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Blitz aus heiterm Himmel: Monstrous Femininity and the Illusion of Gender Equality in the GDR

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Blitz aus heiterm Himmel:
Monstrous Femininity and the
Illusion of Gender Equality in
the GDR



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Submitted for honors in German
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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Definition of Terms	4
Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine	4
Communism, Gender and the German Democratic Republic	7
“Selbstverusch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll”	11
“Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen”	18
Doppelgänger.....	20
Valeska as a Witch.....	25
“Das Rübenfest”	27
Conclusion.....	31
Works Cited.....	33

Introduction

“Is it the goal of emancipation, can it even be worth striving for, that women ‘become like men’, that is, be permitted to do the same things, to gain and increasingly avail themselves of the same rights men have –when, in fact, men are so greatly in need of being emancipated from themselves” (Clausen, Fehervary, and Lennox 110).

- Christa Wolf

Normally, when one hears the word “horror” in reference to Communism, one thinks about atrocities committed by communist regimes. This association is also supported by the fact that when one searches online with key words like “horror” and “communism” the first hits refer to Gulags, purging, the suppression of ethnic minority groups, and many other violent acts. In theory, these legends of horror should not exist in a communist regime, as communism should create a utopia. History tells us that this is not the case. While this paper will address regime specific problems, it will be focusing primarily on a different kind of horror –that of the literary genre of horror. Horror literature is uniquely capable of addressing societal anxieties. In the case of the anthology *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel*, horror is particularly useful in understanding the issues of gender inequality in the German Democratic Republic¹.

There is a remarkable relationship between the horror genre and communism, but virtually nothing has been written about this relationship, and I think that this pairing warrants a closer analysis. In 1975 the anthology, *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* was published in East Germany. Assembled by author Edith Anderson, an American by birth who emigrated to the German Democratic Republic (GDR), this anthology was created to address the unrealized promise of gender equality in the GDR. Four male authors and four female authors were asked to write a short story in which the protagonist undergoes a miraculous gender change and is faced

¹ Title translation: *Bolt out of the Blue* – All translations of German texts in this paper are mine

with confronting society as the opposite gender (Barck). Two works from *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel*, “Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll” by Christa Wolf, and “Blitz aus heiterm Himmel” by Sarah Kirsch, were then published (along with “Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen” by Irmtraud Morgner) in the West German version of the anthology titled *Geschlechertausch: Drei Geschichten über die Umwandlung der Verhältnisse*². Many analyses that focus on these anthologies categorize them as science fiction (ex. “Rereading Christa Wolf’s ‘Selbstversuch’: Cyborgs and Feminist Critiques of Scientific Discourse” by Friederike Eigler), but I argue that they are in fact horror stories because of the monsters that manifest themselves in the narratives. The female characters in *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* are monstrous because of culturally specific anxieties that concerned the role of women in East German society at the time³.

The main characters in the stories in *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* have an existence more akin to doppelgängers than as individuals after their metamorphoses. Witches are also a common theme, as either the perpetrators of these gender changes, or as the metamorphosed figure. While the themes of doppelgängers and witches can be seen in all eight short stories, they are most obvious in “Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll” by Wolf, “Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen” by Morgner and “Das Rübenfest” by Gotthold Gloger. I will be analyzing these three stories to demonstrate that it was the discrepancy between communist ideology and the laws of the GDR, as well as the discrepancy between the laws and societal

² Translated titles in order of appearance: “Self-Experiment: Appendix to a Report”, “The Good Tidings of Valeska in 73 Stanzas” and *Gender Swap: Three Stories about the Metamorphosis of Circumstances*

³ “Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen” was originally published in Morgner’s work, *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz* (1974). It is not entirely clear why it (or the other two works) were chosen for the West German anthology, *Geschlechertausch*. The East German text itself is quite obscure and was never reprinted.

norms, that lead to an illusion of gender equality and therefore to the ‘monstrous femininity’ in the *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* anthology.

Definition of Terms

Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine

Before diving straight into the textual analysis, it is important to explore what I mean by “horror” and the role of women in a socialist state. The genre of horror can be defined in many different ways and is largely subjective. Arguably, one of the original definitions of horror was written by Sigmund Freud in his work *Das Unheimliche*⁴. In this work Freud analyzes E.T.A Hoffmann’s novel, *Der Sandmann*, one of the original works of German, Romantic horror, and addresses the idea of the “Wiederkehr des Verdrängten” (Freud 21)⁵. He argues that, “Unheimlich sei alles, was ein Geheimnis, im Verborgenen bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist” (5)⁶. These secrets are not just personal, but are also societal secrets or taboos. This definition can be applied very widely in many situations, but in analyzing the word “unheimlich” itself, Freud uses a very nuanced definition which fits well in reference to the role of women in the GDR. He writes, “Das deutsche Wort, ‘unheimlich’ ist offenbar der Gegensatz zu heimlich, heimisch, vertraut und der Schluß liegt nahe, es sei etwas eben darum schreckhaft, weil es nicht bekannt und vertraut ist” (2)⁷. While this does not initially appear to be particularly interesting or ground breaking, it is in an extended footnote that the real implications become clear. Freud cites the definition of “unheimlich” and notes, “...zur Familie gehörig oder: wie dazu gehörig

⁴ *The Uncanny*

⁵ *The Sandman* and “return of the repressed”.

⁶ “The uncanny is everything secret that should have remained repressed, and now comes to the surface”.

⁷ “The German word ‘uncanny’ is obviously the antithesis to homey, trustworthy, comfortable, and this conclusion leads us to believe that it is frightening because it is not well known or trusted”. – The German word ‘heim’ literally means home with the prefix “un-“ negating the root word. The direct translation of “unheimlich” is therefore “unhomey”.

betrachtet” (3)⁸. It is this last clause that interests me. This clause sets up the concept of home and what is familiar as a construct, not something inherent or natural. The old role of women in the home is directly challenged by both Marxist theory and the laws of the GDR and creates an “unheimlich” setting when society still has a specific association with the concept of “heim”⁹.

