of women writers such as Morgner and Wolf, who, in the seventies, saw in Bloch a philosophical mentor in their search for self-realization and the resuscitation of feminist hopes for a radical transformation to patriarchal society.

### B. Science Fiction and the "Woman Question"

As Horst Heidtmann has documented in an exhaustive study of East German "utopisch-phantastische Literatur," the sixties saw the beginnings of a reappraisal of the value of 'scientific' dreaming and its corresponding literary equivalent of "Realphantastik" in the numerous works of science fiction or "wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur" which dominated the popular literature market. A series of discussions in the newspaper *Sonntag*, dating from 1962, called explicitly for an injection of "wissenschaftliche Phantasie" as an expression of a type of Leninist "revolutionäres Träumen" into literature.<sup>32</sup> The explosion in scientific knowledge and technological know-how towards the end of the reconstruction period, coupled with the advances in nuclear and space technology most visible in the launching of the Sputnik, all encouraged faith in the miracles of the "scientific-technological revolution."<sup>33</sup> As Alexander Stephan remarks, the "scientific-technological revolution" under the sign of socialism acted as a kind of a "Zauberbesen" to conjure up the image and hence the belief in a rosy future for socialism.<sup>34</sup> The euphoria at the dawning of a new scientific age in the expansion of socialism into outer space found expression in poems by Johannes R. Becher, Paul Wiens, and Christa Wolf's *Der*

<sup>31</sup> Seghers, "Reisebegegnung," p. 141.

<sup>32</sup> See Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, p. 149.

<sup>33</sup> For an excellent summary of the uneasy relationship between the "scientific-technological revolution" and literature during the fifties and sixties see Alexander Stephan, "Die wissenschaftlich-technische Revolution in der Literatur der DDR," *Der Deutschunterricht* 30.2 (1978), pp. 18-34.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, p. 21.

*geteilte Himmel* (1963) and numerous other works. But its most enthusiastic expression was to be found in the popular literature of science fiction, the first genre to utilize elements from the tradition of fantasy and utopian fiction. These prognoses about the future of socialism were characterized chiefly through their claim to base their futuristic models on sound scientific knowledge. "Realphantastik," argues its main exponent Carlos Rasch, must situate itself "in der Nähe von gesicherten Erkenntnissen," never leaving the firm ground of well-founded scientific and technological evidence.<sup>35</sup> The alternative worlds of utopian literature were permitted to extrapolate from the present but must never totally abandon the terrain of existing technological achievements by venturing too far into the realm of the improbable. Scientific verisimilitude remained one of the author's main responsibilities if science fiction was to fulfil its epistemological function as a means of stimulating new knowledge about the universe and not become trivial "Science-triction."<sup>36</sup>

Socialist science fiction, taking Jules Verne as its model, was entrusted with the important task of educating its readers in the central role of the "wissenschaftlich-technologische Revolution" in socialism's road to Utopia. Science fiction had an important contribution to make "zum neuen Wissenschafts-Technik-Verständnis" in the inculcating of attitudes appropriate to the new scientific age.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the author's attitudes to the world of technology were of utmost importance with his or her literary talents generally running a poor second. The

<sup>35</sup> Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> For a particularly virulent critique of the lack of verisimilitude in science fiction in the GDR and its tendency to trivialize "jene Erkenntnis-Problematik" through its "antiwissenschaftlich" and "ideenfeindlich" treatment of space technology; Inge von Wangenheim, *Genosse Jemand und die Klassik: Gedanken eines Schriftstellers auf der Suche nach dem Erbe seiner Zeit* (Halle, Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1981), pp. 40ff.

<sup>37</sup> Adolf Sckerl, *Wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur. Anmerkungen zu ihrem Wesen und ihrer Entwicklung, Überlegungen zum Umgang mit ihr in unserer Gesellschaft* (Berlin/GDR: Arbeitsmaterial für die literaturpropagandistische Arbeit im Kulturbund der DDR, ed. by Kulturbund der DDR, Präsidialrat, Zentrale Kommission Literatur, 1976), p. 87.

writers of science fiction, but increasingly the authors of poetry and other fiction,<sup>38</sup> were called upon to correct the bourgeois decadent bias against technological progress and to participate in the struggle for the "wahre Humanisierung" of science and technology.<sup>39</sup> "Technischer Fortschritt und menschlicher Fortschritt sind hier zwei Seiten eines einheitlichen Prozesses," argued one contributor to the technology debates of 1966 in the youth newspaper *Forum*.<sup>40</sup> In their works, writers should encourage faith in their readers in the rationality of technological progress as well as optimism in the benefits to be gained for humanity from technological advancements. Under socialism, literary representations of technology should denounce the demonic quality of their bourgeois counterparts and act as a corrective to their fetishistic and anti-humanist tendencies. The weight afforded the positive and affirmatory portrayal of technological progress in the literature of the late fifties and early sixties was proportional to the supremacy of the "scientific-technological revolution" in official party rhetoric and in its economic programmes for modernization. Just as the robot became the "Gefährte und Gehilfe der Menschen,"<sup>41</sup> so technology became humanity's "Helper" in the quest for a brighter socialist future.<sup>42</sup>

Just exactly what was woman's role in this quest was not clear. Certainly in the popular works of science fiction she was little more than an object of male fantasies and desires. Alternatively, where women featured as protagonists of science fiction,<sup>43</sup> the question of sexual difference was either ignored in the representation of heavily masculinized women or the images of femininity operated entirely within existing female stereotypes. Otherwise, the science fiction of the fifties and sixties was characterized by a prudery with regard to sexual matters it had inherited from the

<sup>38</sup> See for instance the suggestion that cybernetics could provide models for the production of poetry in the invention of a "Lyrikator," Lothar Kusche, *Sonntag* 52 (1963), p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Sckerl, *Wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur*, pp. 126ff.

<sup>40</sup> Horst Redeker, "Abbildung und Aktion," *Forum* 2 (1966), p. 21. For a more circumspect assessment of the positive benefits of technological progress see the contributions in volume 10 of the same year of Günter Kunert and Rainer Kirsch.

<sup>41</sup> Dieter Wuckel, *Science Fiction: Eine illustrierte Literaturgeschichte* (Leipzig: Edition Leipzig, 1986), p. 228.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p. 225.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. Alexander Kröger, *Die Kristallwelt der Robina Cruz* (Berlin/GDR: Verlag Neues Leben, 1977).

proletarian-revolutionary prose of the Weimar Republic years.<sup>44</sup> As one isolated male critic has remarked, the sexual morality of science fiction appeared to be stuck in "vor-pubertäre Erotik-Auffassungen."<sup>45</sup>

Morgner's works represent some of the first novels to raise the question of the relations between the sexes after twenty years of affirmative action, and to lament the lack of eroticism in the socialist "Alltag." Her call for an injection of erotic fantasy into socialism can be understood as a reaction to the prudery of socialist literature, both in popular representations of women and in more serious literature. The appeal to "die Erotik" as "die letzte Domäne der Männer" (T. 112) represents therefore an attempt by the women of the GDR to reclaim their sexuality and the right to an active female desire. In the *Trobadora*, *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel* and *Gauklerlegende*<sup>46</sup> Morgner raises the question of how women can appropriate a long neglected aspect of their total productivity as individuals in the liberation of their sexuality. She outlines the difficulties women experience in asserting their sexual independence in the face of antiquated customs and sexual practices which reinforce their subordinate position in society. In the *Trobadora*, Morgner uses the narrative structure of the medieval "Ritterroman" to articulate women's longing for greater social mobility and for an active female desire. Through the use of a structuralist analysis of the quest narrative and its variations in the *Trobadora*, I shall demonstrate how the subject of the "scientific-technological revolution" is invariably gendered and how it thus excludes the possibility of an active female subject in the quest for a more humane socialist future. In chapter 5 the analysis will focus on the narrative strategies the novel introduces to overcome the stereotyped concept of femininity as passivity and to reactivate an active female desire.

<sup>44</sup> See Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>45</sup> Hartmut Mechtel, "Die reale Welt der Phantasten," *Temperamente 2* (1978), p. 117.

<sup>46</sup> Morgner, *Gauklerlegende: Eine Spielfraugeschichte* (Berlin/GDR: Eulenspiegel Verlag, 1970; Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1982). Further references will appear in the text as <GL>.

### C. Female Creativity and the Utopian Imagination

The use of fantasy in Morgner's works is intimately connected to the release of female desire and eroticism and the stimulation of the female creative imagination. The unleashing of the productive and creative potential of female eroticism acts as a catalyst for the releasing of the female imagination and the revaluation of invisible, traditionally neglected forms of female productivity. In all of Morgner's novels from 1968 on, the intrusion of eccentric or fantasy figures into the rational worlds of working women triggers off quests for subjectivity and self-realization which are mainly realized through the liberating act of reading other women's texts.

The encounter with the supernatural and the impossible provides the impetus for a critical review of dominant notions of productivity and reproductivity and women's positions in relation to these dominant axioms, resulting, in many cases, in experimentation with alternative modes of creativity. Morgner presents in **Hochzeit in Konstantinopel** a feminine alternative to masculinist forms of "wissenschaftliche Phantasie" in the "poetische Phantasie" of Bele's twenty-one one-hundred-and-one-good-night-stories.<sup>47</sup> The act of narrating Sheherezade-like stories becomes for Bele in **Hochzeit in Konstantinopel** and Wanda in **Gauklerlegende** a way of staving off a type of death from overexposure to excessive scienticism and empiricism as represented in the cold, rational and unimaginative figures of their lovers. For Morgner, this feminine form of creativity, previously relegated to the margins of the literary text in **Die wundersamen Reisen Gustavs des Weltfahrers**,<sup>48</sup> does not stand in opposition to the scientific imagination, but provides instead the possibility of a critique of existing masculine forms of imagination. Morgner rejects the suggestion that her use of fantasy is peripheral to the major concerns of society: "Bele ist nicht nur eine Schnurrenerzählerin! Und da ist kein Kontrapunkt im Sinne von Gegensatz, da sind zwei mögliche Seiten der Welterkenntnis."<sup>49</sup> She refuses the

<sup>47</sup> Morgner, "Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner von Joachim Walther," **Weltbühne** 32 (1972), p. 1012.

<sup>48</sup> Morgner, **Die wundersamen Reisen Gustavs des Weltfahrers: Lügenhafter Roman mit Kommentaren** (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1972; Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981). Further references will appear in the text as <GW>.

<sup>49</sup> Morgner, "Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner von Joachim Walther," p. 1012.

classification of feminine fantasy as the irrational opposite or trivial feminine 'other' of (male) scientific fantasy, maintaining the complementarity and thus the necessary existence of both forms.

The device of framing her narratives with introductory remarks by a female narrator who is both recipient and reader of the texts as well as co-author ("Die Geschichten wurden teilweise neu erlogen" (HK. 191)) allows Morgner to demonstrate the concrete effects of the reception of fantasy. If the novels (with the exception of **Gauklerlegende**) are all the products of the reception of feminine/feminist fantasy, then women's responses to literary fantasy become a structural component of the texts themselves. The texts testify directly to the emancipatory and creative potential of fantasy. **Gustav der Weltfahrer**, although nominally about the untapped potential of the proletarian imagination, thematizes in the footnote references to the suppressed "false" fruits of the female imagination the peripheral status of female creativity and imagination. If official historiography has always been the history of the "Herrschenden,"<sup>50</sup> and the majority of the male population has been expropriated, then "die weibliche Hälfte der Menschheit" has been doubly expropriated.<sup>51</sup> The subtext of the story of the unleashing of the proletarian imagination contained in the footnotes of the text is the as yet untold story of the continued exploitation of the wives of the working-class men as "die Sklaven der Sklaven." The story submerged in the footnotes is the anonymous and invisible history of the "Besiegte," of those women who cooked the "Siegesschmaus" and fed those workers who built Thebes and the Chinese wall in Brecht's poem "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters." Morgner demonstrates how the glorification of the figure of the proletarian marginalizes women and their specific forms of creativity. Female desire is only afforded a place in the margins of the text, in the footnotes supplied by the female narrator. The inclusion of questions of gender in the footnotes of the main text marks the beginnings of the foregrounding of a hidden or

<sup>50</sup> Morgner, "Rede auf dem VII Schriftstellerkongreß," *Protokolle*, Vol. 2, ed. Schriftstellerverband der DDR (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau, 1974), p. 112.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

submerged subtext of a female "political unconscious"<sup>52</sup> which is to emerge in Morgner's main novels after 1973. The desires and demands of the wives of those exemplary proletarian men, which are only allowed to disrupt the text marginally in the timid intrusion of footnotes, are gradually afforded more space in the realm of the social, intruding further in the later novels as the imaginary enclaves become more and more necessary to women's survival.

Morgner's use of fantasy has an emancipatory and agitational function, a fact which has been recognized by critics in the East and West alike.<sup>53</sup> Christa Wolf's prognosis of the revolutionary potential of prose fiction in general can be applied to Morgner's works: "Sie ist revolutionär und realistisch: sie verführt und ermutigt zum Unmöglichen."<sup>54</sup> The function of Morgner's Munchausian tales of the impossible is to give encouragement to women to come to terms with the impossible already existing in their lives in the "double burden" but also to encourage them to aspire to the impossible of today as the possible of tomorrow. To create a fictional discourse in terms of miracles and the supernatural is to reactivate faith in the possibility of utopias and thus to excite the utopian imagination.

Morgner describes the impulse behind her use of fantasy as essentially utopian. She states in an interview with Ekkehart Rudolph:

Vielleicht ist das Phantastische bei mir zu erklären aus einem utopischen Moment: Es gibt mir die Möglichkeit, Zukunft mit Bildern in Gegenwart einzubringen, in ganz anfaßbare Ereignisse, Erscheinungen.<sup>55</sup>

Women, she argues, are more receptive to utopias and the utopian possibilities latent in the present, not on any essentialist grounds, but because of the bleakness of their past and present. Utopian thinking is therefore their only hope: "Was für sie interessant ist, ist die Geschichte der Zukunft, das, was schon, jedenfalls in der

<sup>52</sup> See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>53</sup> This agitational aspect of Morgner's use of fantasy has, at worst been denounced as "plakativ" and "pamphlethhaft" and "aggressiv" (Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz*," p. 143) and at best as "störend" (Siegfried Streller, "Wiedereroberung des Phantastischen zur Wirklichkeits-erhellung," *Weimarer Beiträge* 32.4 (1986), p. 693) by East German critics.

<sup>54</sup> Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> Morgner, "Interview mit Irmtraud Morgner im Gespräch mit Ekkehart Rudolph," *Aussage zur Person*, p. 160.



DDR, etwas in unseren Alltag ragt, was aber noch viel Arbeit verlangt.<sup>56</sup> She even goes so far as to suggest that women already live with an existing utopia - "eine reale Utopie"<sup>57</sup> - which is no doubt an ironic reminder that "der real existierende Sozialismus" is a far cry from the model of utopia it purports to be. Here the real utopia that women need to survive "die Belastung, die ihre Emanzipation erfordert,"<sup>58</sup> this "Ahnung vom Zukünftigen"<sup>59</sup> takes the form of blind faith. Women must furthermore cling to the remnants of a lost utopia - the utopia of self-realization - if they are to overcome the hopelessness of the "schwarze Kapitel" of their past and indeed the bleakness of their future.<sup>60</sup> Utopias, however distant and unreachable, provide women with an indispensable form of "Lebenshilfe."<sup>61</sup> Yet, in many ways Morgner's dogged insistence on the utopian aspects of the present no matter how invisible ("man muß sie nur erkennen"),<sup>62</sup> reminds us of the similar upright gait adopted by Bloch during the Stalinist years and his steadfast refusal to recognize the failure of his concrete utopia.<sup>63</sup>

This analysis will use the term fantasy rather than the designation, "utopian fiction," because the utopian impulse, although a fundamental component of the workings of fantasy, is only one of its functions. In many cases, the fantastic aspects of the texts, that is "das Unmögliche von heute," serve to indicate utopian possibilities latent in the present or "das Mögliche von morgen." In many cases, however, this is only part of the purpose of the fantastic events and characters that populate the texts. Moreover, the term utopian fiction suggests to me the projection of concrete models or partial models of future societies, or alternative modes of existence, which cannot be said to be a primary aim of Morgner's works. Besides, to

<sup>56</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 44.

<sup>57</sup> Morgner, "Aber die großen Veränderungen beginnen leise," *Für Dich* 21 (1978), p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 44.

<sup>61</sup> Morgner, "Die Perlen des Phantastischen: Interview mit Klara Obermüller," *Die Weltwoche* 30. March 1977, p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> See for a fascinating critique of Bloch's commitment to Stalinism and an illuminating reinterpretation of the famous upright gait by his son; Jan Robert Bloch, "How can we understand the Bends in the Upright Gait?" *New German Critique* 45 (1988), pp. 9-40.

talk too readily of the utopian aspects of her works overlooks the constraints operating on the formulation of concrete alternatives to the 'real' existing utopia of socialism; it also tends to assume Morgner is chiefly concerned with postulating concrete alternatives to existing life forms in the GDR. In recent years, the epithet "utopian" has often been used to designate any positive alternative to the existing state of affairs.<sup>64</sup> To subsume all considerations pertaining to the use of fantasy under the rubric of "utopian fiction" is therefore to subscribe to a looseness of usage of the term "utopian," of which many current writers, most notably Christa Wolf, are guilty.<sup>65</sup> The concept of the fantastic, by contrast, allows for greater freedom in understanding the nature of the relationship of the impossible to the possible and the fantastic to the real.

#### D. Feminist Fantasy as Subversion

The fantastic in Morgner's works cannot be adequately summarized by reference to the concept of alienation or "phantastische Verfremdung."<sup>66</sup> Certainly many stories use science fiction topoi as an ironic form of inversion of reality to provoke recognition of antiquated sexual and social practices.<sup>67</sup> However, fantasy does not merely invert or 'make strange' aspects of the social world by displacing the real into a hypothetical future or past world in order to bring it more sharply into focus. Instead it can be seen as transgressing the limits of the possible and the limits of the dominant order, exposing at every turn their ideological and socially contingent nature. Fantasy, Rosemary Jackson writes, "subverts dominant

<sup>64</sup> See Anthony Stephens, "The Sun State and its Shadow: On the Condition of Utopian Writing," *Utopias*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (Melbourne: Oxford UP, 1987), pp. 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> See in particular Wolf's *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Cassandra. Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983), pp. 61, 83, 91, 104; especially where she describes her model of Troy as "ein Modell für eine Art von Utopie" (ibid, p. 83), and "ein Utopie-Entwurf in der Nuß" (ibid, p. 104).

<sup>66</sup> See Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz*," p. 145.

<sup>67</sup> See for example the story "Kaffee verkehrt," (T. 111) in the *Trobadora* as well as "Die gute Botschaft der Valeska" which concludes the novel.

philosophical assumptions which uphold as 'reality' a coherent, single-viewed entity."<sup>68</sup> Jackson's description of literary fantasy as a type of literature of subversion in its overturning of dominant normative notions of reality, here bourgeois conceptions of the real, is particularly applicable to Morgner's use of fantasy and the way it calls into question socialist notions of reality and its attendant assumptions from a feminist perspective. Fantasy in Morgner's works, I will be arguing, serves as a feminist strategy of subversion of patriarchal structures and as means of positing feminine alternatives to the dominant phallogentric order.

Despite acknowledging that fantasy has the power to radically question representations of the empirical world and their underlying philosophical assumptions,<sup>69</sup> Jackson's text does not raise the question of the ideological nature of bourgeois assumptions about the real or how fantasy can undermine the ideological assumptions underpinning literary realism and official accounts of reality. Also absent from her account is an analysis of the ways in which the values of the dominant ideological order and its assumptions about the real are inherently gendered. Her otherwise excellent overview unfortunately gives no consideration to the possible ways a feminist or even feminine fantasy can subvert the phallogentric assumptions underlying dominant representations about reality and overturn a fundamentally "masculinist" reality perceived by feminists to be oppressive and prescriptive.

Fantasy has often been defined as the representation of that which lies outside of the parameters of normal experience in its "obdurate refusal of prevailing definitions of the 'real' or 'possible.'"<sup>70</sup> Both Jackson and Kathryn Hume seem to agree with W. R. Irwin that "a fantasy is a story based on and controlled by an overt violation of what is generally accepted as possibility," a transgression of that which is normally taken to be real or within the limits of the possible.<sup>71</sup> Fantasy, in particular

<sup>68</sup> Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 48.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> W. R. Irwin, *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1976), p. 4; Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 14; Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 13-21.

much of the literature marketed in the West under the rubric "fantasy," as well as much of the science fiction published in the East, is, of course, far from subversive in its uncritical reproduction of the dominant ideologies of the system in which it is produced. Nor does much of what is loosely termed "fantasy" necessarily by definition always extend the limits of the possible.<sup>72</sup> In many cases, an initial transgression of the limits of the real is followed by a strict adherence to prevailing societal conventions and codes which is anything but subversive. In my study, however, I will be concerned with the ways fantasy can be employed as an oppositional practice to subvert the ideological as well as epistemological limits of the real, more specifically the socialist 'real.'

Irwin's definition of fantasy clearly relies on some notion of a consensus reality which the fantastic defies or transgresses.<sup>73</sup> A feminist use of fantasy, however, ought to challenge the very idea of a consensus reality, exposing supposedly gender-neutral concepts such as objective reality and subjective experience to critical scrutiny. The impossible events and supernatural characters that intrude into the lives of the working women of the GDR in Morgner's novels are certainly violations, but violations not of a universally applicable 'reality' but of what is constructed in official and political discourses on women as an accurate objective representation of their reality. A fantastic event or character will therefore be defined in the course of this analysis in terms of its structural and ideological features by which it challenges official representations of women's emancipation, their history and reality.

A fantastic character or event is then by definition something which is afforded no official or recognized place in the dominant socialist discourses on women's reality. Rephrasing Jackson's definition slightly to include considerations of gender in a different socio-political context, fantasy can be said to exist as the "underside" of socialist realism, as propagated in the first two to three decades of the

<sup>72</sup> Science fiction in the GDR, it has been observed, must never stray too far from the realm of the technologically possible, even in its postulations about future advancements. See Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, pp. 47-77.

<sup>73</sup> See Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, p. 21 and for a critique of the concept of consensus reality; Lance Olsen, "Zombies and Academics: The Reader's Role in Fantasy," *Poetics* 15.3 (1986), p. 280.

German Democratic Republic; it gives utterance to those aspects "which are known only through their absence"<sup>74</sup> within the dominant political and cultural discourses. Incorporating the work of Bakhtin on the tradition of the Menippean satire as a form of dialogic discourse which challenges monologic or authoritarian discourses on the truth, Jackson describes the operation of fantasy as dialogic in its interrogation of dominant categories of the real. Fantasy, then, rather than affirming existing perceptions of reality, enters into a dialogue with the real, questioning its claims to truth and incorporating "that dialogue as part of its essential structure."<sup>75</sup>

Todorov's definition of the fantastic as a literary mode also applies a structuralist approach to post-Romantic fantasy. He reduces the structural features of fantasy to the fulfilment of three basic narrative conditions which are organized around the moment of uncertainty governing the interpretation of a fantastic event. The first condition has to do with the hesitation experienced by the reader between a rational interpretation of an unnatural occurrence (such as dreams, hallucinations, madness or other natural causes) and a supernatural explanation (ghosts, witches, monsters, vampires, devils). In the first case, which Todorov defines as the "uncanny," the reader resolves the uncertainty by eventually opting for a solution which leaves the laws of the world intact; the unnatural phenomenon is explained as a mere illusion or a figment of the protagonist's imagination. By contrast, where the reader explains the unnatural event in terms of a supernatural cause, the text can be classified as operating in the "marvellous" mode (e.g. in fairytales, ghost stories). The "marvellous" transcends or contradicts the "laws of nature as experience has taught us to recognize them,"<sup>76</sup> requiring a willing suspension of disbelief. However, only those works in which the hesitation is sustained throughout the entire length of the narrative by either the reader or one of the characters (as the second condition) can be classified, according to Todorov, as belonging to the pure fantastic. The fantastic

<sup>74</sup> Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>76</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975), pp. 24-28.

exists therefore only at the interface of two genres, the uncanny and the marvellous, as the privileged middle term of a continuum.

Todorov discounts from the outset any allegorical or metaphorical use of fantasy (as his third and last condition) on the dubious grounds that in these texts no hesitation is experienced by either the reader or one of the characters.<sup>77</sup> Todorov thus draws a rather tenuous distinction between the pure marvellous, where the supernatural appears as perfectly natural to the reader and to the narrative's hero, and allegorical and metaphorical texts. Very few texts of fantasy and science fiction in the GDR possess no allegorical elements, as all refer, if not directly, then most certainly obliquely, back to the real. To discount therefore the fantastic dimension of texts on these grounds would be to deny the majority of fantastic texts in the GDR status as works of fantasy fiction. Todorov's schema privileges non-referentiality in texts as a basic condition for the literariness or purity of fantasy at the expense of a more direct engagement with the socio-historical conditions of the production of texts.

Todorov's introduction of the category of hesitation is a useful means, however, of differentiating between gender-specific forms of the reception of fantastic events as it singles out the problem of how to classify an event which, according to all natural and social laws, is impossible. For Morgner, the interpretability of unusual or unnatural events depends primarily on the gender of the observer. Questions of gender, absent from Todorov's and Jackson's accounts, are for Morgner fundamental to deciding the dominant mode of a text. For the men in Morgner's texts, the fantastic is either simply uncanny or non-existent; if a rational explanation is not immediately on hand, the male observer immediately goes in search of one. Thus, when Heinrich Fakal in *Amanda* witnesses the ascension of Laura as a witch he at first obstinately resists the idea that "eine fliegende Frau" could be possible. As a rule, the male observer (with the exception of Heinrich) steadfastly refuses to question his firm belief in the rationality of the empirical world. Even Laura's father still adheres unswervingly to his belief in the

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid*, p. 32.

predictability of the scientific age, despite first-hand empirical evidence of the existence of miracles and the supernatural. Consequently, even after his wife has been granted a sleeping-beauty-like repose by the "schöne Melusine" for at least 259 years to await "bessere Zeiten fürs Frauendasein" (A. 583), the existence of her sleeping body in his "Gartenlaube" is not sufficient to shake his "wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung" (A. 584) and allow him to admit that fairytales can indeed happen (T. 584).

For women, the hesitation becomes a measure of the degree to which they too have become indoctrinated by rational modes of thinking. They invariably hesitate when confronted with a fantastic event or the appearance of a supernatural figure, often running through a mental check-list of all the possible natural causes for the apparition before simply accepting the impossible as possible, the supernatural as natural. When Penthesilea appears to Laura in the *Trobadora* on her way from the Eleusinian fields of Hades to the upperworld of the Round Table, Laura assumes she is a charlatan and a confidence-trickster, recalling a recent newspaper report which warned of the deceptions of a "Trickbetrügerin." She checks her purse to see if any money is missing; only when she discovers the parcel with the title "Hadische Erzählungen nebst wunderbaren Aussichten, die Forschungen auf dem Gebiet der belebten Materie eröffnen" does she accept Penthesilea's visit as real (T. 213-15).

Similarly, when the "schöne Melusine" appears to Laura for the first time in the *Trobadora*, Laura attributes the dragon-like figure at first to the hallucinatory effects of eating lentils as she wonders what legitimate place a sphinx could possibly have in the GDR. Not until she has confirmed the reality of the sphinx, even checking her legal status as a resident in an "Aufenthaltsgenehmigung," does she finally come to accept the possibility of miracles and begrudgingly cooperates in Melusine's scheme for helping the working women of her country. Valeska, in the "Gute Botschaft," contained in the twelfth book of the *Trobadora*, also initially passes off her transformation into a man as a momentary aberration in sensory perception caused by "Koffeinhalluzination" (T. 428). She then entertains the possibility that magic might be at work and that she might be the victim of an "übler

Scherz" inflicted on her as a form of "zauberischen Racheakt" (T. 428) by her lover, Rudolf, for not pandering to his misogynistic wishes. The women's hesitation is in each case fleeting; the existence of miracles as "Wege des geringsten Widerstandes" (T. 424) is greeted without exception by women of all generations of the GDR for whom magic and the impossible seem the only means of escape. Trained in coping effortlessly with radical changes "am eignen Leib," Valeska even adapts with relative ease to a change of sex. By the same token, real occurrences are often perceived by women to be so unbelievable, so fantastic and grotesque that they refuse to believe they are happening. So when the "Oberteufel" in the guise of a ZDF correspondent visits Laura in *Amanda*, and it becomes obvious he is not part of "Laura's Einbildung" (A. 394), she also wonders if she is not the victim of a belated "Faschingsscherz" (A. 421).

Where women resolve the issue of uncertainty, the text could be described as entering into the marvellous mode after the moment's hesitation has passed. The marvellous exists, however, only for the women who are willing to believe that the supernatural is possible and to enter into the conditions and terms of this new order. The segments of the text which are in the marvellous mode for women are often simultaneously in the uncanny mode from the point of view of the male protagonists - if they represent any deviation from the natural order at all. Consequently, when Laura is visited as a child by Frau Holle in *Amanda*, her playmate, Gerhard, does not seem to notice anything unusual at all. In the earlier novels most male characters (with the exception of the Gustav's in *Gustav der Weltfahrer*) are simply oblivious to supernatural occurrences. Hubert, in *Gauklerlegende*, is blissfully ignorant of the fact that, Wanda, his lover is sleeping with a medieval jester during a scientific conference on game theory. He is also oblivious to the conjuring tricks Rade performs to amuse Wanda in the conference lecture-theatre during the talks on "Nullsummenspiele." In the *Trobadora*, Clemens fails to realize that the flesh he is eating is the product of magic, and Rudolf at the end of the novel apparently does not seem to notice his wife has changed into a man when he returns from Moscow.



In **Amanda**, Tenner remains unaware of the alchemical experiments being conducted in his kitchen or any of the supernatural feats that his wife and Laura perform.

At the end of **Amanda**, however, there are signs that a radical transformation of society is taking place as various social groups, who all witness the same event of Laura's ascension on a broom, attempt to reach a consensus on the interpretation of a rationally impossible event. The majority of those who witness Laura's "Fenstersturz" either deny that it happened or settle for a rational explanation - the flying woman is clearly a creation of Western propaganda and is to be understood in terms of the on-going ideological warfare between the two superpowers. Another example of the fantastic arguments invented to account for the unidentifiable flying woman is the theory that the consistency of the eyewitness accounts is a result of the age-old "Kampfmittel" of "Massenhypnose" by an enemy who will stop at nothing (A. 579). Heinrich Fakal, although deeply troubled by the phenomenon, tries to explain it by reference to "die Kategorie der stabilisierenden Witze" of the leading newspaper **Neues Deutschland**, hoping desperately it turns out to be an "Aprilscherz neuen Typus" (A. 570). The reports of the eyewitnesses cannot, however, be ignored. Of those present, 98 admit it happened and 8 school pupils, 7 students and 102 adults deny it. Of those who deny the occurrence only three are women.

The numbers of reports from those who claim to have seen a woman fall from a balcony and then disappear into thin air are sufficient to cause some concern to the "Volkspolizei" who become alarmed at the absence of a corpse. Quasi-religious or chiliastic explanations of the older generation are dismissed but the non-religious reports, particularly from the students at the Humboldt University, cause the ideologues at the University considerable consternation. Unaware of the momentous import of their testimonies, the students reported, "daß sie froh wären, endlich mal was erlebt zu haben, was nicht als gesetzmäßig erklärt werden könnte" (A. 560-61). The belief in the supernatural, however, is perceived by the police to be even more subversive than religious revisionism. Openness towards the supernatural is linked here with sympathy for the death of Laura Salman, "eine unbekanntes Triebwagenfahrerin," and the fictional hero of the **Trobadora** novel and is seen in

the context of the rise of "einer gewissen unterschweligen oppositionellen Stimmung" (A. 561). This sympathy for the death of Laura is interpreted by the University administration as part of an international conspiracy to annex East German women writers for the purposes of Western propaganda and ideological warfare. Laura's "Fenstersturz," like the Prager "Fenstersturz" which triggered off the Thirty Years War, has the weight of a significant turning point in history and it is suggested that it may well have the potential to spark off a revolution.

In summary, while the hesitation between two possible but antagonistic interpretations is of paramount importance in Morgner's texts as a critique of the fetishization of reason and rationality in GDR society, I prefer not to speak of the "marvellous" in these texts. Morgner's women eventually come to have no doubts about the existence of miracles. After all, they experience them daily in the double burden. The question of whether an event belongs to one realm or the other does not however ultimately depend on one woman's willingness to suspend disbelief. The issue of how to categorize reality is ultimately a political and an ideological question and not solely an epistemological or philosophical one. This thesis will therefore continue to use the term fantasy rather than the "marvellous" because the term fantasy keeps the dialectic between a rational and a supernatural explanation open.

#### **E. Fantasy as a Critique of Instrumental Rationality**

Irène Bessière has criticized Todorov's reliance on the category of the reader's hesitation. She argues that the fantastic does not rely on the hesitation between two orders but on the contradiction between two possible economies, and their "récusation mutuelle et implicite."<sup>78</sup> Fundamental to the workings of the fantastic narrative is, in her view, its dualist and antinomical structure and the oscillation between a supernatural and a natural or rational economy.<sup>79</sup> Her definition of fantasy as an investigation from a rationalist point of view of forms of rationality

<sup>78</sup> Irène Bessière, *Le Récit Fantastique: La poétique de l'incertain* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1974), p. 57.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

and the limits of reason<sup>80</sup> aptly describes the way a feminist fantasy can interrogate the forms of instrumentalization of reason and rationality in an industrialized male-dominated society. Bessière's claim that the fantastic is intricately connected to rational conceptions of reality does not address the ways in which considerations of gender must inform a critical investigation of the limits of the rational world or economy. A feminist theory of fantasy would be one which reveals the rationalist world view not simply to be arbitrary but as an ideological construct, which has been instrumental in marginalizing other modes of knowledge which have traditionally been practised by women. For Morgner, the global arms race and the destruction of the world environment are all the culmination of this rational world view.

Todorov has noted that the literature of the fantastic "is nothing but the bad conscience of this positivist era."<sup>81</sup> It could be argued that this bad conscience comes more from a disregard for the concerns of gender than from any uneasiness towards man's place at the centre of a rational world which is rapidly losing its rational footing. Fantasy employed to feminist ends can therefore, as I hope to demonstrate, act as the critical conscience of the positivist era.

Morgner's poetics of fantasy conceives of itself as a critique of instrumental rationality and the extreme fetishization of scientific reason as experienced by women in the GDR. As such, this critique is not solely a feminist concern and is shared by such writers as Peter Hacks and Heiner Müller. This interest among East German writers in the progressive potential of fantasy as a form of resistance to rationalism and utilitarianism can be seen as resuscitating the anti-bourgeois, humanist aspects of the Romantic movement and its attacks on the perversion of Enlightenment values by the middle classes.<sup>82</sup> Simultaneously, Morgner's poetics can be regarded as a critical commentary on the processes of the instrumentalization of

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*, pp. 59, 62.

<sup>81</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 168.

<sup>82</sup> See Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (London: Heinemann, 1979) for an examination of the "progressive utopianism" of the German Romantic tradition and its critique of instrumental reason. His study is obviously indebted to the Frankfurt School but also to the scholarship of East German literary critic Claus Träger and his reassessment of the emancipatory progressive tendencies at work in German Romanticism.

fantasy itself in the GDR.<sup>83</sup> Her works are an attempt to create a space for the imagination and for dreams of better worlds alongside dominant forms of "wissenschaftliche Phantasie." Her literature thus endeavours to undo the processes of reification of fantasy which Heiner Müller sees as a defining feature of both capitalist and socialist industrialized societies. In an interview in 1982, Müller identifies the main function of art in its ability to mobilize fantasy:

Wenn man davon ausgeht, daß die kapitalistische Gesellschaft, aber im Grunde jede moderne Industriegesellschaft, auch die DDR, ein Industriestaat ist und die Tendenz hat, Phantasie zu instrumentalisieren auf jeden Fall zu drosseln.<sup>84</sup>

Morgner's narrative attempts to mobilize fantasy are concerned more specifically with the unleashing of women's fantasies and creative imagination as a means to undoing the processes of reification of post-war socialism and the instrumentalization of reason in the development of destructive military technology in the arms race of the eighties. Thus the freeing of a type of "praktisch-geistige Wirklichkeitsaneignung," a mode of knowledge which has been in decline since the Scientific Revolution of the Renaissance, is postulated as a corrective to the dominant forms of "wissenschaftliche Aneignung" which Morgner sees as having reached an impasse in the threat of a nuclear holocaust. The cultivation of alternative modes of "Weltaneignung," referred to by Marx as the "künstlerische," "religiöse," and the "praktisch-geistige," falls to women, who historically had special access to these forms of knowledge (A. 353).

Morgner's works contain a critique of the history of Enlightenment which is heavily indebted to the work of the Frankfurt School. She is concerned not merely to demonstrate the negative dialectic of the Enlightenment, but to reveal the hidden agenda of the forces of instrumental reason in the domination of women and the suppression of female forms of knowledge such as magic. When nature is encoded as female and science and technology as masculine, the position of women with regard

<sup>83</sup> Zipes' study also focuses on the instrumentalization of fantasy and folktales by the ruling classes and the capitalist means of production throughout the nineteenth century; Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell*, pp. 9ff.

<sup>84</sup> Heiner Müller, "Gespräch mit Bernhard Umbrecht," in *Rotwelsch* (Berlin/BRD: Merve Verlag, 1982), p. 111.

to the central linchpin of the Enlightenment's vision of technical mastery over the world of nature and myth is inherently problematic. Morgner's works examine how this legacy from the Enlightenment affects women's autonomy and equality both in the work place and in the private spheres, and how it has contributed to subtle forms of gender discrimination, to women's low status in scientific professions and to their lack of credibility as researchers - despite formal and legal guarantees of equality. These aspects of "Ungleichzeitigkeit" in contemporary East German images of femininity will be shown to reinforce women's subordinate role in the official quest for technological mastery of the future, which is the role of a helper or a playmate but not that of an autonomous historical subject. The texts discussed here experiment with strategies for subverting the identification of women with nature and prevailing female stereotypes. These strategies are at the same time oppositional interventions that aim to counteract the technological mania of GDR society.

If the telos of the project of the Enlightenment can be described in Adorno's and Horkheimer's terms as "die Entzauberung der Welt"<sup>85</sup> through the dispelling of the power of myths and superstition, then Morgner's women undertake to remember the powers of myth and magic, to demystify the myths of the "scientific-technological revolution," or the Enlightenment itself, by a reinjection of magic, fantasy and imagination into an over-rationalized and over-technicized world.

#### F. Real and Fantastic 'Worlds'

The fantastic in Morgner's texts is not confined to the extrapolation of a known world in the creation of a "secondary" or metaphorical world removed in space and time from the reader's present.<sup>86</sup> Metaphorical fantasy worlds are, according to Jonathan Culler, ones that are "immediately recognized as different

<sup>85</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969), pp. 7-8.

<sup>86</sup> The use of the term "secondary" world stems from Tolkien's lecture on fairy stories in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (1964; London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), *passim*.

from our own but analogous to it."<sup>87</sup> Morgner's use of fantasy seems to correspond more to the type of fantasy fiction Culler terms metonymical fantasy. Defined as "a portion of our own which we have not yet encountered," a metonymical world signals a deviation from the existing world and hence the possibility of transformation of the present one.<sup>88</sup> In all of Morgner's works of fantasy, the fantastic or supernatural exists in a relationship of metonymical contiguity to the real world, tangential to the real, interfering and intervening in its events yet never totally displacing it or standing in its place. The law of metonymy, as one which guarantees the independence of "equal and discrepant terms,"<sup>89</sup> rather than the mutual exclusivity of terms, can be seen as the basic law governing the relationship of the fantastic to the real in Morgner's texts.

The spheres of the fantastic consist of a heterogeneous mixture of female characters from stock supernatural figures such as dragons and witches; mythical women from folklore in sphinxes and sirens; Greek Goddesses in Demeter and Persephone and Arke, the daughter of Gaia; to the medieval figures such as Beatriz de Dia and the "schöne Melusine" who lead a twilight existence between the realms of fairytale, legend and history. Although these figures are said in the *Trobadora* novel to inhabit a mythological other world - situated somewhere "zwischen Kaerllion am Usk und der Zukunft" (T. 445), the mythical seat of King Arthur and his Round Table which Greek Goddesses have conquered in a victory for the matriarchy - this other world does not feature strongly in the main narrative. It takes the role instead of a legendary and historical "Beistand" for the 'real' women of the GDR.

<sup>87</sup> Jonathan Culler, "Literary Fantasy," *Cambridge Review* 23 (1973), p. 32.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Anne McLeod sees much feminist fiction in the GDR, particularly the sex change stories from the *Blitz aus Heiterm Himmel* anthology, as a celebration of a matriarchal rule of metonymy and therefore as a critique of a "patriarchal metaphoricist order"; Anne McLeod, "Gender Difference Relativity in GDR-Writing or: How to Oppose without Really Trying," *Oxford Literary Review* 7.1-2 (1985), p. 45.

The main female characters can be defined primarily in terms of their function with respect to "plot-spaces"<sup>90</sup> or the narrative spaces in which they are permitted to move and the political and ideological frontiers they can cross. These political spaces correspond to narrative spaces or separate strands within the narrative which stand in a complementary relationship to one another. As a "Grenzüberschreiterin," Beatriz can cross barriers of all kinds: she can leap forwards in time, inhabit the past and the future, leap sideways in space moving freely between the East and the West. But she is also a transgressor of the limits of ideologies. The narrative space she inhabits will be shown to be primarily the space of the romance or the medieval "Ritterroman." Characterized by her mobility with respect to official limits and borders of all kinds, she represents an ideal foil to Laura who is confined to the political and ideological space of the GDR. This political space coincides with the narrative space of the socialist "Bildungsroman" or the socialist realist novel. The netherworld of Greek Goddesses and medieval legends seldom interferes in Laura's life; as the underworld of socialist reality, its chief function is to lend support to Laura in her quest for a feminist consciousness. Only with the support of this underworld can women set about fulfilling the socialist prophesy, of "in die Geschichte eintreten," originally applied to the working classes but here to the working women of the GDR. In *Amanda*, this mythical other world has expanded to an imaginary "Zauberberg," a place where utopias are forged but where the utopian potential of the present lies imprisoned. Like the underworld in the *Trobadora*, the "Zauberberg" of the "Blocksberg" mountains provides women with a form of "Beistand" which they must conquer if they are to constitute themselves as historical subjects. The magic mountain constitutes an alternative world parallel to the social real linked in a symbiotic relationship to the social world and its working women. This world is under siege by the real, occupied by military powers of the East and West and a patriarchal dictatorship. It has become the space for exiles and dissidents and for the banished other halves of the women of the GDR. Like the underworld in

<sup>90</sup> Jurij M. Lotman, "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology," *Poetics Today* 1.1-2 (1979), p. 167.

the *Trobadora*, the "Blocksberg" has a pivotal role to play in the quest for subjectivity.

Jackson writes that the desire for "otherness" of a secularized culture no longer need displace otherness into alternative metaphysical regions such as heaven or hell.<sup>91</sup> Certainly, modern utopias no longer employ geographical displacement in order to project alternative worlds to the present and tend to use instead the technique of displacement in time rather than space. Jackson argues that alterity can be represented through the process of "paraxis," through dislocation and displacement of elements of the real within the real without recourse to the creation of other worlds.<sup>92</sup> Alterity in Morgner's texts, however, is expressed by means of displacement into other geographical, political and mythical realms: the "Blocksberg" of Amanda, the underworld of the Round Table in the *Trobadora*. All these realms are exploded out of the continuum of mythical and historical time into the socialist present and thus constitute a hidden accessory to the real, a secret resource from the past for the future. Morgner employs here a device peculiar to the earlier "Raumutopien" of pre-Romantic times. As the world became more thoroughly navigated and the object of colonization by the major imperial powers of the world, it lost much of its mystery and became less appropriate a setting for the creation of impossible worlds. It is for the same reasons that the use of spatial or geographical displacement in Morgner's novels assumes a new significance. For the majority of the population, in particular the female population, the rest of the world represents the unknown, that exotic realm of lands and countries as yet uncolonized and unchartered. The West, like the other worlds of the "Blocksberg" and the "Persephonische Opposition" function as repositories of alterity, forming an object of desire and curiosity for those who do not enjoy travel privileges. Links between the barred worlds of the West, the underworld and the "Blocksberg," can only be forged through the use of intermediaries or emissaries who return to the social real, bringing back reports for the sedentary women like Laura.

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<sup>91</sup> Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 19.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*



Jackson has remarked upon the compensatory function of much fantasy, attributing this to the lack of faith in an increasingly secularized world.<sup>93</sup> From the point of view of the women of the GDR, the fantastic has indeed a compensatory function, offering women access to parts of their history that have been forgotten and to fantastic and exotic worlds they have never before experienced. This compensatory function will be analyzed further in chapters 3 and 4 through a close investigation of the relationship between Beatriz and Laura in the *Trobadora* and the structuring principle of the quest.

At the interface between the two antagonistic worlds of fact and fantasy, history and legend, East and West, realist and fantasy narratives, there occurs a crucial life-sustaining exchange. This exchange, which generally takes the form of a friendship between two women, forms the basis of a feminist challenge to phallogentric social practices and their dominant discourses. Chapter 5 will explore in detail the use of genre in the *Trobadora* and the "ideology of form"<sup>94</sup> of the genres implicit in Morgner's choice of generic models. I shall enquire as to how the formal, ideological and gender constraints implicit in the use of certain generic traditions in the GDR and their formal dictates come to bear on the realm of the fantastic and its ultimate relation to the realist narratives. In the following chapter I will investigate the function of the figure of Beatriz and the subsequent disruption her "arrival" in the GDR causes to Laura's "Alltag" and to the practices of socialist patriarchy.

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<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>94</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 76.

## II. BEATRIZ'S ARRIVAL 'IM GELOBTEN LAND' OF EMANCIPATION

### A. A Lesson in the Sexual Practices of Socialist Patriarchy

The story of the life and adventures of the medieval troubadour, Beatriz de Dia, as told by Laura Salman, train driver and single mother, comes to us via the mediating hand of the author, Irmtraud Morgner, who herself is given fictional status in the novel as both the editor and the official author of Laura's manuscript. The claim made by Morgner in the foreword that she is merely the recipient of the manuscript and therefore not solely responsible for its contents can be read as a tongue-in-cheek attempt to blur the origins of the text and hence to share the 'blame' for its message. Although Morgner purports to be the mere reader of Laura's text, she confesses to rearranging the manuscript into a more 'reader-friendly' order and hence to a certain role in the production of the text.

The manuscript contains the story told by Laura of her experiences with Beatriz, the medieval "Minnesängerin" who decides to leave "die mittelalterliche Welt der Männer" (T. 11) to await better times for women. With the help of Persephone, the Greek Goddess of the underworld, she goes to sleep for 810 years in return for 2920 working hours per "sleep-year" to be dedicated to the cause of the "Persephonische Opposition." The Persephonic opposition, which has held the majority on the Arthurian Round Table since 1871, has co-opted both Beatriz and "die schöne Melusine" into its plans for the return of matriarchal conditions (T. 19-20). When Beatriz is rudely awakened in the spring of 1968 in France by workers trying to clear away the undergrowth of the rose bushes surrounding her "Dornröschen" hide-away, she believes she has been returned to a more "frauenfreundliche" world. Her travels to Paris at the time of the student revolts of 1968 and her unfortunate experiences with men there soon disabuse her of these illusions and mark the beginnings of a gradual process of enlightenment. Propelled by an unflagging optimism and naivety, typical of the figure of the picaro, Beatriz

continues on her quest for ideal conditions for women. Motivating Beatriz's search for a country which has abolished patriarchal relations is her desire to fulfil her vocation of "Liebessängerin" - a calling not possible under the rigid rules of the medieval "Minnesang" and the conventions of courtly love. She is finally encouraged through her meeting with Uwe Parnitzke, ex-husband of both Valeska and Laura, to abandon the world of capitalism and to look for her paradise in the "concrete utopia" of "der real existierende Sozialismus" of the GDR. What impresses her most is not Uwe's exemplary Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, but the fact that a man such as Uwe has been divorced twice: "Was mußte das für ein tolles Land sein, dachte Beatriz, in dem solche Männer zweimal verschmährt werden" (T. 72).

Beatriz's arrival in "das gelobte Land" of the GDR is immediately proclaimed, ironically or otherwise, a "wunderbare Heimkehr. Unendlich lang ersehnte" (T. 92). But here too, the discrepancy between ideal and reality, "Erwartung und Angebot"<sup>1</sup> lead to further disappointments and amusing misunderstandings. She naively attributes her perturbing experiences with misogynistic East German men to her lack of familiarity with "den idealen Zuständen" of her newly found "Heimat" (T. 100), hoping that the glorious reality of relations between the sexes will soon be revealed to her. What Beatriz had hoped was a mere 'trompe l'oeil' is revealed to be a fact of life and a fact of socialism. Beatriz's true ideological arrival in the world of the GDR, or rather arrival in the realm of the ideological, is marked by her decision to renounce the supernatural help of her sister-in-law, "die schöne Melusine" and the "Gespenster der Vergangenheit" and to put her faith in "fortschrittliche Kräfte," that is, in historical materialism. The process by which she arrives at this decision is through the exemplary technique of "Selbstkritik."

The motif of self-criticism and the pragmatic decision in favour of the progressive forces of history are all familiar tropes of the "Ankunftsroman" and the socialist "Bildungsroman," as is the theme of the homecoming. The "Ankunftsliteratur" of the sixties, as a sub-genre of the socialist "Bildungsroman,"

<sup>1</sup> See the important book of the same name, Eva and Hans Kaufmann, *Erwartung und Angebot* (Berlin/GDR: Akademie Verlag, 1976).

was primarily concerned with defining a sense of socialist "Heimat" and with elucidating the "problemreiche, langwierige, krisenhafte Eingliederung vor allem junger Menschen" into the socialist community.<sup>2</sup> The central focus of the works of this period has been described by Wolfgang Emmerich as "die Eroberung und Sicherung eines der werdenden sozialistischen Gesellschaft nützlichen Standorts."<sup>3</sup> The education of the young heroine or hero to the aims and ideals of the socialist collective involves a process of "pragmatische Einrichtung,"<sup>4</sup> whereby the protagonist's often unsustainable youthful ideals are rechannelled into socially useful values. The process of education typically ends in a happy resolution of conflicts. Yet, as Schlenstedt points out, an integral component of the literary constellation of "Ankunft" is the aspect of individual "Anspruch."<sup>5</sup> He argues that "das Ankommen in den Verhältnissen eines Landes" does not automatically lead to "das Ankommen in einem eigenem (sic!) Leben."<sup>6</sup> "Arrival," according to Schlenstedt, should not be interpreted as mere "Anpassung" and ought to involve instead a dialectical process, in which the individual's claims to self-realization and -fulfilment, that is, his or her "Anspruch," are also met.<sup>7</sup> The hero or heroine advances therefore through various stages of awareness and personal growth in the development of a "sozialistisches Bewußtsein."<sup>8</sup>

In many respects the education process by which Beatriz's radical ideals are tempered in favour of the forces of pragmatism mirrors the development of the protagonist of the "Ankunftsroman," whose loss of false idealism is compensated for by insight gained into the necessity of putting one's faith in the forces of progress and the future of socialism. Yet the arrival of Beatriz into the realities of the GDR must be seen as a parody of the model of the "Ankunftsroman." As will become clear, Beatriz's willingness to compromise is no longer represented as the

<sup>2</sup> Dieter Schlenstedt, "Ankunft und Anspruch," *Sinn und Form* 18 (1966), pp. 816-17.

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981), p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> Schlenstedt, "Ankunft und Anspruch," p. 814.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 818.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p. 821.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 817.

unequivocally positive result of a successful mediation between the individual and society. The reconciliation of the demands of the individual and the collective that was still possible in the classical "Ankunftsromane" of Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963) and Brigitte Reimann's *Ankunft im Alltag* (1961), becomes in the *Trobadora* novel highly problematic.

This is most clearly illustrated at the outset of the novel in the apparent incommensurability between Beatriz's expectations and her actual experiences. The sheer incongruity of the fact that Beatriz, a medieval troubadour, should eke out her existence manufacturing love poetry in a "Vers schmiede," widens the gap between "Anspruch" and reality so far that it appears almost impossible to bridge. The obvious incompatibility of her demands for free sexual expression in literature and life and the very limited opportunities for realizing them in the GDR in the early seventies can, however, be resolved in one of two ways. One could be forced to conclude, as have GDR critics, that Beatriz's demands are unrealistic and untenable, and that her attempts to reclaim eroticism as "the last domain of men" are for this reason ultimately doomed to failure. Alternatively, one could conclude that she fails in her mission precisely because the GDR allows very little room for the expression of sexuality and eroticism. The exact reasons why Beatriz ultimately fails in her mission will be the object of further investigation in a later chapter. Suffice it to say here, that Morgner's use of narrative patterns common to the "Ankunftsroman" has a parodic intention and serves as a means of criticizing the rigid taboos in East German society on sexuality and love. The socialist appropriation of the concept of "Heimat" is also subject to critical scrutiny: when the new found "Heimat" no longer allows the fulfilment of women's "Anspruch auf Selbstverwirklichung und Selbstachtung" the notion of 'home' must then be perceived as oppressive.

The first stage in the "pragmatische Einrichtung" of Beatriz is her encounter with the pragmatic mother-to-be, Laura Salman, "Triebwagenführerin" and trained Germanist. Beatriz immediately co-opts Laura as her "Spielfrau": Laura is thus rewarded for her efforts in rescuing Beatriz from the circus where she and the "schöne Melusine" have been performing tricks to earn a living. Laura's first task in

her new appointment as "Spielfrau" is to tell Beatriz a story for the purpose of educating her in the realities of sexual relations in the GDR. Beatriz's reaction to the cautionary tale, "Kaffee Verkehrt," in locking herself in the bathroom, is evidence of the immense discrepancy between her expectations and the realities of East German society. The story, "Kaffee Verkehrt," is an empowerment fantasy which consists in an inversion of stereotypical sex roles. The role of the sexual aggressor is played by a heterosexual woman and worker and the reluctant, timid victim of her unsolicited attempts at seduction is the male comrade. The inversion serves to point up the glaring lack of equality between the sexes at the level of personal and sexual relations. It thus identifies one of the major obstacles to the realization of the goals of Beatriz's quest in the archaic patriarchal sexual and social practices of the GDR. If women are still primarily the passive objects of male desire, as Laura's story seems to imply, the profession of a female troubadour which requires an active subject of desire still seems a utopian one. And a passive troubadour, Beatriz argues, "ein Objekt, das ein Subjekt besingt, ist logischerweise undenkbar. Paradox" (T. 112). Beatriz realizes that she may have awakened too soon and considers going back to sleep for a further 800 years. Laura, a champion of "Realpolitik" and highly skilled in "Improvisionstalent" (T. 112), nevertheless persuades Beatriz to participate in a collective plan to create the appropriate conditions under which a female troubadour would be possible.

Beatriz's decision to leave the medieval world is an attempt to escape the oppression of patriarchy - "dieses männliche Meer von Egoismus" (T. 26). Her leap out of history is necessary in order to re-enter history as a historical subject. The first phase in the historical "Subjektwerdung" of women is the reclaiming, or reappropriation, of women's nature - "Mir Natur aneignen. Zuerst meine eigene: die Menschwerdung in Angriff nehmen" (T. 113). Although expressed in analogous terms to the appropriation of nature and the forces of production by the working classes, Morgner's use of the term "Natur" seems to refer here specifically to female sexuality. The first stage in the 'subject-becoming' of women is the reclaiming of the erotic realm. It becomes clear that this is not to be an individualistic solution to the

problems of sexual inequality, but one that is to be achieved through the efforts of women collectively. Laura does not reject the use of miracles per se to help women, only the use of "Privatwunder" or band-aid solutions for "Drückeberger" (T. 112).

Laura's first strategy is to reactivate Beatriz's "erfinderischer Geist" and her talents as a writer of love poetry by arranging a brief love affair with an ex-lover of her own, Lutz Pakulat. This act of exchange, to be discussed in more detail later, has the desired effect and sets into motion Beatriz's creative powers. Beatriz, then, is presumably to serve as a form of creative catalyst for the women of the brigades to whom she tells her "Liebeslegenden." The parodic element of her activities, which resemble the duties performed by writers during the Bitterfelder years, becomes apparent from the content of the unconventional erotic story that she tells to the "dreizehn männlichen und sieben weiblichen Mitarbeitern der Berliner Stadtbahn" (T. 125).

The story tells of a pair of lovers who undertake a trip to heaven and finally to hell in search for a utopian space in which to satisfy their uncompromising thirst for eroticism and love. Although the agitatory intention of the story appears to be little understood by the workers, this first story is clearly conceived as an operative piece to raise awareness among the working population of the lack of eroticism in the world of the socialist "Alltag." In this way, the aims of the "Bitterfelder Weg" are harnessed to the ends of a type of feminist 'consciousness-raising.'

In the West much of the 'consciousness-raising' work performed by women's groups and feminist literature concentrated on revealing women's status as objects of masculine desire and victims of male power; a critique of women's role as sexual objects frequently took the form of an unconditional rejection of heterosexuality and an affirmation of lesbian sexuality. By contrast, the type of consciousness-raising conducted by Laura and Beatriz does not entail a wholesale rejection of heterosexual eroticism; instead they propose liberating women from their position as passive objects by encouraging female eroticism within heterosexuality. Given the extreme prudery of socialist Germany, and the prevailing taboos on sexuality in both literature and the media, the affirmation of an active female desire, even within

heterosexuality, fulfils the function of feminist consciousness-raising. However, a crucial step in this process is also to raise awareness of women's status in GDR society as objects of masculine desire and objects of exchange.

#### **B. Woman as Object of Exchange - Property Relations and the Expropriation of Women**

The second story told by Beatriz to Laura concerns a medieval aristocratic woman, Marie von Montpellier. The story, described as "nicht erfundene," purports, like the first invented story told by Beatriz, to tell the truth about women's status as objects of exchange within patriarchal societies. Although it is only one and a half pages long, I shall dwell at some length on this story because it raises some very important questions about the status of women in socialist patriarchies through a comparison with pre-capitalist feudal Europe and the status of women in aristocratic circles.

Morgner's interest in the status of aristocratic women in medieval France can be read on several levels. Firstly, the story Beatriz tells suggests the need for a radical reinterpretation of some of the canonical socialist theories of the origins of women's oppression. In the following interpretation I shall therefore be drawing on recent feminist theory, namely the work of French feminists, Cixous and Irigaray, which contains implicit critiques of classical Marxist conceptions of the link between women's oppression and private property, as well as on the work of Western socialist-feminists. Through a post-Freudian analysis of the construction of gender relations, which Cixous' and Irigaray's critique of "phallogentrism" provides, the reading performed on Beatriz's short story will shed some light on the inadequacies of an orthodox Marxist position on the "woman question." Although Morgner's story does not discuss women's status in the feudal economy in the terms to be applied here, her story contains an explicit critique of traditional Marxist concepts of exploitation and property relations, which can be best elucidated by the help of



recent French feminist work which draws on both the insights of Marxism and psychoanalysis.

Secondly, the story demonstrates the urgent need in the GDR for a recognition of sexual exploitation as a determining factor in the history of women's subordination and hence in the subordinate status of women in the GDR. The story raises the taboo subject of sexual abuse and, in a very displaced form, the question of domestic violence. By focusing on aristocratic women under feudalism, Morgner is also attempting to correct the bias in Marxist and feminist theory towards analyses of the role of bourgeois women in capitalist societies. Through an account of a medieval woman's misfortunes at the hands of men, the story effects a displaced critique of Marx' and Engels' account of the origins of women's oppression.

Thirdly, the story of the fate of Marie Montpellier acts as one of the first examples in the text of a failed narrative of self-realization. It serves furthermore as a warning to women who refuse to participate as objects of exchange within patriarchal societies. As the product of "memory-work" by Beatriz and an example from Beatriz's experiences as a medieval troubadour, it serves as a reminder of women's long and varied history of oppression and exploitation. Exploded out of the continuum of history in a Benjaminian moment of crisis, the story seeks to point up similarities in women's treatment in the present. Because it directly precedes an attempt to invert the habitual "economy of sexual exchange" between the sexes, it also serves as a type of cautionary tale to female "Querköpfe" or dissidents.

In raising the crucial question of the interrelation between patriarchy and private property, the story seems to challenge the theory advanced by Engels in *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* (1884) that male supremacy is the result of the rise of private property and the economic superiority of men.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, according to Engels' analysis, the abolition of private property and the capitalist mode of production should necessarily bring about the end of monogamy and the economic exploitation of women:

<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, p. 83.

Die Vorherrschaft des Mannes in der Ehe ist einfache Folge seiner ökonomischen Vorherrschaft und fällt mit dieser von selbst.<sup>10</sup>

Beatriz's story implies a critique of the economic determinism of Engels' theory of the oppression of women. It achieves this by presenting property relations as more general social structures governing not only economic relations but psychic and sexual relations as well. The depiction of women as objects or commodities of exchange agrees in principle with Engels' argument that women's status in the family is determined by the dominant set of property relations at a particular historical moment. At the same time, the text seems to offer sufficient evidence to support the theory that women's status as objects of exchange **cannot** be explained entirely in terms of a capitalist mode of production, and that women also function as sexual objects of exchange in what Irigaray and Cixous term "a masculine economy of desire."<sup>11</sup>

On one level, the story of Marie can be read as an illustration of Engels' thesis that since the emergence of private property women have been little more than house-slaves. Although Engels' primary concern was the bourgeois nuclear family, Morgner has chosen to set her story in the Middle Ages rather than in the nineteenth century, the reasons for which will soon become apparent. The story would seem to bear out the view that women's principal function in the family under the capitalist mode of production is to further the "Bewahrung und Vererbung des Privateigentums."<sup>12</sup> Engels contends furthermore that the modern, that is nuclear, family contains in embryonic form the structures of slavery and serfdom:

Die moderne Ehe enthält im Keim nicht nur Sklaverei (servitus), sondern auch Leibeigenschaft, da sie von vornherein Beziehung hat auf Dienste für Ackerbau, sie enthält in Miniatur alle Gegensätze in sich, die sich später breit entwickeln in der Gesellschaft und in ihrem Staat.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the functioning of this masculine economy and its appropriation of otherness and femininity see Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" *Signs* 7.1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 41-54; and Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile," *Ideology and Consciousness* 1 (1977), pp. 62-76; and for an introductory commentary see Monique Plaza, "'Phalломorphic Power' and the Psychology of 'Woman,'" *Ideology and Consciousness* 4 (1978), p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

In locating the exploitative practices of serfdom and slavery between individual members of the family, here the bourgeois family, Engels is opening up the way for a more differentiated analysis of power relations along gender lines. However, Engels fails to draw any parallels between women's status in the bourgeois family and the principle of commodity exchange in the capitalist mode of production, although he does mention briefly Marx' comment contained in a footnote in *Das Kapital* that in a capitalist economy relationships between people can display features characteristic of commodity exchange when people and their relationships become "verdinglicht":

Es dauerte nicht lange mehr, bis die große 'Wahrheit' entdeckt wurde, daß auch der Mensch eine Ware sein kann; daß die menschliche Kraft austauschbar und vernutzbar ist, indem man den Menschen in einen Sklaven verwandelt.<sup>14</sup>

French feminists, notably Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, have analyzed woman's commodity status in symbolic systems of exchange within a psychoanalytical framework. Their thesis that women act as "commodities exchanged between men or groups of men" and that "it is their silence, their silent bodies - but yet productive - which regulates the smooth exchange between men and the social mechanism in general,"<sup>15</sup> is heavily indebted to Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of the laws of kinship. At the same time, however, Irigaray and Cixous offer a radical critique of the gender assumptions underpinning his theory of kinship and his theory of exchange of women within social groups. According to Lévi-Strauss, the prime structuring principles of society can be located in the phenomenon of tribes exchanging goods and gifts as well as women. Initially, he argues, this exchange between families and clans did not serve the principle of capital accumulation, as Marx and Engels suggested, but rather functioned according to the principle of reciprocity. In Lévi-Strauss' view it seemed only natural that women were regarded as the most valuable of commodities because of their exceptional ability to satisfy a diversity of masculine needs.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in patrilinear societies women act as one of

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p. 170.

<sup>15</sup> Irigaray, "Women's Exile," p. 72.

<sup>16</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, ed. Rodney Needham, rev. ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), p. 496.

many objects of exchange, as a "sign" or a generator of signs in a system of communication primarily conducted between men. Women may serve occasionally as a partner but never as the subject of an exchange.<sup>17</sup>

Irigaray's and Cixous' psychoanalytical approach to the question of female identity and the functioning of female sexuality within a "masculine economy" or a "phallogocentric" order highlights Lévi-Strauss' identification of the basic structuring principle regulating social and cultural relations as the exchange of women as goods between men - in order to subject it to critical scrutiny. In a paraphrase of Lévi-Strauss, Irigaray writes in **The Sex which is not one**:

The trade that organizes patriarchal societies takes place exclusively among men. Women, signs, goods, currency, all pass from one man to another . . .<sup>18</sup>

The economy and trade that Irigaray is referring to are not purely social structures but psychic structures, formed through interaction with the "socio-cultural order" or what Lacan has termed the symbolic order of language. The symbolic order and society in general, are, according to Irigaray, founded on the exploitation of women's bodies, an exploitation which acts as a form of exchange between men. Accordingly, women never gain access to the symbolic order and are never paid for their task.<sup>19</sup> The structures of exchange between homogeneous elements which can only conceive of the other in terms of the same, have, according to Irigaray, determined the question of sexual difference and all signifying practices in the Western world since Plato.<sup>20</sup> The individual subject is therefore produced through the interaction of psychic and social relations via the mediation of language. The entry of the subject into language or the symbolic order during the Oedipal phase of the individual's development then inscribes the rule of the biological father. But for Lacan it is no longer the biological father but rather the Law of the Phallus which regulates the symbolic order. The entry of the subject into the symbolic order can

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Irigaray, "When the Goods Get Together," **New French Feminisms**, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1980), p. 107.

<sup>19</sup> Irigaray, "Women's Exile," p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> Irigaray, **Speculum of the Other Woman**, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 26ff.

therefore be termed the "inauguration in psychic terms of the rule of the Father as the Law."<sup>21</sup> The entry of the female subject into the symbolic order is, because of the very different resolution of her Oedipal complex in classical Freudianism, fundamentally problematic. The entry of the female subject into the symbolic order necessitates the negation of the specificity of her desire and of herself as active desiring subject.

Because 'woman' has always occupied the place of the 'other' in Western metaphysics, she has, according to Irigaray, always been reduced to a specular image of man in a system of representation which can only conceive of the other in terms of the same, as repetition, reflection, or reproduction. She becomes an object of exchange in a masculine "economy" of representation which requires the woman to reflect the male, in effect to circulate around the centre of the male self:

. . . the desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same, and again of the similar, the alter ego and, to put it in a nutshell, the desire for the auto . . . the homo . . . the male, dominates the representational economy.<sup>22</sup>

As a commodity, she is positioned at the centre of the economy of exchange but is always excluded from the practice of exchange itself. "The trade that organizes patriarchal societies takes place exclusively among men," contends Irigaray, ". . . women, signs, goods, currency, all pass from one man to another."<sup>23</sup>

Irigaray's and Cixous' use of economic metaphors to denote psycho-sexual relations constitutes an attempt to interrogate what they perceive to be the dominant discourses of the twentieth century - Marxism and psychoanalysis - and the interrelation between the relative positions of women in these discourses. Their works can be read therefore as critiques of the gender-assumptions or the "phallogentrism" in the writings of Marx and Freud and their lack of engagement with questions of sexual exploitation. In a sense, Irigaray and Cixous endeavour to break down the economic "infrastructure" which determines Freud's discussion of the

<sup>21</sup> Annette Kuhn, "Structures of Patriarchy and Capital in the Family," in **Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production**, ed. Annette Kuhn and AnneMarie Wolpe (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Irigaray, **Speculum of the Other Woman**, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Irigaray, "When the Goods Get Together," p. 106.

role of women in the sexual "economy" as well as to enquire into Marx' uncritical use of 'woman' as metaphor to elucidate economic theory. The conflation of metaphors from both Marxism and psychoanalysis in the works of French feminists is further indicative of the dual aims of feminism in France in the seventies, as articulated by Catherine Clément. She argues that women's attack on patriarchy must take place on two fronts, effecting "change in both ideology and economy."<sup>24</sup> Any challenge to the constitution of women in language and the symbolic order must be seen in close connection with the necessity for economic and political changes to women's condition. Their reappropriation or rewriting of classical Marxist economic imagery is therefore a recognition of the inadequacy of a purely materialist approach to feminist concerns.

Although the narrator in Morgner's story makes no explicit reference to the act of exchange of women among men, the mechanisms of commodity exchange are all too clear to the reader familiar with the passage from *Das Kapital* where Marx, in a footnote, draws parallels between the constitution of the human subject and the constitution of exchange value of commodities:

In gewisser Art geht's dem Menschen wie der Ware. Da er weder mit einem Spiegel auf die Welt kommt noch als Fichtescher Philosoph: ich bin ich, bespiegelt sich der Mensch zuerst in einem andern Menschen. Erst durch die Beziehung auf den Menschen Paul als seinesgleichen bezieht sich der Mensch Peter auf sich selbst als Mensch.<sup>25</sup>

Irigaray's and Cixous' critique of the gender blindness of Marx' analysis of the mechanisms of commodity exchange within a capitalist economy can be usefully applied to the story of Marie Montpellier as a means of highlighting the insufficiencies of a purely economic approach to the question of women's oppression.

### C. The Story of Marie Montpellier - Serfdom and Sexual Exploitation

The story Beatriz narrates to Laura tells how Marie von Montpellier is first married at the age of eleven to the Vizgraf von Marseille, whereupon she is forced

<sup>24</sup> Catherine Clément, "Enslaved Enclave," Marks, *New French Feminisms*, p. 131.

<sup>25</sup> Marx, *Das Kapital*, in *MEW*, Vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1962), p. 67.

to pass her inheritance rights to her father's property on to her stepmother's children.

The marriage contract is sealed between her father and the husband and the deal is presumably clinched with the aid of a dowry and Marie's virginity as an added bonus.<sup>26</sup> And Irigaray remarks, echoing Engels, "as well as being an undeclared work contract, the marriage contract will also have disguised a purchase agreement for the body and sex of the wife . . ."<sup>27</sup> On the death of her husband, Marie, at the age of fifteen, is put back into circulation, at which time she momentarily comes into possession of her husband's property, but only to convey it back to her rightful owner, her father.<sup>28</sup> Once the property transaction is completed, both sets of goods, Marie and her accumulated property, return back to their rightful owner. As the emissary of her father sent out to accumulate capital in his name, she becomes herself a capital investment and when she returns home after successfully completing this task, she delivers up the interest and is sent off once again on a further investment mission. As the representative of her father, she can never inherit her husband's wealth herself and can only facilitate the transference of property among men of the same class. She can only ever redirect, convey, reproduce this property, and she is repeatedly divested of the products of this labour. Here Irigaray's description of women's role in "phallogentrism" can be taken as a literal commentary on Marie's function within feudal aristocratic circles. Woman, for Irigaray, is that "matrix - womb, earth, factory, bank - to which the seed capital is entrusted so that it may germinate, produce, grow fruitful, without woman being able to lay claim to either capital or interest since she has only submitted 'passively' to reproduction."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> See Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 122: "This contract is usually drawn up between the father and the husband - like and unlike that between the customer and the pimp - with virginity being figured as a value over and above the dowry, in exchange for a certain capacity for work and a certain guarantee of potency demanded of the future husband. . . . Or else the deal will be arranged between the heads of two families as a function of their respective fortunes and ideological interests."

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p. 121.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Cixous, "Castration and Decapitation?" p. 50; "Everything must return to the masculine. 'Return': the economy is founded on a system of returns. If a man spends and is spent, it's on condition that his power returns."

<sup>29</sup> Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 18.

This pattern of exchange repeats itself a second time. Marie is dispossessed by her father again and is forced once more to circulate. This time the father is aiming at higher returns and invests his capital with the Graf von Comminges, although the count himself already has two other wives. Marie's instrumentality within feudal aristocratic society is further emphasized by the use of the passive mode and the indefinite masculine pronoun:

Man nahm ihr die Schätze ab und verheiratete sie aufs neue an den Grafen von Comminges, der zur Zeit noch mit zwei anderen Frauen verheiratet war, was damals nicht genierte und auch von der Kirche nicht gerügt wurde, wenn man, wie der Graf von Comminges zu den Verfolgern der Albigenser gehörte. (T. 139)

Marie is never the active agent of her marriages; she is always the representative of her father, 're-presenting' the Father in a system of economic management in which "woman exists only as the possibility of mediation, transaction, transition, transference - between man and his fellow-creatures, indeed between man and himself."<sup>30</sup>

As the third wife of Graf von Comminges, Marie can only keep her market value if she bears him male heirs. After bearing her husband only two daughters, she fails in both her father's and her husband's expectations of her because she has not produced male heirs for her husband's property. She has failed in her mission to secure male ownership of property by reproducing heirs for her husband's capital, as well as failing to convey property back to her father. As part of her father's investment strategy, she has failed with the consequence that she forfeits her exchangeability as a commodity and hence her desirability for both men. However, once divested of her "Tauschwert," she still 'possesses,' as every true Marxist commodity, "Gebrauchswert," or use value.<sup>31</sup> Depleted of all exchange value, she is then forced to circulate ever increasingly between her father and husbands, no longer

<sup>30</sup> Irigaray, "When the Goods Get Together," Marks, *New French Feminisms*, p. 108.

