

Berlin's Cultural East and West Division: Masochism and the Female Body

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Abstract

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(Under the direction of Richard Langston)

Else Buschheuer's novel *Ruf!Mich!An!* represents an exceptional example of contemporary German literature in which the gendered body, in correlation to division and unification of Berlin, is represented as a sexual battlefield. The female body of the main protagonist in *Ruf!Mich!An!*, becomes the main mediator and battle field of the divisions and tensions in Berlin between East- and West Germans. Be it the East German inability to cope with Western television or capitalism, the protagonist perceives East Germans as unable to cope with the cultural changes that have come with reunification. Her alienation and hatred culminate into guilt over her own behavior. Communication, which would open ways of coping with the alienation and hatred, has become impossible. As a strategy for channeling this guilt, Paprika indulges in masochism. Masochism represents pornological descriptions which displace and channel her hatred and guilt. Masochism becomes a tool by which her feelings towards Eastern Germans are negated and transcribed into sex.

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Chapter 1

Sex in Contemporary German Fiction

Katharina Gerstenberger's article "Play Zones: The Erotics of the New Berlin," explores Berlin, as a city in which people pursue sex. Gerstenberger claims that sexuality and sex have become ways of describing the new capital of Germany, in a way that turns the "cityscape into an erotic topography" (Gerstenberger, 260). The continuous change of the city landscape has turned Berlin into a town full of "fresh sex" (260). This has sparked discussions in literature of the "transformation from divided city to German capital" mainly through sexual discourse (260). Gerstenberger believes that this sexual discourse centers on the female body, which has become the playground and facade on which the (political) tensions and troubles of Berlin become visible. She concludes that these (political) tensions, triggered by the fall of the Wall, are depicted in literature through "descriptions of sexual pleasure and become so literary interpretations of these events" (Gerstenberger, 270). This, in turn, points to "the collective aspects of sexuality by suggesting that a generation's self-understanding also manifests itself in its sexual attitudes" (270). Her three examples are *Spielzone* by Tanja Drücker, *Eselsfest* by Christa Schmidt and *Schattenboxerin* by Inka Parei. In *Spielzone* Gerstenberger claims that the postmodern subjects of the books - represented by twenty-something's who can choose to be man, woman, or androgynous - do not supplant or supersede their "traditional counterparts", i.e. forty-something lesbians (264). Rather, both generations live side by side in separate districts in Berlin. Parei's book *Schattenboxerin* lacks the depiction of sexual pleasures and delicate gender intertwining. Instead it depicts

and “fuses the experience of rape and Berlin’s division into the narrative of a bodily violation whose signs can be read on the surface of the city’s and the woman’s body alike” (265). Christa Schmidt’s *Eselsfest* portrays the sexual configuration of Berlin as a surface on which narcissistic intellectuals and professionals live and for whom Berlin is “a place of sexual fulfillment” (268). Schmidt depicts members of the generation that promoted free love in the late sixties, ‘68ers who have moved on and found in sadomasochism a new fulfillment. Gerstenberger writes that all three books display generational representations of Germans, be they part of the sixties, eighties, or nineties generations. Each age bracket is defined in the way they practice, live, and feel sex in connection with the changes and upheavals that disrupt Berlin.

Gerstenberger suggests that contemporary literature written in Berlin by women very frequently represents generational-bound German attitudes towards sex. In her article she addresses an aspect which can be found in all three books analyzed; namely, the sexual violence directed toward the female body. Gerstenberger describes, for example, the self-mutilation of Ada, one of the protagonists of *Play Zones*. Ada is caught, “between gender games” and resorts to violence (self-mutilation of her breast) as a way of coping with the “unresolved tensions between a femininity that is available to all and a feminism that only appears in its essentialist version” (263). One can also observe violence acted upon the female body in *Die Schattenboxerin* in which Hell, the female protagonist of the book, is not trapped in any gender games, but is nevertheless subject to violence in the form of rape. In Schmitt’s book *Eselsfest* the aging male protagonist practices sadomasochism with various female partners.

Where does this prevalent violence displayed in the novels come from? Gerstenberger assumes that in contemporary literature the female body is sexually transformed and described in correlation with ever-changing Berlin itself. She says that bodily transformations are caused by events taking place in Berlin, such as the fall of the Wall. I argue, by referring back to Gilles Deleuze, that such events act as direct stimuli, which are depicted as a sexual impact on the female body. In the contemporary literature that Gerstenberger examines, these events are characterized as excessive stimuli full of erotic energy. Excess stimuli can be represented, for example, as political events, the influence of the media, or cultural differences between East and West. They signify causes for sexual violence. How should we begin to make sense of these excessive stimuli? Deleuze describes excess stimulation as full of erotic energy that enables literature to act as mirror image to the world and to contain the violence and excess of the real world (37). Seen in this light, events taking place in Berlin around 1989 are transformed by this corpus of literature into excess stimuli, which lead to violent erotic acts. In the narratives described by Gerstenberger, sexual violence is the result of excess stimulation caused by the city of Berlin and its ever-changing topology and political landscape. Gerstenberger thus writes that this literature depicts projected historical effects directly onto the female body. Yet, by mainly focusing on generational depictions of sexual fulfillment, Gerstenberger explores only one facet of sexual violence in these narratives.

Chapter 2

Introduction to *Ruf!Mich!An!*

An analysis of the novel *Ruf!Mich!An!* (2000) by Else Buschheuer is an important addition to Gerstenberger's work. The novel allows not only for a detailed reading of sex and violence as excessive stimuli, but also connects this sexual violence - which is masochistic - explicitly to the historical event of unification. The narrative of *Ruf!Mich!An!* is full of sexual violence and excesses directed and created by cultural barriers and tensions between West and East Germans. The novel fits all the categories that Gerstenberger established: it is set in Berlin, it is set in the contemporary culture of the new capital, and it is written by a relatively young woman. Instead of being taken seriously by the press, Buschheuer's novel has, however, constantly been represented in a way that has obscured its literary merit by highlighting the author's own persona. Newspapers such as *TAZ*, *Der Spiegel* and *Stern* regularly focused in their reviews of Buschheuer's novel on the fact that she is a weather announcer on TV. All of these more or less respected newspapers and news magazines commented on her illustrious past and call her a "weather fairy" (*Wetterfee*), which not only degraded her artistically and intellectually but also highlighted her previous un-intellectual profession. The critics' identification of the protagonist of *Ruf!Mich!An!* with the author is another frequently cited low point in its reception: "Das hat die Protagonistin von Buschheuer genauso wie ihre Erfinderin," wrote Jenni Zylka in her review of the novel (Zylka, 23). Again, this identification highlighted her persona and suggested that her novel was more autobiographical than literary. Finally, her frank depictions of masturbation and

sex are at the center of critical attention, yet instead of their literary impact they are depicted as a means to advertise and shock: “Sie wollte ihr Buch verkaufen, und das misslang erfolgreich” (Thuma, 135). However, is *Ruf!Mich!An!* really thinly veiled autobiographical trash? Should not the novel be addressed as yet another spectacular example of Berlin’s new erotic play zones? In spite of the critics, I wish to deemphasize the negative value of Buschheuer’s persona and read the text in *Ruf!Mich!An!* as a purely literary work, a literary fantasy in other words, in order to fully understand the underlying role of sexual violence, either done to, or done by women in contemporary literature’s representations of fornication.

Ruf!Mich!An! is told from the first-person perspective of Paprika, a thirty-something professional woman living in united Berlin. Paprika lives in Daimler-City in an exclusive apartment complex on Potsdam, where firms such as Sony have their residence. She describes herself as a typical city-girl who loves the anonymity that her exclusive apartment gives her (9). She is reclusive and shies away from human and bodily contact (10). She is addicted to mass media, such as television, and prefers it over the real flesh-and-blood company of others, her friends included (43). Paprika can afford to live in the expensive apartment because she is the owner of a successful advertisement agency located in the television tower on Alexander Platz. She calls her firm the most innovative and popular advertisement agency in all of Berlin (22). Paprika has two close friends, Dietrich and Robert. She describes their relationship as largely empty: “Uns verbindet keine Freundschaft. Kumpanei vielleicht, Komplizenschaft, entfernte geistige Verwandtschaft, eine gewisse Illusionslosigkeit und natürlich jede Menge Neurosen. Gemeinsam irrlichtern wir der Hölle entgegen“ (160). Paprika makes clear that although they are her closest friends, she feels no real connection to them. Dietrich is an intellectual sex-addict who has

become so intellectually detached that it has become impossible for him to take anything seriously (15). Paprika's relationship with Dietrich is based on the monetary favors given to him. Robert, on the other hand, is a sexual ex-East German who has lived long enough in the West to become bearable for Paprika. In spite of his sexual prowess, he is described as being unable to maintain or even start a sexual relationship (102).

Paprika's world is disturbed when an East German couple moves to the apartment next door. She dislikes East Germans immensely and therefore perceives the couple as a personal affront to her. The chapter in which the first meeting with her neighbors is described fittingly titled "Die Invasion der Körperfresser" (8). The next major event in the novel is a new sexual relationship, one that is anonymous and steeped in role play and masochism. When her anonymous lover starts to pull away from her, she is devastated. As a result she starts taking more and more valium. The drug alters her perception of reality and confuses her to such a degree that it starts to interrupt her normal daily routine. At the end of the book it becomes hard for her to differentiate between reality and fantasy, since her drug-induced misperception disqualifies her as a reliable narrator. When she finally describes killing several people, including one of her East German neighbors, it is ambiguous whether the event has truly happened or if it is just a figment of her imagination.