Apart from Freud’s definition of horror, there are many other ways to characterize the horror genre. Stephen Prince writes extensively on the subject of horror and creates his definition in the introduction to the work *The Horror Film*. He writes, “The experience of horror resides in this confrontation with uncertainty, with the ‘unnatural’, with a violation of the ontological categories on which being a culture reside” (Prince 2). He goes on to write, “The question of what must be done to remain human is posed in its negative form, by showing the loss of humanity (via lycanthropy, vampirism, decay, disease, violence) because the fear of this loss motivates the genre” (3). Here we see that it is the fear of categorical changes, and the concept of humanity that creates the genre. As humans we constantly try to place one another in categories. Anyone or anything that seems to contradict the perceived norm in society (the negative or opposite of human) can be posited as an “other”, or in the case of horror, a monster. With Freud in mind and this definition from Prince, I would like to argue that it is the fear of the hidden truth behind ontological categories and humanity that drives people in droves to the theaters to see horror films or to read horror literature. The truth being that culture and categories are man-made, based on social norms. Monsters are the product of societally specific anxieties based on the culture and norms of that society.

⁸ “...belonging to the family or: considered belonging to the family”.

⁹ Unheimlich means uncanny and heim means home.

I think it is fair to say that many societal anxieties and taboos are related to issues of gender or sexuality. In a patriarchal society, like East German society, the male perspective of social norms is dominant. As such, it makes sense that females are often portrayed as monstrous because they can generally be perceived as the “other” in comparison to males. In her work, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* Barbara Creed establishes different categories of monstrous-feminine figures. She specifically discusses the archaic mother, witches, vampires, the castrating mother, and the monstrous womb. Creed explains her choice to use the term “monstrous-feminine” and defends it by stating:

The reasons why the monstrous-feminine horrifies her audience are quite different from the reasons why a male monster horrifies his audience. A new term is needed to specify these differences. As with all other stereotypes of the feminine, from virgin to whore, she is defined in terms of her sexuality. The phrase ‘monstrous-feminine’ emphasizes the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity. (3)

The types of monsters that Creed describes in the various chapters of her book fit this mold of being defined by sexuality, and I will be discussing the witch at length later in this paper. One horror monster that Creed does not include, and I believe should also be discussed, is the doppelgänger.

Most people are familiar with the term doppelgänger, either through comedic pop culture mediums or through the idea of the evil twin. The psychoanalytical approach to the doppelgänger is not as funny as the former, and much more terrifying than the latter. In an introduction to Otto Rank’s work *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study* Harry Tucker, Jr. writes

Such examination [of the doppelgänger] demonstrated that this use of double-theme derived not so much from the authors' conscious fondness for describing preternatural situations (Hoffmann), or separate parts of their personalities (Jean Paul), as from their unconscious impulse to lend imagery to a universal human problem –that of the relation of the self to self¹⁰. (xiv)

This argument shows the doppelgänger not to be abnormal, or stemming from a fragmented personality, but instead constructed from how one views one's self. The relation of self to self cannot exist without societal expectations and especially the recognition and rejection of what one is and is not –more concisely, as Julia Kristeva would call it, the “abject”. In her work *Powers of Horror* Kristeva describes this process and writes, “We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it –on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger” (9). When the constructed female role in society is ambiguous (as it was in the GDR) the relationship of the self to self is made unclear and the subject is thrust into the “abject”. Therefore the doppelgänger, a creation of abjection, is another version of a monster defined by its sexuality. It is exactly in this ambiguity, this abjection, that the doppelgängers in “Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll” and “Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen” live.

Communism, Gender and the German Democratic Republic

As I have established, horror is a useful forum to discuss the norms relating to gender and the role of women. The conventions of horror, as they relate to women's roles, do not leave room for many heroic, female figures. The weaker image of the woman stands in contention with the

¹⁰ Hoffmann and Jean Paul are authors who have previously written novels about or including doppelgängers

image of the ideal communist woman. Women in the GDR, as in other socialist states, should live as both mother and worker. The general consensus among those who have studied women under communism in the soviet states, is that the emancipation of women was unrealized (ex. “The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia 1948-1978” by Sharon Wolchik, “Women in the GDR” by Christel Sudau, “The Politics of Gender under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice” by Havelková and Oates-Indruchová). In order to fully understand what this failure means, I believe that a specific and nuanced look at the language of the laws of the GDR in comparison to Marxist ideology is necessary. It is stated in Section B1. Rights of the Citizens, Part 7 of the constitution of East Germany, “Mann und Frau sind gleichberechtigt: Alle Gesetze und Bestimmungen, die der Gleichberechtigung der Frau entgegenstehen, sind aufgehoben”¹¹. This quote affirms the classic Marxist ideology that men and women should play an equal role in society. This is not the only section of the constitution that addresses the issue of gender equality. The constitution later states, “Die Frau genießt besonderen Schutz im Arbeitsverhältnis. Durch Gesetz der Republik werden Einrichtungen geschaffen, die es gewährleisten, dass die Frau ihre Aufgabe als Bürgerin und Schaffende mit ihren Pflichten als Frau und Mutter vereinbaren kann”¹². The term “vereinbaren” or “reconcile” is inherently unequal because it suggests that women are still expected, to a certain degree, to remain the basis of the household. This suggestion becomes clearer later in Section III Part 30 of the constitution where it states, “Ehe und Familie bilden die Grundlage des Gemeinschaftslebens. Sie stehen unter dem Schutz des Staates. Gesetze und Bestimmungen, die die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau in der

¹¹ Men and women have equal rights before the law. All laws and ordinances that contradict the equality of women are now abolished.

¹² Women enjoy special protection in employment. Through the laws of the Republic new institutions will be created to ensure that women can reconcile their roles as citizen and worker with their roles as wife and mother.