<sup>31</sup> See Marx, *Das Kapital*, p. 49ff. Irigaray also points out the fact that women have traditionally had use value and exchange value amongst men in their capacity as 'merchandise'; Irigaray, "When the Goods Get Together," p. 105.



as an object of exchange or even as a means to exchange property, but as an object of physical and sexual abuse:

Marie gebar <dem Grafen von Comminges> zwei Töchter, wurde aber von ihm grausam behandelt, weshalb sie heimkehrte. Dort waren ihre Leiden aber so groß, daß sie jene im Haus des Grafen von Comminges vergaß und wieder zu ihm zurückging. Aber aufs neue fürchterlich geplagt, sah sie sich gezwungen, ein zweites Mal zu fliehen. (T. 139)

The act of returning home to the father is thus repeated a second time. He too recognizes her worthlessness as currency or as an object of exchange since she had failed on her capital accumulation mission. She had been unable to circulate capital or to secure - through male heirs to her husband's property - her father's ultimate claim on the count's wealth. The father also recognizes that Marie's sole value now lies in her use value and her treatment at her father's hands is even crueller than at the hands of her previous husband. However, even as an object of abuse she still has limited exchange value and is forced to circulate back and forth between her husband and her father until eventually her father dies and she comes into the rightful possession of her father's property.

As a commodity, woman clearly has more than just the two dimensions ascribed to the classical Marxist commodity. In addition to her exchange and use value, woman as commodity has an additional feature in her potential for 'ab-use' value. Just when her 'ab-use' value becomes important depends on her utility within various "economies," whose interrelation is not immediately clear.

The pattern of expropriation is repeated twice, but with the important difference that the second time Marie is the object of sexual expropriation. The violation of Marie's body is represented as the logical consequence of her loss of value on the feudal 'exchange market' and her failure to participate in the exchange of capital.<sup>32</sup> No longer the receptacle for the transference of male capital, she now

<sup>32</sup> Marx often speaks of commodities in almost human terms. The comparisons between the nature and treatment of commodities and women only reveal themselves in the margins of his text. In the main body of his text commodities become metonyms for women; commodities are powerless against "Menschen" and like women must be taken by force if necessary, that is "wenn sie nicht willig sind" (*Das Kapital*, p. 99). Unfortunately Marx failed to take up the other component of the metonymical equation and to examine the relationship between women and commodities. Underlying Marx' use of metaphor is the

becomes the receptacle for male desire. Displaced from her position within the monogamous family as bearer of male heirs, she is forced to occupy the place of the woman at the other end of Engels' feminine spectrum, that of the prostitute. For Engels, the prostitute was the "notwendiges Korrelat" to the wife in monogamy, the logical other half of the opposition prostitute/housewife-slave.<sup>33</sup> Marie, in failing to conform to her role within the patriarchal family as bearer of male heirs, is then forced to take the place of the prostitute as the recipient of male desire. As a "reproducer" of male desire, Marie is forced to circulate within the male "libidinal economy." The transactions do not, however, end with the expulsion of the woman as prostitute from inside the parameters of the family which would logically seem to be her proper place. Instead, the narrative takes an unexpected turn when the father dies and Marie becomes the legal heir to his capital:

Zum Glück starb ihr Vater Wilhelm gerade in dieser Zeit. Und da seine Heirat mit Agnes, weil seine erste Frau noch am Leben war, vom Papst nicht anerkannt wurde, trat Marie von Montpellier in ihre Erbschaftsrechte. Weshalb sie der König von Aragonien Peter II heiratete.  
(T. 139)

Woman can, according to Lacan, only ever present a challenge to the rule of the Father. She cannot usurp the place of the Father without decentering the Phallus and without disrupting the vital circulation of the Phallus as master signifier from father to son. Such a usurpation would represent a threat to the Law, the principle regulating the symbolic order. Marie, accordingly, never usurps her father's place or partakes of his political and economic power. The place of the father is eventually filled by the King of Aragonien, Peter II, who appropriates the entire fruits of her life-long labour. Marie can only represent the father until his place is filled by a substitute father. As Catherine Clément reminds us: "women must circulate, not put into circulation."<sup>34</sup> The place occupied by the Father is the site of the Law which

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assumption that the use of force against women belongs to the realm of the natural. It follows therefore that the use of force with commodities will also require a degree of naturalness by dint of the comparison with women. Irigaray and Cixous attempt to reverse the metonym and reveal the historically and culturally determined nature of woman's status as commodity.

<sup>33</sup> Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, p. 69.

<sup>34</sup> Clément, "The Guilty One," in *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 53.

regulates the circulation of women and female desire amongst father and son. Marie's attempt to usurp the place of her real father can be read as a threat to law and order, as a disruption to the whole of the symbolic order organized around the Phallus, the master signifier.

But it is here that the system of exchange of women between men breaks down when the King, having decided to marry Marie, refuses to consummate the marriage. The reason given is that his attentions have been captured by the more beautiful and younger Gräfin Mireval:

In Montpellier wurde die Hochzeit gefeiert. Als die Nacht herankam, weigerte sich der König, die Ehe zu "akkomplieren." Große Verlegenheit der Gäste, tiefer Schmerz der Braut. Niemand weiß sich die Weigerung des guten, jungen, Verse machenden und immer galanten Königs zu erklären, denn häßlich war die Braut nicht. Aber schöner war die junge kokette Gräfin Mireval, die der Hochzeit als Gast beiwohnte. (T. 139)

It is not immediately clear why the circulation breaks down but one plausible explanation would be that the object of exchange is finally depleted of its exchange value as well as of its 'ab-use' value. Once Marie, as a commodity, ceases to fulfil either of the dual functions Marx ascribes to the commodity, she becomes redundant, reduced to the status of Gustav "der Schrofelfahrer's" "Müll," in **Gustav der Weltfahrer**: a commodity devoid of function. What remains is therefore the mere "Hülle" or "phantasmagorische Form" of the "Warenkörper," which is the specific form the commodity assumes once it has become an object of exchange.<sup>35</sup>

By refusing to consummate the marriage, the King exercises his patriarchal right over her property and herself as property. Marie is not merely the site of investment of male desire for the purposes of producing an heir for his capital; her social status, even as rightful heir to her father's estate, is dependent on the readiness or unwillingness, as the case may be, of a male master to appropriate her as sexual object. Such an appropriation of the female body cannot, however, be simply reduced to a function of capital accumulation. By the same token, the refusal

<sup>35</sup> Marx, *Das Kapital*, p. 86.

of female sexuality is neither compatible with, nor even the result of, a refusal to merge the King's wealth with hers.

The reason given for the King's rejection of Marie as a legal wife is the greater sexual attractiveness of the Gräfin Mireval. The refusal of the sexuality of the legal wife amounts to the expulsion of eroticism and sexuality from the site of legality of the family to outside its boundaries. Marie cannot fulfil both functions of each term of the binary opposition wife/mistress, that is, she cannot simultaneously occupy the place of mistress with respect to her lover's desire and still be mistress of his property. Thus, despite an unwitting consummation of the marriage and the outwardly happy unification of both territories, the King displays little interest in his new wife:

Aragon und Montpellier sind völkerrechtlich vereinigt, und die Hausmacht mehrt sich. Allerdings ist König Peter jetzt noch gereizter gegen die Königin. Er wendet sich noch entschiedener von ihr ab und überläßt sie einem einsamen Leben im Schlosse Mireval. (T. 139)

The King, however, cannot be persuaded to continue the marriage and files for divorce, although he now has no legitimate case for doing so.

Engels' account of the functionalization of women in the capitalist mode of production as a means to ensure the transference of capital from male to male, seems insufficient to explain why the King could not be brought to form such an advantageous alliance with Marie. The analysis of property relations within the family needs to be complemented by an understanding of the functioning of female sexuality with relation to the masculine libido and the position of woman within the masculine "economy of meaning" or the production of sexual difference. Woman has no function outside this economy and once she no longer serves the purpose of "the repetition - representation - reproduction of sameness," that is, of the masculine, and starts to represent herself, she presents a danger to the smooth exchange between men and must be removed from circulation.<sup>36</sup>

The medieval aristocratic woman was not only dependent on a man to appropriate her deceased husband's or father's property as the case may be, in order

<sup>36</sup> Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 43.

to secure for herself a place in feudal society. In addition she had to market her sexual favours in order to legalize her social status in marriage. Without this appropriation of female sexuality within marriage, even women of the propertied classes were doomed to remain powerless and propertyless. Just as feudal aristocratic men had the right to dispossess women of the same class of their property, by the same token, the males also had the right to refuse women, to devalue women's currency, thereby limiting women's purchase of legal, social and economic rights. The repression of female sexuality within the borders of the monogamous and polygamous family prevents woman's entry into the social system which effectively curtails the possibility of her gaining equal rights to the products of her sexual favours in her amassed wealth. The exhaustion of her exchange value, although due to a failure to circulate capital, is also inseparable from the finiteness of her use value as a sexual object. Although Marie still retains her beauty, the mystery of her sexuality has already been disclosed and the elusive Gräfin clearly represents new terrain to be conquered in contrast to the well-chartered territory of the recycled wife. The depletion of Marie's use value must lead to a blockage in the economy based on the exchange of women. A commodity that has no exchange nor use value and therefore no purchase for either owner or receiver, producer or consumer, has no function within the economy of endogamous or exogamous exchange and, eventually, must be taken out of circulation before it can be allowed to block the free exchange of women among men.

Marie's subordination is indeed largely the result of the need to find a master for her material goods, yet obviously the King's refusal to appropriate her bodily goods runs counter to the aims of capital accumulation evident earlier in the narrative. The nexus between sexual and property relations evident here can be described with the aid of Althusser's concept of the "lacuna," that is to say, sexual relations are something which "must be thought and yet cannot be thought" with the help of the concept of mode of production alone.<sup>37</sup> Women not only serve as

<sup>37</sup> Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970), p. 257.

exchange values, they must also produce and reproduce use values, as well as produce and reproduce themselves as use values as part of the 'natural' sexual division of labour.<sup>38</sup> Woman herself is, according to Irigaray, "held in receivership as a certified means of (re)production."<sup>39</sup> This involves the production of use values for the maintenance of men - for which women are primarily responsible - and for men's property which entails the reproduction of male heirs. But this activity also involves the reproduction of male desire. If woman fails to reproduce herself for the male and reflect his desire, then her production of other use values and even her more direct forms of contribution to the accumulation of capital are to little avail. Thus, although the King's motive for sealing the marriage contract was to consolidate his power through a valuable extension to his kingdom, Marie is prevented from remaining the King's legal wife and the inheritor of his wealth through the active denial of her sexuality on the part of the King. This occurs despite the stated marketability of Marie as an object of desire: "denn häßlich war die Braut nicht" (T. 139).

Engels' notion that monogamy is a function of private property and that sexual oppression will consequently disappear with the abolition of private property was modelled on the bourgeois family and a somewhat idealized image of the proletarian family. His conception of the proletarian family as an exemplary site of equality between the sexes bore in fact little resemblance to the reality of his time and to twentieth century socialist societies where the dictatorship of the proletariat has allegedly been installed.<sup>40</sup> Underlying his analysis of family relations is the assumption that the capitalist mode of production is the point of intersection between patriarchal and property relations, thus implying an historical conjuncture between the two sets of relations. Western socialist feminists such as Annette Kuhn, who have been influenced by the work of Louis Althusser, have argued that it may be useful to see patriarchy as having a relative degree of autonomy with regard to mode of

<sup>38</sup> cf. Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>39</sup> Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> See Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, p. 73.

production.<sup>41</sup> While stressing the historical specificity of patriarchal relations, she points out that social relations of patriarchy "cannot be mapped unproblematically onto the social relations characteristic of a mode of production."<sup>42</sup> Morgner's choice of pre-capitalist feudal society where aristocratic women were the family would seem to be already the site of property relations, indirectly raises the question of the possibility of property relations existing within the family both in a pre- and a post-capitalist society such as the GDR.

Returning to the narrative and Marie's forced removal from circulation, it becomes apparent that Marie's expulsion from the "market" after her pending divorce is for obvious reasons not the positive act of rebellion that Cixous and Irigaray posit as a means to break the mechanisms of patriarchal exchange:

But what if the goods refused to go to market? What if they maintained among themselves 'another' kind of trade?<sup>43</sup>  
 Woman would then have to start by resisting the movement of reappropriation that rules the whole economy, by being party no longer to the masculine return . . .<sup>44</sup>

Marie has very little choice but to "go to market" and would obviously prefer to continue do so, considering the alternative seems to be death. And it is only once she is forcibly removed from circulation that she dares to challenge the authority of the King, the representative in social and psychic terms of Lacan's Law, by appealing to the representative of another authority, namely that of the heavenly Father. To prevent the divorce, Marie turns to the Pope whereupon she mysteriously dies - from poisoning:

Marie von Montpellier ging nach Rom, um sich beim Papst zu beklagen und die Scheidung zu hintertreiben. Da starb sie. An Gift. (T. 140)

Marie's act of appealing to the rival authority of the church clearly represents a challenge to the authority of the King and to the hegemony of the state and its

<sup>41</sup> See Kuhn, "Structures of Patriarchy," p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Irigaray, "When the Goods Get Together," Marks, *New French Feminisms*, p. 110.

<sup>44</sup> Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" p. 50.

attempts to establish absolute authority over the church. It is this challenge which necessitates Marie's death.

With the death of the father Marie becomes a woman without a master, a commodity without an owner. The absence of the father or a substitute father opens up the possibility of her coming into possession of the products of her labour and becoming the owner of herself as property. According to Marx, this would be tantamount to throwing off the yoke of feudalism. Were she to achieve this transition from commodity to owner of commodity, she would, according to Marx, be throwing off the yoke of the slave, who is not free to sell his commodities (since he himself is the commodity), and she would become a "free" worker. The essential difference between the slave and the free worker is that the worker who no longer toils under the yoke of capitalism can sell the products of his labour as a free agent rather than sell himself as the embodiment of his labour power:

If he <the free worker> were to sell it rump and stump, once and for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity.<sup>45</sup>

If we choose to read the story of Marie not so much as an illustration of feudal gender relations but as an oblique commentary on the gender blindness inherent in Marx' and Engels' analysis of the transition from feudal to capitalist society, we can in fact regard Marie as a rather grotesque representation of gender relations as currently existing in twentieth century socialist societies. Even as "free" workers, East German women are not entirely free from those mechanisms of commodity exchange experienced by Marie under feudalism. In a speech at the VII Schriftstellerkongreß Morgner draws attention to the very real inequalities still existing in contemporary East German society between the sexes, drawing comparisons between the status of women in twentieth century industrial societies and the position of slaves in ancient Greece:

<sup>45</sup> Marx, *Das Kapital*; quoted from Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 63.



Die große griechische Kultur basierte auf der Sklavenhalterordnung. Die großen künstlerischen, wissenschaftlichen und technischen Errungenschaften der Kultur, die wir jetzt haben, basieren auf der Frauenhalterordnung.<sup>46</sup>

Slavery functions for Morgner as a metaphor for the exploitation of women, their labour and their bodies, as well as a figure of the degree of their subordination to men. Likewise, Morgner refers in *Amanda* to women's situation in the family as a form of modern serfdom. "Leibeigenschaft" becomes therefore a metaphor for an anachronistic, pre-Marxist set of class relations still upheld and practised between the sexes within the socialist family. At the same time, "Leibeigenschaft" represents the feminist project of "Leib-eigenschaft," that is the reappropriation of women's bodies by women, which is one of the central aims of women's struggle for emancipation in the seventies both in the East and the West. If women are to break the bonds of serfdom, thus becoming like the free worker, they must refuse to sell themselves as commodities as the first step in becoming their own mistresses.

Marie does in fact challenge male rights of ownership simply by being without a father or husband. She also threatens exogamous exchange by rebelling against her commodity status in marriage when she refuses to be exchanged for the Gräfin Mireval as well as by insisting on her legal claim to her property. Yet, Beatriz's second true story ultimately tells the story of women's failure to free themselves from their status as commodities and to break the feudal ties that have historically determined their position in the monogamous family and in modern society. Marie's fate also underscores the very limited options open for medieval women, even aristocratic women, to resist their expropriation and exploitation by men of their own class. Lastly, Marie's plight is clearly conceived as a caricature of Marx' and Engels' analysis of the status of women in feudal and bourgeois societies and their naive prognoses for the future of women under socialism.

Here it may be fruitful to compare briefly the threat posed by Marie to the functioning of feudal society with the rather different kind of disruption to sexual exchange caused by the figure of the hysteric in recent French feminist

<sup>46</sup> Morgner, "Rede vor dem VII Schriftstellerkongreß," p. 113.

psychoanalytic theory.<sup>47</sup> The hysteric is just one of the many figures of feminine resistance celebrated by French feminists. Although Morgner does not engage directly with the figure of the hysteric, the hysteric has often been acclaimed as the modern-day heir to the controversial figure of the witch - a figure Morgner does introduce in the second novel of the trilogy, *Amanda*, and which will be the subject of analysis in a later chapter. In Clément's "The Guilty One" the transgressive nature of the hysteric's bisexuality and the disruption caused to the bourgeois family by her refusal to circulate is linked to the blasphemous and subversive figure of the sorceress. Like Freud, Clément also regards the hysteric as an heir to the witch, as the "witch's daughter,"<sup>48</sup> and as a "remembrance of the sorceress."<sup>49</sup> Freud's attempt to effect a psychoanalytic cure on the hysteric recalls the similar attempt to exorcise the witch's demons during the medieval witch trials and to cure her of her possession by the Devil. Freud saw the re-emergence of the witch in the hysteric's mendacious confessions of paternal seduction, in her resistance to analysis, her accounts of persecution and in the apparently obscure symptoms of her illness.<sup>50</sup> For Clément and Cixous, however, both women are examples of what a phallogocentric culture has persecuted or repressed and hence their "return" is associated with a liberatory moment in the history of the repression of the "feminine."<sup>51</sup>

Freud's figure of the hysteric is of particular interest here since she disrupts not only the exogamous exchange of women in society by refusing Herr K. as a paramour,<sup>52</sup> but also the circulation of the Phallus within the borders of the family itself.<sup>53</sup> By refusing to give up the pre-Oedipal phase of female sexual activity,

<sup>47</sup> Feminist critiques of various discourses on female sexuality, in particular of psychoanalytic discourse, have centred on Freud's case history on hysteria and Lacan's rereading of it. The paradigm of the hysteric has been reworked by French feminists to highlight a whole range of aspects of female sexuality of which only a few can be treated here.

<sup>48</sup> Clément, "The Guilty One," *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 52.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, pp. 11-17.

<sup>51</sup> See Cixous, "Sorties," *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 95.

<sup>52</sup> See Clément, "The Guilty One," *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 53.

<sup>53</sup> See Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic of Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York, London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 191-92. Rubin discusses the interrelationship between Lacan's psychoanalytic theories of the circulation of the Phallus and Lévi-Strauss' anthropological studies on kinship laws. Just as the

which Freud has described as having an essentially active and hence "masculine" character,<sup>54</sup> and by refusing to give herself to Herr K. in exchange for the gifts she has received from him, the hysteric can be said to be refusing her destiny as recipient of male desire. According to Lacan, Dora's problem resides in her refusal to accept herself "as an object of desire for the man."<sup>55</sup>

As Lacan points out, her refusal of Herr K. is attributed by Freud to Dora's persistent identification with her father and her inability to transfer her love-object from her mother to her father.<sup>56</sup> This is tantamount to adopting an active position as desiring subject, or as the giver of gifts rather than the receiver, the agent of exchange rather than the object.<sup>57</sup> If she is to accept Herr K. as paramour she must also accept his gifts and accept herself as the gift given in exchange by her father. The effect of the gifts is to represent symbolically feminine sexuality as the recipient of male desire and as that which must circulate. By refusing to give herself in exchange for the gifts, she is refusing to circulate, and hence disrupting social and sexual exchange.

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exchange of women regulates the exogamous or interfamilial exchange, it is the circulation of the Phallus as a symbolic object that regulates the exchange within families. She points out that "the Oedipal complex is an expression of the circulation of the phallus in intrafamilial exchange, an inversion of the circulation of women in interfamilial exchange" (ibid).

For the functioning of the Phallus in regulating kinship ties see Anthony Wilden on Lacan (Wilden, *The Language of the Self* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1968), p. 304). For Lacan, the Phallus serves as a symbolic mediator between husband and wife in the figure of the maternal uncle as well as being circulated itself as a kind of "symbolic debt" when it is passed on from father to son. The male child ceases during the Oedipal complex to be the Phallus for the mother and receives through the father the gift of the Phallus thus putting him in the position of being able to participate in the exchange of women in exogamous exchange.

<sup>54</sup> See Freud's lecture on "Femininity" in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933), *Standard Edition*, Vol. 22, trans. James Strachey, collab. Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 119.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Intervention on Transference," in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell, Jacqueline Rose (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), p. 68.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*, p. 66.

<sup>57</sup> Lacan acknowledges woman's position in the symbolic order as "object of exchange": "That the woman should be inscribed in an order of exchange of which she is the object, is what makes for the fundamentally conflictual, and, I would say, insoluble character of her position: the symbolic order literally submits her, it transcends her . . ." (in Mitchell and Rose, eds., *Feminine Sexuality*, p. 45.).

The hysteric disturbs the family from within with her accusations of paternal seduction as well as disrupting the social exchange of women between families which structures the symbolic order. The hysteric's refusal to enter into exogamous exchange effectively causes an obstruction in the circulation of women amongst men which amounts to a transgression of the laws of kinship. Likewise, her rejection of Herr K. could be read as a blockage in the circulation of the Phallus from father to son and a disruption to the "reproduction of kinship" within the family.<sup>58</sup>

Marie also causes a blockage in the family which leads to a break-down in the system of exogamous exchange when she refuses to vacate her place within the family for the Gräfin Mireval. She thus refuses to accept her interchangeability as commodity. There are, however, obvious differences between Marie and the hysteric of Clément or Cixous, whose "resistance to masculine desire" represents a positive paradigm of women's rebellion against "phallogentricity."<sup>59</sup> Marie's "blockage" cannot be construed as a conscious refusal of the system of exogamous or endogamous exchange; it is instead the result of market forces which determine the life-span of commodities in circulation. Marie does not refuse to go to market, nor can she, since commodities are, in fact, as Marx points out, reliant on the consent of their "Warenbesitzer" to regulate their exchange.<sup>60</sup> The only possibility of rebellion open to the commodity within a Marxist economy once it is depleted of its use and exchange value and once it has been abandoned by its owner, seems to be for the commodity to reassert itself as "refuse" by "refusing" to be defined solely in terms of its function within a particular economy. As "refuse," the commodity and woman as commodity, undergo a redefinition when they re-enter circulation on their own terms, refunctionalized. Here we are reminded of the way Gustav "der Schrofelfahrer," in *Gustav der Weltfahrer*, reinstates the "Müll" or refuse he finds in his daily visits to the rubbish-tip, inscribing the seemingly useless objects of "refuse" with new meaning. Marie functions as a "use" commodity with limited purchase and her fate is

<sup>58</sup> See Rubin, "The Traffic of Women," p. 191.

<sup>59</sup> Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" p. 50.

<sup>60</sup> Marx, *Das Kapital*, p. 99.

inevitably the same as any commodity which, having exhausted its exchange and use value, becomes 'spent.'

Marie's fate as a commodity for exchange becomes metonymically linked to the mode of production associated by Marx and Engels with women's work in the home. Since the sexual division of labour, women have been the producers of use values, whereas men have been engaged in the production of goods primarily for exchange. This division of labour continues to exist today in East German society as is demonstrated in numerous passages in the *Trobadora* novel.

#### D. The Gender Politics of Food Production in the Socialist Family

In the *Trobadora*, women are represented as the producers of "use values" in the meals they provide for their husbands and male lovers. For Laura, Valeska and Berta Katschmann, the activity of food production in the home is an act of loving and caring, "eine Zärtlichkeit" (T. 233). However, it is labour spent in an expression of love which is only appreciated by the women themselves: the realization that "jemandem Essen zu geben, von Frauen nur geübt, sondern auch empfunden werden kann" (T. 233) brings with it the additional insight into the ways in which gender inequalities continue to be reproduced within the family. The men, by contrast with the women, regard eating as a necessary but largely unproductive and unpleasurable exercise - "ein ähnlicher Vorgang wie das Tanken" (T. 135). Eating is instead for Lutz an "Akt des Bewußtseins" (T. 135), rather than the act of communication, the declaration of love, that it is for the women concerned. Katschmann is equally unappreciative of the emotional investment involved in the preparation of meals by his wife, Berta; for him they have merely functional or use value. Eating is on a par with other socially necessary activities such as work: "Essen schien zu seinem ungeheuren Pensum zu gehören, das er sich täglich auferlegte. Er bewältigte es planmäßig und so gründlich, daß es ihm eine Kreislaufstörung eingebracht hatte" (T. 116). Only in *Gustav der Weltfahrer* is eating a pleasurable pastime, that is, for the two Gustavs. Here too it is the wife of Gustav "der Weltfahrer" who prepares the

soups for the consumption of the two men. Although the meal times are heavily ritualized, Gustav's wife, as the producer of the meals, remains absent from the mealtime rituals which are conducted exclusively between the two men.

Sheila Rowbotham maintains that it is because women have traditionally been producers of use values, that is producers of goods for immediate consumption within the family, that this specifically female mode of production has remained outside traditional Marxist analyses of the relations of production. She argues that this is because the production of goods within the family for private consumption is not directly related to the cash-nexus. She also points out the similarities between the relations of production in the family and the relations of production under serfdom. Women function within the family like feudal serfs and like Marx's slaves. They are not able to freely dispose of the products of their labour to men or to society and cannot sell them freely as commodities.<sup>61</sup> Their service to society and to men is, therefore, because of its feudal nature, largely invisible. Only Uwe Parnitzke in the *Trobadora*, as a sensitive 'feminized' male, who declares his need for a mother ("Ich bin ein Mensch, der eine Mutter braucht" (T. 121)), is appreciative of the invisible service women provide to men in the form of prepared meals.

The story about Marie demonstrates how woman as producer of use values has, through a process of metonymical substitution, become herself a commodity with exchange and use value and eventually 'abuse' value. Even long before industrialization and the rise of capitalism, woman has functioned as a type of 'natural' commodity with respect to man. It is this status as 'natural' object for sexual exchange that is the target of Morgner's critique. In foregrounding the potential for abuse implicit in property relations between the sexes, Morgner's text highlights an aspect of sexual relations which Irigaray's and Cixous' analyses do not address. She also deconstructs the markers of sexual difference which have positioned woman on the "Nahtstelle" or the dividing line between nature and culture. The construction of such binary oppositions has facilitated the categorization of women's activities in the

<sup>61</sup> Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*, pp. 58ff.

home as an extension of a 'natural' service women provide to men and hence as the product of a 'natural' division of labour between the sexes.

In a letter of protest sent to the circus which employs Beatriz and Melusine, Laura decries as reactionary any theories which posit women as the "missing link zwischen Menschenaffe und Mensch" (T. 104). Such theories have, however, found much more reputable proponents than Max Funk and the like, and reassert themselves in such unexpected places as Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology. While maintaining that woman functions largely as a sign within exogamous exchange,<sup>62</sup> Lévi-Strauss adds that the essential difference between women and other gifts or goods for exchange lies in their natural function in child-rearing and in their value as a stimulus of male sexual desire.<sup>63</sup> Women possess therefore a unique ability to satisfy both the social and sexual needs of the (male) community. "Woman has remained at once a sign and a value," he writes and hence it is due to woman's dual nature that "the relations between the sexes have preserved that affective richness, ardour and mystery which doubtless originally permeated the entire universe of human communications."<sup>64</sup>

Women's exchangeability therefore results from her ability to excite "sexual and proprietarial instincts" in others as well as in her own proprietor.<sup>65</sup> In pre-Marxist society these "sexual and proprietarial instincts" both belonged to the natural order of things and received their legitimation from this order. Marx and Engels were concerned to rescue only one half of the pair, namely the proprietarial instincts, from the realm of the natural in the name of the science of historical materialism. They were content to leave the question of the other co-determinant in the oppression of women, namely their sexual expropriation, unaddressed. If women are to reappropriate themselves as "objects of personal desire,"<sup>66</sup> that is, "sich Natur aneignen. Zuerst ihre eigne" (GW. 157), which is the project Morgner assigns women and women's writing in the GDR, they must reverse the process of expropriation by

<sup>62</sup> Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, p. 496.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

which they have become natural stimulants, becoming instead owners of their own commodities, following the example of Marx' ideal of the free worker. The "Heiratsschwindlerin" in **Amanda** attempts to do just this by regulating the sale of her labour as housewife and lover for her own profit.

The representation of woman as "Barschaft" or cash for exchange amongst men as well as a commodity with exchange and use value, which is implicit in Beatriz's story about Marie, can be read as a radical critique of the way in which the theories of Marx, Engels, Lévi-Strauss and others have done nothing to explode the myth of women's 'natural' role as producer of commodities with use value for the maintenance of the family and the reproduction of the workforce. The perpetuation of the myth of women's natural role as object of male desire has meant that women not only have continued to produce use values but have had to produce themselves as commodities for sexual use and abuse. The representation of woman as commodity in this second "true" story told by Beatriz constitutes a crucial point in the novel insofar as it points to the need for an alternative concept of value which can adequately deal with women's work within the family and the less tangible products of women's labour outside the workforce. The text also raises questions concerning the possibility of an alternative set of relations between the sexes and alternative sexual "economies."

#### **E. Alternative Models of Exchange - The Exchange of Men between Women**

I will now look at the alternative forms of social and sexual exchange in the novel which purport not to objectify women and which aim at freeing women from their commodity status. This will involve a search for woman as owner or subject of her desires and of her destiny.

The exchange of men between Laura and Beatriz, posited by Laura as a "dichtungskatalysatorische Maßnahme" (T. 133), highlights the potential for solidarity amongst women. At first glance it seems to be merely an inversion of the patriarchal model of exchange between men as illustrated in the story about Marie. The purpose



of inversion as an alienation technique is to reveal a particular phenomenon normally considered natural as socially or historically constructed and hence "veränderbar." By the same token, the exchange of men between women is not solely designed to point up the objectification of women in GDR society. The model postulates the possibility of women becoming active subjects of sexual desire. Whilst the solidarity between the two women could possibly be seen as analogous to the collusion between the father and the husband within patriarchal relations (as indicated by the story about Marie), there are significant differences in the way in which Lutz is 'exchanged' between the two women. These differences raise the question of a specifically female form of sexual and social exchange.

What appears to be absent from the act of 'gift-giving' between Beatriz and Laura is the compulsion to reciprocate the exchange in some form or another. Although Lévi-Strauss establishes that the notion of receiving a gift in exchange is not essential to the functioning of exogamous exchange even in tribal societies, the principle of reciprocity is still maintained in the expectation that the gift-giver will receive a long-term return on his or her investment.<sup>67</sup> The concept of a return on the erotic and emotional investment involved in the relationship with Lutz, as well as any ownership claims, would appear to be absent from the exchange between Beatriz and Laura. The alternative system of exchange in operation here would therefore appear to be one not based on 'returns' of any kind. Once Lutz has failed to have the desired "dichtungskatalysatorische" (T. 133) effect on Beatriz and she fails to produce the love poetry she has promised, Lutz, the so-called object of exchange, is not returned to its initial owner, Laura. Instead, both women are happy to relinquish all claims to Lutz, just as he is only too happy to escape the cries of screeching children:

Lutz war geflohen. Weil sich brüllende Kinder durch Definitionen nicht beherrschen lassen. So hatte ihm Beatriz den Abschied gegeben. (T. 146)

This inversion does not appear to modify substantially the mechanisms of objectification and functionalization which typify the position of women in

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid*, p. 59.

patriarchal socialist societies.<sup>68</sup> However, there is little to suggest that the interlude with Lutz was meant to be more than a "Verfremdungseffekt." Lutz is conceived purely and unashamedly as an object of female desire. This fact alone is sufficient to break radically with sexual and moral taboos on female eroticism in GDR literature, as the example of Beatriz's erotic tale told to the workers of the Berlin tramways demonstrates. The moral quality of the story was found to be lacking for the reason that, "von der Tatsache, daß Schriftsteller nackte Frauen schilderten, dürfte sich eine Schriftstellerin nicht verleiten lassen, nackte Männer zu beschreiben" (T. 126). Belletristic means just that, "schöne Literatur," (T. 126) Beatriz is told. In terms of the narrative, the story of the exchange of men between women serves the specific function of demonstrating solidarity among women and of freeing representations of women from sexual taboos. It achieves the effect of reawakening Beatriz's dormant erotic imagination and of putting the slow process of 'consciousness-raising' into motion.

The women's treatment of Lutz as an erotic means to their own erotic ends can also be read as a commentary on the objectification of women in much of East German literature authored by men. Lutz thus fulfils much the same function that women serve in many East German novels which instrumentalize women in the male protagonist's search for identity and in particular in his struggle for recognition as a writer. In much 'oppositional' literature authored by men, women are little more than foils for the individual male's struggle for recognition in a society with which he feels at odds.<sup>69</sup> In such novels as Klaus Poche's *Atemnot* and Werner Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* women are even sexually abused as part and parcel of the protagonist's search for identity.<sup>70</sup> The relationship between Lutz and Beatriz is, for both parties,

<sup>68</sup> Sigrid Damm sees the danger in a simple reversal of existing roles in the tendency to fall into a type of schematism which she calls "das Pamphlethafte": "Es kann eigentlich nichts mehr geleistet werden, als im Bewußtmachen das Rollenverhalten umzukehren und dieses Stehenbleiben bei der bloßen Umkehr bedingt das stellenweise nur Pamphlethafte, nur Aggressive ...": Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz*," p. 143.

<sup>69</sup> See Sigrid Stahl, *Der Ausbruch des Individuums aus gesellschaftlicher Konformität* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), pp. 124-31.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

a "Zweckgemeinschaft," each having an ulterior motive for pursuing the erotic involvement. In this sense Lutz is very definitely a willing accomplice in the deal.

Although the experiment with Lutz is an attempt on Morgner's part to break with a set of relations between the sexes which designates one term as the beneficiary or subject of the exchange and the other as its object, it offers no real alternative other than the inversion of the relative positions of the terms of the commodity relations between the sexes. It neither upturns the hierarchical structuring of the positions within the "economy" nor does it transgress the boundaries between active and passive positions of exchange. It does, however, challenge assumptions that woman's position within the operations of sexual exchange is naturally that of the object, and thus introduces the possibility of a female desiring subject. An active desiring subject is also the necessary precondition for the realization of the ideal of the active female troubadour.

An alternative form of social rather than sexual exchange explored by the text, and, one which does challenge hierarchical forms of exchange based on the objectification of one of the terms, is to be found in the relationship between Beatriz and Laura. I would argue that this relationship is an attempt to break down fixed subject positions and to posit alternatives to the objectification of women. There is a constant swapping of their respective roles and social functions which makes it difficult to identify any clear subject or object of any social exchange, and therefore makes it difficult to speak of a stable female subjectivity. Whilst the sliding of subject positions is on the one hand a direct result of the swapping of social roles and therefore constitutes a sharing of duties towards the family and the workforce, it also involves a transgression of the boundaries between categories of the real and the fantastic.

Laura's experiment with Lutz has the opposite effect to that intended, namely of stifling Beatriz's creativity as a female troubadour. Sexual gratification is apparently not compatible with her social obligations as a writer nor with her contract with her publisher and Beatriz falls behind with her commitments to her publishers:

Beatriz verlag sich. Blieb der Gesellschaft zur Verbreitung wissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse literatur-historische Vorträge über sich schuldig, die vertraglich vereinbart waren. Fehlte bei einem Literaturball, dessen Plakate auf den S-Bahnhöfen ihren Namen neben den Namen Sarah Kirsch und Volker Braun fett verzeichneten. Vergaß eine Lesung im Berliner Glühlampenwerk. Schrieb nichts mehr. (T. 146)

Only a division of creative labour between the two women can save Beatriz from official censure and allow her to fulfil her erotic desires. She delegates her obligations as an officially registered writer to Laura, who subsequently holds readings to various groups of factory workers in Beatriz's name as Beatriz's "Spielfrau." In return, Beatriz is initiated into the duties of motherhood.

The first story that Laura tells in her new role as "Spielfrau" to a women's brigade in an electric light factory takes as its theme the conflict between the two mainstays of official GDR policy concerning women, namely between the sacredness of "Ehe, Familie und Mutterschaft" (T. 331) and the full participation of women in the workforce. The role-swapping is therefore conceived as a pragmatic solution to the inability of one woman to comply with the exigencies of two disparate ideals. Although the notion of job-sharing does not directly presuppose a divided female subject, it could be interpreted at this stage as a precautionary measure to combat the fragmentation of the subject which occurs in the *Amanda* novel. In a later chapter, we will discuss to what extent Beatriz and Laura represent two halves of an imaginary whole which is itself an ideological product, and to what extent they can be seen as the two sides of Lenin's "allseitig entwickelte Persönlichkeit."<sup>71</sup> It should then become evident to what extent the female counterpart of the socialist personality is largely the result of the ideological shoring-up of contradictions and conflicts within the state's official ideal of the female personality. I will look at the extent to which this whole, female socialist personality is an idealized, imaginary subject, which is in reality a fragmented and atomized subject, reliant on a fantastic other half to give it the appearance of being both whole and real.

<sup>71</sup> For a detailed description of Lenin's concept of the well-rounded socialist personality see Wolfgang Eichhorn, *Von der Entwicklung des sozialistischen Menschenbildes* (Berlin/GDR: Dietz Verlag, 1964), pp. 140-145.

Laura is entrusted with the task of continuing the 'consciousness-raising' work begun by Beatriz. Laura pretends that she has written the story "am Wickeltisch. Zwischen den Mahlzeiten ihres Sohnes Wesselin" (T. 148) and that she successfully has combined both the duties of motherhood and those of her profession. Laura's story flaunts its fictionality, much in the same way as do Gustav "der Weltfahrer's" "Lügendgeschichten." It is obviously a piece of 'fiction,' premised as it is on the myth that women can meet effortlessly both of the conflicting demands society imposes on them without the help of miracles. Melusine reminds Beatriz at this point that no real change can occur without recourse to miracles: "Ohne Wunder kannst du nicht mal einem Baby helfen, geschweige denn der Welt" (T. 147).

The emancipatory effect of the role reversal is in Laura's case indisputable and, once she is relieved of the sole responsibility for child-rearing, it seems as if her creative potential has indeed been tapped. In Beatriz's case the role reversal is, however, more complex. One should resist the temptation to interpret Beatriz's child-minding primarily as a cure for her eccentricity, despite Laura's recommendation of the "fanatismushemmende Wirkung von Windeltöpfen" (T.164) as a remedy for her terrorist tendencies. Readings which see the development of the figure of Beatriz as a process of disillusionment and the necessary dismantling of untenable emancipatory ideals fall prey to the temptation to see in Laura the sole mouthpiece of the author.<sup>72</sup> The tendency to locate the authorial perspective in the character of Laura blinds some critics to the possibility of reading Laura as an object of authorial irony herself. Laura does in fact see her role towards Beatriz as that of an educator or a mentor, but the strategy she eventually adopts with regard to Beatriz is not to tie her to pots of nappies but rather to send her off on a kind of secret mission. Melusine in fact censures Laura for her attempts to curb Beatriz's "Größenwahn":

Denn Ungeduld ist das einzigartige Talent der Beatriz de Dia, Größenwahn ihre außerordentliche Tugend. Wer ihr Talent und Tugend adressiert, so geschehen ist jahrtausendlang ihren Schwestern, macht sich schuldig vor Gott, der kein Mann sein kann. Auch keine Frau. (T. 181)

<sup>72</sup> See Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz*," pp. 143-44.

To be able to understand fully the significance of both the female protagonists within the structure of the narrative it will be necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of their functions with respect to one other and also with respect to the narrative structure as a whole. An understanding of the relationship between Beatriz and Laura is, moreover, essential if we are to be able to draw conclusions about the problems of female subjectivity and the relative position of the fantastic in relation to the real. I would argue that, just as Laura and Beatriz do not represent fixed subject positions, nor do the spheres of the real and the fantastic remain separate, easily definable categories. In the following chapter I will examine how the text deconstructs rigid boundaries between such oppositional pairs as real/fantastic, subject/object and thwarts attempts on the part of the reader to establish a stable hierarchical ordering of oppositions. This is best illustrated by examining the various models of social and sexual exchange posited by the text, as feminist critiques of patriarchal values and as possible strategies for feminist intervention. It also remains to be seen whether Beatriz's arrival 'home' to the GDR is successful in bringing about a mediation between individual "Anspruch" and the goal of "arrival."

### III. THE QUEST FOR FEMALE EMANCIPATION - THE ALLIANCE OF BEATRIZ AND LAURA

#### A. The Strategy of "Der Sibyllinische Geheimbund" and Female Solidarity

In the previous chapter the *Trobadora* novel was discussed, among other things, in terms of the dominant paradigm in the literature of the GDR of the sixties in the model of the "Ankunftsroman." The concept of "Ankunft" was elaborated primarily in relation to the figure of Beatriz. Laura's function as "Spielfrau" was seen accordingly as a means of educating Beatriz to the realities of East German social and sexual relations and of harnessing her talents for the benefit of East German women. Thus far, the task of education has been presented as a one-way process and Laura's function within the narrative has been explicated solely in terms of her role as educator. It soon becomes clear, however, that the structure of the narrative is far more complex than the alternative models of sexual exchange and job-sharing between Laura and Beatriz have suggested. The initial quest proposed by Beatriz upon arrival, that is, her endeavour to conquer eroticism as the last male frontier, is fraught with hurdles and difficulties which shall be analyzed in more detail here by means of a structural analysis of the narrative trope of the quest as an organizing principle within the novel. Similarly, Laura's role in the ostensible education of Beatriz will be revealed to be far more complex than has been hitherto suggested. The use of the quest will be seen as an important vehicle for the articulation of feminine desire: of the desire for adventures, for travel and for 'otherness.' Concomitant with this is a critique of the socialist realist "Bildungsroman" and

"Abenteuerroman"<sup>1</sup> and their structural assumptions of mobility and activity which act as constraints on the construction of an active female subject of narrative.

The close interaction between the respective functions of Beatriz and Laura within the quest narrative is in the main attributable to the strategy of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund." The proposal to form a "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund" signifies an attempt to subvert binary oppositions of subject/object, real/fantastic, male/female by proposing a feminist paradigm founded on the mutual compatibility of conflicting spheres or on the rejection of an 'either/or' mode of thinking.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the proposed secret alliance between the two women formulates and tests a strategy for feminist intervention based on female solidarity. The founding of a secret society transforms into a political strategy what had in the arranged affair with Lutz been hitherto a purely personal commitment to fostering solidarity among women. The politicizing of the personal is therefore by necessity a subversive, clandestine activity, as the name of the secret society indicates. In the *Trobadora*, this takes place on a small scale and is only permitted to develop between two female friends. In *Amanda*, other forms of organized female resistance are tested, but, as was the case with oppositional groups until October 1989, all are clandestine.

When Beatriz suggests to Laura that they utilize this solidarity for the purposes of subverting patriarchal structures or "Sitten," she initially encounters strong resistance from Laura. The suggestion thus appears to be an open admission that the personal is political and that their friendship has subversive potential. Laura does, however, agree that the aims of the secret society should be to undermine the last bastions of male domination:

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<sup>1</sup> Under the term "Abenteuerroman" I will be deliberately subsuming a wide range of works written in the GDR which would not normally fall under the category, for reasons which will become apparent later in this chapter. These include both popular literary forms such as the "Weltraum- Klassenkampf- und naturwissenschaftlich-technische Abenteuer," discussed by Heidtmann in *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, pp. 77-105, as well as those more "serious" works which focus on the ordinary, everyday "adventures" of socialism. See Hans Hofmann, "Historische Wandlungen des Erlebnisphänomens 'Abenteuer,'" *Weimarer Beiträge* 23.1 (1977), pp. 72-88.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of feminist alternatives to "patriarchal alternativism" or the tendency to rely on an either/or mode of thought in the GDR see Anne McLeod, "Gender Difference Relativity in GDR-Writing," pp. 41-43.



Laura behauptete, den Trobadoraberuf nicht für verfrüht zu halten, weil es keine Frauen gäbe, die sich als Subjekte empfanden, sondern weil die ihnen notwendigen besingenswerten Gegenstände als soziale Erscheinung noch fehlten beziehungsweise von den Sitten verdeckt wurden. Die Möglichkeit, Leute zu ihrem Glück zu zwingen, wäre machtabhängig. Das hieße bis auf den heutigen Tag: Männerabhängig. "Genau," sagte Beatriz, "hier muß unser Bund die Hebel ansetzen." (T.163)

Laura's main objection is to the choice of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund" as an appropriate "Hebel" for social change. Furthermore, she dismisses the notion of a secret society as a "dichterische Absurdität" and a childish fantasy:

Laura hielt den Geheimbund für eine dichterische Absurdität. Mühte sich also, Beatriz mit Nachsicht zu behandeln wie Kinder. (T. 163-64)

Laura attempts to defuse the subversive potential of Beatriz's proposal by attributing it to the excesses of a childish imagination, thus rendering it marginal and rather less threatening. Here one is reminded that the marriage between the world of the child and fantasy has traditionally been a happy one in the GDR and fantasy gained respectability as a literary form in children's literature long before it became a legitimate narrative style in adult literature.<sup>3</sup>

Laura's scepticism towards Beatriz's proposal is part of a conscious strategy to disguise the real aims of an undertaking of a potentially subversive and politically dangerous nature. Laura's tactics do not, however, result solely from a genuine concern for the dangers in organizing women politically. Her strategy indirectly has to do with the marginal status of women's fantasies in socialist fiction. In the course of the third chapter of the eighth book the notion of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund" undergoes a further metonymic displacement; a chain of signification between the original secret society, childish fantasies and the female poetic imagination is thus established. Just as the beginnings of the political organization of women as represented by the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund" pose a threat to the social fabric of patriarchal society, the fictionalization of women's fantasies equally presents a challenge to the demarcations between dominant literary genres.

<sup>3</sup> See Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, pp. 47ff.

In all the strategies developed by Beatriz and Laura under the auspices of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund," the imperative of secrecy and therefore marginality remains constant. Within Western feminism the issue of whether and how women should convert the negative fact of their cultural and historical marginalization within a male-dominated society into a positive means of breaking the hegemony of patriarchal structures has been a contentious issue. Resistance to reclaiming the cultural 'centre' has often been the result of an unwillingness to participate in hegemonic cultural discourses which are perceived to exclude women. It has been argued that the simple fact of women's exclusion from the dominant discourses in the West has necessitated a struggle from the margins and must continue to do so. Debates have accordingly centred around what constitutes a marginal or alternative position from which feminism should operate, in particular around the question of where to situate a feminist discourse in relation to the generality of Western philosophical discourses.<sup>4</sup>

As Meaghan Morris points out, debates in the West about the appropriate site for feminist resistance have not always been entirely productive. She contends that the circularity of the argument about women's exclusion from history and cultural production has meant women have been faced with two mutually exclusive alternatives: either to participate in the dominant culture or to remain in the cultural ghettos, a choice, she argues, which has not proved productive as a way of analyzing how femininity operates within dominant discourses.<sup>5</sup>

In the GDR, it is the very fact that women must participate in the workforce on terms that are not their own which makes these private 'ghettos' so vital, not as an alternative to public engagement but as a second line of resistance. A feminist strategy that weighs up the merits of getting one's hands dirty by lending tacit

<sup>4</sup> The positions within feminism have been diverse, ranging from a rejection of all forms of participation in what is often seen as "male theoretical discourse" and the formation of a feminine sub-culture and an "écriture féminine" (Hélène Cixous) to others, such as Julia Kristeva, who sees marginality as the perpetuation of a negative practice. See for example Julia Kristeva, "Interview - 1974: Julia Kristeva and *Psychanalyse et Politique*," *m/f* 5 & 6 (1981), p. 167.

<sup>5</sup> Meaghan Morris, "Aspects of Current French Feminist Literary Criticism," *Hecate* 5 (1979), p. 65.

support to patriarchy against the benefits of refusing to become an accomplice in a bankrupt "economy," to take up Luce Irigaray's metaphor once again, can only operate under a system which allows for both possibilities. Under a socialist system such as the GDR, which has guaranteed and enforced women's right to work since its formation, and where women have little option but to participate in the public spheres, the private sphere, those private spaces provided by the family and friendships, take on new oppositional significance. The emphasis on the private spheres in Morgner's writing is, it seems to me, a far cry from any affirmation of existing public/private divisions.

Laura's search for a suitable "Hebel" for her secret society must be situated within the broader context of the debate in feminist theory around what constitutes a specifically feminine form of subversion. At the same time it must take into account the specific problems associated with the formation of an alternative women's movement in the German Democratic Republic. Because it has been Party policy after 1949 to render women visible in official Marxist discourses - by highlighting their achievements and the measure of their contribution to socialism at every possible opportunity - the strategies adopted by women to challenge their cultural marginalization must differ radically from those of French feminism or Western Marxist feminism.

For Laura, the most effective site from which to launch a feminist attack on patriarchal structures is the private sphere. The importance of the private spheres is underlined by Morgner in an interview with Ursula Krechel:

Die große Arbeit, die eine Gesellschaft leistet, und die jeder einzelne leisten muß, um die jahrtausendealten Sitten zu verändern, die spielt sich aber vor allen Dingen in der sogenannten privaten Sphäre ab und kann nicht von heute auf morgen und auch nicht in 10 oder 20 Jahren geleistet werden. Das geht allmählich und ist auch nicht durch Gesetze zu erzwingen, muß wachsen, ist ein schöpferischer Prozeß der Gesellschaft.<sup>6</sup>

The attack therefore that Laura proposes launching from amongst the nappies represents by no means a 'soft' or even a 'wet' option; nor is it a substitute for a

<sup>6</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 43.

political offensive within the public sphere or in the work place. It represents instead a conscious decision to adopt the domestic sphere, rather than a public forum, as a site of resistance because it is in the private sphere that women are still expected to fulfil the traditional feminine functions of housewife and mother and that the anachronistic "Sitten" are still felt most acutely. However, if women want to change patriarchal practices in the home as well as challenge the official narrative of the history of their emancipation under socialism - which barely acknowledges these practices - there is perhaps no better place for an act of subversion than the privacy of women's kitchens. The private sphere thus offers a perfect camouflage for activities that question the truth value of official narratives or endeavour to undermine official myths. This is further aided by the fact that there still exists such a disjunction between women's official status as equal, emancipated subjects in public and their subordinate status within the nuclear family. It is precisely the existence of an immense gap between the official versions of women's emancipation and the other story of their continued exploitation in the domestic sphere that enables a secret society such as the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund" to maintain its clandestine nature, because it is the site where one would least expect political activity.

However, when Laura suggests that Beatriz should subject herself to the "fanatismushemmende Wirkung der Windeltöpfe" (T. 164) as an alternative strategy to the more violent methods of her proposal for a "terroristischer Geheimbund," she is not suggesting Beatriz should divert her attention away from politics to the traditionally feminine spheres of child-minding. As part of the education process of Beatriz, Laura is merely pointing out one of the main obstacles to the political organization and mobilization of women in the GDR, women's child-rearing duties. Beatriz must experience at first hand the conflicting demands made on women's time and energies before the secret society can decide where to insert the "Hebel" for social change. The "Windeltöpfe" provide in fact the perfect cover for the activities of a secret society. Laura's proposal to continue her work for the society from amidst pots of boiling nappies is so absurd, so 'ex-centric' as to provide the perfect alibi for

political activity from below. The same also applies to Vilma's alchemical experiments in her kitchen in **Amanda**. The tactics adopted by Laura should not be equated with a position affirming traditional female values such as motherhood over and above women's role in the workforce. Instead, Laura's strategy displays similarities with those put forward by the West German feminist Ulrike Prokop, who incites women to decipher the subversive impulses latent in their everyday lives and ultimately to develop them as the basis for future feminist strategies.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of the pressures placed on women by the "Doppelbelastung," women in Morgner's novels are forced to lead double lives, a public and a private one, an official and an unofficial one, a 'real' one and a 'fantastic' one. Characters such as Vera Hill, Valeska and Laura in the **Trobadora**, Vilma and Hilde Felber in **Amanda**, and Bele in **Hochzeit in Konstantinopel** all lead lives of apparent conformity either in the work place, or, in Vilma's case, in their official capacity as spouse, whilst simultaneously existing in alternative fantasy worlds. These fantasy or 'other' worlds are firmly rooted in GDR reality but are incompatible with the women's official function in society as working mothers and wives. These alternative spheres of action, which in the **Trobadora** are entirely private and which only later in **Amanda** expand to include select public arenas such as the "Hugenottendom," provide a necessary foil to the public, official spheres in which women are required to participate. Their role in providing an unofficial, private space for the testing and formulation of alternative forms of self-expression is all the more important because of the very limited space within the public spheres in the GDR in the first four decades for alternative strategies for change.

As one of the first clandestine activities of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund," Beatriz is sent on an "Aventure." The following section will deal with the question of Beatriz's secret mission and the particular purpose it serves with respect to both women. Finally, it remains to be ascertained exactly what place this mission occupies

<sup>7</sup> Ulrike Prokop, **Weibliche Lebenszusammenhänge: Von der Beschränktheit der Strategien und der Unangemessenheit der Wünsche** (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976).

within the overall structure of the narrative and why it is of such importance for the overall concept of the novel.

### B. The Adventures of Beatriz - The Quest for Anaximander.

Beatriz's adventures in the West, as the first task Beatriz undertakes in the name of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund," have a pivotal function in the structure of the novel. Organized around the motif of the quest, the novel displays the narrative features of the "quest-romance." Northrop Frye has defined the quest-romance as the "search of the libido or the desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality."<sup>8</sup> Defined in these terms, the narrative of the quest-romance is a narrative of wish-fulfilment which has as its starting point a deficient reality which it strives to ameliorate through substitute wish-fulfilment in other spheres. The romance, according to this definition, is not an escapist narrative but one that is cognizant of the insufficiencies of social reality and seeks to remedy them through an imaginary resolution of conflicts. Modifying Frye's definition somewhat, Fredric Jameson has termed the romance a "utopian fantasy" which aims at the "transfiguration of the world of everyday reality."<sup>9</sup> For Beatriz and Laura, therefore, the romance provides the appropriate narrative vehicle for the dual goals of self-realization and the eroticization of the socialist "Alltag."

Frye identifies the dominant conflict in the romance as the struggle between the forces of good and evil or between heaven and hell. The hero of the romance is "analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world."<sup>10</sup> The conflict takes place, however, in 'our' world, in the world of the real.<sup>11</sup> In the following I shall analyze the quest motif in the *Trobadora* novel in terms of the narrative paradigm of the romance, examining how Morgner transforms and modifies these basic features

<sup>8</sup> Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre," *New Literary History* 7.1 (1975), p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

to articulate a critique of the socialist "Bildungsroman" and its variant in the "Ankunftsroman." The following analysis will draw on the generative narratology developed by structural linguist A. J. Greimas, which is based on the model of the quest narrative, and his reworking of the earlier work on folktale by Russian Formalist, Vladimir Propp.

Greimas' structural narratology can provide a useful tool of analysis here because it offers a narrative grammar based on structural semantics which can account for the constitution of meaning within narrative and help analyze the function of particular semantic units. His narrative model applies principles developed by anthropology to a theory of semantics which expresses meaning as structured along the principles of binary oppositions present at the level of the paradigmatic axis.<sup>12</sup> Along this paradigmatic or semantic axis meaning is constituted between two lexematic poles which can be broken down into sets of binary "semes" such as individual/collective, masculine/feminine, active/passive, which form the terms around which the narrative is organized.<sup>13</sup> Greimas' narrative schema provides us with the tools with which to demonstrate how these sets of binary oppositions are developed and resolved syntagmatically in the narrative syntax.

One difficulty in applying methods of the deductive, generativistic tradition of narratology is that it pays scant regard to the socio-historical determination of the narrative processes.<sup>14</sup> In locating a logical structure underlying the surface structure, Greimas' structural model attempts to reduce the culturally specific surface structure which corresponds to the 'parole' or the individual utterance of structural linguistics to a logical 'deeper' structure of universals. Deductive, generative narratologies of the type produced by Greimas, Barthes and Todorov and their claim to generate a universal grammar thus run the risk of disregarding the socio-historical or ideological determination of narrative processes by universalizing the semic categories

<sup>12</sup> See Ronald Schleifer, introd. to A. J. Greimas, **Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method**, trans. Ronald Schleifer, Daniele McDowell and Alan Velie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. xi.

<sup>13</sup> See Annette Runte, **Subjektkritische Diskurstheorie** (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1982), p. 65; Greimas, **Structural Semantics**, pp. 23-28.

<sup>14</sup> See Runte, **Subjektkritische Diskurstheorie**, p. 73.

at the level of the 'deeper' structure.<sup>15</sup> The cultural specificity of the narrative is often then erased in the process of distilling 'logical' patterns and structures beneath its surface. To avoid the reduction of 'surface' narrative patterns to a set of universals, we need to subject Greimas' so-called universal categories, his transhistorical sets of binary pairs, to a further, cultural analysis in order to explicate just how these binary oppositions are themselves the products of their specific cultural and historical contexts.

Much recent feminist criticism has recognized the importance of performing similar analyses on dominant discourses in the West, precisely to reveal the operations of binary thinking underpinning much philosophical discourse and its categorization of the feminine in relation to the masculine. Although this work often runs the risk of universalizing the masculinity/femininity dichotomy by hypostasizing the 'feminine' as an oppositional category, the deconstructive gesture is perceived by many feminists as a useful means of analyzing the construction of femininity in discourse.<sup>16</sup> When adapting Greimas' actantial model and the syntagmatic structuring of narrative around binary oppositions, one should remain aware of the ways gender comes to bear upon the use of such oppositions as subject/object, active/passive and hence the gendered nature of the structure of the quest narrative itself. It then becomes necessary to read the "actants" in the narrative model no longer as the gender-neutral 'everymen' of a universal narrative but as projections of cultural and gender-specific relations in particularized cultural and historical systems.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 73ff.

<sup>16</sup> See Chris Weedon for a positive appraisal of the marriage between feminism and poststructuralism; Chris Weedon, **Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory** (London: Basil Blackwell, 1987) and Rita Felski for a more critical look at some of the ahistorical tendencies in much French feminist work; Rita Felski, **Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change** (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> Greimas designs an actantial model for mythical narratives which consists of six components. According to this schema all narratives have a sender who seeks to gain possession of an object through the medium of another subject. The quest is conducted for the benefit of a higher power which Greimas terms the receiver of the quest. This main action is accompanied by a helper and an opponent whose function is not so much syntactic but adverbial. See Greimas, **Structural Semantics**, p. 207.



But let us return to Beatriz and her quest. Beatriz, as a non-German speaking foreigner from the pre-capitalist past, functions as a surrogate for Laura, who, because of travel restrictions in the GDR and her duties as a mother, can only experience foreign cultures and countries through the aid of a mediator. Beatriz thus provides a crucial link between Laura and the outside Western world. She is therefore from the very outset a substitute for Laura long before she starts to resemble Laura physically towards the end of the book. Beatriz is in literal and figurative terms someone who crosses frontiers, a "Grenzüberschreiterin."<sup>18</sup> She crosses political and cultural borders as well as transgressing ideological and political boundaries between East and West. By traversing boundaries of time and space through non-scientific means, with the aid of magic and other subversive means, she also challenges the limits of socialist realist fiction and the limits of what constitutes the 'real.' She provides therefore the perfect counterbalance for the pragmatic Laura, who is firmly rooted in the fictional world of socialist realism. Beatriz's status as a foreigner in the GDR permits her freedom of movement as well as the freedom to be eccentric and extremist in her demands. In this sense she represents what we will call the site of the 'other,' as that which has no place within the dominant social and ideological order of the GDR.<sup>19</sup>

By reactivating the dormant emancipatory ideals of the post-war period, Beatriz challenges the aims of the state's official policy on the status of women. Her reappearance in the GDR in the seventies signals a growing sense of dissatisfaction among women with the existing state of emancipation, as well as what Rosemary Jackson has termed women's radical "desire for otherness,"<sup>20</sup> for other forms of expression outside those officially recognized or permitted. Beatriz's story is therefore the story of the 'other,' and more specifically the female 'other' and the female as 'other.'

<sup>18</sup> Morgner, *Die Hexe im Landhaus: Gespräch in Solothurn* (Zürich, Villingen: Raureif Verlag, 1984), p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> See Jackson, *Fantasy*, pp. 19-25.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

It is this privileged status as an outsider or foreigner which allows her unlimited freedom to question, criticize and even undermine existing practices and policies on women's status and prevailing taboos on sexuality. She subverts official versions of women's reality and femininity as well as fixed modes of behaviour between the sexes. Hers is the subversiveness Rosemary Jackson attributes to the fantastic. It is important to remember that it is because Beatriz does not belong to either the East or the West that her activities in the GDR are tolerated.

Because her origins are in medieval France rather than the capitalist West, Beatriz manages to escape the type of simplistic ideological characterization along cold-war lines so typical of GDR literature of the fifties and sixties. She belongs therefore to the ideological grey area of the neither/nor - neither capitalist nor socialist, East nor West. Morgner thus avoids the black and white schematization that was a salient feature of much of the literature during the "Aufbau" years, particularly in popular science fiction and the sabotage novels of the same period.<sup>21</sup> In those novels, the characters who pose the greatest threat to socialism come as a rule either from the imperialist West or are destined to end there. This has the effect of locating the threat to socialism firmly outside the state boundaries of the GDR in the "Feindbild" of capitalist imperialism. The threat posed by those saboteurs or Western agents infiltrating the socialist system is made less imminent by virtue of the fact that their geographical and ideological origins are in the West. The fact that the greatest threat to socialism stems from outside the ideological and social operations of the GDR makes it easier to keep the "Feindbild" at a safe distance and to ward off the danger of a threat from within. As can be observed with science fiction and detective genres in the GDR, a threat can be more easily contained if it comes from outside. The enemy is expelled from within and thus returns to its origins, leaving the socialist world intact.

The *Trobadora* novel in fact mobilizes similar defense mechanisms to deal with the threat posed by Beatriz and her radical demands for subjectivity and emancipation. Her critique of East German conditions can always be rationalized by

<sup>21</sup> See Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur in der DDR*, p. 50.

attributing her disappointment to the misguided expectations of an outsider with a limited understanding of the real aims of socialism, and the real obstacles to their realization. However, the novel thwarts the reader's attempts to dismiss Beatriz's claims to self-fulfilment as the naive delusions of a foreigner simply by virtue of the fact that her initial response to the GDR as "das gelobte Land" was so positive. Beatriz's expectations thus demand to be taken seriously. However, the real subversiveness of Beatriz's arrival in the GDR lies in her relationship with Laura, in her appointment of Laura as her "Spielfrau" and in their collective activities in the name of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund."

Yet, when Laura discovers that Beatriz has by-passed all democratic decision-making processes in planning a terrorist attack on "ihren Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat" (T. 166) on behalf of the "Sibyllinischer Geheimbund," she decides Beatriz's fanaticism has gone too far. Laura cannot agree with Beatriz that terrorist means such as hijacking an aeroplane are an appropriate means of forcing the GDR government to abolish the restrictions on the abortion laws. Laura eulogizes the virtues of patience in the revolutionary struggle: "Wer die Welt verändern will, muß Geduld haben" (T. 166). She then searches desperately for a more acceptable and less dangerous alternative.

Beatriz's mission purports to fulfil a number of different functions which are not necessarily congruous or compatible with one another. Laura initially proposes the mission in place of the "Windeltöpfe" and their "fanatismushemmende Wirkung" (T. 164) in order to curb Beatriz's terrorist tendencies and to cure her of her "revolutionäre Ungeduld" (T. 166). It is, however, precisely these qualities of "Ungeduld and Größenwahn," (T. 180) which Laura perceives as so threatening, which are, according to Melusine, essential if Beatriz is to help women retrieve the lost traces of their as yet unwritten history (T. 181). "Größenwahn," she argues, is necessary if women are to throw off the yoke of oppression and to achieve their aim of entering into history as historical subjects. The least Laura can do, chides Melusine, is to aid Beatriz in her historical mission by having faith in her:

Wenn Beatriz groß genug ist, uns die ungeschriebene Geschichte, die nicht von Männern gemacht wurde, persönlich zu überbringen, sollten wir wenigstens groß genug sein, an sie zu glauben. (T. 181)

It seems, however, that in criticizing only Beatriz's impatience, Laura is objecting neither to the principle involved nor to the aims of the mission, but only to the excessive form that the search takes. Laura's initial justification for sending Beatriz on an adventure abroad to capture the unicorn, whose code name is Anaximander, seems therefore to be a kind of ruse or a disguise for a mission with quite a different purpose. It seems in fact that Anaximander itself is nothing more than a ploy to disguise the real object of Beatriz's search.

If the name Anaximander is a code, its meaning then requires decoding. Laura first hits upon the quest for the unicorn when she is devising a suitable means of utilizing Beatriz's mobility and revolutionary zeal for the collective needs of other women like herself. Unlike the proposal of terrorist activities, Laura's strategy must be effective without drawing attention to itself. The choice of Anaximander as the object of the quest seems therefore to be the ideal solution in as much as it best serves the needs of Beatriz as well as the needs of the GDR. With respect to Beatriz, Laura devises the quest as part of an "Erziehungsprozeß" or a therapy aimed at facilitating Beatriz's integration or "arrival" into GDR society. The procuring of the unicorn appears not to be the primary goal of the "therapeutische Aventure" (T. 175) but instead a type of occupational therapy (T. 167). At this stage of the narrative it seems as if Beatriz is the sole object of the educational exercise. However, it is unclear whether the objective of the mission is to expand Beatriz's "Weltkenntnisse" (T. 175) or in fact Laura's own. Beatriz's travelogues are substitutes for Laura's lack of travel opportunities as well as a form of compensation for the tedium of being a housewife and mother. As "Reiseersatz. Hausfrauenentschädigung. Trostpflaster für stationäre Tätigkeit" (T. 185), Beatriz's travel reports also serve an educational purpose, in allowing Laura to experience vicariously the customs of foreign countries.

Laura proposes the search for Anaximander as a "Lösung" (T. 167), that is, as a solution to the problem of accommodating Beatriz's radical demands for the emancipation of women. However, what is conceived as a "Lösung" turns out to be a "Losung," that is, a "Codewort" (T. 169) or a "Sprachregelung" (T. 200). If Anaximander is not then a real solution to the problems facing Beatriz and Laura but instead merely a code or a secret sign, what does it then signify and for whom?

In a playful letter to Beatriz, Laura reminds Beatriz of the "Sprachregelung," Anaximander, and includes a description of the unicorn. In this story Laura extends the semantic field surrounding the code, Anaximander, on the basis of her childhood experiences with a unicorn. The semantic field regulating the use of the "Losung" Anaximander is widened to include meanings more traditionally associated with the figure of the unicorn. As a symbol of her virginity, the unicorn is Laura's invisible companion until her defloration. It figures in the story as the guardian angel of the pre-pubescent girl, as a signifier of childhood dreams and of the as yet unshattered illusion of female subjectivity and wholeness. The disappearance of the unicorn signifies not only the loss of Laura's virginity but also the loss of self-confidence and independence. The exit of Anaximander marks in other words the initiation into those age-old feminine virtues of "Selbstaufgabe und Ausgeliefertsein" (T. 203) and thus the loss of her childhood dreams of self-fulfilment. The quest in search of the lost unicorn is therefore linked with the desire to regain a sense of wholeness and the belief in youthful dreams of self-realization. As a mythical figure with no proven existence, the unicorn and its retrieval can also serve as a means of criticizing the fetishization of rationality.

If the rediscovery of the unicorn functions on an individual level as a catalyst to reinstate lost childhood ideals of emancipation, on a collective level it could be interpreted as sparking off the recovery of women's collective past by retrieving the unwritten text of women's participation in history. The search for Anaximander becomes therefore, by a process of metonymical substitution, the attempt to write a history which pays tribute to women's participation, a history not written from the perspective of men and the ruling class.

This is, however, by no means the end of the chain of metonymical substitutions that the sign Anaximander undergoes within the text. As previously mentioned, Anaximander is also posited as a solution to the specific problems of the GDR. For Laura, the recovery of the unicorn is associated with the reactivation of the belief in miracles and the impossible. If the GDR is truly "ein Ort des Wunderbaren" (T. 167), it should logically also be a place for unicorns. Laura is forced to admit, however: "jedenfalls sucht heute niemand das Einhorn anderswo als in der Fabel. Ich bin dieser Niemand" (T. 167). To disguise her real agenda of feminist 'consciousness-raising,' Laura conjures up the more traditional mythical properties of the unicorn, in particular its notorious powers as an aphrodisiac (T. 167).

The aphrodisiac properties of the unicorn's horn are, however, far outweighed by the usefulness of the concentrate of a single unicorn's brain as an alternative to more orthodox means of state propaganda. Just as the fluoridation of drinking water was seen as an effective means of fighting tooth-decay, the "Monocerosierung des Trinkwassers" (T. 167) could provide an equally effective means of population control. Through the addition of one measurement of "Einhornstärke" to the drinking water, the ideological level of the population could be cheaply and effectively raised - those people with a low or "reactionary" level of ideological development could be transformed into "klugen, gütigen, friedlichen Erdenbürgern kommunistischer Überzeugung" (T. 168). Eventually unicorns would have to be cultivated by the state to cover the number of "unenlightened" heads in the population and to continue the fight against the national enemies of the state in "Kapitalismus, Kriege, Hunger und Patriarchat" (T. 168).

If the parodic intention of the proposal to indoctrinate the masses with unicorn horns were not already clear, the final suggestion that unicorns' horns should be used to wage war on patriarchy clearly points out the feminist intention of this critique of the state's use of propaganda. The fight against patriarchy is obviously not one of the officially recognized aims of international socialism and its inclusion at the end of a list of legitimate objectives of the socialist state points once again to the exclusion of

women from the operations of official discourse. This passage is clearly a spoof on the eagerness with which the East German state carried out the education of the populace, its paranoia towards the West, as well as a comment on the principles of instrumental rationality which governed the state's attitude to its people for forty years. As more than just a critique of state propaganda, the plan to "monocerize" drinking water reads in fact as a subversive feminist strategy for 'consciousness-raising.'

In order to disguise the feminist aims of the "monocerization" of the drinking water in the GDR, Laura proposes conspiring with the technical apparatus of industrial scientific research to lend her strategy scientific legitimacy. As Laura points out, there should be no great difficulties in arranging collaboration with scientific institutions, provided Beatriz can pretend her project is being conducted in the name of reason, "denn welcher Wissenschaftler mit Charakter sehnt sich nicht danach, daß die Erde von Vernunft beherrscht wird" (T. 168). Thus, if on a superficial level the aims of Beatriz's mission can be made to coincide with the aims of scientific and technological progress in their privileging of "Vernunft" over "Unvernunft," they should not attract too much attention. Laura's use of the term "Vernunft" is, however, radically different from, if not diametrically opposed to, the use of reason in scientific discourse. Within the discourse of science and technology, reason is associated with such lexemes as technological progress and the development of nuclear and military technology. Within the context of Laura's and Beatriz's "Weltverbesserungsplan" (T. 286), reason undergoes a shift in meaning to signify the abolition of all wars and the end of patriarchy. Reason then takes on antimilitaristic, pacifist and feminist attributes which would not normally be considered compatible with the aims of reason within scientific discourse.

Through a process of substitutions along the syntagmatic axis of language or what Greimas calls the semantic or lexical axis in his structural narratology,<sup>22</sup> Anaximander can be made to serve a range of varying functions which can be classified into narrative functions pertaining to an individual subject or "acteur" of

<sup>22</sup> Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, pp. 25ff.

the narrative<sup>23</sup> - as in Laura or Beatriz - and into functions which relate to a collective subject of the narrative. It becomes increasingly difficult to isolate one specific function of the quest for the unicorn without first examining the different variations on the quest motif and the varying quest narratives in some detail. It is not at all clear for whose benefit the quest for the unicorn is being conducted and who is the active subject of this quest. To best answer these questions it will be necessary to undertake an analysis of the various narrative models which the text itself supplies in the form of narrative clues to the reader.

Before applying a Greimasian analysis to the quest narrative there remains one further function of Anaximander or the unicorn to be discussed. This concerns the function of Anaximander at the level of the metanarrative. Laura first comes up with the solution of the unicorn by means of an analogy with the white stag referred to in the first few verses of the Arthurian legend of Erec and Enide by Chrétien de Troyes:

Laura suchte lange nach einer Lösung, die sowohl für ihr Land als auch für Beatriz gut sein sollte. Sie suchte lange. Dann fiel ihr der weiße Hirsch in den ersten Versen des Erec-Romans von Chrétien de Troyes ein. Das Tier, personifizierter Rechtsbrauch (costume), den König Artus als eine Art Beschäftigungstheorie handhabte, brachte Laura schließlich auf die rettende Idee vom Einhorn. (T. 167)

The relation between the unicorn and the white stag is not metaphoric, nor is it primarily one of homology of kind or essence, although both are clearly imaginary animals. The link between the two is one of homology of function within their respective narrative structures. The white stag functions within the narrative of the courtly romance of Erec and Enide as a "Beschäftigungstheorie," or even occupational therapy for the knights at the Arthurian court on the one hand, and on the other as a "Rechtsbrauch" or a custom whose purpose it is to elect the most beautiful woman of the court. The white stag has in itself no intrinsic importance within the story; its significance lies instead in its positioning in the narrative structure of the courtly romance. I therefore propose to examine the medieval "Ritterroman" and the

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, pp. 196ff.



relevance of this model for Beatriz's quest and ultimately for the 'real' women of the GDR.