The general assumption by the popular press that Buschheuer writes pornographic fiction is entirely misguided, for what is seemingly pornography is in fact "pornology" (Deleuze 18). According to Deleuze, pornographic literature is "reduced to a few imperatives (do this, do that) followed by obscene descriptions. Violence and eroticism do meet, but in a rudimentary fashion" (17). Pornographic literature depicts sexual encounters and stimulates the rudimentary libido but nothing more. Pornology, however, acts on the

senses and the mind of the reader. For Deleuze, pornography symbolizes “configurations of symptoms and signs” (16). In the case of Sadism, the use of demonstrative language, or the sadist as instructor of his victim, represents such symptoms and signs that raise “the acts of violence inflicted on the victims to a higher form of violence” (19). The sexual violence depicted in and around Paprika in *Ruf!Mich!An!* is utterly masochistic. Some essential signs and symptoms for masochism, which are also visible in *Ruf!Mich!An!*, are contract regulations and the usage of pseudonyms. When analyzing Paprika’s fantasy, it becomes apparent that not only her own masochistic desires, but also Valmont’s sadist desires are of importance, since the relationship between a sadist and a masochist is complex. The common perception of masochistic and sadistic natures as being in harmony with each other is wrong. The sadist could never tolerate a victim that has pleasure in the pain that he inflicts. A masochist on the other hand would never “tolerate a truly sadistic torture”, because she “needs to mold, to educate and persuade it in accordance with his secret project” (Deleuze, 41). The secret project represents the fantasy that the masochist tries to create. In order to do so, the masochist has to choose a person who can be educated and persuaded in compliance with his or her masochistic fantasy. The masochist trains his own torturer. A true sadist, instead of becoming a part of this fantasy, would naturally try to destroy it. Paprika, the masochist, is from the beginning molded and trained by the sadist Valmont for his own sadistic fantasy. Paprika is a genuine masochist and Valmont would find no lasting pleasure in inflicting pain on a victim that enjoys it. Their relationship becomes impossible to sustain.

For Deleuze, sadism and masochism as depicted by Sade and Masoch are essentially paradoxical. The torturer in Sade’s novels does not use the language of authority, which

consists of keeping “quiet and conniving at cheating” (17). Rather, the torturer, by describing his torture openly, admits that he himself is a victim, since only the tortured can describe torture. The masochist in Masoch’s novel performs a double function; he is not only the victim, but also the trainer of his torturer. In Buschheuer’s novel, the masochist Paprika uses the language of the victim when describing torture, instead of the language of the torturer. A consequence resulting from this paradox is that sadistic and especially masochistic descriptions in *Ruf!Mich!An!* become instances in which the boundary of language as a medium to communicate is stretched to its limit. It is stretched because “pornological literature is aimed above all at confronting language with its own limits, with what is in a sense a non-language” (22). Seen in this light, Buschheuer’s masochistic descriptions aim at describing the indescribable, since her female protagonists’ descriptions entail what Deleuze describes as “transpositions or displacements, resulting in a scene being enacted simultaneously on several levels” (22). In *Ruf!Mich!An!*, the indescribable, which is expressed through pornography, is the impassable cultural rift between East and West, which makes communication impossible.¹

The masochistic descriptions in Buschheuer’s novel, when read as pornography, must be interpreted as representations and transpositions of the inability to communicate between East and West Germans or the wall that has remained after the fall of the Wall. Therefore, instead of interpreting the graphic depictions in *Ruf!Mich!An!* solely as the usage of bodily functions and the expression of basic sexual needs as would be the case with a pornographic reading, I wish to bring Buschheuer’s masochistic sexual depictions in dialogue with Gerstenberger’s thesis and Deleuze’s theory. Gerstenberger argues that actions geared

¹ Pornology in *Ruf!Mich!An!* represents masochism.

towards the female body symbolize historical events in relation to the new Berlin. Dialogue here is not meant to represent the simple exchange or re-telling of information. Rather, it represents the transposition or displacement that go along with the assumption that Buschheuer's protagonist represents not any old ordinary female body, but rather a specific literary female body onto which Berlin is projected. Buschheuer does not, counter to Gerstenberger's thesis, represent generational conflicts through sex; rather, her book puts masochistic sexual practices at its core. I argue, therefore, that the representations of masochism in *Ruf!Mich!An!* are pornography by which West Germans are able to channel their inability to communicate to East Germans into sexual signs and symptoms. To pursue such an inquiry further, it is necessary to refer back to Deleuze.

The writers Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and the Marquise de Sade became synonyms for masochism and sadism, Deleuze writes in his essay "Coldness and Cruelty." He repudiates the notion that there is a connection between masochism and sadism, that they are interchangeable, or that they can be found in one and the same person. Deleuze believes that these two sexual perversions are made out of different basic symptoms and signs, such as a fetish or disavowal of reality. Consequently, he defines masochism by breaking it down into its literary "symptoms." Accordingly he makes sure to emphasize that in order to be a masochistic fantasy it must not imitate another masochistic fantasy. Rather it must, in some form or another, display "Disavowal, waiting, fetishism and fantasy" (72). As we shall see, all these symptoms are embedded into Buschheuer's description of masochistic behavior. I argue that masochism in *Ruf!Mich!An!*, together with its symptoms, like fetishism, is pornological. Masochism operates in this novel symbolically representing a wall between

East and West. This wall is not only Paprika's hatred and shame towards East Germans, but also the rift between the two Germanys.

Buschheuer's pornological descriptions of masochistic encounters are a means by which the effects of unification are directly projected onto the female body. This is especially the case with Buschheuer's protagonist. Paprika is depicted as a cruel, hurtful and vindictive western capitalist. Her hatred is directed towards East Germans, whom she treats with contempt and disrespect. They are for her second class citizens. She displays no signs of remorse or reconciliation towards East Germans throughout the novel. Oddly enough, the Wall had fallen eleven years prior to the events in the book. *Ruf!Mich!An!* portrays Germany as a space on which, after all these years, there is still no direct communication or dialogue possible between East and West Germans. The reason for this breakdown is because the West German depicted in Buschheuer's novel cannot communicate directly with East Germans. *Ruf!Mich!An!* is a literary fantasy of an inability to communicate. As I will prove, this inability to communicate stems from the seeming incapability to overcome cultural differences, such as mass media and capitalism, between East and West. It also acknowledges the fact that West Germans, as long as the Wall still stood, were able to prosper materialistically and sexually. In contrast, the novel represents East Germans as Germans who suffered under an authoritarian system, deprived of all the sexual liberties that the West enjoyed, meaning that they were sexless and lacked sexual pleasure. When the Wall fell, Buschheuer's book suggests, the material, ideological, and sexual gap between the East and the West of Germany could not be closed.

This rupture between the two parts of Germany is closely connected to Western mass media. Konrad Weller states in his book, *Das Sexuelle in der Deutsch-Deutschen*

Vereinigung, that an inability to communicate can be interpreted as deriving from the overflow of media that Germans are subjected to, which then leads to a “Erotisierung, besser sogar Sexualisierung des modernen Menschen von außen, eine Daueraktualisierung sexueller Impulse durch die Gesellschaft“ (17). Weller suggests that West and East Germans are both constantly flooded by mass media, which can lead to an inability to communicate. This massive media shower has led to the rupture between Paprika and East Germans by creating cultural barriers. Media also influences the sex drive by intensifying it and activating “stärkeren, nimmersatten, unstillbaren Reizhunger, und damit den Griff nach der härteren Droge” (17). In *Ruf!Mich!An!* the next so-called harder sexual drug for Paprika becomes masochism. As I will prove, media has indirectly led to an intensification of her sex drive. Media plays a sadistic role in her masochistic fantasy. Media becomes sadistic in the sense that Paprika lets it seemingly define her life. So far in her function as masochist, she is to a certain degree in control of the relationship. She controls her own intake of media.² When she meets Valmont, she immediately identifies him with media and masochism. His “Robert De Niro” voice reminds Paprika of media (Buschheuer, 40). Yet, when she starts a sexual relationship with him, she is not at all in control of their relationship, since Valmont is an actual sadist. Paprika, the “secret person in charge” suddenly becomes the victim. Mass media stands closely in connection with her sex life and becomes one of the reasons for the rupture between East and West. Media constitutes in itself a cultural barrier between East and West. These cultural barriers and the resulting rupture then led West Germans to harbor ill will towards East Germans.

² This suggests, since media plays such a significant role in the creation of her cultural barrier, that her cultural estrangement to East Germans is to certain degree self-chosen.

This ill will of Paprika is depicted as negative and full of stereotypes. How to make sense of affect at all has become a topic of intense debate. Hemmings describes the emergence of affect as “critical object and perspective through which to understand the social world and our place within it” (548). Hemmings writes that there are two kinds of affect, one full of “pessimism of social determinism (including bad affect)” and the other an “optimism of affective freedom (good affect)” (551). This bad affect, which is visible in Buschheuer’s novel, strengthens social determinism. It functions, as Hemmings notes, as a

central mechanism of social reproductions in the most glaring ways. The delights of consumerism, feelings of belonging attending fundamentalism or fascism, to suggest just several contexts, are affective responses that strengthen rather than challenge a dominant social order. (551)

Hemmings describes how a dominant order in society can stay in existence. In opposition to challenging the central mechanisms of society, one is engulfed in the pleasures of western consumerism and culture and thus becomes an affective part of it. Paprika engulfs herself in Western society and mass media. By doing so, she develops bad affect towards East Germans who are not part of the dominant German culture. This seeming inability of East Germans to grasp Western culture leads Paprika to feelings of hatred.