Familie beeinträchtigen, sind aufgehoben”¹³. The issue with this statement is that it directly contradicts Marxist theory. In *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums, und der Staat* Friedrich Engels addresses the topic of marriage and writes¹⁴:

In einem alten, 1864 von Marx und mir ausgearbeiteten, ungedruckten Manuskript finde ich: ‚Die erste Teilung der Arbeit ist die von Mann und Weib zur Kinderzeugung‘ Und heute kann ich hinzusetzen: Der erste Klassengegensatz, der in der Geschichte auftritt, fällt zusammen mit der Entwicklung des Antagonismus von Mann und Weib in der Einzelehe, und die erste Klassenunterdrückung mit der des weiblichen Geschlechts durch das männliche. Die Einzelehe war ein großer geschichtlicher Fortschritt, aber zugleich eröffnet sie neben der Sklaverei und dem Privatreichthum jene bis heute dauernde Epoche, in der jeder Fortschritt zugleich ein relativer Rückschritt, in dem das Wohl und die Entwicklung der einen sich durchsetzt durch das Wehe und die Zurückdrängung der andern¹⁵.

This quote makes it quite clear that Marx and Engels never envisioned a society in which marriage and family were, the “foundations for societal life”. This is the first discrepancy between Communist theory and actuality when it comes to women and equality. The institutions set up by the male-dominated, patriarchal government still perpetuated a system that has

¹³ Marriage and family are the foundations for societal life. They exist under the protection of the state. Laws and ordinances that compromise the equal status of men and women in the family are abolished.

¹⁴ Title: *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*

¹⁵ In an old, unpublished manuscript that Marx and I worked on from 1864 I found: The first division of labor is that of man and woman in child rearing. And today I can add to this: The first class division in history appeared at the same time as the development of antagonism of man and woman in single marriage, and the first class oppression is that of the female gender by the male. Single marriage was a large historical move forward, but simultaneously opened, along with slavery and private riches, in every epoch since, a relative step backwards; in that the wellbeing and development that continues depends on the suffering and repression of others.

historically subjugated women. The traditions and norms of marriage are long held, and steadfast. To retain a system that seemed inherent to culture would seem to make sense, but it also perpetuated traditional roles of women in society. There is no mention in the laws of the roles of men in the family, and this absence creates the idea that men are still removed from the duties of family life.

I have established that monsters are the manifestations of societal, specific anxieties and repressions, and that classic Marxism dictates that there be equal opportunity for men and women in the workforce. This means that there is already a doubling/contradiction in meaning between the ideology driving the state, and the laws of the state itself. With this doubling in mind, I will move onto the doubling seen between the laws and reality. In her work *Women in the GDR* Christel Sudau addresses the discrepancy between the promises made by the socialist state and the reality that faces women in the workforce. She writes:

The family, for which women are programmed now just as their mothers were before them, is no longer complete. In their work and profession lies a chance, the only chance, to become more independent and to find their own identity. Of course, most women in the factories, the stores and the offices still do work that has little to do with self-fulfillment. For that reason, the family remains the focal point of many women's lives.

(71)

Sudau perfectly demonstrates the conflict that women faced in the GDR. While the newly granted access to education, equal pay in the workforce, and financial independence allowed women to create an identity outside of the home, it also forced some women into creating a double identity –one for their programmed role in the home, and one for their role in the workforce. Since one of the main goals of Communism was to reverse the alienation of the worker

and put control of production and ownership into the hands of the proletariat, the fact that women were not able to truly devote themselves to their professions meant that they were relegated to a form of second-class citizenship. This further demonstrates the theme of doubling in East German society (without even confronting the idea of a doubled Germany and the divide between East and West). With ambiguous meanings and concepts in respect to women's roles, it is no small wonder that monstrous figures appear in literature that focused on gender during this period.

“Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll”

This brings me to the first body of text that I will be discussing, “Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll” by Christa Wolf. This short story is told from the perspective of a female narrator, whose female name we never learn, as an appendix to a report on a gender change experiment. She writes it directly to the professor, a man, who instigated and oversaw the experiment. Despite the fact that she uses the formal “Sie” to address him, this report is remarkably personal and intimate, and one gets the feeling immediately that she is enamored with him¹⁶. The narrator details her experiences as a man (named Anders) and her decision to reverse the experiment and become a woman again. Her loss of identity, which Sudau plainly points to being a key component to the GDR woman's independence, creates a doubling effect as she retains her memories and experiences as a woman in her form as Anders. Through the descriptions of her metamorphosed life and her simultaneous loss of and doubling of identity, the *doppelgänger* materializes.

¹⁶ Sie is the formal way to say “you” when addressing someone.

The narrator's struggle with her self is evident on the very first page of the story. She writes, "Sie [der Professor] aber mit Ihren abergläubischen Anbetung on Messergebnissen haben mir jene Wörter meiner inneren Sprache verdächtig gemacht, die mir jetzt helfen könnten, der unwirklichen Neutralität dieses Protokolls mit meiner wirklichen Erinnerung zu widersprechen" (Wolf 68)¹⁷. The narrator admits that she can no longer trust her own thoughts; her own vocabulary and sense of language betray herself. The professor's desire to create order, distinct borders and solid answers has made the narrator question her understanding of relationality. She knows the professor's motivations behind the experiment, and this knowledge has also compromised her identity as a scientist because she has lost her neutrality as both subject and supervisor of the experiment. Her loss of identity and self-trust are the first indicators of the monstrous figure to come; this introduction is a foreshadowing of the doppelgänger.

The narrator is the perfect subject for this gender change, in theory, because she embodies the ideological hopes for the communist woman. She is independent, educated, and works in a specialized field as a scientist. "Selbstversuch" is the story most written about in the *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* anthology, and most of the essays focus on the discourse of the narrator as a female scientist. Ingrid Sharp also addresses the narrator's special role as a scientist in her essay "Representations of Male Inadequacy in the *Geschlechtertausch* Stories of the German Democratic Republic" and writes, "In deliberately shutting out commitments that compete with her scientific research, [the narrator] is presented as functionally male, her uncompromising dedication to work seen as 'unnatural' for a woman –an analysis supported by the nature of the experiment she is working on" (208). The narrator's "functional" gender is

¹⁷ You [the professor] with your superstitious belief in measurable results have made me suspicious of every word in my inner language that could now help me contradict the false neutrality of this appendix with my real memories.