### C. The Medieval Quest - Beatriz and Laura as Arthurian Knights

At first glance the reference to the medieval "Ritterromane" of Chrétien de Troyes, in particular the romances of Yvain and Erec and Enide, seems somewhat obscure. On closer analysis, however, Laura's choice of narrative paradigm would appear to be significant on several accounts. These have to do with the notion of the quest itself, the aspect of adventures and the choice of actors in the quest. Most importantly, the use of the motif of the quest allows Morgner to effect a critique of the lack of opportunities available to East German women and to point to the very real obstacles to their search for self-realization.

In a later chapter, when Laura is musing over the reasons for the absence of any mention of Anaximander in Beatriz's letters, she wonders whether Beatriz has correctly understood the real meaning of Anaximander: "Eine Frau, die sämtliche Romane des Chrétien de Troyes gelesen hatte, müßte wissen, wer Anaximander war" (T. 184). Just why this should be so, given that Anaximander is in fact a Greek philosopher and astronomer, is not immediately apparent. Laura shifts the focus away from Anaximander and the ambiguity of his identity (is he the white stag, the unicorn or the Greek philosopher and astronomer?) to Erec and Yvain, both male heroes of medieval courtly romances.

Here Laura employs the skills she has acquired in her previous occupation as a "Germanistin." She identifies similarities between the generic structures of the medieval courtly romance and the "Bildungsroman" (T. 184). The aim of the legends of Erec and Yvain is to inculcate the virtues of moderation and loyalty through a series of trials and tests which are designed to prove the strength and virtue of the knight. Both Yvain and Erec provide an illustration of Lenin's thesis that an idea can be easiest discredited when carried to its extreme:

Das sicherste Mittel, eine neue politische (und nicht allein eine politische) Idee zu diskreditieren und ihr zu schaden, besteht darin, daß man sie zwar vertritt, sie aber bis zur Absurdität treibt. Denn jede Wahrheit kann man, wenn man sie "exorbitant" macht (wie der alte Dietzgen zu sagen pflegte), wenn man sie übertreibt, wenn man sie über die Grenzen ihrer wirklichen Anwendbarkeit hinaus ausdehnt, zur Absurdität machen, ja sie wird unter diesen Umständen unvermeidlich zur Absurdität. (T. 167)

Yvain and Erec appear to represent paragons of medieval virtue: Yvain is an example of the model knight and Erec is the embodiment of the ideal of courtly love. Yet within the course of the narrative of each romance these ideals are taken to such extremes that they can no longer be considered to be representative of the "höfisches Menschenbild":

Die mittelalterlichen Ritterromane waren Bildungsromane. Die die höfischen Tugenden Mâze und Treue anerkennen sollten. Zu diesem Zweck hatte sich zum Beispiel Ritter Erec erst unmäßig der ehelichen Liebe hinzugeben und sich zu verlegen. Ritter Yvain aber mußte unmäßig auf Aventüre gehen und sich verittern. Beides entsprach nicht dem höfischen Menschenbild. Dann wurden die Ritter ausführlich beispielhaft gemäßigt: Erec mußte auf Aventüre und Yvain nach Hause. (T. 184)

Both Erec and Yvain undergo a process of education typical of the "Bildungsroman," which involves subjecting each of the knights to that very component of the courtly ideal they had previously neglected. Thus the process of education is completed through a reversal of roles: Yvain, who had indulged excessively in knightly adventures eventually returns to the forsaken object of his love, and Erec, whose fault lay in the excessiveness of his devotion to his lady, has to prove his worth as a knight by venturing forth in search of adventure.

Erec and Yvain are portrayed by Laura as representatives of two courtly ideals whose incompatibility appears to be demonstrated by the two Arthurian legends. The narratives seem therefore to advocate diametrically opposed ideals. It becomes evident from Laura's synopsis of the legends that both subjects of the romances have little freedom to choose their preferred mode of existence. The subjects of the fable, Yvain and Erec, are in fact the objects of an educational exercise orchestrated by the hidden subject of the medieval "Ritterroman." This hidden subject of the quest is what Greimas terms the "sender," or what I will call the 'acting subject.' According

to Greimas, the sender is generally the representative of the social order.<sup>24</sup> In the case of Erec and Yvain this role is played by the Arthurian court:

Zu diesem Zweck (d.h. die höfischen Tugenden) hatte sich zum Beispiel Ritter Erec erst unmäßig der ehelichen Liebe hinzugeben und sich zu verlegen. Ritter Yvain aber mußte unmäßig auf Aventüre gehen und sich verrittern. (T. 184)

Both narratives are structured along the same set of oppositions between courtly love/knightly feats, private happiness/collective well-being, privileging one term of the pair over the other at different stages in the course of the narrative. Whereas the pursuit of knightly adventures functions as the negative term of the oppositional pair in Yvain, it functions in Erec as a positive corrective to the exclusive pursuit of private happiness.

The narratives also reveal similar syntactic components. Each consists of a central "Bewährungssituation,"<sup>25</sup> in which one medieval ideal, as personified by the Arthurian knight, is put to the test, taken to its limits, extended "über die Grenzen ihrer wirklichen Anwendbarkeit hinaus" (T. 167). This segment of the narrative is then followed by a reversal in which the knight's excesses are curbed by sending him in search of an ideal which is the very opposite of the first. What appears to be a very different set of events displays in fact similar narrative structures. Greimas' narrative model provides an analysis of these structures which may shed some light on the types of strategies the text of the *Trobadora* employs with respect to Laura and Beatriz.

Both Arthurian legends are examples of what Greimas terms 'quest' narratives, a common variant of the basic types of narratives Propp identified using the example of the Russian folktale.<sup>26</sup> Greimas identifies the relationship between the two syntactic "actants" of the quest narrative, or in Propp's terms between the subject and the object of the narrative syntax, as one of desire which may take the form of the desire for an object or the desire for truth or knowledge.<sup>27</sup> Greimas reduces Propp's

<sup>24</sup> See Ronald Schleifer, introd. to Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, p. xiv.

<sup>25</sup> See Hofmann, "Historische Wandlungen des Erlebnisphänomens 'Abenteuer,'" p. 82.

<sup>26</sup> Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, p. 207.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 207ff.

31 functions of the Russian folktale to an actantial model with six components, thus redefining Propp's subjects and objects of narrative not in terms of spheres of action but in terms of a particular function with respect to a group of semic categories. By borrowing from structural linguistics, Greimas analyzes the narrative of the folktale in terms of the syntagmatic resolution of what Greimas, like Lévi-Strauss, posits as a paradigmatic set of relations between binary oppositions.

Whereas Propp was not able to give a systematic account of why certain thematic elements recurred in a particular order in a great number of folktales, Greimas is able to simplify the order of the narrative sequences by identifying different "predicate" functions within the narrative.<sup>28</sup> Those narratives which involve a change of state between the subject and the object describe relations of disjunction or conjunction between the subject and the object.<sup>29</sup> Changes from one state to another operate through a transforming function.<sup>30</sup>

Greimas breaks down narrative syntax into three basic units, all of which may appear within one folktale. The first group are syntagms or narrative segments of contract which involve injunctions to take up a contract to go in search of an adventure or an object of desire.<sup>31</sup> The second group covers syntagms of performance which include those narrative segments to do with tests of physical and moral strength, ideals and ordeals of all kinds.<sup>32</sup> The third group is concerned with syntagms of disjunction which involve changes of place, the discontinuing of actions and changes of course.<sup>33</sup> By analyzing each of the syntagmatic units of the narrative syntax present in a particular story, it becomes possible to trace the transformational changes that take place within the hierarchy of semic categories from beginning to end.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, pp. 222-44; also see Runte, *Subjektkritische Diskurstheorie*, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup> A. J. Greimas, *Du Sens II: Essais sémiotiques* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1983), pp. 68-69.

<sup>30</sup> Greimas' transformational model can thus account for the operations of inversion or equation performed on the oppositional semic categories by tracing the semantic structures present at the beginning and at the end of the transformation. See Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, pp. 243-45.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, pp. 225-26.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, pp. 227-28; Greimas, *Du Sens*, pp. 53ff.

<sup>33</sup> Greimas, *Du Sens*, pp. 69-70.

Greimas isolates another type of narrative which does not focus on the transference of a valued or desired object but on the mediation between two opposite poles, usually between the social order and the individual.<sup>34</sup> This type is in fact the basic structure of the "Entwicklungsroman" and the "Bildungsroman," although Greimas makes no specific reference to this most common form of a narrative of mediation.<sup>35</sup> He identifies two possible variations of the mediation narrative in which the existing social order is either accepted or rejected by the subject-actant.<sup>36</sup>

Turning to the courtly romances of Erec and Yvain, it is now possible to read them as narratives of mediation which plot the conflict between the medieval ideals of courtly love and chivalry. Another possible axis along which the legends could be read is along the individual/collective divide. Thus, whilst the narratives comprise of syntagmatic elements typical of the folktale, such as the "contract," the ordeals and feats of prowess, and the winning of the object of desire, it now becomes possible to examine the narrative in terms of the working out and resolution of a conflict between two contradictory ideals.

Love and chivalry are presented at the beginning of both the Erec and Yvain narratives as essentially compatible values. If Erec and Yvain can be seen as representatives of the ideals of courtly love and chivalry respectively, the two legendary knights form complementary halves of the composite image of the medieval knight. The relationship between the two seemingly complementary ideals is however rather complex. Acts of chivalry invariably serve as the only means to obtain the lady of one's heart. The successful completion of the syntagms of

<sup>34</sup> Greimas, *Structural Semantics*, pp. 245-46.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> In the first variation the natural or social order is explained to the individual subject through a series of quests and ordeals which serve to reinforce the reigning order and the individual's place in this order. The function of mediation 'humanizes' this order, which is given an individual dimension by virtue of the subject's integration into it. The order finds itself legitimized through the individual's status within it and the individual finds his/her justification in its service to the society as a whole. In the second variation the individual is alienated in an imperfect world which he or she attempts to change in a succession of confrontations which test his/her moral courage. The narrative generally ends with a promise of salvation which may or may not be actualized. Often, Greimas argues, it is sufficient for the narrative to give the impression that the contradictions have been 'neutralized.' See *ibid.*, p. 246.

contract, that is, the acceptance of the challenge and the embarking on an adventure, as well as the successful completion of syntagms of performance in the series of victorious battles, are all necessary narrative prerequisites so that the hero-subject can gain possession of the object of his desire, the ideal lady or "domna" (T. 32).

However, once the prized object has been found and 'won' the equilibrium promised at the beginning is disrupted and the narrative enters into a conflict phase. During this conflict phase Yvain pursues increasingly more daring feats of chivalry, whilst Erec withdraws from courtly life into his own private world with Enide. Throughout this conflict phase each narrative privileges one term of the semic pair at the expense of the other. Yvain's endless exploits continually prevent him from fulfilling another contract made with his lady, and Erec's indulgence reaps him the scorn and derision of Arthur's court. The conflict is eventually resolved through inverting the hierarchy of terms and Yvain returns home from his adventures and regains the love of the lady he had almost lost, whilst Erec must set off in search of adventures to prove once again his worth as a knight of Arthur's court. This second syntagm of disjunction does not re-establish an equilibrium between love and chivalry but instead inverts the hierarchy. This is perhaps a telling indication of the extreme difficulty Chrétien de Troyes had in reconciling both medieval ideals.<sup>37</sup>

The continual inversion in both narratives points to an essential incompatibility between love and chivalry which can also be read as the rift between the individual and the collective, between the search for personal happiness and the demands of the society at large. In both narratives personal happiness is only achieved at the expense of great personal suffering and sacrifice. The mediation between the terms appears to be successful only at the end and there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the

<sup>37</sup> Medieval scholars have on the whole tended to play down the insolubility of the conflict between love and chivalry and have overlooked the incompatibility of the two ideals in these two narratives. D. D. R. Owen in his foreword to the English versions of the Arthurian legends does, however, identify the conflict in Erec between the "private worlds of love and the services of the society where he is shortly to become King" as the major theme of Erec and Enide. See D. D. R. Owen, introd. to *Arthurian Romances*, by Chrétien de Troyes (Melbourne: Penguin, 1978), p. xv.

marriage between true love and the demands of knighthood is an unstable one.<sup>38</sup> Yvain only regains the lost object of his love at the expense of his sanity, his sense of reality and his self-esteem. Erec can only restore his honour as a knight at the expense of the loss of Enide's speech. In both cases, the capture of the object of desire is frustrated by the call to duty from the collective represented by Arthur's court.

Leaving aside the obvious parallels between the figures of Erec and Yvain and Laura and Beatriz which will be discussed in a later chapter, I shall now address the significance of the quest motif. The most salient example of a quest narrative is Beatriz's search for Anaximander which makes obvious use of the narrative structure of the medieval quest. Beatriz, as the subject of the actantial model, is sent out on a quest by Laura (the sender or the acting subject) to find Anaximander (the object of the search) with the aid of a 'helper' (Laura). Beatriz's mission, like that of the medieval knight, is fraught with hidden dangers and ordeals which appear to be successfully resolved up until the point where she thinks she has completed the mission in locating the unicorn. Yet Beatriz's quest is obviously a parody of the "Ritterroman."

As Anthony Stephens suggests, one such way of detecting a parodic intent in a narrative is in the deviations in the syntagms of contract, performance and their resolution.<sup>39</sup> Initially there seems to be little in the narrative syntax itself to suggest that Beatriz's quest is indeed a parody of the conventional "Ritterroman." Beatriz has successfully outwitted such opponents to her mission as Professor Leopold Janda and his daughter, who, she is convinced, are trying to put her off the scent of

<sup>38</sup> See for example the incident in "Erec and Enide" at the court of King Evrain where Erec solves the mystery of the Garden of Joy. The garden with its invisible walls turns out to be a sanctuary for the love between Erec's cousin and his mistress. Her love can only survive if she succeeds in keeping her knight captive within this garden. What is for the lady the only means of keeping her love intact is, however, perceived by the court to be a scandal. Only the introduction of a *deus ex machina* in the presence of Enide can save the relationship between the knight and the lady from the impasse created between the desires of the individual and the court. See Chrétien de Troyes, **Arthurian Romances**, pp. 75ff.

<sup>39</sup> A. R. Stephens, "Narrative Structures in Karen Blixens' 'The Dreamers,'" **Festschrift für Ralph Farrell**, ed. A. R. Stephens, H. L. Rogers and Brian Coghlan (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977), p. 128.

Anaximander (T. 286). She also eventually successfully completes her mission to find the unicorn. But once she has located the unicorn, she attempts, like Erec, to bring her spoils home to the GDR. In the act of transporting the unicorn, the much sought-after object of desire, back over the border to the GDR, the unicorn itself undergoes a curious transformation. Instead of the living embodiment of female ideals, it becomes transformed into a mere travesty of its former self:

Da erblickte sie neben Beatrizens rechtem Hosenbein ein kleines Tier. Das von Laura gleich als Hund erkannt worden wäre, wenn ihm nicht ein korkenzieherähnliches Horn zwischen den Ohren aus dem Kopf geragt hätte. (T. 329)

The difficulty in transporting the ideal of the unicorn over the border to the GDR points up the difficulties women in the GDR face in transporting Western feminist ideals and strategies into the East German context. The home-coming is blatantly meant as a parody of the typical syntagm of performance of the medieval courtly romance of bringing the fair damsel home to the court, as well as of the ideological home-coming of the socialist "Ankunftsroman." In the light of this final absurdity - Lenin's idea *reductio ab absurdum* - it now becomes possible to read backwards from this crucial syntagm of performance in search of other significant deviations to the conventions of the quest.

It soon becomes apparent that the parody lies mainly in the incompatibility or incongruity between what can be termed the surface syntactic structure and the underlying hierarchy of binary oppositions traditionally thought by Greimas to be part of the deeper universal structure of narrative. That is to say, there appears to be a disjunction between the actantial model and the casting of Beatriz in the role of subject. At the level of the surface structure, the *Trobadora* novel displays similar patterns at the syntagmatic level to the folktales analyzed by Greimas and Propp. Yet the quest narrative inverts the usual ordering of binary pairs of oppositions, in particular the gender oppositions which equate femininity with passivity and masculinity with activity. The historically specific content of Morgner's use of the medieval quest lies therefore not so much in the variations to the narrative pattern at the level of the surface structure but instead at the level of those pairs of semes,



those universal categories, that Greimas saw structuring all narratives. It is these inversions which in fact prepare the way for the final parody in Beatriz's inability bring the unicorn home. Whereas Greimas is concerned with identifying the abstract structures underlying the culturally specific surface structure, it is precisely the culturally specific substrata of meaning motivating the use of conventional motifs of the quest narrative that are of interest here. The problem of the historical, cultural and gender specificity of narrative structures and genres is one Greimas does not address and one which will be the object of investigation in the following section.

#### **D. Gendering the Quest - The Search for the Active Female Subject of Adventures**

The most significant deviation from the narrative structure of the courtly romance to be found in the *Trobadora* novel can be located at the level of the actantial model in the choice of actants. The subject of the actantial model underlying Beatriz's quest is not the medieval knight, nor feudal man; nor is it a masculine subject hiding under the guise of the gender-neutral "Mensch" but, instead, a woman. Likewise, the role of the sender is filled by a woman, Laura, who is the initiator of the quest, as is the role of the receiver, occupied by either Beatriz or Laura or both, as both stand to benefit from the quest. Women occupy all roles in the actantial model with the exception of the one which has traditionally been their lot, namely that of the object of the quest. Beatriz, in leaping out of history, that is out of her historical context in which she is prevented from fulfilling her wish to be the desiring subject of love poetry, could be said to have embarked on a mission to find the right historical conditions for the speaking female subject of erotic discourse. One of Beatriz's objectives in the GDR is therefore to reinvent the speaking female subject, or the woman as "Liebessängerin," for: "Eine mittelalterliche Minnesängerin ist historisch denkbar. Eine mittelalterliche Liebessängerin nicht" (T. 33).

Both Laura and Beatriz seem to be in agreement that the time of the female troubador has not yet come, not "weil es keine Frauen gäbe, die sich als Subjekte

empfinden" (T. 163) but for want of somebody to fill the place of the object of love poetry.<sup>40</sup> If the speaking, or in this case, singing subject has no addressee or object, it cannot yet constitute itself as a subject. The search for a suitable object for her narrative is thus part of the process by which the female subject actively constitutes herself. One additional aim of the alliance between Laura and Beatriz could therefore be considered to be the constitution of the female subject.

By foregrounding questions of gender in the actantial model and therefore at the level of the semantic structure, the text raises pertinent questions about the interrelationship between gender and genre. By casting a female in the role of the subject of the medieval romance, the text exposes the ideological assumptions about gender difference which are implicit in the semantic structures of the quest narrative itself. Moreover, Morgner's text invites a reading of the quest narrative and in particular the genre of the courtly romance along that isotopic axis which has persistently been ignored by all the masters of narratology: the gender axis.<sup>41</sup> This enables us to produce a reading of the medieval quest along the lines of gender difference. Gender is therefore the hidden isotopy of such genres as the classical "Bildungsroman" and the medieval courtly romance, that hidden variable which aligns activity and subjectivity with masculinity and passivity with femininity. It is precisely the presence of this isotopy which has traditionally provided the rationale for casting the male in the active role of the subject of the quest and the female as the passive, silent object. The binary opposition of active/passive is admittedly one that is grammatically given, that is, one that is structurally inherent in any adventure genre, as without an active subject of the narrative it becomes hard to conceive of a

<sup>40</sup> Compare the pronouncement made by the narrator at the end of Christa Wolf's science fiction story, "Selbstversuch," that women have yet to invent a suitable love object: "Jetzt steht uns mein Experiment bevor: der Versuch zu lieben. Der übrigens auch zu phantastischen Erfindungen führt: zur Erfindung dessen, den man lieben kann." Wolf, "Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll," **Unter den Linden: Drei unwahrscheinliche Geschichten** (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1974), p. 169.

<sup>41</sup> Understood as a way of making a uniform reading of a text possible, Greimas' concept of isotopy, which he borrows from physical chemistry, provides him with a means of examining repetition in discourses, that is, of isolating redundant semantic categories which assure discursive utterance its homogeneity and often its comprehensibility. See Schleifer, introd. to Greimas, **Structural Semantics**, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

quest narrative at all. What Morgner's use of the genre does question, however, is the gender assumptions that are implicit in the genre of the courtly romance and in variations on this genre such as the socialist adventure novel. Thus, by reversing the gender of the actants in the narrative and by inverting the semic hierarchy of the binary pair male/female, Morgner's adaption of the quest motif reads as a parody and therefore a critique of the conventional socialist "Bildungsroman" and "Abenteuerroman."

The main barrier to the constitution of the female subject of the adventure segment is the "Seßhaftigkeit" of women. Laura's "Seßhaftigkeit," for instance is attributable to the unequal distribution of child-rearing responsibilities among men and women. This is further compounded by women's poor representation in better qualified professions which offer travel opportunities through the attendance at overseas conferences. Attendance at international science conferences is portrayed in the *Trobadora* as a male prerogative and even 'feminized' males such as Uwe Parnitzke, who is described as "ein anempfindendes Wesen: eine Rarität unter Männern" (T. 216), feel slightly out of place in such an overtly masculine environment. Or alternatively, women function within the context of conferences as men's "Spielfrauen" as in *Gauklerlegende* and *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel*.

Thus, Laura is effectively barred from accepting all invitations to travel not so much because of prevailing travel restrictions, which precluded a "Triebwagenführerin" from visiting Western Europe, but mainly because of the demands on a single parent:

Kinderaufzucht verlangt strenge, Erwachsenennaturen normalerweise zuwiderlaufende Ordnung. Diese Ordnungsmaschinerie zählt neben erzwungener Seßhaftigkeit zu den Strafen der Mutterschaft. (T. 179)

These were initially the demands that made Laura sacrifice her career as a "Germanistin" which may have offered her travel opportunities to international conferences. It is not in the least surprising that the only figures in the *Trobadora* novel who are free to travel are, apart from those fantastic characters such as Beatriz and Melusine and Persephone, solely professional men, primarily

engaged in scientific professions. The major actants of syntagms of contract which involve syntagms of disjunction (for example a change of place), are therefore either male or, if female, they belong to the realm of legend or fantasy.<sup>42</sup> Otherwise the 'real' women of the GDR in the **Trobadora** novel are all stationary.

Women have as a rule barely figured in popular adventure novels as protagonists, usually playing the part of the wife or lover who stays at home. Because adventures are usually something that the protagonist experiences on his travels abroad, women rarely feature as the subject of the travel or adventure genre. Exciting and risky adventures are events that generally occur outside the geographical and ideological space of the GDR, either in the wild capitalist West or in outer space and are thus not accessible to women. Despite numerous claims that socialism should also be a suitable setting for an adventure novel, most examples of the adventure genre prefer an exotic or foreign backdrop.<sup>43</sup>

In all three of Morgner's earlier works, **Hochzeit in Konstantinopel**, **Gustav der Weltfahrer** and in **Gauklerlegende** the concept of travel is inseparable from the longing to experience something out of the ordinary as well as the need to transcend rigid mechanistic ways of categorizing human experience. In **Gauklerlegende**, the dice which repeatedly fall into Wanda's lap are a constant reminder of the elements of chance which have been rigorously excluded from the male-dominated world of science and mathematics. The "Würfel" which resurfaces again briefly in the **Trobadora** novel, becomes a recurrent metaphor for the longing for a feminine alternative to male-dominated forms of political and scientific discourse. In earlier novels, this longing is triggered off by the 'chance' to travel. In all three stories the opportunity to travel, even if as the play-mate of a man, serves as a precondition for women's encounters with the extraordinary and the fantastic.

<sup>42</sup> An exception here is the case of Tamara Bunke, a famous Cuban revolutionary, who functions in Eberhard Panitz's novel **Don Juanita** as a male projection rather than a female "Wunschbild," and belongs more to the realm of legend than to history. Tamara Bunke makes a brief appearance in Morgner's novel as the deliverer of a letter addressed to Laura from Beatriz who is holidaying in Split. It is apparent that Tamara Bunke is very much a living legend, especially when Laura recalls having seen a death notice in the newspaper.

<sup>43</sup> See Hofmann, "Historische Wandlungen des Erlebnisphänomens 'Abenteuer,'" p. 84.

The cultural and political constraints preventing the female subject from accepting the "contract" and the call to travel are duplicated at the level of the construction of an active female subject of the quest narrative. When Beatriz requests Laura to join her on her travels to Split, Laura interprets this as a breach of their original contract and declares Beatriz crazy (T. 189). Were she, as subject of her own quest, to accept the "contract" now imposed by Beatriz, who acts here as the sender in Laura's quest, she would be actually violating the contract she had entered into with Beatriz in their secret society as well as the conditions of the traditional quest narrative. Laura's refusal at this stage therefore highlights the constraints affecting the "Subjektwerdung" of women in the GDR.

In the era of German imperialism the concept of adventure became reduced to a celebration of "Innerlichkeit" and a "gesteigertes Lebensgefühl."<sup>44</sup> The category of adventure, as an intensification of individual experience, came to be associated with the "subjektivistischer Relativismus der Lebensphilosophie" of the Wilhelminian era and the "Negieren aller sozialen Verpflichtungen."<sup>45</sup> The bourgeois individualist concept of adventure is seen to culminate in the philosophy of Ernst Jünger and the mystification of war as the ultimate adventure.<sup>46</sup> It has been argued by some East German critics that the irrationalistic and fatalistic inflections of the word adventure during the era of German imperialism should not prevent socialism from usefully appropriating earlier parts of the semantic heritage of the concept, given that the desire to experience something unpredictable and unforeseen forms an integral and legitimate part of socialist life:

Während das Leben in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft in zunehmendem Maße durch Planmäßigkeit und soziale Sicherheit bestimmt wird, bleibt die Sehnsucht nach dem Unberechenbaren, dem Nichtvoraussehbaren, das hohes Risiko und damit starkes, spontanes Erleben einschließt, bestehen.<sup>47</sup>

The reintroduction of the element of the unpredictable and the extraordinary into the semantic field surrounding the lexeme, adventures, approximates the original

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*, p. 79.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*, p. 84.

meaning the word had in the Middle Ages in the context of courtly literature. The Middle High German word "aventiuere," or Morgner's version "aventûre," occupied a central position within the medieval code of chivalry, which, after the rise of the knights as the dominant class, became the dominant code of conduct in medieval feudal society.<sup>48</sup>

In the Middle Ages the concept of "aventûre" signified an unexpected occurrence or event, or alternatively, a "Glücksspiel," whose outcome was largely the result of chance or fate. The particular happening was often heralded by the appearance of magical forces or the intervention of the supernatural. The adventure was never an end in itself but rather the means of putting the knight's moral strength and courage to the test. Successfully accomplished adventures were then the primary means by which the knight attained prestige and fame at the court and were imperative for the knight's social standing and his sense of self-worth.<sup>49</sup> The category of adventure is central to the self-understanding of the "Rittertum" as a class and its standing in feudal society.<sup>50</sup>

Following the rise of the middle classes, the term underwent substantial semantic changes during the classical and Romantic periods, which brought about a shift in emphasis away from the unexpected, fateful "Ereignis" to the subjective existential "Erlebnis." Out of the "ehrenhaften ritterlichen Wagnis" became "das dubiose bürgerliche Risiko."<sup>51</sup> Under the influence of capitalism the term also became equated with an unpredictable gamble or a game of chance whose outcome was the result of market forces. Chance was also the term used by Engels to describe the production and distribution of commodities in the early capitalist economy. As the process of commodity exchange grew more complicated with the introduction of money and middlemen, the fate of commodities became more and more uncertain. Engels predicted that the producers of commodities would eventually lose control over their products and that production in the capitalist economy would increasingly

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 74.

fall prey to the forces of chance.<sup>52</sup> Given the historical and ideological baggage of the term, the bourgeois concept of adventure as "Erlebnis" can only be usefully appropriated for Marxism if the bourgeois connotations are suppressed and the positive aspects of the word's semantic heritage are accentuated.

According to Hofmann, all subsequent attempts to rehabilitate the genre of the adventure novel in the GDR were consequently forced to disregard what he sees as the essential "semantic core" of the word.<sup>53</sup> The eradication of the aleatory, unpredictable side of socialist life was considered necessary in the "Aufbaujahre" of consolidation in order to instil a sense of confidence in the future of the socialist state. Hofmann maintains that this necessitated abandoning not only the bourgeois connotations of the term in an attempt to reintegrate the term into the active vocabulary of socialist realism, but also the original medieval meaning of the word as an unexpected, extraordinary happening. The pursuit of adventures became replaced by a "Bewährungssituation" which is not the result of an unexpected event but largely the product of "zu lösenden Schwierigkeiten im Arbeitsprozeß, in der gesellschaftlichen oder persönlichen Entwicklung," whose causes are "bestimmbar und infolgedessen meist voraussehbar."<sup>54</sup> In the socialist realist novel, the adventure of the hero is often little more than "das Bewältigen neuer Lebenskonflikte und die Erfahrung neuer Züge der Wirklichkeit."<sup>55</sup>

If one accepts such a loose definition of the term, it could be argued that the entire literature of the GDR might be subsumed under the single rubric of adventure literature.<sup>56</sup> Occasionally the term 'adventure' is even used as a synonym for any event or challenging daily experience under socialism itself.<sup>57</sup> In Christa Wolf's *Der*

<sup>52</sup> Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, p. 169.

<sup>53</sup> Hofmann, "Historische Wandlungen des Erlebnisphänomens 'Abenteuer,'" p. 81.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 81. Despite Hofmann's reservations, the most significant attempts to rework the adventure motif for socialist realism are Strittmatter's *Ole Bienkopp* (1963), Eric Neutsch's *Spur der Steine* (1964) and Karl-Heinz Jakobs' *Beschreibung eines Sommers* (1961), as well as the early factory and production novels of Eduard Claudius (*Vom schweren Anfang*, 1950).

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>57</sup> See Kurt Batt's remark: "So gab es dann jene Baustellen-Erzählungen, die mit hemdsärmeligem Pathos vom Aufbruch einer jungen Generation in das Abenteuer Sozialismus Zeugnis ablegen wollten" in Batt, "Was wir haben - was wir brauchen," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 24.1 (1976), p. 16.

*geteilte Himmel*, even Rita's uneventful daily experiences at teacher's college are seen as "Abenteuer."<sup>58</sup> Thus the daily drudgery of work and the personal sacrifices this involves are given the aura of heroic sacrifice. Adventures may well provide a means of compensating for the frustrations inherent in daily life, but Hofmann correctly doubts whether "ein geplantes und nach einem Plan ausgeführtes 'Abenteuer' noch ein Abenteuer ist."<sup>59</sup>

The genre of the adventure novel undergoes thereby a process of industrialization. The site of the adventure is transferred from the exotic settings of distant countries to the socialist everyday of the factory floor, the building site or out into the fields. The experiencing of adventures becomes restricted to the worker's dealings with the day-to-day problems associated with industrial or agricultural production. As this passage from Brigitte Reimann's diaries demonstrates, according to such a definition, it becomes increasingly hard to see what constitutes the excitement of an adventure when the term adventure is used synonymously with work and the filling of quotas. Writing towards the end of the Bitterfelder years, she asks:

Wonach suche ich? Was erwarte ich? Wenn man näher hinsieht, besteht das große Abenteuer - in Bratsk wie in Schwarze Pumpe - aus Alltag und Arbeit, Sonnenbrand und Frostbeulen, Normen und Verbesserungsvorschlägen und jenem stolzen Blick zurück . . .<sup>60</sup>

One exception to this rule, where adventure does not signify the challenges of the work place, is Dieter Noll's two volume novel *Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt* (1960/1963) in which the concept of adventure is used in the sense of "amours."<sup>61</sup> In all other variations of the socialist adventure novel set on East German soil, the protagonist's experiences are almost invariably a confirmation of the rationality of the processes of production and the smooth functioning of state and political decision-making processes. The elements of chance and unpredictability are

<sup>58</sup> Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel*, p. 89.

<sup>59</sup> Hofmann, "Historische Wandlungen des Erlebnisphänomens 'Abenteuer,'" p. 83.

<sup>60</sup> Brigitte Reimann, *Die geliebte, die verfluchte Hoffnung: Tagebücher und Briefe* (1983; Darmstadt und Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1986), p. 226.

<sup>61</sup> Milfull, "Die Literatur der DDR," p. 635.



eliminated by the rationality of the socialist mode of production and are then projected onto the capitalist mode of production.

Morgner's adaptation of the medieval "Ritterroman" and its knightly adventures is one such attempt to reinstate moments of chance and the unknown and to lend legitimacy to human longing for the extraordinary aspects of everyday life. By the same token, her use of the adventure motif in connection with female protagonists is intended as a critique of the gender constraints implicit in the use of adventure narratives for women. The casting of women as adventurers is also a reminder of those unofficial adventures and hardships women encounter on a daily basis outside the work place which are either excluded from or smoothed over in official accounts of women's achievements. In making reference to the medieval notion of adventures, Morgner is attempting to gain recognition for the trials and the tests of physical endurance women in the GDR are subjected to daily. Laura's yearning for adventure is therefore the desire to experience something which has not been colonized by idealized newspaper and literary reports of women's emancipation and hence something which has hitherto had no legitimate place in a rationalistic technological life-world.

Morgner's rewriting of a medieval adventure story parodies therefore the notion of "Bewährung" and the socialist concept of adventure as a test of the individual's ideological rather than physical strength. Beatriz's final ordeal or "Bewährungsprobe," which, like its medieval counterpart, is meant to test "die höfischen Tugenden Mâze und Treue" (T. 184), is a test of her solidarity and loyalty. It is, however, not loyalty to the immediate economic objectives of the factory or the goals of the "New Economic System" that is being put to the test here but, instead, a new sense of female solidarity. What we have emerging in the main quest narrative is the construction of a new addressee or receiver who, in the folktale, is the person who receives the object of the quest or who benefits from retrieving the lost object. The receiver can also be a collective in the broader sense if the quest is conducted in the name of a larger community. The receiver in the bourgeois-humanist "Bildungsroman" would therefore be humanity itself and in the socialist variant it

would be the "sozialistische Gemeinschaft." In Beatriz's quest it is not only Laura and Beatriz who are to benefit from finding the unicorn but the working women of the GDR, as implied by the "we" and "us" in Laura's discussion with a colleague:

Ihrer einstigen Arbeitskollegin Grete, die die Existenz von Beatriz kurzweg leugnete, da sie der Logik widerspräche, antwortete Laura zum Beispiel: "Wenn Beatriz groß genug ist, uns <emphasis added> die ungeschriebene Geschichte, die nicht von Männern gemacht wurde, persönlich zu überbringen, sollten wir wenigstens groß genug sein, an sie zu glauben. (T. 181)

As Beatriz is homing in on her "prey," it becomes increasingly clear that the unicorn is a code not for an individualistic solution to the problems of women's emancipation, but that it signifies a collective solution aimed specifically at the problems of GDR women:

War die individualistische Lösung ein Code? . . . Sicher, daß mich Janda kurz vorm Ziel korrumpieren wollte. Mit einer persönlichen Lösung. Um die gesellschaftliche zu verhindern. (T. 284-85)

But before we can complete decoding the actants in Beatriz's quest it will be necessary to outline briefly the general narrative structure inherent in the socialist "Bildungsroman."

The central focus of those novels of the sixties generally regarded as variations of the "Bildungsroman" has been described by Emmerich as the "alltägliche Bewährung in der gesellschaftlichen Arbeit."<sup>62</sup> The process of integration of the protagonist into the socialist collective is, in the majority of cases, portrayed as a test of his/her ideological commitment to the socialist cause, to the "Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat" and more generally to international socialism. Conflicts between the collective and the ideologically naive or uninformed individual, which form the basis of the ordeals or trials that the hero must undergo, tend to be resolved with a change of heart of the hero/heroine accompanied by new political and personal insights. The antifascist prose of Dieter Noll (*Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt* 1960/63) follows

<sup>62</sup> Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, p. 100. Novels which fit this pattern include the "Bauernromane" of Erwin Strittmatter (*Ole Bienkopp*, 1963), the great social epics of Hermann Kant (*Die Aula*, 1962) and the industrial, production novel of Erik Neutsch (*Spur der Steine*, 1964).

much the same pattern as well as the "Ankunftsliteratur" of Brigitte Reimann and Christa Wolf.

Although exponents of the socialist "Bildungsroman" like to stress the element of historical continuity between the modern socialist variant and its bourgeois humanist precursor, there are significant differences between the two, in particular at the level of the semantic structure of the quest motif. It will be useful to analyze the socialist "Bildungsroman" in terms of Greimas' actantial model of narrative in order to highlight the significant differences between the socialist variant and its humanist predecessor.

The subject of the quest of the socialist model is no longer simply "der Mensch" but more specifically "der sozialistische Mensch," that is, the son or daughter of the working class. The object of his/her quest is clearly identifiable as "die Wende zum sozialistischen Bewußtsein."<sup>63</sup> The search for this ideal involves not so much physical hardship (although this is certainly a factor in some cases) but an ideological struggle between, on one level, the attitudes and needs of the individual and the needs of the collective, and on another level, the regressive forces of capitalism and the progressive forces of socialism. The sender, or the person in whose name the quest is conducted, is not society or humanity in general, but the "Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat." The ideal or historical force which stands to benefit from the education of the individual, or the receiver of the sought-after object, is either international socialism or the socialist revolution, as opposed to humanism or modernity in the case of the humanist "Bildungsroman."<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, p. 100-101.

<sup>64</sup> Following Greimas' example, Peter Zima has analyzed the structure of the narrative of classical philosophy and Marxism in terms of its actantial model. In classical philosophy the quest of the subject for the world is commissioned by God (as the sender) in the name of humanity which becomes the receiver of the quest. His opponents in the quest are, according to Zima, "die Materie" and his helpers are "der Geist." It should be noted that this could also serve as the actantial model for the humanist "Bildungsroman." The narrative of orthodox Marxist discourse as well as of the socialist "Entwicklungsroman" makes the following changes to the humanist model: according to Zima, the Marxist narrative places "der Mensch" instead of the transcendental humanist subject in the position of the subject of the quest. I would argue that the concept of the "Mensch" needs the further qualification in "der sozialistische Mensch." In Zima's scheme, the object of the quest becomes the classless society and his chief opponent is the class enemy or the bourgeoisie. His helper is therefore the

The role of helper in the quest could be filled by either the Party or "die wissenschaftlich-technische Revolution" or both. This is certainly more in evidence in science fiction novels of the fifties and sixties than in the "Bildungsroman" of the same period; as previously mentioned, the portrayal of technological progress as "der Helfer des Menschen auf seinem Weg in die Zukunft" is perhaps the most significant feature distinguishing science fiction writing in socialist countries from its dystopian, pessimistic counterpart in the West.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the role of science and technology is equally important in the "Bildungsroman" and the "Betriebsromane" as well as the literature of the "Bitterfelder Weg."

The chief opponent in the quest is usually the "Klassenfeind," the bourgeois renegade, the "Republikflüchtling" or the careerist, or, more generally, fascism or capitalist imperialism. The construction of a helper and an opponent is particularly obvious in Reimann's *Ankunft im Alltag* where the struggle for the right attitude to socialism and the collective is expressed in terms of a love story between three people, each of which represents clearly defined ideological positions. Here the female protagonist has to make a choice between two men of opposite ideological persuasions and her decision to break off the relationship with Curt in favour of Nikolaus is a symbolic gesture indicating her rejection of an uncommitted, individualistic attitude to socialism and her commitment to socialism. In *Der geteilte Himmel*, Rita's eventual rejection of Manfred, the "Republikflüchtling," also constitutes a more or less successfully completed struggle with the enemy from within. Interestingly, there are no real attempts to integrate the cynical, indifferent Manfred into socialist society, as Milfull has pointed out: in the end Manfred and the ideological position he represents are simply excluded or expelled from the narrative.<sup>66</sup>

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working classes. It could equally be argued that an additional helper in the quest is, in the case of the socialist "Bildungsroman," the scientific and technological revolution. What both humanist and Marxist models share in common is the positioning of humanity in the role of the beneficiary or receiver of the quest. I would argue that this role could also be occupied by the working classes. See Zima, *Textsoziologie: Eine kritische Einführung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980), pp. 78ff.

<sup>65</sup> Wuckel, *Science Fiction*, p. 225.

<sup>66</sup> Milfull, "Die Literatur der DDR," p. 625.

The most important adaptations to the structure of the socialist "Bildungsroman" that Morgner makes are not located at the level of the narrative syntax but in the choice of actors in the actantial model itself - although ultimately the choice of actors must disrupt the teleology of the narrative. The subject of Beatriz's quest and of all other quest narratives in the text becomes a feminized subject. The various narrative strands centre neither around "der Mensch in seinen Beziehungen zur Natur, Technik und Gesellschaft,"<sup>67</sup> nor the alleged gender-neutral subject of the socialist revolution, but around the female subject and her specifically 'feminine' relationship to science and technology, nature and work. The role of the initiator or sender of the quest is enacted by Laura who can be seen to represent the particular interests of working women in the GDR (and therefore 80-90% of women of working age), and more specifically of single, working mothers. The substitution of the female subject and female actants for the socialist "Mensch" constitutes therefore an attempt to displace the male subject or the male subject masquerading as "Mensch" as the chief actor in socialist realist fiction and official discourse. Morgner's text thus exposes the working-class subject of the socialist revolution as implicitly male with masculine concerns, attitudes and privileges. By displacing the humanist concept of the "Mensch" which socialist aesthetics and cultural politics have unquestioningly adopted, thus highlighting the gender-bias underpinning official Party rhetoric on socialist work and society, Morgner's text raises the crucial question of sexual difference and its importance for the constitution of female subjectivity in fiction. If the quest motif functions as a means of transcending the socially and culturally imposed passivity of many working East German women like Laura, it remains to be seen what exactly is the nature of Laura's relation to Beatriz's adventure quest and what is the relevance of Beatriz's travels abroad and her homecoming to Laura's "Alltag."

<sup>67</sup> Wuckel, *Science Fiction*, p. 185.

#### IV. SCIENCE AND HISTORY - OBSTACLES AND HELPERS IN WOMEN'S QUEST FOR EMANCIPATION

##### A. Women in Science and the Double Burden

The parody of the socialist "Bildungsroman" in the *Trobadora* is not solely confined to the inscription of a female actor in the role of the active subject in the adventure sequences of the narrative. Nor does it consist merely in the casting of women in the roles of the sender, that is the hidden collective subject, as well as in the roles of the beneficiaries of the quest. In fact, all roles in the actantial model employed by the text undergo transformations. It becomes apparent that just as the sender and subject are modified by 'feminizing' the actantial model, so too are the corresponding roles of the helper and the opponent in the quest.

The role of the "wissenschaftlich-technologische Revolution," which is usually assigned the function of the helper or friend in the development of the socialist state in the socialist "Bildungsroman," as well as in science fiction novels, has similarly undergone a process of inversion in the *Trobadora* novel. Both the major "Wissenschaftler" that Beatriz meets on her travels, Professor Wenzel Morolf, a nuclear physicist and Professor Leopold Janda, a philosopher, are clearly unsuitable as helpers or even allies in Beatriz's quest for the unicorn. Professor Janda is in fact undertaking his own mission to find the key to the "Kreativitätsautomaton," a mission which Beatriz suspects is at cross-purposes to her own:

Vielleicht wollte mir Janda Anaximander abjagen? Im Auftrag der persephonischen Opposition. Oder aus privaten Gründen . . . (T. 286)

The objective of Janda's mission is to develop the necessary technology, not merely to create artificial intelligence, but to reproduce the intellectual and creative abilities of humans:

"Es liegt offen auf der Hand, daß die Schaffung einer neuen Generation problemlösender beziehungsweise schöpferisch tätiger Automaten, sogenannter Kreativitätsautomaten, solch weitreichender Umwälzungen in der Daseinsweise der Menschen hervorrufen würde, daß die Wissenschaft ihre Dimensionen heute noch nicht voll zu erkennen vermag," sagte der Professor. (T. 283)

The dream of developing artificial intelligence to the extent that much of the work performed by humans would be rendered superfluous was particularly popular in the GDR in the fifties and sixties, and the figure of Janda parodies the general euphoria amongst scientists at the time concerning the limitless possibilities of the computer age and space technology.

Both scientists function within Beatriz's mission as opponents rather than helpers in her quest, despite the fact that both Janda and Morolf are exemplary in their commitment to socialism and of course to science. It is, however, not only Morolf's arrogance and self-importance that is satirized in the novel, but also his particular interest in inanimate matter and the scientific model of antagonistic opposites he is concerned with developing.

Morolf is portrayed as the living incarnation of those goals he pursues in his research in nuclear physics. He represents in the words of Dr. Solowjow, a fanatic of a different kind, "den männlich, zu geistigem Fanatismus neigenden wissenschaftlichen Denkstil als Norm" (T. 165). It is this type of fanaticism and excessive dedication to a cause that is seen as providing the norm for men and women employed in scientific professions.

In Morgner's *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel* and in *Gauklerlegende*, it is mainly women who are perceived as the victims of this masculine norm, although in the *Trobadora* the primary victim of the stereotype of the dedicated, selfless scientist is in fact a man, Uwe Parnitzke. In the first "Intermezzo" of the *Trobadora* novel, Morolf describes nuclear physics to a group of scientists convened for a conference as "eine vitale Wissenschaft für vitale Männer. Eine männliche Wissenschaft also" (T. 78). Here Morolf is merely testifying to the widely-held belief in the inherent interconnection between conceptions of masculinity and the discourse of science.

The relationship between representations of masculinity and of science as perceived by Morolf and Parnitzke is not presented as metonymic, that is, as historically and culturally determined, but as metaphoric, that is, as a relationship grounded in essential similarity. Morolf apprehends the pursuit of science as an essentially masculine profession; he regards the transference of qualities traditionally attributed to masculinity, that is properties of the subject of enquiry, onto the object of enquiry, here physics, as somehow natural or given. Although Uwe rejects the myth of physics as a masculine science, signified by his rejection of an authoritarian father-figure - "Ich bin ein Mensch, der keinen Vater braucht" (T. 76,80) -, he remains a victim of the immense social pressure to conform to norms of masculinity.

Thus the domain of science is not only dominated by men,<sup>1</sup> but is also imbued with values that have historically and culturally belonged to the ruling sex. As Uwe observes, the feminine has no place in the realm of science and the merest trace of what has traditionally been regarded as feminine or pertaining to women can be sufficient not merely to question a scientist's masculinity but to damage his credibility and worth as a researcher as well. The perceived lack of authority of the Armenian physicist is therefore attributed to the unsettling combination of a "femininer Mund" with "fanatische harte Augen": physiognomical features which give his appearance a heterogeneity that by comparison with Dr. Morolf's "intellektuellen Sex-Appeal" (T. 79) makes the Armenian, even in Uwe's eyes, a faintly ridiculous figure. The exclusion of the feminine from the site of the operations of scientific discourse disadvantages progressive, sensitive men such as Uwe, who have rejected normative concepts of masculinity and, of course, women attempting to break into the traditional strongholds of masculinity: the hard sciences.

In the novels preceding *Amanda*, the female figures who attempt to enter traditionally male-dominated professions can be divided into two distinct groups. On the one hand, there are those female characters such as Bele in *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel* and Laura in *Trobadora* who are unwilling to make the sacrifices

<sup>1</sup> See "Die Männer saßen um einen großen rechteckigen Tisch, ausschließlich Männer" (T. 78).



required of them in a male-dominated profession and who are generally forced, either for personal or family reasons, to opt for careers which do not require the same degree of self-sacrifice and subjugation to men as a scientific career. Driving trains throughout the night is preferred by Laura, for instance, to a career as a "Germanistin" because it allows her to spend more time with her child during his waking hours.

There are, on the other hand, a number of women in Morgner's novels who have succeeded in entering into scientific professions, albeit the 'soft' sciences, such as the area of "Ernährungswissenschaft." Valeska, a nutritionist working on the synthesis of protein from crude oil, has devised her own strategy to cope with the problem of sex discrimination in the work place and the effects this has on her status as a researcher. To relieve herself of the double burden of working full-time and looking after her children, she shares a house with two other working mothers. She thus manages to avoid the "Zerstückelung ihrer Kräfte" (T. 233), that fragmentation of the self that is symptomatic of the lives of single working mothers. This in turn gives her more time for her research.

The theme of women sharing accommodation and child-rearing responsibilities, as unremarkable as it may seem to a Western reader, is conspicuous by its absence in East German men's and women's writing. Alternative forms of living arrangements such as 'share-house' arrangements between women, homosexuals or single parents have received little or no attention in East German writing, with the notable exception of Christine Wolter's short story "Ich habe wieder geheiratet."<sup>2</sup> The desire to experiment with different ways of organizing and distributing household and child-rearing duties in order to escape the double bind of the double burden very rarely finds its concrete expression in women's texts in the GDR, since the texts usually do not go beyond a critique of existing living and working conditions to offer alternative solutions to the problem.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Wolter, "Ich habe wieder geheiratet," in *Wie ich meine Unschuld verlor* (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1984), pp. 26-35.

Valeska's experiment presents therefore a utopian perspective which touches on a subject which has constituted one of the taboo topics in GDR literature. Such solutions as share-house arrangements are generally not encouraged and certainly not practised at official levels as they are thought to be incompatible with the socialist ideal of the harmonious nuclear family. Morgner includes in her novel an excerpt from a speech given by Professor Dr. Ludwig Mecklinger, the East German Minister of Health in the early seventies, on the occasion of the abolition of paragraph 218, which had until then prohibited abortions. In the speech he cites the preservation of harmonious marriages and stable families as one of the prime concerns of socialist policy-makers:

Ehe, Familie und Mutterschaft stehen unter dem besonderen Schutz des sozialistischen Staates. Im Artikel 38 der Verfassung der DDR ist dieses Prinzip verankert. Die Entwicklung gesunder, harmonischer und glücklicher Ehen, die Gründung dauerhafter Familien, die Förderung der Liebe zum Kind, die Erhöhung der Geburtenfreudigkeit sind unabdingbare Attribute und prinzipielles Anliegen der sozialistischen Politik (T. 331-32).

The primacy of the family in the GDR is further upheld in the family law legislation in the "Familiengesetzbuch" of 1965 as it was in the "Bundesgesetzbuch" at the same time in the Federal Republic. The particular emphasis in the speech given by the Minister of Health on the stabilization and maintenance of the nuclear family under socialism is further evidence of the ambivalence of state policy concerning women's rights, in particular the individual woman's right to abortion:

Unsere verantwortungsbewußten jungen Bürger in jungen Ehen wollen auch nicht auf das glückliche Erleben der Familie, auf das Kind, verzichten. Sie wissen sehr wohl, daß die Familie in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft einen festen Platz hat, daß die Familienbildung von der Gesellschaft gefördert wird und die Kinder die große Liebe und Fürsorge des sozialistischen Staates erfahren.  
Die Förderung der Liebe zum Kind, die Festigung der Familie in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft und die Erhöhung der Geburtenfreudigkeit werden in der DDR stets ein Grundanliegen der sozialistischen Politik bleiben. (T. 333)

It is also characteristic of socialist policies on women that the word "woman" rarely appears without the accompanying appendage "family" or "child." Legislation governing women's rights is formulated in terms of their rights and obligations as

mothers, which are subsumed under policies on the nuclear family. Despite an increasing tolerance of single-parenthood and state measures to correct any financial discrimination of single parents, the nuclear family is still considered the norm and single parenthood a temporary deviation from this norm.

Women in the GDR are still defined in terms of their traditional role within the family unit. Their position in society is still predominantly determined by their social function as producers of use values in the home and work place as well as their role as reproducers of labour power. In the light of this, the fulfilment of the first condition of women's emancipation, their integration into the workforce, becomes contingent on the resolution of the contradictions of the double burden. **Bele H. in Hochzeit in Konstantinopel** and **Laura Salman in the Trobadora** are negative examples of emancipated women who have compromised their career aspirations not only because of the double burden but also because of the intransigence of prevailing attitudes towards women's traditional role in the family. However, the double bind of double standards becomes particularly obvious in the example of Valeska, who, having escaped the problems of the double burden through officially non-sanctioned means, falls prey to those very same traditional prejudices. The amount of talent and extra work required for women to achieve equal recognition within scientific professions is the price women then have to pay if they take on the traditional bastions of male intellectual activity:

Eine Frau muß selbstverständlich begabter sein, wenn sie das gleiche wie ein Mann erreichen will. In Berufen, die verlangen, daß der Mensch sich ausgibt, in wissenschaftlichen zum Beispiel, wird das deutlich, in anderen nicht, da verschließen sich die Frauen nur schneller durch Doppelbelastung, was dem Schönheitsideal strikt zuwidergeht. (T. 233-34)

Many of the women in Morgner's novels are, however, provided with a handicap to help them cope with the extra pressures of the double burden in the form of white magic.

## B. Magic as Women's Helper in the Quest for Equality

Valeska's reliance on magic to counteract forms of discrimination is first and foremost an expression of the lack of political and social power available to East German women to effect radical changes to their status in the home and the workforce. At the same time, it also represents a strategy of resistance aimed at opposing those structures upholding women's inferior status in scientific and other male-dominated professions.

To foil the attempts of a fellow scientist, Clemens, who solicits Valeska's sexual favours in order to extract from her the officially well-guarded secrets of synthesized meat, Valeska conjures up woman's age-old ally of magic. Thus it is only through the use of magic to produce samples of synthesized meat for the lovers' consumption that she manages to both please her lover and to preserve her integrity as a scientist. After all, she knew only too well the urge to consume the flesh of the other in moments of passion: "Im Verlaufe von Liebesspielen hatte es Valeska nämlich des öfteren gelüstet, von Clemens' Fleisch zu kosten" (T. 222). When she manages to conjure up the aid of white magic to synthesize human flesh, she is thus able to 'have her meat and eat it too': to combine "das Nützliche mit dem Angenehmen" (T. 222). Clemens, however, remains blissfully unaware of her supernatural powers: "Der gelegentliche Wunsch, von einer Frau verzehrt zu werden, erschien ihm bislang lediglich metaphorisch erfüllbar" (T. 222). Valeska is well aware of the ideological reservations she, as a scientist, should have indulging in unscientific irrational forms of creativity which, in the scientific age, have long since been discredited :

Denn Zaubern gehört in die Größenordnung erfolgreicher, industriell nicht auswertbarer Laborversuche. Mit feenhaften Fähigkeiten kann man heutzutage bestenfalls im Zirkus auftreten. Valeska wollte die wissenschaftliche Laufbahn. (T. 222)

Valeska reminds herself that the epistemologies of magic and science are fundamentally antagonistic; her insistence on using magic as the only possible solution to keeping both her lover and her integrity as a scientist obviously flies in

the face of the principles of scientific rationality. Yet in practising magic, she effectively breaks down the binary opposition between science/magic, constructing both elements of the pairs as non-antagonistic and not mutually exclusive terms of a contradiction. Magic becomes a metaphor for a form of feminine resistance whose subversiveness lies in its indifference to the binary logic of dominant discourses. Valeska's experiments thus prefigure the alchemical experiments of Laura and Vilma which play such a central role in *Amanda*. Valeska's conjuring experiments, her use of "archaische Methoden" (T. 222) must not, however, leave any traces or clues, for:

eine Wissenschaftlerin, die als Fee entlarvt wird, würde in Anbetracht der oft zitierten Tatsache, daß weibliche Gehirne durchschnittlich weniger wiegen als männliche, logischerweise auch ihre Berufsgenossinnen mystisch verdächtig machen. (T. 222)

Valeska's success at synthesizing Clemens' and her own flesh for their communal consumption and erotic gratification fails, however, to elicit any recognition for her ability as a researcher and instead only strengthens Clemens' belief in the myth of the eternal feminine:

Valeskas Fähigkeiten, die Clemens eigentlich auf nicht untersagte Weise zeigen sollen, daß das Eiweißdefizit der Welt von 15 Mill. t gedeckt werden kann, bestärkten Clemens' Neigung zur Mythologisierung der Frau. Das heißt zur Arbeitsteilung zwischen Mensch und Natur. Valeska spürte Pedestal. Diese Erniedrigung verdarb ihr schnell Appetit und Lust, aus Futterhefe, die auf Erdölfraktionen gezüchtet war, Teilwiedergaben zu zaubern. (T. 223)

The tendency to mythologize women as creatures of nature is seen here as a consequence of the sexual division of labour or the "Arbeitsteilung zwischen Mensch und Natur" (T. 223), which feminists have long recognized as being responsible for naturalizing women's function as child-rearers and men's function as maker and shaper of the social environment. The text refers therefore to what socialist feminists have often termed the blind spot in Marx' and Engels' theory of the division of labour, namely the first division of labour between the sexes, which Marx and Engels assumed to be a necessity. Official policies furthering the equality of women and equal representation of women in the workforce reproduce this blind spot in orthodox Marxism and therefore perpetuate traditional Western concepts of

femininity and womanhood. In her introduction to a study of women's historical contribution to scientific knowledge, East German writer Renate Feyl attributes the perpetuation of the myth of woman as nature to the sexual division of labour:

Was unter dem Zwang der Arbeitsteilung zur Gewohnheit wurde, erklärt man schließlich zur Natur. Nicht denken, erkunden oder wissen ist die Natur der Frau, sondern fühlen, erdulden, erfahren. . . . Vor allem hat sie hier ihrem Naturberuf zu folgen: muß Kinder gebären, Kinder erziehen, das Haus hüten, die Tugend bewachen und sich dem Willen des Mannes fügen.<sup>3</sup>

As Feyl points out, those women who have in the past managed to enter the temple of the sciences reserved exclusively for men were either treated as anomalies or were raised on a pedestal as an object of wonder. Although Feyl is careful to point out the significance of the socialist revolution for paving the way for women's entry into the sciences, she refers at the end of her introduction to the "alte Gewohnheiten und überholte Ansichten . . . , die die wissenschaftliche Leistung von Frauen in Frage stellen."<sup>4</sup>

In her foreword to Maxi Wander's *Guten Morgen, du Schöne*, Christa Wolf declares that women must continue to fight for a more humane science which does not deform its victims. The starting point for the rehumanization of socialist society, she argues, must be the recognition of women's physical and sexual needs:

Diese Entdeckung, noch sehr verletzlich, sehr wenig gefestigt, sollten wir hüten; sie könnte, vielleicht, dazu beitragen, den erbarmungslosen, menschenfremden Rationalismus solcher Institutionen wie Wissenschaft und Medizin wenigstens in Frage zu stellen.<sup>5</sup>

Achieving equality of opportunity for women in scientific professions is, it seems, not simply a matter of overcoming those anachronistic prejudices, the "Sitten"; it calls instead for a radical critique of the masculinist ideology underpinning scientific discourse and those gender assumptions which have been instrumental in upholding patriarchal structures in socialism. Many of the montages in the *Trobadora* novel serve to challenge the myth that the pursuit of excellence in

<sup>3</sup> Renate Feyl, *Der lautlose Aufbruch: Frauen in der Wissenschaft* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Wolf, "Berührung," in *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 217.

science is predicated on intrinsically masculine qualities such as fanaticism and single-mindedness that women by nature do not possess. Their first and foremost responsibility towards their children is cited by Dr. Solowjow, a Soviet chess champion, as the main biological reason why women can never make good chess players and by implication, good scientists:

S.M. (Die schöne Melusine): Was gehört eigentlich nach Ihrer Ansicht zum natürlichen Leben einer Frau? Dr. Solowjow: Nicht ihre soziologisch bedingten Lasten. Aber Kinder. Deren Anwesenheit, Forderungen, Ansprüche, Poesie sind Barrieren gegen die Fanatisierung des Geistes. Kindliches Dasein setzt geistige Gegenstände zur Realität in Beziehung, relativiert sie, ironisiert sie auch mitunter auf drastische Weise. (T. 164)

Women's child-rearing responsibilities, which are quoted here as biological constants rather than as the product of the sexual division of labour, are put forward by Solowjow as the fundamental reason why women do not possess the necessary qualities such as fanaticism, aggression, ambition and self-confidence to make good chess players or scientists. They are, in short, by virtue of their biological nature "unwissenschaftlich" (T. 165).

Women's achievements in the sciences are constantly undermined by the perpetuation of patriarchal attitudes and deterministic theories defining woman in terms of her nature and biology. Women are generally faced with the choice of remaining second class workers of "Bezirksklasse" (T. 164), whose achievements are never as highly regarded as those of their male counterparts, or, alternatively, with adopting male norms and masculine qualities in order to gain due recognition for the fruits of their labour. Christa Wolf's story "Selbstversuch" gives expression to the perceived need for women to become like men, whilst criticizing the impasse in which women find themselves when faced with the false alternatives of either accepting their inferior status as female workers or conforming to masculine work standards.

Valeska's decision in the *Trobadora* to undergo a sex change is, unlike that of the protagonist of Christa Wolf's science fiction novella, "Selbstversuch," an involuntary response to the exclamatory statement, "Man müßte ein Mann sein" (T.

426). Valeska, like the female scientist of Wolf's story, is also, at least initially, a victim of social pressures to conform to masculine work norms. Valeska is, however, never only a victim; she is also an active opponent in the fight to undermine male hegemony in the better-paid, more prestigious professions. Her reactivation of women's dormant magical powers constitutes one form of resistance to the normative power of scientific discourse and its practices. Her harnessing of magic and the forces of the supernatural, far from underwriting essentialist theories about women's closeness to nature or women's intuitive powers, posits magic as a Marxist form of "Lebensaneignung," which has historically and culturally been the province of women. Magic offers therefore an alternative form of knowledge and interaction with the world which women can appropriate to subvert oppressive dominant discourses.

By foregrounding magic as the 'natural' helper of working women, the text causes a displacement of the scientific and technological revolution as the 'natural' helper of socialism. The story of Valeska inverts the actantial model of the socialist "Bildungsroman" and positions science and technology in the role of the opponent rather than the helper. Likewise in Beatriz's quest narrative, Dr. Morolf, an exponent of the socialist principle of scientific progress at all costs, acts in the role of the opponent rather than the helper in her quest. In the "Bildungsroman" of the fifties and sixties the obvious choice of opponent in the narrative was either the class enemy or the renegade. In Beatriz's quest it is that much idealized figure of the dedicated scientist that functions as the opponent or obstacle in Beatriz's quest for the unicorn.

These structural changes at the level of the actantial model correspond to an inversion of discursive hierarchies and a subversion of official Marxist discourse and its main legitimating discourse, the natural sciences. The displacement of science from its key position in official Marxist discourse opens up a space for suppressed "feminine" forms of knowledge. To remember these "subjugated knowledges"<sup>6</sup> which

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the *Trobadora* in terms of oppositional or "subjugated" knowledges see Martin, "Socialist Patriarchy," p. 60.



historically have been disqualified and suppressed by the dominant discourses of science is therefore to challenge the imperialism of official Party ideology and its legitimating discourses. Morgner's recuperation of the magical powers historically and mythologically attributed to women, in particular the figure of the witch, to be discussed in detail in chapter 7, constitutes the rediscovery of women's historical struggles against the hegemony of scientific, rational thought.

The construction of magic and the supernatural as the natural helpers of working mothers and wives can also be read as a polemic directed at the official heroes of popular socialist literature, who are typically idealized supermen or women in all respects. Although it is often denied that these exemplary heroes are in any way "Supermänner," but instead "sozial aktive Persönlichkeiten, deren Menschlichkeit sich in den außergewöhnlichen Situationen zu bewähren hat,"<sup>7</sup> that is, representative rather than idealized figures, it becomes clear from Morgner's text that women in the GDR have indeed had to be superhuman if they are to live up to the ideal of the "sozial aktive Persönlichkeit," as well as the traditional ideals of motherhood. Thus, it is only with the help of magic that women can survive in male-dominated professions and successfully combine the duties of motherhood and a career. Here we are reminded of Melusine's warning to Beatriz:

Ungeduldige sind angewiesen auf Wunder. (T. 107)  
 Ohne Wunder kannst du nicht mal einem Baby helfen, geschweige denn  
 der Welt . . . (T. 147)

Thus, by insisting on the need for magic in women's daily lives, the novel paradoxically tries to render visible the supernatural powers hitherto excluded from most socialist realist fiction, yet, which have always, by necessity, been the secret helpers of the 'supernatural' heroines of socialist realist fiction. The introduction of the supernatural calls therefore for the acknowledgement of the supernatural as an essential part of women's existence and for a reappraisal of women's active contribution to socialism. Morgner's attention to pre-scientific forms of female knowledge such as magic and mythology stems from the need to articulate the

<sup>7</sup> Wuckel, *Science Fiction*, p. 185.

"discursive repression of a 'feminine' difference"<sup>8</sup> and at the same time signals the search for feminine alternatives to dominant discursive structures. As Christa Wolf pointed out in the seventies, women are increasingly expressing the need for alternatives to those they have had imposed upon them by men in the first two decades of socialism:

Unsere Verhältnisse haben es Frauen ermöglicht, ein Selbstbewußtsein zu entwickeln, das nicht zugleich Wille zum Herrschen, zum Dominieren, zum Unterwerfen bedeutet, sondern Fähigkeit zur Kooperation. Zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte definieren sie ihr Anderssein; zum ersten Mal entfalten sie nicht nur schöpferische Phantasie: Sie haben auch jenen nüchternen Blick entwickelt, den Männer für eine typisch männliche Eigenschaft hielten.<sup>9</sup>

### C. Changing Scientific Paradigms - Matter and Antimatter, Laura and Antilaura

As Beatriz gets closer to tracing down the object of her search, she slowly gains a new understanding of the underlying structures organizing scientific discourse that have provided the main opposition to women's search for equality and self-awareness in the GDR. Although Beatriz perceives the mere presence of Leopold Janda as the main obstacle to her search, the text offers evidence to suggest that the main obstacle lies not with the individual, Janda, but more importantly with his masculinist system of values and the discursive principles he represents.

If masculine values and representations of masculinity have pervaded the way in which nuclear physics and scientific research in general have been conducted, from their epistemological framework to their praxis, it comes as no surprise that these same values have also informed scientific discourse and the formulation of scientific theory.

Dr. Wenzel Morolf provides Beatriz with an exposé of a theoretical model which forms the basis for scientific enquiry into inanimate matter. Beatriz conveys this treatise in turn to Laura in a letter she sends from Genoa. According to Morolf, the organizing principle of matter is that of absolute, antagonistic opposites. Every

<sup>8</sup> Martin, "Socialist Patriarchy," p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> Wolf, "Berührung," *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 220.

part of the inanimate world, from the galaxies to the smallest unit of matter, has a "Doppelgänger," an opposite or a mirror image that is not imaginary but has a real existence. Morolf stresses the fact that the mirror image is no mere phantasm but that it is empirically verifiable and quantifiable. The particles and their opposites are essentially antagonistic; they can only exist as the negation of each other. They are in effect mutually destructive: "Teilchen und Antiteilchen vertragen einander nicht und zerstrahlen beim Aufeinandertreffen" (T. 199).

The synthesis of the collision of opposite particles results in their mutual destruction and the release of large amounts of energy. It is this explosive potential of antagonistic matter that, according to Morolf, has made space travel possible, thus opening up an entirely new future for mankind: "Das ermöglichte uns, heute wissenschaftlich begründet vom Flug zu fernen Sternen zu sprechen" (T. 199).

Science provides the technological know-how and thus the empirical foundations to make those wild speculations of futuristic literature a reality. Morolf is clearly setting up a hierarchy of discourses which privileges scientific speculations about the future over literary or fictional representations. This hierarchy is one which goes back to Engels' rejection of the utopian socialist literature of Fourier and Saint-Simon on the grounds that only dreams of the future which have a materialist foundation, that is, which seek changes not in 'philosophy' or in people's heads but in the 'economics' of an epoch, could be of relevance in an age of scientific materialism. Because the French utopian thinkers relied on reason rather than a materialist analysis of society to inspire their speculations about the most equitable social system they could not help therefore indulging in "reine Phantasterei."<sup>10</sup>

In a similar fashion to Engels, Morolf argues that the writers of futuristic fiction are concerned with fantasies about antigalaxies, antistars and the possibilities of living organisms, whereas scientific enquiry is concerned with the more pressing global problems of the age. Scientific discourse may share similar aims with scientific fiction, yet its superiority undoubtedly lies in its empirical method of enquiry.

<sup>10</sup> Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, p. 29.

The contents of this treatise on the organisation of the inanimate world appear without commentary in a letter from Beatriz to Laura. In her reply, Laura makes no other reference to Beatriz's letter other than the cryptic form of address: "Liebe Antilaura" (T. 200). By casting Beatriz in the role of her own double, Laura raises the question of the nature of her relationship to Beatriz and the issue of female solidarity. Laura's playful reference to Morolf's treatise on inanimate opposites raises the question once again of a feminine difference.

To begin with, let us first examine the interconnection between Beatriz and Laura at the level of the narrative structure. Laura serves on the one level as the sender in Beatriz's quest, as she is the one who is primarily responsible for the initial injunction to travel. It was at Laura's instigation that Beatriz embarked on the quest for Anaximander; Laura is furthermore responsible for the choice of the object of the quest. Laura's role in Beatriz's quest is not confined solely to that of the sender; she also reappears in the role of the helper. As Beatriz's minstrel, it is her role to provide a stationary "Stützpunkt," that is: a support system for Beatriz's escapades, much in the same way as Laudine in the Arthurian romance. Laura also provides Beatriz, the time traveller from thirteenth century France, with a solid grounding in the real. Laura provides Beatriz with an essential link to the realities of women's situation in the GDR in the seventies and thus supplies that necessary dose of pragmatism that Beatriz's seemingly naive idealism lacks. She also provides the provincial troubadour's revolutionary enthusiasm with a concrete social and historical focus. In other words, she gives her a concrete historical mission to complete. Laura's task is then to facilitate Beatriz's quest for the ideal conditions for female subjectivity. As part of her first task as Beatriz's minstrel, Laura secures a contract with a publisher for the proposed montage novel which she is trying to write in Beatriz's name. The swapping of names coincides with a shifting of narrative functions and subject positions within each narrative. The question of the right name, and moreover the proper name on whose behalf the quest is being conducted, is not merely a question of identity, it inevitably impinges on the question of textual authority. Whereas Laura appears to be occupying the position of "Spielfrau," or

helper, she in fact comes to represent Beatriz as author of the montage novel in a process of substitution which has Laura "acting," but only ever in the sense of "deputizing," as the subject of textual authority in Beatriz's place. In *Amanda*, Laura's authority over the narrative is placed in question when Beatriz reveals that it was actually not Laura but Amanda who was responsible for writing the *Trobadora* novel. In the Beatriz narrative, Laura acts both as helper and subject of the signifying process that constitutes Beatriz as the object of the novel.

The relative positioning of Beatriz and Laura within the "Stützpunkt" model raises the issue once again of female solidarity. Laura and Beatriz discuss female solidarity as an ideal with immense emancipatory potential which historically and politically has had little chance to develop because women have traditionally tended to internalize their inferior status:

Wer zum Beispiel zu lebenslänglichem Kerker verurteilt wurde und keine Ausbruchspläne macht, ist nicht stolz, sondern feige. Beklagtest du nicht ebenfalls den Mangel an Solidarität unter Frauen? Er ist natürlich bei Wesen, die jahrtausendlang erniedrigt waren. Ihre Hoffnung, aus hoffnungsloser Lage zu entkommen, könnte nur auf Wunder gründen: das heißt auf Einzelaktionen. (T. 113)

Sheila Rowbotham has attributed the historical difficulty in mobilizing the emancipatory potential of women to the unique nature of women's oppression which she sees as being comparable to no other oppressed minority group or class in society.<sup>11</sup>

Although there is a great deal of role-swapping and shifting of functions within the various narrative strands, Beatriz and Laura nevertheless appear to represent opposite poles of female experience within East Germany. As "Antilaura," Beatriz represents that fantastic other side of Laura's experience: those unfulfilled desires and yearnings which have been afforded no official place in women's daily experience and in its representations. Like the narrator of Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, Laura seeks to answer the questions about the possibility and

<sup>11</sup> Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World*, pp. 34ff.

impossibility of existence through the exploration of another woman's life.<sup>12</sup> At one point, Wolf's narrator also expresses a similar desire to become the 'other' of herself when she experiences the parting from Christa T. as a division of the self.<sup>13</sup>

The relationship between the subject of the Beatriz narrative and its helper or acting subject, Laura, provides us with a model of feminine interaction based on mutually compatible, non-antagonistic or 'sympathetic' opposites. This mode of interaction is presented as an alternative to the scientific model of mutually exclusive and mutually destructive opposites propounded by Morolf. Laura's realization that Beatriz is her double in the 'other' worlds beyond the borders of the GDR and beyond the representations of women in dominant realist fiction is accompanied by the realization that she needs another half with which to complement herself. Beatriz's experiences and ideals are therefore not the negation of Laura's but instead a corrective or an addition to a one-sided picture. The alternative offered to the male-propagated and dominated scientific model of matter marks therefore a shift in paradigm to a mode of social and textual interaction which is posited as feminine and which is not based on antagonistic but rather on complementary mutually compatible opposites.