As I will prove below, Paprika embraces such Western mass media like the *Bild Zeitung*, TV-talk shows, television or dominant American culture. Her Western demeanor turns out to be especially visible through not only her work but also her work space. Paprika situates herself away from East Germans. Through mass media and dominant Western capitalist culture, she builds up hatred towards them. By setting herself apart, she makes communication between East and West impossible. Communication becomes impossible because displaying or receiving emotions to others constitute key elements in a relationship.

This inability to communicate together with the breakup of her masochistic relationship, channel Paprika's violent attitude (bad affect) into an act of violence, namely she shoots her East German neighbor. In spite of this general breakdown, the masochistic and violent sexual practices in which Paprika indulges represent a pornological counter-fantasy, in which she not only displaces, but intensifies her violent tendencies onto the private realm of her sex life. The violence in her masochism turns out to be self-inflicted violence; a form of coping with the violent tendencies towards East Germans caused by the unification and mass media.

Chapter 3

Berlin's New Wall: Paprika's Apartment and Work Space

The city of Berlin and its influence on its inhabitants, be it spatial or political, are crucial components in *Ruf!Mich!An!*. The locations of Paprika's apartment and her work space, as examples for her personal spaces, are central for the novel, insofar as they frame Paprika's behavior towards East Germans. As I will argue, her own personal spaces are designed and chosen by Paprika to represent a new wall, which is supposed to keep East Germans out of her life. Because of the importance of Berlin as setting, *Ruf!Mich!An!* is consequently a "textual city novel" (*textuelle Stadtlektüre*) in which the city is, to borrow from the works of urban planner Steve Mahler, a "über referentielle bzw. semantische Rekurrenzen abgestütztes – dominantes Thema , also nicht nur im Hintergrund, Schauplatz, *setting* für ein anderes dominant verhandeltes Thema, sondern unkürzbarer Bestandteil des Texts" (12). The problems caused by unification lived out on the female body, as shown in Buschheuer's novel, are closely tied to the spaces of Berlin. Paprika's choice of apartment location is one such instant where the significance of Berlin as setting becomes apparent. *Ruf!Mich!An!* starts with a description of her living situation and her declaration that she is a "stinknormale Großstädterin" (Buschheuer, 9). In this instance, a characteristic of the textual city novel is fulfilled. Again Mahler writes: "Jeder isolierte Text – und insbesondere jeder fiktionale – beginnt gleichsam in einem informatorischen Vakuum" (14). Buschheuer fills the informational vacuum at the beginning of her book with Paprika's life philosophy as city dweller (9). These instances highlight the significance of Berlin in the novel. Places

described in the book are set up as a dominant theme which reoccurs throughout the whole novel over and over again. Her apartment is a crucial point of departure.

Through her apartment Paprika tries to exert excessive control over her life by excluding Eastern Germans. She perceives them as “invading forces” and keeps them out of her life by means of her high income and their financial woes. Because of the money that she makes and the fact that she is her own boss, Paprika is able, at least at the beginning of the novel, to control her daily life substantially and can afford to live in an anonymous and exclusively Western apartment complex (Buschheuer, 9). She likes the apartment because it offers her the possibility to live completely undisturbed from any social contacts: “Man kann dort völlig ungestört leben. Niemand nimmt Notiz, keiner regt sich auf, lauter Autisten, Wand and Wand. Ich kenne meine Nachbarn nicht. Wir wollen uns auch ums Verrecken nicht kennen lernen“ (9). The anonymity of the apartment complex offers security which she believes is normal for a city dweller in Berlin.

Paprika’s search for security and anonymity is not irregular behavior for Western Germans living in Berlin. Since the fall of the Wall many West Germans perceived Berlin as less safe and more crowded as before. Brian Ladd writes about this clash between East and West:

As a more parochial matter, the end of the Wall did not make the quite enclave of West Berlin a more pleasant place; on the contrary, it became more crowded and less safe. Nor did most West Berliners really enjoy the constant presence of the poor and uncouth Easterners. (Ladd, 7)

Ladd suggests that there are tensions between East and West Germans, which are partly based on fear and the fact that East Germans have not caught up materialistically with the West. What this means for the novel is that her East German neighbors were a shocking

surprise to her, since she anticipated no such elements in her exclusive apartment complex. She is very protective of her apartment and sees their presence as interference into her life. Paprika views her apartment as a fortress against the outside world or even as a symbolic representation of the former Wall, keeping out East Germans. She therefore views her new East German neighbors as representing a breaching of her own symbolic wall. Aiding in this belief that her apartment represents a sort of symbolic wall for Paprika is the fact that her apartment is located in the former *Niemandsländ* of the *Grenzstreifen* in the middle of the Wall. Paprika has chosen the location of her exclusive apartment as a replacement for the former Wall, a border and protection from the outside world and specifically of East-Germans.

The location of her apartment is also significant, as it accentuates her identity as Western capitalist as opposed to the stereotypical struggling East German. Like the Sony Center, her apartment is a symbol for the new and transformed Berlin. She moved to Potsdamer Platz because she read in the *Bildzeitung* that the apartments there are unaffordable. She felt the unaffordable prices of the apartments as a challenge, which is a rather superficial reason. The real motivation behind her move to Potsdamer Platz is the lasting legacy of the Cold War division of Germany. She counted on natural selection as an exclusionary force capable of keeping unification effects out of her home. This is destroyed, however, by Maike and Mändy who move into the apartment next door (71). Potsdamer Platz is an important private development which lies only a short distance away from the colossal construction area of the new government quarters. Ladd writes about the importance of the Potsdamer Platz in the past and in the present:

The old, destroyed Potsdamer Platz was the mythic center of Berlin bustle early in the twentieth century, so it's fitting that the new Potsdamer Platz is both the city's biggest construction project, and the largest of its many new retail centers. (Ladd, 8)

The Potsdamer Platz, Ladd suggests, held the promise of economic reconciliation between East and West. Instead of becoming a place of reunion for East and West for Paprika, her apartment symbolizes a place of tension. It also symbolizes both the representational equivalent of the former Wall as protection and the fear that she feels towards her East German neighbors.

The fear and tension that she feels are closely connected to her body. She perceives her body as a closed unit, comparable to the apartment complex she lives in. The way she perceives her body in connection to her apartment becomes interesting. Gerstenberger states that "urban space is significantly shaped through the ways in which humans perceive their bodies" (Borders, 126). The location and the meaning of her apartment become synonymous to/with her body. Both her body and her apartment are described in terms of places of confinement and security, which must be protected from the outside world and especially East Germans. Rosemary Garland Thomson has argued that "singular bodies become politicized when culture maps its concerns upon them as meditations on individual as well as national values, identity, and direction" (2). This means that Paprika's values, identity, direction, and her body becomes politicized through her apartment and represents a distinctive Western German cultural attitude. Both her body and her apartment function as closed units that shut out East Germans.

Another important space in Paprika's life is her work space. Rather than representing a place of confinement and security, it represents an aspect of her aggressive, capitalist and Western attitude towards East Germans. Paprika's work space at the top of the television

tower signify two important aspects *Ruf!Mich!An!* in relation to the city Berlin. First, it comments on the perspective in which the protagonist views the city. Andreas Mahler writes about the differences of perspectives in city novels:

Textstädte können darüber hinaus unterschiedlich perspektivisiert werden. Die Form der Modalisierung diskursiver Stadtkonstitution ist eine Frage der Fokussierung. Die Modalisierung des wahrgenommenen Gegenstandes hängt also in erster Linie ab von der Lokalisierung des wahrnehmenden Subjekts (Wahrnehmung von erhöhtem Standpunkt vs. Wahrnehmung von der Straße aus) ab. (Mahler, 22)

This means that the focus of her perspective from the tower is always from a point of view that sets her apart from the rest of the city. In a sense she is throned above Berlin. This spatial induced perspective comments also on her normal perspective of the city. Her normal perspective runs parallel to her emotional, namely it sets her apart from everything. Secondly, it remarks on the spatial capitalist take over of Berlin. Both aspects display a distinct Western cultural attitude towards East Berlin that is closely linked to the television tower and contribute to her inability to communicate to East Germans.