interesting because it presents her as already dual-gendered even before the experiment. The narrator is unmarried, and does not seem to have any real wish to fulfill those societal expectations of her. However, despite her perceived masculinity she is still shown as an object for male attention. Before her metamorphosis the narrator shares this encounter she has with a coworker, “Mein Freund Doktor Rüdiger, den Sie [der Professor] als Wissenschaftler schätzen und doch eine Spur zu lasch finden, hatte den rettenden Einfall, mich, als ich aus Ihrem Zimmer trat, von Kopf bis Fuß mit einem unverschämten Männerblick zu mustern, einen ordinären Pfiff auszustößen und zu sagen: Schade, Puppe!” (Wolf 71)¹⁸. It is the specific use of the term “male gaze” that makes this quote so important. Whoever possesses this gaze also possesses power. The narrator, despite her masculinity does not return the look, and she is still powerless in comparison to her male comrades. This conflict that arises with the male gaze creates a double meaning of the concept of masculinity. The narrator is expected to behave as a man in her position as a scientist, but these expectations are paired with the norms that existed before the introduction of a communist society. This is yet another instance that demonstrates the lost or confused identity of the narrator and hints at the emergence of the doppelgänger.

It is after her metamorphosis that this doppelgänger truly emerges. She goes out once again with Doctor Rüdiger, and she recalls this encounter as they sit in a street car and observe a woman a ways in front of them who drops her purse, “Ich bin es gewesen, ich: die Frau, die mit Spott oder Empfindlichkeit oder einfach durch Ungeduld die männlichsten Triumphe des Herrn Anders sabotierte. Ich: Die Frau, habe ihn gehindert, der „Kleinen von nebenan“ ihr

¹⁸ My friend, Doctor Rüdiger, whom you [the professor] value as a scientist although you find him a bit too feeble, had the redeeming idea, as I walked out of your office, of looking me over from head to toe with an unashamed male gaze, emitting an ordinary whistle and saying: Too bad, doll.

Handtäschchen aufzuheben...” (78)¹⁹. In contrast to the scene from earlier, the narrator is now the one who possesses the male gaze, and it is hers to use like any other man. The key part of this scene is that she cannot. She looks at the “little lady over there” like any other man, but it is her female self that prevents her from acting. The narrator very explicitly refers to herself as two different people in this scene, indicating a confusion in her relationship with herself. She is not sure how to behave anymore, as the man she now looks like, or as the woman she still senses inside of herself. This is the first major instance of her doubling; the first appearance of her *doppelgänger*.

Even the name she chooses for herself suggests the “othering” of her gender. The name “Anders” is a typical German name, but the word “anders” also means “other”, but “other” in a way that means foreign, strange or unfamiliar –in other words, “unheimlich”. It is a perfectly symbolic name for her metamorphosis, and for the idea of monstrousness. In horror, monsters are often created through the processes of othering. As I stated before, monsters exist outside of normal categorization, and blur the borders of what society considers to be normal. In this way they often reflect what a society considers to be taboo, or “other”. The narrator’s name is therefore a perfect symbol for her *doppelgänger* form.

The next instance in which the narrator’s *doppelgänger* manifests itself is later when she’s back at the institute. Her colleagues are running word association tests on her. She explains her experience and confusion by writing, “Sollte ich als Frau antworten? Als Mann? Und wenn als Mann: Wie denn, um Himmelswillen? So dass ich schließlich auf ‚rot‘ nicht ‚Liebe‘ sagte, wie sonst immer, sondern ‚Wut‘. Auf ‚Frau‘ nicht ‚Mann‘ sondern ‚schön‘. Auf ‚Kind‘ nicht

¹⁹ It was me, me: The woman, who with sarcasm or sensitivity, or simply out of impatience sabotaged the manly triumph of Mr. Anders. Me: The woman, hindered him from picking up the purse for the “little lady other there”.

„schlank“, sondern „süß“ (78-79)²⁰. The fact that she has to ask herself how to answer, and categorizes the possible answers, demonstrates the confusion with her self-identity. She, and the scientists administering the test, assume that an answer denotes a certain gender, but the fact that the narrator has multiple options shows her two distinct identities. Should she answer? Or should she let her doppelgänger answer? Despite her new gender, she has not suddenly forgotten the answers that she should have given as a woman. Her memories as a woman remain, and they constantly force her to make a distinction between her female and male identity; her identity is in “perpetual danger”. Another moment of learned gendered behavior comes when the narrator and Doctor Rüdiger go out to eat lunch. The narrator writes, “So haben Sie [der Professor] nicht gesehen, wie ich Eisbein mit Erbspüree essen musste, was Doktor Rüdiger für den Beweis von eines Mannes Männlichkeit hält” (79)²¹. Despite the gender equality guaranteed in law in the GDR, the norms dictating behavior on a day-to-day basis did not change. Pork hock, being a staple in the idea of classic German food, not only stands in for the constructed version of masculinity, but also for traditional German culture. The narrator feels strange eating it because she, even as a man, still feels excluded from the masculine tradition in Germany. This is just another example of how the disparity between the laws of the GDR and reality lead to unclear constructions of identity since she did not grow up with or learn these masculine norms, values, and behaviors.

Apart from gendered behavior, there are other instances in which the narrator’s doppelgänger materializes. One evening, as the narrator waits for the professor at the lab, she

²⁰ Should I answer as a woman? As a man? And if as a man, how in god’s name was I supposed to do that? So that finally I answer “red” with “rage” instead of “love”. With “beautiful” for “woman” instead of “man”. With “sweet” for “child” instead of “slender”.