It is therefore significant, if hardly astonishing, that the destructive energy which is released in Dr. Morolf's model when matter collides with antimatter is given a positive reinterpretation in the feminist paradigm. The outcome of the meeting between Laura and "Antilaura" unleashes Laura's creative potential and launches her career as a writer. In *Gustav der Weltfahrer* there are already the beginnings of such a model of doubles in the friendship between the two Gustavs. Here, as in the *Trobadora* novel, the friendship is a source of inspiration for both the Gustavs and the fantastic stories that Gustav "der Weltfahrer" tells Gustav "der Schrofelfahrer," his alter ego in the real, encourage both the narrator and his listener to give free rein to

<sup>12</sup> See Anthony Stephens and Judith Wilson, "Christa Wolf," *The Modern German Novel*, ed. Keith Bullivant (Leamington Spa: Oswald Books, Berg Publishers, 1987), p. 285.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 287. "Und daß uns kurz bevorstand, uns verlorenzugehen: einander und jeder sich selbst . . . , bis zu einem Augenblick, da dieses fremde Ich zu mir zurückkehren und wieder in mich eingehen wird . . ." in Christa Wolf, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1968), p. 20.

their imagination. It is only later in **Amanda** that the release of creative potential is viewed slightly less optimistically when Laura's sudden fame as the author of the **Trobadora** novel is marred by the jealousy and resentment of her husband, Benno. The resistance to female creativity does not stem from official levels but from men's inability to cope with their wives' literary success.

This shift of paradigm also has further consequences for the compatibility of the discourses of the real and the fantastic. The constellation of the two main female protagonists, Beatriz and Laura, constitutes an attempt to break down hierarchies between the real and the fantastic and between subject/object positions within discourse. The model presented by the two women would seem to posit the possibility of a non-hierarchical relationship between opposites based on the principle of metonymical contiguity. Such a model allows for the co-existence of disparate, independent terms as opposed to a metaphorical relationship which subsumes difference under the rule of the same.<sup>14</sup> The positions of the terms in a metonymical system are not necessarily fixed and can be subject to numerous substitutions. The relationship of metonymical contiguity is borne out by the constant role-swapping and job-sharing activities between Beatriz and Laura and the shifting of positions within the actantial model of the various narratives.

Although Laura succeeds in displacing Beatriz as author of the proposed montage novel whilst Beatriz supplants Laura as child-minder, the substitutions are by no means limitless or arbitrary. Beatriz, it seems, is able to displace and replace all of Laura's functions as working mother. The number of official substitutions that Laura can undergo is, however, much more restricted. It is precisely those substitutions which she is barred from undergoing which ultimately point to the limitations within this paradigm of opposites and to the problems associated with constructing 'real' alternatives. Those substitutions in the narrative chain that Laura

<sup>14</sup> For my definition of metaphoricality and metonymical contiguity I am drawing on the work of Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and two types of Aphasic Disturbances," **Selected Writings**, Vol. 2 (The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1971), pp. 239-59; as well as Anne McLeod's discussion of the quest for a feminist discourse as a critique of paternalistic discourses of "alternativism" in the works of Morgner and Wolf in "Gender Difference Relativity in GDR-Writing," pp. 41-61.

is barred from completing may help to illuminate the status of those spheres belonging to the real which Laura inhabits and hence the difficulties facing the female subject in East German society.

Laura's function with respect to Beatriz is to provide stability and support at home during Beatriz's adventures abroad. Laura is also Beatriz's stable point of reference in the realm of the socialist 'real.' Although Laura is described repeatedly as the stationary pole of the diad, she eventually comes to displace Beatriz as female troubadour and as creative subject, becoming the author of her own stories. Whilst Beatriz is away, Laura vents her frustration at being left home 'holding the baby' in "Fernweggeschichten" which openly express her longing to travel and to escape the monotony of her daily routine. Writing becomes a kind of substitute adventure or a surrogate for travelling since it is only through the act of writing that Laura can traverse the limitations of her situation, a situation which typifies the limitations of working women in the GDR. But Laura can only ever stand in for Beatriz as author of the montage novel in the same way as she can only transgress the borders of the GDR: in fictional representations. She can only ever be the sender, the acting rather than active subject of Beatriz's travel adventures, never fully displacing Beatriz as the active subject of her own adventures and her own narrative.

From her holiday in Split, Beatriz writes a letter to Laura, offering her a chance to become both the subject in her own quest narrative and the author of her own travel stories. The letter Beatriz sends Laura from Split thus reads as an invitation to Laura to embark on her own adventures.

Liebe Kollegen, hiermit beantrage ich einen Freifahrtschein Berlin-Prag-Budapest-Zagreb-Split für die Triebwagenfahrerin Laura Salman, die bei Ihnen in einem vorübergehend ruhenden Arbeitsverhältnis steht.  
(T. 189)

Apart from the fact that an application for a travel visa might well blow her cover, Laura's consternation at Beatriz's request seems to be unwarranted. Laura suspects the misunderstanding stems from diverging conceptions of the "Stützpunkt" theory: "Laura wirtschaftete verzweifelt im Stützpunkt. Der als Ausläufer von Klassischer-Erbe-Mode charakterisiert werden könnte" (T. 189).



Laura's acceptance of the invitation would therefore be equivalent to an inversion of the "Stützpunkt" model. Because of her child-rearing duties, Laura perceives her role as Beatriz's "Spielfrau" as stationary. Beatriz's request to meet in Split represents therefore a violation of the contract between Beatriz and Laura, because it implies an inversion of the model or at least a temporary disruption to its stability. The inversion of the support model would thus dislodge Laura as the passive, static pole of the pair, thereby freeing her from her position within Beatriz's narrative as passive bystander. Laura's refusal, then, even to consider Beatriz's request points to a reluctance or an inability to constitute herself as active subject of her own quest. The attainment of female subjectivity is thus indefinitely deferred. It is also important to note here that the attaining of subjectivity is associated with the transgression of boundaries. The crossing of geographical and ideological borders serves as a metaphor for the attaining of subjectivity and the liberation of women from their objectification in the *Trobadora* as well as in the sequel to the novel, *Amanda*.

While Laura's reluctance to join Beatriz in Split can be read on the one level as an affirmation of the "Stützpunkt" theory and its stable pairs of binary oppositions of movement/stasis, subject/object, it can also be read as an affirmation of difference and a call for a continuing dialectic of identity. If one reads Beatriz's invitation to Laura to travel to Split as an attempt to collapse the opposite halves of a dichotomy, it is therefore hardly surprising that Beatriz's invitation precipitates something of an identity crisis for Laura.

There is sufficient evidence in Beatriz's report on her experiences in Split to sustain a reading of Beatriz and Laura as dichotomous halves of a divided female whole. Beatriz's discovery of her identity in Split, that is, her 'split' identity, is of course reinforced by the name of the city where she makes the discovery. Her holiday is described at one point as an "Erholung vom Ich" (T. 195), as an escape from the self. One can presume that the self Beatriz is referring to is Laura.

The central metaphor of the story of the "Sklavenhalterburg" of the "Diokletianpalast" also provides us with a few clues here. Both the palace of Split and

the landlady of Beatriz's pension are described as a "historisches Gewächs," as the organic product of an historical process. Behind the facade of the palace Beatriz sees history in human form: "Hinter der Palisade steht Geschichte. In naturhafter, fast menschlicher Erscheinungsform" (T. 191). Frau Saric is also likened to the palace; she partakes of the long and turbulent history of the palace in a harmonious fusion of collective and personal identities. Beatriz writes: "Sieben Tage spazierten meine Füße auf den historisch gewachsenen Fassadenresten der Frau Saric" (T. 194). As the metaphor of the castle and the representation of subjectivity as a "historisches Gewächs" seem to indicate, the female subject is presented as the result of a long protracted process of political struggles. The historical "Subjektwerdung" of women is seen in analogous terms to the "Unterwanderung des tyrannischen Baus" of the palace by the "obdachlose Saloniter" (T. 192). The realization that the foundations for a new historical consciousness cannot be laid down overnight and are the work of centuries marks a crucial difference between Laura and Beatriz and a major hurdle in Laura's "Subjektwerdung."

Beatriz's search for the foundations of the castle marks therefore the beginnings of the laying down of the foundations for a new female subjectivity. Her search in the foundations, or rather in the cellars of the castle, is also a search for Laura, for her absent other self and for the history of that other woman. The woman whom she meets in the cellar, Bele, a character from *Gustav der Weltfahrer* can be interpreted as a fictional representation of Laura or Laura's representative in fiction.

Morgner's parable is reminiscent in many ways of Italo Calvino's story in *Invisible Cities* where men build a city, Zobeide, in order to capture the lost dream of a woman. Yet the woman for whom the city is built, and who, like Morgner's women, provide its very "foundation and the very condition of representation," remains forever absent.<sup>15</sup> But unlike the lost dream of the woman in Zobeide, Morgner's women are always very much physically present. They are not

<sup>15</sup> Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 13.

absent from history, as some Western feminists have maintained, but rather are hidden underground, to be found in the cellars of the castle in Split or at the foundations of patriarchal history.<sup>16</sup> They too, like the illusive and illusory woman of Calvino's story, who is the city's "foundation" and "the very ground of representation," provide the foundations upon which Western patriarchal culture is built.<sup>17</sup>

The "historisches Gewächs" of female subjectivity, although protected by "Schutzmauern," which are likened to Laura's pragmatism, is also described as an "unterwanderte Sklavenhalterburg." Thus it is simultaneously the historical site of struggles for liberation as well as domination. The 'female self' is also very much a construction of ideology and the dominant discourses of Marxism in East Germany have generally constructed the female subject as coherent and unified. The ideal self of Marxist discourse essentially leads a monad-like existence - very much like the palace in Split if viewed from outside its protective walls. Beatriz's discovery of the fragmentation of the female self accompanies the realization that the female subject has always been and still is the site of an ideological warfare. Subjects are, like the palace in Split which sees generations of rulers come and go, able to be invaded and inhabited by ideological and political struggles for domination and control, but equally by struggles for liberation.

In Laura's case the invasion of the subject by ideology is described in rather ambiguous terms as the product of a process of alienation whereby her body becomes the site of the intersection of railway tracks, streets and rivers: "So kommt es, daß Laura von Straßen durchquert ist und von Schienen und Flüssen, die lagern Gegenstände ab in Gewände ihres Leibes, belebte und unbelebte" (T. 195). In the case of Beatriz, however, the process of breaking down barriers and invading the interior of the subject is seen as a positive act of reappropriation and an emancipatory move in the historical becoming of the female subject:

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid*, p. 13.

Ungeduld fiel ab. Und dieser Trieb zu Reinlichkeit. Körperlich und geistig. Ich wusch mich nur schwimmend im Meer. Ich duschte das Salz aus Haut und Gehirn. Bald fühlte ich mich außen und innen von Kristallen durchsetzt, die wuchsen. Sieben Tage. (T. 192)

The laying down of crystals during her seven-day holiday is symbolic of the laying down of foundations for a mythical construction of an organic kind in the "Subjektwerdung der Frau": for the active constitution of a new female subjectivity.

It seems therefore that the possibility of merging the two halves of the female self presents a threat to the very nature of difference and that the separation of the two poles represented by Laura and Beatriz is necessary to maintain the subject/object dialectic. Extrapolating from the relationship between Beatriz and Laura, it seems that the ideal state of balance between the two is posited as a non-hierarchical relationship where both terms can undergo any number of substitutions with the opposite term without either term being totally collapsed or equated with the other. There is, it appears, an unresolved tension between this idea of balance - which is rather like Habermas' ideal of the "herrschaftsfreier Dialog" - and the tendency to fall back into an 'either/or' mode of dialectical thinking. The subject of balance, and its resolution in the text, will, however, be the subject of further discussion in a later chapter.

#### **D. "Der Beistand der Geschichte" - The Role of History and Legend**

In Split, Beatriz comes to the realization that her 'real' mission is to provide the historical and cultural base for East German women for the reconstruction of a women's history and the construction of an historical consciousness as a foundation for attaining selfhood. In the cellars of the palace in Split, Beatriz is approached by the figure of Bele - herself a character resurrected from Morgner's literary past - who reminds Beatriz:

Niemand, der sich müht etwas Größeres zu wollen, kann den Beistand der Geschichte entbehren. Die Gewißheit der Verwurzelung. Selbstbewußtsein schaffendes Traditionsbewußtsein. (T. 194)

This remark reads very much like a response to Brecht's critique of bourgeois historiography in the poem "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters." Here Bele is advocating a project of recovering and rediscovering women's lost historical remains. This involves the seemingly impossible task of piecing together the nameless and invisible traces women have left behind in history: a history of the slaves of the slaves.<sup>18</sup> A sense of history and of the history of women's struggles against domination is essential, Morgner argues, for the cultivation of a specifically feminist consciousness. Great achievements, all of Morgner's character seem to agree, cannot be expected from women if they cannot lay claim to a visible history of resistance as could the working classes in the history of "Bauernkriege" and the reformation:

Geschichtsbewußtsein ist außerordentlich wichtig, wenn man eine historische Bewegung wie die Frauenbefreiung richtig verstehen will. Ohne Geschichtsbewußtsein würden wir bald ungeduldig und möglicherweise einen nostalgischen Rückschlag erleiden. . . . Sich in einem historischen Zusammenhang zu begreifen, erfordert natürlich Mühe, Kraft, verlangt Intelligenz, Belesenheit und leider viel Geduld.<sup>19</sup>

Morgner's remarks echo in fact a similar comment made by Volker Braun in 1973: "Geschichtsbewußtsein ist Selbstbewußtsein."<sup>20</sup> Beatriz also concurs that women need the assurance and confidence that only historical "Verwurzelung" can provide: "Selbstbewußtsein schaffendes Traditionsbewußtsein" (T. 194).

However, the project of rewriting women into official socialist historiography is, unlike Brecht's project of writing the proletariat into bourgeois historiography, further complicated by the fact that a history of women cannot be concerned with existing recorded historical facts: "denn nur die Geschichte der Mächtigen steht in den Büchern verzeichnet" (T. 193). Because the traces women have left behind are both nameless and invisible, unlike those of the male slaves which are "namenlos . . . aber sichtbar . . ." (T. 194), women must venture into the world of legends to discover the history of their oppression and must reappropriate these legends as their

<sup>18</sup> See Morgner, "Rede vor dem VII Schriftstellerkongreß," p. 113.

<sup>19</sup> Morgner, "Die täglichen Zerstückelungen: Ein Gespräch mit Ursula Krechel," *Frauenoffensive* 5 (1976), p. 39

<sup>20</sup> Volker Braun, "Literatur und Geschichtsbewußtsein (Diskussionsgrundlage auf dem VII Schriftstellerkongreß der DDR, 14. November 1973)," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 22.2 (1974), p. 131.

history. Bele describes to Beatriz her first encounter with the suppressed history of the proletariat in the legendary figure of her grandfather:

Eine gewisse Bele H. erzählte mir, daß ihr die Geschichte am 17. Juni 1953 im Hörsaal 40 der Alten Universität zu Leibzig in Gestalt ihres verstorbenen Großvaters erschienen wäre. Umständehalber in legendärer Gestalt. (T. 193)

Although the recuperation of the history of the working class provides the point of departure from which women should start to reappropriate their own history, a history which includes women's achievements and contributions must be distinct from the history of the proletariat. In *Gustav der Weltfahrer*, Bele recounts the story of her grandfather and the tall stories he used to tell as the first step in writing the non-heroic story of the proletariat into history. Morgner's story clearly demonstrates, however, that the project of rewriting history with the proletariat as the new subject of historical processes cannot do justice to the very different history of women's contribution. Such a history of the proletariat as offered by Brecht in his "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters" fails to include an account of women's labour in the home, that is, women's labour outside of the spheres of economic production. Bele's account of her grandfather in *Gustav der Weltfahrer* demonstrates that the rebuilding of the legend of her grandfather and his fantasies cannot at the same time take into account the secret desires and the creativity of his wife as long as the relations of production within the family retain their feudal character. The process of rendering visible women's particular forms of productivity is described as a process of reappropriation of their forces of production:

Die Geschichte verzeichnet Sieger. Klara, eine Besiegte, hat vierzehn Kinder geboren, auch den Weltfahrer. Ihrem ausgemergelten Leib entwachsen und entwachsen, noch und endlos lügenhafte Blumen. Ich erwarte die Zeit, da sie nimmt, was ihr gehört. (GW. 87)

The marginal position of Bele's grandmother with respect to the story repeats the marginal position women have occupied even in the history of the working class. Morgner seems to suggest that although a Marxist historiography has been hitherto ill-equipped to take women's productivity in particular in the home into account, she concurs with Brecht's position that a materialist analysis of history is essential to

rendering the productivity of an oppressed group or class visible. Bele argues, however, that Brecht's poem "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters" is only directed "nach den Männern" (T. 194) and that he fails to pay tribute to the slaves of the slaves who have left no visible signs behind them. *Gustav der Weltfahrer* can be read therefore as a feminist reply to Brecht's "Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters," in particular to the question "Wer kochte den Siegeschmaus?" As Morgner's story demonstrates only too clearly, it was not the male slave or worker who cooked the feasts for the kings and the patriarchs but generally his wife.

During her stay in Split, Beatriz speculates about Laura's lack of historical origins and reflects on women's need for the backing of tradition and history in their struggle for recognition. Beatriz, herself a cross between historical fact and legend, provides Laura with just that sense of historical tradition that Laura needs. The metaphor of the "historical Gewächs" expresses the dialectical process between history and legend, art and nature that is needed to free women from the realm of nature with which they are constantly identified. Beatriz sets up a dichotomy between art and nature on the one hand, and between historical fact and legend on the other: "Ich <Beatriz> wurzele im zwölften Jahrhundert. Von Kunst. Laura wurzelt legendär. Von Natur. Ob sie es weiß?" (T. 193).

Laura's historical and cultural roots are situated along the same axis as legend and nature; Beatriz's historical origins are to be found in the twelfth century and belong therefore to the realm of historical fact. Yet it is only through the medium of art, through the fictional appropriation of the legend, that Beatriz can actually enter into history as an historical and legendary figure. In the case of Beatriz, the boundaries between history and legend are not clearly demarcated. Laura's historical roots on the other hand are shrouded in those literary legends about emancipated women of the fifties and sixties which restrict the representation of women's emancipation to their participation in the workforce.

The legend of the positive active heroine, however, quickly became little more than a stereotype and an excuse for the lack of any analysis or discussion around the inadequacies of government strategies for emancipation. Patricia Herminhouse has

remarked upon the uniformity in the images of femininity of the works written by both men and women up until 1961:

In diesem Prozeß des Aufbaus und der Bewußtseinsveränderung, die bis zur Schließung der Grenzen 1961 dauerte, sind die Werke der Schriftstellerinnen in keiner Weise von denen ihrer männlichen Kollegen unterscheidbar.<sup>21</sup>

The creation of legends has not always been productive in providing women with a history they can claim to be all their own making, that is, a history which includes all their struggles, both public and private, heroic and non-heroic. In the seventies a number of works by women tried to redress the imbalance in the previous literary legends about women, emphasizing for the first time the degree of personal sacrifice which was required of the female activist, bringing to light seemingly irreconcilable individual and interpersonal conflicts.<sup>22</sup> As Beatriz demonstrates in her first "Bitterfelder Frucht" about the legend of comrade Martha, the preoccupation of newspapers and official organs of the Party with the creation of legends and heroic socialist figures led to the creation of dangerous and unrealistic myths about women's superhuman feats for socialism. Beatriz's attempt at a documentary, by contrast, does not aim at a coherent, unifying "picture" of Martha Lehmann for the reason that "sie sich keins aus sich gemacht hat" (T. 356). If Beatriz is ambivalent towards the official version of the legend of Martha Lehmann, it is because Martha is the object of an artificially unifying legend rather than the subject of her own story. If women's entry into history is then dependent on their rewriting the legends from a female perspective, history and legend lose their qualities as fixed categories in the dialectical process of the constitution of the female subject.

Laura's entry into history involves, as announced by Beatriz soon after her arrival in the GDR, the appropriation of her 'nature' - "Laura wurzelt legendär. Von

<sup>21</sup> See Patricia Herminhouse, "Der Autor ist nämlich ein wichtiger Mensch': Zur Prosa," *Frauen, Literatur, Geschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Hiltrud Gnüg, Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985), p. 343.

<sup>22</sup> An example of the revision of the legend of the emancipated, active woman is Elfriede Brüning's collection of three stories entitled *Partnerinnen*.



Natur" (T. 193). The allusion to a female nature, as mentioned earlier, can be interpreted as an encoded reference to female sexuality. Yet Morgner's use of the Marxist concept of nature contains a hidden polemic directed against classical Marxist concepts of productivity and reproductivity. Reappropriating women's nature can also be read as the act of repossessing women's means of production and reproduction. The Western notion of free love thus gains new legitimacy under the mantle of Marxist terminology. The project *Bele* announces at the end of *Gustav der Weltfahrer* is identical to the historical mission Beatriz proclaims in the *Trobadora* and centres around the notion of appropriating women's nature as a prerequisite for their historical becoming.

Um als Menschen zu leben, das heißt in die Historie einzutreten, müßten sie aus der Historie austreten: sich Natur aneignen. Zuerst ihre eigne. (GW. 157)

The reference to the appropriation of nature cannot, of course, be read without reference to Marx' history of the working class. Marx argued that if the working class were to appropriate its own means of production this would involve harnessing the forces of nature much in the same way as had the bourgeoisie. Marx' account of the rise of the bourgeoisie gives legitimacy to women's struggle for "Leib-eigenschaft" and functions as a narrative of legitimation. Women's task of appropriating their 'nature' is therefore concerned with reappropriating those means of production specific to women, which Marx excluded from his analysis of the forces of productivity. It is also concerned to break down the classical Marxist opposition between those forces of production and reproduction. The *Trobadora* novel also contains the narrative of women's struggle for control over their bodies as one of their means of production which will be the subject of discussion in chapter 6.

The reappropriation of women's 'nature,' their sexuality and their forces of reproduction is posited by Morgner as the first step in inscribing women into history. It is also not until they can write themselves into history and their history becomes written, that women can effect the transition from naturalized objects of sexual exploitation to historical subjects. Laura, whose roots are 'by nature' legendary, still

finds herself on the side of nature in the nature/culture dichotomy, at the crossroads of her historical becoming. As a member of the working class she has already, at least officially, entered into history, yet as a woman she still finds herself on the other side of the demarcation line between nature and culture - as a type of "missing link zwischen Menschenaffe und Mensch" (T. 104).

Despite Engels' assurances that women's entry into the workforce would help them throw off the yoke of oppression and exploitation by the monogamous family, in the GDR women still tend to be regarded as objects of 'nature' with 'natural' ties and functions. Besides the familiar division of labour between the classes and sexes, Morgner points to the existence of yet another division of labour which informs the other two in the divide between man and ape, culture and nature. This dichotomy places woman either along the axis of nature, or along the interstices between nature and culture with her mythical predecessors, the sphinx and the siren: at the same time half woman and half creature. One of the main obstacles preventing women from breaking down the division of labour between the sexes seems to be, according to Morgner, men's refusal to give up their belief in women's natural function as mother and as reproducer of male labour power in the form of the emotional and material support women provide in the home. The kind of support women have traditionally given children in the family is still considered by many one of the biological determinants influencing women's function in the family and therefore also in society. If woman's role as reproducer of labour power is not thought by Dr. Solowjow to belong to the "soziologisch bedingten Lasten" of the woman, being a part instead of her "natürliches Leben" (T. 164), it is not hard to imagine that the service women perform in cooking, cleaning and caring for men be also thought of in those terms. It is only in freeing themselves from their natural status, by refusing their natural function as mothers, wives and lovers, that they can begin to enter into the world as historically constructed and determined beings.

Women's historical becoming involves therefore a dialectical process whereby women's initial leap out of history as natural objects is followed by a leap back into history as historical subjects. This is what Volker Braun has termed "den

dialektischen Sprung der Geschichte."<sup>23</sup> Despite the urgency of the project of 'historical becoming,' Valeska, the nutritionist mentioned earlier, gives voice to her bitterness and frustration in a nostalgic plea for a return to a naive, plant-like, vegetative existence in a state of pre-consciousness. She expresses the desire to escape the painful process of historical becoming in the conceit of the dandelion. As a dandelion she could hide "im Bleichplan" in "Lehmboden": "da wäre tief wurzeln nicht nötig" (T. 224). She would, as a dandelion, have no need of tradition or history; history and nature would have taught her how to survive without roots. The dandelion also provides a model of feminine survival and non-heroic resistance with its remarkable ability to survive even the most pernicious attacks on its leaves, flowers and roots. The dandelion is useful for its medicinal and nutritional value, yet it is generally regarded, especially by those "weißwaschsüchtige" housewives who wash on the "Bleichplan," as a noxious weed and an object for extermination. Not surprisingly, the dandelion has developed its own ingenious means of self-defense in order to be able to survive the various onslaughts it is subject to. Firstly, it thwarts all attempts to root it out by refusing to ever be completely uprooted: "Stets bleibt ein Wurzelstück in der Erde" (T. 224). And secondly, its flowers, "Früchte mit Haarfallschirmen," ensure that the dandelion is indestructible: "ich bin unausrottbar: unsterblich" (T. 225). To become a dandelion is thus to bleed but to feel no pain: "Zwar spür ich den Schnitt, doch keinen Schmerz. Lust auch nicht oder Freude, ich bin" (T. 224-25). To lead a dandelion existence may be a reaffirmation of the notion of woman as immanence, but it is an immanence which has not given up striving for transcendence.

Valeska's longing for a vegetative form of existence is also associated with a disguised form of desire for homoerotic love: "Manchmal möchte ich eine Pflanze sein, beispielsweise Löwenzahn, oder lesbisch" (T. 225). To be a lesbian is clearly to suffer a fate worse than a dandelion. The articulation of lesbian sexuality and identity has been one of great taboo topics, the great silences in East German literature and culture. Valeska's desire for a homosexual attachment finds no

<sup>23</sup> Braun, "Literatur und Geschichtsbewußtsein," p. 131.

legitimate expression in the text, except for in a displaced form of representation in the utopian story of Valeska's sex change at the end of the novel. Homosexuality can thus only be expressed within the sanctioning frame of utopian fiction. By virtue of the fictional device of the sex change it loses its threatening illicit aspect, is made respectable by the fact that when Valeska makes love to a woman she at least takes on the form of a man. Homosexual desire must disguise itself as heterosexual sex. Likewise, the fear of male homosexuality is disavowed by the narrative trick of allowing Valeska to revert back to her original feminine form before she makes love to her husband. Homoerotic desire is therefore channelled through conventional heterosexuality, must assume the guise, if only externally, of heterosexuality. A physical sex change becomes the necessary prerequisite for the fulfilment of homosexual desire: the necessary narrative form for the articulation of a literary and social taboo.

The conceit of the dandelion can therefore be read as a general expression of the desperation at the lack of sexual and social alternatives available to women in the GDR: as the negation of all feminine desire - for love between two women, for social mobility, for travel and adventures and for difference. In its regressive nostalgia, it also provides a somewhat more realistic foil to the naive optimism of Beatriz's project of women's entry into history. For Valeska the story can be seen as an attempt to purge herself through the diuretic of the dandelion of all "Sehnsucht," to become totally without desire and hence without fear of frustration and the pain of waiting. It is also an announcement of defeat; the gap between individual "Lebensanspruch" and objective "Angebot," which the socialist community purports to narrow, has become unbridgeable:

Ich warte auf nichts. Bin von Natur seßhaft. Kein Gedanke an Reisen und andere Gespinste. Sehnsucht ist mir unbekannt wie Satttheit. (T. 225)

This extremely pessimistic portrayal of the limited possibilities for the self-realization of women in the GDR is only of marginal importance in the framework of the main narrative. It does, however, parallel an increasing sense of desperation

on Laura's part; her "Fernweh" and sense of isolation during Beatriz's absence grows more acute and can no longer be placated by Beatriz's "Reiseberichte." Laura's situation begins to look more and more hopeless; she cannot travel herself and the travelogues, albeit "Hausfrauenentschädigung," are a poor substitute. And Beatriz has not yet returned with the unicorn.

At this point the narrative enters a new phase. The "Bildungsroman" which began with Laura's decision to educate young Beatriz via the medieval notion of the quest may prove to be successful in taming Beatriz's wild and fanciful ideas about women's emancipation but this solution is clearly not in the best interests of the working women of the GDR. Laura is literally left pining for Beatriz whilst the latter cavorts around the capitalist country-side. The solution of Laura as surrogate subject of the quest-romance is not tenable. Laura must actively constitute herself as subject of her own desires and of her own romance narrative. The choice of romance for Laura is significant. Whereas Beatriz became the historically impossible female subject of the medieval courtly romance, allowing her to go in search of adventure, Laura can only become the subject of a modern-day love romance which permits her to conduct a search for the ideal heterosexual partner. In the following chapter I shall investigate how the roles are reversed between Beatriz and Laura and what implications this narrative shift in emphasis from the "Ritterroman" to the modern romance has for the goals of emancipation and self-realization.

## V. GENDER AND GENRE - SOCIALIST MODELS OF FEMALE DEVELOPMENT IN THE TROBADORA

### A. The Classical "Bildungsroman" - A Masculine Model of Social Harmony

The metaphor of balance serves in the *Trobadora* as a focal point around which the central concerns of the novel are organized: the relationship between Beatriz and Laura, and hence between idealism and pragmatism; the unresolved tension between the teleologies of the "Bildungsroman" and the romance, as well as the uneasy coexistence of the real and the fantastic. As previously indicated, the novel of the *Trobadora* exists in a constant state of tension between a dialogic structure and a more rigid, hierarchical arrangement of its contradictory elements. This tension is one which can best be elucidated through an analysis of the way in which the text utilizes generic conventions as a form of battlefield on which to contest questions of ideology and gender.

In chapter 3 it was demonstrated how the novel parodies the socialist "Bildungsroman" through significant modifications at the level of the structure of the narrative. In this chapter I will investigate how the novel extends this gender critique of both classical and socialist variants of the "Bildungsroman" to the telos of the narratives themselves, that is, to the ideal of social integration and harmony.

Franco Moretti identifies two contradictory and conflicting aims at the heart of the classical "Bildungsroman," which it endeavours to present as complementary and convergent trajectories. These are the goals of individual self-development and realization and the imperious demands of social integration.<sup>1</sup> These potentially conflicting concerns of the "Bildungsroman" are indicative, he argues, of the dual nature of modern socialization and are "conterminous with modern bourgeois civilization."<sup>2</sup> The uniqueness of the "Bildungsroman" for Moretti lies in its ability to synthesize the dual trajectories of modernity in symbolic form:

<sup>1</sup> Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The 'Bildungsroman' in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

. . . it is not sufficient for modern bourgeois society simply to subdue the drives that oppose the standards of 'normality'. It is also necessary that, as a 'free individual', not as a fearful subject but as a convinced citizen, one perceives the social norms as one's own. One must internalize them and fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter. This fusion is what we usually call 'consent' or 'legitimation'.<sup>3</sup>

The "Bildungsroman" achieves a synthesis between societal demands for order and harmony and the individual's striving for self-fulfilment through the mechanism of internalization whereby the individual adopts the imperatives of the social order as his or her own. In this way the novel represents the "symbolic legitimation" of the social order. In its classical configuration, Moretti conceives of it as a synthetic form holding together its inherent tensions in a more or less perfect state of balance:

More than depicting the two opposing tensions of modern existence as coextensive and isomorphous, the synthetic vocation of the classical "Bildungsroman" presents them as complementary. In organic balance . . .

One typical form that this synthesis takes is the ideal bourgeois marriage which becomes a model for a new type of "social contract,"<sup>5</sup> sealed not by external forces, but by the mutual consent of two willing and supposedly equal partners. In the classical formation of the "Bildungsroman," the new couple form a prototype of the new society in the newly constituted family. A perfect balance is finally struck between the individual's desire for self-realization and the call to duty in "the perfect match."<sup>6</sup> As feminist analyses of the "Bildungsroman" have revealed, almost all definitions of the genre presuppose a range of social options in the narrative that are only open to men: the unfettered exploration of the social milieu, access to formal education and the valorization of social involvement in the linear progression towards maturity.<sup>7</sup> Marianne Hirsch reminds us that the maturity that the female protagonist of the "Bildungsroman" attains can not be equated with the acquisition of

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland, eds. **The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development** (Hanover, London: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 7; see also Marianne Hirsch, "Spiritual 'Bildung': The Beautiful Soul as Paradigm," in Abel et al, **The Voyage In**, p. 27.

wisdom and "Bildung" of the male hero; for the female protagonist marriage often increases the sense of isolation and confinement of the heroine, bringing her intellectual and emotional development to an abrupt and often violent end.<sup>8</sup> Heterosexual love and marriage are therefore frequently the feminine counterparts to the adventures and travels that characterize the development of the male protagonist. For this reason, Karen E. Rowe has argued that the patterns of folktales and the romantic fairytale often exert a persuasive influence on the female "Bildungsroman." The fairytale with its ideals of romantic love provides a subtext for female growth and a paradigm for female maturation.<sup>9</sup> The development of the female protagonist is shaped according to the dual imperatives of the romantic fairytale and the male "Bildungsroman" with its emphasis on adventures. As Thomas Mann remarked in a lecture on his "Zauberberg," the German "Bildungsroman" incorporates aspects of the quest narrative or adventure story in a more noble form: "Und was ist denn wirklich der deutsche Bildungsroman . . . anderes als die Sublimierung und Vergeistigung des Abenteuerromans."<sup>10</sup>

The socialist "Bildungsroman" shares many features of the classical "Bildungsroman," in particular the emphasis on the processes of individual legitimation of the social, that is, the socialist order. Yet the harmony that was still possible in the early sixties even in such novels as Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* had by the seventies become increasingly implausible and artificial. Like Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, perhaps the first of the failed female "Bildungsromane," the *Trobadora* also challenges this increasingly untenable notion of an ideal balance between social norms and pressures to conform and the individual's irrepressible desire for a fulfilment of personal goals. The novel replaces the conventional notion of a perfect process of socialization with an alternative concept of harmony and balance, one which opens up a far greater realm for the realization of feminine aspirations and needs. This utopian ideal is perhaps best expressed in the image of

<sup>8</sup> See Hirsch, "Spiritual 'Bildung,'" pp. 27ff.

<sup>9</sup> Karen E. Rowe, "Fairy-born and human-bred': Jane Eyre's Education in Romance," in Abel et al, *The Voyage In*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mann, "Einführung in den Zauberberg," *Gesammelte Werke XI* (1964; Stuttgart: Fischer, 1974), p. 616.



the medieval lady who tames the lion and the unicorn taken from the tapestry "A mon seul désir" in the Museum of Cluny. Yet this state of harmony is never attained; a synthesis of the possibilities open to Beatriz and Laura appears unlikely and the 'masculine' option of travel and adventure is transformed into the conventional modern romance with its ideal of the happy heterosexual union.

### **B. A Quest for the Perfect Balance - Vera Hill's Tight-Rope Walk**

Vera Hill's tight-rope walk to the physics institute where she works stands as a metaphor for the delicate balancing act women have to perform on a daily basis to combine their professional aspirations with the demands of a family and children. The tight-rope is an essential time-saving device that enables Vera Hill to meet the demands of both her shifts, that is, her shift at the institute as a physicist and her shift at night as a single-parent. The rope provides Vera with an ideal solution, for, as Vera explains to her sceptical boss, she cannot possibly have her "Habilitation" finished on time,

ohne den zeitsparenden Weg über das Seil . . . da sie im Gegensatz zu ihm über die Arbeitskraft einer Hausfrau oder Dienstmagd nicht verfüge. Wenn sie nach Arbeitsschluß eingekauft, den Sohn aus dem Kindergarten holt, Abendbrot gerichtet, gegessen, Autos und andere Wunschbilder des Sohnes gemalt, ihn gebadet und mit einem Märchen versehen ins Bett gebracht, auch Geschirr oder Wäsche gewaschen oder ein Loch gestopft oder Holz gehackt und Bricketts aus dem Keller geholt hätte, könnte sie mit Seiltrick gegen einundzwanzig Uhr am Schreibtisch über Invarianzen denken, ohne Trick eine Stunde später. Müßte auch eine Stunde früher aus dem Bett ohne den Trick. Nach weniger als sechs Stunden Schlaf fiel ihr nichts Brauchbares ein. (T. 394)

The tight-rope act is symptomatic of the delicate balancing act women have to perform daily if they are to cope with the double burdens and their double shifts. During the day, they are active as producers in the labour force and in the evenings they are expected to be reproducers of their own labour power in addition to that of their husbands. And if these activities do not call for a delicate juggling act then the additional responsibilities of motherhood will certainly ensure women develop a keen sense of balance. Vera's tight-rope act along the interstices between the duties of

motherhood and her career is precarious precisely because there is only a very fine line between success and failure in the two conflicting spheres of the workforce and the family home. The division can only be bridged through a very delicate balancing act which requires such concentration and effort that the slightest distraction or criticism is sufficient to send Vera tumbling to her death. The day following her official censure by the director of her institute Vera loses her balance and falls to her death.

We could read the search for Anaximander, which is after all referred to as a "Losung" or a code, as a quest for this perfect balance: for an ideal balance between the radical impulses of Beatriz and the pragmatism of Laura. This is at the same time the quest for a solution to the conflicting trajectories of the quest for female self-realization and the quest for "Treue" to the socialist collective. It then becomes possible to read Beatriz's mission as a search for a compromise between the radical emancipatory ideals she herself espouses and the pragmatism of daily survival advocated by Laura. The "Stützpunkt" model which structures the relationship between the two women within the narrative is, we recall, intrinsically concerned with the question of balance and counterbalance. Its primary function is to provide Beatriz, a fantasy construct, with a solid grounding in the real, since Beatriz can only maintain a footing in the real and hence contact to the women of the GDR if she has the support of Laura. The presence of a real counterweight is therefore a necessary precondition for the stability of the fantastic. Beatriz's letter to Laura from Split represents one such example of the precariousness of this state of balance between women's ideals and expectations and the reality of their situation in the GDR. Thus, if Vera Hill's circus act is indicative of the daily contradictions lived by East German women, then the balancing act Morgner's text must perform is equally symptomatic of the status of the fantastic in mainstream socialist realist fiction and socialist literary theory.

### C. Balancing the Real and the Fantastic - A Failed Dialogue

In the previous chapter the relationship between Laura and Beatriz, or Laura and Anti-Laura, was identified as one of mutually compatible opposites, capable of a peaceful non-destructive coexistence and of generating a creative and productive union. But is the relationship between the relative narrative functions of the two women and between the real and fantastic worlds they inhabit equally harmonious? It remains to be seen whether the principle of metonymical contiguity which allows for the non-hierarchical coexistence of two opposing, discrete terms of a relation also structures the discourses of the real and the fantastic. Is the marriage between the real and fantastic aspects of women's lives in fact as well balanced as this anti-scientific model of opposites would suggest? Or is, in fact, the match between the realist forces of pragmatism and the emancipatory powers of the imagination and fantasy an uneven one?

The fundamental ambiguity in Morgner's text, it seems, is that it oscillates between a non-hierarchical, metonymical ordering of the real and the fantastic and a more stable metaphorical structuring which clearly privileges the real. There are, however, two breaks in the text where the stability of the support model and the hierarchical ordering of Beatriz's and Laura's respective life spheres comes under threat. The first occasion is when Beatriz attempts to free Laura from her sedentary position, beckoning her to give up her position as the fixed term of the relationship. The second example of a threat to the stability of the model comes in the chapter leading up to Beatriz's fatal loss of balance when Laura's functions in the realm of the real are gradually displaced by Beatriz, thus rendering Laura superfluous. But because Laura is firmly rooted in the real it is not she who disappears but Beatriz, the less stable and hence more dispensable of the two. After each threatened disruption, the text reverts to a more stable vertical structure which privileges the real over the fantastic and Laura's experiences as the 'real' subject of the Beatriz narrative over Beatriz, her fantastic double. Of the two poles, the real remains the more stable and consequently the more static and rigid of the two terms.

The difference in mobility between the two women must also be seen as further evidence of the difference in stability between the two modes of writing and existence. Beatriz enjoys relative freedom of movement between the real and the fantastic spheres, as she does between East Germany and the rest of Europe, and she appears to be equally at home in East Germany as she is abroad. She also appears to have little difficulty in coming to terms with her social responsibilities as a newly arrived citizen. Laura, as the static pole of the diad, clearly does not have the same freedom of movement as Beatriz, and her choice of spheres is limited to the space mapped out by the political borders of the GDR.

The barriers to the successful integration of the goals of both spheres and ultimately to reversing the process of "Entzauberung der Welt,"<sup>11</sup> are twofold. One of the main hurdles in all of Morgner's works remains the inability of the fantastic to make substantial inroads into the spheres of the real. The major problem, as discussed earlier, lies in the extreme resistance of men, especially those with scientific training, to assimilating any kind of irrational or unnatural occurrence. It has been noted that it is primarily women who display the greatest readiness to accept the existence of the supernatural and the fantastic. In fact, the alarming ease with which Beatriz becomes assimilated into Laura's world is testimony of women's receptivity to the extraordinary. Yet paradoxically, it is this extreme willingness to utilize the forces of the supernatural that poses one of the greatest threats to Beatriz's continued existence. The assimilation of the fantastic leads, as Biddy Martin has correctly pointed out, eventually to its domestication and hence to the domestication of a feminine difference.<sup>12</sup>

The failure of Beatriz's mission can, however, be attributed from a quite different view point to the inability of the real, that is, of official Party rhetoric and those institutions that reproduce and produce this official rhetoric, to enter into a dialogue with alternative, non-rational discourses such as the fantastic. Laura's inability to replace Beatriz as the mobile pole of the diad, indicates a major

<sup>11</sup> See Horkheimer and Adorno, *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Martin, "Socialist Patriarchy," p. 62.

difficulty in overturning or subverting existing perceptions of reality, in particular officially propagated truths. Whilst Laura's lack of mobility is indicative of the lived reality of women's experience as working mothers in East German society, her inability to cross boundaries must also be seen as an indication of the general difficulties involved with subverting official myths and legends about women. The restrictions on Laura's freedom of movement, even if self-imposed, become spatial ciphers of the wide-spread resistance to overturning official versions of the history of women's emancipation in East Germany and to constructing alternative narratives of their struggles for equality.

The increasing domestication of Beatriz's demands after her return 'home' to the GDR can be read as a parable of the way in which fantasy, as a literary genre, in particular women's fantasies in fiction, have been incorporated into the canon of East German realist fiction. Literary practices which transgress generic conventions, cutting across traditions and breaking taboos, have traditionally either remained outside of the canon or, in the case of science fiction, have been drawn into the services of the dominant literary aesthetic.<sup>13</sup> Despite repeated calls for a breaking down of rigid aesthetic categories and taboos and for a loosening up of the criteria for evaluating new literary experiments, the reception of new literary genres during the sixties and seventies did not succeed in challenging the need for aesthetic boundaries or limits, nor the notion of a socialist canon.

Annemarie Auer's reception of Morgner's use of fantasy is typical of the attempts by literary scholars to deny the otherness of fantasy. In order to reassure the reader and the critic that Morgner's work deserves its place in the canon of socialist realist fiction, Auer must play down the differences of Morgner's use of fantasy from accepted conventions and its emancipatory potential to such an extent that it seems as if the notion of a difference is lost entirely. This becomes apparent when she states that Morgner's prose is not fantastic, but instead "ersichtlich sozialistisch realistisch."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Rainer Nägele, "Trauer, Tropen und Phantasmen: Ver-rückte Geschichten aus der DDR," Hohendahl, *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*, p. 196.

<sup>14</sup> Auer, "Trobadora unterwegs," p. 1093.

As demonstrated in an earlier chapter with the example of the adventure novel, the rehabilitation of non-canonical genres, or of those literary forms previously suspected of bourgeois decadence or formalism, is often effected at the expense of the unique and different features of the genre itself. What often ensues is a process of appropriation or colonization, whereby the distinguishing features of the new genre are annexed by the dominant category of socialist realism. The inclusion of fantasy motifs and narrative techniques within socialist fiction, whilst appearing on one level to be a liberalizing move towards heterogeneity and pluralism, often resembles an act of semantic imperialism. The subsumption of fantasy and other genres under the rubric of realism acts as a means of diminishing the subversive potential traditionally associated with forms of the fantastic, in particular, with the Romantic tradition. Horst Heidtmann attributes the defensiveness in the GDR towards literary transgressions to a fear of the manipulation of needs through popular literature, a fear largely fuelled by the negative experiences of German fascism.<sup>15</sup> Rainer Nägele, on the contrary, sees in this extreme disavowal of mass literature and fantasy as a legitimate literary mode a refusal to come to terms with real needs and desires:

In der Angst vor der Manipulierbarkeit der Bedürfnisse spricht letzten Endes aber immer auch die Angst vor den Bedürfnissen und Wünschen selbst. Sie kaschiert sich im geschichtlichen Trauma des Faschismus, benutzt die Aggression der Nazi-Rhetorik auf die Vernunft als Waffe, um gegenwärtige Wünsche abzuwehren.<sup>16</sup>

He criticizes the need to assert dogmatically "den festen Boden der Wirklichkeit" as a form of defense against the dangers of irrationalism and fascism; behind those arguments in favour of the necessity for a solid grounding in the real, Nägele detects a disguised act of disavowal.<sup>17</sup> The insistence on firm ground becomes a means of imposing limits on the imagination, on freedom and change: "Innerhalb der Grenzen des jeweils abgesteckten Bodens ist alles erlaubt: Grenzenlosigkeit in Grenzen, ordentliche Freiheit."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Heidtmann, *Utopisch-phantastische Literatur der DDR*, p. 97.

<sup>16</sup> Nägele, "Trauer, Tropen und Phantasmen," p. 197.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 197.

Werner Neubert's response to Roger Garaudy's concept of a realism without boundaries, entitled "Realer Sozialismus - Sozialistischer Realismus," epitomizes the dogged insistence within the literary criticism of the GDR on the necessity for maintaining clearly defined and delineated borders within aesthetic categories. These "Ufer" are, according to Neubert, nothing more than the principles or fundamental categories by which every aesthetic category defines itself:

Jeder geschichtlich vorkommende Realismus hat seine historisch-soziale Quelle, und sie bestimmt letztendlich auch die Ufer des entstehenden Flusses. . . . Was sind aber die sogenannten 'Ufer' anderes als die Prinzipien, die Grundkategorien und Unterscheidungen?! 'Ufer' oder 'Prinzipien' - beides meinte und meint dasselbe.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the choice of the metaphor of a stream which requires banks to contain it and direct its flow is a telling indication of the limited conditions under which new categories can be accommodated into this body of water. The banks are those aesthetic and ideological constraints which make the integration of new forms possible, whilst at the same time streamlining them to fit into existing frameworks. Neubert rejects the notion that the dynamics of socialist realism should be "hydrodynamisch," that is "uferüberschreitend," arguing instead for the determinacy and stability of aesthetic categories.<sup>20</sup>

The category of socialist realism is thus prevented from stagnating - not because it continually floods its banks and renews its terms of reference, but because it is "gesellschaftsdynamisch."<sup>21</sup> This presumably means that the category itself is not necessarily dynamic but that it is capable of bringing about changes and movement in something other than itself. Neubert thereby diverts attention from the limits of the socialist realist canon itself, which the metaphor of the banks was intended to circumscribe, onto the social function of the stream. He thus side-steps carefully the question of the function of the banks in relation to the stream they are supposed to contain. What is then at issue for Neubert is not the need for banks but the more

<sup>19</sup> Werner Neubert, "Realer Sozialismus - Sozialistischer Realismus," **Ansichten: Aufsätze zur Literatur der DDR**, ed. Klaus Walther (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1976), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

pressing question of the direction of the stream, its final destination and its fellow-travellers.

Although Neubert does not address the question of the inclusion of fantasy motifs and topoi in the socialist realist literary canon in his essay, the fate of those genres previously excluded from the canon is nevertheless clear. The parameters or "Ufer" of the canon function in such a way as to curb and limit the free 'flow' of such new-comers to the canon as myth, folktale, fantasy and science fiction. The result is that the inclusion of heterogeneous or even antinomous genres into the canon often achieves little by way of expanding the notions of boundaries and realism themselves.

By the same token, the insistence that fantasy is realistic and that the genre is just another form of realism is often usefully employed as a strategic move on the part of critics and authors to gain recognition for neglected aspects of socialist reality. Hence, when Annemarie Auer terms Morgner's prose "realistisch," this should be understood as a strategy to legitimize the use of hitherto largely unacceptable literary forms and motifs. Morgner herself uses the same tactic to prevent her work from being dismissed as irrationalism or escapism, a form of label which would severely hamper the reception of her work in the GDR as serious fiction. For Morgner to call her prose 'realistic' is, therefore, not an act of self-abnegation or necessarily a refusal of the designation 'fantasy'; it is much more a pragmatic means of securing herself a voice and a place from which to speak within the canon. It represents therefore a conscious choice to speak from within the dominant literary canon in order to have a voice at all. Morgner's optimistic belief in the *Trobadora* that she can find a voice from within the canon seems to undergo a radical reappraisal in *Amanda*, with the imprisonment of the now mute Beatriz in her reincarnation as a siren in the zoological gardens of the Berlin "Tierpark." Beatriz has often been interpreted as the representative of the female writer in the GDR and her enforced silence in *Amanda* seems to indicate a growing sense of helplessness and pessimism with regard to the powers of the writer and literature in general to effect any substantial changes in society. The silencing of Beatriz and her extreme isolation



in her cage in the zoo seems to suggest that the choice to speak from a place within the system no longer even guarantees that the writing subject is given a voice at all.

#### **D. The "Trobadora" as a Failed "Bildungsroman" - The Domestication of Beatriz**

If we take Beatriz as the representative of that which has been excluded from depictions of women's reality in the GDR, the phase of the narrative when Beatriz returns home to the GDR and gradually takes over Laura's domestic tasks can be read as a commentary on the process of rehabilitation of the fantastic as a genre. The contradictory nature of this process of assimilation is encapsulated in the title of the chapter, "Beatriz richtet sich immer besser ein und aus" (T. 346). The process of integration of the individual into the socialist community, described here as the process of "sich einrichten," marks the final phase in the ideological home-coming of the protagonist of the socialist "Bildungsroman." However, in Beatriz's case, the act of "sich einrichten," or the coming to terms with societal expectations, proves to be the very opposite of an harmonious process of ideological education. Her arrival in her new socialist home involves instead an act of "sich ausrichten," whereby Beatriz and her radical demands are 'brought into line' ideologically. The suggestion is that the bringing into line of Beatriz with the rest of society is in fact the very antithesis of a happy process of integration; Beatriz's coming to terms with the socialist "Alltag" spells in fact not her arrival but her exit from the socialist arena.

If the price of integration is the fitting of an ideological straight-jacket and hence the obliteration of all difference, Laura's original task of educating Beatriz to the realities of the GDR has paradoxically been so successful that it has failed. There has been no gradual unfolding of Beatriz's personality, no individual growth within a sympathetic social context; instead Beatriz's development concludes with a rather grotesque process of domestication. Her accommodation to the demands of child-rearing is so 'out of character' that even Wesselin is confused:

Da Beatriz sich befleißigte, Laura auch in Kleinigkeiten nachzueifern, erkannte Wesselin sie bald als Ersatzmutter an. Nannte sie aber nicht 'Mama.' (T. 378)

Shortly after Beatriz has been brought into line, she loses her balance while cleaning Laura's windows from the balcony and falls to her death. The domestication of Beatriz, of her emancipatory aspirations toward sexual liberation and the eroticization of the everyday, simultaneously entails, it would seem, the end of those radical impulses. It would also seem to signal the end of the usefulness of the fantastic to women's concerns. But Beatriz's death signifies a loss of balance in more ways than one. Her sudden departure spells the collapse of the support model which assigned to Beatriz the role of a fantastic counterbalance to Laura's experiences in the sphere of official East German reality. Without the guaranteed support of Beatriz, Laura is left to fill this gap caused by Beatriz's disappearance through the creation of another fantasy figure, the ideal emancipated male.

Beatriz's sudden disappearance from the narrative has been thought by some East German critics to be the logical outcome of Laura's successfully completed plan for the education of Beatriz. Once Beatriz has been tamed, her ideals modified and moderated for the more modest aims of working East German women, she is no longer needed. She becomes superfluous, argues Sigrid Damm.<sup>22</sup> One might ask, however: if Beatriz has been so successfully domesticated and house-trained, as the text suggests, whether it might not seem more logical to conclude that it is in fact Laura who is now rendered superfluous?

As mentioned earlier, Beatriz's home-coming to the GDR causes a gradual displacement of Laura as working mother and as the static pole and stationary partner in the alliance between the two women. The more Beatriz becomes integrated into Laura's domestic sphere, taking over her duties as child-minder, mother and house-keeper, the greater the physical resemblance between the two women becomes. The chapter entitled "Die Freundinnen nähern sich zusehends einander, das entfernt sie" (T. 378) marks the beginning of a disturbing shift in identities between the two women. The physical resemblance is therefore a 'reflection' of the more important similarity between the now identical social functions of the two friends. This

<sup>22</sup> Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz," p. 144.

merging of the identities of Beatriz and Laura obviously signals a crisis point in both the education of Beatriz and the development of Laura. It now becomes apparent that there has been a hidden agenda to Laura's plan to rid Beatriz of her "Hörner" and to smooth her rough edges through the idea of the quest, that is, to enable Laura herself to eventually take Beatriz's place as the active subject of her own adventures. One of Laura's aims in teaching Beatriz the skills of child-minding was to find a substitute mother for herself, to duplicate herself so that she may quit her "stationären Dienst" and replace Beatriz as the mobile rather than sedentary subject of the "Stützpunkt" model. She announces her intention to embark on her own set of adventures to Beatriz on the morning after her wedding:

"Du behältst Wesselin. Hast du dich etwa umsonst hauswirtschaftlich orientiert? Ich habe lange genug daheim gehockt, jetzt übernimmst du den stationären Dienst." - Beatriz wußte gegen Lauras Logik nichts einzuwenden. Bewunderte sie sogar, das Bild, das sich die Trobadora während der Reise von der Freundin gemacht hatte, war inzwischen zum Vorbild geraten. Dem nachzueifern sich Beatriz vornahm. Die Zeitungen, die sie seit ihrer Rückkehr las, bestärkten sie in diesen Bemühungen prinzipiell. (T. 338)

Beatriz has no objections to her new duties; she has been brought ideologically so well into line that she has only the utmost admiration for the heroic achievements of the socialist mother, Laura. The image or "Bild" that Beatriz had of her friend has been transformed into a stereotypical "Vorbild," a model for emulation which she finds reinforced at all official levels - which is why she feels encouraged to imitate it. The creation of a "Vorbild" from a "Bild" involves, however, the continued enforcement of normative bourgeois ideals of femininity and motherhood which Beatriz uncritically adopts. In view of the fact that it was Laura's aim to moderate Beatriz's unrealistic expectations of emancipation and to educate her into the realities of women's situation in the work place and in the home, Laura's mission has certainly failed if all she has achieved is the duplication of the official myth of the active, tireless working-class heroine.

Beatriz appears therefore to have misunderstood her brief; here she is reinforcing the official myths and images of femininity instead of challenging them. Instead of encouraging Laura to satisfy her thirst for travel, Beatriz finds herself

discrediting the desire to travel as a means of compensating "die innere Hohlheit" through "großer Erlebnisverschleiß" (T. 347). Laura eventually also comes to realize the failure of her plan when it becomes clear that she too, like the circus from which she rescued Beatriz, is guilty of taming Beatriz for her own individual needs:

Am 28. Januar bemerkte Laura, daß Beatriz ihr auch äußerlich ähnlich geworden war. "Warum dressierst du dich so", fragte sie erschreckt, "willst du mich doubeln? Willst du dich überflüssig machen?" (T. 397)

The growing physical resemblance between the two women signals not merely a merging of their social functions; it suggests furthermore a conflation and confusion of identities. This is perceived by Laura as a threat to her own life as well as to Beatriz's. The process by which their social functions and therefore their social identities merge paradoxically does not bring the two women closer together. It is described instead as tearing them apart: "das entfernt sie" (T. 378). The role-reversal, instead of providing an ideal solution to Laura's longing for travel and adventure, upsets and disrupts the stability of the relationship and the fixed subject-positions of both women. It is this loss of equilibrium, this loss of a suitable division of labour between the two women, that can be seen as responsible for Beatriz's loss of balance on the balcony and her violent disappearance from the narrative.

Beatriz's loss of balance is plainly the result of an attack of vertigo; yet it could equally well be construed as symptomatic of an identity crisis. That Beatriz's disappearance is indeed somehow linked to an identity crisis, involving both terms of the dialectic between Beatriz and Laura, is prepared by the chapter heading, "Die Freundinnen nähern sich zusehends einander, das entfernt sie." Beatriz's attack of vertigo occurs therefore at that point in the narrative where the identities and social function of the two women come so precariously close to each other as to merge. The merging or collapsing of those quasi-identities which function in the narrative as dichotomous halves of women's experience in East Germany causes a disruption to the dialectics of identity by removing one term of the dialectic. Beatriz's usurpation of Laura's social role effectively closes the dialectic between the two women, the dialectic of identity and subjectivity as well as the dialectic between the real and the

fantastic as opposite poles of female experience. This must eventually cause a displacement of the relative positions of the terms.

Beatriz's usurpation of Laura can be seen as a substitution of a metaphoric type as it pushes the term it replaces out of the signifying chain. But because the 'real' is always the more stable of the two terms, Beatriz's attempt at taking over from Laura miscarries and it is finally Beatriz herself who is usurped and forced out of the narrative. Laura has the more solid footing in the 'real,' is on firmer ground and hence harder to unsettle. Beatriz's endeavour to displace Laura is, in another sense, a failed attempt at a metonymical substitution by virtue of the fact that her emulation of Laura does not bring about a complete transfer of roles. Despite pronouncing an ultimatum upon Beatriz's return to the GDR that it is now her turn to embark on an adventure story, Laura shows no further signs, apart from a brief "Entrückung," of setting off on her own travels:

Am Morgen nach der Hochzeit eröffnete die Spielfrau ihrer Trobadora, daß sie demnächst verreise. "Wohin denn soll die Hochzeitsreise gehen?" fragte Beatriz. "Ich verreise allein," sagte Laura. . . . Sie <Beatriz> erkundigte sich also ungern nach dem Reiseziel. Und Laura sagte prompt: "Almaciz oder so." (T. 338)

#### **E. Laura as Barred Subject of the Medieval Quest**

Laura seems incapable of replacing Beatriz as active subject of a travel narrative, despite issuing herself an imperative to embark on her own series of adventures as subject of her own narrative. Laura's inability to switch narratives and to occupy different actantial positions within these narratives prevents further substitutions along the signifying chain of a metonymic kind, or further role-reversals at the narrative level, despite all textual indications that Beatriz's displacement of Laura should bring about a reciprocal substitution.

The text sets up a series of expectations at a structural level that Laura will be relieved of her child-minding functions and liberated from the double burden. The structural signs which reinforce this are located at the level of the metanarrative in

the allusions to the medieval narratives of Erec and Yvain. In accordance with the narrative patterns of reversals set up by the medieval quests of Yvain and Erec, it can be expected that Laura's prolonged period of stasis be corrected, as was Erec's, by its opposite in the form of her own adventures. Certainly the ultimatum that Laura herself issues to travel to Beatriz's birth place reinforces this expectation.

As discussed in chapter 3, both Erec and Yvain are presented in the *Trobadora* novel as embodiments of opposing medieval codes of behaviour which only represent ideals when in a state of harmony or balance. Neither of the medieval ideals of courtly love and chivalry correspond in isolation, and particularly when taken to extremes, to the ideals of the Arthurian court. Neither Erec nor Yvain can attain the ideal balance between chivalry and courtly love, the perfect harmony between personal happiness and the well-being of society as a whole. The 'telos' of both narratives is therefore to teach the knight the virtues of moderation and of loyalty to the court. To remedy over-indulgence in one area of activity, Chrétien de Troyes recommends an excess of the opposite activity. Erec's immoderation in love and the domestic sphere is corrected by the Arthurian court by sending him out on a "Bewährungsprobe," or a test of his moral courage and physical prowess. Erec's long period of inactivity at court is in turn corrected by his embarking on a mission. Yvain's excessive indulgence in feats of chivalry is likewise remedied by a phase of domesticity which parallels Beatriz's phase of domesticity preceding her death.

If we read the two narratives of Erec and Yvain along the isotopic axis of stasis/movement, we find that in the Erec narrative the syntagmatic segment of stasis where Erec and Enide finally find domestic happiness together is followed by a segment of movement. In Yvain the order is reversed and Yvain's excessive adventures are curtailed by a long-overdue home-coming to Laudine, his lady-in-waiting. It is not difficult to imagine that the life and adventures of Beatriz could be slotted into either of the courtly romances at different points along the syntagmatic chain. Like Yvain, Beatriz's extended period of adventures is 'corrected' by her return home to the GDR to Laura, who doubles here as her lady-in-waiting, Laudine. It is during this time that Laura acts out the part of the Erec in the Erec

narrative during his phase of stasis. It is also possible to map the narrative segment of the bringing-home of the object of the quest, the unicorn, onto the syntagm of disjunction where Erec returns home to the Arthurian court with Enide, the object of his quest. Beatriz's return home is similarly followed by a period of calm, where it seems as if Beatriz and Laura had collectively found the ideal solution to the conflicting demands of the working mother and wife. But, as in the Erec narrative, this period of happiness is in a precarious state of balance and is only short-lived.

These structural parallels between the life and adventures of Laura and the legends of Erec and Yvain awaken expectations that Laura will also be freed from her position in Beatriz's narrative as "Spielfrau" or vicarious subject, or what Greimas calls the sender of the quest. By stepping out of this narrative, Laura would no longer need to be the 'acting' subject of Beatriz's narrative or even the helper in someone else's narrative but the active subject of her own story.

Laura, it would seem, misreads Beatriz's attempts at duplication of the domestic, stationary side of women's experience; she consistently misses her cues and forgets her own ultimatum to travel to Almaciz. Beatriz's usurpation of Laura's role is not an attempt to render Laura superfluous but is instead a cue to Laura to go in search of adventure. Even when Laura realizes Beatriz has already replaced her to such an extent as to render her superfluous, she is still unaware of her failure to fulfil the syntagmatic conditions required of the proper subject of a medieval courtly romance, namely the necessity of countering periods of inactivity with periods of activity. The real cause for Beatriz's loss of balance could instead be ultimately located in Laura's inability to break out of the official 'realist' narrative which is resistant to the need for a renewed dialectic between stasis and movement and therefore to women's desire for greater freedom of movement and flexibility. It is not Beatriz who has become superfluous but Laura who has been made redundant by being caught up in a process which effectively duplicates her.

Critics in the GDR have tended to concur with Laura's statement that, by duplicating Laura, Beatriz is actually rendering herself superfluous. This is then always taken as the only possible explanation for Beatriz's disappearance. Laura's

explanation is furthermore understood as sufficient proof that the fantastic has served its purpose. Beatriz's disappearance from the narrative is interpreted by Sigrid Damm as a timely "Abbau von Illusionen, frauenrechtlerischen Zuspitzungen, von Wünschen einer sofortigen, radikalen Veränderung der Lage der Frau . . ." <sup>23</sup> She reads Beatriz's death as a further sign that Beatriz's radical demands for equality and subjectivity have either been met or sufficiently softened by a deeper understanding of the actually existing state of women's emancipation in the GDR. The diminishing importance of the figure of Beatriz is accompanied by a "Hinwendung zu den tatsächlich existierenden, komplizierten Veränderungsbedingungen." <sup>24</sup> To see Beatriz's sudden disappearance from the narrative which bears her name in such terms is to underestimate the importance of the figure and her role in the story. By reading the removal from the text of its main protagonist as simply the moderation of unrealistic demands, Damm is encouraging a reading of the novel along the lines of the "Ankunftsroman."

#### F. Beatriz's Home-Coming and the "Ankunftsroman"

To read the disappearance of Beatriz from the site of the narrative as the dismantling of false illusions represents an attempt to recuperate the novel for socialist realism and to superimpose the narrative structure of the genre of the socialist "Bildungsroman" and its variant in the sixties, the "Ankunftsroman" on a text which is really going in an opposite direction. The tale of Beatriz, as told by her mistress, Laura, is in fact the story of the failure of an education. Beatriz does indeed successfully complete an apprenticeship in child-rearing and other household duties, yet her new-found pragmatism does not seem to hold any promise for the future. Damm's interpretation of Laura's "Erziehungsprozeß" in terms of the moderation of excessive demands seems to stem from an insistence on the literalism of Laura's remarks concerning the aims of her education of Beatriz. This reading fails to take into account Melusine's rather stern rebuke of Laura's desire to curb Beatriz's

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<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*



"Ungeduld" and "Größenwahn." When an exasperated Laura attacks Beatriz with a book crying, "Ungeduld und Größenwahn werden dein Untergang sein!" (T. 180), Melusine's response is to declare Laura's project to be grossly misguided:

"Du hast schwer gefehlt. Widerrufe dich! Laß ab von sündhafter Einmischung! Denn Ungeduld ist das einzigartige Talent der Beatriz de Dia, Größenwahn ihre außerordentliche Tugend. Wer ihr Talent und Tugend adressiert, so geschehen ist jahrtausendlang ihren Schwestern, macht sich schuldig vor Gott, der kein Mann sein kann. Auch keine Frau. (T. 181)

Thus, whilst Laura conceives of the idea of a medieval adventure in order to teach Beatriz the medieval virtues of "Mâze und Treue" (T. 184), it is equally important to read her statements in connection with Melusine's critique of Laura's short-sightedness. To teach Beatriz a sense of moderation in her demands for the immediate realization of emancipatory ideals would clearly divest her of what Melusine is convinced is her most important contribution to the future of women in the GDR. And it is only with the help of Beatriz's megalomania and her refusal to align herself with the Persephonic opposition or with any prescriptive dogma that she can function as the perfect agent to reactivate dormant emancipatory ideals.

However, behind the professed aims of inculcating moderation and partisanship in Beatriz in the name of the socialist cause, Laura has also a somewhat different training programme in mind for Beatriz. As we recall, the purpose of her close tutelage of Beatriz's activities is to give Beatriz a lesson in the real state of women's emancipation as lived daily by women in the GDR, and to correct certain naive assumptions she has about existing relations between the sexes under socialism. This secondary education narrative is, however, only granted the status of a subtext. It is eventually absorbed into the main education narrative, which is by contrast concerned with instilling in the individual the socialist virtues of moderation and partisanship. Furthermore, the eagerness with which Beatriz conforms to the official ideal of the working woman and mother propagated in the novels of the fifties and sixties is yet another indication that we are dealing with a parody of an official narrative. The alternative narrative of the education of Beatriz, which traces the gradual disillusionment of Beatriz's initial expectations about the GDR as "ein Ort

des Wunderbaren," becomes subsumed under the dominant education narrative which equates women's emancipation with their participation in the workforce. This dominant education narrative - typical of the "Ankunftsroman" - tends to pose the question of women's emancipation solely in terms of the degree of their commitment to their work and consequently their commitment to socialism.

The process of Beatriz's education reads, until her disappearance, as a paradigm of the "Ankunftsroman." Just at the point, however, where the "arrival" of Beatriz appears to be achieved, the narrative falters and derails, leaving the task of educating Beatriz unfinished. The final stage in the formation of the "allseitig entwickelte sozialistische Persönlichkeit," and the harmonious integration of this individual into the socialist collective, cannot take place, and Beatriz is displaced instead from the narrative altogether.

In the "Ankunftsroman," the heroine is typically aided in her path to adulthood and maturity by exemplary male figures who embody the correct attitude and commitment to the socialist cause. The role of the educator is often played by a father-figure or a potential lover who is largely responsible for the cultivation of a positive, active attitude to socialism in the heroine. Whereas the protagonist constitutes for the most part the object of the process of education, it is crucial that she make the transition from object to subject of the education process by herself adopting the role of educator and ideological mentor with respect to others:

Das Subjekt ist nicht mehr vorwiegend Objekt der Erziehung, es ist  
angelangt an der Front des Fortschritts, seine eigene Tat treibt sie jetzt  
mit voran. Das Objekt der Erziehung wird selbst zum Erzieher.<sup>25</sup>

The attainment of a socialist "Heimat" in the "Ankunftsroman" is achieved via the positive experience with socialist work and the new principles of socialist production. The telos of the narrative can be understood as the inculcation of a socialist work ethos and a lasting commitment to the goals of GDR socialism. The hero/ine is neither the already committed socialist, nor the petty bourgeois or fascist hero of the "Aufbauromane" who is to be converted to socialism; instead it is those

<sup>25</sup> Horst Redeker, "Abbildung und Aktion," *Forum* 2 (1966), p. 23.

often naive ingenuous figures, "die erst noch in der neuen sozialistischen Produktionswirklichkeit ankommen müssen."<sup>26</sup> As Knipp points out, the arrival of the hero/ine in the socialist "Alltag" stands as a metaphor for "die im wesentlichen bereits geschaffene sozialistische Ökonomie."<sup>27</sup> Beatriz's arrival back home in the GDR challenges the concept of the "Erziehungsprozeß durch Arbeit"<sup>28</sup> and the assumption that the education of the heroine and subsequently her emancipation can only be achieved through her successful integration into the spheres of production.

The remodelling of Beatriz for Laura's domestic purposes obviously represents an arrival of a radically different kind, one which had hitherto played no role in the dominant narratives of the fifties and sixties. Whereas the site of the process of ideological formation at the centre of the "Ankunftsroman" had previously been firmly located in the public spheres of production, the final stage in Beatriz's education takes place entirely in the private, domestic sphere. This topological shift parallels the change in the concerns of women's writing in the seventies away from the public arena as the major site of women's emancipation to the private, domestic sphere as the new site of struggle for equality among the sexes. Beatriz's integration into Laura's domestic sphere thus signals the need for a reappraisal of this repressed sphere of socialist women's lives and for due recognition for the invisible contributions to socialism that women perform daily in the family home. The illuminating of that side of women's reality further serves to challenge official notions of what constitutes socially productive work.

Beatriz's attempts at appropriating Laura's sphere reads therefore as a rewriting of the "Ankunftsroman" understood as "der Prozeß der Aneignung eines neuen Wirklichkeits-bereichs."<sup>29</sup> The new sphere of reality that the *Trobadora* novel sets out to appropriate is no longer the sphere of industrial production but instead that private, domestic site of the production of the double burden. The story of Beatriz's arrival in the domestic sphere of production is, because it is intercepted at its crucial

<sup>26</sup> Wolfgang Knipp, *Zum Verhältnis von Individuum und Gesellschaft* (Köln: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1980), p. 162.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 152.

stage of development, indicative of women's inability to fully appropriate the means of production in the home and to extricate themselves from the exploitative relations of production within the nuclear family. Beatriz's disappearance signifies at this level the failure of women to 'arrive' fully in this other domestic sphere of production. This is reinforced by Beatriz's repeated acts of arriving and taking up residence in what she believes each time to be "ein Ort des Wunderbaren." Beatriz's disappearance constitutes an unsuccessfully completed period of probation in women's other sphere of production, the family home, which is the site of the reproduction of the family, the labour force and labour power.

Seen, however, from another perspective, Beatriz's emulation of Laura is nothing but exemplary, providing Laura, the authorized private tutor, with a great sense of personal satisfaction:

<Sie> war aber mit deren Studienfleiß sehr zufrieden. Ja sie spürte Genugtuung ähnlich der, die Erziehungsberechtigte empfinden, wenn ihre Anweisungen befolgt werden. Beatrizens Botentätigkeit erschien ihr allerdings als Überspitzung. (T. 347)

It therefore comes as some surprise that the education of Beatriz should be broken off just at the point when she seems to have attained her ideal of the "well-rounded socialist personality." Beatriz's difficulty seems to lie in the fact that she takes her task of imitating Laura and thus Laura's status as a role model far too literally. The result of her over-eagerness is a complete confusion of identities and social functions which means that she not only comes to resemble Laura almost exactly, but becomes a carbon-copy, an exact replica of the myth she is trying to explode. It is here that the narrative shifts from the model of the "Ankunftsroman" to a narrative mode more reminiscent of a comedy of errors: into the world of mistaken identities, role-reversals and happy marriages.

However, the real problem with Beatriz's usurpation of Laura's domestic sphere seems to lie neither in the confusion of identities nor in her domestication but in the sliding of genres within the narratives of which Beatriz is an actant. Up until her return home to the GDR with the spoils of her adventures in the form of a toy unicorn, Beatriz had been both the subject of a medieval adventure novel as well as

the object of a socialist "Bildungsroman" narrated by Laura. But in both instances, she causes a disruption to the structure of her respective narratives, both to the narrative syntagms and to the paradigmatic layering of meaning. As the active subject of her own adventures, she inverts the gender oppositions structuring the medieval courtly romance, as well as the semic hierarchy the narrative sets up between the opposing ideals of chivalry and courtly love. Beatriz's adventures up to her return to East Germany are also neither the typical experiences and encounters of the hero of the classical "Bildungsroman" nor those of the socialist variant. She resembles instead far more the figure of the picaro who refuses to be moulded by societal conventions and mores. Upon her return, however, the narrative switches into a more conventional "Bildungsroman" whereby Beatriz's radicality and excessiveness are curbed and her energies channelled into more 'productive' pursuits.

The taming of the picaro represents quite a common narrative trope in the novels of the fifties, its most well-known example being Erwin Strittmatter's trilogy **Der Wundertäter**. However, the ideology of gender which has traditionally informed such genres as the picaro novel, the medieval courtly romance and the classical "Bildungsroman," has also been instrumental in preventing the emergence of a female picaro as the active subject of narrative. The fact that women have been traditionally excluded in patriarchal societies from acting the role of the active desiring subject has made the construction of an active mobile female subject of narrative particularly problematic.