Her firm is located in the television tower on the Alexander Platz. The Alexander Platz was the former center of East Berlin and was used as showcase for socialist architecture, i.e. the huge television tower in which Paprika works in. Her advertisement firm is very lucrative and successful:

Wir sind *die* Werbeagentur in Berlin, inzwischen die innovativste in Deutschland. Selbst wenn wir jetzt nur noch Scheiße bauen – wir würden weiter mehrstellige Millionenumsätze machen, allein unseres legendären Rufes wegen. (22)

They make commercials for the deodorant Axe, the newspaper *FAZ* and the internet firm Yahoo. She calls herself the queen bee of Berlin and Alexander Platz. She thinks that the world looks different from above and looks down on all the ant-like figures and cars (66). She looks down on East Germans in a degrading way, perceiving them as ants and not as

humans. Paprika calls herself the queen of what was perceived of as the center for socialist architecture. Through this behavior Paprika sets herself literally apart through the height of the Television Tower. People become transformed into antlike figures to which she feels no connection anymore:

Der Fernsehturm ist insgesamt 365 Meter hoch. Innerhalb einer Stunde rotiert die ganze Stadt um die Kugel herum. Währenddessen zähle ich ameisengroße Menschen und käfergroße Autos, erzähle mich aber immer wieder, drehe mich schließlich gähnend auf dem Ledersessel und schalte den Fernseher ein. (66)

Instead of the sphere on top of the tower turning around the city, the city turns around the sphere. For Paprika, the tower is the center of Berlin. Her work place, because it is situated on Alexander Platz, becomes a symbol of the ongoing cultural and material 'war' between East and West to conquer the East through capitalism. Her advertisement firm, situated in the TV tower, the former socialist architectural showcase, represents the symbolic capitalist and cultural victory of the (American) West over the East. Her advertisement firm becomes another spatial barrier that makes it impossible for Paprika to communicate with Eastern Germans.

Chapter 4

Media and Affect (Hate and Shame)

Paprika's inability to communicate her own feelings to others, recalls the Silvan Tomkins' dichotomy of affect. On this, Hemmings paraphrases the following thoughts:

Affect may be autotelic (love being its own reward), or insatiable (where jealousy or desire for revenge may last minutes or a lifetime). Tomkins work suggests that affects have a complex, self-referential life that gives depth to human existence through our relations with others and with ourselves. For Tomkins, then, affect connects us to others, and provides the individual with a way of narrating their own inner life (likes, dislikes, desires and revulsions) to themselves and others. (552)

Hemmings writes that no individual can exist without connecting to others in an emotional matter. Through emotional contact to others one can compare, relate or reject ideas and feelings. By doing so one forms an own identity that is built on likes and dislikes of feelings that are transmitted from the outside world. When Germany became unified in 1989, Paprika only admitted dominant Western German culture, in the form of mass media, into her life and repressed all positive affects towards Eastern Germans. Bad affect is partly the result of her over-consumption of mass media, which, as Weller states, can lead to the loss of social relations and therefore positive affect (Weller, 17). Tomkins states that affect connects and makes relations to others possible. Paprika embraces dominant culture and mass media and is therefore unable to communicate with her East German neighbors. As a result she develops bad affect.

Her malevolent perception of East Germans and her bad effect lead Paprika to create a cultural barrier, which ultimately lead to her feeling of shame. Shame, as Silvan Tomkins

defines it, is activated by a barrier (Sedgwick, Frank, 5). This barrier comes into existence not because something is prohibited or disapproved, but out of a sense of strangeness:

Such a barrier might be because one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or because one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange, or one expected him to be familiar but he suddenly appears unfamiliar, or one started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger. (Sedgwick and Frank, 134-35)

Shame as an emotion comes into existence when one tries to communicate with someone who is perceived as familiar but turns out to be a stranger. After the Wall fell, East and West Germans were strangers to each other, because they had been separated for over 40 years. Yet, 11 years after unification, Paprika is still unable to connect to East Germans and perceive them not as strangers. Paprika, through her embrace of mass media, which has made East Germans stay strangers for her, has created not only cultural barriers but also feelings of shame. The hatred towards and inability to communicate with East Germans can be contributed to this strangeness that Paprika feels. The apparent cultural barrier that Paprika perceives between East and West and turns into hate, is a representation of shame and guilt that is caused by the strangeness and unfamiliarity of East Germans.

East Germans play a large role in her life, at least in her mind. She obsesses over East Germans. Throughout the novel she thinks about the way East Germans dress, talk, or make love. Her hostile attitude towards East Germans is a direct result of setting herself culturally and emotionally apart. If we fast-forward to the novel's conclusion, the murder of her East German neighbor, Maik, is the culmination of this hostility. She proclaims after shooting him: "Ich bin eine Partisanin gegen die Broilerisierung der Welt!" (Buschheuer, 201). Paprika thus makes clear that she sees East Germans as an invading force. She perceives them as threatening. For Paprika, East Germans are recognizably different from

West Germans in not only their behavior and accent but also in their appearance, and she expresses this in racist terms: “Dieser look scheint mir Indiz für die Broilerisierung der Gesellschaft zu sein. Going black = in Afrika zum Neger werden. Going broiler = in Ost-Berlin zum Ossi werden” (110). Just as she denigrates Africans because their skin color, so are East Germans for Paprika easily derided because of their clothes, behavior and dialect. This attitude allows her to label East Germans as different and therefore set herself emotionally apart. This is possible for Paprika by means of contrasting Eastern German life styles with her own Western German life style.

By analyzing the influence that cultural differences and mass media have on Paprika’s life, it becomes apparent that they make up the barriers between Paprika and East Germans, which lead to her sense of shame and hatred. These interests include: reading the *Bild Zeitung*, watching television, embracing American culture, speaking a different dialect than East Germans and being a capitalist boss of an advertisement agency. Part of this cultural barrier between East and West is the material gap that exists between the two parts of Germany. This material gap becomes especially visible with respect to Paprika’s work. Paprika, in relation to her firm, which functions as a personal space, degrades not only East Germans, but also her co-workers, especially her male second in command. Her negative affects are closely connected to both her work space and the corresponding cultural barrier, namely the hostile Western takeover of Eastern Berlin. In her workplace, Paprika is the absolute boss, unable to treat her co-workers in a human and fair manner. She is mean to her workers and has a man, Fred, as a second in command, whom she makes fun of all the time. Paprika believes he is gay and lets him do all the work (68). He has worked for her for over five years and is her personal assistant and runs the firm when Paprika is not there, which is

all the time. Paprika describes Fred as a narcissist who thinks of himself very highly. She degrades him sometimes by having him drive her around. She even goes so far as to buy him a chauffeur's uniform:

Seitdem fährt er mich bei Bedarf in einer geleasten Stretchlimo durch die Gegend. Die Degradierung vom Persönlichen Assistenten zum Chauffeur trägt er mit Fassung. Wie ein Kind macht er beneidenswert schnell seinen Frieden mit dem Ist-Zustand. (171)

She never comes into work in the mornings and sometimes stays out for days at a time. She is not concerned about all her absences, because she believes that Fred is honest to the bone. Fred is a toy for Paprika with which she can display power over at least a part of her life. In this case she displays power over men. In a sense, Paprika plays the role of a sadist at her work space who emotionally tortures her employees. This behavior is in stark contrast to her sex life, in which she is the masochist.³ Through the sadistic suppression and degradation of her employees (and East Germans) she becomes the feeling that she is not socially determined. Hemmings defines social determinism as “raw material responding rather passively to cognitive or learned phenomena” (552). Yet that is exactly what she is doing through the display of bad affect. She is not connecting to other people because she mistreats them and keeps her inner life to herself, which supports Tomkins idea, “that affect gives depth to human existence through our relations with others and with ourselves” (Hemmings, 552). Paprika's bad affect is responsible for her suppression and degradation of her colleagues and East Germans.

Part of Paprika's consumption of mass media is the *Bild Zeitung*. She reads the *Bild Zeitung* every day and pins their headlines on one of the walls of her living room. The

³ Paprika is not really the masochist in her relationship; rather she is the victim of the libertine Valmont. Her sadistic behavior at work also reveals her as the victim since the sadist through his usage of language reveals himself as the victim. Paprika turns out to be in both instances the victim.

headlines that are mentioned in the book are ridiculous and highlight how unserious the *Bild Zeitung* is: “Man schnitt sich bei Karstadt die Hoden ab, Rhesusaffe überfiel Frau – Festgenommen.” (Buschheuer, 13). Another example is: “Ratte kroch aus dem Klo – Architekt entmannt“ (37). The *Bild Zeitung* and its headlines are presented to the reader comical. Yet, Paprika takes them seriously and whatever the *Bild Zeitung* says, she does.⁴ So when the *Bildzeitung* says that plum cake from Aldi is trendy, she goes there directly to buy it (147). She reads one day an article that states that an East German had been shot in Los Angeles (34). Instead of feeling sorry or showing compassion for his death, she feels as if it was the fault of the East German. East Germans should go on vacation in East Germany not in the West. In effect, the *Bild Zeitung* serves as a symbol for Paprika’s embrace of mass media and capitalism. Paprika belongs to the high society of Germany and yet is an avid reader of the *Bild Zeitung*, which is commonly perceived as a right wing proletarian newspaper. This seems to imply that there are no differences anymore in West German culture between high and low culture, or working or the educated classes. She is portrayed as unintelligent, but more importantly as displaying bad affect. This insensitivity is part of her bad affect. Paprika’s socially determined embrace of dominant Western culture creates her bad affect towards East Germans. This contributes to the fact that in Buschheuer’s book, although the Wall fell eleven years ago, mass media has made it impossible for West Germans to communicate with their Eastern counterparts.