²¹ So you [the professor] didn’t see, how I had to eat a pork hock with pureed peas because Doctor Rüdiger considers it a sign of a man’s masculinity.

looks out of a window across from his office. As she gazes out of the window she thinks, “Ich aber stand und suchte mit dem Blick der Frau das Fenster...da suchte ich, Anders [der männliche Name der Erzählerin], das Lächeln zustande zu bringen, über das ich als Frau verfügt hätte. Es war noch in mir, ich konnte es deutlich fühlen. Zugleich aber spürte ich, wie es mir auf meinem Gesicht misslang” (77)²². Here the window also functions as a mirror, which is traditionally used as a representation of narcissism and femininity. I am not the first to link narcissism, gender, and psychoanalysis. In his work, *Narcissism and Paranoia in the age of Goethe*, Alexander Mathäs discusses the conflict of identity which faced the bourgeois class in the German romantic period, and the subsequent doppelgänger that appear in writings of this time. He writes, “These doppelgänger constellations reveal narcissistic impulses underlying German idealist aesthetics, such as the links between narcissism, paranoia, and the production of both meaning and form” (16). He also discusses the inherent masculine bias in these writings. I do not argue that because the narrator of “Selbstversuch” looks into a mirror that she automatically sees a doppelgänger through her narcissistic activity, but it is her attempt to reconcile her two identities into one that creates this doubling. The inner femininity that she senses while looking at the reflection of her male form demonstrates her double identity. It is also interesting that the narrator differentiates between looking at her reflection as a woman versus look at it as a man. She uses the female gaze, not the male gaze. She looks, as a woman, at her male reflection; which stares back at her from the window with the male gaze. In this way, even her vision of herself is distorted and biased. In her essay, “When Woman Looks”, Linda Williams addresses the act of the woman returning the gaze of the monster in horror. She quotes Stephen Heath and

²² However, I stood and looked with the gaze of a woman for the window. There I (Anders –the other) attempted to form the smile that I often used as a woman. It was still in me, I could distinctly feel it. At the same time I sensed how it would no longer fit with my face.

writes, “if the woman looks, the spectacle provokes, castration is in the air, the Medusa’s head is not far off; thus, she must not look, is absorbed herself on the side of the seen, seeing herself seeing herself, Lacan’s femininity”, and then she elaborates on his point by stating, “In other words, her look even here becomes a form of not seeing anything more than the castration she so exclusively represents for the male” (64). These two quotes from Williams’s essay are particularly interesting in the context of this scene from “Selbstversuch”. The narrator does see herself seeing herself, and the act of not seeing herself, as Williams points out in her quote supports the idea of a loss of identity. Again we see that it is the act of self-reflection, of seeing her own manifest gender difference in herself that creates her doppelgänger.

Towards the end of the story the narrator meets the professor’s daughter accidentally while waiting in line at a movie theater. The daughter invites Anders home for dinner, not knowing that her father already knows Anders quite well. Anders and the professor act as if they are meeting one another for the first time, and over the course of the evening Anders discovers the true impetus for the experiment. It appears as though the professor is unable to love, and he is searching for the cure to and answer behind man’s inability to love. He attempts to find a man who is actually capable of love, so (in a Frankenstein manner) he creates one. Adam Phillips describes the relationship between Freud’s theories and love in his work “Waiting for Returns: Freud’s New Love” and writes

The new object of desire could only be an object of desire at all if it was, in some sense, a copy of the original, incestuous object. Indeed, for Freud, the copy functions as the necessary cover-story for the new; in erotic life the new is only possible by way of the copy. Freud promotes, as we shall see, the necessity of mimesis in the construction of the new; and insists on the new as the stomping ground for the repetitions of the past. We are

likely to be at our most repetitious, Freud proposes, when we think we are at our most innovative.

In the case of the professor, one who symbolizes the heterosexual male in this German society, the object of desire would be a woman. Women however, with their newly codified role in society, are no longer copies of previous feminized women from earlier epochs. The socialist version of the woman is new in comparison to previous eras in German society. Following this Freudian interpretation of desire, the heterosexual male in the GDR would no longer desire this socialist version of woman. The professor desires a woman that copies the gender norms from previous eras that does not threaten his patriarchal power. In her essay “Rethinking Sexual Difference and Kinship in Juliet Mitchell’s *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*” Judith Butler writes, “Mankind does not live fully in the present: some history is transmitted at the level of the unconscious, and this is surely part of what is meant by sexual difference” (5-6). Unconsciously, through transmitted history of gender expectations, the professor desires a different kind of woman than the ideal communist woman of the GDR. Historical expectations of gender were not just changed in the GDR, but also repressed. It was as if by simply changing the laws or changing a person’s sex would erase thousands of years of gender expectations and societal norms. It is the return of this repression that creates the *doppelgänger* that the narrator in “Selbstversuch: Traktat zu einem Protokoll” must confront.

“Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen”

This narrator is not the only female figure in the *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* anthology that must confront her *doppelgänger*. Valeska, the protagonist in “Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen” also deals with the loss of her identity in her male form. In this story Freud’s theories and the return of the repressed are acknowledged more outright and less through motifs

and symbols. Like Wolf's protagonist, Morgner's leading lady is also a female scientist. Despite this similarity, the two female characters are markedly different. Valeska's relationships with men (and women) are more varied than the relationships from Wolf's story. Unlike the narrator from "Selbstversuch" (who decides to reverse the operation and return to her female form), Valeska remains a man. The story starts with her typical life in Berlin. Valeska lives with her son from a previous marriage and her boyfriend, Rudolf. Again, unlike the protagonist of "Selbstversuch", Valeska does have to "reconcile" her roles as worker and citizen with her roles as wife and mother. She seems to be very independent like Wolf's protagonist, but she is unhappy in her relationship with Rudolf. One evening, while walking home from work and contemplating how to gain respect in society, she finally comes to the conclusion that, "[Man] müsste ein Mann sein" (31)²³. The next morning she awakes as a man. At first she is shocked and taken aback, but after a few hours pass, she is calmed. This calm persists until she remembers that Rudolf does not yet know about her metamorphosis. Out of fear, she flees to Russia to visit her friend, Shenja, who lives in a communal apartment with men and women in Moscow. While in Russia, she begins a romantic relationship with Shenja. After staying a while in Moscow, Valeska returns to Berlin and confronts Rudolf. At the end of the story, her relationship with Rudolf is stronger than ever (another difference between this story and "Selbstversuch"). The ending of this story asserts the position that women and men can live together in a society without the constraints of gender norms. In her work, "Representations of Male Inadequacy in the *Geslechtertausch* Stories of the German Democratic Republic", Ingrid Sharp writes

However, unlike Wolf, who appears to be positing a deficit model of both genders, Morgner points forwards to a post gender world in which male and female protagonists

²³ One has to be a man.

can encounter one another as complete individuals in their own right, free from the divisive constraints of a relational system of binary genders and the necessity of complementing or completing one another. (210)

This is a decidedly more optimistic view of the way that men and women could interact in the GDR than Wolf's depiction. While Sharp's interpretation makes sense because of the happy ending this story depicts, I think that the key words are "points forwards". The majority of the story still relies heavily on gendered roles and expectations through which these characters have to navigate.