#### **G. Laura as Subject of a Modern-Day Socialist Romance - The Perfect Marriage**

In a discussion between the fictive author, Laura Salman, and the 'real' author, Irmtraud Morgner, in the **Trobadora** novel, there is mention made of the "Verdacht, daß aktive Beziehungen zur Welt a priori geschlechtsbedingt sind" (T. 28). The repeated references to Laura's "stationäre Tätigkeit" and "Seßhaftigkeit" further reinforce the difficulty in constructing an active female subject of an adventure or picaro narrative. The question arises here whether the shift from the structure of the

"Ritterroman" with an active female subject to a structure reminiscent of an "Erziehungsroman" with Beatriz as the object of a process of education does not ultimately signify a capitulation of radical demands for an active subjectivity and sexuality in the text. What seems to occur is a transference of actantial positions from Beatriz to Laura and back, resulting in a switching between narratives. The caesura between the medieval courtly romance with its active female subject, and the ensuing domestication of Beatriz, is also signalled by a radical change in Beatriz's attitude to travelling and a strange reluctance to share her travel experiences with Laura. The inconsistencies in character and motivation serve as a hint to the reader that the narrative has perhaps moved into a different mode. Where character is a function of narrative - which it appears to be here - then a change in character can serve as an indicator of a shift in narrative function or a shift in genres.

The breaking off of the medieval romance and Beatriz's emulation of Laura causes a shift in the construction of female subjectivity from mobile and active to one that is stationary, passive and house-bound. The displacement of social and narrative functions is also significantly uni-directional: Beatriz very successfully displaces Laura as the stationary house-based pole of the alliance, but a reverse substitution, in which Laura would take Beatriz's part as the active subject of a medieval romance, fails to eventuate. Laura may announce her intention to replace Beatriz in the form of an ultimatum that she will soon be visiting Beatriz's birth place and place of historical origin, but she does not act upon it. Her dreams of travelling never materialize and she is confined to visiting the Museum of Cluny in her sleep in the chapter entitled "Lauras Entrückung." Apart from this solitary visit, when Laura is spirited away to see the tapestry of the lady and the unicorn in her sleep, she shows no other signs of repeating Beatriz's performance or of taking her place as subject of her own adventure narrative. She does, however, become the subject of a narrative of an altogether different kind, for she becomes instead the subject of a thoroughly modern socialist romance. The adventures of Laura end with a fairytale marriage, if not made in heaven, then, at least, in a "Himmelswagen" (T. 185).

Running parallel to the main quest for the unicorn is another quest narrative which has Laura as its subject, and Beatriz, together with her accomplice from the underworld, Melusine, as its 'sender.' The aim of the quest is in this case to find the ideal emancipated man, the perfect father for Wesselin and the ideal husband for Laura. Laura's quest is not without its share of ironic twists, which are concerned with a reversal of the actors of the ordeal sequences. In Laura's quest it is the object of the quest, Benno, rather than the subject, which must undergo a series of ideological tests of strength to prove himself worthy of Laura. These tests are in the main designed to reassure Laura of the sincerity of his convictions on the equality of the sexes and his commitment to sharing child-rearing duties. Thus, whilst Laura is subjecting Beatriz to an "Erziehungsprozeß," she is herself unwittingly the object of an experiment. If the quest for the unicorn can be seen as the striving for an impossible ideal, the search for Benno is equally a quest for the seemingly impossible in the existence of a suitable object of female desire. Benno, however, like the unicorn, may also be nothing more than a figment of the heterosexual woman's imagination.

Significantly, Benno first appears as a conjuring trick of the lovely Melusine in a "Himmelswagen" heralded by a blue light. All three subsequent meetings have a distinct fairytale quality and evoke a sense of the unreal and dreamlike. Benno's unexpected openness to matters of emancipation also seems equally fantastic and is in direct contrast to Laura's subsequent first 'real' meeting with Benno in the chapter called "Benno Parnitzke höchstpersönlich," where he is caricatured as a Don Juan figure. Laura is predictably incredulous when he presents himself as a model of the emancipated male and an anti-authoritarian father, a figure "aus dem Bilderbuch" in every respect. Laura's decision to accept Benno at face value and 'bring him home' parallels therefore Beatriz's bringing home of the imaginary object of her quest, the unicorn. Her first 'real' meeting with Benno shows him, however, to be an incorrigible 'macho' and, what is more, a sexual harrasser: a veritable embodiment of all the sexual and social practices discriminating against women in East Germany. He proves to be a fraud much in the same way as Beatriz's quarry, the pet dog, also

turns out to be a fake. The description of this meeting with Benno "himself" is almost the exact inversion of the first story Laura tells to Beatriz called "Kaffee verkehrt" (T. 111), in which the stereotypical roles of the male as active sexual pursuer and the female as the victim of the male's soliciting are reversed. Laura's point to Beatriz is of course that the socialist revolution has yet to bring about changes in society's perception of what constitutes natural sexual and therefore social behaviour. "Kaffee verkehrt" is therefore an ironic comment on the particularly virulent anachronisms and contradictions still hampering women's emancipation under socialism. The story is an expression of women's radical desire for change and for a revolution between the sexes. It is presented as a fantasy but one that is unfortunately only "zu wahr" (T. 111), as becomes evident when Laura meets Benno "höchstpersönlich."

Benno's first appearance in the 'real' frustrates Laura's fantasies of sexual liberation and active subjectivity and ultimately reinforces woman's role as passive victim and object of male desire. If Laura's version of the story of their first encounter is a projection of women's fantasies of liberation, then the second version reveals the disappointing reality of life between the sexes and the continuing dominance of men in GDR society. Benno's so-called first 'real' appearance has the status of a waking nightmare which stands in stark contrast to the fanciful dream sequences of the three nocturnal meetings with Benno on Laura's balcony. In the chapter immediately following the first real meeting, Benno reappears, this time only "persönlich," rather than "höchstpersönlich," as the genuine article, the real object of Laura's dreams or Laura's dreams real-ized. The re-run of the meeting with Benno "in person" could be read as the synthesis between the dialectics of dreaming and waking, reality and ideal.

But precisely because it attempts to synthesize women's fantasies with their reality, their past and their future, the discovery of the ideal partner never loses its fairytale-like, unreal quality. The reader remains uncertain as to who the 'real' Benno is, wondering in fact whether the real Benno only exists as a product of female imagination, as a fantasy figure with a real existence only in the imagination



of those women who invoke him. He is, like Beatriz, a fantasy figure given an independent existence in the real, and, like Beatriz, he disappears in *Amanda* as suddenly as he appears. Although Benno has an independent existence in Laura's 'real' world, no longer disappearing at the touch of a toe, he retains, like the unicorn, his status as an imaginary construct of the female imagination. His grounding in the real and in women's reality is never entirely convincing - which only serves to heighten our awareness of the possibility of his disappearing from the narrative at a later stage.

Both Beatriz's and Laura's quest narratives near fruition at the same time. When Beatriz first announces "ich bin Anaximander auf der Spur" (T. 254), Laura is confused and shocked and loses seven nights sleep - a reaction which is surprising for someone who presumably initiated the quest in the first place. Once she has recovered, she rings Melusine to arrange the first of the "Informationsbefragungen" with the "Exponat" Benno. It seems as if the discovery of Anaximander acts as some sort of narrative catalyst for the completion of Laura's own quest for the object of her own desire.

If we recall the first mention of Anaximander, we remember the ambiguity surrounding its particular meaning in the text. The first mention of Anaximander is in connection with the mythical figure of the white stag in the Arthurian romance of Erec and Enide. The relationship between the white stag and Anaximander was shown to be one of homology of function within their respective narratives. The retrieval of Anaximander fulfils therefore the same function in Beatriz's quest narrative as the white stag in the Arthurian legend. If the hunting of the white stag serves as a catalyst prompting Erec to go off in search of the ideal lady, then the hunt for Anaximander can be read as the catalyst for locating a different object of desire - that of the ideal male partner for Laura.

Thus, instead of going off in search of her own adventures, Laura's desires for travel undergo a displacement. The process of substitution of social and narrative functions between Beatriz and Laura operates in one direction only. Whereas Beatriz takes over Laura's social responsibilities with the greatest of ease and matter-of-

factness, with Laura becoming her minstrel, Laura remains immovable. Because Laura does not manage to embark on her own adventures, she never manages to totally replace Beatriz as active female subject. Her failure to undertake travel and to constitute herself as the active subject of a travel narrative points therefore to her failure to constitute herself as active subject of her own desires. Laura's lack of mobility begs the question of whether the marriage to Benno does not in fact constitute an act of re-objectification of the female in marriage and in narrative. In fact, it would seem as if the explosive potential of female eroticism and sexuality that is unleashed by Beatriz's appearance in the GDR has been effectively curtailed and contained by the *deus ex machina* of Laura's marriage to Benno. Female desire finally finds its legitimate place in the ideal heterosexual marriage.<sup>30</sup> As Biddy Martin has convincingly argued:

With the domestication and death of Beatriz, struggle and conflict disappear, unconscious desires are defined as safely conscious attitudes, and the female bonding which has provided the disruptive and critical potential in the text is unconvincingly suppressed in favour of a nervously asserted heterosexuality.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, if we accept the view that the disappearance of Beatriz signals the domestication of the radical emancipatory impulses triggered off by Beatriz's arrival, then the happy end can legitimately be read as the appropriation of a feminine difference by a "reformed socialist patriarchy."<sup>32</sup>

At the close of the novel Laura may have been co-opted into the Round Table of the Persephonic opposition but her situation has not changed radically in material terms. The problem of Laura's "Seßhaftigkeit," which is one of the key difficulties faced by women in their on-going struggle for emancipation, does not appear to have been resolved. If the promise of the socialist revolution still holds and women are to become historical subjects and approximate the ideal of the active socialist personality, then the social and moral constraints still operating at the material level of women's everyday lives to reinforce their immobility, will also have to be

<sup>30</sup> Martin, "Socialist Patriarchy," p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 62.

removed. Although Laura is allowed a form of nocturnal escapism when she is whisked away in her sleep to the Museum of Cluny in Paris to view the tapestry of the lady and the unicorn for herself, the mode of production within the new family unit, as well as the division of labour, remains untransformed. There does not seem to be any evidence of a redistribution of child-minding and household tasks. This suspicion is supported by Laura's remarks in the prologue. There she remarks that one of the consequences of her marriage to Benno is in fact the sacrifice of her "eigentlichen Beruf." Her job as train driver, it should be recalled, was one of Laura's main means of compensation for the lack of travel opportunities and mobility in her life. Similarly, Laura's other means of compensation, in her vicarious excursions into the realms of the supernatural and the fantastic via Beatriz's travel reports, would also seem to have been safely limited to the world of dreams. Laura's participation in the realm of the fantastic is therefore confined to the night, that time of the day traditionally allocated to the supernatural and to the expression of the unresolved desires and urges of the unconscious through the mediation of dreams. The world of dreams, it would seem, has become the proper place for the enactment of desires and fantasies which have no legitimate place in the conscious, waking existence of a married working mother.

#### **F. Censoring Female Desire - Transference and Reading as Strategies of Wish-fulfilment**

By way of a slight digression, I shall conclude this discussion of the various models of female development employed by the *Trobadora* novel with an analysis of alternative strategies used by Morgner - other than those of genre - to circumvent the censorship of female desires. If the world of dreams functions as the only permissible site for the enactment of women's fantasies, made possible through the act of transference, by analogy it will be argued that the dual acts of writing and reading women's fiction also function through the same principle of transference to foil the mechanisms of state censorship of female desire. In the following I shall

attempt to demonstrate how the laws of censorship operating at the level of dreams serve as a hidden principle organizing the complex relationship between Beatriz and Laura, between woman and her 'other.' Finally, through a consideration of the complicitous relationship between reader and writer in the *Trobadora*, I shall trace these textual strategies in terms of political ploys the author puts into operation to overcome both internal and external forces of censorship.

We have noted that, after the death of Beatriz, the spaces opened up for the intrusion of the fantastic are considerably reduced. Because Laura is limited to acting out her irrepressible longings for travel and adventure in the realm of her dreams, it may help our understanding of the constraints on the construction of female sexuality and subjectivity in the GDR to look at the particular way dreams have been conceptualized by psychoanalytic theory as filters or censors of the unconscious and of desire itself.

One should of course not lose sight of the fact that Morgner is concerned with the expression of collective female desires which are censored or repressed by social and ideological formations in East German society, rather than at the level of the individual psyche. Notwithstanding certain contradictions inherent in the use of a psychological model of repression and censorship to account for what may appear to operate primarily as a political and institutional form of control of individuals, it may nevertheless prove valuable to trace the effects of power as they manifest themselves at the individual psychological level.

According to Freud's dream theory, unconscious desires and drives cannot find direct expression at the conscious level and undergo a process of censorship before they can "slip . . . past the barrier of the censorship in an inconspicuous disguise" and find satisfaction at the level of the dream's manifest content.<sup>33</sup> Impulses from the unconscious are only able to enter the preconscious, which is that intermediate state in dreams, by transferring their force and intensity onto another object already present at the conscious level - the "day's residues." These signifiers accumulated

<sup>33</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Revision of the Theory of Dreams," *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (1933)*, Standard Edition, Vol. 22, p. 18.

from the immediate past provide the vehicle for the transference of matter from the unconscious to the conscious.<sup>34</sup> For Freud this is the normal and necessary process by which the unassimilable desires of the unconscious are 'censored' or filtered. If the transference that occurs in dreams is therefore the "enactment of the reality of the unconscious,"<sup>35</sup> as Lacan argues, then the mechanism of transference could in fact legitimately be viewed as a type of compensatory strategy which circumvents the initial act of censorship of the contents of the unconscious.

Laura's dream of flying to Paris during the night is obviously a displaced act of wish-fulfilment or transference intended as a means of compensating for her lack of real travel opportunities. Because her suppressed longings for travel cannot be lived out in direct uncensored form, they are displaced under the influence of the censor and articulated through the medium of dreams. One further way of interpreting the figure of Laura would be to construe her as a type of Lacanian "barred subject" - a subject who is barred from living out her desires directly and who must seek surrogate forms of wish-fulfilment through the transference of her desires onto a suitable form of substitute, whether it be a substitute object as in Lacan's "object petit a," or a substitute subject in Beatriz. Beatriz functions then, as do the signifiers from the day's residue, as a medium for the expression of Laura's barred or censored desires.

The mechanism of transference was initially conceived by Freud as a way of conceptualizing the means by which the unconscious seeks expression in dreams through the principle of displacement, and later as an explanatory model applied to the analytic situation.<sup>36</sup> The 'natural' process of transference between the patient and the analyst was thought by Freud to be a necessary part of the cure of the patient. Post-Freudians, in particular Lacan and his followers, have extended the uses of the notion of transference beyond the intersubjective link between analyst and analysand to explicate the more general processes of signification within textuality. More

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> See Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 493.

recently, theories of reading have explored the wider implications for narrative theory contained in Lacan's central thesis that "the unconscious is structured like a language"<sup>37</sup> and that as such it demands to be 'read.'<sup>38</sup>

Within the analytic situation, Lacan also modified Freud's analysis of the mechanism of transference to include the desire of the psychoanalyst himself without which the process of analysis would be "unthinkable."<sup>39</sup> Any discussion of the analytic situation and the dynamics of transference must start with the analyst as the "subject who is supposed to know" ("sujet supposé savoir")<sup>40</sup> who is as much the subject of the transference as s/he is the object.<sup>41</sup> It is in the process of transference that the patient ultimately invests the analyst, or the subject in the know, with authority over the meaning of his/her text and the interpretation of his/her illness. The 'cure' involves therefore the transfer of authority and thus the conferral of power onto the other, whether it be the narrator of a text, the analyst in the analytic situation, the father in the Oedipal triangle or merely the signifier in the reading process.

If we take the act of transference to mean not only the transfer of authority and meaning but the conferral of authority and power onto the subject in the know as well, then the very act of transference also constitutes an act of 'authorization.' By redefining transference broadly in terms of the authorizing of someone to act, speak or travel on one's behalf, it then becomes possible to unravel the complex fabric of the interrelationships between Morgner, the 'real' author, Laura, the fictitious and fictional author, and Beatriz, the object of the narrative.

As the 'real' author of the novel, who is given a fictional presence in the novel itself, Morgner is both writer and reader of the same text. She becomes the author of the novel when she is authorized by Laura to act on her behalf as writer and thus originator of the text. As the authorized author, she is simultaneously reader of

<sup>37</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p. 20.

<sup>38</sup> For the use of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the development of narrative theory and theories of reading see Shoshana Felman, "The Turning of the Screw," *Yale French Studies* 55-56 (1977), pp. 94-207.

<sup>39</sup> Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, p. 253.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, p. 233.

Laura's authored text which Laura relays to Morgner in the prologue. The function of the prologue is ostensibly to establish the source of meaning and to settle the question of responsibility for the text. It manages instead to confuse the question of authorship and avoid the issue of responsibility. By posing as a mere reader of Laura's manuscript, Morgner is transferring authority and responsibility for the relayed text onto Laura, the putative author of the chronicle of Beatriz's life. Confusing the origins of a text is not so much here an attempt to postpone and defer the ultimate closure of meaning, which is often a consequence of the notion of an authored text. Transference of authority is instead a political strategy.

To confuse the origins of a text and thus to refuse authority for the text by collectivizing the responsibility for meaning is also not primarily a denial of the determinacy of meaning. It represents instead a ruse designed to escape accountability and liability for the written word and hence any political repercussions that could ensue from an admission of direct authorial intent. Collectivization of authorship is therefore also a means of disavowing intentionality. The story of the resurrection and homecoming of Beatriz is relayed from Beatriz to Laura who, in turn, relays it to Morgner, and in this process each account is overlaid with the perspective of the next recipient of the text. As the last term in the narrative chain, and as reader of both Laura's and Beatriz's texts, Morgner refuses ultimate responsibility for the contents of the manuscript, making it plain that she only perceives her role as that of reorganizer and hence mere co-writer of the novel.

If reading is then a type of transference whereby the reality of the unconscious is enacted, then it follows that Morgner, in reading and rewriting the text, is living out her desires through Laura, and that Laura in turn is living out her desires through the medium of Beatriz. What occurs between Laura, Beatriz and Morgner, resembles in many ways the signifying processes operating in dreams. Much in the same way that desire in dreams becomes displaced from one signifier to another in

an attempt to "foil censorship,"<sup>42</sup> in narrative the responsibility for the written word is also displaced from one reader to the next and back in a seemingly endless chain of co-authorship. The origins of the text become obscured through the constitution of a narrative chain<sup>43</sup> which sets up a system of authorization which confers and defers authority and authorship. Meaning then becomes the effect of a multiple layering of authored and authorized voices, as each reader becomes in turn a co-writer and the writer a reader. Thus, whereas transference functions to deflect the question of authorship and hence accountability for the written word, it is also the underlying narrative principle by which women's suppressed wishes, like the desires of the unconscious, manage to "foil censorship."

Inherent in this notion of reading is the now somewhat unfashionable idea of reading as a process of projection of the reader's wishes onto various characters in the novel. In the wake of structuralism and poststructuralism, the phenomenological notion of reading as mere projection of the consciousness of an empirical reader has tended to be replaced by the concept of reading as production rather than passive consumption or escapism.<sup>44</sup> Drawing on a multitude of influences from structuralist narrative theory to Lacanian psychoanalysis, Roland Barthes has argued for a re-theorization of the reading processes in narrative and a re-conceptualization of the reader as 'lover.' Reading, he argues, must be able to account for the entry of the reader's fantasies and desires into the process of reading production.<sup>45</sup> The mode of reading Barthes demonstrates in a **Lover's Discourse** is one that operates according to the principles of transference, which in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis are very similar to the structures of love.<sup>46</sup> What they have in common is that both transference and love are governed by the Imaginary relation of the subject to its object. In the Imaginary, the relationship between the subject and the object is one of narcissistic identification where factors such as resemblance and

<sup>42</sup> Lacan, **Ecrits: A Selection**, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> See Felman, "The Turning of the Screw," p. 121.

<sup>44</sup> See Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Discourse of the Imaginary," **Diacritics** 10.1 (Spring 1980), p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> See Ulmer, "The Discourse of the Imaginary," p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Lacan, **The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis**, p. 253.



similarity rather than difference play a key role.<sup>47</sup> Barthes' writing project, which he announces in a *Lover's Discourse*, could therefore be classified as an attempt to "stage the Imaginary."<sup>48</sup>

The reading that Laura performs on Beatriz's text could be considered in some ways to be analogous to Barthes' lover's discourse because of the structures of identification and transference organizing the relationship between Morgner, Laura and Beatriz. Given that we are essentially dealing with the conditions of possibility of a "barred" subjectivity which is reliant on another for its existence and experience, the mechanisms of transference and identification are paramount in the readings and rewritings that Laura performs on Beatriz's texts. Laura's longing for travel and for new experiences are transferred in the process of reading to Beatriz who acts as her surrogate in the worlds Laura is barred from visiting. But as the production of a reading is always an active rewriting of its 'content,' Laura is able to act out her desires vicariously through the agency of Beatriz's travelogues. This is only made possible because of Beatriz's exceptional status as outsider, as the privileged 'other' of East German culture, who, as a rule, escapes the internal and external forces of censorship. Beatriz, like the 'neutral' signifiers from the day's residue, can unashamedly make unrealistic demands for emancipation and is free to pursue her ideals of eroticism, however untenable and excessive they may be. Owing to her privileged position as a foreigner and a political refugee from the past, she can serve as a suitable object of transference, becoming not so much the subject in the know as the subject 'in the act,' that is, the subject who has the authority to act. Through the process of transference she is then authorized by Laura to act out Laura's secret desires and yearnings. We recall that Laura refers to the "Reiseberichte" Beatriz sends her during her travels as "Reiseersatz" (T. 335). Reading therefore becomes crucial to the expression of desires that otherwise, because of the material constraints of motherhood, would find no other legitimate means of articulation. Laura can, however, only perform readings of the travel reports since

<sup>47</sup> See Ulmer, "The Discourse of the Imaginary," p. 63.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

she remains barred from enacting them out directly. As indicated earlier, Laura's inability to travel stems from more than political prohibitions. Her refusal to travel has to do with a strategic decision to uphold the imaginary relationship between herself and Beatriz without total loss of identity. Once, however, Beatriz begins to close the dialectic of identity by even taking on Laura's physical attributes in addition to her household duties, the imaginary relationship between the two is severed. Laura is forced to halt the act of transference and, like the patient, who, after the transference in analysis has taken place, must mourn the loss of a love-object in the figure of the analyst, Laura too eventually has to mourn the physical loss of a friend.

Because the travelogues are taking the place of that which the subject is deprived of, they are overdetermined with meaning. The sublimated desire for travel is condensed onto the travelogues themselves, which then become in Lacanian terms 'fetishized.' Laura seems in fact to attribute undue importance to Beatriz's tales from abroad, and her interest in receiving the travelogues comes to replace the urge to travel itself. After Beatriz's death, Laura finds a replacement for Beatriz's stories in the world of her dreams. It is at this stage in the narrative that Laura disclaims responsibility for the writing of the story of the collaboration between Laura and Beatriz. She relays the manuscript to Morgner, an already acclaimed author, and thus reactivates the processes of transference of authorship again. Morgner then becomes the authorized, legitimate author of Laura's illegitimate stories. They are illegitimate in two senses; firstly because they are the product of a clandestine alliance between a subject with an officially recognized existence and a subject with no formal status in GDR society, and secondly, because Laura, as a single working mother, certainly had officially no time for creative writing, hence any products of her labour must be thought of as illegitimate. There also seems to be sufficient evidence that, even as a married mother, Laura will have even less time to practise her new found profession as a writer, since she no longer has the child-minding help of Beatriz. (T. 7)

In *Amanda* the question of authorship and authority over the text of the *Trobadora* novel is renegotiated. Beatriz, who is reincarnated once again, this

time in the hybrid body of a siren, challenges the authority of Morgner as narrator of the manuscript of the **Trobadora** novel which Amanda retrieves for her out of the "Blocksberg" archives. Beatriz accuses Morgner, as the author and the one who has been authorized with the relaying of Beatriz's "Botschaft," of being "unverantwortlich" (A. 149). Beatriz decries Morgner's novel as "Rufmord" (A. 35), as wilful character assassination and as a distortion of the truth. As the author and a female at that, it should have been her duty to conceal the fact that Laura was in fact the author of many of Beatriz's texts in order to protect Laura's reputation. Morgner's irresponsibility is due to the fact that she has revealed 'the truth' about Laura's co-authorship without telling the other half of the truth of the story, namely that it was not even Laura who wrote the stories in Beatriz's name in the first place but Laura's other half, Amanda, who had been vegetating in the dungeons of the "Blocksberg" for years.

Beatriz claims that this 'other' truth about Laura's 'other' half, Amanda, had not been the subject of censorship, but the victim of "innere Zensur" (A. 23). Beatriz conceives her task of reading Morgner's manuscript as an imperative to rewrite that part of the story that has been censored by Morgner in the **Trobadora** novel. Thus, in **Amanda**, the roles of author and object of the narrative are reversed. In the **Trobadora** it was Morgner, who, as receiver and reader of Laura's manuscript about the life and adventures of Beatriz, and the last in the narrative chain, was ultimately held responsible for the contents of the novel. In **Amanda**, the role of receiver and reader of the manuscript is assumed by Beatriz, who undertakes to rewrite the story of the other Laura, the story of the novel's author. Her aim is therefore to reconstruct in part the **Trobadora** novel by filling in the censored gaps. Writing then becomes a dialectical process in search not of some absolute truth about the 'real' Laura concealed behind the virtuous exterior of the image of a model working mother, but is instead a process in search of self-censored truths and censored truths about the self.

## VI. FEMALE SEXUALITY, TECHNOLOGY AND STATE CONTROL

### A. The "Trobadora" and the Quest for Sexual Liberation

The transformation of traditional socialist generic patterns in the *Trobadora* novel provides an effective critique of the ideological 'content' of the narratives of these genres and their representations of the emancipated working woman. At the same time these structural modifications effect a critique of the "ideology of form"<sup>1</sup> of socialist realist genres, that is, of the formal constraints impinging on the writing process which serve to limit the narrative options available to female heroes in literature. Despite these generic adaptations, the dominant narrative paradigm informing the respective narrative strands in the *Trobadora* would appear to be that of the quest-romance. The specific "master narrative" which underpins all the quest narratives in the text is the history of the quest for women's emancipation; the telos of this history is the feminist ideal of the emancipated female subject of history. Since the search for this ideal and the struggles around its realization inform all the quest narratives in the novel, it becomes possible to read the multiple quests conducted by Beatriz and Laura as allegories of this one "master" quest.<sup>2</sup> Thus the ordeals and tests of the female actants or actors, their tests of courage and will, become the means by which the history of women's emancipation under socialism is contested. The quest narratives participate therefore in an ideological struggle for the

<sup>1</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of a master quest is indebted to Jameson's discussion of a "master code" or a "master narrative" as the "allegorical key or the figural content" of all narratives, the fundamental hermeneutic level of all narrative which generates a reading of a text in terms of its collective historical significance. Although cognizant of poststructuralist critiques of the use of master codes and narratives, Jameson argues a case for retaining the notion of a hidden master code or historical referent in Althusser's formulation of History as that "absent cause" which is only accessible to us in textual form (ibid, pp. 28-35). In defense of retaining this anagogical level of hermeneutics, he maintains: ". . . interpretation in terms of . . . allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation . . . because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in texts as well as in our thinking about them; such allegorical narrative signifieds are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality" (ibid, p. 34).

'subject' of the socialist revolution and of socialist history and, in so doing, they are indirectly engaged in a wider ideological struggle to recreate a space for the utopian imagination in orthodox Marxism. In a broader sense then, the *Trobadora* narrative forms part of an ongoing struggle to clear a space for the utopian socialist imagination - that Romantic legacy of the Marxist philosophical tradition so thoroughly discredited by Marx and Engels for its unscientific 'regressive' approach to social change.<sup>3</sup>

The historical subject of the quest for the emancipation of women in the seventies is quite clearly no longer the gender-neutral representative of the working classes nor the putative ungendered subject of the socialist revolution. But nor is it the 'unfeminine' positive heroine of the fifties and sixties. The text rejects both these Marxist paradigms and specifically highlights the question of gender to challenge the Marxist notion of the gender-free subject of the socialist revolution. Yet the problem of the inherently gendered nature of the socialist subject cannot be solved simply by positing female alternatives to existing paradigms, nor by a direct process of substitution of the active socialist woman for the active socialist man. As Christa Wolf remarked in 1973 to Hans Kaufmann, women's emancipation was not about women becoming more like men.<sup>4</sup> Equality for women could no longer be attained through the obliteration of all sexual difference nor by replacing male protagonists with positive heroines. The substitution of positive female characters or 'role models,' which was a feature of cultural and literary representations in the fifties and sixties, was obviously no longer a viable solution to the problem of feminine difference. In terms of a programme for change, therefore, the objectives of the cultural politics of those years have a number of severe limitations.

These representations were experienced by women as mystifications of their 'real' situation as well as an ideological distortion of their own experiences. This was because dominant literary and cultural representations failed to address the problem

<sup>3</sup> For a critique of the scientific/utopian antinomy of Engels and a reappraisal of Marxism's debt to early socialist utopias and to the Romantic tradition see E. P. Thompson, "Romanticism, Moralism and Utopianism: the Case of William Morris," *New Left Review* 99 (1976), pp. 83-111.

<sup>4</sup> Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 93.

of the ideological and material constraints on the construction of an alternative notion of female subjectivity. Hence, as a result of the attempts in the fifties to provide the reading public with ideal role models, with superhuman superwomen, women writers in the seventies and eighties tended to focus on a notion of what women are 'really' like and what they 'really' experience and feel.

The female subject of the quest narratives in the *Trobadora* presents herself at times as a romantic desiring subject - in her nostalgia for a lost unity of self and a lost childhood of self-confidence - and at others as a divided subject fragmented by the incompatible demands of the work place and the family. This fragmentation is the direct product of the contradictions inherent in Party and state ideology concerning women and the family. Ideology, as Althusser has pointed out, is not confined to the classical Marxist concept of a superstructure; it has a material existence which is inscribed in everyday practices and social rituals.<sup>5</sup> The ideology of patriarchy, as feminists have argued, cannot adequately be accounted for in a concept of ideology as false consciousness; gender ideology has obviously material effects and is embedded in material institutions such as the family which reproduce in their practices the dominant relations of production.<sup>6</sup> It is precisely at this physical and material level of women's everyday lives that the ideological contradictions of socialism are most obvious and most intolerable. This explains the urgency of the demands for concrete solutions like the "Schlafersatzelixier" which Vilma and Laura try to distil in *Amanda*, or the various strategies proposed in *Trobadora* and *Amanda* to alleviate the double burden. What they have in common is that they are all solutions designed to have concrete effects on women's everyday lives.

The double burden is, however, not the only contradiction lived and experienced by women through the agency of their bodies. Here we recall Morgner's description of ancient Greece and, by analogy, GDR socialism, as a "Sklaven-

<sup>5</sup> Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 155-56.

<sup>6</sup> See Michèle Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: The Marxist/Feminist Encounter*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 85-90.

halterordnung" and a "Frauenhalterordnung." The coexistence therefore of feudal and socialist modes of production, each with its distinctive spheres of operation, yet each dependent on the other for its reproduction, has brought with it another form of control which involves the exploitation of women's sexuality by their male partners, socialist comrades and 'feudal overlords.' However, it is not the mere coexistence, or the "Ungleichzeitigkeit" of different modes of production and historical consciousnesses that is of such importance for the female body. Rather, the significance of contradictory modes of production lies in their relative degree of contingency or interdependency. What is significant is the fact that the feudal relations reproduced in the socialist family provide the very condition of possibility for the institutionalization and consolidation of the socialist relations of production. Women's unpaid domestic labour provides the support not only for the spheres of economic production but also for the scientific and technological revolution, whose achievements are still, despite equal opportunity programmes, attributable in the main to men. Here we may recall the words of Dr. Solowjow, the Soviet chess world champion, who reminds Melusine in the *Trobadora* that many of men's achievements in all areas of public life would simply not have been possible if men shared domestic and child-rearing duties equally with women:

Wenn ich meiner Frau die Betreuung unserer Söhne zur Hälfte abnehme, das heißt, wenn nicht nur sie, sondern auch ich gleichberechtigt wäre, könnte ich nur Bezirksklasse sein. (T. 164)

If the male virtue of "geistiger Fanatismus" were to be replaced by the feminine counterpart of that virtue, namely "geistiger Realismus" (T. 165), none of the scientific and artistic achievements of 'mankind' would have been possible. The sexual division of labour is therefore the sine qua non of the competitiveness of the socialist world, of all scientific, technological and artistic breakthroughs and innovations. What is perhaps most interesting in Solowjow's vindication of the sexual division of labour is that, contrary to similar arguments in the Western world, it is grounded not in the idea that women are innately unscientific or lacking in rationality, but rather in the claim that their daily dealings with children have

provided them with a more pragmatist approach to life. Their pragmatism, because it is lacking in those qualities of fanaticism and self-interest so essential to scientific 'excellence,' has rendered them in consequence unsuitable as scientific subjects. Thus the socially imposed burden of child-rearing comes to function here as a kind of second nature, as an unalterable fact of socialism. To question the sexual division of labour is to shake the very foundations of the scientific and technological revolution and hence the very basis of the socialist project.

Dr. Solowjow's remarks, for all their extremism, point to an important connection between the functioning of the socialist state and the patriarchal structures of the family. There is, it seems, a fundamental political and economical justification for the necessity for women to continue to service the needs of men. There is a very direct relationship between the socialist mode of production and the perpetuation of patriarchal structures in the family. Given the dependency of the economic spheres on women's domestic work, it seems to be particularly unproductive to theorize women's domestic labour with reference to a primary or original system of exploitation, whether it be socialism or patriarchy. The tendency to theorize women's subordination in terms of a single originating cause has often been a feature of Marxist feminist and radical feminist theory in the West.<sup>7</sup> In the

<sup>7</sup> For early feminist attempts to synthesize the two modes of exploitation of patriarchy and capitalism in a dual systems theory see Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in **Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism**, pp. 1-42; and for a critique of Hartmann's dual systems approach to women's oppression from a Foucauldian perspective see Bidy Martin, "Feminism, Criticism and Foucault," **New German Critique** 27 (1982), p. 5. See also Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980's," **Socialist Review** 15 (1985), pp. 65-107. From quite a different perspective, Haraway posits a way out of the theoretical impasse for feminists created on the one hand by Marxist feminists' 'ontologizing' of the category of labour and the primacy of class in their analyses, and on the other hand the 'ontologizing' of sex and the structures of patriarchy in the theories of radical feminists. The inadequacies of these approaches, Haraway argues, are borne out by their reluctance to "embrace the status of a partial explanation" and their insistence on the total determinacy of either class or sex. By way of a synthesis, Haraway attempts to transcend the strictures of sex and class in the futuristic paradigm of the "cyborg feminist." While I would agree that the strategies of each of the above groups have often consisted in trying "to annex other forms of domination by expanding <their> basic categories, through analogy, simple listing, or addition" (ibid, p. 78), I do see the value in a dual systems approach which seeks out the points of interaction and the interrelationship between these two forms of exploitation,



East German context, however, the realization that women's domestic labour provides a vital support system for the smooth functioning of socialist production is nothing new or surprising. It is surely a commonplace that the domestic sphere of labour complements the public spheres in a similar fashion to the way in which institutions such as state child-care centres provide a service for the private spheres. What is intolerable however, is the unequal distribution of labour in the family between members of the workforce, who are in political and legal discourse considered as, and to all intents and purposes treated as equals. Because the ideal of equity breaks down most strikingly in the home, women come to perceive themselves as servicing in private the needs of men who are publicly their equals. Yet it is not sufficient to recognize the existence of patriarchal or feudal structures of domination in the family; what is ultimately of importance here is not whether women's domestic labour produces "use-values" for socialism, or whether women's unpaid work in the family services the needs of men for a patriarchal system, but rather the points of intersection between the two sets of relations.

Apart from the need for recognition of the second shift women are expected to perform in the home, perhaps the predominant concern of women's fiction in the seventies was the question of and the quest for sexual liberation. The most important station in the quest for emancipation in the *Trobadora* is the liberation of eroticism and the freeing up of "die Produktivkraft Sexualität" (T. 336). In the narrative, this crucial stage in women's progression towards emancipation is made dependent on the fulfilment of two conditions; the reform of the abortion laws and paragraph 218 and the increased availability of reliable contraception.

The changes to the abortion laws are represented in the *Trobadora* novel as the final and deciding stage in the struggle for emancipation. The reforms are the essential precondition for the reappropriation of women's bodies by their rightful owners. The body, as that part of women's 'private property' hitherto ignored by the state and by classical Marxist theories, becomes the site of a revolutionary struggle

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although such an approach might well have limitations for a consideration of questions of race.

over the possession of what women see as their own particular force of production. If the socialist revolution takes as its first immediate goal the seizing of the means of production and the abolition of private property, then a feminist revolution should likewise strive to seize women's private property from 'foreign ownership' by men. In this sense, Morgner's proposal is a historical Marxist one which sees the sexual liberation of women as only possible after a change in the relations of production in the family. Thus it is only when women become the rightful controllers and owners of their bodies as "Besitz" (T. 336), that they can start to take advantage of their legal and political rights. But the history of Eastern socialism has clearly shown that the appropriation of the means and forces of production by the proletariat and even a change in the mode of production is by no means the end of the story. It is doubtful, therefore, that a quest for sexual freedom which hinges on the development of oral contraceptives and the liberalizing of abortion laws will likewise be the end of the story of women's emancipation. This becomes apparent in the sequel to the *Trobadora* novel, *Amanda*.

#### **B. A Feminist Politics of the Body and the 'Body Politic'**

In *Amanda*, the unqualified enthusiastic response to the removal of the legal barriers to sexual freedom, which constituted the final obstacle in Laura's quest in the *Trobadora* novel, is subject to more critical scrutiny. This final victory provides in fact the starting point for future narratives of female emancipation and is the very condition of possibility for the narratives in the later novel, *Amanda*. The project of the subsequent novel is much more ambitious in scope and strives to build the emancipation of women into a broader narrative involving the emancipation of the entire human race. This narrative no longer represents the history of women's 'real' emancipation as a continuous, linear progression towards a tangible goal and hence displays a greater awareness of the many contradictions inherent in women's situation in the late seventies and early eighties.

Although **Amanda** is a sequel to the **Trobadora** novel in that it traces the lives and rebirths of the two main characters of the earlier novel, Laura and Beatriz, from the period between 1980 and 1983, it is simultaneously a rewriting of the events in the lives of Laura and Beatriz as presented in the **Trobadora**. **Amanda** can be read therefore as a revision of the history of the seventies and the goals of emancipation at that particular historical conjuncture. The novel thus attempts a critical reappraisal of many of women's concerns in the seventies in the light of political and historical developments in the early eighties, both on a local and a more global level. There is, furthermore, a discernible shift of focus in the novel away from purely sexual political concerns to matters of a more global nature which were perceived in the eighties as a matter of increasing importance for women.

In **Amanda**, Beatriz, the medieval troubadour from the French province, is reincarnated for the second time in the figure of a siren, half animal, half woman. She is entrusted with the mission of securing peaceful conditions in a world threatened by the arms race and the possibility of nuclear disaster. As in the **Trobadora**, where Beatriz campaigns as the emissary of the Persephonic opposition to overthrow patriarchy in order to secure favourable conditions for women, so in **Amanda**, Beatriz has a similar function as the agent of a mythical figure, Arke, one of Gaia's serpentine daughters. As Arke's representative in the 'real,' Beatriz is called upon to rediscover her lost abilities as an active pacifist and a campaigner for peace, qualities which Morgner attributes to the mythical figure of the siren but which were forgotten or ignored in the 'patriarchal' rewriting of the legend. "Das ist eine lange Geschichte," Arke tells Beatriz, ". . . Singen wäre die Muttersprache der Sirenen" (A. 14). Morgner's version of the myth purports to tell the story of what happened to the sirens after Odysseus and his ship disappeared and after the sirens' last hour had come.<sup>8</sup> According to her version, the sirens' particular talent for suppressing bellicose tendencies in society by "singing them down" became lost as a result of patriarchal reappropriation of earlier matriarchal myths:

<sup>8</sup> See Horkheimer and Adorno, **Die Dialektik der Aufklärung**, p. 55.

Damals gab es viele Sirenen. Dann übernahmen die Männer die Herrschaft und führten ein, was die Menschen heute Geschichte nennen: Privateigentum, Klassentrennung, Ausbeutung, Staatsgewalt, Kriege. Kriegslieder konnten die Sirenen mühelos niedersingen. (A. 16)

This act of appropriation occurred in Morgner's mythology at the point of transition from a matriarchal to a patriarchal society. As almost all women then led double lives as sirens, with the "Sirenengesang" was also lost a specifically feminine trait and a significant feminine myth. Morgner's mythical sirens were able to regain their ability to sing down war only in prolonged times of peace, and as these grew less and less frequent their talents became lost forever:

In Kriegen verstummten die Wesen. Danach erinnerten sie sich wieder und gewannen ihre Sprache zurück. Als jedoch die Zeiträume zwischen den Kriegen kürzer und kürzer wurden, blieb den Sirenen keine Zeit mehr zum Erinnern. Auch wurden die weisen Frauen immer seltener. In Küchen können keine wachsen. Und in Kriegen können keine auferstehen . . . (A. 16)

In Morgner's version of the siren myth, Odysseus' success in overcoming the temptation of the sirens' song is not due to his "Schlachtenmut, Eroberungswille, Siegesgier" (A. 14) - nor even to his trick of blocking his crewmen's ears with wax and tying himself to the mast of his ship. Odysseus' survival and subsequent elevation to hero status was instead only made possible because the sirens were in fact already mute, had already been rendered speechless and voiceless by the ever-increasing number of wars and patriarchy's increasing deafness to the sirens' pleas. Only the myth of the power of their song continued to live on long after they had ceased to sing:

Die Sage von den ursprünglichen Fähigkeiten der Sirenen müsse damals offenbar noch derartig lebendig gewesen sein, daß der Kriegsheld der Realität nicht gänzlich zu vertrauen wagte. (A. 14)

Morgner thus creates her own "myth of Enlightenment," in the legend that Odysseus' feats of technological mastery over nature were themselves founded on a myth, namely the myth of the seductive power of the sirens' song. The Enlightenment's suppression of the sirens' song became therefore the precondition for the creation of a new patriarchal myth of technological mastery and progress.

Morgner's critical use of Greek myths, in particular the legend of Odysseus' victory over the sirens, follows in the tradition of Brecht, Kafka and the Frankfurt School, all of whom have used the saga of the sirens to highlight negative developments in modernity and twentieth century capitalism. However, Morgner's critique of the strain of Western thought initiated and sanctioned by the mythical figure of Odysseus is perhaps most indebted to Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. In their account, Odysseus appears as the paradigm of the enlightened rational bourgeois subject who interprets his ability to employ the qualities of "List" and "Betrug" as unequivocal proof of his superiority over the world of myth and nature.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the emancipation of bourgeois man and his "Ratio" from nature and myth required a dual form of mastery over both internal and external nature. It was only by overcoming the power of external natural forces and by denying the power of his own 'natural' inclinations that the enlightened individual could assert his superiority over the pre-enlightened, pre-rationalistic world of myth and nature. The price for the preservation of his sense of identity and of the creation of that "Selbst, der identische, zweckgerichtete, männliche Charakter des Menschen" has been high.<sup>10</sup> For, at that moment when man disassociated himself from nature and suppressed the nature in himself and others, he enthroned instrumental reason and technological domination of man over nature and man over man.<sup>11</sup> At this point rationality turns into irrationality, liberation into domination and enlightenment into myth. The project of the Enlightenment, rather than overcoming mythical and irrational thought, reverts to myth when it replaces 'natural' coercion with social and political coercion.<sup>12</sup>

Adorno and Horkheimer see the sirens as the epitome of the seductive forces of nature that Odysseus was compelled to overcome in his quest for mastery over the natural world. The temptation of the sirens' song represents the temptation to transcend the self and the boundaries between the self and others. To fall prey to the

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, pp. 42-73.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Peter Madsen, "History and Consciousness: Cultural Studies between Reification and Hegemony," *Thesis Eleven* 5-6 (1982), p. 204.

seduction of the sirens' song is to succumb to a promise of happiness, to a "Glücksversprechen" which is incompatible with the capitalist work ethic.<sup>13</sup> The beauty of the siren's song becomes forgotten; 'mankind' now sees the need to warn of its inherent dangers and its destructive potential for technological progress.<sup>14</sup> Thus, with the increasing automatization of the constraints of reason and "Zweckrationalität," the Enlightenment has become increasingly detached from the original goal of freedom from "Unmündigkeit." The Enlightenment is guided instead by a negative dialectic, the products of which can be clearly seen in the rise of fascism, the events of World War II and the history of Stalinism.

Morgner shares the pessimism present in the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and its authors' distrust of the achievements of science and technology. She also sees these achievements as the products of instrumental reason and new systems of domination rather than of any concern for the real welfare of humankind. Yet her revival of the original mythic power of the sirens does not simply represent the "return of the repressed," or the use of older myths to combat new myths of Enlightenment. It implies a further critique of the nexus between female sexuality, nature and irrationality, which informs Adorno's reading of the victory over the song of the sirens as an act of domination of nature. For Morgner, the sirens' song is not synonymous with the seductiveness of the female sex, but instead with other historically determined female qualities, namely women's ability to oppose male aggression and bellicosity. But her critique of Odysseus' cunning, like Adorno's, also suggests that the history of rationality and the Enlightenment is founded on deceit and trickery and wilful falsification or myth-making. The reliance on illusion and deception starts, she implies, already much earlier with Odysseus' trick with the wax and the mast:

Doch die Schlange behauptete, daß die Sirenen zu Odysseus' Zeiten bereits stumm gewesen wären. Beweis: die Ohrstopfen. Ein derart lächerliches Mittel gegen den überwältigenden Sirengesang strafe die Überlieferung Lügen. (A. 14)

<sup>13</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, pp. 34-35.

Whereas in Adorno's account, the sirens still had the power to entice and break Odysseus' resolve, Morgner sees them as already powerless prior to Odysseus' heroic act. His feat of overcoming the legendary power of the sirens' song, which in Adorno's account is reduced to mere trickery and cunning, becomes in Morgner's version a deliberate distortion of reality. The myth of the Enlightenment originates not with the development of capitalism and capitalist rationality but with the emergence of patriarchy and its legitimizing myths of domination.

Beatriz's first mission in her resurrected form as a siren is to reactivate the 'original' political force of the song of the sirens as the primary means of rescuing the human race from the threat of a nuclear holocaust and ecological destruction. In this particular quest Beatriz is no longer the "actant" in a search for the ideal political and social conditions for women. The quest for ideal material conditions for the sexually liberated female subject, which broke off rather unsatisfactorily in the *Trobadora* with Beatriz's abrupt disappearance from the text, appears to have been integrated into the more pressing quest for the survival of the human race and for the future of the planet. Certainly the sexual and political concerns of the earlier novel and the issues of birth control and abortion are still relevant in *Amanda*, as I shall show. It seems, however, that the earlier feminist issues give way to a broader discussion of the implications of scientific and technological advancement for East German women and for women globally.

In East Germany, as in the West, this shift in focus appears consistent with the emergence in the eighties of oppositional peace groups, in particular women's peace groups. The earlier concentration on women's sexuality and bodies as forces to be 'reappropriated' by their rightful owners becomes in *Amanda* part of much broader debates on the gender politics of scientific research and scientific-technological progress as manifest in arms technology.

Like the women's peace movements in Britain and America, where opposition to the nuclear arms race has often - and certainly not unequivocally - been considered a purely feminist issue,<sup>15</sup> in East Germany the task of saving the world

<sup>15</sup> See McNeil, ed., *Gender and Expertise*, pp. 44ff.

from self-destruction through the arms race is also perceived as a feminist issue. In a later chapter I will look at what makes peace a specifically feminist issue in the German Democratic Republic and how the political strategies put forward in the text compare to and converge with similar feminist arguments in Western Europe. I will also examine the reasons why the scope of a feminist politics has been extended "most notably through a shift from a feminist politics of the body to feminist strategies for the body politic."<sup>16</sup>

As already indicated, the reincarnation of Beatriz as a siren, her memories of her experiences as a medieval troubadour and as a tourist in the GDR still intact, has as its point a critical reassessment of the concerns of women in the late sixties and the seventies. This is most obvious in Beatriz's decision to rewrite the version of Laura's life which appeared in the *Trobadora*. In *Amanda* Beatriz accuses Morgner of deliberately and irresponsibly falsifying her portrayal of Laura. Beatriz's rereading and rewriting of the life history of Laura is then a form of "Erinnerungsarbeit"<sup>17</sup> or memory training which is intended as a preliminary exercise in preparation for the 'real' work of "Sirenengesang" or singing for peace. Such a rewriting of the character of Laura from Beatriz's perspective entails a rewriting of the history of women's emancipation in the GDR and in part a critique of the overly naive and optimistic image of the officially emancipated working woman in Laura. Beatriz accuses Morgner of creating a falsely harmonious and heroic picture of Laura, who in retrospect appears as an idealized repository of all socialist feminine virtues - as "genügsam - willig - unauffällig - verzichtgeneigt - opferungsgemut" (A. 29). The act of writing is then for Beatriz a dialectical process which constantly questions the validity and truth value of its products.

Before paying closer attention to the other quest narratives and the questions raised for a feminist theory and politics, it is important to ask what is specifically different in the type of feminist politics of the body proposed in *Amanda* and what

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, p. 56.

<sup>17</sup> See Frigga Haug et al., *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*, trans. Erica Carter (London: Verso, 1987), in particular the introduction by Erica Carter (*ibid*, pp. 11-19), for a discussion of the critical project of "Erinnerungsarbeit."



is the nature of the relationship between the politics of the body and the feminist concern for the 'body politic.' Of further interest here is the extent to which the female body provides both the experimental site for the articulation of a feminist theory in the GDR and the practice of a feminist politics of subversion.

### C. Seizing "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität"

In interviews conducted at the time of writing the *Trobadora* novel, Morgner reiterates the claim that the key to women in the GDR taking full advantage of the legal and economic prerequisites for their emancipation lies in their success in taking control of their bodies as economic and sexual forces of production. Towards the end of the *Trobadora* novel we read the same claim:

Die Männer haben bisher bei den Frauen Schicksal gespielt. Das ist vorbei. Aber sie wird sicher noch eine ganze Weile dauern, bis das weibliche Geschlecht gelernt hat, die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän zu nutzen. Zuzüglich aller frauenfreundlichen Maßnahmen und Gesetze vorher ist mit dem neuen Gesetz in unserem Staat die rechtliche Gleichberechtigung verwirklicht. Auf der allein die sittliche Chancen <sic!> hat zu wachsen, verordnen kann man sie nicht. (T. 336)

The legal reforms can, however, only provide the material basis for the task of reforming sexual morals.

In the *Trobadora*, as in the earlier novel, *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel*, women are presented as the representatives of a type of Freudian or Marcusean "pleasure principle" who must oppose the "reality principle" or "achievement principle" which informs the male-dominated socialist work ethic of the first two decades of the GDR. In *Amanda*, however, the ideal of female eroticism is tempered with a good deal of scepticism. The optimism of the *Trobadora* novel is replaced in *Amanda* with strong doubts as to whether the legal changes are in themselves sufficient to bring about radical changes in social and sexual practices affecting women's everyday lives. In an interview published in the East German women's magazine *Für Dich*, Morgner stresses the need to revolutionize people's habits and traditional role behaviour so

that women can begin to take advantage of their legal rights.<sup>18</sup> Changes to social practices require transformations at the level of the collective conscious and this is not something which can be easily achieved in the short term nor something which can be ordered or prescribed from above: "Man kann den Leuten kein neues Bewußtsein einreden, jeder muß es selbst produzieren. Es muß wachsen."<sup>19</sup>

The 'real' work of changing the "Sitten" or social and sexual practices between the sexes can only begin with economic and legal changes to the system, and yet this in no way guarantees the success of the project. Morgner is adamant that changes in role behaviour cannot be forced upon the population but must instead develop "organically":

Die große Arbeit, die eine Gesellschaft und die jeder einzelne leisten muß, um die jahrtausendealten Sitten zu verändern, die spielt sich aber vor allen Dingen in der sogenannten privaten Sphäre ab und kann nicht in 10 oder 20 Jahren geleistet werden. Das geht allmählich, ist nicht durch Gesetze zu erzwingen, muß wachsen, ist ein schöpferischer Prozeß der Gesellschaft.<sup>20</sup>

Self-determination in matters of birth control and abortion are therefore expressed in terms of the historical reappropriation of a female sexuality which is defined in terms of a "Produktivkraft." The intended homology with the seizing of control of the means of production by the proletariat is obvious, yet Morgner's concept of productivity and her notion of what constitutes a force of production is significantly at variance with the Marxist conception of what constitutes a productive and a reproductive force. Behind Morgner's polemic here lies a fundamental refusal to recognize the classical Marxist dichotomy between productive spheres of social life and the private realm of biological and social reproduction. The point becomes more significant when one considers the extent to which the East German state relied in the first three decades of its existence on women's biological reproductivity to secure the future of the workforce. It can be argued, in fact, that changes to the abortion laws were primarily motivated by the concern to regulate and control women's

<sup>18</sup> Morgner, "Aber die großen Veränderungen beginnen leise," p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 43.

reproductive cycle so as to increase their productivity and reliability in the labour force.

Although Morgner talks about utilizing female sexuality as a productive force, in general sexuality appears in her writings to approximate a form of socially committed creativity which is not necessarily geared to any specific utilitarian or economically productive ends:

Frauen, denen die Sitten jahrhundertlang abverlangt haben, ihre Sexualität zu unterdrücken, mußten verkrüppeln and von Krüppeln sind keine originären Leistungen zu erwarten.<sup>21</sup>

Female sexuality is thus, according to Morgner a social, historical construct, the social differences far outweighing the biological ones:

Sozial unterscheidet sich das Leben von Männern und Frauen doch enorm - der biologische Unterschied ist vergleichsweise gering.<sup>22</sup>

In proclaiming the historicity of women's sexual oppression, she appears to avoid the sort of biologicistic or essentialist arguments prevalent in many Western feminist debates around female sexuality which appeal to the notion of a 'natural' feminine body or some ideal of a repressed natural or pre-social sexuality. In many such arguments the female body becomes the site of an authentic 'natural' existence which can be invoked to undercut the repressive nature of 'the social' rather than as something which is always already mediated by society.<sup>23</sup>

The matter of reclaiming women's bodies and sexuality in the German Democratic Republic is particularly problematic given the marked absence of any alternative or oppositional discourse on female sexuality. In political discourses on women's dual function in the public spheres of industrial production and the private sphere of the family, female sexuality is reduced to a mere function of women's role as mother and reproducer of the workforce. Morgner attributes the silence surrounding women's sexuality and erotic needs to a certain 'puritanical' or ascetic streak, which, she claims, is common to all revolutionary movements:

<sup>21</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 334.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> cf. Beverley Brown and Parveen Adams, "The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics," *m/f* 3 (1981), pp. 39-41.

Es ist allgemein zu bemerken, daß revolutionären Bewegungen oft zunächst ein asketischer Zug anhaftet. Da haben wir keine Ausnahme gemacht.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, in order to remove the social and literary taboos on sexuality and eroticism, East German women have, it seems, one of two options. One strategy would be to claim new social relevance for the tabooed subject or activity. An alternative strategy, and one that was employed by Western feminists in the seventies in particular, has been to refer back to a pre-social or prior state of existence which is constructed as 'natural' in order to make a case for the inclusion of the particular activity into the social realm. It has been a particularly useful strategy for feminists to argue that sexuality is something quite 'natural' which has been tabooed or repressed within a certain social and historical order.<sup>25</sup> Discourses of 'origins' provide in general a convenient way of presenting certain social formations as repressive or 'unnatural.'<sup>26</sup> However, the proclaiming of the 'natural' existence of an 'undeformed' female sexuality is problematic because it attempts to couch historical truths in the form of a dogma or an unchanging given. Morgner's ideal of an 'undeformed' female sexuality inevitably draws on the assumption that the 'natural' state of the female body is one where women's sexuality is a productive force not yet deformed by social constraints. Similarly, her rather nostalgic notion of an original state of pansexuality which is characterized by the eroticization of all social relations - from sexual relationships to women's relationship to nature - indicates further the usefulness of constructing an alternative form of sexuality around some notion of the 'natural' or a lost state of being:

Sexualität ist eine kostbare Unruhe, die erotische Beziehungen ermöglicht, nicht nur zu Menschen, sondern auch zu Landschaften, Tönen, Farben, Gerüchen - zu Erscheinungen dieser Welt überhaupt. Ohne sie gibt es keinen Enthusiasmus, kein Feuer des Geistes, keinen Esprit. Kein Denker, kein Politiker, kein Wissenschaftler, kein Dichter, kein Komponist arbeitet nur mit dem Kopf. Er arbeitet als Ganzheit: der Kopf ist ein Teil seines Körpers, nicht sein Widersacher. Mit sich in Harmonie und Spannung wird die Welt gemacht, in sich und außer sich. Das gilt für Frauen ebenso wie für Männer.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 333.

<sup>25</sup> cf. Martin, "Feminism, Criticism and Foucault," p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> cf. Brown and Adams, "The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics," pp. 39-41.

<sup>27</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 334.

This imperative to discover the lost power of sexuality and the suppressed potential of a non-dualistic or holistic approach to the mind and body bears similarities to campaigns within feminist movements in Britain, America and Europe in the seventies to rediscover the "suppressed power of female sexuality."<sup>28</sup> But whereas the focus in Western feminist movements was often on the liberation of female sexuality from the "institution of heterosexuality"<sup>29</sup> and from male oppression and violence, Morgner's project, like that of her socialist sisters',<sup>30</sup> explicitly includes men and male sexuality in her plans for reform: "Das gilt für Frauen ebenso wie für Männer."<sup>31</sup>

Many radical feminist arguments in the eighties contended that women's sexuality was 'crippled' by the enforcement of "compulsory heterosexuality" and that as a result the roots of male dominance lay in men's sexual domination of women.<sup>32</sup> Rape and pornography were considered conclusive evidence that the primary form of domination over women was sexual and that the "heterosexual institution" merely reinforced these structures of domination.<sup>33</sup> Although women in Morgner's works most certainly suffer at the hands of the "heterosexual institution," in particular those representatives of the older generation like Olga Salman - Laura's mother -, Morgner generally tends to regard the problems of institutionalized heterosexuality as more the symptom than the cause of women's continued subordination. Thus, whilst her target is often the institutionalization of heterosexuality in the nuclear family and the role this plays in perpetuating a set of social practices which are sexually and economically exploitative to women, nowhere is the domination of women reduced to a notion of coercive or violent male sexuality, as is often the case in anti-pornography debates in the West.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> See Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female?* (London: Virago, 1987), p. 80.

<sup>29</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5.4 (1980), p. 633; Segal, *Is the Future Female?*, pp. 80-95.

<sup>30</sup> See also Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 93.

<sup>31</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 334.

<sup>32</sup> See Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," pp. 631-60.

<sup>33</sup> See Segal, *Is the Future Female?*, p. 96.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 102ff.

Morgner repeatedly insists on an education programme for men and that "das Frauenproblem" is also "ein Menschheitsproblem"<sup>35</sup>:

Da wird aber ein Menschheitsproblem aufgeworfen. Emanzipation der Frauen ist ohne Emanzipation der Männer unerreichbar und umgekehrt.<sup>36</sup>

In interviews and her works, Morgner consistently eschews any form of feminist separatism. In this respect she has inherited the fear of feminism and purely 'feminist' concerns that was characteristic of early socialist feminists, in particular Clara Zetkin, for whom feminism was equal to separatism.<sup>37</sup> The preoccupation with "women's issues" alone has traditionally been considered the bastion of liberal feminism. Women involved in the social democratic movements in Europe in the late nineteenth century devoted their attention instead to the more pressing task of accelerating the downfall of capitalism and agitating for the imminent socialist revolution rather than campaigning for what they regarded as mere cosmetic changes to the social structure and to women's situation. In order to avoid the sort of marginalization of women's matters within the political programmes of their parties, that was initially a feature of early bourgeois feminist movements, socialist feminists have traditionally insisted on the futility of fighting against men for better conditions and equal rights for women.<sup>38</sup> Better conditions for women, they insisted, could only be brought about through the collective efforts of working-class men and women. Women socialists tended on the whole to adopt the contempt of their male colleagues for liberal feminist campaigns and, in fact, seemed to regard the extent of their rejection of bourgeois feminist issues as a measure of their credibility as socialists.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 44.

<sup>36</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 328.

<sup>37</sup> See Quataert, **Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy**, p. 119.

<sup>38</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the polemics between Clara Zetkin, the leading female figure among the Social Democrats in Germany at the turn of the century, and the women in the bourgeois feminist movements, see Marielouise Janssen-Jurreit, **Sexism: The Male Monopoly on History and Thought**, trans. Verne Moberg (New York: Farrer, Straus, Siroux, 1982), pp. 114-27.

<sup>39</sup> See Quataert, **Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy**, pp. 114-20.

Morgner's insistence therefore that the emancipation of women is far too important to be classified as "nur eine Frauensache"<sup>40</sup> must be understood against the background of the polemics between early bourgeois and socialist feminist movements. Her statement is clearly intended as a means of preventing the sort of political division of labour that in bourgeois and socialist movements at the turn of the century promoted the marginalization of women's political demands on the grounds that they were only of relevance to women and did not form part of the larger political struggle. Her remarks contain furthermore an implicit critique of the fate of official East German women's bodies such as the "Deutscher Frauenbund" which is perceived by many women as becoming increasingly detached from women's real concerns.

In *Amanda*, the problems posed by such a political alliance between feminists and men and the specific difficulties of a feminist separatism in the German Democratic Republic are frequently the object of satire and humour. The voice of a feminist opposition, which in the *Trobadora* is embodied in Laura, becomes in *Amanda* at once more diversified and more fragmentary. The voice of pragmatism and realism is complemented by the different feminisms of Amanda, Laura's "hexische" other half, and Isebel, one of the witches languishing in the underground of the "Blocksberg." Each represent opposing factions in the "Hörselberger" opposition, a body of witches/feminists/prostitutes who are plotting to overthrow the "Männerherrschaft" on the "Blocksberg" or "Brocken." Isebel, the leader of the HUU-Fraktion, or the "Hörselbergeruntergrund," represents a type of militant feminism which is "männerfeindlich" and endorses the use of patriarchal means of opposition, by which is presumably meant violence.

The text clearly privileges Laura's particular form of pragmatic 'realistic' feminism and satirizes the type of radical, militant, feminist opposition represented in the figure of Isebel. Yet Laura's theoretical guilelessness and political naivety are as far from providing a sound basis for the construction of a feminist politics and theory as Isebel's radicalism. Her reluctance to step out of line for fear of reprisals is

<sup>40</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 328.

meant to typify the sorts of attitudes shared by the majority of working mothers in East Germany. Laura clearly provides the East German reader with a point of identification. Yet Laura's voice is patently the voice of a conservatism which is constantly subjected to criticism in discussions with Vilma and Isebel.

Isebel is, for example, highly critical of Laura's willingness to enter into a pact with the opposite sex in order to regain control of the "Blocksberg." What is at issue here is the official Marxist assumption that changes for women can only be achieved with the help of "Verbündete."<sup>41</sup> Isebel challenges the need for allies and revives the bourgeois feminist notion of women's emancipation as a "Fortführung des Kriegs der Geschlechter,"<sup>42</sup> which Laura has explicitly rejected. Laura's final proposal of an alliance with men is essentially not an endorsement of heterosexuality but a necessary political manoeuvre to ensure the success of the emancipation of both sexes. This is conceived in the same terms already outlined by Morgner, that is, as a "Menschheitsproblem."<sup>43</sup> This solution is rather a choice between two evils, as her own experiences with heterosexuality have been far from satisfactory. Moreover, her strategy stems in part from the purely pragmatic desire to share the duties of parenthood and to provide her son with both male and female role models.

In a later chapter I shall address the particular problems that Laura's pragmatic approach to heterosexuality poses for a revolutionary feminist politics and for feminist strategies for the future. Suffice it to say here, that, in *Amanda*, heterosexuality is represented as the dominant mode of female sexuality, but that the spaces the text opens up for sexual plurality are far greater than in the *Trobadora*. In the *Trobadora*, we recall, the situation of lesbians in East German society is encapsulated in the extended metaphor of the dandelion - the scourge of every hard-working woman, useful only for its medicinal and nutritional value and otherwise a noxious weed marked for general extermination. In *Amanda*, female homosexuality is

<sup>41</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> Morgner, "Die Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nutzen," p. 328.

<sup>43</sup> Morgner, "Das eine tun und das andere nicht lassen," p. 44; Morgner, *Die Hexe im Landhaus: Gespräch in Solothurn: Mit einem Beitrag von Erica Pedretti* (Zürich, Villingen: Rauhreif, 1986), p. 56.



afforded more space and exists at the level of the underworld in a nascent stage of political organization.

#### **D. The Female Body and Technology - Liberation or Control?**

In *Amanda* the task of regaining control over the female body as a means to liberating women's repressed creativity becomes further complicated by an increased awareness of the fact that the female body is, to speak with Michel Foucault, "directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it, they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."<sup>44</sup> The female body can no longer be thought of unproblematically as a force, or even a property to be appropriated by the historical female subject. Nor does it seem appropriate to women's situation in the eighties to regard the body as something to be 'freed' from those material conditions which alienate and objectify it. It has been customary within revolutionary movements for those who see themselves as excluded from power to regard power as something external to the subject, as something which coerces, prohibits and alienates subjectivity. The question remains, however, whether an act of repossession is all that is required to free the subject entirely from domination.

The arguments put forward in the *Trobadora* on the question of the liberation of women's bodies through the act of repossession are, it would seem, not entirely free of a certain amount of what Foucault has termed "juridical schematism"<sup>45</sup> - that is a type of legalistic reductionism which sees the empowerment of the subject as the logical consequence of legal changes or reforms. Once women have legally become the subjects of their bodies and sexuality, the question must be asked in what ways the subject is empowered, how this power operates and what precisely are its effects on the body. It now becomes imperative to ask whether the notion of a progression

<sup>44</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 25.

<sup>45</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 120.

from domination to liberation, from the object to the subject of power relations can provide an adequate conceptual framework for examining the ways the female body is inscribed in power relations.

In the GDR the female body has, since the second world war, been especially productive as an economic and political force. The post-war years of "Aufbau" would scarcely have been possible without the large-scale mobilization of female labour power and without women's participation in industrial and agricultural production. The entry of women into the workforce, particularly into traditionally male-dominated professions is well-documented in the literature of the first two decades of socialism. Particularly in stories by male authors, women appear to subject their bodies almost euphorically to the physical hardships of hard manual labour.

These tributes to the early heroines of socialism in fact pay meticulous attention to the subjection of the female body to the rigours of the work place as a kind of ordeal which the women must submit to if they are to prove their worth as equal members of the workforce. The greater the physical trials and the greater the degree of physical hardship, so it seems, the greater the level of achievement of the heroine in a masculine environment. Physical sacrifice then appears in these early novels to take on a new meaning as the highest form of female heroism. It was those women who suffered the most and who displayed the greatest endurance who formed the role models for a whole generation of women in the fifties and sixties. Thus they became a type of politically and physically superior vanguard of the official women's movement. The force of the official imperative to endure physical suffering stoically and heroically has been far-reaching and has left its mark well into the eighties. The normative power of the image of the quietly stoic female worker is for instance still very much in evidence in the negative responses of those daughters of the post-war heroines of socialist work such as Barbara, the "Heiratsschwindlerin" in *Amanda*. Barbara's rejection of her mother's work standards is given as one of her main reasons for leaving the GDR:

Meine Mutter war eine Frau, wie sie im Buche steht: tüchtig in allen Rollen. . . . Sie arbeitete in der ersten Schicht als Dispatcher, in der zweiten und dritten gratis. 1960 ließ mein Vater Frau, schlechtes Gewissen und Tochter hinter sich und ging von Dessau nach Hamburg. Ich folgte ihm bald, weil ich von der Gleichberechtigung die Nase voll hatte. Ich wollte kein Arbeitstier werden wie meine Mutter. Ich wollte was anderes. (A. 320)

It is in the context of women's entry into male-dominated professions that the issue of contraception is best seen. Oral contraception was welcomed by most women for the reason that it freed them from the aspects of their menstrual cycle that made them less able to perform the tasks required of them in the work place. It provided women with a means of guaranteeing maximum efficiency from their bodies and hence maximum recognition for their labours. Here Laura's example can be seen as typical of women's responses to the Pill in the seventies. The Pill, she argues, put women in control of their reproductive cycles and partially in control of their labour power. When Laura recalls in *Amanda* the euphoria she and Beatriz felt at the changes to the abortion laws, it is precisely for the reasons of increased efficiency and productivity that she welcomes the reforms:

Erst jetzt gehört uns wirklich. Die Auswirkungen sind unübersehbar. Jedenfalls wäre mein Leben gänzlich anders verlaufen, wenn ich von Jugend an im Besitz meines Körpers gewesen wäre. (A. 222)

Laura now confesses to *Amanda* that her earlier optimism was misplaced and that she no longer holds the belief that the Pill and the right to abortion will guarantee women ultimate control over their bodies.

Vilma's attitude to the Pill and its social and economic consequences for women is, by contrast, rather more sceptical. She argues that the Pill may well have freed Laura from excessive pain and discomfort, yet it has also made her more productive, more reliable and more competitive in a male-dominated workforce:

P.p. <post pilalum> war Laura leistungszuverlässiger geworden. Körperlich gleichbleibend fit und wettbewerbsfähig wie ihre männlichen Kollegen. Gesellschaftlich besser brauchbar. (A. 370)

In order to compete in the workforce women have had to deny their bodies, argues Vilma, because it is the male body which sets the norms for performance:

In Männergesellschaften lehnen Frauen ihren Körper immer ab, direkt oder indirekt. . . . schämen sich seiner. Verbergen seine Eigenschaften, wenn die behindern, bestimmte Leistungsparameter der menschlichen Norm zu erreichen. Diese Norm stellt der Mann vor. (A. 371)

So whilst Laura maintains that the Pill has given her the sense of being "doppelt befreit" (A. 369) from domination and pain, Vilma regards the Pill as merely another form of subjection. The regulation of women's menstrual cycle has not only made them socially more productive, it has also helped to make women more sexually available to men. This in effect has meant women have substituted one form of "Unfreiheit" or "Ausbeutung" for another:

Die Pille hat uns von einer physischen Unfreiheit in die andere gestürzt . . . Früher war es einer Frau erlaubt, sich zu müde zur Liebe zu fühlen. Heute wird von jeder anständigen Frau zu jeder Tages- und Nachtzeit Lust erwartet. Präparation sowieso. Präparation ist plötzlich nur noch Frauensache. Kannst du das Gleichberechtigung nennen? Ich nenne es Ausbeutung. Eine neue Form der Ausbeutung, mit der wir in unserer naiven Fortschrittsgläubigkeit nicht gerechnet hatten. (A. 223-24)

Contemporary women's movements in the West have been only too aware of the negative implications of the sexual revolution of the sixties and how a masculinist idea of sexual liberation often led to greater access to women's bodies and to different forms of exploitation.<sup>46</sup> In East Germany, the medical technology which had promised women greater sexual freedom in the seventies is, in the eighties, made responsible for binding women into another form of political and social domination with a different set of social and sexual obligations.

In his influential study of the genealogy of the French penal system, **Discipline and Punish**, Foucault observes that "the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected one."<sup>47</sup> What is of particular relevance to this discussion of the subjection of the female body is Foucault's analysis of the effects of power and domination at the level of the body:

<sup>46</sup> See Martin, "Feminism, Criticism and Foucault," p. 11 and Haug et al, **Female Sexualization**, p. 188.

<sup>47</sup> Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 26.

This subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it may be calculated, organized, technically throughout; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order.<sup>48</sup>

Foucault argues that certain forms of mastery over the body which on the surface appear to be more 'enlightened' or 'lenient' in style and form are not necessarily any less a form of control or an exercise of power. In the same way, the Pill is for Vilma simply another means of exercising control over women's bodies; it has neither given rise to the liberation of women's bodies nor has it succeeded in making the female subject and body the unequivocal centre of power and control. The Pill is instead, what Foucault has called, a "technology of power" or a "political technology of the body," a new and different form of social and technological control which is deployed at a micro-political level through specific discourses and social practices.<sup>49</sup>

From the discussion between Laura and Vilma it becomes evident that the effects of domination on the body are neither solely attributable to the operations of "appropriation" or alienation, nor can they adequately be accounted for by an analysis of power in terms of prohibition, interdiction or censorship.<sup>50</sup> They are instead the result of what would seem to be a "political technology of the body," the result of power relations "that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge," and therefore into more suitable objects for surveillance, discipline and regulation.<sup>51</sup>

Foucault's interest in the varying regimes of power/knowledge that invest the social body is significantly at variance with the totalizing theories of power we know from Marxism which tend to pose the problem of power only in terms of the state apparatus and modes of production.<sup>52</sup> The experience with Stalinism has, Foucault argues, been a salutary one because it has demonstrated that power is not only localized in the state apparatus and that it does not only work from above to repress

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 24-30.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 11, 27.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 115.

and prohibit.<sup>53</sup> The lesson to be learned from the Stalinist experience for Western Marxism is that it is not enough to trace the workings of power back to a source; changes in the structures of socialist society can only be achieved if the mechanisms of power that "function outside, below and alongside the State apparatuses, on a much more minute and everyday level, are . . . also changed."<sup>54</sup>

Although the targets of Foucault's polemic here are the apologists of Stalinism within the French left, his attack is no less aimed at the political theories employed by opponents of Stalinism to denounce the totalitarianism of the Soviet system.<sup>55</sup> Neither group has developed a theoretical framework to account for the way power is exercised at a "micro-political" level and the techniques and tactics employed in its execution. Thus, it is in order to resist the globalizing and totalizing tendencies of political theories of power that Foucault rejects the liberal and Marxist concept of power as a purely negative and repressive force. To do so is to open a space for a concept of power as a "positive creative force" which produces knowledge through discourses on the body simultaneously with techniques of control and domination. By his polemical denunciation of the common Freudo-Marxist definition of power as repressive, Foucault makes possible a more differentiated analysis of power in terms of both its productive and negative aspects.