Beyond the *Bild Zeitung*, television functions as another part of her over consumption of media, which contributes to her bad affect. She excessively consumes television. For Paprika, life seems to imitate movies. She explains, describes, and lives her life according to

⁴ Media is perceived by Paprika as the sadistic part of her masochistic relationship.

the movies. When she is interacting with her friend Kitty, she defines a moment with her using references to *Pulp Fiction*: “Für einige Sekunden entsteht das, was Mia Wallace in *Pulp Fiction* ungemütliches Schweigen nennt“ (31). She also lets movies dictate what she can or can not do: “Wer lässt sich nach *Basic Instinct* schon noch gern ans Bett fesseln? Wer macht nach *Im Reich der Sinne* noch ohne weiteres ein kleines Würgespiel mit?“ (56). Watching television is so important for her that it interferes with her friendships. When a friend needs help, she is unable to come to her assistance, because of *Seinfeld*, a sitcom to which she is addicted. Her favorite show is *Barbel Schäfer*, a program she watches everyday. In fact, one chapter of *Ruf!Mich!An!* consists entirely of lists which is made out of *Schäfer* show themes. The chapter demonstrates how ludicrous the topics on *Bärbel Schäfer* are. As shown with the *Bild Zeitung*, the topics and themes on *Bärbel Schäfer* are ridiculous, ranging from Nazis claiming that there are not ashamed of hating Turks to women who scare men away with their large breasts. Paprika’s embrace of Western TV culture strengthens her bad affect and dictates her life by becoming more real than reality itself. This adds to her inability to emotionally connect to anybody.

Paprika tries to connect culturally to American culture. American culture is portrayed in the novel as desirable. American culture stands as the Western ideal which Paprika strives for. After threatening some people in a movie theatre with her gun she congratulates Dietrich with a high-five. For her, the symbol of high-five represents something that East Germans will never learn:

Draußen machen wir High Five. Auch was, was Broiler nie lernen werden! Die können das nicht. Die begreifen nicht, was das soll! Da steckt eine ganze Philosophie dahinter. Das ist cool, Verstehen ohne Worte, international ein Zeichen höchster Anerkennung – außer in Broiler Land. Die Biester kapieren das einfach

nicht! ...Oder sie greifen die erhobene Hand des anderen und schütteln sie fröhlich – eine unüberwindliche kulturelle Barriere! (77)

She believes that America, which in Buschheuer's novel is synonymous with Western culture, is superior to East German culture. East Germans, in contrast to their Western counterparts, are not able to adjust to the Western standards. Because of their inability to change, Easterners are perceived by Paprika as alien. This alienation leads to her perceiving East Germans as foreign and unfamiliar. On the question of strangeness, Tomkins writes: "Such a barrier might be because one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or because one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange" (Sedgewick and Frank, 134-35). This feeling of unfamiliarity, caused by cultural barriers and the consumption of mass media, to an object which should be familiar, in this case East Germans, can lead to a sense of shame.

Part of the cultural barrier that contributes to the strangeness that Paprika feels toward East Germans is linked to the East German past. The lift boy in her workplace is an old East German of whom she thinks very poorly:

Der Liftführer trällert mit. Vermutlich ist er ein ehemaliger Stasi-Offizier, oder, wie er es nennt: Gelernter DDR-Bürger. Mich begrüßt er immer recht mürrisch. Für ihn bin ich die Inkarnation des westdeutschen Besatzers. Womit er auch Recht hat. Zwischen uns verläuft die Mauer. Mitten durch die Luft. Sein missionarischer Eifer, mir den Broiler als solchen nahe zu bringen, ist mir manchmal unterhaltsam, meist jedoch recht anstrengend. (23)

Paprika's view of East Germans is clouded by their past. She believes, without any evidence, that the liftboy was part of the Stasi. Her comment suggests that she believes that all East Germans were part of the Stasi, spying and denouncing on each other. Paprika assumes that for the liftboy she represents the incarnation of the West German invader and an occupying force. She goes on to say that, although the real Wall had fallen eleven years ago, Germans

are still divided through a wall in their head. For Paprika, East Germans are the “Sinnbild für den Verfall der zeitgenössischen Kultur“ (26). East Germans are second class citizens who are good enough to sort and recycle trash, but nothing more: “Sollen die doch einen Broiler anstellen, der den Müll sortiert. Der findet bestimmt noch was brauchbares. Das Müllsortierungsproblem löst sich von selbst” (81). Paprika, on the other side, believes that the liftboy sees her as an invading force, representing capitalism in its purest form through her advertisement firm. Paprika’s bad attitude and behavior towards East Germans becomes a source for her shame.

Another reason for her resentment is the dialect in which East Germans speak, which she despises. Although East and West Germans share the same language, this degradation on the basis of their dialect makes out of the familiar the unfamiliar. The familiar German language becomes estranged to Paprika. This feeling of strangeness combined with her obvious interest in East Germans leads, as Tomkins defined it, to her sense of shame. Working in an advertisement agency, she herself is rather accurate when it comes to using language. In opposition to this, the East Germans throughout Buschheuer’s novel are described as speaking German in a sloppy dialect: “Es riecht nach vergammelten Hundefutter. Könnten aber auch Maiks Füße sein. Mändy köpft inzwischen zuor Feior des Dages dän guden Rotgäbbschen-Sekt” (Buschheuer, 146). East German dialect becomes a means through which East Germans are described as primitive and under-educated. Her neighbor Maike uses the informal *Du*, instead of the formal *Sie*, which angers her. If East Germans had any culture they would use and differentiate between the formal and informal address (19). Paprika perceives East Germans and their dialect as culturally degrading to Western Germans. As I have argued, the Western German subject in *Ruf!Mich!An!* feels not

only spatially but also culturally estranged from Easterners and is shamed by its own perception of East Germans as culturally degrading. Buschheuer's novel describes a Germany that, although united since the fall of the Wall, is still culturally and emotionally divided.

Chapter 5

Masochism

Paprika's bad affect, i.e. hatred and shame, was activated in 1989 through the fall of the Wall. Unification had a direct impact on her sex life. Before the wall fell she perceived herself as sexually liberated. The invasion of East Germans literally ended her sexual liberation. She sees them as liable for her incapability to initiate a genuine relationship. Although unification collapsed the political and geographical barriers between East and West, it further enhanced, with the help of mass media the cultural and sexual barriers which in *Ruf!Mich!An!* are attributed as being responsible for her inability to communicate. Her inability to communicate or to overcome existing cultural barriers is channeled into pornological masochistic descriptions. During the course of the novel, as her relationship deteriorates, her masochism intensifies. After the final break-up with her lover, she is unable to contain her violence anymore and kills her East German neighbor. Violence is present throughout the novel and becomes expressed as a homicidal act when the language of masochism is not available anymore. As a result, *Ruf!Mich!An!* depicts a culturally divided Germany that is unable to mend and become one again.

Before unification, Paprika and Dietrich had a dream in which they indiscriminately slept with whomever they could; she perceived herself as sexually free. Then when the Wall fell this changed: "Aber das war vor dem Mauerfall und damit vor der Broilerisierung. Damals, als die Welt noch in Ordnung war. Erzähl mir aus meiner Jugend, sage ich oft, wenn ich melancholisch werde" (Buschheuer, 191). She identifies unification and East Germans as the

direct cause for her sexual malady. After the fall of the Wall, Paprika's attitude towards men and sex has become rather unconventional. She displays no signs of sexual freedom anymore, rather she has become the opposite, a sexual reclusive. If Paprika starts a relationship, she muses, it has to be with a man that has no fear of death. If he has no fear of death, then he has no fear of passion (38). This is a contradiction to her previously mentioned uneasiness towards closeness and her inability to go beyond bodily pleasure. The thought of real passion makes her think about death: "Auch beim Tod gibt es ein Vorher und ein Nachher" (39). She has two images that symbolize death and sex (39). The first emerges after seeing a corpse being restored by the coroner after a dissection. When the coroner pulls the face back on the scalped skull, she thinks up the picture of a mother lovingly pulling the hat of her son back into place. The other pictures are that of a person who has a near death experience or of people who have sex under the influence of drugs. In their near (death) experience, they get disconnected from their bodies and see a tunnel with a light at the end. Paprika makes clear she wants to see this tunnel (40). She realizes that the only way for her to have such an experience is to invite insanity into her bed. Movies such as *Basic Instinct* and *Im Reich der Sonne* come to mind. Who, she asks, would let anybody perform masochistic games with oneself, after seeing those movies?

Because Paprika lives in an emotional emptiness, she is unable to open up to normal feelings and friendships. Paprika's situation is comparable to somebody who has not eaten for days and therefore craves large amounts of food. This person will eat voraciously if the possibility presents itself and probably will get sick. Just as this overindulgence is in no way representative for normal eating habits, so is Paprika's interest in extreme feelings and relationships not usual. She will project these extreme feelings and her emotional void on the

next sexual relationship with the outcome that it will be masochistic in nature. Interestingly, the possibility of having the type of relationship that she wants, one seemingly without feelings and exclusively sexual, presents itself to her shortly afterwards. While trying to cancel a meeting with one of her old girlfriends from the university, she hears the voice of a phone receptionist, who reminds her of the voice of Robert De Niro (40). The German voice used for De Niro's parts is also identified as the voice, "der 85 Prozent aller Werbespots in Radio und Fernsehen spricht. Sonor, samtig, erfahren, rauh, geheimnisvoll, kleines Zisch-S. Ein Mann, der nicht viel redet und doch alles sagt" (40). This man later on becomes her sadist lover. Paprika believes that his voice resembles the one that voices most of the advertisements on television and radio in Germany. Through this association he becomes synonymous with mass media, which for Paprika is also sadistic. The difference between her relationship to media and Valmont are that she is not in the least in control of her sexual relationship. She starts their relationship by asking for his number. She does not ask for his name or any other information. He remains a stranger to her for the rest of the book. For the first time in the novel she begins to display good affect. She feels her pulse racing and her feet get prickly and warm (40). She is afraid for a while to call him, because she does not want to destroy her fantasy of the stranger. Her friend Dietrich believes it's highly romantic and thinks that the unknown man could be Paprika's last chance for love (61). In truth, she does not believe in love: "Du immer mit deiner Liebe! Ich kenne dieses Gefühl ja nur vom Hörensagen, aber ein Kinderspiel ist das nicht. Immerhin ist Aphrodite aus dem Pimmel ihres Vaters gemacht" (63). In these scenes Paprika and her lover draw up some of the contractual regulations for their masochistic fantasy. These contractual regulations are, no

love must be involved and their anonymity should be preserved. Paprika and her lover are setting the stage for their pornological fantasy.