The relationship between Valeska and Shenja has led many scholars to interpret this work as commentary on lesbian relationships and gay culture in the GDR because Valeska still uses her female name and pronouns after her transformation. While I believe this to be a valid interpretation of the story, I believe that this story is better suited to addressing the issue of gender equality in the GDR. Valeska cannot be removed from the political context of this story, otherwise her role as a woman in society would have a completely different meaning. The fact that she retains her female memories, conditioning, pronouns and name after the metamorphosis further supports the idea that it is the illusion of "masculinity" that determines her status when interacting with others in society. Valeska takes a different view from the narrator in "Selbstversuch," and believes that men and women can love one another as people and equals and not simply, "als Vertreter(in) [einer] Art" (35)²⁴. Valeska might experience equality when encountering people on an individual, personal level, but when she is out in society, there are certain behavioral norms that are imposed upon her and her interactions.

²⁴ As a representative of their sex.

Doppelgänger

Despite the optimistic approach that Morgner takes, Valeska still encounters many moments where old traditions of female gender roles arise. These are the moments when Valeska's monstrous femininity manifests itself. The doppelgänger is the first figure to be hinted at and that appears in this story. At the beginning of the story, the gender roles are more traditional, giving us a backdrop for the changes to come. She recognizes in her reflections that, "Rudolf war Hausfrauen gewohnt" (30)²⁵. Not only is this sentence interesting in its own right, but the way it appears on the page is also significant as it has its own stanza. The format of this sentence draws special attention to its place and meaning in the story. It does not only demonstrate that Rudolf himself is accustomed to women belonging in the domestic sphere, but it suggests the patriarchal system still lingers in the subconscious collective memory of East German society. This repressed view of the role of women will come back to haunt Valeska directly after her metamorphosis. It also supports the popular belief that gender equality was unrealized despite the progressive laws of the GDR. As I stated earlier, this discrepancy is the perfect breeding ground for doppelgänger. It is clear that at the beginning of the story this world is not the "post-gender" world that Sharp describes in her analysis. In order for there to be a metamorphosis of this nature, there has to be inequality between the genders and some form of binary system in place in society.

The subject of repression must have been on Morgner's mind while writing this story because after Valeska realizes that "man müsste ein Mann sein" she thinks, "Freud's Wunschbild, dass Penisneid neben Passivität, Narzissmus und Masochismus die Natur der Frau

²⁵ Because Rudolf was accustomed to house wives.

charakterisierten, konnte Rudolf nicht unbequem sein” (35)²⁶. Valeska’s thought illustrates that Rudolf expects these conventions to hold true in GDR society. Rudolf expects a woman to have penis envy, to want to utilize the power that comes with the phallus. This expectation further demonstrates the societal expectations of women in the GDR and the inequality that persisted in society. Rudolf’s expectations for women, including Valeska, have been repressed through her newly legislated role in society.

Valeska literally asks for her metamorphosis when she pleads for a change while looking at her reflection in a mirror. This mirror scene, like that in “Selbstversuch” is vital to Valeska’s transformation and self-recognition. Like in Wolf’s story, the mirror scene with Valeska is the stage for her doppelgänger to manifest. The mirrored reflection is not her true self, but an illusion. Her reflection allows for her metamorphosis because it shows the difference between who Valeska really is, and who she wants to be in order to truly succeed in society. Lacan describes a similar situation in a lecture of his titled, “The Hysteric’s Question (II): What is a Woman?”. He writes

When Dora finds herself wondering, *what is woman?*, she is attempting to symbolize the female organ as such. Her identification with the man, bearer of the penis, is for her on this occasion a means of approaching this definition that escapes her. She literally uses the penis as an imaginary instrument for apprehending what she hasn’t succeeded in symbolizing.

In this case, Lacan describes an incident in which a woman finds herself struggling between two identities. This is similar to the situation in which Valeska finds herself as well. The mirror

²⁶ Freud’s ideal that penis envy, along with passivity, narcissism, and masochism are part of woman’s nature, would not have been unfamiliar to Rudolf.

symbolizes Valeska's recognition that her wish is, as of yet, unfulfilled. It is a tool which Valeska uses to create her identity; the relationship of her self to self. Because the mirrored image is not her true self, however, she "abjects" herself. The mirrored image of herself and how she wants to see her reflection simultaneously supports and threatens her self-recognition. On the topic of self-abjection, Kristeva writes, "There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (5). "Want" is an interesting choice in translation. It can mean either longing or the absence of something. In the context of "Die gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen", this dual meaning is especially interesting. Not only does Valeska recognize what she lacks in order to belong (a phallus), but she also recognizes verbally that that is what she desires or longs for. In this way, want is the perfect word to describe this phenomenon as it perfectly reflects the paradox inherent in self-abjection.

It is after this example of self-abjection that the *doppelgänger* appears. After her metamorphosis Valeska also observes herself in the mirror. Mornger writes, "[Valeska] eilte zum Spiegel zurück. Keine Koffeinhalluzination. Wechselhaftigkeiten derartiger Gewächse pflegten sie bisher gewöhnlich zu erfreuen. Als Objekte. Anverliebt erschien ihr die Zutat als übler Scherz, den sie ohne Zögern Rudolfs schlechter Laune zutraute" (37)²⁷. Valeska would have found these changes pleasing in theory, but in practice it appears as though she has reservations and her new body is not what she would have expected. In this way, her reaction to her new physical sex mirrors the feelings of women in the GDR with unfulfilled expectations. She may have considered the phallus as an object before, but the experience of having one physically,

²⁷ Valeska hurried back to the mirror. No caffeine induced hallucination. Vicissitudes of this nature normally used to delight her. As objects. Enamored, this new addition seemed like a sick joke that she instantly accredited to Rudolf's bad mood.

coupled with her experiences as a woman which she taps into unconsciously further her abjection. Kristeva also addresses the topic of the unconscious and abjection and writes, “The theory of the unconscious, as it is well known, presupposes a repression of contents (affects and presentations) that, thereby, do not have access to consciousness but effect within the subject modifications, either of speech (parapraxes etc.), or of the body (symptoms) or both (hallucinations, etc.)” (7). Based on this analysis, Valeska’s initial reaction would be to think of her transformation as a hallucination. Her transformation was not a hallucination, but it functions similarly with the paradox between her female unconscious and male consciousness/physicality. This paradox creates her monstrous doppelgänger.