In attempting to apply these theories to the realities of a socialist state, we should be alert to the dangers of embracing in total any concept of power which is blind to the repressive nature of the mechanisms of coercion, given that for four decades state power in the German Democratic Republic publicly operated as prohibition, interdiction and censorship. Notwithstanding these reservations, it may still, however, be useful to be reminded of Foucault's remarks that:

Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*, p. 116.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid*, p. 59.

Many such theories of the socialist state which define the modus operandi of the socialist system in terms of the totalization of social control through a "dictatorship over needs," presided over by the Party and its organs, fail to address the more productive and positive effects of the exercise of power at the level, for instance, of the female body and women's everyday lives.<sup>57</sup> It is customary for such analyses to ascribe all reformist measures to rationalization processes within the bureaucracies of the state apparatus, to processes which are geared to improve efficiency in the economic functioning of the state. As a system of total social domination, the dictatorship over needs requires a diffusion of power from the state to all areas of the social formation.<sup>58</sup> Totalitarian societies are described as anti-pluralistic and anti-liberal; periods of liberalization and reform are reduced to a sleight-of-hand on the part of the absolutist state to disguise the 'real' motive for its operation and to perpetuate a liberal or tolerant "Schein" over its essentially repressive core. "Pluralism-tolerance," the authors of **A Dictatorship over Needs** suggest, is "a concession to the civil society which can legally be withdrawn at any moment, pluralism being outlawed even in times of concessions."<sup>59</sup>

The theory of the dictatorship over needs displays serious shortcomings when confronted with the ambivalence of the type of state practices Heller, Feher and Markus identify as pseudo-pluralism. Whilst they are at times only too aware of the contradictions in state policy and practices, these are too readily explained away in what seems a rather too simplistic account of the workings of the party and its various apparatuses. Such a theory has, for example, no answer to Laura's protestations that technological control in the form of the Pill, which is according to Heller an extension of party control, may well have made her economically more productive for the state, but has also afforded her a degree of individual freedom she did not have before.

<sup>57</sup> Agnes Heller, Ferenc Feher and Georgy Markus, **The Dictatorship over Needs** (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>58</sup> See Johann Arnason, "Critical Marxism in Eastern Europe Part 2," **Thesis Eleven** 5-6 (1982), p. 234.

<sup>59</sup> Heller et al., **The Dictatorship over Needs**, p. 163.

By the same token, we as readers must obviously, as does Vilma, resist the temptation to laud the reforms in women's health in the seventies as unequivocally emancipatory and liberal, or as the result of an official "Tauwetter" phase or period of liberalization. As Beverley Brown and Parveen Adams point out, it has become necessary for feminists to move beyond analyses of the female body and female sexuality which contrast women's lack of control over their bodies with the form of absolute control found in private property, "since our form of control of our body is, like all forms of ownership, itself a matter of partial control and partial non-control."<sup>60</sup> Just as it becomes impossible in *Amanda* to talk of the female body as a unity in need of liberation, it also becomes increasingly difficult to speak of a totally homogeneous body of working women in the GDR with communal goals and interests. In the seventies, it was politically expedient for feminists in East Germany, as well as in West Germany, to see sexual liberation in terms of regaining control of their bodies as their rightful "Besitz," and to project an image of a natural, undenatured female body which could resurface or re-emerge once the repressive social structures were removed. As Brown and Adams remark, the "conception of unities," "the unity of the body, the unity of sexuality, the unity of control" can be particularly seductive and indeed at times politically useful.<sup>61</sup> As they argue, "analyses in terms of unities hold out the prospect of liberation - unities can be grasped and will not finally escape us."<sup>62</sup> However, they also warn against the dangers of a feminist politics of liberation which analyzes female sexuality solely in terms of the negative effects of a repressive exercise of power from above. Such theories tend to place great emphasis on the transgression of this source of power in the reclaiming of a natural, unalienated female body.<sup>63</sup> This critique of the repression of female sexuality is based therefore on a concept of power which inevitably sees the individual body as both inside and outside the workings of a

<sup>60</sup> Brown and Adams, "The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics," p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> See Martin, "Feminism, Criticism and Foucault," p. 5.



monolithic power, as simultaneously oppressed by it, yet paradoxically capable of liberation from it.

Here Foucault's theory of power is useful for its critique of theories of liberation - in particular sexual liberation. Whilst there are obvious difficulties in adapting Foucault's discussion of the absolutist feudal state to the modern socialist state, his at times Nietzschean approach to questions of history and the exercise of state power can provide us with a rather more differentiated overview of the workings of the socialist state at its various levels. It would, for obvious reasons, be unwise to jettison the idea of the socialist state as a monolithic form of power and to see the Party's control as anything less than total and totalizing. However, Foucault's deconstruction of strict divisions between oppressed and oppressor, the individual and the state, the repressed and the liberated, and his analysis of power at the micro-political level, at the level of its effects, its techniques and mechanisms of regulation, enables us to gain greater insights into the multifarious ways in which the Party gains and maintains control of its socialist subjects. Furthermore, it may suggest ways in which to conceptualize 'liberal' strategies within what are called "Tauwetter" phases, or periods of ostensible liberalization, in East German social, political and cultural history.

Foucault's analysis of how bodies are disciplined through their inscription in networks of power sheds light on the techniques and means by which the female body is subjected to state and institutional control through mechanisms of discipline and normalization. It is the constricting nexus between, on the one hand, increased "aptitude" or productivity, which is a direct effect of the technological regulation of women's reproductive cycle, and, on the other hand, "increased domination" through technological intervention and coercion, that Foucault identifies as the dual aspects of the exercise of power through "discipline(s)."<sup>64</sup> Discipline in the penal system produces "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies"; the body becomes simultaneously more useful economically as it becomes more submissive and

<sup>64</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 138.

obedient.<sup>65</sup> This relation of "docility-utility," which Foucault calls discipline, became in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a new, more expedient, ostensibly more 'humane' form of domination over bodies and subjects, its techniques and practices permeating a broad spectrum of institutions from the education system and the penal system to the army.<sup>66</sup> Disciplines replaced not only more violent and sadistic forms of corporal punishment in the Middle Ages but also earlier feudal modes of domination such as slavery and vassalage. The development of disciplines of coercion that act upon the body and mechanisms of control that make the body more obedient as it becomes more useful then obviated, according to Foucault's account, the necessity for feudal relations of domination, such as slavery, which were literally based on total appropriation of bodies, total subservience of the serf to the will of a master or lord.<sup>67</sup>

As Vilma's critique of the new technologies of the body implies, the increased availability of birth control and the reforms to abortion laws have in many respects replaced one form of 'policing' or control with another. Liberation from one form of regulation can often mean control of another sort, by other social, sexual or medical practices. In the *Trobadora*, Laura remarks that physical lack of freedom can be more "crippling" than political lack of freedom. In *Amanda*, however, women's freedom to control their bodies and their reproductive cycles is overshadowed by the realization that political control, in the form of legal barriers, has been replaced by technological control of women's bodies and sexuality through oral contraception. The body is now the contradictory site of different social and institutional practices which regulate and normalize its functions, directing them towards more diverse ends. Such practices also make the female body the object of new developments in medical and technological knowledge.

This form of control is, however, seen by Vilma as a form of intervention into the "kreativer Bau" of the female body which is crippling in a different way. The female body is referred to as a building - which suggests, once again, that the body

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

is a source of stifled or untapped creativity which is being harnessed in the name of technological innovations in the interests of the state and the dominant sex. This reminds us of the "Palastgewächs" of Split, "das Laura verwandt ist" (T. 191), which Beatriz discovers during her visit to Split in the *Trobadora* (T. 193). Here the female body is likened to a "historisches Gewächs" and female subjectivity to an historical organical construct. Vilma's critique of oral contraception as "Vergewaltigung der weiblichen Natur" (A. 369) also draws on the concept of the female body as a fundamentally dynamic structure which has been forced into stasis by artificial means. Vilma is critical of the fact that women are forced to welcome artificial interventions into their menstrual cycles if they want to compete, as they indeed must, with masculine work norms and achievement standards. Laura, however, dismisses Vilma's argument as a dangerous standardization of women's bodies which is based on the idea of a natural female body and of the female body as a preexisting piece of nature. She retorts that Vilma can only worship this "wunderbarer kreativer Bau" because she, with her "Ausnahmebauch" (A. 371), represents more of an exception than the general rule. Laura is unable to take any special pride in "diese Natur, die sie so im Stich gelassen hatte" (A. 370), this piece of nature which in her "ante pilalum" days (A. 369) made her unfit for carrying out her daily duties as a train driver, thus putting herself and her passengers at risk. What is at stake in Laura's case is not so much her duty to the community, but the sense of self-fulfilment she gains from her work, and of course from the economic independence this guarantees her:

P.p. <post pilalum> war Laura leistungszuverlässiger . . . Aber privat auch: Laura konnte das Triebwagen-fahren, das sie über alle Maßen liebte, endlich selbstsicher betreiben. Souverän. (A. 370-71)

Laura defends therefore on personal grounds greater forms of technological control, even if this in turn increases her social efficiency and productivity, preferring to see in the free availability of oral contraception not a form of technological domination but instead a form of personal empowerment.

### E. Disciplining Bodies - The Public Execution of Damiens

In the *Trobadora* novel Morgner draws parallels between feudal relations of domination and the economic and sexual dependency of women in the family in the GDR through the montage of stories about women's subordination in the Middle Ages. As I have already shown, Morgner implies in the story about Marie Montpellier that aristocratic women were disenfranchised within a feudal social structure, functioning as objects of exchange in a patriarchal 'libidinal' economy, as the conveyors of property and power relations between men of their own class. Moreover, their economic and legal dependency on men guaranteed their sexual objectification as objects of exchange with both use - and hence 'abuse' value - as well as exchange value.

In *Amanda* the analogy with feudal forms of domination is taken up again, primarily in the chapter entitled "Rede über die Hinrichtung Damiens" which narrates in graphic detail the public execution and torture of Damiens, the regicide of Louis XV of France. What distinguishes this medieval story from those in the *Trobadora*, is the account of torture as public spectacle and thus the corporeal form assumed by the mechanisms of absolutist state control. Morgner's version of the legend, like the account which opens Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, focuses on the description of the seemingly barbaric act of the public dismemberment of the body of Damiens as an act of revenge on behalf of the King. In both accounts the body of the feudal subject is the explicit object of the punitive procedure and the site of the execution of absolutist power. The punishment of the royal subject is effected on the body through elaborate torture techniques and finally through total dissection of the body and its components. Feudal acts of punishment, unlike modern forms of punishment, do not aim at reform and rehabilitation, but rather at the destruction of the body as the visible representative of the self.

Foucault's genealogy of penal systems offers as a counterpoint to the brutality of the Ancien Régime a description of a timetable dated eighty years later, which outlines the daily regime for the discipline and moral correction of incarcerated

prisoners. Yet the point of such a comparison is clearly not to map the path of a process of 'humanization' or the transition from blatantly cruel forms of feudal punishment, "centred on torture as a technique of pain,"<sup>68</sup> to more humane and lenient forms of the exercise of penal justice which spare the body of the prisoner to reform the soul. Foucault's study of the history of the transformation in penal forms refutes the common liberal explanation, which highlights the role of enlightened bourgeois thought in these transformations from the pre-modern barbaric to the more rational, superior form of modern punishment. Equally, he rejects the Marxist account of Rusche and Kirchheimer who attribute the disappearance of the public spectacle to the underlying economic changes in society during the transition from a feudal to a capitalist or mercantile mode of production.<sup>69</sup> Foucault argues that even the more lenient forms of punishment which entail confinement and correction rather than torture or execution still make the body the target of their punitive techniques:

. . . it is always the body that is at issue - the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission.<sup>70</sup>

Foucault's genealogical methodology aims to identify continuities and discontinuities in two radically different moments in the history of the modern penal system, while at the same time refusing to order them into a teleological narrative or to impose a "progressivist perspective" on his historiography.<sup>71</sup>

Like Foucault's use of the Damiens story, Morgner also appears to resist any such reading of the feudal procedures of torture which might posit the present as either a more humane or an equally barbaric moment in history. One might in fact argue that the story paradoxically supports both these readings. This ambivalence, it seems, is encouraged by an allegorical reading of the story. The historical referent of

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> According to their account, these transformations in the mode of production then necessitated the preservation of the body of the offender and the implementation of methods of corrective detention in order to provide an additional labour force for a burgeoning capitalist economy. (*ibid.*, p. 25)

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> David Couzens Hoy, "Power, Repression, Progress: Foucault, Lukes, and the Frankfurt School," *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 141.

the story remains, as in most allegories, the historical present or a point in the recent past. However, an allegorical reading of the Damiens story which reduces the narrative to a radical indictment of the forms of domination and control employed by the absolutist socialist state necessarily ignores the very obvious differences between the feudal and the socialist state in their choices of punitive techniques. What then, is the point of the inclusion of the Damiens story in the **Amanda** novel if it does not function in a straightforward allegorical way?

Morgner's interest in the Damiens story has to do with the specific function of the public display of the power of the feudal monarch in the art of inflicting gradations of pain on the body of the transgressor. For Morgner, as for Foucault, the prime purpose of torture as a public spectacle is its "juridico-political function" as a public ritual designed to reinforce the power of the regent. As Foucault remarks, "in this liturgy of punishment, there must be an emphatic affirmation of power and of its intrinsic strength."<sup>72</sup> Far from representing a gratuitous act of cruelty and sadism, the public execution signifies an orderly social ritual calculated to have specific effects on the criminal, the power of the sovereign and lastly the spectators at the execution.<sup>73</sup> Morgner stresses likewise the importance of the spectacle as a means of publicly reactivating the power of the monarch and reinforcing his strength:

Ogleich die dem König beigebrachte Wunde sehr leicht war und nur leicht sein konnte, weil Damiens ein kleines Messer benutzte, wurde der Attentäter auf dieselbe Weise hingerichtet wie Ravailac. Dadurch sollte Ludwig XV. mit dem besten König, den Frankreich je besessen hatte, gleichgestellt werden, was wohl auf eine Überkompensierung der Haß- und Verachtungsgefühle gegen das Königtum, die nur durch Ehrfurcht unterdrückt waren, hinweist. (A. 93)

Foucault mentions as a second function of the spectacle of torture the physical marking of the body of the victim.<sup>74</sup> Political power finds its direct correlation in the physical violence of the torturing procedure. Because the crime of regicide is directed at the body of the law as represented in the body of the sovereign, the punishment is logically directed at the body of the assassin. Torture then makes it

<sup>72</sup> Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 49.

<sup>73</sup> See Mark Poster, **Foucault, Marxism and History** (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 97.

<sup>74</sup> Foucault, **Discipline and Punish**, p. 34.

possible to "reproduce the crime on the visible body of the criminal; in the same horror, the crime had to be manifested and annulled."<sup>75</sup> The feudal regent had, as Habermas points out, truly a representative function; he did not represent power on behalf of the people, "für das Volk," but in front of the people, "vor dem Volk."<sup>76</sup> Under feudalism, power, authority, law and order had to manifest themselves physically, had to be physically and publicly "representable."<sup>77</sup>

Both Foucault and Morgner locate another essential ingredient in the success of the public execution in the ambiguous role of the spectators. Both also seem to agree that the spectators play a pivotal role in assisting the King to wreak his vengeance on the regicide. Although such a brutal display of might must at one level invoke fear in the spectators, it also made them the guarantors of the punishment, "rather like a "scaffold service" that the people owed the king's vengeance."<sup>78</sup> Foucault notes, however, that the carnivalesque nature of the execution ritual equally allowed for an inversion of this complicity between spectators and regent through the encouragement of the intervention of the crowd in the spectacle.<sup>79</sup> The sheer brutality of the spectacle, the excess of fear produced in spectators, invariably resulted in an identification of the crowd with the victim. The more unreasonable the punishment, so Foucault seems to be arguing, the greater the probability that the crowd would recoil from the sovereign's brute display of strength and exhibit solidarity with the victim:

. . . the people never felt closer to those who paid the penalty than in those rituals intended to show the horror of the crime and the invincibility of power . . . The solidarity of a whole section of the population with those we would call petty offenders . . . was constantly expressed . . .<sup>80</sup>

To focus on the solidarity with the victim is to attribute almost a sense of class consciousness to the amorphous mass of the spectators present at public executions in

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*, p. 55.

<sup>76</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962), p. 20.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>78</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 59.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid*.

the late eighteenth century and, it seems to me, to overestimate the efficacy of these pockets of "illegality."<sup>81</sup> Morgner is less optimistic about the rebelliousness of the crowd at executions and their willingness to disrupt the ritualized proceedings of the ceremony. Morgner's reading of the role played by the spectators makes less of the oppositional force of the crowd and their power to express their disagreement. The public spectacle should, she argues, present itself as an "Offenbarung des Königshasses" (A. 92), thus providing an outlet for the pent-up aggressions of the people towards a monarch who was already rapidly losing favour with his populace. The attempt on Louis XV's life was in general welcomed by the French, according to Morgner, because of the mounting discontent with the King's various practices, not the least of which involved incurring huge national debts and imposing unreasonable taxes to pay for the extravagant tastes of his mistress. Rumours circulating after the minor attempt on the King's life that claimed the King was dead are furthermore cited as an example of the extent of his unpopularity and the power of wishful thinking on the part of the people:

Das Gerücht vom Attentat verbreitete sich schnell und wurde alsbald in wunscherfüllender Richtung umgewandelt: Man erzählte, der König sei tot. (A. 91-92)

Yet Morgner does not share Foucault's conclusion that the public spectacle often provided the people with an opportunity to express their outrage at the excessive abuse of royal power and to display their solidarity with the victim. She asks: "Ist nun aus alledem zu schließen, daß Damiens solidarischer Gefühle sicher sein konnte?" (A. 93).

She concludes that any such display of solidarity with the tortured victim becomes transformed not into a rebellion against injustice but instead into open complicity with the executive arm of the law. The aggressions which were directed at the King are displaced and then projected onto the assassin:

Das Strafbedürfnis der Zuschauer gegenüber dem König war also offenbar auf dessen Attentäter projiziert und mit seiner Hinrichtung emotionell befriedigt worden. (A. 95)

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<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*



The collective need of the people for vengeance finds its fulfilment just as easily in the bringing to justice of the victim as it would in injuring the body of the King. The spectacle functions, therefore, to redirect the aggressions of the populace onto the oppressed rather than the oppressor or the real source of power. It does so by encouraging identification with the punitive power through the public display of the authority of the monarch:

Die Identifizierung mit der strafenden Gesellschaft ermöglicht ein Sichausleben von Aggressionen in erlaubter Form. (A. 95)

The crowd becomes an accomplice in the punitive act and, through the medium of the public spectacle, the potentially disruptive force of the people can be sublimated and channelled in such a way as to reinforce and enhance the power of the ruling class rather than to challenge it. Morgner quotes Freud as the source of her speculations about the relationship between oppressed and oppressor and about the processes of transference which prevent clear divisions between those with power and those without: "Was man passiv erduldet, ist man bestrebt, aggressiv auszuleben" (A. 95).

Yet Morgner is not so much concerned with psychological explanations of the reasons why power is exercised through mechanisms of identification, but rather with the way power structures are internalized and reproduced at the individual level to enable the identification of the medieval crowd with its own oppressors. In raising the question of complicity in the perpetuation of structures of domination, Morgner is at the same time touching on issues of a more general nature about women's implication in patriarchal power structures and practices which make women living under a patriarchy unwitting accomplices in the perpetuation of social and sexual inequalities. The story about Damians forms in fact part of a speech given to the plenum of witches/feminists who hold their clandestine meetings in the "Hugenottendom" to illustrate the point that: "Die Frauen leben nicht nur im Patriarchat; es lebt auch in ihnen" (A. 91).

The feudal spectacle of the public execution is, like the medieval carnival and official feasts of the church and the state, as Terry Eagleton suggests, "a prime

example of that mutual complicity of law and liberation, power and desire."<sup>82</sup> **Amanda** is particularly concerned with the problems this often unwitting complicity of women with patriarchal structures of domination, with the law and its apparatuses, poses for a feminist liberatory politics and practice. As I have indicated when discussing the female body and technological domination, there is often a fine line dividing a politics of liberation from a politics of cooperation and complicity. Women's complicity in power structures, as demonstrated in the medieval public spectacle, provides one of the major obstacles to the formulation of an emancipatory politics, a theme which is taken up later in connection with the witches' "Walpurgisnacht." As with the witches' sabbat, Morgner displays an acute awareness of the subtle and often devious ways in which state power is exercised at its various levels. She closely dissects the mechanisms by which individual needs and emotions can be channelled to enhance rather than diminish the aura of the totalitarian state. These considerations are of paramount concern for oppositional groups such as the alternative peace movement and women's movement in the formulation of strategies of intervention.

Morgner concedes that the public execution does not only have an affirmatory or implicative function in feudal society in the way that it allows for the expression of collective sentiments in permissible form. The spectacle, although like Bakhtin's carnival, clearly a "licensed affair,"<sup>83</sup> also provides an outlet for the venting of frustrations and repressed emotions in a form that is usually prohibited. Unofficially, the public execution provides a forum for the unbridled expression of an unlicensed sexuality which under normal circumstances would be kept firmly in check. The best expression of this is to be found in the image of Casanova and his friend copulating with female spectators at the execution:

<sup>82</sup> Terry Eagleton, **Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism** (London: Verso, 1981), p. 149.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid*, p. 148.

Als solcher muß man wohl die Erfahrung Casanovas bei der Hinrichtung betrachten. Er war in Gesellschaft einiger Damen und Herren, die sich in zwei Reihen auf den Stufen vor einem Fenster plazierten. Dabei hatte man die Röcke der Damen beiseite geschoben, um diese nicht schmutzig zu machen. Freund Tiretto nutzte die Gelegenheit und beschäftigte sich in einer nicht näher zu erörternden Weise mit einer alten Dame, die vor ihm stand. Erregt durch das Jammern des Opfers unterhielten sich die beiden so zwei Stunden lang. (A. 95)

#### F. The Public Spectacle and the Carnival - The Witches' "Walpurgisnacht"

The officially organized spectacle is thus a contradictory site of conflictual power relations; it both affirms and negates the socio-political status quo. The crowd is made an accomplice in the execution of Damiens and yet, as the example of Casanova and the women clearly shows, there are possibilities, even within this complicity, for the transgression of social and sexual prohibitions.

Morgner's account of Damiens' execution stresses the ambiguous nature of the officially sanctioned spectacle. The spectacle is "incorporative"<sup>84</sup> because it encourages complicity "mit der strafenden Gesellschaft" (A. 95) by providing a licensed safety valve for sentiments that might otherwise lead to revolt.<sup>85</sup> The example of how anti-royalist feeling and solidarity with the regicide is channelled into solidarity with the oppressive regime itself is indicative of the way the public spectacle functions to reinforce existing hierarchies and power structures. It is also a practical demonstration of how power, in particular patriarchal power, is internalized by the individual and reproduced in sexual and social practices.

But, by the same token, carnivals may have, according to Morgner, a liberatory and disruptive aspect, in particular for women, in allowing sections of society to show their other, unofficial face or as Bakhtin has termed, their "second nature."<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> *ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>85</sup> This was a defense of popular festivals employed in the Soviet Union, mainly by Anatoly Lunarcharsky, *The Commissar of Enlightenment*, and to which Bakhtin's theory of carnival is a critical response. See the prologue by Michael Holquist in Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. xvii.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*, p. 75.

The same can be claimed for the public execution as for Bakhtin's carnival; they both provide "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; <they mark> the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions."<sup>87</sup> The non-permissible behaviour of the public execution in the sexual licentiousness among the spectators during the execution functions in a similar way to Bakhtin's laughter or the "Lachkultur" of the medieval marketplace which "liberated . . . from censorship, oppression, and from the state."<sup>88</sup>

In Bakhtin's account the medieval carnival is the privileged time of the year when official truths and existing hierarchies are subverted with gay abandon by the common people. The inversion of all social hierarchies within the carnival does not merely reveal that all existing social relations are arbitrary and relative, but also that alternative truths are possible. Rather than positing the carnival as a utopian ideal in itself and as a model for a freer community of individuals, which can only be realized during sanctioned periods of license, Bakhtin's notion of carnival provides instead "the repeated affirmation of the possibility of alternative relations in the midst of order and control."<sup>89</sup> These alternative relations are otherwise unrealizable except "in play, as fictions."<sup>90</sup> Much of the utopian aspect of Bakhtin's concept of carnival derives from the temporary nature of the periods of carnival - a fact which in no way decreases or invalidates carnival's utopian or liberatory potential. As the people's most effective and subversive means of defense against all forms of dogmatism, orthodoxy and official seriousness, laughter remained according to Bakhtin a "free weapon in their hands," never becoming an "instrument to oppress and blind the people."<sup>91</sup>

In Morgner's account of Damiens' execution, the feudal public spectacle functions similarly to Bakhtin's carnival in permitting the expression of emotions otherwise excluded from the dominant feudal order in a temporary suspension of

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid*, p. 93.

<sup>89</sup> David Carroll, "Narrative Heterogeneity, and the Question of the Political: Bakhtin and Lyotard," in **The Aims of Representation: Subject/Text/History**, ed. and introd. Murray Krieger (New York: Columbia UP, 1987), p. 91.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid*, p. 90.

<sup>91</sup> Bakhtin, **Rabelais and His World**, p. 95.

social hierarchies and social and political prohibitions. Official and unofficial worlds co-exist side by side; the official display of power is the paradoxical condition of possibility for the expression of alternative power relations and other unofficial truths. While Bakhtin's emphasis is entirely on the disruptive and subversive aspects of the carnival, the interludes of popular laughter amidst the official feasts and festivals, Morgner's discussion of the role of the carnival and the public spectacle focuses on both official and unofficial displays of culture. A determining feature of the carnival for Morgner is the permissible public representation of power as well as the potentially disruptive elements accompanying any public festivity or officially organized performance of existing power relations.

Yet Morgner's reservations about the efficacy of these "licensed enclaves"<sup>92</sup> does not stem from the fact that they are fully contained within an officially sanctioned festival of the state or church. She does not object to the utopian aspects of the carnival, as does Eagleton, on the grounds that the carnival "is a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art."<sup>93</sup> The laughter of the carnival cannot, Eagleton contends, constitute the basis for a revolutionary practice if it is in any way tolerated or licensed by the dominant order. Bakhtin, by contrast, sees no contradiction in the permissible status of the medieval "Lachkultur" precisely because, as part of the unofficial culture, whether licensed or not, it "opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture."<sup>94</sup> The very brevity of the period of freedom and licentiousness in fact only increases its "fantastic nature and utopian radicalism."<sup>95</sup> In Bakhtin's account, the toleration of medieval laughter by the state and the church is the direct result of "concessions, large or small"<sup>96</sup> made by the state to the marketplace, and is seen as an attribute of the subversive power of folk humour and popular culture.

<sup>92</sup> Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin*, p. 149.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid*, p. 148.

<sup>94</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid*, p. 89.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid*, p. 90.

Morgner does not question the liberatory potential of the official carnival with its pockets of unofficial social and sexual transgression on the grounds that it has official state approval. She is concerned instead with the ways in which the official culture is able to appropriate and manipulate the mocking, irreverent laughter of the people for its own political ends.

In the chapter entitled "Die Walpurgisnacht auf dem Blocksberg (Intermezzo in Moll)" Morgner composes a thinly disguised satirical allegory of an official East German television report on a feminist demonstration, most probably to commemorate the Year of the Woman in the West. Laura is approached alternately by "Oberteufel" Kolbuk and Pater Maccotino, acting for "Oberengel" Zacharias, who both propose marriage on behalf of opposing ideological powers. Both forcibly subject Laura to a viewing of a video of "Walpurgisnacht" festivities conducted on the "Blocksberg," each providing their own radically different commentary on the same ceremony. The fact that Laura takes "Oberteufel" for a ZDF or a "Südfunk Stuttgart" correspondent is a clear indication that the report of the witches' activities on the "Blocksberg" is from a Western perspective, and hence the version that Pater Maccotino shows is quite obviously an edited official East German version of the same event. The East German version is significantly given the subtitle "Karnival-Ersatz" (A. 496). Interspersed in the commentary is a section taken from Bakhtin's **Rabelais and His World** on the liberatory function of laughter and the carnival in the Middle Ages and the formation of an unofficial alternative truth, "voll von ambivalentem Lachen, von Gotteslästerung und Profanation, von unziemlichen Reden und Gesten, von familiärem Kontakt aller mit allem" (A. 510). The medieval "Lachkultur" signalled therefore a victory over fear of authority and absolutes, a victory,

über die Furcht vor dem Geheiligten und Verbotenen, vor der Macht Gottes und des Teufels und vor der Macht der Menschen, vor den autoritären Geboten und Verboten, vor Tod und Vergeltung im Jenseits, vor der Hölle, vor allem, was entsetzlicher ist als die Erde. (A. 507)

This section from Bakhtin concludes with the remark that these carnivalistic safety valves in the Middle Ages, like the feminist demonstrations, were not an

expression of the increasing liberalism and tolerance of a repressive absolutist regime, but a measure of the degree of oppression of the feudal order, a mark of "ein Übermaß von Unterdrückung" (A. 510) which made the need for officially sanctioned outlets all the more necessary. If this still forms part of the "Oberengel's" commentary, then this reading of carnival as a measure of the oppressiveness of a regime rather than of the power of the people is obviously intended as an indictment of the pseudo-liberalism of Western democracies. As officially staged displays of pluralism, modern day equivalents of the carnival such as demonstrations by minority groups, merely serve, in the eyes of the East German reporter, to enhance the tolerant "Schein" of a repressive or absolutist regime. The first report of the feminist demonstration or the witches' "Walpurgisnacht" by the West German reporter in the chapter entitled "Die Walpurgisnacht auf dem Blocksberg (Intermezzo in Dur)" concludes in fact with a panegyric to the sort of democratic political order, which not only tolerates the open expression of dissention but which even welcomes such virulent and aggressive opposition. The reporter remarks at the end of the programme:

Die Blocksberg-Ordnung ist die freiheitlichste aller Ordnungen. Oder kennen Sie irgendwo eine Obrigkeit, die sich derart beschimpfen läßt? Nirgendwo anders gibt es eine so hochdemokratische Regierung, die erlaubt, gegen sich den Aufstand zu proben und diese Proben nicht nur toleriert, sondern sogar bejubelt und prämiert". (A. 411)

Spectacles such as the witches' demonstration in fact trivialize the tyranny of a particular regime in an exhibitionist display of pluralism:

Pyramidengerüst wie in jedem Jahr - eine abgeschmacktere Form scheint dem hohlen Regime nicht einzufallen, um seine Tyrannei exhibitionistisch zu verharmlosen. Absolutistische Formen lassen sich heutzutage nicht mehr einfach als Witz wegwitzeln und mit einem pluralistischen Feiertag überspielen. Mit einem einzigen pro Jahr! (A. 500)

Whilst the reporter is clearly referring to practices in the West, the same criticism could equally be levelled at official periods of license and carnival in the East. It follows that if official times of carnival in the West, particularly those organized by feminists, can be read as a "raffinierte Inszenierung und Selbstinszenierung" (A. 510)

of capitalism, tolerance towards feminists in a patriarchal society such as East Germany could equally be open to co-optation by the socialist state to improve its international image.

As a more or less officially recognized spokeswoman on women's issues in the East, and as the official author of the feminist novel **Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz**, Laura is being courted by both "Oberteufel" Kolbuk and "Oberengel" Zacharias to lend her name to a new feminist book which they have given the by now clichéd title "Eine Frau ohne Mann ist wie ein Fisch ohne Fahrrad" (A. 452). Both sides see the political advantage in putting Laura's name to a feminist novel which can only improve the reputation of both regimes. The marriage proposals of the two are also attempts to compromise the integrity of Laura in the name of patriarchal systems with opposing ideologies, to give credence to their particular regimes and to foil the other in a thinly disguised form of ideological warfare.<sup>97</sup> Yet it becomes apparent in the chapter "Wette auf dem Blocksberg" that Kolbuk and Zacharias are in league with each other, despite their obvious ideological and political differences, and that both are endeavouring to compromise Laura's integrity and authorial autonomy. Pater Maccotino reveals to Laura after attempting to win her hand in marriage: "Die himmlischen und höllischen Heerscharen bekämpfen einander mitunter bis zur brüderlichen Verbundenheit" (A. 522).

Officially licensed periods of feminist dissent and anarchy, confined to isolated days of the year and to discrete social and geographical spaces, appear not only to be tolerated by the opposing ideological regimes of Kolbuk and Zacharias but are in fact actively encouraged by them. Yet Morgner's scepticism towards the liberatory potential of such carnivals does not go so far as to cynically dismiss the public spectacle as yet another means employed by state apparatuses to consolidate their control over the populace. The relevance of the carnival as a means by which the populace can rehearse strategies of resistance to dominant ideologies cannot be

<sup>97</sup> The sense of ideological warfare is strengthened by the use of a military setting and military metaphors during the meeting between Kolbuk and Zacharias in the chapter entitled "Wette auf dem Blocksberg," when they discuss ways of pacifying dissident women and feminists, negotiating over who shall win Laura over to their cause.



dismissed on the grounds that the carnival can also be deployed by state apparatuses as a safety valve to defuse sentiments that might otherwise lead to revolt. Yet nor does Morgner wholly endorse Bakhtin's utopianism which sees the medieval carnival as an unequivocal manifestation of the emancipatory force of popular laughter and unofficial culture - a force so powerful that it obliged the medieval church and the state to make more and more concessions to the popular masses.

But whether the lack or the abundance of periods of carnival is ultimately to be interpreted as a measure of the power of the people or as a measure of the repressiveness of a particular regime, is perhaps not the crucial issue here in the context of the formation of oppositional groups and strategies in East Germany. Periods of carnival and popular festivals will, Morgner seems to be arguing, always be open to multiple and contradictory readings and appropriations and they will never be the unequivocal site of oppression or liberation. They are instead arenas of political struggle, a criss-cross of practices that are neither entirely liberatory nor repressive.

She is obviously refuting the idea put forward by the East German reporter of the "Walpurgisnacht" that the tolerance of carnivalistic outlets is an indication of the repressiveness of a political regime, or that the infrequency of carnivals in the GDR, when compared with the West, is a sign of the degree of "Machtschwund" (A. 510) of state power in the GDR, rather than its opposite. The reporter thus presupposes a perfect balance between state forces of control and the power of the people. State power is seen as receptive and responsive to the needs of the masses, reflecting and expressing directly the desires of the social body. State power is thus made to appear an expression of the will of the people.

Morgner also does not appear to endorse the opposing argument that officially sanctioned periods of carnival denote the degree of democratic liberalism of a particular regime. She is particularly careful not to posit any general theory of the correlation between periods of licensed carnival within a political system and the repressiveness of the system. In doing so, she simultaneously subscribes to a 'repressive' theory of state power - one which sees state power, particularly in East

Germany, as monolithic and absolute - whilst acknowledging the fact that state power can be both monolithic and highly visible, as well as dispersed and invisible in its operations. The repressive hypothesis of power alone does not allow for an account of the diverse and multiple ways in which power is spread throughout the social body and how it is imbedded in a multitude of institutional and social practices.

A salient example of the ambivalence of the carnival as a popular liberatory strategy and of the susceptibility of local oppositional struggles to appropriations by the dominant ideology and culture is the official East German interpretation of the witches' sabbat superimposed upon the same West German report. Whereas the incidence of feminist carnivals is interpreted in the West as denoting a degree of liberalism and pluralism of the political regime, the East German report reverses the terms of the equation, making the high incidence of carnival outlets a function of the popular demand for them and hence the "Übermaß von Unterdrückung" of the state. Thus, the number of carnivals in the West is made to seem a direct result of the excess of state power. This enables the East German reporter to draw the conclusion that, if the frequency of carnivals is an indication of the need for carnivals, then the decline of carnivals can be attributed to a decline in the oppressiveness of state power, and hence to "Machtschwund," rather than to an increase in state control. According to this logic, the fewer the existing outlets, the less there would be a need for them.

The fact that all readings and representations of the "Walpurgisnacht" are inevitably ideological and that the activities of the witches cannot help but be co-opted in the name of the dominant patriarchal ideologies of either side, obviously bears on the ultimate efficacy of oppositional practices. However, this cannot reduce the importance of such outlets for the articulation of an alternative feminist culture. The public spectacle, like the feudal public execution, provides an outlet for the expression of permitted and prohibited emotions, of official and unofficial cultures. Like the medieval feast which has two faces, the festival of witches also has at least two aspects, comprising of an official and an unofficial representation. Like the

laughter of the medieval crowd, the laughter of the witches and the torrents of verbal abuse they hurl at representatives of patriarchy signal a victory for the female participants over fear of masculine domination and intimidation.

The witch is to an alternative feminist culture what the medieval "Narr" was to the people of the Middle Ages. She is the herald of another, non-patriarchal, non-official truth and her laughter is an ideological weapon in the struggles for a feminist alternative to socialist patriarchal practices. By unleashing women's pent-up aggressions towards men, the witches' invective or "auslachen," like Bakhtin's folk laughter, serves to liberate from the "great interior censor,"<sup>98</sup> and to encourage the expression of alternative unofficial feminist 'truths' and life forms:

Indem es diese Furcht besiegte, hellte das Lachen das menschliche Bewußtsein auf, öffnete ihm die Welt auf eine neue Weise. Dieser Sieg war freilich nur ephemer, er beschränkte sich auf die Festtage; dann kamen wieder Werkstage der Angst und Bedrückung, doch aus diesen festtäglichen Lichtblicken des menschlichen Bewußtseins bildete sich eine andere, eine nicht offizielle Wahrheit über die Welt und den Menschen aus, die das neue Selbstbewußtsein der Renaissance vorbereitete. (A. 507)

By allowing a less restrained communication of alternative truths, the witches' invective serves a similar purpose to Bakhtin's medieval folk laughter. It articulates a "less restrictive sense of the social, an alternative idea of community"<sup>99</sup> among women. In this way Morgner's women's laughter is in fact itself, like the official culture it debunks, full of ambivalence. As the epitaph to the **Amanda** novel from E. T. A. Hoffmann's **Seltame Leiden eines Theaterdirektors** suggests, laughter is also symptomatic of a romantic longing for "Heimat," for a lost sense of self and for a lost utopia:

"Das Lachen ist nur der Schmerzenslaut der Sehnsucht nach der Heimat, die im Innern sich regt." (A. 6)

Like Laura's laughter, the tirades of abuse vented by the witches are not merely parodic: they are deadly earnest. Julia Kristeva sees this as the only way "that it <carnival> can avoid becoming either the scene of the law or the scene of its parody,

<sup>98</sup> Bakhtin, **Rabelais and His World**, p. 94.

<sup>99</sup> Carroll, "Bakhtin and Lyotard," p. 89.

in order to become the scene of its other."<sup>100</sup> It is doubtful that Morgner's witches, in their staging of the "Walpurgisnacht," do actually avoid becoming "the scene of the law or its parody," given the highly mediated form the reports of their festivities take in the novel and given the very impossibility of immediate and undistorted representation by the media of both the Kolbuk and the Zacharias regimes. Nonetheless, the witches' "Walpurgisnacht" represents an attempt on the part of the participating women to articulate and perform their own sense of identity and community "in their own way"<sup>101</sup> and not in the terms dictated to them by the dominant patriarchal orders.

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<sup>100</sup> Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," **Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art**, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 81.

<sup>101</sup> Bakhtin, **Rabelais and His World**, p. 255.

## VII. THE WITCH, THE MOTHER AND PANDORA - STRATEGIES OF SUBVERSION AND SURVIVAL IN AMANDA

### A. The Witches' Return

The figure of the witch is by now a familiar one in the discourses of feminist movements around the world.<sup>1</sup> Much of the original power to shock and scandalize that women calling themselves witches were able to wield during the anti-abortion demonstrations and reclaim-the-night marches of the seventies must by now surely have lost its impact. In the German Democratic Republic the witches' return has been somewhat belated; yet the delay in the appearance of the feminist trope of woman as witch on the East German literary scene does not appear to have lessened the threatening and disruptive aspect of her return. Her reappearance cannot be reduced entirely to earlier moments within feminism nor can her political mission be defined solely by reference to previous struggles within international feminism.

As in the West, the revival of the image of the witch and the plethora of mythical and historical associations East German women writers invoke in their novels and short stories about witches<sup>2</sup> represents a process of remythification by which patriarchal myths are mobilized and reappropriated by women themselves in an act of self-definition and self-representation.<sup>3</sup> As with much modern-day recourse to myth, the act of collective recollection of the history of the oppression of women in the witch trials of the Middle Ages by feminists could be seen to "seize . .

<sup>1</sup> Here are listed a few examples of recent studies which appropriate aspects of the historical and mythical figure of the witch for feminism; Xavière Gauthier, "Why Witches?" in Marks, *New French Feminisms*, pp. 199-203; Julia Kristeva, "A new Type of Intellectual: The Dissident," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 296; Inge Stephan, "Hexe oder Heilige? Zur Geschichte der Jeanne d'Arc und ihrer literarischen Verarbeitung," in *Die Verborgene Frau*, ed. Inge Stephan and Sigrid Weigel (Berlin: Argument, 1985); Uta Treder, *Von der Hexe zur Hysterikerin: Zur Verfestigungsgeschichte des 'Ewig Weiblichen'* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> See Renate Apitz, *Hexenzeit* (Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1986); and Elke Willkomm, *Hexensommer* (Berlin/GDR: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> See Silvia Bovenschen, "The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch and the Witch Myth: The Witch, Subject of the Appropriation of Nature and Object of the Domination of Nature," *New German Critique* 15 (1978), p. 90.

hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger."<sup>4</sup> This memory is the history of the persecution and oppression of women by the church and the state, but it is also the story of active female resistance to patriarchal coercion. Although the persecution of women in the medieval witch trials differs radically from present forms of oppression, this type of "experiential appropriation of the past"<sup>5</sup> underscores the longevity of feminine myths, the long and intractable history of varying forms of women's oppression. And it does so without losing sight of the fact that today, as Bovenschen has stated, "we are relatively safe from being burned at the stake."<sup>6</sup> It is a memory which does not attempt to reconstruct the objective historical figure of the witch nor to re-enact the historical persecution of women during the witch pogroms of the late Middle Ages. Instead it seeks out lines of continuity and points of conjunction between the past and the present.

To Laura's mother and grandmother there can hardly be a place less likely to allow the existence of witches and supernatural events than the GDR. Therefore, when Amanda makes an appearance on a witch's broom in their living-room on the day of Laura's baptism, they are far from impressed. Amanda's offer of a "Beschwörungselixier" for the young witch-to-be, together with the name Amanda Laura, is regarded with considerable suspicion and, once the apparition has vanished, the child is named Laura instead and the potion is thrown away. The annunciation of Laura as the "chosen one" occurs some years later when she is visited by Frau Holle and reminded once again of her calling as both witch and madonna.

In *Amanda*, the role of the witch is not defined exclusively by the concept of carnival, nor are her activities contained within officially sanctioned periods of chaos. The image of the witch is central to the concerns of the novel and figures much in the same way as the sorceress in the writings of French feminists, Cixous

<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. and introd. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 257.

<sup>5</sup> Bovenschen, "The Contemporary Witch," p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 85.

and Clément, as an "exemplary trope for the female condition."<sup>7</sup> In addition, it represents a symbol of the possibility of a feminine subversion of the cultural and political systems within patriarchy. Like the sorceress of the French Romantic historian Jules Michelet, Morgner's witch is "woman finding her autonomy in . . . a counter-culture."<sup>8</sup> She presents a site of resistance to the oppressiveness of dominant belief systems and ideologies and a potential site of emancipation from the homogenizing and unifying force of the dominant culture. In the figure of the witch, Morgner revives a lost mythology of a feminine resistance to patriarchal forms of coercion and patriarchal forms of knowledge, reinvesting the archetype with a new subversiveness and political force. Morgner's rewriting of the legend of the witches' sabbat resonates with Western feminist recuperations of the traditionally negative figure of the witch as seductress and the demonic woman, as well as with feminist appropriations of the positive attributes of the mythical figure of the witch as nature healer, wise-woman and midwife. Her critical use of mythical tradition participates therefore in the general feminist project of revalorizing negative historical images of women and femininity. Yet at the same time Morgner resuscitates aspects of the myth which have hitherto played only a minor or subordinate role in other feminist reappropriations, overlaying these feminist rereadings and rewritings with new readings pertinent to the socio-historical context of Eastern Europe.

Like the sorceress of Michelet and Clément, the witches in *Amanda* are simultaneously bearers of a past history of resistance and heralds of new forms of opposition to repressive patriarchal social and symbolic orders. They represent similarly "the return of the repressed," an archaic, anachronistic force which serves as a reminder of what a culture has collectively repressed and censored. According to Freud, this "archaic heritage," although of phylogenetic origin, is present in residual form in the individual unconscious.<sup>9</sup> These forgotten cultural memories become

<sup>7</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, "Introduction: A Tarantella of Theory," introduction to Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism: Three Essays, Standard Edition (1937-1939)*, Vol. 23, trans. James Strachey, collab. Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), pp. 98-99.

reactivated by a recent repetition of the original act of suppression or repression which then inscribes the original act or event with fresh significance.<sup>10</sup> The works of Freud and Michelet show how women have traditionally been the repositories of culturally sublimated desires and taboos, which, when they resurface in the figure of the hysteric, for example, or alternatively when invoked by the witch, have the power to challenge the oppressive social and political systems of the present.<sup>11</sup> The deployment of the figure of the witch in European feminist movements has frequently expressed an almost romantic desire for "the return of the repressed" in the form of a return to an unalienated female sexuality undeformed by patriarchal history.<sup>12</sup>

Whilst Morgner's witches are a striking example of the subversive power the "return of the repressed" can wield, the East German witch is simultaneously an example of negative stereotyping. Her reappearance also provides a means of challenging the traditional 'demonization' of the female sex still in evidence in the GDR. The rebellious woman or "weiblicher Querkopf" in *Amanda* carries therefore associations of sexual promiscuity and lasciviousness; Tenner, Vilma's husband and Laura's ex-husband, is quick to accuse Vilma of unfaithful behaviour on her failure to return home one night, when she has in fact been attending a witches' symposium at the Hugentendom. The non-conformist woman is quickly transformed into the temptress or alternatively the evil mother or the "Rabenmutter." The obverse of the superwoman, the 'other' woman of the GDR, or the GDR woman's 'other,' who dares to defy cultural norms is therefore both witch and whore. Political and social disobedience becomes associated with sexual licentiousness. Both witch and whore constitute that which has no proper place within East German society and which is afforded no official existence within the dominant culture. They form the basis of a cultural imaginary which is confined, like the refractory other halves of East

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>11</sup> Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, pp. 5-9.

<sup>12</sup> For an example of an uncritical appropriation of the witch as a mother earth figure at one with herself and nature see, Judith Jannberg (Gerlinde Adia Schilcher), *Ich bin eine Hexe: Erfahrungen und Gedanken* (Bonn: Die Maus, 1985).



German witches, to the "Hörselberg," that mythical underworld of East Germany's "Zauberberg," which in recent times also serves as a brothel. As Cixous remarks: "Somewhere every culture has an imaginary zone for what it excludes and it is that zone we must try to remember today."<sup>13</sup>

In East German culture, this imaginary zone, or "Zauberberg," is to be found on the "Blocksberg" in the Harz region. This cultural imaginary with its hierarchical divisions into upper and underworld lies on the periphery of the geographical space of the German Democratic Republic, along the political borders of a divided nation at the heart of patriarchal ideology. It forms a space between two political cultures, a space which has historically been allotted to those who fall between two stools or cultural systems. The women who inhabit the underworld of the "Blocksberg," the imaginary red-light district of the GDR, are not only those who fall outside the symbolic and social order and who are thus relegated to margins of the country, but they also represent a political 'other,' a group excluded and marginalized from the dominant political order. The legendary "Blocksberg" becomes the imaginary hide-away, not only for a cultural 'fall-out,' for the prostitutes, the "Rabenmütter," the witches and the female "Querköpfe" of the GDR, but also for a political 'fall-out,' for the heretics, the non-believers and the potential dissidents.

Morgner's witches are therefore much more than the demonic temptresses and seductresses of, say, the Italian feminist movement. They are primarily heretics, and the history of resistance they draw on is the history of witchcraft as a form of opposition to institutionalized religion and to the orthodoxy and dogmatism of the church. Witchcraft in the German Democratic Republic, like other unorthodox beliefs and practices, is, like the real or imagined practice of witchcraft in the Middle Ages, "a matter of high ecclesiastical and civil politics."<sup>14</sup> Just as witchcraft practices, pagan rites and the medical practices of healers and midwives became equated with heresy and heterodoxy during the religious struggles of the Reformation, the witchcraft practices of Laura and Vilma, their "sleep-substitute"

<sup>13</sup> Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Hirst and Penny Woolley, *Social Relations and Human Attributes* (London: Tavistock, 1982), p. 230.

brews and their conjuring tricks, make them guilty of heresy and hence, by analogy, subject to modern day forms of persecution and surveillance.

Morgner's heretics do not merely re-enact a past history of resistance by reasserting the legendary demonic power of their historical predecessors; they are the bearers of a constantly present utopia and thus anticipate alternative cultural and political possibilities.<sup>15</sup> Like the utopian community of the "Frauen in den Höhlen am Skamander" in Christa Wolf's *Kassandra*, Morgner's heretics and their home of the "Zauberberg" could be seen as representing a type of "Utopie-Entwurf in der Nuß."<sup>16</sup> In re-presenting the impossible of the historical present they offer a perspective on the possibilities of the future:

In Ordnung ist das Mögliche von heute und morgen denkbar. Unmögliches, das heißt, das Mögliche von übermorgen, wird ordentlich als Unordnung empfunden und ist nur auf Bergen denkbar. Deshalb heißen diese Berge Zauberberge. Und die Besucher solcher Berge werden heute und morgen als Ketzer und Hexen bezeichnet und übermorgen als Weise. (A. 115)

The proper place for heretics and witches in the GDR is in the confined and isolated spaces of the cultural imaginary, on the besieged magic mountains, where their effective surveillance and policing can be carried out. They are banished to the political, cultural and geographical margins of East German society, the place Western societies have traditionally assigned to society's deviants, mad people and medical freaks. This means of maintaining order and cohesion in the social fabric, which Lévi-Strauss has identified as the anthropoemic mode of containment of a society's outcasts,<sup>17</sup> condemns non-believers and prophets of the future to a clandestine existence in the occupied military territory of the "Blocksberg" on the frontiers of the republic. Yet the "Blocksberg" itself is no longer solely the mythical and imaginary site of witches' sabbats; its dual status as a military zone occupied by the forces of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and a place where utopias are forged makes it a highly contradictory and ambivalent object of feminist interest. Unlike the commune of women living on the Skamander river in *Kassandra*, which

<sup>15</sup> See Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung*, p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> See Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 8.

temporarily offers a harmonious refuge from the war-mongering of the world of men in a type of time-warp, or "Zeitenloch,"<sup>18</sup> outside the camps of the Greeks and the Trojans and outside patriarchal history,<sup>19</sup> Morgner's utopia in the "Blocksberg" does not appear to present any such idyllic alternative in the momentary brief existence of "einen schmalen Streifen Zukunft."<sup>20</sup> Wolf's narrative ultimately allows, as Sigrid Weigel points out, "keine konkrete Utopie, d.h. keinen Ausweg aus der Geschichte zunehmender Herrschafts- und Gewaltverhältnisse,"<sup>21</sup> where a feminist alternative to the impasse of militarist ideologies can develop. The focus of the narrative of *Kassandra* shifts therefore away from the "impossible of today" and Troy's social outcasts in "die Frauen am Skamander" to *Kassandra's* inner struggle for autonomy;<sup>22</sup> the third alternative - "Zwischen Töten und Sterben ist ein Drittes: Leben"<sup>23</sup> - is surrendered and *Kassandra* eventually succumbs to the "Todessucht" she so despises in *Penthesilea*.<sup>24</sup>

Obviously, the enclosing of the Brocken in *Amanda* effects a cultural and political marginalization of the utopian moments within the social sphere. But to be banished to the margins is at the same time to occupy an intermediary position, a space in the interstices between East and West, between antagonistic systems. At the same time this is also the military space of No-Man's Land, off limits and out of bounds to the 'real' women of the GDR like *Laura*, accessible only to the privileged few or to the incarcerated other halves of these real women. Yet, in occupying the space between the inhabitants of two political systems, the dwellers on the "Blocksberg" are themselves "Grenzgänger," go-betweens between two opposing worlds and potential mediators between conflicting ideologies.

<sup>18</sup> Christa Wolf, *Kassandra: Erzählung* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983), p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> See Sigrid Weigel, "Vom Sehen zur Seherin," in Christa Wolf, ed. H. L. Arnold (3rd revised ed.; München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1985), p. 75

<sup>20</sup> Wolf, *Kassandra*, p. 152.

<sup>21</sup> Weigel, "Vom Sehen zur Seherin," p. 75.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Wolf, *Kassandra*, p. 134.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 135. Anthony Stephens has also remarked on this contradiction in the narrative in, "Die Verführung der Worte': Von Kindheitsmuster zu *Kassandra*," *Wolf: Darstellung, Deutung, Diskussion*, ed. Manfred Jurgensen (Berne, München: Francke, 1984), p. 135.

The witches' exile, despite the wasteful discarding of the "Beschwörungselixier," proves not to be absolute and irrevocable. Because Laura's mother and grandmother relinquished her right to call upon the assistance of her severed demonic other half when they threw away the "Beschwörungselixier," it is left up to Amanda to initiate and maintain contact with Laura, her "diesseitige" witch-half. However, when Laura, in sheer desperation at her inability to cope with the demands of being a single working parent, tries to distil a fatal potion for herself and her son, she manages instead to conjure up her other "jenseitige" witch-half. Amanda, thus summoned, leaves the "Hörselberg" where she is currently "stationiert" (A. 161) to lodge the right of veto, that every woman's banished witch-half can exercise in matters of life and death. Through her clumsy and naive use of magic potions and herbal brews, Laura, as the "Vorbild" of the "diesseitige" witches, has unwittingly remembered the traditional knowledge of her historical predecessors, reactivating the ability of her banished other half to return from exile on the "Zauberberg" to the social reality of the GDR.

The power of Isebel and Amanda, as messengers from the banished cultural imaginary of the "Schloß Blocksberg," to act upon the realms of the Symbolic and the Real is further reinforced by the alliances they attempt to forge with their other working halves in the GDR.<sup>25</sup> Establishing a satisfactory working relationship between real and imaginary halves is by no means an easy task; Laura continually resists efforts on the part of Amanda to co-opt her into the struggle for reunification of the two severed female halves. Laura is also reluctant to co-operate with Amanda's plans for conquering the "Blocksberg" and toppling its oppressive patriarchal regime, a strategy which Amanda insists is essential to the witches' overall project. Laura's concerns are represented as strictly pragmatic and she is adamant that she does not need the help of theory and "hochgemute Ideenspiele" (A.

<sup>25</sup> Cixous and Clément also attribute to the return of the repressed the power to disrupt the Symbolic and the Real: "To sum up, it is the relations between the Imaginary, the Real, and the Symbolic that are at stake here. . . . The heart of the story linking the figures of sorceress and the hysteric lies in the subversive weight attributed to the return of the repressed, in the evaluation of the power of the archaic, and in the Imaginary's power or lack of it over the Symbolic and the Real" (Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 9).

adamant that she does not need the help of theory and "hochgemute Ideenspiele" (A. 167) - a cry not unfamiliar to feminists in the West - to solve her immediate practical problems of sleep deficiency. Amanda dismisses Laura's desire to combat tiredness with alchemy as a solution of the "third way," as "Flickerei" (A. 274) - a band-aid solution which fails to address the underlying problem of the splitting in two of East German women. Laura's initial response to theoretical solutions to the pragmatic problems of the double burden is, however, eventually overcome by means of a compromise when she realizes that even practical short-term goals cannot be achieved without Amanda's theoretical guidance:

Laura wußte aus längst verbotner Erfahrung, daß sie ohne Kompletettierung nicht auskommen würde. Da sie sich die optimale Kompletettierung durch Amanda versagen mußte, grübelte sie, wie sie zu einer anderen kommen könnte. (A. 167)

The compromise lies in the immediate refusal of Amanda's theoretical assistance in favour of the doubling of the practical female half in the enlisting of Vilma to assist with the distilling of the sleep-substitute elixir.

The "Blocksberg," like the sorceress, is the site of incompatible syntheses.<sup>26</sup> Mythical and historical time coexist and are in conflict for supremacy; the military occupation by troops of the superpowers stands in contrast to the mythical occupation by the witches. The highly ambivalent status of the "Blocksberg," it would seem, makes it far from the ideal hide-away or haven for female querulants and wise-women. Despite its utopian potential, it is reported to replicate patriarchal relations of exploitation and is described by Amanda as an "Ort der doppelten Moral" (A. 548).

Thus, if the "Blocksberg" is to be returned to its utopian function it must first - according to Amanda - abolish male supremacy and the sexual exploitation of women, for "ein Sozialismus aber, der die Männervorherrschaft nicht abschafft, kann keinen Kommunismus aufbaun" (A. 549). In this sense, the "Blocksberg" represents both a microcosm of the social, in as much as it reproduces existing social and sexual

<sup>26</sup> Both the sorceress and the hysteric are characterized by "unrealizable compromises, imaginary transitions, incompatible syntheses" (Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, p. 8).

relations, as well as the proper place for utopias. The far from ideal conditions existing on the "Blocksberg" provides a suitable social space for the witches to rehearse their revolt against patriarchal domination. Because it mirrors the hierarchical structure of society at large, it provides an ideal testing ground for the witches' experiments with feminist alternative life forms or "Erfahrungswerte" (A. 547-48). Here women can experiment with marginalized modes of "Weltaneignung," such as the magic, mimetic mode of appropriating nature, "die bildliche Aneignung der Welt" (A. 461), which has increasingly been lost since the Scientific Revolution and the enthronement of instrumental reason. Furthermore, it provides a forum for "öffentliches Nachdenken" (A. 459) in the imaginary institution of the "Blocksberg-Universität" and thus a substitute for institutionalized forms of cultural criticism:

Da an den wirklichen Orten dieses Landes öffentliches Nachdenken dürftig stattfindet, erscheint mir die Blocksberg-Universität als nützliche Einrichtung. (A. 459)

The "Blocksberg" remains therefore the ground of the still to be realized utopia, a type of "konkrete Utopie," no longer the home of the visionaries of the past and not yet the home of the visionaries of the future. The task of returning the "Blocksberg" to its original utopian function is left up to the fraction of Hörselberger witches, for whom the "Eulenform" or androgyny represents the optimal form of human sexuality:

Nur mit Eulen könnte die Schwerarbeit geleistet werden. Nur sie könnten den Ort der doppelten Moral zum Ort der dringlichen Utopie modeln. Der Brocken/Blocksberg als alte Heimat der Seher könnte zur neuen Heimat der Retter werden: das heißt zur Heimat der Friedensforscher. (A. 548)

Although we are invited to see in the witchcraft practices of Laura and Vilma much more than the return of a repressed female sexuality, they are the conscious heirs to the myth of the disruptive and destructive power so often attributed to female sexuality and "the female principle" within Western metaphysics, in particular during the witch trials in the Middle Ages.<sup>27</sup> Laura and Vilma's task as "diesseitige"

<sup>27</sup> See Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955; Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 161.

witches and participants of the "Unsinnkollegien" - the non-sense seminars in the Hugenottendom - is to disrupt and subvert the "performance principle" as the dominant ethics in East German society through the affirmation of a type of Marcusean "pleasure principle."<sup>28</sup> During the "Walpurgisnacht" the witches denounce in virulent tirades the archetypal representatives of the "performance principle" and all forms of patriarchal "Popanz." Morgner represents Prometheus, Don Juan and Faust as variations of the archetypal hero of the "performance principle." They epitomize and embody masculine principles of rationality and utilitarianism and all excel in their mastery over external and internal nature and hence over Woman as Nature. The reification of these principles under late capitalism and Eastern European socialism is seen by Morgner - like the exponents of Critical Theory - as symptomatic of the failure of the project of Enlightenment and modernity.

Here she departs radically from the common reception of the mythical and literary figure of Prometheus in the literature of the German Democratic Republic.<sup>29</sup> In poems by Czechowski, Maurer and Bernhof, Prometheus is a chiffre for the ideal-typical hero of socialist work.<sup>30</sup> The procuring of fire by Prometheus is frequently employed as a metaphor in East German literature for the advent of the socialist revolution, whereby the conflict between Prometheus and the gods is transformed into a classical "Klassenwiderspruch."<sup>31</sup> In these works Prometheus is no longer the supreme individualist in his refusal of all tutelage and dependency on the advice of the gods, he is instead the representative of the "unterdrückten Klasse gefangen im Produktionsprozess,"<sup>32</sup> dedicated to the promotion of the socialist work ethic and the principles of socialist production.<sup>33</sup> His main adversary is neither the world of the gods nor Brecht's "Weltfeind" in "Lied der Ströme" but the "Klassenfeind." The promise of liberation that Prometheus brings is to be achieved through socialist

<sup>28</sup> See *ibid*, pp. 159-71.

<sup>29</sup> Rüdiger Bernhardt, *Odysseus' Tod - Prometheus' Leben: Antike Mythen in der Literatur der DDR* (Halle/Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>33</sup> See Siegfried Streller, "Der gegenwärtige Prometheus," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 101 (1984), p. 35.

production and the efforts of collective work.<sup>34</sup> Like the Prometheus of Volker Braun, Peter Hacks and to a lesser extent Franz Fühmann, Morgner's critical evaluation of the myth amounts to an "Abkehr von der Promethie" and a loss of blind faith in the principles of unlimited technological progress.<sup>35</sup> However, in contrast to Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* which has been read as a radical indictment of the cult of Prometheus in the light of the escalating global arms race, and thus as a total "Aufhebung jenes Hoffnungsprinzip,"<sup>36</sup> Morgner's treatment of the mythology - like Hacks' - marks not a retreat from the principle of hope but instead a redistribution of hope from the figure of Prometheus to Pandora.<sup>37</sup> The aporia of the negative dialectic of the Enlightenment can only be overcome by countering the negative legacy of the ideals of technological progress and rationality, inherited equally by twentieth century capitalism and socialism, with radically new practices, informed by oppositional discourses and metadiscourses.

In the figures of the witch and Pandora, Morgner offers oppositional images in contrast to the heroes of the "performance principle," Prometheus, Faust and Don Juan. The witch and Pandora, like Marcuse's positive images of Orpheus and Narcissus,<sup>38</sup> stand for alternative modes of social interaction and peaceful, non-aggressive forms of "Weltaneignung." And like the images of Orpheus and Narcissus, the witch and Pandora have the ability to explode objective reality and fixed meaning.<sup>39</sup> But although they too are essentially "unreal and unrealistic" images because they designate that which has not yet been achieved, their existence is, as Marcuse points out, no more impossible than the deeds of the superhuman cultural heroes of Western civilization like Prometheus.<sup>40</sup> The difference lies in the fact that they celebrate the "pleasure principle" and the "Nirvana principle" against the prevailing, repressive reality principle.

<sup>34</sup> See Michael Rohrwasser and Michael von Engelhardt, "Mythos und DDR-Literatur," *Michigan Germanic Studies* 8.1-2 (Spring/Fall 1982), pp. 36-37.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup> See also Christoph Trilse, "Arbeit und Macht, Geist und Poesie - des Lebens Kräfte, meistre sie," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 101 (1984), pp. 42-55.

<sup>38</sup> Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 164.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p. 165.



## B. The Feminization of Politics - Enlisting Mothers for Peace

In *Amanda Morgner* reinvests the female principle, which has traditionally been regarded as disruptive and destructive, with a new positive, peaceful force. Female pleasure and sensuality, which were according to Marcuse anathema to the principles of economic productivity and capital accumulation underpinning the project of modernity, become instead in the nuclear age highly productive positive forces. Morgner argues that the world can only be saved from nuclear disaster if politicians and populations recognize the fact that patriarchal systems have led the world to the brink of disaster: "Alleinherrschendes Eroberungsdnken in Gesellschaft, Wissenschaft und Technik haben die Erde an Abgründe geworfen" (A. 377). The male tradition of "Eroberungsdnken" - understood as the tendency to conceive the relationship of the self to the world predominantly in terms of struggles for power and domination - is, according to Morgner, not something which is inherent in the male character but a product of cultural and historical processes: "Eroberungsdnken von Männern - eine Kulturzüchtung, nicht Männernatur" (A. 377). The aporia of the concept of "Abschreckungspolitik" can only be overcome once governments and the men who make them up recognize the value of certain much maligned and neglected talents traditionally associated only with the female sex:

Nur wenn Männer und die von Männern geführten progressiven Regierungen erkennen, daß sie die Probleme der Weltpolitik und Ökologie und ihre eigenen ohne gewisse Fähigkeiten und Tugenden der Frauen nicht bewältigen und entsprechend handeln, kann der Planet gerettet werden. (A. 377-78)

The world situation is so serious through the massive build-up of "Militärmaschinen mit dem Vernichtungspotential von einer Million Hiroshima-Bomben" (A. 378), argues Beatriz, that only a radically new way of approaching matters of such global importance as war and peace can avert the danger of nuclear war. The new feminine philosophy that Morgner puts forward as the key to saving the future for the future

is not confined solely to female pleasure and aims to draw on more aspects of female culture than Marcuse's "female principle."

A major problem of Western civilizations has always been - according to Beatriz - "das Ausweichen vor dem Konkreten" (A. 40). As a result of the "Spezialisierungskultur" (A. 547) and the sexual division of labour, the concern with "das Allernächste und Konkreteste" (A. 40), with concrete, pragmatic social tasks has traditionally been the province of women. Originally a quality shared equally by both sexes, "die Fähigkeit zu hegen," (A. 377) the ability to nurture, has only been cultivated in the female sex and then exclusively for "private Zwecke" (A. 377). As a consequence, these specifically feminine talents which are oriented towards the preservation rather than the destruction of life and culture have had no impact in the realm of politics and government. As Sirene Katharina remarks to Arke: "Hohe Politik war nie so absolut Männersache wie im Zeitalter der Frauenemanzipation" (A. 379).

The ability to nurture, protect and preserve is neither naturally given nor an innate feminine characteristic; it is a culturally acquired skill, the product of acculturation rather than biology. As the result of increasing specialization in society, nurturing is a skill which has been developed solely by women to such a high degree of proficiency for the purposes of maintaining the monogamous family. And as Engels suggests in his famous treatise on the rise of the bourgeois family and private property, the monogamous family and the division of labour between men and women within the family was consolidated during the rise of capitalism for the purposes of securing heirs for private property.

Morgner does not specifically link the cultivation of nurturing skills among women to the development of the capitalist mode of production, but it seems likely, judging by the popularity and currency of Engels' thesis in the GDR, that her remarks on the perpetuation of "Hegen als Weiberressort für private Zwecke" (A. 377) are also intended as a critique of the way the socialist state has continued to encourage the traditional division of labour between the sexes. However, the mere fact that nurturing has remained a skill only cultivated by women does not allow her

to dismiss its worth as a valuable human activity. In recognizing the ability to nurture as a socially and historically produced skill rather than a biologically given instinct, Amanda cleverly by-passes many of the pitfalls of essentialism, seeking to ground her alternative feminist politics and philosophy historically in the sexual division of labour under capitalism. She urges women to reactivate these typically feminine skills and deploy them for direct political purposes, even though in doing so they do not break with traditional female domains of social life and traditional feminine activities. The skills, Amanda argues, that women have historically developed in private to sustain the bourgeois family and to perpetuate both capitalist and patriarchal relations of production should not be abandoned simply because women would be in danger of replicating the very division of labour which has been the cause of their oppression. She proposes instead that women redeploy these highly specialized skills in the public spheres of social life for political purposes. She argues that it is not the activities themselves that are inherently demeaning or exploitative but the social purpose to which they have hitherto been employed:

Die Unfähigkeit zu Hegen - eine durch Kultur erworbene Männereigenschaft - kann plötzlich nicht mehr als Kavaliersdelikt hingenommen werden wie gewohnt. Plötzlich kann an dieser Unfähigkeit die Erdenwelt zerscheitern. Plötzlich wird die Fähigkeit zu Hegen - eine durch die Spezialisierungskultur bisher allein bei Frauen hochentwickelte Eigenschaft für private Zwecke - für die größten öffentlichen Zwecke unentbehrlich. (A. 547)

Because of their constant concern with child-rearing, women also have - according to Morgner - a more highly developed sense of responsibility and a greater capacity to compromise: "Frauen sind also hochtrainiert, Verantwortung zu tragen" (A. 378). She maintains that women in fact act irresponsibly when they neglect to employ this well-developed sense of responsibility in the public sphere, remaining content to delegate responsibility to so-called specialists: "Wenn die Frauen sich länger mit privater Verantwortung bescheiden und öffentliche an Spezialisten delegieren, handeln sie unverantwortlich" (A. 378).

Morgner, like Christa Wolf in *Voraussetzung einer Erzählung*, is not advocating a new form of "Mütterlichkeit" of the type often put forward within

certain strands of American and West German feminism during the seventies and eighties. Like Wolf, who warns against substituting "an die Stelle des Männlichkeitswahns" a form of "Weiblichkeitswahn,"<sup>41</sup> Morgner, too, seems careful not to paint an idealized picture of either womanhood or motherhood. Laura is a far from perfect mother and, if her experiences with her first child Juliane in the *Trobadora* are typical of motherhood under socialism, motherhood is certainly not a quality or gift women are born with. Socialist mothers, like socialist fathers, neglect their children too, if and when conditions force them to.

Unlike the work of those advocates of a new type of mothering such as Nancy Chodorow, Dorothy Dinnerstein, and Margarete Mitscherlich,<sup>42</sup> Morgner does not draw on object-relations psychology to ground her critique of gender inequality. She is not concerned with the detrimental psychological effects of mother-daughter and mother-son relationships on the socialization of the infant and how better patterns of mothering would improve social relations. She also does not attempt to locate the origin of male dominance in Western societies in the asymmetry in child-care arrangements and the institution of mothering itself, nor in the personality structures which current forms of mothering produce in males and females. As Lynne Segal points out, much of this American psychology-based research into the causes and effects of motherhood arose out of the desire to understand more fully the reasons why women choose to mother, what needs mothering fulfils and what are the full social and political consequences of this seemingly 'natural' desire to mother.<sup>43</sup> This resurgence in interest in issues of childbirth and -rearing after the early pro-abortion campaigns of the women's movement helped to articulate many of the mixed feelings

<sup>41</sup> Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung*, p. 115.

<sup>42</sup> For a representative sample of American and West German feminist theories of the socialization of gender which tend to equate "weiblich" with "mütterlich" and which extrapolate women's greater peaceableness from the activity of mothering, see Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (London: University of California Press, 1978); Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World* (London: Women's Press, 1987); Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Zukunft ist Weiblich* (Zürich: pendo-verlag, 1987); Mitscherlich, *The Peaceable Sex: On Aggression in Women and Men*, trans. Craig Tomlinson (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corporation, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> Lynne Segal, *Is the Future Female?: Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 135-36.

white middle class women in Britain and America were experiencing around the choice of whether to mother or not.