Although she may not know how love feels, she knows how desire feels. Many times she wakes up out of dreams that are filled with dirty anonymous sex. When she wakes up she asks herself so-called important and basic questions such as: “Warum müssen wir essen? Warum müssen wir ficken? Warum müssen wir fernsehen? Was ist besser: Oralsex oder Schokolade?” (64). Afterwards she watches telephone-sex advertisements on television and tries to masturbate. When this fails she tries to call the anonymous man for the first time, but nobody answers the phone. The second time she calls him she is at work. For her, he is “the voice” (68). She is afraid that when she calls him she will be disappointed since for her most men are unbearable. She goes on describing how she is disappointed with men. As soon as she gets to know them she is turned off, because in her eyes they all have unbearable eccentricities. Her ideal relationship would resemble the one in *Letzten Tango in Paris*:

Wenn es nur einen Weg gäbe über Sex zu kommunizieren wie im letzten Tango in Paris! Ich kenne seinen Namen nicht und er nicht meinen. Er fragt mich nichts, ich frage ihn nichts. Wir treffen uns an den unmöglichsten Orten. Nur zum Ficken. Ohne Gelaber. (69)

After thinking this she calls him. Instead of telling themselves their names, they make up names for each other. She is called Eugenie and he Valmont. Just as in Masoch’s novels, the protagonists of Buschheuer’s novel now use pseudonyms, which formalize and verbalize their behavior to each other.

When she tells Dietrich about the incident, he explains to her the meaning of the names that he has given them. He thinks that the names are “starker Tobak” (82). Eugenie is one of the main characters in Sade’s book *Philosophie im Boudoir*, which Dietrich calls one of

his funniest books (133). Eugenie is a fifteen year old girl who is sent to a very foul and tainted lady in order to get instructed in matters of love. She gets penetrated in every fashion possible, by many men over and over again. When her mother comes to rescue Eugene, she gets raped by her own child. Valmont is a figure in *Dangerous Liaisons* (82). Dietrich explains the character of Valmont to Paprika as a sadist: “Der Vicomte de Valmont ist ein diabolischer, boshafter, raffiniertes, herzloser Beau. Er muss erobern, und er verabscheut die leichte Eroberung” (83). Dietrich’s description applies perfectly to the real Valmont who later has a relationship with Paprika. While having sex with Valmont Paprika gets aroused by the anonymity of the encounter; Valmont is a stranger doing violence to her body. This anonymity is part of their masochistic contract. Masochists need contractual relations, meaning that their relationships are “regulated by contracts that formalize and verbalize the behavior of the partners” (Deleuze, 20). In Buschheuer’s novel parts of the masochistic contract between Valmont and Paprika consist of sexual violence done to her, the elements of anonymity, and the usage of pseudonyms. Also, Valmont stays throughout the novel in his character, namely, that of the diabolical film Valmont. His violence atones for her feelings of guilt and shame caused by the cultural barrier and alienation towards East Germans. Her cultural estrangement is lived out directly on her own body.

Paprika watches *Dangerous Liaisons* with John Malkovich as Valmont later on television (89). She does so because she is sexually stirred by listening to her East German neighbors who are having sex. It is interesting that she still describes the sexual encounters between her neighbors, Maik and Mändy, in her typical negative manner:

Manchmal, an einem lauen Maiabend, höre ich Maik und Mändy laut kopulieren. Mei Gudor, mei Gudor, ruft Mändy dann emphatisch. Wenn er kommt, macht Maik ein Geräusch, das zwischen Grunzen und Rülpsen beheimatet ist. (87)

This un-erotic description of their intercourse is by no means sexually enticing; it is alienating and hateful and makes her think about the sadistic Valmont, whom she tries to call after hearing her neighbors. The connection between her masochistic relationship and East Germans becomes very clear here. Her shame and hate entice her to engage in a sexual act. Violent sex becomes a substitute for her cultural alienation and bad affect and is directly applied to her body. While watching *Dangerous Liaisons* she realizes that she likes the Valmont figure because of his ruthlessness and his display of coldness. She calls her lover the next day, whom she thinks is mad, since he could be crazy or a mass murderer (90). Here it becomes apparent for the first time that her hermetic world is breaking down.⁵ Not only is she doing something dangerous but she is starting a relationship that she is unable to control, since Valmont turns out to be a genuine sadist. He dominates the phone call from the beginning, by telling her directly that he does not plan on going out to eat with her. He gives her in demanding fashion direct and clear directions to leave the door open and be naked on her bed with covered eyes. She is surprised since no man has ever talked to her like this, but she does exactly as he tells her (90). From the beginning Valmont forces his sadistic fantasy onto Paprika. She is not teaching, instructing him to fulfill her own fantasy, which is essential for every masochistic fantasy. Therefore the relationship turns out not only unsatisfactory for Paprika but also destined to fail. Her pornological fantasy, in which the breakdown of communication or language between East and West is projected onto, is flawed from the beginning. It becomes a channel but not a solution for the cultural division existing in Germany.

⁵ Her world is hermetic, mainly to shut out Eastern Germans.

Her masochistic behavior stands in stark contrast to her behavior in the rest of her life, especially her work place where she is herself is playing the sadist. She is completely surprised by her own behavior: “Ich, die ich nicht einmal eine Putzfrau habe, weil ich niemandem traue! Ich, die ich jede Kommunikation scheue, jede Bindung, jede Verpflichtung“ (91). Valmont tells her what to do and she obeys. This behavior is part of her masochistic fantasy. Deleuze writes that “words are at their most powerful when they compel the body to repeat the movements they suggest” (18). This is also observable when she masturbates. She imagines Valmont being there telling her how to behave and torturing her. Suddenly she has an orgasm:

Ich überschreite den Point of no return. Jetzt bin ich, Sisyphus, am Gipfel, voller Vorfreude. Ich erklimme ihn, jetzt, jetzt, ich bezwinde ihn, muss tief, tief atmen und kriege doch nicht genug Luft. Der letzte Schritt. Die Augen schließen sich. Die Flammen lodern tief in mir. Es ist, als hielte man ein Streichholz an den Gasherd. Ein Wuff und alles brennt. Alles wird hell, wird butterweich. (119)

Paprika starts to communicate with the sadist Valmont through his spoken orders, be they real, or in her head, both of which result in sex. Therefore, Valmont’s spoken orders are the only communication that gets through Paprika’s defenses. Rather than training him as her torturer, he trains her to suit his fantasy. She is not the secret organizer of their relationship; rather she becomes the victim of the sadist Valmont. Still, in no other situations in the novel than her masochistic encounters, be they real or imagined, does she ever communicate her feelings to someone else.⁶ Her sex becomes pornologic, insofar as it represents her displacement of hatred, shame and alienation. Violent sex is transformed into a pornological

⁶ The only exceptions are her friend Dietrich and Eastern Germans. She displays constantly emotions to Eastern Germans, yet they are bad affect. Her relationship with Dietrich is based on monetary gains given to him. She pays him to be her confidant and companion. Therefore, he becomes more of a prostitute whose job is it to listen to Paprika’s problems than a real friend. True feelings and passions therefore are not truly exchanged.

space, in which Paprika receives pain for her shame. It becomes the only way to deal with the cultural estrangement towards East Germans.

Her first sexual encounter with the sadist Valmont is full of pornological descriptions. They describe her pleasure in the pain that Valmont inflicts. In her masochistic fantasy, pain turns into atonement, a moment in which she feels whole again and not divided anymore. Valmont comes into the apartment and touches her. She is completely mesmerized by the touch of his hands. She has the feeling that she is burning wherever he touches her. That she desires his touch becomes a sign or symptom of not only her mental change, but also of her masochistic fantasy. Before, she avoided bodily contact even handshakes through all means possible. Valmont physically penetrates her interpersonal barrier through bodily contact. His touch becomes violent. Valmont feels her behind with his hands and then suddenly hits her with his flat hand. The pain awakens a mixture of pleasure, lust and protest in her. She tries to struggle free but Valmont holds her and proclaims: “Sie werden feststellen, dass es mit der Scham wie mit dem Schmerz ist, Eugenie. Beides spürt man nur beim ersten Mal“ (93). She recognizes this as a quote from the movie *Dangerous Liaisons* which makes her believe that the unknown stranger is playing the role of the film Valmont. Valmont, the voice of radio and television becomes the embodiment of a film character. She draws again these parallels from media to Valmont that suggest their sadistic nature. She tries to shape this sadism into the form that suits her fantasy best, namely as a channel for her shame. While this works for media, namely she is able to control media, down the line this does not work with Valmont.