Valeska’s doppelgänger appears more frequently when she flies to Moscow to see her friend, Shenja. They arrange to meet for dinner, and when they meet Valeska kisses Shenja’s hand. Morgner describes the scene and writes, “[Valeska] küsste Shenja hingerissen Hand. Der erste offizielle Handkuss. Das männliche Vorrecht, den Hof zu machen, gehört auch zu den allerersten Vergnügungen der menschlichen Rasse. Später Liebe in der kommunalen Wohnung” (48)²⁸. Valeska, despite her feminine unconscious, quickly falls into the traditional, masculine roles of courtship. Engels would argue that these “Vorrechts” belong to a part of human history based on the oppression of the female gender by the male, as they suggest a hierarchy between the genders²⁹. Valeska, despite her feminine unconscious, behaves in a way that grapples not only with her feminine self, but also with the ideology behind the gender equality laws in this new society. Perhaps if the laws had stayed true to Marx and Engels’ original ideology and abolished the institution of marriage, this act of courtship would no longer be considered a manly

²⁸ She kissed Shenja’s hand rapturously. The first official hand kiss. The manly privilege of courtship also numbers among the very first pleasures of the human race. Later it would be love in the communal apartment

²⁹ Vorrecht translates to privileges.

privilege. In this scene, we see that social convention has repressed Valeska's feminine self for fear of its perceived power, and replaced her with a version of herself that is physically male.

By the end of the story, Valeska adjusts her original statement that "Man müsste ein Mann sein". She reflects on her experiences as a man and thinks, "Das Mannsein nützt mir ohnehin wenig, wenn mir nicht auch meine Vergangenheit samt Rollenerziehung weggezaubert ist. Eine Frau mit männlicher Vergangenheit müßte man sein!" (60)³⁰. This quote further supports my argument that traditional female gender roles were simply repressed in East German society. In order for Valeska to truly fit as a woman in society, she could not have been raised to believe that women are the same as men in regards to their societal roles. If Valeska were to be a woman with a masculine past, her female past would also have to be erased in order to eliminate her *doppelgänger*. The laws, created by a patriarchal society, did not do enough to ensure that this ideology transferred to the whole of society. Because of this failure, Valeska is forced to become two people. One person that the world sees, the male, and one person that she feels, the female. This doubling creates two versions of Valeska; it creates her *doppelgänger*. The word "weggezaubert" is also interesting in this context³¹. The word "zaubern" means to perform magic. This word conjures up an image of a magician or, in this case specifically, a witch.

Valeska as a Witch

Valeska is described at one point in the story as, "hexenhaft"³². The witch is a female monster whose power is uncontrollable; outside of the human realm, and definitely outside of the traditional notion of female power. Barbara Creed describes the witch as a female monster who

³⁰ Being a man hasn't done me much good anyway since my past experiences and taught gender role aren't also magically erased. One has to be a woman with a masculine past.

³¹ *Weggezaubert* means to magically erase. It does not need to be done by a person who possesses magic.

³² Witchlike or like a witch.

threatens patriarchal power with her sexual difference and power. She also writes that, “In those societies which lack centralized institutions of power, a rigid separation of the sexes is enforced through ritual. In such societies the two sexes are in constant conflict. Women are regarded as ‘baleful schemers’, the feminine is seen as ‘synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed’ (Kristeva, 1982, 70” (76). While I am not insinuating that women are shown to be inherently evil in this story by Morgner, I do think that Creed’s observations about the witch in society are worth discussing. Although power was extremely centralized in the GDR, I think it is accurate to say that there were still rigid separations within society when it came to gender roles. Despite the centralized power structure of the regime, the laws of the GDR did not translate to societal norms, or “rituals”. The rituals that were enacted through the laws and constitution of the GDR were unsuccessful in creating an equal society. In light of this application to the GDR, I have to disagree with Creed. Ritualized gender roles can be found even, and maybe especially, in regimes with strong, centralized, authoritarian institutions.

The description of Valeska as witchlike occurs when Valeska first meets up with Shenja for dinner when she arrives in Moscow. Morgner describes their interaction by writing, “Shenja stöckelte resolut übern Marmor, umarmte und küsste sie, schenkte Blumen, fragte besorgt nach ihrer Gesundheit, deren schlechten Zustand sie vom veränderten Gesicht abzulesen glaubte. Die aufgelegte Schminke modelte Strenge in Alter. Hexenhaft” (48)³³. Valeska, who needed to dress like a woman so that her physical appearance matched her identification card when entering Russia from East Germany, attempted to cover her new masculine features with makeup. The process of camouflaging her masculinity ended up giving her the appearance of an old, haggard

³³Shenja tottered resolutely over the marble, hugged and kissed [Valeska], gave her flowers, and asked her concernedly about her health, which she believed to be poor based on her changed face. The makeup reflected the harshness of age. Like a witch.

woman, the stereotypical image of a witch. The choice of word with “Hexenhaft” cannot be overlooked. Morgner could have chosen any number of words for this description, but this specific word begs the reader to think of this female monster. The witch is a female monster that is also construed as phallic because she possesses power greater than the average man or woman, and she is therefore threatening. A woman, who is granted equal opportunity as a man possesses far more power than at any other point in history. In the context of the GDR, this could mean that the witch symbolizes the threat to patriarchal power masquerading as equality. Valeska is, in this way, a witch, and her ability to understand and move through both worlds. Her overpowering, monstrous femininity threatens to expose the hypocrisy of East German society.