In the GDR, women have never been faced with such a choice, and even the availability of oral contraception in the seventies together with the changes to the abortion laws did not alter the massive pressures on all East German women to bear children. Legal abortions and oral contraception did not alter the inevitability of motherhood for most women but merely the timing. Morgner does, however, share the concern of Dinnerstein and Chodorow that fundamental changes to society's "sexual arrangements,"<sup>44</sup> by which is meant "the division of responsibility, opportunity, and privilege that prevails between male and female humans, and the patterns of psychological interdependence that are implicit in this division,"<sup>45</sup> are necessary to the survival of the human race. But whereas Dinnerstein's and Chodorow's primary concern seems to be the detrimental effects of asymmetrical mothering relations and the "female monopoly of child care"<sup>46</sup> on society at large, Morgner chooses to highlight the potential for positive changes to society as a whole if traditional modes of mothering are brought to bear on other social spheres than the family unit. Thus, while Dinnerstein hopes to change society radically through psychosocial relations, mainly the mother-child relation - albeit without specifying how these changes within the family will affect the social fabric -, Morgner proposes breaking down the public/private split which Dinnerstein's theory still upholds. The project for joint parenting which forms the mainstay of Dinnerstein's and Chodorow's theses does not challenge the ideology of the middle class family and the private institution of mothering in the way that Morgner's critique of the socialist family does.<sup>47</sup>

Where Morgner's emphasis on maternal values and practices diverges most from the work of Dinnerstein and Chodorow is in the link which she forges between maternal values and the 'big questions' of war and peace. Morgner's plan to save the

<sup>44</sup> Dinnerstein, *The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World*, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>47</sup> Segal, *Is the Future Female?*, p. 159.

globe from nuclear and ecological destruction hinges on the hope of extending the realm of influence of women's nurturing and mothering skills to the public domain, where feminine values and ways of thinking have hitherto had little or no impact. Women are to form the vanguard in the fight against the "militarist mentality" and in promoting peace between nations. Here Morgner agrees with antimilitarist feminists in the West, who contend that women must play a key role in saving humanity from destruction through nuclear war, and that the specific values and skills associated with mothering such as "hegen" or "preservative love" must be brought to bear upon the social world.<sup>48</sup>

American feminists, such as Elshtain and Ruddick, argue also for the notion of "maternal thinking" as a means of diminishing militarism and undercutting militarist ideologies. Their arguments rely, however, on the assumption that there is a psychological basis for the association of women with peace. Female peacefulness, they contend, is the result of "early experiences of preservative love expected from and bestowed by mothers and other female caretakers."<sup>49</sup> "Women are daughters," the argument continues, "who learn from their mothers the activity of preservative love and the maternal thinking that arises from it."<sup>50</sup> Why mothering should only be successful where daughters are involved and just why these maternal values should be transmitted only to daughters seems unclear. Equally unclear is the uniform manner in which daughters replicate their mother's behaviour and the precise reasons why their moral and cognitive development should be any different from that of their brothers, provided they have the same 'good' mothers. Such theories which ground the greater peacefulness of women in universal patterns of mothering, are furthermore flawed, it seems to me, in their attempts to claim not only the higher moral ground for women but also a different "cognitive style."<sup>51</sup> Part of the

<sup>48</sup> See Sara Ruddick, "Pacifying the Forces: Drafting Women in the Interests of Peace," *Signs* 8.3 (Spring 1983), pp. 471-89; and Jean Bethke Elshtain, "On Beautiful Souls, Just Warriors and Feminist Consciousness," in *Women and Men's Wars*, ed. Judith Stiehm (Oxford, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Paris, Frankfurt: Pergamon Press, 1983) and Segal, *Is the Future Female?*

<sup>49</sup> Ruddick, "Pacifying the Forces," p. 479.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Ruddick claims that women have a "distinctive female moral voice" (*ibid.*, p. 482). She also seems at times to be arguing for the return of women as part of

daughter's heritage, and not the son's, from the mother's activity of preservative love is a "concrete cognitive style and theory of conflict at odds with the abstractions of war"<sup>52</sup> and actually opposed to "warlike abstraction."<sup>53</sup> The culprit in Ruddick's eyes is the tendency to abstract, which she sees as being closely connected to "our desire and capacity to wage war."<sup>54</sup> Women with their more concrete style of thinking are therefore much less likely than men to condone wars and to participate in militaristic activities. As Lynne Segal points out, peace is itself equally an abstract cause so why should women be any more predisposed to supporting peaceful causes than men?<sup>55</sup>

Morgner also makes mention of the need for concrete thinking and the knowledge gained from experience as an important means of counteracting the abstract logic of "Abschreckungspolitik." The phenomenon of the nuclear arms race is only made possible, she argues, because of the lack of concrete thinking or "das Ausweichen vor dem Konkreten" (A. 40). Concrete thinking does not designate here a form of cognition which is holistic and field-dependent, but instead a particular attention to issues closest to the individual's life context. In the past, humanity has too often concentrated on things far-removed from the everyday at the expense of more immediate and pressing needs:

Es besteht eine auffallende Tendenz, erst auf das fernste loszugehen und alles zu übersehen, woran man sich in nächster Nähe unaufhörlich stößt. Der Schwung der ausfahrenden Gesten, das Abenteuerlich-Kühne der Expeditionen ins Ferne täuscht über die Motive zu ihnen hinweg. Nicht selten handelt es sich einfach darum, das Nächste zu vermeiden, weil wir ihm nicht gewachsen sind. (A. 40)

Morgner does not specifically state that women, in particular mothers, have a "cognitive style" that makes them better at concrete thinking than men. Nor does she make the associative leap that equates women's more highly developed talents for concrete thinking with women's greater peacefulness. She implies, however, that women must lead the way in cultivating "das Allernächste und Konkreteste" (A. 40)

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God's moral police when she asserts that women would find "battle lust" "disgusting" close up (ibid, p. 484).

<sup>52</sup> ibid, p. 483.

<sup>53</sup> ibid, p. 479.

<sup>54</sup> ibid, p. 481.

<sup>55</sup> Segal, *Is the Future Female?*, p. 197.

and that they are better suited to the task by virtue of their experience with child-minding.

In discussions, both Beatriz and Arke agree that the type of thinking which can best come to the aid of the planet is one that places greater emphasis on life quality rather than quantity. Abstract communication with the life world, which has had the ascendancy since the Renaissance, has valued definitions, material laws and objectivity over quality of life, interconnectedness, experience and subjectivity. Enlightenment discourses of mastery have, in their race for supremacy, displaced "die Fähigkeit der konkreten Zwiesprache" (A. 459) as a valid form of interaction with the environment and the social community. Morgner proposes fostering "bildliches Denken" (A. 460) as an alternative materialist philosophy and thus as a means of challenging forms of instrumental thought. A real materialist is someone who does not merely recognize the material basis of the world but one who perceives herself as part of a whole, as "gebunden, eingebunden, geborgen, verantwortlich" (A. 460).

This particular mode of interaction with the world, or "Aneignung der Welt," stresses the individual's connections to the natural and social world and encourages therefore a higher "Verantwortungsgefühl" towards the environment. Only by challenging the "Ausschließlichkeitsanspruch" of the negative legacy of Enlightenment discourses, such as abstract thinking, can the ability to think concretely and mimetically be retrieved. As Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby suggest, ecofeminist discourses, with their emphasis on interconnectedness, responsibility and nurturance, may in fact foster alternatives to discourses of mastery and control while still managing to avoid the traps of essentialism.<sup>56</sup>

Unlike Ruddick, Morgner implies that the rhetoric of abstraction is used by both pacifists and the defenders of limited warfare alike.<sup>57</sup> Both employ similar

<sup>56</sup> Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby, "American Feminism and the Language of Control," *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 202-3.

<sup>57</sup> See Segal's critique of Ruddick's statement that "willing warriors are loyal to abstract causes" (Ruddick, "Pacifying the Forces," p. 481) in Segal, *Is the Future Female?*, p. 197.



abstractions in the realization "daß sich mit Abstraktionen leichter lebt" (A. 460). Abstractions, however, soon lose their power to shock or to galvanize people into action unless the ability to identify with those most affected, "die Betroffenen," is regained. She appeals therefore to people "mit Bindung" to keep the historical memories of the victims of third world poverty and, in particular, the twenty million Russians and the six million Jews that died as a result of the policies of Nazi Germany, alive. Whilst she questions the historical efficacy of such abstractions to change post-war German history, she does not call into question her own use of statistics of the megatonnes of nuclear explosives which are sufficient to blow up the earth ten times over.

In contrast to Ruddick and Elshtain, who subsume all measures to ensure peace under the rubric of "maternal thinking," Morgner includes writing and other creative activities such as "orakeln" and singing in her list of means of combatting militaristic tendencies in society. Beatriz reflects on the usefulness of such activities in preventing war:

War das Allernächste und Konkreteste, dem ich mich zuwenden mußte, singen? Konnte für Arke dieses Allernächste und Konkreteste umgehen, orakeln über Orakel und mich ziehen sein? (A. 40).

Yet the urgency of the world situation is such that even the sirens' song, "das Allernächste und Konkreteste" that Beatriz has to offer in her present incarnation, seems inadequate:

Jetzt, 1980, lagern auf ihm <dem Planeten>, wie ich von Arke hörte, pro Kopf der Erdbevölkerung bereits drei Tonnen Sprengstoff. Fünfzehn Gramm reichen, um einen Menschen zu töten. Gegenüber Vorräten zur zwanzigfachen Weltvernichtung erschien mir Sirenengesang lächerlich. (A. 41)

One further traditional feminine art to be co-opted in the name of peace is the age-old "Kunst der Einbläselei." On her world tour to find support from other remaining sirens, Arke encounters Sirene Katharina, the former Empress of Russia, and Sirene Sappho. Both mention independently of one another the usefulness of the art of suggestion in increasing women's influence in the political arena. When women have had no other form of political representation, they have had to resort to

exerting their influence over political matters indirectly through their male lovers. Is Morgner denying here the need to fight for more direct political representation by resorting to the standard anti-feminist argument that women have in fact always wielded power over men in the bedroom and in the realm of the home? It seems unlikely that Morgner is advocating "Einbläserei" as a valid alternative to more direct political power for women but rather as a critique of the under-representation of women in political decision-making processes. By the same token, Morgner's polemics underscore the fact that an adherence to a type of 'rights' feminism, which, in the West is often associated with a liberal feminist position, and in the East with the SED's official policy on women's emancipation, is in itself insufficient to increase the influence of an alternative feminine or feminist standpoint on the realm of politics. Her resuscitation of the art of suggestion should also be seen as an attempt to refute the notion that the influence of women upon world affairs can be measured in terms of their emancipation from the private spheres into the workforce. Sirene Katharina warns against equating higher participation rates in the workforce and greater freedom of speech with greater political influence:

Ist etwa gar Gaja selbst schon der Illusion aufgesessen, daß Frauen gleich Einfluß auf Menschengeschichte haben, nur weil sie in manchen Ländern etwas mehr reden und arbeiten dürfen? Reden und mitarbeiten dürfen führt nicht automatisch in die Kommandozentralen der Macht. Im Gegenteil. Viel Emanzipationsgerede ruft als Gegenreaktion Aggressionen auf den Plan. (A. 378-79)

The implication here is that a type of liberal or 'rights' feminism that concerns itself solely with increasing women's representation in the workforce and in decision-making processes is in itself inadequate to sufficiently challenge militarist ideologies. High politics, Sirene Katharina reminds Arke, was never more a "Männersache" (A. 379) than in the age of women's emancipation. Solutions, such as those recently put forward by American feminists, which go as far as to condone women's participation in the armed forces as a means of feminizing the military and hence abolishing war, would therefore only be implicating women in patriarchal structures without radically altering their functioning.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See Ruddick, "Pacifying the Forces," pp. 484-85.

The assumption underlying Morgner's call for a feminization of politics is that women are historically rather than psychologically more inclined towards peace. Here she comes closest to the theories expounded by West German sociologist Margarete Mitscherlich, who considers the greater "Friedfertigkeit" of women as the inevitable result of years of compromise and powerlessness. Peaceableness has become a social role which women have been forced to adopt owing to their inferior position. Mitscherlich does concede, however, that certain attitudes traditionally associated with female social spheres, such as nurturing, empathy or "Einfühlung," as well as the Christian values of passivity, compassion and forgiveness,<sup>59</sup> are inherent to women's 'nature.'<sup>60</sup> She then goes on to argue that, unless women attain power, these values so essential to the preservation of life and nature will not come to bear upon the world of politics.<sup>61</sup>

Although Morgner agrees that feminine skills and talents must be mobilized if the destruction of the environment and the human race is to be avoided, at the same time she stresses the fact that the preservation of peaceful conditions is not only a feminist concern and hence one that is peripheral to society, but that peace is "ein gemeinsames menschliches Interesse" (A. 634). She pins her hopes for the future therefore on a feminization of the political arena which strives "die Welt menschlich <zu> verändern . . ." (A. 312). Like Wolf, she is anxious to dispel any fears about the sectarian nature of this philosophy by stressing the "human" benefits to be gained. It seems as if Morgner too shares Wolf's "wahren Horror vor jener Rationalismuskritik, die selbst in hemmungslosem Irrationalismus endet."<sup>62</sup> The critique of the one-sidedness of male rationality must not, Wolf urges, find itself replacing "Männlichkeitswahn" with "Weiblichkeitswahn" or idealizing pre-rational or irrational phases of human history.<sup>63</sup> One cannot afford not to engage with "rationalen Modellen der Konfliktlösung" and consequently any attempts to eternalize femininity

<sup>59</sup> Mitscherlich, *Die Zukunft ist Weiblich*, pp. 23-25.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>62</sup> Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung*, p. 115.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

as an absolute value are, she contends, merely manifestations of a "großangelegten Ausweichmanöver."<sup>64</sup>

### C. "Die Mütter sind es" - The Matriarchy or Discovering Women's Prehistory

What the two most important East German feminist manifestos of the eighties, Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* and Morgner's *Amanda*, share in common is a renewed interest in matriarchy as a primal and dominant phase of human prehistory. This resurgence in interest among East German writers in the possibility of matriarchal societies takes its impetus mainly from feminist enquiry in the West into the origins of patriarchal structures and into feminist alternatives to patriarchal history. Notwithstanding the impact of much recent research into matrilinear and matrifocal societies in the West, both works by Morgner and Wolf can also be read as responses to the history of the reception of Greek mythology within the GDR itself.

Both Morgner and Wolf look to matriarchal societies for solutions to the aporias of Western civilization which they see manifested in the ever-escalating arms race and the "Abschreckungspolitik" of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. They retain however a certain scepticism towards feminist calls for a return to the matriarchal life forms which form part of the movement "Zurück zur Natur,"<sup>65</sup> especially when this is accompanied by a romantic nostalgia for 'primitive' or prehistoric forms of civilization. Wolf reminds us of the dangers of the idealization of myth and prehistory as a radical critique of modernity, particularly when it is linked to "ein Hinopfern und bubenhaftes Über-Bordwerfen von Errungenschaften und Prinzipien . . . , die nicht nur den Europäer zum Europäer, sondern sogar den Menschen zum Menschen machen."<sup>66</sup> She presents instead an alternative use of matriarchal prehistory in a Faust-like "Gang zu den Müttern"<sup>67</sup> which purports not to be a "Rückfall in Ressentiment," nor a "Flucht-Weg vor einer Analyse der Verhältnisse,"

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<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 100.

nor yet an "Idealisierung primitiverer Gesellschaftszustände."<sup>68</sup> But whereas Wolf announces an intention to strip Greek mythology of its patriarchal overlayings and to uncover the matriarchal genesis of European society, Morgner is far less concerned with questions of aetiology and with such conditions as may have given rise to the patriarchal "Umfunktionierung" of matriarchal myths.<sup>69</sup> Her treatment of Greek mythology in *Amanda* could therefore be said to be more utopian in character than archaeological.<sup>70</sup> Underlying Wolf's search for a turning point when European history might have taken a radically different direction, there is, in addition, a fascination with origins which Morgner's work does not share.<sup>71</sup>

Morgner's use of myth is, by contrast with Wolf's, more purely utopian in its lack of concern for ascertaining the historical and social conditions which gave rise to matriarchy or at which point "das Vaterrecht" took over from "das Mutterrecht."<sup>72</sup> Although Morgner grounds the female qualities of nurturing and responsibility historically in the original sexual division of labour, her plea for the revival of other aspects of the "female principle" such as "Kompromißfähigkeit," "Erdenliebe" and peacefulness makes no attempt to verify her assertions through the allusion to the actual existence of peaceful conditions under matriarchal societies. She side-steps therefore the contentious issue of whether women can be considered inherently pacifist or peaceful, as well as the equally controversial question of whether matriarchal societies - if there were any - were any more peaceful than their patriarchal successors. In the place of speculations about social origins, Morgner

<sup>68</sup> *ibid*, p. 101.

<sup>69</sup> See Anthony Stephens' critique of Wolf's claims to trace the mythical overlayings of the figure of *Kassandra* back to their historical "coordinates." Stephens writes: "Abgesehen von den abenteuerlichen Hypothesen eines Robert Graves oder George Thompson findet man kaum eine Spur von solchen 'Koordinaten,' dafür aber Mythisches in Hülle und Fülle" ("Die Verführung der Worte," p. 141).

<sup>70</sup> Gerhard Neumann sees Wolf's undertaking in *Kassandra* as both archaeological and utopian in character: "Ausgrabung einer mythischen Grundfigur und Entwurf eines sozialen Modells" (Neumann, "Christa Wolf: *Kassandra*: Die Archäologie der weiblichen Stimme," *Erinnerte Zukunft: 11 Studien zum Werk Christa Wolfs*, ed. Wolfram Mauser (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1985), p. 233).

<sup>71</sup> Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung*, p. 107.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*, p. 56.

offers instead her own revised version of Greek myths of the origins of humanity, narrated in the chapter "Parnaß-Mythologie."

Myth functions paradoxically in **Amanda** as a form of "Aufklärungsarbeit," as a way of demythologizing the present through the looking glass of the mythical past. Myth no longer represents a form of "falsches Bewußtsein," as it appears to in Wolf's **Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung**,<sup>73</sup> as a mystification of reality or as a pre-rational and thus irrational form of cognition.<sup>74</sup> Isebel talks of the prime value of myths as ideological buttresses or "Stützen" (A. 61), which women must erect if they are to attain power. Beatriz reminds her that future generations will require quite different myths and legends; they will find today's heroic ideals and idealized heroes or any material which is too overtly didactic in its content indigestible. Laura's son, Wesselin, the only representative of future generations in the novel, would not swallow "hundertprozentige Erbauungsgeschichten" (A. 61). Beatriz also questions the need for power to secure its foothold through myths of legitimation which are blatantly exaggerations of the truth. Isebel puts an end to Beatriz's squeamishness at being forced into the role of "Hofhistoriographin" (A. 62) by reminding her that not all ideological uses of myth are incompatible with the historians' pursuit of truth. Beatriz then, as a twentieth-century successor to the court historian, is entrusted with the task of creating unofficial myths of legitimation for feminists in the East.

Beatriz's unofficial "Arbeit am Mythos" undertakes, as Wolfgang Emmerich points out, a correction of those orthodox Greek myths which had already in the post-war years been revised for socialist readers. This use of mythical material goes beyond the sort of demythologizing and "Entwertung des Mythischen" which Brecht demonstrates in three short works written in the year 1933, entitled "Berichtigung alter Mythen."<sup>75</sup> Authors such as Morgner, Fühmann, Wolf, Hacks and Müller attempt to locate the relevance of myths for the present, to rediscover the "Logos im

<sup>73</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>74</sup> Rohrwasser and Engelhardt, "Mythos und DDR-Literatur," p. 17.

<sup>75</sup> Wolfgang Emmerich, "Zu-Ende-denken: Griechische Mythologie und neuere DDR-Literatur," **Kontroversen, alte und neue**, Vol. 10, ed. Albrecht Schöne (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), p. 217.

Mythos."<sup>76</sup> Yet, whereas Emmerich follows Blumenberg in classifying myths as successful endeavours to compensate for fears by converting them into stories,<sup>77</sup> I would argue that Morgner's (as well as Müller's and Hacks') treatment of Greek mythology is a far more self-reflective process of "Zivilisationskritik."<sup>78</sup> The act of tracing negative developments of civilization back to a mythical origin is the work of "Aufklärung," of freeing the present from the hold of the mythical past. Like the work of Hacks and Müller, Morgner's fiction is primarily concerned with correcting a naive "Geschichtsoptimismus" and "Fortschrittsdenken."<sup>79</sup> This correction does not take the form of what Thomas Mann termed "die 'Umfunktionierung des Mythos ins Humane,'" or of divesting fascist ideology of its mythical underpinnings.<sup>80</sup> What Morgner is attempting is instead an "Umfunktionierung des Mythos ins Weibliche," a demythologizing of patriarchal myths and the resurrection of matriarchal or feminine equivalents. This involves performing a feminist reading of patriarchal myths, as Morgner argues in a paraphrase of Marx' famous Feuerbach thesis:

Die Philosophen haben die Welt bisher nur männlich interpretiert. Es kommt aber darauf an, sie auch weiblich zu interpretieren, um sie menschlich verändern zu können. (A. 312)

Like Wolf, Morgner turns her attention to "Vorgeschichte" in the hope of discovering "friedliche Zustände." The same is said of Laura Salman - "sie wollte Geschichte studieren, weil sie erkunden wollte, was allgemein als 'Vorgeschichte' bezeichnet wird, nicht ohne Akzent. Als ob friedliche Zustände un kreativ wären. Sein müßten" (A. 141). If war is the "Vater aller Dinge," Laura wants to find out what is "die Mutter aller Dinge" (A. 141). Laura's rather naive interest in the matriarchy and what constitutes prehistory is part of a larger project of GDR writers to subvert the teleological accounts of history which posit a radical caesura between

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

<sup>78</sup> See Emmerich, "Das Erbe des Odysseus: Der zivilisationskritische Rekurs auf den Mythos in der neueren DDR-Literatur," *Studies in GDR Society and Culture* 5, Selected Papers from the Tenth New Hampshire Symposium on the German Democratic Republic, ed. Margy Gerber (Langham: UP of America, 1985), p. 181.

<sup>79</sup> Engelhardt and Rohrwasser, "Mythos und DDR-Literatur," p. 19.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*, p. 16.

"Vorgeschichte" and "Geschichte." She implicitly questions the need to construct an 'historical' period dominated by chaotic natural phenomena, the belief in superstitions and the general "Unmündigkeit" of the human subject. In Enlightenment discourses prehistory has always functioned as a means of distinguishing reason from its 'other,' as a way of differentiating the history of the Enlightenment from the irrational, barbaric phase of the history of humanity, or "Vorgeschichte," it is thought to supersede. It is the concept of a radical break from the past which forms the basis of the self-understanding of Western civilization as Enlightenment and it is this notion of the progression of history towards ever more rational goals that is under attack in Morgner's enthroning of prehistory.

Rüdiger Bernhardt suggests reading the binary opposition between "Geschichte"/"Vorgeschichte" as a metaphor for the historical rupture brought about by the socialist revolution.<sup>81</sup> "Vorgeschichte" then signifies - in reference to the use of mythology in Heiner Müller's works - the irrational forces of capitalism and fascism which the entry into a new phase of socialist history is supposed to overcome. Presumably due the influence of Bloch, the concept of "Vorgeschichte" is commonly associated in the GDR with an unenlightened, pre-socialist phase of history and thus with barbarism and fascism.<sup>82</sup> Prehistory functions therefore as a chiffre for socialist history's 'other.'

A feminist return to prehistory sees itself by contrast as a critique of this binary opposition and of the isotopic readings of the rational versus the irrational, the barbaric versus the civilized, that the division invites. Morgner's preoccupation with prehistory functions, as does Wolf's, as "Rationalismuskritik"<sup>83</sup> and more generally as a critique of "das hierarchisch-männliche Realitätsprinzip"<sup>84</sup> or the principle underpinning patriarchal history. In the "Griechisches Vorspiel" in *Amanda*, Morgner postulates the origins of the patriarchal martial tradition or "was die

<sup>81</sup> Bernhardt, *Odysseus' Tod - Prometheus' Leben*, p. 104.

<sup>82</sup> "Der Mensch lebt noch überall in der Vorgeschichte, ja alles und jedes steht noch vor Erschaffung der Welt, als einer rechten," in Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), p. 1628.

<sup>83</sup> Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung*, p. 115.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p. 112.



Menschen heute Geschichte nennen: Privateigentum, Klassentrennung, Ausbeutung, Staatsgewalt, Kriege" (A. 160) as coinciding with the beginnings of Western civilization and history as we know it. Implicit in this account is of course the assumption that matrilinear societies were predominantly peaceful, an assumption that is also shared by Wolf.

#### D. Pandora's Return or the Revival of Hope

In the "Parnaß-Mythologie" Morgner offers an alternative account of the Olympian creation myth. In the main, her version of the creation of the first humans closely follows the Greek sources in Hesiod's *Theogony*, beginning firstly with the creation of Mother Earth from the night, then the birth of Uranos followed by the creation of flora and fauna.<sup>85</sup> Gaia and Uranos beget the first men and women, together with giants with three hundred arms and the cyclops. The eldest son, Kronos, rebels against his father and finally castrates him. Kronos is to repeat his father's fate and is dethroned by Zeus, one of his sons. The struggle lasts for ten years and brings about the end of the first human race. Humankind is given a second chance with the arrival of Prometheus who, envious of Gaia's powers to create life, strives to imitate her creativity by fashioning people out of clay: "Er bewunderte Gaja. Er fühlte sich von ihr herausgefordert. Es drängte ihn, sich von der überwältigenden Verehrung, die ihm Gajas Fähigkeiten abverlangten, zu befreien und seine eigenen zu erproben" (A. 79).

Prometheus, as the father of all men, is also the "father" of invention. He teaches his creations the secrets of architecture, astronomy, mathematics, navigation, medicine, metallurgy and other useful arts and sciences (A. 84). This period witnesses furthermore the beginnings of agriculture. Perhaps the most significant innovation of all was the discovery of Mother Earth's treasures in the mining of

<sup>85</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, in *The Poems of Hesiod*, trans. with Introduction and comments by R. M. Frazer (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983). All further references to this work will appear in the text as the abbreviation <Theog>

gold, silver and iron. When Zeus, in search of revenge, decides to withhold fire from Prometheus and his men, Prometheus must devise a ruse to win back the vital facility of fire-making. Soon, however, the destructive purposes to which fire is put, begin to outweigh the constructive purposes and Mother Earth notices that "die Waffenherstellung eine bevorzugte Beschäftigung der Menschen wurde und das Niederbrennen von Behausung ein gewohntes Mittel, Streite auszutragen" (A. 81). The possession of fire is initially neither wholly negative nor positive until the production of weapons for the preparation of war becomes its main function. This period in the development of the human race bears many similarities to the Bronze Age outlined by Hesiod in **Works and Days**, which is lamented as an age of men completely different from the previous peace-loving races of the golden and silver ages, a race "devoted to doing war's wretched works and acts of hybris."<sup>86</sup>

It is here that Morgner's version appears to diverge most noticeably from Greek and German sources. The ever-increasing aggressive tendencies of Prometheus' men are explained by Gaia as the result of "den Mangel an Liebesfähigkeit" (A. 81). In order to teach them how to give love, she proposes sending them a woman, Pandora. Whereas Pandora is referred to in Hesiod as a gift sent from Zeus to punish Prometheus for the theft of the fire (WD. 47-85) and for deceiving him with the sacrifice of the ox (Theog. 535-75), Pandora appears in Morgner's mythology as a gift from Mother Earth. She is not the "great plague" (Theog. 592), the "evil which all shall take to their hearts with delight, an evil to love and embrace" (WD. 57-58), but a messenger from Gaia, more beautiful and intelligent than any woman before (A. 82). With the exception of Goethe's central figure in his play **Pandora** (1809), Hesiod's virulent misogynistic denunciation of women as the origin of all evil has tended to influence all subsequent interpretations of the figure of Pandora. Even Robert Graves, who chides Hesiod for his "anti-feminist fable, probably of his own invention,"<sup>87</sup> cannot resist adding his own embellishments to the list of Pandora's evils, seeing in her the archetypal demonic woman. In addition to her seductive

<sup>86</sup> Hesiod, **Works and Days**, in **The Poems of Hesiod**, p. 102. All further references to this work will appear in the text as the abbreviation <WD>.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Graves, **The Greek Myths**, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1955), p. 148.

beauty, Pandora is "as foolish, mischevious, and idle as she was beautiful - the first of a long line of women."<sup>88</sup>

The model for Morgner's Pandora was provided instead by Goethe's fragment **Pandoras Wiederkunft**. Although Goethe was never to complete the last section of the play, in which Pandora returns to save humanity, his portrayal of the figure is significantly at variance with the Greek sources and subsequent versions of the myth. Goethe recast his Pandora with classical grace and beauty and her box, which was once the source of "all the Spites that might plague mankind,"<sup>89</sup> contains "Luftgeburten"<sup>90</sup> and "Liebesglück."<sup>91</sup> Similarly, in Morgner's retelling of the myth, Pandora's box contains "Luftgestalten und Güter mit Fittichen: Zukunftsbilder" (A. 82). Whereas the figure of Pandora functions in Hesiod's epics as an aetiological myth, introduced to explain the necessity for men to work for their livelihood and the existence of the social evils of hunger and illness,<sup>92</sup> Morgner uses the same mythological figure to explain the loss of human qualities which have traditionally been associated with the feminine. When Epimetheus opens the box, "Erdenliebe . . . , Sinn für Harmonie und Hegen, Kompromißfähigkeit, Frieden" (A. 83), attributes which have only been cultivated by women over the ages fly out, leaving only Hope remaining. Pandora then sees the necessity to flee in order to preserve her only remaining gift to humanity, hope.

Hope is stripped of the negative connotations it has in Hesiod's account and becomes - instead of a synonym for delusions<sup>93</sup> - the key to the salvation of the human race and to maintaining faith in the future. After the disappearance of Pandora with the only remaining contents of her box, the second race of humans continues to misuse the fire that Prometheus had brought and to travel further down the path to self-destruction: "die Menschen aber führen fort, das Feuer zu

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Johann Wolfgang Goethe, **Pandora: Ein Festspiel, Dramatische Dichtungen II** (Berlin/GDR: Aufbau, 1964), vol. 6 of **Goethe: Poetische Werke**, "Berliner Ausgabe," 22 vols., p. 414.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p. 413.

<sup>92</sup> Hesiod, **The Poems of Hesiod**, p. 100.

<sup>93</sup> See Graves, **The Greek Myths**, p. 145.

mißbrauchen und strebten, von den Luftgestalten noch angestachelt, rücksichtslos, zerstörerisch, ja selbstzerstörerisch" (A. 83).

The return of Pandora becomes associated not only with the revival of a type of 'realistic' hope to replace the kind of blind hope that has driven the human race relentlessly on to its destruction, but also with the maintenance of a perspective on the future.<sup>94</sup> The future, according to Beatriz and Arke, resides in a reconciliation between Prometheus and Pandora, between the destructive and creative tendencies in human nature. Goethe's attempt in *Pandoras Wiederkunft* at a synthesis between the opposing attitudes of Prometheus and Epimetheus is considered by Arke and Beatriz as exemplary. Goethe's play represents a significant modification of his positive interpretation of the Prometheus and the Faust figures of his earlier works with their emphasis on the destructive rather than the "genial-schöpferisch" aspects of the myth. For the first time, the figure of Epimetheus, whose name signifies "Nachbedacht," afterthought, care and contemplation, is seen as the more positive of the two brothers. This revaluation involves not so much a rejection of his earlier "Sturm und Drang" hero, Prometheus, but rather an attempt to temper Prometheus' "Tatendrang" with the thoughtfulness and reflectiveness of Epimetheus. Beatriz writes of Goethe's play:

Goethes Festspiel verband die Hoffnung auf Heil und Erneuerung der gefährdeten Menschenkultur wesentlich auch mit den Beziehungen zwischen Prometheus und Epimetheus.

"Pandoras Wiederkehr" handelt vom Gegensatz zwischen dem Tatenleben und dem Leben in Betrachtung sowie der Versöhnung dieser einander ausschließenden Haltungen in den folgenden und belehrteren Menschengeschlechtern. (A. 301)

Significantly it is Epimetheus who is the only one to appreciate the loss to humanity that Pandora's disappearance will involve. He is furthermore the brother who is most capable of love. The triumph of Epimetheus represents, according to Hacks, a truly utopian intervention, a "Vorgriff" and a victory for "die klassische Kapitalismuskritik" (A. 301). According to Arke, Goethe's reassessment of the Prometheus myth occurred at a time of personal crisis which was precipitated by

<sup>94</sup> See Engelhardt and Rohrwasser, "Mythos und DDR-Literatur," p. 38.

"schlimme Zustände" (A. 257) in the political arena. The crisis was eventually overcome not by an improvement in the political situation but by a resolution to make "das alltägliche Hoffen" (A. 258) the basis of all future action and thought. In a unprecedented move, Goethe transforms Epimetheus' longing for Pandora's return, which Arke regards as a "Hoffnung nach hinten" (A. 258), a nostalgic and unproductive hope for the restoration of a lost paradise, into a "Hoffnung nach vorn" (A. 258). This is the type of hope which inspires and encourages humankind to contemplate and build a better future. Myths about the regaining of a lost paradise are, Beatriz discovers, common, but myths about their return are rare: "Mythen von gewesenen Paradiesen sind häufig, solche von deren Wiedergewinnung rar" (A. 258). Goethe's Pandora figure functions as a "Humanitätssymbol" (A. 96), an embodiment of hope for a renewal of human culture. Morgner's faith in the return of Pandora and the recovery of the lost "Güter mit Fittichen" also stems from the hope that her return will herald the dawn of a new peaceful age and the birth of a new antimilitarist phase of human history in which the historical and social experiences of women will have a formative influence.

Goethe's use of the Prometheus myth provides inspiration for Beatriz and Arke in their attempts to resuscitate the seductive power of the song of the sirens to silence "Kriegslieder." Beatriz, as the only siren already awakened, has the difficult task of co-ordinating or overseeing the various activities to bring the planet back from the edge of destruction. Sirens, by virtue of their name, have the ability to alarm and warn of pending danger and yet they are not prophets of salvation, Arke remarks, "weil die Erde voll von ihnen ist. Die meisten Propheten sind Personifikationen menschlicher Vermessenheit und Liebesunfähigkeit" (A. 97). Sirens are needed to fight against the Prometheus principle or the "destruction" principle. Their song must seduce Prometheus so that he will be diverted from his self-destructive path. He will then recognize his work as fragmentary and without future and recall Pandora and her one remaining gift to humankind. The next human race will then evolve out of a reconciliation between Prometheus and Pandora, be born out of love and will be the first to be "friedensfähig" (A. 159). The new breed of

human being will value non-violent resolution of conflicts, the importance of compromises and will place a taboo on war (A. 159).

This plan can only be executed if the unquantifiable - "unermeßliche" - contents of Pandora's box, those "Güter mit Fittichen," are also retrieved. Although Beatriz's task as a siren is to provide "Beistand" to the "diesseitige" witches like Laura and Vilma in the form of information about the state of the arms build-up and the earth's depleted natural resources, as well as providing theoretical and mythological underpinnings for the activities of GDR feminists, Arke reminds her that her task is in fact profane and must take place in a suitably profane place - in a cage in a zoo. Rather than occupy the "Blocksberg," the proper place for utopian models where "das Mögliche von Übermorgen" is tried and tested, the sirens must instead give voice to the urgent needs of the present to ensure that the future's utopian potential is kept alive. However, the revival of the sirens' song is not only necessary to save "die alltägliche Realität des Planeten" (A. 246); it must also be employed in the service of the magical reality of the planet: "Denn der Atomtod bedroht selbstverständlich auch die Zauberberge" (A. 246). In this way the fate of the "Zauberberg" is inseparably linked to everyday reality and thus to the activities of the "diesseitige" witches and rebels.

Arke's and Beatriz's plans are sabotaged when Beatriz finds herself the victim of a terrorist attack in which her tongue is cut off. The chances for reactivating the original agitatory power of the song of the sirens now seem remote and, despite the ever-increasing urge to sing, Beatriz has to content herself with "die schriftliche Sirenenstimme" (A. 258) - "die einzige Stimmform, die mir möglich geblieben war" (A. 359). Faced with the impossibility of direct political intervention, Beatriz realizes the worth of literature as a "Mittel zur Bekanntmachung von Hindernissen" (A. 258). Arke, meanwhile, embarks on a world trip to discover what has happened to the other sirens who have been revived to save the planet from ecological and nuclear disaster. Since the removal of Beatriz's tongue and the attempts to render the "Friedenssängerin" "mundtot" (A. 357), Arke is also anxious to find out what other political means are being employed to suppress their activities. Yetunde, the only

other siren to have been resurrected, warns Arke that terrorist attacks on sirens and Gaia's daughters are to be expected even in a country such as the GDR, which in its constitution outlaws "Kriegs- und Völkerhetze" (A. 249). The style of attack of "Sirenenattentäter" does not differ from the usual type of political terrorism in that country, but as Yetunde is not familiar with the "landesüblichen Attentatsstil" (A. 248) of the GDR, she cannot say who was responsible for cutting off Beatriz's tongue nor what their motives were. She suspects, however, that enemies of the GDR may be trying to use Beatriz's tongue as a form of economic blackmail. Morgner is quite obviously parodying the motif of economic blackmail so common in the literature of the "Aufbauphase." The fact that Beatriz has only lost her tongue and hence her ability to speak freely and publicly is perhaps to be understood as a comment on the more subtle means employed by the GDR to silence dissenting voices within its population and more specifically its writers.

At the end of the novel, Pandora has not yet been persuaded to return and there is no real evidence that the Prometheus principle has been defeated. Of all the pragmatic and ideological strategies of the real and fantasy figures of the novel, Pandora's return is the most abstract and possibly therefore the least successful. However, Beatriz reminds Arke that her account in *Amanda* only represents half the victory for the witches and the first part of the "Blocksberg-Umsturz," a long story (A. 656).

## VIII. THE QUEST FOR PEACE - FEMINIST ALTERNATIVES TO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

### A. Alchemy and Feminine Science

In *Amanda* the traditional feminine skills of mothering and nurturing and the ancient art of "Einbläserei" are by no means the only feminine capacities to be enlisted in the name of peace. The new pragmatic skills originally developed by women for private purposes are alone insufficient to change the way of the world and must be complemented by some supernatural or magical help. The art of conjuring and mixing magic potions, which was also cultivated by Laura for personal reasons, represents an additional historical female experience to be remembered by women in the name of peace.

In the *Trobadora* the use of magic by women was sporadic and yet strategic. Women scientists such as Valeska employed the long-forgotten art of magic, albeit somewhat hesitantly, as a response to heavily masculinized scientific discourses. The strategic use of magic had the potential to become a crucial weapon in women's struggle for recognition for their achievements, particularly in male-dominated areas of research. In the *Trobadora* and *Amanda* the cultivation of pre-scientific, pre-rational discourses enables women to challenge and undermine the dogmatism and gender-bias in scientific institutions. The practice of magic, furthermore, provides women with both the theoretical and the practical armoury to mount an attack on instrumental reason and scientific rationality. The practice of white magic by women postulates a different form of feminine interaction with nature based on a specifically feminine mode of production of knowledge. These strategies effect therefore a critique of the gender politics of scientific knowledge, in addition to questioning the association of women with nature which still prevails in scientific institutions in the GDR.

In the story about Valeska in the *Trobadora*, Morgner attacks the continued association of women with nature and the way the "Arbeitsteilung zwischen Mensch



und Natur" (T. 223) continues to dominate gender stereotypes and to plague women in scientific professions. The story of how Valeska resuscitates the ancient art of magic to save her career and her integrity as a researcher and at the same time to satisfy her craving for love, as discussed earlier, also demonstrates how traditional dichotomies such as the nature/culture opposition still continue to inform scientific methods of enquiry and practice. Science is described in the *Trobadora* by Dr. Solowjow, the Russian chess master, as inherently masculine and infused with "den männlich zu geistigem Fanatismus neigenden Denkstil" (A. 165). Women are by contrast "relativ unwissenschaftlich" (T. 165), because as biological beings they represent self-sufficient systems and lack therefore the epistemophilic drive to analyze the world around them. Dr. Wenzel Morolf also informs Uwe Parnitzke that certain forms of science are more masculine than others, physics being the most vital and virile of the sciences. (T. 78)

If nature is the object of scientific enquiry and the domination of nature its telos, then the presence of women within scientific professions is highly problematic for the women themselves as well as for the exclusive status of scientific enquiry. The example of Valeska provides a good case in point. Even though she is occupied in a feminine or 'soft' science, the results of her work still do not carry the same weight as a man's in the same field. Valeska can therefore only gain recognition for her achievements if she disguises them in a traditional feminine form, that is as white magic. The recourse to magic offers no real solution to the impasse, as women who resort to magic rather than scientifically tried and tested methods of research are no more likely to have the results of their findings taken seriously than before. As she says:

Eine Wissenschaftlerin, die als Fee entlarvt werden könnte, würde in Anbetracht der oft zitierten Tatsache, daß weibliche Gehirne durchschnittlich weniger wiegen als männliche, logischerweise auch ihre Berufsgenossinnen mystisch verdächtig machen. (T. 222)

Magic does, however, provide women with an individualistic means of defense, which in *Amanda* is channelled into organized political ends in the invention of the "Barbara-Methode" or the use of the "Tarnkappe" to disguise women's subversive

activities. Moreover, in practising magic, Valeska expresses the desire for a feminized science and for the revival of forgotten forms of feminine knowledge.

Carolyn Merchant<sup>1</sup> and Sandra Harding<sup>2</sup> have argued that the identification of women with "natural magic" has its roots in the Renaissance identification of women with nature and the metaphoric representation of the earth as nurturing mother. With the Copernican revolution, the organicist concept of nature, with its emphasis on the earth as the active nurturing force in the cosmos, was replaced by a cosmology which supplanted the earth-centred and female-dominated universe with a sun-centred and male-dominated one.<sup>3</sup> It was this notion of the earth as the active force at the centre of the universe that was undermined by the Scientific Revolution and the Copernican view of the universe as revolving around the sun.<sup>4</sup> The new cosmology, in turn, was to have consequences for the status of the feminine and for women.

In their studies of the gender politics of the Scientific Revolution, Merchant and Easlea<sup>5</sup> have argued that if women had traditionally always been identified with nature and nature has always been thought of as feminine, the new science needed to suppress traditional forms of female knowledge such as herbal cures, witchcraft, midwifery and white magic as tangible proof of its mastery over the natural world. Accounts of the history of science as the history of the domination of women and nature have enjoyed increasing popularity in America and Europe, particularly among eco-feminists. Although Morgner implicitly draws on this account of the gender politics of the Scientific Revolution, her critique of scientific rationality seems more indebted to the Frankfurt School and its critique of Enlightenment discourses of mastery and domination. What these feminist accounts of the ascendancy of scientific knowledge and modes of enquiry - and here Morgner seems to follow suit - leave out, however, is any investigation into the social, economic and

<sup>1</sup> Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Brian Easlea, *Witch Hunting, Magic and the New Philosophy: An Introduction to Debates of the Scientific Revolution 1450-1750* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1980).

political reasons why some forms of knowledge gained dominance over others and why feminine forms were persecuted with such alacrity during the witch-hunts.<sup>6</sup>

Morgner seems to share the opinion of Merchant, Easlea and Fox Keller<sup>7</sup> that science is not only dominated by men but that its very thinking is masculine. To elucidate this idea, she somewhat paradoxically uses the mouthpiece of Konrad Tenner, masquerading as a feminized male. Tenner confesses to Laura: "es gibt keine weibliche Wissenschaft . . . es gibt nur männliche Wissenschaft - von menschlicher ganz zu schweigen" (A. 271). Alchemy is then, according to Laura's necromantic studies, "die einzige nicht ausschließlich männlich geprägte Wissenschaft" (A. 139). She posits an alternative to masculine forms of knowledge in the form of pre-scientific traditions practised by women prior to the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment. Laura concedes that alchemy was not the exclusive province of women but that it appeared to be the last form of socially useful, scientific knowledge in the history of Western civilization that women had access to. Closely linked to the disappearance of alchemy as a significant form of production of knowledge about the world is the history of the brutal suppression of this knowledge in the persecution of women as witches. This is given as one of the reasons why no female alchemists of note have been recorded in scientific histories, as "alle bedeutenden Alchemistinnen auf dem Scheiterhaufen geendet <sind>" (A. 139). One task for rebellious women remains therefore to remember the practices and objectives of an alternative "feminine" alchemy as a form of suppressed oppositional knowledge. This act of remembering is not a nostalgic attempt to retrieve a lost feminine affinity with a nature untainted by scientific knowledge or untampered with by technological intervention, but is, instead, utopian in its attempt to free the future from the ideological waste-products of the Scientific Revolution.

The aim of the alchemical experiments conducted by women was - according to Morgner - the distillation of the small elixir or "Trinksilber" from the "Stein der

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Hirst and Penny Woolley for an account of the ascendancy of scientific knowledge over magic and feminine forms of alchemy in **Social Relations and Human Attributes**.

<sup>7</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, **Reflections on Gender and Science** (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1985).

Weisen zweiter Ordnung" (A. 140). The traditional aim of masculine alchemy or the official alchemy, was to obtain the "großes Elixier" or "Trinkgold" from the "Stein der Weisen erster Ordnung." Among its known and sought-after properties were the ability to preserve eternal youth and to heal all illness and infirmity. "Trinksilber," by contrast, when taken as medication, had the ability to "spirit women away" ("entrücken") and to restore unity and a sense of wholeness to its adepts. Female adepts who believed they had found their arcanum were not known as adepts but as witches and were persecuted as heretics. The discovery of "Trinkgold" placed the whole world at the feet of the adept, the procuring of the "Trinksilber" merely an island.

It is the prospect of an island "als eine Art Orplid" (A. 141) and as the "Hinterland der Frau" that initially spurs Laura on to remember the alchemical talents of her mothers in order to distil one such "Hinterland" for herself. The desire to create a "Hinterland" is at once the desire for a utopian space where female creativity can flourish and for a physical place where it is possible for women to rest and replenish their energies spent on their first and second shifts. The longing for an island expresses Laura's discontent at the lack of material and historical "Beistand" available to women, the absence of a long historical and mythical tradition to lend legitimation to their struggles for independence and knowledge. This is because women were traditionally expected to provide the "Hinterland" for their men. Laura is accordingly outraged to discover that even under socialism men can continue to rely on and exploit the material and emotional support of women in the privacy of their own homes, while at the same time preaching the new discourses of emancipation and equality in public. She is shocked to find that the old militarist dictum that the woman provides the "Hinterland" for the soldier still applied in the immediate post-war years in the GDR, considering: "Laura hatte sich eine sozialistische Familie anders vorgestellt" (A. 139). Upon discovering that the exemplary socialist, Kurt Fakal, behaves in public like a model socialist while in private continuing to act as "ein feudaler Despot" (A. 140), Laura resolves to distil her own "Hinterland," as her own form of imaginary material and emotional support.

While Laura's alchemical experiments are primarily designed to have practical effects at the level of the everyday, the search for the "Trinksilber" is eventually co-opted by Amanda into her plan for conquering the "Blocksberg" and for rendering women whole again. In the meantime, Laura concentrates her efforts on distilling a sleep-substitute elixir which will temporarily solve her problems in reconciling her child-minding responsibilities with the demands of her career. It is only when by mistake she distils a phoenix elixir, granting herself, like Beatriz, a second life, that she is more receptive to Amanda's larger-scale plans for wresting the "Trinksilber" from the hands of the male ravens occupying the "Blocksberg."

In *Amanda*, Morgner addresses in greater depth the gendered nature of scientific discourse and scientific modes of enquiry. She also investigates how masculine practices in the family and society inform the norms of scientific institutions and their practices. The norms of scientific pursuit draw heavily on images of masculinity which masquerade as the post-gendered or universal axioms of science as the objective pursuit of knowledge. In *Amanda*, Morgner looks at the ways masculinist dichotomies and ideologies contribute to maintaining the gender politics of science in the GDR.

Morgner's main object of attack is not so much the masculinist assumption that all science is hard and objective,<sup>8</sup> but rather the gender politics of the popular image of the scientist as dedicated, single-minded and eccentric. The qualities valued in science and in the scientist himself, such as eccentricity, originality, genius and passion, have traditionally only been associated with masculine forms of knowledge production and masculine forms of genius. The same qualities in women have tended to signal social or sexual deviancy or outsidership. Passion, says Morgner, has only ever been granted women in the domain of love:

Schöne leidenschaftliche Entschiedenheit, die jedem Mann offiziell zur Ehre gereicht und jede Frau offiziell ruiniert. Denn uns Frauen wird Leidenschaft nur in der Liebe zugebilligt. (A. 226)

<sup>8</sup> See Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism*, pp. 121-26.

Whilst passion within the private sphere is encoded as female, within the public sphere, the domain of politics and science, it is strictly masculine. Women who display the same fanaticism towards their professions as men are immediately considered bad mothers or "Rabenmütter" as well as bad wives. Extreme dedication to one's career is valued in males but condemned as "pflichtvergessen" in women. Husbands expect "entspannte Züge, ausgeglichenes Wesen, Zurückhaltung, Anpassung" (A. 226) from women, qualities which are certainly not the mark of genius and which traditionally have not been considered to be conducive to great scientific discoveries. Scientific activity and the norms of scientific professions are founded therefore on the exclusion of the feminine and attributes traditionally associated with motherhood.

Not only have the positive terms within scientific discourses been encoded as inherently and traditionally masculine, they are, in addition, bolstered by social practices which guarantee the reproduction of gendered ideologies within scientific discourses and institutions. The admirable attributes of the stereotype of the talented, dedicated scientist are grounded in the traditional sexual division of labour within the home and hence are predicated upon the maintenance of what could be called the feudal mode of gender reproduction. The eccentricities and original achievements of a Konrad Tenner, for example, are only made possible by the strict division of labour within the family which frees men from any daily responsibility for the immediate needs of their wives and families. The ideologies informing scientific practices are produced and reproduced within the private spheres and function to legitimize the perpetuation of misogynistic practices in the home. If intellectual fanaticism is the precondition for great scientific breakthroughs, then the sacrifice women and children are required to make is considered by men a small price to pay. The general consensus appears to be that:

geistige Qualität sich als Originalität zeigt, das heißt in Denkbewegungen, die die Normgleise verlassen: in Absonderlichkeit also, in Exzentrizität. Nur Leidenschaft kann aus den Gleisen tragen. Solche Denkbewegungen sind also keineswegs Unterfangen, die allein den Kopf strapazieren. Die ganze Persönlichkeit wird von ihr ergriffen und gezeichnet. (A. 225)

Morgner cites the processes of gender symbolization as a further example of the gender politics of science in the GDR. As Sandra Harding and Fox Keller have consistently argued, the metaphors scientists use in describing their practices are further evidence of the way science establishes a link between masculinity and scientific discourse.<sup>9</sup> Harding also contends that gender politics have in fact "provided resources for the advancement of science, and science has provided the resources for the advancement of masculine domination."<sup>10</sup> Harding recalls the rape and torture metaphors permeating the works of the founding father of modern science, Sir Francis Bacon, as an example of discursive processes of legitimation of the new science.

But whereas the gender metaphors underpinning the new science were modelled on "men's most misogynous relationships to women - rape, torture, choosing 'mistresses,'"<sup>11</sup> the new socialist science of the "scientific-technological revolution" was careful to avoid such blatantly misogynous metaphors within scientific discourse. That is, however, not to say that gender metaphors did not provide significant resources for the scientific and technological revolution and for the way in which socialist science is still conceived of as masculine. Popular conceptions of the 'hard' sciences as virile and masculine, as presented by Paul in *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel* (HK. 121) and Wenzel Morolf in the *Trobadora* (T. 78), appear to be the direct heirs to the idea of an active virile science proposed by Francis Bacon in *The Masculine Birth of Time*.<sup>12</sup> The metaphors used in *Amanda* by Konrad Tenner are more subtle and seductive than the rape and torture metaphors used by Bacon. They represent nevertheless a more subtle use of gender politics to exclude women from the active areas of scientific research and to reinforce the notion of the creative domain of the sciences as an exclusively male domain.

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the gender metaphors employed by Bacon in his description of the birth of the new masculine science see Fox Keller, *Gender and Science*, pp. 38-40.

Vilma comments that her husband Konrad Tenner has personified history as his "Frau Königin." His relationship to the science of history, that is, to the object of scientific enquiry, is expressed both in terms of the relationship of a feudal subject to his queen and a king to his wife. The relationship is both one of submission and of domination:

Für ihn <Konrad> ist Geschichte die Königin der Gesellschaftswissenschaften, und er geht mit ihr um, wie ein Mensch seines Charakters mit Königinnen umgeht: königlich. Seine Mitarbeiter wissen, daß er Geschichte geradezu personifiziert liebt und verehrt. Und keiner grinst, wenn der Doktor Tenner von "Frau Königin" spricht.  
(A. 224-25)

The incongruousness of the term "Frau Königin" also suggests that Konrad envisages himself very much as the king of science and, even if history is indeed a 'queen,' that makes her in fact only his wife. The reverence which Tenner brings to his object of research appears to be little more than a ruse to disguise the strictly hierarchical nature of the relationship of the male scientific subject to its feminine object. Tenner's desire to anthropomorphize history and encode it as female and hence himself as male, lays bare the hidden agenda of sexual politics which informs both the practices of the "Naturwissenschaften" and the "Geisteswissenschaften" in the GDR. Tenner's mode of thinking about science presupposes furthermore a set of gender assumptions shared by the scientific community. A woman researcher would have obvious difficulties regarding the object of her study as female when she herself is female. Vilma questions the association of women with history, finding the personification of history as a queen incomprehensible, given that women have in fact always been excluded from official versions of history:

Die Geschichte wäre mir freilich auch als Königin undenkbar. Denn die Geschichtsschreibung hat die Frauen historisch expropriert. Und die nicht als aufschreibenswürdig erachtete Geschichte ist eine Geschichte von Verbrechen am weiblichen Geschlecht. (A. 226)

Tenner adds insult to injury when he insists that the scientific male gaze is only a form of compensation for men's inability to match women's innate gift for creating biological life. All male forms of creativity can therefore be reduced to the "Urgrund" of "Gebärrersatz":



Wissenschaft und Technik haben bisher nichts Annäherndes von der Größenordnung hervorgebracht, das in zwanzig Tagen in einem befruchteten Hühnerei sich heranbildet. . . . Denn da wir wissen, wie blaß wir aussehen bei einem Vergleich mit der Natur, sehen wir über sie hinweg. (A. 270)

The comparison that Tenner makes between male creativity and female reproductivity takes yet again as its basic premise the identification of women with nature and the view that women's reproductive role in society is primarily a biological fact of life rather than a socially and politically motivated activity. Tenner contends that because men's "Nachschöpfungen" can never equal nature's creations and hence women's "Schöpfungen der Natur," the history of civilization has had to devalue the miracles of nature in order to appreciate men's poor imitations at all:

Wir müssen die Wunder der Natur gering achten, um die Erfindungen der Wissenschaft und Technik als Wunder anbeten zu können. Nicht die Schöpfungen der Natur, sondern Nachschöpfungen, in denen der Mensch versucht, erkannten Naturgesetzen folgend nachzubauen, werden verehrt. Angebotet und gehegt wird nicht das den Menschen natürlich Geschenke, sondern das von ihnen mit ungeheuerem Aufwand künstlich Geschaffene. (A. 270)

Tenner continues to argue that men's feelings of apparent superiority in fact stem from feelings of inadequacy and insecurity regarding their lesser creative capabilities in comparison with women.<sup>13</sup> Modern science becomes a type of "male uterus envy"<sup>14</sup> or, at best, a rather clever ruse designed to conceal men's basic sense of inferiority. In this way the history of modern science since Bacon reads as an ill-conceived and rather pitiful trick that men have tried to pull off to overcompensate for being second-class biological citizens. Men's greater technological mastery is thereby nothing more than:

<sup>13</sup> This line of reasoning comes close to the arguments put forward by Brian Easlea in **Science and Sexual Oppression: Patriarchy's Confrontation with Woman and Nature** (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981). Easlea attempts to argue that modern science is founded on male insecurities, by which he mainly means male sexual inadequacies or "penile insecurities" and potency anxieties (ibid, pp. 30-89).

<sup>14</sup> See Phyllis Chesler, **About Men** (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 38: "Male science, male alchemy is partially rooted in male uterus envy, in the desire to be able to create something miraculous out of male inventiveness. However, men in science have carried us to the brink of total planetary, genetic, and human destruction. Repressed and unresolved uterus-envy is a dangerous emotion."

Eine gerissen ausgedachte Weise, Minderwertigkeitsgefühle in Überwertigkeitsgefühle zu modeln. Denn wie steht ein Mann da gegenüber einem Menschen, der Menschen gebären kann? Arm steht unsereiner da unter den Frauen, von denen jede, dumm oder gescheit, häßlich oder schön, klein oder groß, eine Schöpferin sein kann. Jede ist fähig, Einmaliges aller Welt hervorzubringen. Ich dagegen? (A. 270)

What we have here - male superiority masquerading as inferiority - is an extreme example of the naturalization of power in the interests of the dominant sex and culture. Tenner's confession to Vilma, superficially aimed at eliciting sympathy from her, is nonetheless a thinly veiled attempt to reinforce the traditional feminine spheres of social activity by revalorizing women's place in the area of biological reproduction. This is one way of ensuring that the traditional male domains of science and technology remain bastions of male power. Tenner's argument hinges on the qualitative distinction between unmediated 'natural' modes of creation of biological life, which are seen as the province of women, and mediated, 'artificial' modes of creation as practised by men, which merely reproduce or imitate the wonders of nature. This distinction purports to privilege the natural and feminine over the 'man'-made, and therefore to value female reproductivity over 'mere' male productivity. The adulation for the wonders of nature turns out in fact to be its converse: the fetishization of science and technology and its mastery over nature. As feminists have repeatedly pointed out, the price for the elevation of female creativity to a higher plane than male creative activity is of course the exclusion of feminine forms of productivity from the realm of the social. This then has as its consequence the reaffirmation of the traditional association of women with nature and the natural. It has been argued that this linking of women with nature has been responsible for the protracted historical subordination of women to the cultural achievements and institutions of men.<sup>15</sup>

By the same token, Tenner's speech offers a critique of modern science and, by implication, of the socialist conception of the "scientific-technological revolution" which feminists might, nevertheless, welcome. Whatever reservations Vilma and Laura may have about Tenner's ulterior motives for dethroning his 'queen' and

<sup>15</sup> See Merchant, *The Death of Nature*.

following Laura's crusade to the "Blocksberg,"<sup>16</sup> Tenner's critical position vis-à-vis scientific practices and institutions enables the women to find in him their first male ally.

Despite the gender-blindness of Tenner's relationship to history, he announces to Laura that he has dethroned his queen. Taking Laura's words right out of her mouth, he now proclaims the importance of investigating "Vorgeschichte." Nevertheless, he remains impervious to any alternative modes of knowledge and methods of scientific enquiry, particularly when practised by women or by one of his ex-wives. Vilma reassures Laura that they can conduct their alchemical experiments in safety in the kitchen, because Tenner would never dream of taking women's work in the kitchen seriously. As he would never even let himself be seen in a kitchen, and because women's work is considered to be reproductive rather than creative, alchemical experiments do not have the aura of scientificity of experiments conducted in a laboratory, a space more clearly coded as masculine.

It now becomes apparent that it is not simply a matter of the gender of the subject producing the scientific knowledge which determines the weight attributed to the discourse and its truth-claims. If the public spaces in which scientific activity is conducted and in which the scientific subject is constituted are gendered, then it becomes crucial to investigate the discursive processes by which gender comes to bear on the ideology of socialist science and its methods and objects of enquiry. The private sphere of the family home is not the proper place for scientific research, nor are homes considered by men the proper sites for 'cooking up' politically subversive activities. It is, of course, for precisely these reasons that Vilma and Laura decide to use their kitchens to try and concoct a potion which will solve Laura's sleep-deficiency problems and eventually distil the "Trinksilber" which will make women whole again.

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<sup>16</sup> See in particular chapter 67, where Tenner uses the discussion to win sexual favours from Vilma, and chapter 80, where he manipulates feminist arguments and critiques of contemporary masculinity to sexual ends. It is also suggested that Tenner is interested in the alchemical talents of Vilma and Laura because of the promise of distilling an aphrodisiac so he will be able to satisfy two women at the same time.

## B. A Utopian Experiment with "Unvernunft" or the Search for a Male Ally

Tenner is not the only male scientist in *Amanda* to begin to express doubts about the fetishization of science and technology. Heinrich Fakal, Laura's school friend, represents perhaps the most extreme example of a dogmatic scientist, whose reliance on principles of empirical rationality earned him the name "eiserne Heinrich" as a child (A. 136). The son of a miner and a communist, Fakal has been encouraged to adopt the role of ideological guardian and role-model for his peers. His uncompromising attitude towards his school friends when conducting what he calls "ideologische Enttrümmerungseinsätze" (A. 604), is only matched by his self-denial and "Gefühlshärte" towards himself, as his motto "brutal gegen sich, hart gegen andere" (A. 136) indicates. As the director of the section "Wirtschaftsplanung" at the "Institut für Wissenschaftstheorie," Fakal has been entrusted with the task of intensifying production and rationalizing work processes at his institute. The "scientific and technological" revolution, which played a key role in the ideological struggle for supremacy between the East and West in the fifties, still functions as a yard-stick by which the success of socialism and in this case the success of Fakal's institution can be measured. The catch-words "Wissenschaft und Technik," now little more than clichés, have become synonymous with the intensification of production and output:

Der Begriff "Wissenschaft und Technik" war zum Synonym für Intensivierung geworden. Täglich wurde den Bürgern im Betrieb und nach Feierabend dargelegt, daß in der weltweiten Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kapitalismus und Sozialismus letztlich der Gesellschaftsordnung der Sieg zufiele, die die Ergebnisse der fortgeschrittensten Wissenschaft und Technik zur Erhöhung der Arbeitsproduktivität optimal ausnutzen könnte. Ständig wurde den Mitarbeitern des Instituts für Wissenschaftstheorie, an dem Fakal die Arbeitsgruppe Wirtschaftsplanung leitete, bewußt gehalten, daß im geschichtlichen Wettstreit um die Meisterung der wissenschaftlich-technischen Revolution dem Faktor Zeit und damit der Organisiertheit und Zielstrebigkeit im wissenschaftlichen Vorgehen ein bisher nicht dagewesener Wert zukäme. (A. 567-68)

The principles of rationalization of time and organization, when applied to the production of scientific knowledge, arouses in Fakal a sense of panic and bewilderment, since "die landläufige Forderung nach Arbeitsintensivierung empfand er selbstverständlich an sich gerichtet. Wie aber intensiviert ein Wissenschaftler seine Arbeit?" (A. 568). Fakal finds his scientific work ethos, based on the principles of "Vernunft und Fleiß" and patience, in conflict with the institutional demands for instant solutions to pragmatic problems. He has become "übersättigt von Vernünftigkeiten, die nichts erbracht hatten" (A. 567), "übersättigt von Bestimmtheiten, die zu nichts geführt hatten" (A. 571). Surrounded by "Plänen, Programmen, Direktiven, Wettbewerbszielen, Beschlüssen" (A. 571), he is the victim of processes of rationalization and short term economic concerns which are not conducive to long term research. The principles of instrumental rationality have led him so far from the original scientific precepts of reason that he is eventually willing to resort to the "nicht koscheren Mitteln" of putting his faith in reason's opposite, "Unvernunft." If instrumental reason sanctions all means, provided the ends themselves are worthwhile, then it follows that even those means which are incompatible with a scientific world view must also be legitimate. Fakal is then forced to consider even pre-scientific, pre-rational methods of enquiry, such as magic, and to summon up the belief in miracles as a final means of solving the impasse of the production of scientific knowledge in the GDR. The catalyst for such radical considerations is the discovery of a flying woman:

Warum hatte Fakal den naheliegenden logischen Schluß, mit Unvernunft zu experimentieren, nicht längst vollziehen können? Unvernunft oder Wunderglaube oder Zauberei - heiligte der gute Zweck nicht alle Mittel, selbst solche, die mit einer wissenschaftlichen Weltanschauung nicht in Übereinstimmung zu bringen waren? (A. 571)

The intellectual and emotional dilemma that the flying woman, who is none other than Laura Salman, causes Fakal and his rational world view on April Fool's Day can be seen as evidence of what Habermas has termed the total "Kolonisierung der Lebenswelt"<sup>17</sup> by science and technology and the principles of instrumental

<sup>17</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981).

reason. In the seventies, the theme of the dehumanizing effects of technology became more common in the literature of the GDR,<sup>18</sup> particularly among women writers such as Christa Wolf and Helga Königsdorf. Often it is the male scientist himself who is the object of scrutiny, as in Wolf's sex change story "Selbstversuch,"<sup>19</sup> where a female scientist agrees to undergo a sex change experiment in the hope of gaining recognition for her work and of winning the love of her professor. Only capable of seeing in the female protagonist an asexual experimental object, the male scientist is characterized as lacking in emotions, sensitivity and warmth. The debilitating effects of the rational, scientific world view are most obvious in his private life, in his treatment of his wife and daughter, but also in his attitude towards his colleagues and to women. Wolf identifies the inability to love as the major consequence of a thoroughly over-technologized, over-rationalized and -masculinized life world.<sup>20</sup> She also suggests in "Selbstversuch" that the inability to love may even be the cause of many scientific achievements:

Ihre kunstvoll aufgebauten Regelsysteme, Ihre heillose Arbeitswut, all Ihre Manöver, sich zu entziehen, waren nichts als der Versuch, sich vor der Entdeckung abzusichern: Daß Sie nicht lieben können und es wissen.<sup>21</sup>

This is further evidence of the processes of colonization, whereby the social practices of the life world become progressively subordinated to systemic imperatives and to economic and bureaucratic concerns. The experiment is eventually declared a failure and, after a horrifying look at the male-dominated world of the "drei großen W: Wirtschaft, Wissenschaft, Weltpolitik,"<sup>22</sup> "Anders," the object of the unfortunate

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the treatment of science in the literature of the GDR, see Eckart Förtsch, "Literatur als Wissenschaftskritik," **Lebensbedingungen in der DDR: Siebzehnte Tagung zum Stand der DDR-Forschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 12.-15. Juni 1984**, ed. Ilse Spittmann and Gisela Helwig (Köln: Edition Deutschland-Archiv im Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1984), pp. 157-68.

<sup>19</sup> Wolf, "Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll," pp. 125-69.

<sup>20</sup> See Anna K. Kuhn, **Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: From Marxism to Feminism** (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), p. 12; and Helen Fehervary and Sarah Lennox, "Introduction to Christa Wolf's 'Self-Experiment: Appendix to a Report,'" **New German Critique** 13 (Winter 1978), p. 111.

<sup>21</sup> Wolf, "Selbstversuch," pp. 167-68.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163.

experiment, decides to reverse the operation, but not before she announces an alternative experiment in the "Erfindung dessen, den man lieben kann."<sup>23</sup>

In the **Frankfurter Vorlesungen**, Wolf elaborates further on the alienating, dehumanizing effects of masculine science, describing science and also philosophy as a means of shielding the individual from reality, of "sich Wirklichkeit vom Leib zu halten, sich vor ihr zu schützen."<sup>24</sup> Progress in the sciences and the arts, she argues, has been bought at the expense of the extreme alienation and de-personalization of the individual:

Die Art Fortschritt in Kunst und Wissenschaft, an die wir uns gewöhnt haben: ausgefallene Spitzenleistung ist nur so zu haben. Ist nur durch Ent-Persönlichung zu haben.<sup>25</sup>

The main cause of the disregard for human needs and emotions that is characteristic of industrial societies in the nuclear age, she argues in a speech to the Südwestfunk in 1982, is the positivist orientation of the natural sciences and their dependence on quantifiable, verifiable values:

Die Rakete, die Bombe sind ja keine Zufallsprodukte dieser Kultur; sie sind folgerichtige Hervorbringungen expansionistischen Verhaltens über Jahrtausende; sie sind vermeidbare Verkörperungen des Entfremdungssyndroms der Industriegesellschaften, die sich mit ihrem Mehr! Schneller! Genauer! Effektiver! alle anderen Werte untergeordnet, . . . Die Massen von Menschen < sind > in ein entwirklichtes Objekte-Dasein gezwungen und besonders die Naturwissenschaften in den Dienst genommen, die Fakten, die sie liefern, in den Rang der einzig gültigen Wahrheiten erhoben haben, was heißt: Was nicht meßbar, wägbbar, zählbar, verifizierbar ist, ist so gut wie nicht vorhanden. Es zählt nicht.<sup>26</sup>

In a letter written after the death of her husband to the journal **Neue Philosophische Blätter**, which is contained in chapter 39 of **Amanda**, Laura complains that the principles of Marxism-Leninism have failed to provide adequate answers to the non-material problems of everyday life, in particular the need for forms of metaphysical "Lebenshilfe" to help people cope with matters of life and death. This was the sort of "Lebenshilfe" previously provided by religion in pre-

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>24</sup> Wolf, **Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung**, p. 150.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> Wolf, "Ein Brief," **Mut zur Angst: Schriftsteller für den Frieden**, ed. Ingrid Krüger (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1982), p. 154.

socialist times. But when the materialist world view dispensed with metaphysics there remained certain basic human needs and emotions which the materialist view was unable to meet:

Wir haben Gott abgeschafft, schön und gut. Aber die Gegenstände, mit denen sich Religion beschäftigt, konnten wir nicht abschaffen. Tod, Krankheit, Zufall, Glück, Unglück - wie lassen sich die unerbittlichen Wechselfälle des Lebens eigenverantwortlich meistern? Wer ohne Gott lebt, kann Verantwortung nicht delegieren. Er muß diese Last immer allein tragen. (A. 152)

Laura's demand for a substitute for metaphysics and hence for an adjunct to the historical-materialist world view expresses a commonly felt dissatisfaction with the hegemony of the discourses of dialectical materialism and Marxism-Leninism and the central role they attribute to science and technology.<sup>27</sup> Her request for an alternative to metaphysics is also intended as a critique of the way dialectical materialism has become in effect a new type of religion with science its new priesthood. More generally then, Laura's demand for a reconsideration of the functions of religion and metaphysics represents a significant critique of the socialist ideals of unlimited technological progress. Technological progress, which in the fifties and sixties was regarded as the sine qua non of the progress of socialist society and of socialism itself, is no longer a precondition for "menschlicher Fortschritt," becoming instead a hindrance to the "Subjektwerdung des Menschen."<sup>28</sup>

The literature by Morgner and Wolf is more critical of the effects of the scientific and technological revolution on human relationships and needs than most of the socialist literature written up until the seventies and eighties, particularly the works of science fiction. Instead of being a "Mittel zur Selbstbefreiung,"<sup>29</sup> the world of science and technology begins in Morgner's works to take on those diabolical traits that East German literary critics were so quick to condemn in Western science

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the "Schlüsselrolle von Wissenschaft und Technik" in the GDR, see Förtsch, "Literatur als Wissenschaftskritik," p. 166.

<sup>28</sup> See the discussions in the East German publication *Forum* in 1966 regarding the role of science and technology, in particular Redeker, "Abbildung und Aktion," p. 21, where he states with reference to the "Ankunftsliteratur": "Technischer Fortschritt und menschlicher Fortschritt sind hier zwei Seiten eines einheitlichen Prozesses, der sich natürlich in Widersprüchen vollzieht, aus denen die Literatur Konflikte gewinnt."

<sup>29</sup> See Sckerl, *Wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur*, pp. 126ff.



fiction.<sup>30</sup> One of the officially propagated functions of socialist science fiction literature in the fifties was, according Adolf Sckerl, the "Humanisierung der Technik" via the positive and enriching activity of socialist work. Through the medium of work, the individual was assigned a creative and active role in the formation of a more humane society. As we recall from an earlier chapter, he was aided in this task by the worker's best friend and helper, technology. In this way, the utopian concept of socialist work as a liberating and creative force in society ideally acts as the missing link between the individual and an increasingly technologized society. It is this tendency to fetishize the benefits to be gained from technological progress that writers such as Morgner and Wolf are anxious to expose in their feminist polemics against modern science. Once a fatal flaw only attributed to capitalist science fiction,<sup>31</sup> the accusation of fetishization - when levelled at the practice and representation of socialist science - marks a significant departure from the technological euphoria of the fifties and sixties in the GDR.

Morgner's female characters are not able to establish the positive relationship to the world of science and technology that the male figures do. The euphoria of a Rita in Wolf's **Der geteilte Himmel** at the launching of the Sputnik and the dawn of a new technological age, is replaced in the seventies with a general disappointment at failed career opportunities and a well-masked despair at the future of the human race. Morgner's working women suffer from considerable alienation in the work place as well as in the home, an alienation only matched by the lack of understanding from their male colleagues. We are not told why Bele in **Hochzeit in Konstantinopel** has given up her career in a scientific institute, but only that she prefers the work of a taxi-driver, a ticket collector or a train driver to that of a laboratory assistant, because she has then at least the illusion that she is in control and not subservient to men. In reply to Paul's question why she gave up her job in the laboratory, Bele answers, that she "für Domestikenarbeit nicht geeignet wäre"

<sup>30</sup> Wuckel, **Science fiction**, pp. 175-76.

<sup>31</sup> See for a discussion of the "Fetischisierung der Technik" in science fiction in the West; Sckerl, **Wissenschaftlich-phantastische Literatur**, pp. 105-30.

(HK. 44), a barbed comment which Paul fails to understand. Laura, of course, offers us the most striking example of a failed scientific career.

Morgner presents perhaps the most convincing indictment of the dehumanizing, "frauenfeindlich" effects of the work of knowledge-production where she outlines the circumstances under which Laura finally gives up her job as a historian. It is only after the death of her child from pneumonia - for which Laura feels personally responsible - that she chooses a profession which does not demand the sorts of long hours which could lead to her neglecting the needs of her child. Increasingly in the literature of the seventies and eighties, the utopia of the humanizing effects of technology gives way to the dystopia of a deformed, dehumanized society which still adheres steadfastly to the now empty catch-words of "Wissenschaft und Technik," preferring to see in them the only hope for the future rather than a recipe for disaster.