The pain Valmont inflicts on her arouses her, since it is an important element of their masochistic fantasy. He goes on to hit her, which produces great amounts of pleasure for her:

Seine harte Hand trifft meinen Arsch noch fünfmal exakt auf dieselbe Stelle. Die Haut fühlt sich taub und heiß an und prickelt. Die Anonymität dieser Berührung, die Virtuosität des gesichtslosen Liebhabers verwirrt und entzückt mich. Im Geilheitsfuror sehe ich Elfen auf Mondwiesen tanzen. Ich möchte sterben. Nicht vor Scham – vor Wonne. (93)

When he finally penetrates her, she feels as if heaven and hell have fused, as if she is being torn and ripped apart: “Dann kommt sein Schwanz aus dem Nichts, trifft punktgenau und fährt bis ans Heft in mich hinein. Er versengt mich. Er pfählt mich. Er zerreißt mich. Vermählung von Himmel und Erde. Heilige Hochzeit“ (93). She compares intercourse with Valmont to a holy marriage, in which heaven and earth are being connected. The terms in which her masochistic relationship is described, although it uses pornographic language, is nonetheless pornography. In pornography, sexual descriptions and imperatives are representations of language that transcendent towards a higher function (Deleuze, 20). Instead of language, Paprika’s body becomes transcended towards a higher function, that is to say it creates for her the illusion of communication between East and West. The connection of heaven and earth, with which she compares her intercourse becomes symbolic for Paprika’s seeming mending of the rapture of East and West. Her masochism becomes the articulation of a sublime state of violence that will eventually break down again and turn into violence against East Germans.

The next meeting with Valmont is in a train. She gets completely drunk and waits for Valmont to visit her in the night train (123). When he comes he seems to her vampire-like with a diabolic face. Paprika thinks that if he really is a murderer then he is the most

beautiful murderer in the world. Valmont appears to her as “unwirklich, fremd, ein Rätsel. Er spricht kein Wort. Es gibt Dinge, die sind so perfekt, dass man erschrickt“ (123). His mysterious appearance, together with his unavailability, make him perfect in Paprika’s eyes. Valmont drops hot wax on her body and she enjoys it immensely: “Ein Lustregen aus Wachs, jeder Tropfen trifft ins Mark. Ich klage, genieße, versinke in einer geheimnisvollen dunklen Welt. Er macht mich abhängig und sich unsterblich“ (123). She wants to kiss him and says so, but he tells her to be quiet because he does not want to kiss. He is in absolute control. In this scene Valmont can be seen as the force that has ultimate power over Paprika. Her forming addiction to Valmont becomes apparent. The longer the relationship holds, the more Paprika becomes obsessed with him and the role of masochism.

Chapter 6

Fetish: Filling the Holes

Although Valmont is her primary object of choice, Paprika turns to fetishes after the initial relationship has cooled down and Valmont slowly ends the relationship by avoiding her. They intensify her masochistic feelings because they are only substitutes for Valmont. She develops fetishes for her cell phone, parking spaces and food. These fetishes become ways of coping with the end of her relationship. On the topic of fetishes Deleuze writes, “there can be no masochism without fetishism” (Deleuze, 32). Deleuze’s meaning of the fetish is largely based on the Freudian definition. He writes that Freud believes that the fetish stands for the last object that one sees before the realization that women are penisless (32). The fetish then becomes part of the disavowal that goes along with masochistic fantasies. For Deleuze, the disavowal stands for the negligence that women are penisless (31-32). A more important assumption Deleuze makes, without going too much into the hypothesis that the fetish stands for the female penis, is that the fetish, “is experienced as a protest of the ideal against the real; it remains suspended or neutralized in the ideal, the better to shield itself against the painful awareness of reality” (Deleuze, 32). In Paprika’s case, the agonizing truth from which she tries to protect herself, by means of fetishes, is the awareness that Valmont is leaving her. The breakup signals the failure of her imagined masochistic relationship. Her hatred and shame are no longer projected non-violently onto her own body but result in the violent murder of her East German neighbor. Valmont’s departure signifies

the breakdown and simultaneously the intensification of her masochistic desires and relationship which increases her hatred towards East Germans.

An indication for this intensification of her masochistic fantasy starts with her fetishes. Paprika starts to obsess over her cell phone, which constitutes her only connection with Valmont. She develops an erotic relationship to her cell phone which becomes a fetish. Her fetish over her cell phone is therefore a disavowal of reality in favor of the ideal - the ideal being that Valmont has not left her. The only times she turns her cell phone off is when she is together with him (129). When she is not together with him, she waits for him to contact her. Waiting is an important element of masochism, says Deleuze: "Formally speaking, masochism is a state of waiting; the masochist experiences waiting in its purest form" (71). Deleuze divides the experience of waiting into two currents; one, the waiting for the masochistic encounter to happen and secondly, the event itself. For Paprika, the experience of waiting constitutes a waiting for sexual pleasure which intensifies her potential of being hurt. Her emotions and feelings of pleasure are transferred to the cell phone. If he does not call she is mad with the cell phone, even though it is just an object. When he sends her messages or calls her, she fondles with it (129). The cell phone becomes an indicator of her masochistic desire for Valmont. The cell phone as the object of desire becomes a fetish since it becomes the receiver of all emotions and empathy that she feels and can not convey to Valmont. Valmont, the real object of Paprika's desire, functions as a means to stimulate her experience of waiting for her masochistic pleasures, namely sexual pain. Her relationship with her cell phone makes evident the isolation in which she lives in. It also makes clear her need for anonymity and alienation, for which the lifeless cell phone stands

for. It becomes the new center of Paprika's sexual relationship. Her cell phone becomes a substitute for actual sex.

Paprika's sexual relationship deviates from her previous normal lifestyle insofar as she is not in control of them. She has the role of the passive and abused object while her male partner dominates her and forces his sadistic fantasy on her. In the beginning of the novel, Paprika always tries to be in control of her normal daily routine. Part of this daily routine revolves around food and sex. She has developed phobias over things that she is not in control of, such as processed food, for example. She is afraid to eat cookies because she is afraid that someone has put menstrual blood in them to make her fall in love. She is afraid to drink coffee with milk, because she has heard that sometimes people put milk of new mothers in it. She has a whole list of things that make her uncomfortable:

Vom Bäckerlehrling, dem es Spaß macht in den Teig zu rotzen, oder seine Kippe hineinfallen zu lassen. Vom Angestellten der in den Tee seines Chefs pinkelt. Vom Fleischer, dem beim Wurstmachen ein Stück Finger in den Fleischwolf gerät. Das eitrige Pflaster im Sauerkraut. Das Schamhaar in der Suppe. (Buschheuer, 38)

Connected with this phobia for processed food is her attitude towards sex. Paprika is appalled by the intimate contact that is involved with sexual relations. At the beginning of the novel, she states that sex interests her only as a borderline experience. To have sex with a man is for her a necessary evil, a part of her bodily drive that has to be satisfied (37). What comes after causal sex is painful and thus unnecessary. All this changes as she starts her masochistic relationship. Not only does she find sexual fulfillment, but she also changes her attitude toward food. While her relationship with Valmont deteriorates, she develops a fetish for food. Her food fetish consists of periods during which she eats in large quantities. As an element of her pornological fantasy, food becomes a substitute for masochistic sex. By

loosing the masochistic sex, she has no way left of dealing with her hate for East Germans anymore. Paprika's body together with her apartment has been described previously as a space of confinement, closing out East German. Just as the East German neighbors invaded her apartment complex, her masochistic relationship penetrated her body. Sex with Valmont became a substitute for her barriers; he filled her holes. When he leaves her, she tries to fill the holes of her body with food.

Eating becomes a substitute or fetish for sexual fulfillment, in her case masochism. The need for sexual abuse and domination is substituted by the need to fill her body with food. Yet, this fetishization of food is just a stand-in for sex, which she herself realizes. Every time she thinks about Valmont she has the urge to eat enormous quantities of food. At various points during the novel she eats Beef Jerky, pickles, half a jar of Nutella, bloody roast beef, the chocolate of ten advent calendars, and 300 grams of raw bull tongue. While eating, she normally watches television and waits for Valmont to call her. When she is bored by television and depressed from missing Valmont, she eats (156). As a justification she states:

Mein Magen ist zu groß. Er faßt zwei bis drei Liter. Ein Hohlorgan im Oberbauch, das, ähnlich wie die Vagina, ständig gestopft werden will. Da man seinen Körper ja, an der Ewigkeit gemessen – nur vorübergehend bewohnt, sollte man auch ordentlich Gebrauch davon machen. (117)

She compares her vagina directly with her stomach. She herself states that her food fetish is closely connected to her sexual longing for Valmont. After indulging large quantities of food, she thinks about her relationship with Valmont:

Was soll das sein? Eine gottverdammte Knutschoper? Eine Obsession? Eine verhängnisvolle Affäre? Ist Valmont die Erfüllung meiner sexuellen Phantasien oder die Rache wofür auch immer? (117)

This analogy between her vagina and her stomach suggests again that her food fetish becomes a substitute of her ending masochistic relationship.