Apart from emphasizing the obvious inaccessibility of scientific careers to women, Morgner attacks in **Amanda** the androcentricity of the scientific world view from a perspective which was once disregarded as subjectivistic and individualistic. The subjective factor, therefore, becomes important as a means of criticizing the negative effects on the individual of a too heavy reliance on the methods of scientific empiricism. Subjective feelings and emotions, like the world of dreams and the imagination, are, of course, not as easily verifiable or quantifiable and can be easily ignored or dismissed. Like the quirky 1001 goodnight stories that Bele tells Paul, which fail to impress him, and the passionate love-affair that Wanda has with the invisible medieval jester, Rade, to which Wanda's scientific lover, Hubert, also remains blissfully oblivious, women's needs for an injection of eroticism and fantasy into the stultified world of the everyday are often overlooked or simply denied a voice.

But in **Amanda**, Morgner's critique of the interface between masculinity and science, exemplified in her earlier works in such male figures as Paul in **Hochzeit in Konstantinopel**, Hubert in **Gauklerlegende** and Wenzel Morolf, Rudolf Uhlenbrook, and Clemens in the **Trobadora**, comes full circle. Although these figures are not all

entirely negative examples of the way masculinity informs and shapes scientific practices - Paul for instance proves to be a surprisingly good lover despite his otherwise consistent lack of concern for his fiancée's well-being -, the picture Morgner presents of the interconnections between masculinity, rationality and science is predominantly negative. All utopian impulses concerning the future of masculinity are focused on the fantasy male figures like Rade, the medieval jester, and Benno, in the *Trobadora*, who can be said to represent the radical 'other' of the rational scientific male. Not until *Amanda* do we find these utopian impulses actualized in the creation of new images of masculinity. Thus the rational male researcher who, despite wife and child, is "nur mit der Wissenschaft verheiratet" (A. 564) and who is renowned for his dogmatism and unrelenting analytical gaze, becomes, instead of purely an object of ridicule, the object of a utopian experiment.

Unlike his literary predecessors, Fakal's "wissenschaftlicher Blick" has not made him totally blind to reason's underside. As the first adult male in Morgner's works to actually witness a fantastic, supernatural event, he finds himself forced to admit the empirical existence of the supernatural. Yet the conversion of Fakal is not the result of an empirical observation but ironically the condition which makes such an observation possible. Paul, in *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel*, and Hubert, in *Gauklerlegende*, are blind to any experience, figure or event that lies outside their scientific world of empirically verifiable certainties. Likewise, Rudolf and Lutz, in the *Trobadora*, and Tenner, in *Amanda*, do not have an eye for the extraordinary - partly because of their unswerving belief in the rationality and predictability of the world and partly because this world is still relatively intact. What distinguishes Fakal from the others is not any latent scepticism or lack of commitment to the principles of reason, but a sense of increasing desperation at the inadequacy of these principles as the sole means of interpreting the world. The aporia of scientific positivism and rationality is nowhere more evident than in Heinrich Fakal's eventual willingness to embrace mysticism in "die Zahlenmystik" and the supernatural.

After observing, along with numerous other eye-witnesses, the 'Ascension' of Laura in her new incarnation as a witch, Fakal makes the dubious decision to

experiment with "Unvernunft oder Wunderglaube oder Zauberei" (A. 571), although he is aware that the belief in miracles of the non-economic kind is not compatible with "einer wissenschaft-lichen Weltanschauung" (A. 571). He undertakes this despite announcing to his son, also an eye-witness: "in Natur und Gesellschaft verläuft alles gesetzmäßig" (A. 565). Ironically, his reputation and self-confidence as a rigorous researcher enables him to pass off even the most unscientific, irrational practices as the result of sound empirical experimentation, although:

Auf obskuren Suchpfaden durfte er sich nicht erwischen lassen. Erfolgreich aber würde es für ihn eine Kleinigkeit sein, den Beweis zu führen. Ein philosophischer Kopf wie Fakal konnte alles beweisen, wenn er nur wollte. Und in diesem Fall müßte er gar nicht mal besonders spitzfindig sein. Wenn er jetzt eine handhabbare Wissenschaftsstrategie auf den Tisch legen könnte, würde ihm alles verziehen. Der Erfolg spräche überwältigend für ihn. (A. 571)

In connection with this, Fakal recalls a remark by Marxist utopian thinker, J. D. Bernal, who in the twenties and thirties developed a vision of a scientific utopia governed by an aristocracy of scientific intelligence.<sup>32</sup> In his work, Bernal stressed the importance of epistemological ruptures or ground-breaking in all scientific revolutions:

Fakal erinnerte die bekannte Bemerkung Bernals: "Die größte Schwierigkeit bei einer Entdeckung liegt nicht darin, die notwendigen Beobachtungen zu machen, als darin, sich bei ihrer Interpretation von traditionellen Vorstellungen zu lösen." (A. 572)

A paradigm-shift, however, that would allow the "Wahrnehmung eines Objekts mystischer Observanz" and permit the existence of "Zauberei oder eine Hexe persönlich" (A. 572) would necessitate a radical departure from Bernal's Marxist vision of a socialist state dominated by a scientific elite constantly engaged in perfecting man's scientific and technological mastery over the natural world.<sup>33</sup>

Yet while Fakal is ruminating on the epistemological, philosophical, and indeed even the political implications of his conversion to magic, mysticism and astronomy,

<sup>32</sup> For a summary of Bernal's scientific utopia proposed in *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1929; London: Cape, 1970) and *The Social Function of Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), see Brian Easlea, *Science and Sexual Oppression*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>33</sup> See Easlea, *Science and Sexual Oppression*, p. 20.

he becomes unwittingly the object of a transformation of quite a different kind. A few days after sighting the flying woman Fakal notices a mysterious long red plait growing from his otherwise slightly balding head. It is this plait that convinces Laura that Heinrich Fakal was just the man she was looking for.

### C. Delousing Men for Peace

In the chapter titled "Laurä Verkündung," the thirteen year old Laura receives a visit from the underworld from the daughter of "Frau Holle." Laura is given the advice that, if she is to continue to put her faith in men, then she must rely on a type of revolutionary "Verschlagenheit" so as not to succumb to the pressures of a male-dominated world. She must look for men with "Kupferhaare" - even a few hairs are sufficient - delouse them and save the red hairs in the hope that she can eventually regain entry to the utopian imaginary of the "Blocksberg." As the current regime on the "Blocksberg" only grants red-haired men entrance to the "Brocken," women must use the red hairs of men to bribe the "Brockenpförtner." Men are, by necessity, women's secret allies, says Frau Holle's daughter, and gives Laura the advice:

"Heirate also bald und oft und richtig, auf daß dir Einblicke werden.  
Doch vergiß nicht, dein Haar vorher zu färben." (A. 131)

By the same token, the search for red-headed men is designed as a tactic to subvert the authoritarian structures of patriarchy from a position of apparent complicity and co-operation. The red hairs are the secret pieces of information that Laura collects about the internal workings of masculinity and male domination, the key pieces of evidence she needs to mount her case against the authoritarian structures of patriarchy and to storm the "Blocksberg." Yet, just as the mere presence of a few red hairs signifies in women witch-like capabilities and potential - as it does when Laura delouses her friend Vilma - the discovery of red hair in men signals their potential for feminization and for co-optation as allies in the witches'

cause. So when Laura discovers the red plait growing down Heinrich Fakal's back, she is witnessing an unprecedented transformation of a man into a witch.

Yet Laura's realization that Fakal is recruitable comes not in that moment when she discovers the red plait but when she looks in the mirror and finds that Heinrich has a "Doppelgänger." Her discovery of Heinrich's secret double in Henri, whom he tries to conceal by stashing him away in the cupboard, accompanies the realization that some men, like Laura and most other GDR women, have also been severed in two. Yet, whereas the division of women was either the work of "Sitten" or the result of a violent act of Satanic aggression, executed to ensure women's subservience and loyalty to male authority, the division of men, in the case of Heinrich, was due to a more or less voluntary act of self-mutilation. Laura writes in her diary of Heinrich, known in her childhood as "Maries Heiner":

"Maries Heiner lebt noch länger geteilt als ich. Er muß sich selbst zerhackt haben. Freiwillig? Jedenfalls hatte ich nach 45 nur mit der einen Hälfte Kontakte und Reibereien: mit dem eisernen Heinrich. Die andere Hälfte, die jetzt im Eckschrank aufbewahrt wird, nannte der gelauste Fakal 'Henri'." (A. 608)

Heinrich's sensitive, passionate other half remains stored in a cardboard suitcase along with other useless emotions and unfulfilled wishes that Heinrich, out of sheer desperation, hoards with his secret other self. When the young Heinrich, a passionate mathematician, fails to be accepted for a University course in mathematics and is allotted one in philosophy instead, he hides his desperation and his disappointment along with Henri in the cardboard case and resolves to adjourn his real life as a mathematician until later:

Wohin mit der Verzweiflung? Heinrich Fakal stopfte sie zu Henri in den Pappkoffer. Und er vertagte den Beginn seines eigentlichen Lebens. Und mit seiner vom Vater übernommenen Lebensdevise: 'Brutal gegen sich, hart gegen andere' erreicht er vorbildliche Studienergebnisse in allen philosophischen Fächern und führende Funktionen. Nur sonntags und in den Ferien saß er regelmäßig auf seinem Koffer über mathematischer Literatur und hoffte auf ein zweites Studium. (A. 609)

Only the socially useful halves of men which can be best adapted to the short-term pragmatic concerns of the socialist state have been allowed to survive. The non-conformist, rebellious other halves lie dormant - locked up in cases with other trivial

memorabilia like Henri - or imprisoned in the "Hörselberg" like Amanda and the other halves of GDR women. These are the "useless" parts of the socialist personality which, like Henri, are impatient and uncompromising in their ideals, and selfish in their demands for self-fulfilment. These unruly other halves are not only unproductive in a limited economic sense, they present furthermore a threat to the smooth workings of the state and to the processes of rationalization. The banished other halves of East German citizens act as a repository for those dreams and ideals of the individual that the state does not acknowledge and cannot harness for its own ends. The wishes of the other halves are therefore economically and ideologically unproductive for the state and threaten to block the smooth exchange between individual and state apparatus and to disrupt the symbolic reproduction of the socialist system.

## IX. FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY

### A. The Division of Women by "Sitten" and the Devil

In many respects, the model of subjectivity projected in *Amanda* and to a lesser extent in the *Trobadora*<sup>1</sup> bears many similarities to the much contested concept of subjectivity in poststructuralist discourses of psychoanalysis, linguistics and philosophy: radically split, non-unified and decentred. The ambivalent and problematic nature of the relationship of this non-identical, non-present subject of poststructuralism and deconstruction to feminism has only recently been addressed in ways which fruitfully question and analyze the fundamentally androcentric bias of the celebrated "Death of the Author"<sup>2</sup> and its relation to feminist politics.<sup>3</sup> Those theories which declare the death or disappearance of the author of texts and the subjects of discourses as part of the project of uncovering the 'biographical fallacy' in literary criticism<sup>4</sup> must be revealed as problematic for women, whose relationship to the privileged positions of author of texts and subject of philosophical discourses is fundamentally different to men's. As Rita Felski argues: "The assertion that the

<sup>1</sup> See Beatriz's remark to Laura in the *Trobadora* novel: "Du bist meine bessere Hälfte" (T. 126).

<sup>2</sup> See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hills and Wang, 1986), pp. 49-55. Barthes' influential essay, written in 1968, was originally intended as a polemical piece directed at forms of literary criticism which are predicated on the presence of an author as the origin of a text and hence as the ultimate source of explanation of a text's meaning. To assign an author to texts, claims Barthes, is to "impose a brake on it" (ibid, p. 53), to reduce the free play of the signifier and hence the multiplicity of the text's meaning. Barthes privileges writing, that is, the anonymous process of textual production over the conventional notion of a subject or a real biographical individual (usually one of genius) as the source of writing: "Writing is that neuter, that composite, that obliquity into which our subject flees, the black-and-white where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes" (ibid, p. 49).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the relevance of postmodernist theory for feminism, see Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*, especially chapters 1 and 2; Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory*; Nancy K. Miller, "Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing, and the Reader," *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), pp. 102-20; and Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," *New German Critique* 33 (1984), pp. 5-52.

<sup>4</sup> See also Foucault, "What is an Author?" *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 101-20.



self needs to be decentred is of little value to women who have never had a self."<sup>5</sup> However, Felski goes on to argue that, "the recognition of subjectivity as a central category of feminist politics and culture does not imply its unconditional affirmation."<sup>6</sup> An appeal to an alternative notion of a female self constitutes a crucial part of the process whereby women can define a politics of difference in opposition to dominant categories of subjectivity. It may therefore be politically expedient for feminism to posit within certain historical and political contexts the existence of a unified female self as a utopian model, while decrying the very same unity as oppressive and monolithic in other contexts. In the case of Morgner and Wolf, the prevalence of a split female subject of narrative in their works from the late sixties onwards constitutes a significant critique of the unified masculine subject of Marxist discourses, as well as signalling the need for a feminine difference. This desire for a self therefore assumes the form of a rejection of the notion of a whole or undivided self.

Of course, the phenomenon of the split subject is by no means confined to the twentieth century and has numerous literary precedents; in the German tradition these include the works of Kleist, Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to Kafka and Rilke in the twentieth.<sup>7</sup> Popularized in the English-speaking world in the 1960's by the anti-psychiatry of R. D. Laing, and in France by Jacques Lacan and members of the "école freudienne," the concept of a divided subjectivity, understood as the displacement of the Cartesian transcendental ego, is in fact a rehearsal of themes which are much older than many critics would have us believe. Morgner's debt to the works of Jean Paul and E. T. A. Hoffmann is often obvious, particularly in her use of the "Doppelgänger" motif. The centrality of the theme of subjectivity in Morgner's later novels, in evidence in *Amanda* in her theories of the violent splitting of the female self, in Laura's longing to be made whole again and in Vilma's strategy of "Leibrede," is confirmation of the political

<sup>5</sup> Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Anthony Stephens, "Er ist aber zwei geteilt': Gericht und Ich-Struktur bei Kafka," *Text & Kontext* (1978), pp. 215-38.

relevance of these themes to feminist struggles. The model of feminine subjectivity delineated by East German writers, in particular by Morgner, can provide, I would argue, a pertinent and productive contribution to current debates around the status of subjectivity. Morgner's approach to questions of individual identity is not as idiosyncratic as it may seem. Rather, her response to the issue of the nexus between ideology and subjectivity could serve as a timely reminder for the need in any theory of the subject for a consideration of the importance of cultural differences and the role of historical and political determinants in the production of literary texts.

Morgner's conception of a split subjectivity represents an endeavour to create an awareness of the gendered nature of the official discourses of Marxist humanism and the dogma of the self-identical non-alienated (proletarian) subject of historical processes. The dismantling of the official subject of Marxist humanist discourses, in evidence in much East German feminist literature in the seventies and eighties, is a direct response to the increasing perception that the socialist paradigm of the subject is inadequate as a model and role-model for women, given women's changing conceptions of selfhood. By the same token, there is a growing awareness of the disjunction between the official female subject - the idealized heroine of socialist work - and the varied individual experiences of working women, who increasingly find the 'reality' of their everyday lives does not measure up to the ideal.

Such a critique of the official female subject of Marxist humanist discourses is implied in even the most positive of Morgner's heroines, from the unrebelling, moderate mother, Laura, of the *Trobadora*, to the openly renitent Vilma of *Amanda*. The victim of historical processes of specialization and the division of labour, the unofficial female subject of the discourses of Eastern Marxism is doubly alienated: from the products of her work, but also more significantly from the forbidden products - the "blaue Früchte" - of her imagination and desires.

Morgner's emphasis on a split subjectivity, which is mainly specific to women but which is increasingly found in men who have not yet been deloused, is certainly anti-humanist in its rejection of the ostensibly universal subject of orthodox Marxism. Such a position is, however, as Chris Weedon correctly points out, not

necessarily at one with a misogynistic or anti-feminist position which denies the validity of the subjective experiences of women.<sup>8</sup> The recognition of the new paradigm of the split subject, divided physically as well as morally and ideologically into two separate parts, does not amount to a devaluation of women's experience, not is it a denial of women's claims to a different kind of subjectivity. Instead it constitutes a powerful tool for understanding and uncovering the ideological underpinnings of socialist ideals of femininity and subjectivity.

Morgner draws on the subjective experiences of working women to show the constructed nature of official subjectivity and indeed of the idea of experience itself. She does so, moreover, without appealing to a belief in subjective experiences as the unmediated guardian of the truth. She thus avoids a simplistic notion of women's experiences as a guarantee of the authenticity of women's writing, reflecting or expressing an inner essence of femaleness. Against the official Marxist ideal of a true unalienated nature, Morgner proposes a female 'nature' or subjectivity as a contradictory site of conflicting, antagonistic forms of subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> Women's experiences in the work place and the home may share many features in common, but are not reducible to a common experience of womanhood or to the experiences of their male comrades. Similarly, just as women's experiences of oppression and alienation can differ markedly, as demonstrated by a comparison between Hilde Felber and her secretary, Vilma, it also follows that their lived relationship to their sexuality and bodies will be equally heterogeneous. The discrepant attitudes of Vilma and Laura to "der kreative Bau" of the female 'nature' are a prime example of this. Through an appeal to experiences hitherto excluded from the dominant representations of femininity in the GDR, Morgner is not postulating a notion of a female nature deformed and alienated from itself. Instead, she sees subjectivity, as well as women's experience, as discursively produced, as the product of contradictory cultural and political meanings assigned to femininity under socialism. The subject

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<sup>8</sup> See Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice*, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p. 33.

becomes therefore the ideal site to contest alternative meanings, alternative ideologies and mythologies.

The appeal to women's heterogeneous experiences in the private and public spheres also challenges the official claims of socialist literature to realism. The realism of the literature about women can only ever be a contingent realism, mediated by prevailing ideologies about femininity, subjectivity and the value of work in the formation of the socialist personality. Literary realism is always highly crafted, a sensitive balance between permissible and non-permissible, objective and subjective aspects of women's experiences. In *Amanda*, the obligation of the author to the imperatives of a realist aesthetic is presented as a type of sleight-of-hand or myth-making. Generally, the mythologizing of women in socialist realist literature has served to limit the range of possible representations and self-representations open to women writers and readers. Here Morgner suggests realism should be understood instead as responsible or sympathetic myth-making, as a difficult decision-making process whereby the author must weigh up the possible consequences of her writing for herself and her subjects with her commitment to the truth.

The basic axiom of socialist realism, namely "Parteilichkeit," acquires in this context a new dimension and comes to signify a particular kind of feminine or feminist solidarity existing between the writer and reader, the writer and her subject. Realism is characterized therefore not by a faithfulness to an objective idea of reality or truth but by an awareness of the intersubjective nature of all conceptions of the real. The partisanship of the female author is then enlisted in the service of feminist solidarity to ensure the maintenance of a necessary fictional illusion. Lying becomes preferable to truthful reporting in order to protect the reputation of the empirical author against charges of subjectivism or voluntarism. In *Amanda*, Laura Salman accuses the author of *Trobadora* of attempting to adhere too closely to an inflexible or dogmatic notion of realism because she does not see the necessity of occasionally trying to "put one over the reader." Laura asks why the author does not know "daß es die verdammte Pflicht der Schriftsteller ist - von den Schriftstellerinnen ganz zu schweigen - den Leuten gegebenenfalls so lange wie

möglich ein X für ein U vorzumachen" (A. 36). The role of the 'responsible' author is then similar to that of the illusionist of the **Gauklerlegende**: too strict an adherence to reality can result in "Rufmord" and too little in only half truths.

Women's experiences in literature are therefore constantly subject to revision by changing ideologies at the level of public representations but also, and more significantly, by women themselves in acts of self-representation and determination. The version of Laura's life which appeared in the **Trobadora** novel as a more or less authentic account of the adventures of Laura and Beatriz, recorded realistically by the pen of Laura, is discredited in the next novel of the trilogy by Amanda as a falsification and distortion of 'reality.' In **Amanda**, the eponymous heroine is revealed to be the 'real' author of the **Trobadora** novel. What appeared to be a 'real' and subjectively authentic account of Laura's life is 'subject' to review by a further subject, in what may seem a potentially endless dialectical process of subjective review and revision of women's experiences. Morgner seems to be advocating here a type of subjectivity-in-process or, alternatively, a conception of subjectivity as a process of permanent review and revision. This bears some similarity to Kristeva's concept of the "sujet en procès" - the subject in process and the subject on trial - but does not require recourse to a psycholinguistic model of subjectivity.<sup>10</sup> Morgner postulates a female self which avoids a static, fixed notion of female subjectivity and experience, while still creating a voice for the individual subject or subject-"Entwurf." This voice, as I will discuss later, is also not the unmediated expression of an unproblematic subjectivity or "inner being." Rather, it is the voice of a ventriloquist, a "Bauchreden," decentred and displaced, non-identical with itself and highly devious.

The question remains to be answered, however, whether Morgner's critique of a unified notion of subjectivity does not still adhere to a conventional humanism - and indeed to the idealism often identified with forms of Romantic nostalgia - in the ideal of a femininity reunited with its separate and disparate halves. If the

<sup>10</sup> See Julia Kristeva, "Le sujet en procès," **Polylogue** (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977), pp. 55-106; Kristeva, **Revolution in Poetic Language**, trans. Margaret Wallace, introd. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), pp. 178-81.

answer is yes, then the next question is whether poststructuralist feminist critiques of humanism - mainly the liberal, Marxist and radical-feminist kind - have not tended to oversimplify and misunderstand the political necessity of asserting and indeed constructing, at various historical conjunctures, the utopia of an undivided subjectivity as a political strategy.<sup>11</sup> Rita Felski has argued convincingly for the need for feminist critical theory and politics to retain some concept of the female subject, despite the profoundly ambivalent status of the subject in poststructuralist and antihumanist literary theories. The concept of a subject is useful, not as the "archetypal female subject which provides an ultimate grounding for feminist knowledge"<sup>12</sup> but as a necessary fiction: "For women, questions of subjectivity, truth and identity may not be outmoded fictions but concepts which still possess an important strategic relevance"<sup>13</sup> in the articulation of an oppositional culture and politics. Feminist discourse must itself construct a "necessarily streamlined conception of subjectivity which can address the politics of gender as relevant to its particular strategic concerns."<sup>14</sup>

In the chapter "Brockenmythologie," Morgner offers her own version of a creation myth of Western civilization which attempts to account for the original division of labour between the sexes as well as the splitting of the sexes - and here she mentions only women - into two distinct halves. The creation of an alternative mythology is in a Barthesian sense an act of demystification performed on socialist myths and ideologies.<sup>15</sup> The history of Western civilization, as recounted in *Amanda*, is the history of the processes of specialization, both between the sexes and between God and the Devil. Morgner's mythology is dominated by a metaphysical dualism

<sup>11</sup> See Chris Weedon's critique of the naive adherence of much Marxist, liberal and radical-feminist humanist discourse to unproblematic notions of subjectivity and experience and their mediation through language. In my opinion, however, she tends to overstate her case by oversimplifying the way these theories draw on naive notions of "the transparency of language and the fixity of subjectivity" (ibid, p. 83). I would also strongly disagree with the claim that Marxist feminist discourses must necessarily rely on the idea of a 'true nature' which is fixed at all times in order to expound a theory of women's alienation (ibid).

<sup>12</sup> Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, p. 73.

<sup>13</sup> ibid, p. 70.

<sup>14</sup> ibid, p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> See Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972).

that has divided the world between the forces of good and evil, between idealism and materialism, or between the visible and invisible values of these opposing systems. Throughout history, the two systems have been continually engaged in an ideological warfare for supremacy which has required the allegiance at different times of one sex or the other. Those women who were able to recognize the binary oppositions as two sides of the same coin and who refused to align themselves with either side were branded "Querköpfe." The female "Querköpfe" - a code for women condemned as witches in the Middle Ages - took to the mountains where they formed secret groups of resistance to the dominant ideologies in the form of magic and witchcraft. The specialist knowledge practised by the women was eventually appropriated by men in another act of specialization which could be said to correspond to the Scientific Revolution and the rise of modern capitalism. With the ascendancy of "Oberteufel Kolbuk" to the "Brocken," which we take to mean the victory of the socialist revolution, the women who have been imprisoned on the "Brocken" see their chance of gaining access to the "weißer Zauberstein" and "Trinksilber."

The Kolbuk regime, like the SED, promises with the help of the "Trinksilber" to make women whole again. Yet the Kolbuk regime is also anxious to keep "weibliche Querköpfe" away from the "Brocken" and institutes the "teufliche Teilung" as a precaution against the female querulants. The procedure of severing women in two, which we see practised on Laura, is essentially a means of taming the unruly elements of women's personalities by dividing them into useful and non-useful halves:

Kolbuk schaffte seinen Raben Ruhe, indem er die teuflische Teilung einführte. Die unbrauchbaren Hälften, die bei dieser Teilung abfielen und nicht vergingen, deponierte er im Hörselberg. (A. 118)

Yet in dispensing with women's unproductive other halves through violence, Kolbuk is merely harnessing a form of cultural and ideological splitting that already occurs at the hands of the local "Sitten":

Kolbuk sah sich auf Erde und konnte sich überzeugen, daß die Sitten fast alle Frauen früher oder später halbierten. Die unbrauchbaren Hälften dieser normalen Frauen verwelkten und vergingen ohne Rückstand. Die brauchbaren machten sich nützlich, ohne zu stören. (A. 118)

Here it is the "Sitten" which are held responsible for the fragmentation of women's energies and time. We can read the "Sitten" here as either a synonym for the "Doppelbelastung" or to mean those traditional customs and practices which make the particularly inequitable division of labour in the home acceptable to most men and women. But the gradual fragmentation of women through the "Sitten" refers to more than just the negative effects of irreconcilable conflicts between family and profession; the prevailing customs of the country have led to a further splitting of women into mutually exclusive images of femininity, into good mothers and "Rabenmütter," diligent selfless heroines and seductive demonic witches. The split here is ideological in nature and is an indicator of the contradictions underpinning popular images of femininity in the GDR.

There has been some debate among critics concerning the exact meaning of Morgner's term "die Sitten." Ingeborg Nordmann reads the use of the term as a cipher for patriarchal relations, reproaching Morgner for limiting her critique of patriarchy to a Blochian notion of "Bewußtsein."<sup>16</sup> Later, however, she speaks of Morgner's almost emblematic references in her interviews and works to the "Sitten" as signifying in a much more limited sense dominant mores and attitudes to sexuality. Dorothee Schmitz prefers a more comprehensive interpretation of the term, thus extending Morgner's critique beyond sexual mores to male-dominated "Verhaltens-, Denk- und Empfindungsweisen der Menschen."<sup>17</sup> I would argue that while Morgner's use of the term allows all these readings by virtue of the cryptic nature of many of her statements, most sense can be made of the function of the

<sup>16</sup> Ingeborg Nordmann, "Die halbierte Geschichtsfähigkeit der Frau. Zu Irmtraud Morgners Roman 'Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura,'" in *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*, ed. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), p. 430.

<sup>17</sup> Dorothee Schmitz, *Weibliche Selbstentwürfe und männliche Bilder: Zur Darstellung der Frau in DDR-Romanen der siebziger Jahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1983), p. 82.



term in her polemics if we take it to include the dominant practices (from attitudes towards femininity to more material practices) both inside and outside the home which support the continued subordination of women. This would seem to be borne out by a statement made by Morgner in an interview published in the Western Marxist journal *Kürbiskern*, in which she asserts that the economic changes to society merely create the basis for the socialist revolution and the precondition for a change to the "Sitten." She argues:

Dabei <bei der Gleichberechtigung> ist der erste Punkt die sozialistische Revolution. Damit wird die ökonomische Grundlage hergestellt - keinesfalls schon die Gleichberechtigung - und erst dann kann die Umwälzung der Sitten beginnen. Das geht nicht durch Dekret. Das ist ein schöpferischer Prozeß einer ganzen Gesellschaft.<sup>18</sup>

Legal and political changes are in themselves not sufficient to change the "Sitten," she contends, as "mit Gesetzen allein kommt man nicht durch. Es geht um die Sitten, die geändert werden müssen."<sup>19</sup> It would appear that with the word "Sitten" Morgner is referring to the practices of everyday socialism rather than to a vague notion of revolutionary consciousness or "Bewußtsein."

In *Amanda* the existence of a unified female subject is located neither in the mythical matriarchal past nor in an equally mythical golden age or Arcadia. In the novel, the myth of the socialist female self as non-divided is located historically in the immediate post-war years after the establishment of the socialist state. Yet the possibility of attaining full subjectivity resembles more Bloch's notion of a "concrete utopia" than a fully realized entity. From the vantage-point of thirty, forty years later, the utopia of an unalienated female subjectivity reveals itself as a myth, and consequently comes to function much in the same way as creation myths and other nostalgic myths of a lost paradise. This phase of history and official East German mythology corresponds to Laura's childhood. It is the time when everyone believed in miracles; the miraculous survival of the human race fostered the belief in the impossible, in the existence of economic miracles but also in miracles of a personal kind:

<sup>18</sup> Morgner, "Weltspitze sein und sich wundern, was noch nicht ist," p. 98.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p. 95.

Als in der Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts der zweite Weltkrieg zu Ende war, glaubten viele Überlebende: Das war der letzte auf Erden. Besonders junge Überlebende glaubten es. Das Wunder, dem Inferno heil entronnen zu sein, begünstige Wunderglauben. (A. 19)

For the childish Laura, the miraculous beginning after the end appeared like natural magic and henceforth all artificial forms of magic seemed superfluous: "Der Anfang nach dem Ende muß ihr als Ereignis natürlicher Zauberei erschienen sein, weshalb ihr Gedanken an künstliche zunächst überflüssig erschienen" (A. 19). Laura's euphoria after the war, expressed in the exclamation: "Jetzt darf man direkt sagen, was man denkt" (A. 102) and "Jetzt darf man direkt tun, was man will" (A. 103), points to the specific hopes of women and girls for radical changes to the position of women under socialism. For Laura the socialist state encouraged faith in miracles as well as the practice of wishful thinking. Laura's role models, Don Juan and Faust, are significantly famous men of genius, and her ideal profession as a child, a "Lokführer," is correspondingly "ein Männerberuf." These masculine ideals which fuel her hopes for self-realization all seem within the realm of the possible amidst the emancipatory rhetoric of the Party in the immediate post-war years. Laura reports in her first "Idealbericht":

Als ich mittags nach der bedingungslosen Kapitulation den Bleichplan ohne Widerstand der bisherigen Autoritäten gewonnen hatte und Sonnenbad nahm, hielt ich die Welt für gewonnen. Ich glaubte also, daß ich nicht mehr beim Wort nehmen mußte, um ihm zu entgehen. Mir erschien der Mummenschanz der Untertänigkeit und andere Tricks, die mir zugekommen waren und die heute von gewissen Theoretikerinnen als revolutionäre Verschlagenheit kategorisiert werden, nunmehr für überflüssig. (A. 101)

The reunification of women's two halves thus comes to be linked with the survival of wishful thinking or a utopian perspective.

The division of Laura, however, is not the result of the "Sitten" but the legacy of a "teuflische Teilung" effected to make the recalcitrant Laura both a more manageable citizen and a more compliant wife. This form of violent splitting is preferred by Laura to the slower, more gradual kind caused by the "Sitten" as it is obviously a more expedient and less painful operation. The fragmentation of women by Kolbuk is welcomed by Laura, as was indeed the guillotine, as a more "humane"

and enlightened form of "torture" and is far preferable to the fate of her medieval sisters on the pillory:

Die Teilung dagegen wäre vergleichsweise schmerzlos. Kurz sowieso, ein Hieb und fertig, besser abrupt geteilt als mählich. Besser Präzisionsarbeit von Oberteufel Kolbuk als Improvisationsarbeit von den Sitten. Gewöhnliche Damen würden von x-beliebigen Herren bedient. Laura war aber ein Querkopf. Deshalb stünde ein Stellvertreter Satans bereit, sich persönlich zu bemühen. (A. 147)

An end with a little terror is, Kolbuk announces smugly, infinitely preferable to terror without end. Bereft of her headstrong "eulenspiegelhafte" other half, who is left vegetating in the "Hörselberg," the now compliant and "angepaßte" Laura is willing to fulfil her motherly role. Paradoxically, however, her husband Tenner now leaves her, preferring her previous wilful self. Laura lives in relative harmony with herself until she encounters her other half in Amanda, a meeting which awakens dormant childhood longings and dreams, "ihre erstorbenen Jugendträume, ihr verlorenes Selbst" (A. 149).

The Satanic splitting of women is explicated elsewhere as a form of specialization or a process of rationalizing subjects to increase their usefulness for society. The amputation of Laura's other half enhances her usefulness as a mother and wife. Hilde Felber, the party functionary who answers Laura's advertisement for "nährische Hilfe" and who is found resting in a psychiatric clinic, likewise suffers from the fragmentation of her energies between her professional obligations and "Haushalt und Kinder" (A. 180). This conflict results in a type of professional schizophrenia which necessitates regular visits to a clinic where she can replenish her dissipated energies. Vilma sees the specialization of women as a diachronic as well as synchronic process, as a succession of different lives each distinguished by a different division of labour between herself and her husbands. In her first life she specialized in self-denial and "Dienstleistungen" provided to men. Her second life, which is only just beginning, will be dedicated to herself and science (A. 191).

The contradictory demands of a family and the work place have produced in women a type of split consciousness which is not only ultimately unproductive for society but also destructive of women's sense of identity and self-worth. In a petition

to the head of a psychiatric clinic, Vilma declares herself to be suffering from schizophrenia, not from the clinical variety, she argues, but from an ideological form of "Seelenspaltung." Sigrid Weigel has noted that the contradictory images of femininity and motherhood have led to "eine latente Schizophrenie" in women, who cannot reconcile the positive images of motherhood with their socially subordinate position and their desires for social and economic independence:

Die latente Schizophrenie der Frau besteht darin, daß diejenigen Momente des Weiblichkeitsmusters, die ihr moralisches Ansehen verleihen (wie z.B. Mütterlichkeit, Verständnisfähigkeit, Sozialverhalten), andererseits ihre gesellschaftliche Unterordnung begründen.<sup>20</sup>

The schizophrenia that Vilma suffers from is more specifically a result of the contradictions between old and new ideals of femininity, between the pre-socialist objectification of women as sex objects and their post-revolutionary role as comrades-in-arms. When accompanying a work delegation to the decadent capitalist West, Vilma discovers to her horror that her male colleagues and comrades in fact share their capitalist brothers' pleasure in the sexual objectification of women in pornography. Vilma is shattered to find that even socialist women, while they may be equal partners by day, can be little more than sexual objects by night.

Women's lives are not only characterized by a dualism which splits them into godlike and devilish halves, forcing them to lead socially useful and productive lives in the 'real' spheres of official public spaces. In addition, they lead a type of existence described by Sloterdijk in his study, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, as "ein kynisches Leben," an existence of critical non-conformity and resistance, which takes it upon itself to become the feared and despised 'other' of the dominant value system.<sup>21</sup> Sloterdijk argues that from the Middle Ages to modern times those groups such as "Ketzer, Zauberer, Homosexuelle, Juden, kluge Frauen" who defy and resist the prevailing ideology are identified with "das Teuflische" or the negative term of a

<sup>20</sup> Weigel, "Der schielende Blick: Thesen zur Geschichte weiblicher Schreibpraxis," in *Die verborgene Frau*, ed. Sigrid Weigel und Inge Stephan (Berlin: Argument, 1983), pp. 120-21.

<sup>21</sup> See Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft*, Vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 659-71.

transcendental dualism.<sup>22</sup> The separating off of the evil term of the opposition in the splitting of women into good and heretic/witch aspects is tantamount to a modern form of exorcism. According to Sloterdijk's thesis, "das Teuflische" only manifests itself when dualism itself is under threat, as exemplified for example by the outbreak of Satanic acts and incidents of Satanism at the end of the Middle Ages.<sup>23</sup>

The draconian measures introduced by Oberteufel Kolbuk to pacify female heretics, although a more virulent form of suppression of ideological and sexual difference, signal at the same time a legitimation crisis of the reigning regime and fuel the hopes of those "Ketzer" for transformation. The existence of semi-autonomous halves can therefore be turned to women's advantage in a productive division of labour between the real and imaginary parts of women. Amanda reminds Laura that effective resistance is only possible when both halves are reunited. Isebel, however, the leader of the HUU fraction, claims any such ideas of reunification are opportunistic and that it is better to struggle on "halbiert" than "ideologisch aufgeweicht" (A. 542). In a caricature of radical-feminist separatism, Isebel continues by saying that women should also refuse to ally themselves with male sympathizers and should in principle support a "Boykott der Einzelehe" (A. 541). The text remains undecided as to the long term advantages of an alliance with such men as Fakal and Tenner and hence any collaborative work with men, although there seem strong indications that such an alliance will, in the short term, best serve the aims of both halves.

In *Amanda*, Morgner delineates a strategy of resistance rather similar to that of Sloterdijk's "Kyniker," endeavouring to overcome through sheer cunning and inventiveness patriarchal practices which marginalize and silence women's speech. It is an intervention which is grounded in the idea of a split subject and which attempts to turn women's current disadvantage into an advantage. In making a virtue

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p. 666.

<sup>23</sup> "Das Teuflische tritt also in Erscheinung, wenn ein Ich einen unhaltbar gewordenen Dualismus um jeden Preis verteidigen möchte. Der Teufel ist ein reflexiver Effekt . . ." (*ibid*, p. 667).

out of necessity, Morgner converts the paradigm of female subjectivity as alienated from itself into a "positivity."

### **B. Ventriloquism and the Art of "Leibrede"**

Like French feminists Kristeva, Irigaray and Cixous, Morgner effects a displacement of the speaking subject, transferring her site of enunciation to a position off-centre: a position strategic to women's role as outsider, witch, heretic and dissident. She thus attempts to transform the negativity of the heretics' marginality into a positivity by redirecting the force with which her speech has been suppressed and silenced into a form of explosive energy, possessing the power to disrupt and dislocate the dominant order. Essential to the theories of Morgner and French feminists is furthermore a theorization of the female body as a site of utterance and a locus of resistance to oppression. There are, however, significant differences in the ways the female body is produced as an instrument of opposition and subversion. The model offered by Morgner effects a critique of the mind/body split and the ways this dualism has been implicated in the suppression of women's desire and corporeality. Yet, the particular model to be analyzed here does not resort to a mere inversion of the mind/body opposition through the affirmation of a female corporeality. Morgner thus manages to avoid the pitfalls of essentializing a feminine difference in the hypostatization of the feminine.

French feminist theory, in particular the work of Irigaray and Cixous, has also been regarded as one such endeavour to resist "phallogentric" modes of thought through the postulation of a new feminine paradigm which emphasizes the irreducible nature of the feminine and the elusive, diffuse nature of female desire. Irigaray constructs a model of femininity which attempts to deconstruct the mutual exclusivity of binary oppositions by positing the female sex as indivisible. In analogy and reaction to Freud's theory of human sexuality which is based on the Phallus as the central organizing term and metaphor, Irigaray's model is based on the female anatomy and its potential for autoeroticism, which she posits as an original site of

resistance to "phallogormism" and monolithic modes of phallogentric thought. It is the two lips of the female "sexe" which suggest to her ways of challenging the unifying exclusive power of the master signifier of Western philosophy, the Phallus. The systems of exchange set into motion by these two lips that perpetually touch yet are never divisible, poses a threat to masculine sexuality and systems of representation which are organized around masculine desire and the law of the Phallus.

Irigaray's model of femininity, which is at the same time a philosophical paradigm, lays stress on the self-sufficiency of the female sex and its inexhaustible potential for reproducing itself without reliance on another and without dominance over the other: "She is infinitely other in herself." Irigaray's polemic is clearly directed at Lacanian and Freudian notions of female sexuality as lack or as "the sex which is not one/ which isn't one," as suggested by the title of one of Irigaray's works.<sup>24</sup> The economy of exchange of the female sex is democratic in its refusal to privilege one term over the other and its avoidance of imperialistic acts of mastery, whereby the second term of the binary pair is subsumed into the logic and control of the first, or, more specifically, where female desire is subordinated to masculine. Many feminists have pointed out the limitations of French feminist criticism - based as it is on an abstract idealized theory of female sexuality - for a feminist aesthetics and politics.<sup>25</sup> Despite the spectre of essentialism, often said to be lurking behind the linguistic and aesthetic seductiveness of the theories of French Feminism,<sup>26</sup> the writings of Irigaray and Cixous have found a resonance among American, Australian

<sup>24</sup> Irigaray, "Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un," in Marks, *New French Feminisms*, pp. 99-106. (quote p. 103)

<sup>25</sup> See in particular Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, pp. 1-50; and Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of 'L'écriture féminine,'" in *The New Feminist Criticism*, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1985), p. 367; and Mary Jacobus, "The Question of Language: Men of Maxims and 'The Mill on the Floss,'" *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 37-52.

<sup>26</sup> For a critique of the essentialism of the writings of Cixous and Irigaray see Beverley Brown and Parveen Adams, "The Feminine Body and Feminist Politics," pp. 33-37; and for a defense of their use of metaphors of the female body as non-essentialist, see Carolyn Burke, "Irigaray through the Looking Glass," *Feminist Studies* 7.2 (1981), pp. 288-306; and Jane Gallop, "Quand nos lèvres s'écrivent: Irigaray's Body Politic," *Romanic Review* 74.1 (1983), pp. 77-83.

and West German feminists that has been productive for the development of other forms of feminist critiques of phallogocentric discourse and for the articulation of specifically feminine forms of speech and writing.

In *Amanda* we find an analogous attempt to formulate a feminist aesthetics and politics which extrapolates from the female body in Vilma's technique of "Leibreden" or "Worte schlucken." The art of "Leibrede" is, as the name suggests, a particular form of ventriloquism or "Bauchreden" peculiar to women. As a form of "body-speech" or speaking the body, it represents like Cixous's aesthetic strategy of "s'écrire," "parler femme" or writing the body, a means of articulating sexual difference through the materiality of the body - a form of material life strangely absent from most materialist accounts of history. Cixous proposes the invention of a new "insurgent" writing, not as a form of self-expression but as a means of producing the feminine self in the liberating, explosive act of writing. In this way women can project their repressed and censored sexuality into their texts and into history. If women are to realize their "decensored relation" to their sexuality, Cixous argues, women must make their bodies heard:

By writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display - the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time.<sup>27</sup>

However, unlike the project of "écriture féminine," which privileges the experimental formalism of the literary avant-garde over oral forms of communication and more common forms of everyday speech, Morgner's attempt to make the body speak is grounded in the praxis of women's everyday lives. Instead of being the legacy of a literary elite, the practice of body-speak is an extension of women's everyday communicative experience, based on the widespread practice among women of swallowing one's words.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in Marks, *New French Feminisms*, p. 250.

<sup>28</sup> French feminism has been accused in this respect of an elitism which is in fact prejudiced against 'women's talk' and forms of verbal communication. See Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, p. 62.



In *Amanda*, the body becomes a site of opposition to the silencing of a specifically feminine voice. The art of "Leibrede" is, however, more than an aestheticized form of that very activity of "swallowing one's words" which has contributed historically to the perpetuation of women's oppression. Vilma remarks that women have traditionally developed the talent for suppressing their personal needs and desires for the benefit of their families and spouses by driving them inward. She describes the different ways the sexes relate to their environment in terms of opposing activities of externalization and internalization:

Konrad hat große Entbehrungen auf sich genommen, seine wesentlichen Fähigkeiten aus sich herauszutreiben. Ich habe große Entbehrungen auf mich genommen, meine wesentlichen Fähigkeiten in mich hineinzutreiben. Die meisten Kräfte, die mir das Leben abverlangte, hab ich für Anpassung aufbringen müssen. (A. 227)

With the invention of "Worteschlucken" as an emancipatory art form, Vilma thus manages to avoid the traps of enshrining existing conceptions of feminine sexuality as transhistorical, cross-cultural constants by turning an essentially negative activity of suppression into a productive act of creativity. Vilma declares necessity the mother of invention: "Die besten Erfindungen werden aus Not geboren" (A. 227). Her strategy manages therefore to avoid the insufficiencies of some French feminist psychoanalytic theory which identifies the essential "partition" of femininity as the inevitable result of women's narcissism, thereby offering a psychoanalytic justification for maintaining the current status of femininity in psychoanalytic discourse as lack and for women's subordinate status in society.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas Olga Salman, Laura's mother, merely suppresses her speech by sending her replies down to the gall-bladder where they form a repository of bitterness, Vilma has developed the art of regurgitating her speech, or re-embodiment of swallowed "Wahrheiten" as a foreign body. This then provides a means of doubling the self in the projection of the self as 'other' or an-other self into the external world. The self as 'other,' unlike the male 'other,' can furnish the subject with a valuable

<sup>29</sup> See Eugenie Lemoine-Luccioni, *Partage des femmes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1976) and for a critique of this uncritical form of Lacanian discipleship; Alice A. Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985), pp. 169-71.

conversation partner - something which Vilma complains is denied many women in marriages - a conversation partner, moreover, which takes women's words seriously. Born out of women's suppressed need for communication, the art of projecting or doubling the self acts as an important form of self-help, suggesting possible ways of actively overcoming women's isolation in the home. Vilma describes the emancipatory potential of her invention in the following way:

Ich bin eine Erfinderin geworden, weil mein Kommunikationsbedürfnis dem Konrads ähnelt. Die Erfindung der Leibrede erlaubt mir und allen Frauen, ihr Kommunikationsbedürfnis selbst zu befriedigen. Keine Anhäufung von falschem Reichtum mehr, keine Kopfwolken. Aber auch keine Abstinenzerscheinungen, weil die Sitten den Frauen Ideen nur dann nachsehen, wenn die Umwelt damit nicht belastet wird. (A. 228)

Although Vilma refers to the "Leibrede" as liberating because it releases energies that women would otherwise expend on "Anpassung," it becomes clear that "Leibrede" is also a form of critical self-examination. In this way women can discuss their ideas and share their experiences with another, even if the other is only oneself: "Geschluckte Rede, geprüfte Rede. Selbstprüfung kann zwar Fremdprüfung oder geistige Geselligkeit nicht ersetzen, aber sie kann bei Verstand halten" (A. 228). This model of substitute communication is clearly not a utopian one but rather a desperate measure to compensate for the lack of opportunities available to women in the GDR for four decades to meet in groups and share their common experiences, opportunities which have been provided in some measure in the West by the autonomous women's movement and other community services to women. The severity of the problem becomes most evident when Vilma, despite the jocular understated tone, hints that without the help of body-speak she would have long since committed suicide. The critical polemics of Vilma's invention, which on a literal level is represented as a positive act of self-help, now become evident: in the absence of alternative non-Party support-mechanisms, women must rely on miraculous or fantastical inventions in order to survive. To circumvent the criticism that hers is an individualistic solution to a collective problem, Vilma cynically

parades her "Notlösung" as an art which has potential benefit to the collective as a whole:

Meine These: Die Leibrede der Frau - ein stabilisierender Faktor unseres Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staates. (A. 229)

"Leibrede" is clearly also a form of self-censorship to control imprudent emotional outbursts which could have negative consequences for the women concerned. Vilma's theory should, however, be read as a polemical attack on the need for self-censorship, reminiscent of Christa Wolf's remarks on the wide-spread tendency among women to censor their own thoughts and actions to avoid public censure.<sup>30</sup> Self-censorship at least has the added advantage over other forms of collective or official censorship in that it involves a choice at the individual level, which could possibly be seen as a form of individual empowerment. Vilma, for instance, is in the habit not only of swallowing unwanted words, she also swallows her disruptive other half. She has patented this invention and it is practised by some of the other witches who attend the "Unsinnskolloquien" in the Hugenottendom. The other witches swear allegiance to the "Barbara-Methode" and employ natural magic and a "Tarnkappe" to conceal their other unruly halves:

"Ich zum Beispiel hab meine störende Hälfte verschluckt," trillerte Vilma stolz. "Sie ist dort, wo sich meine Leibreden befinden: sicher. Das Leibreden und das Häftenschlucken sind Erfindungen, die mir sogar von der Tafelrunde patentiert wurden. . . ." (A. 351)

Vilma claims that her method is safer because her other half is constantly at hand and can be regurgitated whenever it is called for. Laura regards the technique as potentially divisive and thus as contributing further to women's already acute sense of fragmentation. She asks if this can be a means of solving the manifold conflicts in women's lives, or if it will rather lead to further disruption. Vilma reassures her that the reabsorption of her heretic other half is only a temporary measure and that she can be reinstated at any time.

<sup>30</sup> See Wolf, "Die Dimension des Autors: Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann," in *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 84.

The novel does not give any evidence of the efficacy of both the Vilma and the Barbara method, but - since as a revolutionary strategy they most resemble guerilla warfare - it is in the nature of such tactics to spread and camouflage their attacks so that it becomes difficult to assess the overall effects of such oppositional strategies from any one particular vantage point. Needless-to-say, both inventions mark the beginnings of the first collective strategies of resistance by heretic women and both are significant modes of feminine opposition to the dominant patriarchal values. Their usefulness for a feminist praxis is, however, somewhat limited by virtue of their fictional and imaginary nature. While this can in itself be perceived as liberating because of its inherent critique of rationality, it obviously cannot provide a blueprint for intervention at the level of everyday life. To condemn these inventions, however, as an insufficient basis for an alternative feminist politics and praxis is to overlook the narrative and formal constraints operating on feminist texts and to pay insufficient consideration to the heavily overdetermined nature of all literary forms within the dominant East German aesthetic. It would seem that the very precondition for articulating an alternative feminist consciousness and praxis is the use of "ostranenie" or literary estrangement. The choice of fantasy as one of many means of displacement is of further significance, not because women have any particular innate relationship to nature and magic, but because through their daily experiences and the double burden, it has been the women who most of all have had to learn to rely on performing "miracles."

## X. CONCLUSION

### Towards a Dialogic Theory of Materialist Feminist Aesthetics

In a discussion between Laura and the editor of the Aufbau-Verlag in the *Trobadora*, Laura attempts to sell her proposal for a montage novel as a specifically feminine genre, based on a division of time and labour typical of the majority of working women in the GDR. The suggestion is that women can only write short stories and, at best, a novel comprising of a series of short prose pieces, because they never have time at their disposal to realize a longer novelistic concept; the orthodox novel form is the product of "trägen oder sturen Naturen" (T. 169), which have the ideal material conditions to realize a concept that may involve the work of years. Beatriz's prose is one which incorporates into its structure its material conditions of production in the diverse daily demands on working women's time. An open form of the novel best suits

dem gesellschaftlichen, nicht biologisch bedingten Lebensrhythmus einer gewöhnlichen Frau, die ständig von haushaltsbedingten Abhaltungen zerstreut wird. Zeitmangel und nicht berechenbare Störungen zwingen zu schnellen Entwürfen ohne mähliche Einstimmung ... (T. 170).

Morgner's heavily ironic description of the writing difficulties faced by women with responsibilities in the household is reminiscent of the scenario outlined by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*; women's writing has traditionally been influenced by the amount or rather lack of time available for the concentrated work required for the production of a novel. Talking of the sorts of novels women traditionally write, Woolf remarks that "the book has somehow to be adapted to the body ..."<sup>1</sup>

Morgner's concept of the montage novel is one such attempt to do just this. This concept of a "weibliches Schreiben" rooted in women's daily experience, and in some normative notion of a natural feminine "Lebensrhythmus" has often been

<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Hogarth, 1931), p. 117.

interpreted by East and West German critics alike as the attempt to define and, possibly to prescribe, a specifically feminine aesthetic. The concept of the montage novel as "der Romanform der Zukunft" (T. 170) has been varyingly described as an "Erfindung weiblicher Autoren," as a "weibliche Form der Epik" and an "emanzipatorische Literaturästhetik."<sup>2</sup> The tendency to identify women's creative efforts with their activities in the home, to see them as "homegrown" or "half-baked" products, has traditionally been a favoured device for devaluing women's fiction. Likewise, descriptions praising women's writing as "spontaneous" and "vegetativ wuchernd,"<sup>3</sup> which stress the unselfconscious, intuitive nature of the female creative process have also been common strategies used to differentiate between female and male productivity. Morgner makes it quite clear in an interview with Ursula Krechel that she does not wish to make a virtue out of necessity, nor does she mean to extrapolate a specific content from the form of women's "alltäglichen Lebenszusammenhang."<sup>4</sup> She remains convinced, however, that the material conditions of production of much literature written by women with children and families have a strong influence on the way women write:

Es kann gar nicht anders sein. Es liegt nicht am Geschlecht, sondern an den sozialen Bedingungen. Jemand, der anders lebt, der muß auch eine andere Art zu schreiben haben . . .<sup>5</sup>

She offers the principle of montage as a form which is more conducive to women's daily lives but which does not necessarily always register the context of production at a thematic level (T. 170). She proposes instead a utopian form of writing which bears witness to the "täglichen Zerstückelungen und Zerstreuungen"<sup>6</sup> of women's lives:

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Damm, "Irmtraud Morgner: **Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz**," p. 145. Damm denies the specifically feminine aspects of Morgner's art, emphasizing instead her literary debt to a masculine tradition of such Enlightenment writers as Laurence Sterne and Diderot as well as Goethe and Jean Paul.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Morgner, "Die täglichen Zerstückelungen: Ein Gespräch mit Ursula Krechel," p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

Die Utopie, die ich mir vorstelle, wäre, daß man sich sowohl mit geistigen Dingen beschäftigt als auch mit den gewöhnlichen Dingen des Alltags, um die Verbindung zu dieser Art von Umgebung nicht zu verlieren, um nicht entfremdet, seiner Umwelt entfremdet zu sein.<sup>7</sup>

This theory implies a strong element of material determinism which Morgner retracts in later interviews, maintaining that her original idea of the operative novel as "ein geradezu ideales Genre zum Reinreden" (T. 170) was heavily ironic. She remarks that the discussion between Laura and the editor in the *Trobadora* novel, which was "eine ausgesprochen hintergründige und auf keinen Fall ohne doppelten Boden gearbeitete Sache," was quoted with deadly earnest by critics eager to extract 'her' writing programme.<sup>8</sup> The overly enthusiastic reception of this polemic formulation of a feminine aesthetics or "weibliches Schreiben" in West Germany<sup>9</sup> was influenced by the novelty value of Morgner's approach to the difficulties besetting women writers and her attempt to formulate a materialist theory of women's writing. If Morgner's denials are not sufficient to shift the focus away from the montage novel and short prose as the basis for a feminist aesthetics, then the writing of a second novel in the trilogy should testify to the very extreme "Durchhaltevermögen" women writers are in fact capable of.

**Amanda** does however offer a model of a feminist rather than feminine aesthetic which has hitherto not received the attention it merits. This is the construction of "Leibrede" as an aesthetic as well as a political model. As outlined above, "Leibrede" or body-speak/speech involves the dual movements, firstly, of the internalization of socially useless and subversive aspects of women's personalities and lives, and secondly, their subsequent regurgitation or spitting-out again. It is based on the common practice among women of swallowing their words or their innermost feelings, those particularly personal experiences that women endure "am eigenen Leib." In the *Trobadora* we have a prototype of the invention in the "Leibrede" of

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Morgner, "Gespräch mit Irmtraud Morgner von Doris Berger," *GDR Monitor* 12 (Winter 1984/85), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of an uncritical reading, see Sonja Hilzinger, 'Als ganzer Mensch zu leben . . .': Emanzipatorische Tendenzen in der neueren Frauen-Literatur der DDR (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985), pp. 126-58.

Olga Salman, Laura's mother, who for years has been in the habit of suppressing her contradictory remarks by swallowing them down to her gall bladder (T. 187). In **Amanda**, Tenner maintains, however, that the practice of swallowing one's anxieties has traditionally been a "Männertugend," reactivated by men in the GDR in response to the stresses of "die Menschwerdung der Männer" (A. 334):

Die Helden der Gegenwart hätten die Ängste zu schlucken. "Immer schlucken . . . immer fressen, immer eine Angst nach der anderen in dich reinfressen, und wenn du dir dann eines schönen Tages deine Angstneurose zusammengefressen hast oder deine Angstpsychose, mußt du auch diese Krankheiten noch verschweigen solange irgend möglich. Denn sie kann sich nicht sehen lassen neben einem Magengeschwür oder einer Säuferleber oder einer ähnlichen ordentlichen Krankheit. . . ." (A. 335)

Tenner's professed experiences with "Schlucken" have, however, failed to make him more sympathetic to the swallowed silences of Vilma and Laura and his expressed sympathies here appear to be a dangerous diversionary tactic on the part of Tenner to seduce Laura.

One variation on the "Leibrede" is the "somnambule Rede" which is described as an aria overlaid with grace-notes, half swallowed, half projected, accompanied by rhythmic beats to the belly. Vilma attributes her talents to her refusal to suppress her energies with "Scheißegalttabletten" and the "Antibabypille" (A. 227). Thus the invention of the "Leibrede" is directly linked to the sexual emancipation of women, not through the availability of the Pill but by women's decision to take charge of their bodies in other ways. When Laura has finally perfected the art of ventriloquism, she finds it helps to reinforce her decision to maintain her independence from men at all costs. "Ich werde niemals wieder heiraten," she exclaims while practising the art of "Leibrede," "und schluckte ihn in verschiedenen Tonlagen und Lautstärken" (A. 421). Women's "Leibrede" can thus be seen as the culmination of a long process of reappropriating women's "Bäuche" and "die Produktivkraft Sexualität."

The crucial difference between women's traditional practices of self-censorship and self-negation and the technique of "Leibrede" is that the art of body-speak attempts to break the cycle of oppression and repression by turning an age-old



technique into a creative liberating act of self-expression and self-production. By becoming ventriloquists, women can speak with two voices, one that is their own and one that is their own rendered 'other.' The other voice of the ventriloquist is therefore at the same time hers but not hers. It is the voice of the self that has no origin, that cannot be traced back to its source. The strategic use of such a tactic as a means of subversion and disruption now becomes apparent. Women can unburden themselves of their stored-up resentments, their unvoiced feelings and experiences by disseminating their innermost desires among other women also initiated in the art of ventriloquism, without fear of detection.

The political usefulness of ventriloquism as a literary strategy can be best exemplified through reference to Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and his alleged practice of publishing his own works under pseudonyms. According to Bakhtin, the author is always a ventriloquist, speaking through voices other than his/her own, his/her speech always resonating with a polyphonic multitude of other social and individual voices. The ambivalence of language in the novel or its heteroglossia resides in its ability to give expression to a wide range of ideological and social positions coextensively. For Bakhtin, the author is never fully in possession of her words but constructs meanings instead by 'ventriloquizing' a plethora of ideological voices. But it is language itself, says Bakhtin, situated on the borderline between self and other,<sup>10</sup> that cannot be reduced to the intentions of a single speaker nor to a single historical or social context. Even the solitary voice is always already interacting with other voices from other contexts. Discourse which attempts to suppress this 'other-voicedness' or alterity in language is referred to as monological or authoritarian discourse. Some critics have seen dialogism as a way of "outwitting and subverting political censorship of all sorts" arising from the political restraints on free speech under Soviet Stalinism.<sup>11</sup> The attractions of Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and its critique of monologic discourses for a writer operating under the institutional

<sup>10</sup> M. M Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), p. 293.

<sup>11</sup> See David Carroll, "The Alterity of Discourse: Form, History, and the Question of the Political in M.M. Bakhtin," *Diacritics* 13.2 (1983), p. 72.

and ideological constraints of the GDR in the seventies and eighties are obvious. The construction of Morgner's novels is highly dialogic in its refusal to privilege any one voice over the other, but, even more so, it is her strategy of writing "ohne Boden" and "mit doppeltem Boden," (GW. 75) of constantly shifting ground between different ideological positions that presents the best example of dialogism.

Bakhtin's socio-linguistic model of dialogism has often been interpreted in terms of the familiar modernist convention of multiperspectivism. Dialogue is often misconstrued as an act of communication, failed or otherwise, between two competing identities or characters. Alternatively, it has been seen as synonymous with narrative openness. Dialogic speech is not, therefore, speech which enters into dialogue with the speech of another person, nor a simple narrative strategy of allowing opposing voices or perspectives to compete for supremacy, as has been suggested in some recent feminist appropriations of Bakhtin's work.<sup>12</sup> It is speech that is similar to indirect speech, "populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others,"<sup>13</sup> continually overlaid with multiple social and historical contexts. To limit meaning to the intentions of one speaker, argues Bakhtin, is to expropriate it, transform it into private property.<sup>14</sup> Dialogic speech, like the voice of the ventriloquist, always belongs to someone else, is always speech within speech, a quotation within a quotation. It enables Vilma both to disguise her own authorial voice by speaking in other people's speeches, by paying lip-service to the ideology of the addressee when engaging in debates with Tenner and also to convey highly controversial feminist speeches to the other witches who meet in the Hugentendom.

The art of ventriloquism also allows Vilma to turn inner speech into outer speech or to give voice to speeches she has internalized or censored, because of their inappropriateness in certain social contexts. She can then activate in more appropriate moments those suppressed speeches stored in the gall bladder and in her belly which, like Bakhtin's unuttered discourse of inner speech, lie dormant in the individual,

<sup>12</sup> See Dale M. Bauer, *Feminist Dialogics: A Theory of Failed Community* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 294.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

forming "foreign bodies" until they can be exorcised and ejected into the outside world. Volosinov, a pupil of Bakhtin's or, as has been suggested, Bakhtin himself,<sup>15</sup> distinguishes in **Freudianism**, his critique of Freudian psychoanalysis, between inner and outer speech in his schema of "behavioural ideology." Inner speech, as the language of the "unofficial conscious" - Volosinov's anti-ontological, anti-individualistic version of Freud's concept of the individual unconscious -, can only be openly shared with others if it is made to conform to patterns of outer speech. Outer speech is that already censored form of speech that inhabits the ideological realm of the "official conscious" or official discourse. Only where there is total correspondence between inner speech and outer speech or between the utterances of any individual or social or ethnic minority and the ideology of the dominant class, can inner speech be expressed freely in the outer or public realm. But, if the gap between the official and unofficial conscious and hence between inner and outer speech is too great, the ideologically subversive speech of the individual cannot find a suitable form of expression. It then turns into a foreign body in the psyche, unless it can externalize itself and convert its interiority into a external challenge to official ideology.<sup>16</sup>

Vilma's "Leibreden," which are stored in her belly waiting for a suitable opportunity to be projected onto the outer world, are forms of inner speech, censored utterances in contradiction to official discourse. They belong to the repository of a suppressed, collective, unofficial consciousness. Like the illicit, tabooed contents of Freud's unconscious which are censored and sublimated by the conscious or "Überich," Vilma's stored, inner speeches are also subject to censorship, unable to be verbalized in the public realm. In the same way that the unconscious desires and drives attach themselves to the day's residue in a drive to express themselves, Vilma's inner speech also assumes an ideological disguise by attaching

<sup>15</sup> See Michael Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," in **Allegory and Representation**, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1981), pp. 163-83.

<sup>16</sup> V. N. Volosinov, **Freudianism: A Critical Sketch**, trans. and ed. I. R. Titunik in collaboration with Neal H. Bruss (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 89-90.

itself to already censored utterances in circulation in public and/or official spheres in order to overcome primary censorship. She resorts to quotations and citations of ideological material which has already passed into outer speech, 'ventriloquizing' the already censored speech of others. Unlike Freud's theory, which assumes that the unconscious can never have unmediated access to the realm of the conscious, Volosinov's model of inner and outer speech allows for the possibility of a limited but still uncensored expression of inner speech as a means of subverting the dominant ideologies through the articulation of "revolutionary ideologies." He remarks that not "every motive in contradiction with the official ideology must degenerate into indistinct inner speech and then die out - it might well engage with that official ideology."<sup>17</sup>

In the model of the female ventriloquist, Morgner has developed Bakhtin's notion of 'other-voicedness' as part of a specifically feminist textual strategy which can both disrupt male monologic authoritarian discourse and give voice to an alternative feminist discourse. But because this voice is never what it seems, or where it seems, it cannot be pinned down and tied to any one meaning or intention. In this way the voice of the ventriloquist disorients the listener, confuses and surprises the addressee. The voice of a ventriloquist always pays lip-service to the dominant discourses, sometimes it operates with "doppeltem Boden," sometimes with none. As Vilma remarks, "Leibrede" may well be a stabilizing factor of the "Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat" but it is also, like the "nährische" and "hexische Aktionen" of the witches who congregate in the Hugenottendom, innately subversive. The trick of swallowing one's unproductive words and thoughts, from which Vilma extrapolates her invention of "Leibrede," can be deployed both to suppress women's unwanted sentiments and to enable the articulation of oppositional feeling without the personal repercussions that an unmediated, undeflected or uncensored expression of authorial or subjective intention would entail.

The voice of the ventriloquist is moreover scurrilous and irresponsible; by denying its origins it divests itself of all responsibility for its words. The abrogation

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

of authorial responsibility as inseparable from political responsibility does not mean literary texts like "Leibreden" are unauthored or write themselves. As Christa Wolf has remarked, it still holds that "der Autor nämlich ist ein sehr wichtiger Mensch."<sup>18</sup> To speak with forked tongue is not to deny the author the possibility of speech; nor is it to deny the "subjektive Authentizität" of her discourse. The author is not dead, she is just elsewhere, she is always someone and somewhere else. The female subject of Morgner's works still has difficulty - 15 years after Wolf's brilliant and succinct diagnosis of the writing female subject in the German Democratic Republic - in saying I. Whereas there are signs that Wolf may have overcome this difficulty in speaking in her own voice in her works after *Kassandra*,<sup>19</sup> it seems that Morgner instead sees political and aesthetic advantages to be gained in keeping the dialectic of female subjectivity - and thus the narrative dialectic - open. Unlike Wolf who, according to Weigel, harks after an "ursprungsmythologische Utopie von Einheit,"<sup>20</sup> Morgner resists the temptation to mythologize an original prelapsarian state of subjective wholeness. The longing articulated in *Amanda* for a reconciliation, or reunification, of the two divided halves of the female self is relativized by the tactic of Vilma's "Leibrede," as one example of the productive uses of a dialogic conception of subjectivity.

The text of *Amanda* offers a curious example of the problem of "saying I" diagnosed by Wolf in Vilma's strange "erzählerisches Verhalten." After the first few meetings with Vilma it appears to Laura that Vilma indeed seems incapable of using the first person pronoun. Instead of introducing herself, she narrates one story after the other about her boss, Hilde Felber, Hilde's mother, Hilde's grandmother and grandfather, until finally Laura protests. It seems as if she were getting to know

<sup>18</sup> Wolf, "Lesen und Schreiben," in *Lesen und Schreiben*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> See Anna Kuhn's remark that Wolf's latest novels from *Kassandra* onwards no longer problematize the first person in narrative through the use of the device of the split female voice. If she does "still suffer from this modern malaise <of the schizophrenia of our age>, it is obviously no longer as debilitating as it once was"; Kuhn, *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision*, p. 213.

<sup>20</sup> Weigel, "Vom Sehen zur Seherin: Christa Wolfs Umdeutung des Mythos und die Spur der Bachmann-Rezeption in ihrer Literatur," in *Christa Wolf*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (3rd rpt.; München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1985), p. 80. (Text + Kritik 46)

Hilde more and more and Vilma less and less. Laura decries this type of narrative behaviour as a "verfluchter Personenkult" (A. 219), as an outmoded authorial stance reminiscent of the Stalinist era and the Bitterfelder years. She demands that Vilma speak with her own voice, give "Vilmaantworten" instead of "Hildeantworten," instead of sublimating her own identity in biographical "Brocken" about Hilde's life. Vilma should speak therefore with the voice of subjective authenticity. Vilma's reply to Laura amounts not so much to a critique of the notion of subjective authenticity but of autobiography as a more authentic, immediate form of self-expression. Vilma argues:

Den eigenen Schädel entleeren könne schließlich jeder Dummkopf. Sich auskotzen wäre keine Kunst. Sich auslegen auch nicht. Aber andere auslegen - das verlangte Schule. Hochschule. Vilma hatte Hermeneutik und Exegese an der Universität gelernt und in der Redaktion der Zeitschrift "Neue Philosophische Blätter" täglich Gelegenheit, diese Künste zu vervollkommen. . . . Sie triebe Hilde-Exegese . . . (A. 220)

According to Vilma, speaking of oneself requires no particular skill at all, whereas to speak of others involves interpretative or hermeneutic talents. These Vilma has acquired through her daily work as secretary to Hilde Felber. Since she has little opportunity to apply her hermeneutic skills to the classics of German literature and philosophy, she turns to lesser known female 'classics' such as Hilde herself. There are obvious similarities between Vilma's imperative to interpret the wisdom of women both living and dead and the Western feminist project of gynocritics<sup>21</sup> or of rediscovering a lost body of female literature. The "Unsinnkollegien" can also be read as the East German equivalent of women's studies seminars or the "Frauenkolloquien" introduced into West German universities in the late seventies.

Morgner's concept of the author as ventriloquist obviously owes much to Bakhtin's socio-historical model of language and literature. Some of the more influential interpreters of Bakhtin's work have tended to see dialogism and the practice of ventriloquism primarily as a device to foil the strict censorship laws

<sup>21</sup> See Elaine Showalter, "Towards a Feminist Poetics," **Women's Writing and Writing about Women**, ed. Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp. 22-41; rpt in **The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory**, ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago, 1986), pp. 125-43.

under Stalinism in the 1920's. While it is obviously important to highlight the ideological conditions of production in any work of literature, Holquist's valid comments about the genesis of dialogism lose their pertinency when he reduces the principle of dialogism to a mere formal instrument for conveying an authorial meaning, which is itself not dialogic but unified, and, for Holquist at least, unequivocal. Dialogism, in Holquist's account, becomes a type of ideological or Marxist icing on an essentially religious cake, or alternatively, a politically expedient means of lending the appropriate ideological flesh to the spirit of Bakhtin's Christian words.<sup>22</sup> Marxism becomes a convenient and necessary "flag" under which Bakhtin can fly his religious beliefs, which Holquist believes to be merely submerged beneath the external trappings of dialectical materialism and modern linguistic theory.<sup>23</sup>

To 'ventriloquize' meaning, according to Holquist, is to "appropriate meaning for <one's> own purposes,"<sup>24</sup> the author becomes the "master ventriloquist" who, as Carroll points out, "exploits the voices of others in order to express his true intentions."<sup>25</sup> I would concur with Carroll that it is possible to put forward a far more radical view of dialogism than Holquist's account, one in which "the ventriloquist himself <sic!> must be seen as ventriloquated as much as ventriloquating," himself <sic> a site of conflicting voices and ideologies.<sup>26</sup> Morgner's model of the author as simultaneously ventriloquist and ventriloquist's dummy, as exemplified in Vilma's "Leibreden," and her strange "erzählerisches Verhalten," is one that is more radical in its application of the principles of dialogism to orthodox Marxist notions of unalienated subjectivity and individual authorship. At the same time, Vilma's disconcerting narrative stance may also be read as a hidden polemic against the Romantic concept of subjectivity that underlies Wolf's demand for more subjective authenticity in literature. For while it is true to say that Vilma's peculiar habit of quoting Hilde in the place of her own opinions and experiences arises out of

<sup>22</sup> Holquist, "The Politics of Representation," p. 172.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, p. 173. For a similar critique of Holquist's theory of ideology and language, see Carroll, "The Alterity of Discourse: Form, History, and the Question of the Political in M. M. Bakhtin," p. 72.

<sup>24</sup> Holquist, "Allegory and Representation," p. 171.

<sup>25</sup> Carroll, "The Alterity of Discourse," p. 72.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p. 74.

what Wolf correctly diagnoses as the "difficulty in saying I," the impasse cannot simply be solved, as Laura soon realizes, by advocating the use of the first person or by prescribing the use of autobiography as a relevant form for women in overcoming the aporia of feminine subjectivity.

Mornger's works display a scepticism towards first person narratives in evidence in her technique of using doubles and confusing the identities of author and reader, narrator and narrated, and the seemingly endless deferral of the origins of her texts. She appears not to share Wolf's idealism, whose female subject, although torn, has not yet relinquished the hope of rediscovering an authentic position from which an "I" can speak. But, like Wolf's aesthetic of dual subjectivity, Morgner's dialogic model of subjectivity and authorship has dynamic and radical potential as a model for a feminist aesthetics. As a means of both projecting censored utterances and interrogating the utterances of others, by speaking through and across them, it represents a unique narrative device designed to foil those internal and external mechanisms of censorship. A feminist aesthetics and politics may well have to relinquish the telos of a unified subjectivity and of reuniting the two halves of the feminine totality or the two ends of a feminine continuum if it is to continue to interrogate fixed notions of identity. A dialogic model of subjectivity, by contrast, which emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity rather than subjective unity, is one which gives consideration to the importance of sexual and cultural difference in the formation of new subjectivities.

The question of identity remains unresolved at the end of *Amanda* as does the outcome of the offensive on the "Blocksberg." The reunification of women's two halves as the precondition for attaining more peaceful conditions appears to have been adjourned. Obviously, as Amanda remarks, the reunification of the halves of the "diesseitige" witches with their other worldly halves no longer takes priority over the more urgent need to storm the "Blocksberg" and to introduce conditions which are more conducive to women's self-realization. The close of the novel anticipates a partial victory for the witches, yet the narrative breaks off before the victory of the collective strategy has been ascertained. As with the *Trobadora* novel which closes on



the utopian story of Valeska's sex change, **Amanda** ends on a carnivalistic note with the retrieval of Beatriz's tongue during a fantastical "Sylvesternacht" conducted by the witches. Yet like the man in Kafka's parable "Das Gleichnis" who wins the bet, but only "im Gleichnis," and thus loses "in der Wirklichkeit," the victory of the witches and Beatriz remains confined to the 'imaginary' realm: the domain of the still to be realized utopia.

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