Another fetish of Paprika's is her insistence on filling every parking space that she sees, be it practical or not. Again, her urge to fill holes is closely connected with sex, her body and the filling of the cities voids. While her friend Robert and she are driving to the movies, she sees a parking space on the side. She screams at Robert to stop and fill in the parking space. Robert at first refuses to park, since the movie theatre is still two kilometers away (27). That the parking space she wants to use is far away from the place that they are driving to does not matter to Paprika. She has developed a fetish, or as she calls it, a "Parkzwang" (27). While riding the bus, she sees a big parking space in front of a Cartier shop. This is one instance in the book in which the connection between East Germans and her obsession for parking spaces becomes most apparent. Paprika gets excited and fights her way through the masses of people in the bus and with her Walter PPK forces the bus driver to park his bus in the parking space (60). Interestingly, this happens after she meets Maike, her Eastern neighbor. After seeing Maike, her fetish is activated and she feels the need to fill the gap. The breach in the Wall that lets East Germans come into the West must be filled. While forcing the bus driver to park Paprika's voice gets deeper in a way that suggests sexual passion (60). The connection between sexual passion and her fetish to fill holes becomes evident here. Parking the bus becomes a substitute for Valmont filling her vagina. Her use of a gun combined with her sexual passion suggests that her *Parkzwang* symbolizes not only a fetish, but also a violent sexual act, which foreshadows the murder at the end of the novel.

Paprika's fetishes are part of the process of waiting for Valmont to return, to fill the holes that he had previously filled. Deleuze writes that waiting is an important element of a

masochistic relationship, which heightens the pleasure of the masochist (71). Waiting, together with her fetishes, intensify her masochistic tendencies. When it becomes clear that Valmont has left her she reacts with violence. She has no way of filling her holes anymore, since the fetishes only worked if they were part of her waiting. The end of her relationship leads to a complete breakdown. After Valmont breaks up with her, Paprika's only channel for her hatred and shame towards East Germans disappears. As a consequence, it seems as if she shoots her East German neighbor Maike. This is however not entirely clear, because she increases her intake of valium and thus becomes an unreliable narrator. Reality and fantasy are not distinguishable anymore. Her masochistic relationship was her only means to articulate her shame and hatred towards East Germans.

The final meeting of Valmont and Paprika takes place at a costume ball titled *Dangerous Liaisons* (181). This coincidence signals the end of their relationship because the fantasy of the film and reality collide. She starts to think about the end of the movie *Dangerous Liaisons*, in which the fictional Valmont leaves his innocent victim after having used her for his sexual conquest. The film character Valmont's explanation for leaving is: "Ich fühle mich so unendlich gelangweilt" (192). These are the feelings that Valmont voices in the movie. Paprika is unable to react to the clash of fantasy and reality: "Dagegen bin ich machtlos! Das muss ja so kommen! Das wird auch unser Ende sein! Warum sonst hätte er sich den Namen Valmont gegeben?" (192). Her Valmont stays in character and acts exactly as the real Valmont would. Paprika was aware of this from the beginning. The sadist Valmont has to leave Paprika in the end, since that is the ultimate pain/torture he can inflict on her. Her waiting for sexual pleasure is prolonged indefinitely and therefore unbearable.

Before he leaves her it becomes clear that her life has come to revolve around Valmont. She is not interested anymore in the life of her friends. The only thing that interests her is the fact that Valmont has not visited her in a long while (172). Her mood declines more and more. Her consumption of valium and her bygone relationship with Valmont together make her paranoid (178). She can no longer remember events in her apartment and then develops panic attacks because she thinks that someone is there. Another symptom of the collapse of her masochistic fantasy is that Paprika changes the rules of their contractual relationship. She starts to develop feelings for him. She says about their relationship: “Was verbindet uns jenseits unserer schweigsamen Dschungelkämpfe? Was bleibt, wenn er geht? Kaskaden ungeordneter Gefühle. Schwellbrand“(179). Paprika’s borders are starting to open; she is not able to fill her holes completely anymore. The barriers and channels that mass media, bad affect, Valmont, or fetishes created between herself and her environment are falling away. She is starting to have good affect for Valmont and she is asking herself if he is thinking about her, if he is seeing other women. She tries to hide her jealousy from him. This good affect is wasted on Valmont, who is a sadist. If he realizes that he has conquered her, he will leave her. Her valium intake increases as she seeks to escape the reality of her failed relationship.⁷

While going to the costume ball Valmont suddenly appears for the last time. He has sex with her there in public:

Valmont! Hier! In aller Öffentlichkeit! Er kann doch nicht! Er wird doch nicht! Das Theater ist gerammelt voll...die Gefahr ist erregend, der Sex erreicht den letzten Zipfel meines Körpers. Mein sichtbarer Teil bewahrt weitestgehend Haltung, der Rest ist in Aufruhr, in Auflösung, fest in Valmonts Händen. (196)

⁷ Her valium intake also represents a fetish. She is filling the sexual void with drugs. The valium intake turns into an oral fetish, with which she tries to fill her body openings.

Although she is more or less able to pretend outwardly that she is in control, her mind is in turmoil and completely dominated by Valmont. This outward calmness, which is her last reserve, disappears after Valmont leaves her. She finally breaks down, mentally as well as physically. As a consequence of her breakdown, she kills Maïke after he makes a noise complaint:

Dann klingelt es. Valmont? Nein, nicht Valmont! Du liebe Güte! Es ist Maik im Jersey-Schlaf-anzug. Ich leere mein Magazin in seinen Wanst. Er winselt ein letztes Mal. Dos darf doch wohl nisch wöhr sein, lallt er blutsprudelnd, als er verendet. Ich schleife seinen schwabeligen toten Broiler-Körper auf den schlunzschen Fußabreter. Haxen abkratzen! Ausbluten! (201)

She shoots him, seemingly feeling no remorse for the killing. The sexual violence of her masochistic fantasy is turned into external reality. It becomes a redirecting of the violence that she previously aimed at herself onto the actual target, which is East Germans.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Else Buschheuer's novel represents an exceptional example of contemporary German literature in which the gendered body, in correlation to division and unification of Berlin, is represented as a sexual battlefield. The city as a place of sexual tension is not new in German literature. The "semantic construction of the city, as a gendered space that instills both sexual desire and fear, has a long history," Gerstenberger explains (259). Yet, new German contemporary literature like *Ruf!Mich!An!* does not portray the city as a female body, which the "male flaneur" feels the need to conquer (259). Rather, it depicts the female body at the center of political events, such as the fall of the Wall. Young German writers have made women's bodies the main focal point in the ongoing struggle for German reunification and so shifted the dominant literary perspectives in which the city is depicted. In comparison to projecting oneself onto the city, the political city in contemporary literature now imprints itself onto the body.

As a consequence, Paprika's body becomes the main mediator and battle field of the divisions and tensions in Berlin between East- and West Germans. Paprika herself represents the idea of a lingering West German reality after the unification of all German identities. Be it the East German inability to cope with Western television, capitalism or American culture, Paprika perceives Easterners as unable to cope with the cultural changes that have come with the reunification. As I have argued, Paprika's alienation and hatred culminate into shame of her own behavior. Communication, which would open ways of coping with the alienation

and hatred, has become impossible. Consequently, as a strategy for channeling this shame, Paprika indulges in masochism. The masochism represents pornological descriptions which displace and channel her hatred and feelings of shame. Paprika's masochism represents a fantasy which "consists in neutralizing the real and containing the ideal within the fantasy" (Deleuze, 73). She neutralizes reality, which consists of a materially unified, yet culturally still divided Germany. The ideal of Paprika's fantasy consists of negation. German unification is negated and suspended within her fantasy. Buschheuer describes her masochistic fantasy by means of the symptoms that Deleuze ascribes to masochistic fantasies: violence, pain, disavowal, fetishes and waiting. Masochism becomes a tool by which Paprika's feelings and emotions towards Eastern Germans are negated and transcribed into sex.

Another point of interest in not only Buschheuer's novel, but in contemporary German literature in general, becomes the shifted perspective from male to female, in which the protagonist views the city. As already stated above, I chose not to address the obvious gender related division that is visible in *Ruf!Mich!An!*, namely that Paprika is dominated by a man and therefore enforces typical stereotypes. This gender related violence, which is done to women in contemporary German literature, be it in Inka Parei's *Die Schattenboxerin* or in Christa Schmidt's *Eselsfest*, is mainly inflicted by men. Instead of enforcing male dominance I believe that the novels represent a way for women to search for their own genuine bodily understanding in the face of men's corrupting descriptions of them. As Lynne Segal states:

The place of the body in feminist theory is probably more confusing today than it has ever been. The material potentialities and vulnerabilities of that body remain central to women's struggles and resistance. On the other hand, with the sex/gender

distinction now seen by many as a misleading distinction, and our knowledge of the body primarily a social and political matter, sensual and fleshy reality keeps disappearing into the discourses which construct it, the study which has become an ever more abstract affair. (226-227)

Segal believes that the body is a central theme in feminist theory, but that there are too many conflicting theories surrounding it. Identifying the sex/gender problems with which feminists struggled for a long time, as a main topic in *Ruf!Mich!An!*, would simplify the problems that are in fact depicted in it. The woman's body in connection not only with socially and politically (theoretical issues), but also sensually and fleshy matters stand at the heart of the novel. Contemporary German literature written by women is opening new horizons by exploring how the woman body is coded and how it may be recoded.

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