“Das Rübenfest”

Valeska is not the only witch in these anthologies. In “Das Rübenfest” from the *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* anthology addresses the theme of witches more outright. In this story, however, it is not the transformed character that is described as witchlike, but rather the mechanism that creates the transformation. The power that allows for the metamorphosis is described as uncanny, and is embodied by a witch. The story starts with two men, Arnold and Udo, who have just finished work and are waiting for the train to take them home. They both work in agriculture, and it is time for the harvest. While waiting for the train, enjoying a beer, Arnold cries, “Wir sind behext, so wahr ich hier sitze” (Gloger 84)³⁴. Udo tells Arnold not to be crazy and superstitious, but Arnold insists that there are witches living amongst them and proceeds to tell his unlikely tale of woe. He tells a story of how a witch cursed him to switch bodies with his wife. In his experiences as his wife, Milda, he realizes that there is a larger movement at play

³⁴As true as I sit here, we are cursed.

apart from one witch's agenda. The witch is just the ring leader of the operation. The witch and her female followers represent the power and opportunity that women technically gained in society through the laws of the GDR. In "Das Rübenfest" the witch and other women are portrayed as monstrous because, despite the socialist regime in which they live, they threaten the patriarchal system in place.

Arnold starts out by describing an elderly woman in town named Blawasch. He describes her by saying, "Du kennst unsere Blawasch nicht... das ist eine, sag ich dir, vor der sich das ganze Dorf in Acht nimmt. Sonst ist nichts Auffalendes an ihr, nur ein altes häßliches Weib mit herausquellenden, glasigen Augen, aus denen sie glotzt, wenn sie was sehen will" (85)³⁵. This description of Blawasch contains some familiar witchlike characteristics, but instead of a long, pointed nose with a wart, it is Blawasch's eyes that seem to distinguish her. The witch already could be considered to be a phallic woman because of her extra ordinary power, but the description of Blawasch's eyes further the description of her monstrous femininity. Her eyes bulge, or protrude from her head, and not just in a way that they stick out. The root of the adjective that is used here ("herausquellen") is "quellen". A "Quell" translates to "well" in English, so in this sense her eyes not only bulge out, they ooze or swell out of her head. Usually it is the witch's nose that symbolizes her phallic nature, but in the case of Blawasch it is the link to an erection with her eyes that take on the symbol of the phallus.

It is especially important to note that the eyes could also symbolize her powerful female gaze; the gaze similar to that which Linda Williams describes. Williams focuses mostly on the gaze that young, beautiful women return when confronted by male monsters. Blawasch's gaze is

³⁵ You don't know our Blawasch, I tell you, she is one that the whole town is cautious of. There's not much special about her. She's just an old, ugly woman with protruding, glazed over eyes that she uses to stare with if she ever wants to see something.

different in that she is not young and beautiful. Her gaze has a different effect because she is not castrated. Her gaze is threatening because of her sexual sameness to the male object. The fact that the whole town is cautious of encountering her demonstrates her uncanny power. Arnold reiterates this after his transformation as well and thinks to himself, “Alle im Dorft wußten, daß sie mit unheimlichen Mächten im Bunde stand, und ich, der ich zum Vorstand der Genossenschaft gehörte, mußte mich fügen, mußte mir ihre fürchterliche Willkür gefallen lassen” (89)³⁶. Again, we see specific reference to terms which apply to horror. He does not describe Blawasch as being in league with the devil, but rather as being in league with uncanny powers. Uncanny could be a direct reference to Freud, and signal the return of power of the repressed gender.

After encountering the old witch, Arnold becomes convinced that she has hexed him. The final evidence appears one morning when he wakes up and realizes that, “an [seinem] Körper ein paar entscheidende Dinge fehlten” (89)³⁷. He is shocked that something like this could have happened to him and thinks, “Ich war starr vor Entsetzen, weil mir diese Verwandlung so unglaublich und so ungerecht vorkam, hatte ich doch bis jetzt meine Arbeit zur Zufriedenheit aller erledigt und mich auch immer am achten März beteiligt, wo wir Männer die Frauen traktierten” (89)³⁸. The eighth of March is International Women’s Day, and was celebrated within the GDR. It is interesting that Arnold uses the word, “traktieren” because it means to mistreat or pester. On the day designated to celebrate women, Arnold mocks this ritual and still does not question his behavior in retrospect. Arnold’s disdain for March 8th parallels the way in

³⁶ Everyone in the town knew that she was in league with uncanny powers, and I, a member of the cooperation board, now had to fall victim to her horrible caprice.

³⁷ A few key components were missing.

³⁸ I was paralyzed with astonishment because this transformation seemed so unbelievable and unfair to me. Until now I had always done my work to a satisfactory level, and I participated on March 8th –when we men pester the women.

which he views the role of women in society. He is shocked to discover that this old, obscure woman could have castrated him.

At first, Arnold is unsure whether or not his wife has switched places with him. Throughout their morning ritual, he realizes that it is indeed his wife, Milda, who is now inhabiting his body. When he tells Milda that he thinks Blawasch has hexed them, she responds by saying that Blawasch is harmless and only practices small magic. Arnold reacts to this by thinking, “Milda, als mein Mann, verharmloste die Fähigkeiten dieser Person derart auffällig, daß mir der Verdacht kam, Milda in meinem alten Körper wußte nicht nur Bescheid, sie war sogar bei diesem Verwechslungsspiel mit dem anderen Weib im Bunde” (94)³⁹. Here Arnold begins to believe that this transformation is part of a larger conspiracy concocted by women. This is not simply about the powers of one woman, Blawasch, but the collective power of women; a female collective whose new power construes them as monstrous.

Milda, disguised in Arnold’s body, attempts to make institutional reforms to the way in which women are treated in the workplace. After lunch all of the women gather in front of an announcement board, where Arnold (Milda) has placed a new bulletin. The real Arnold (in Milda’s body) describes his reaction, “Frauenförderungsplan nannte sich dieses Hexenwerk, dieses Instrument des Umsturzes mit dem Ziel, die Frauen an die Macht zu bringen” (105)⁴⁰. Here Arnold very obviously conflates women’s equality with witchcraft. This equality and upheaval of old gender norms is so threatening that it must be supernatural and horrifying to possibly be true. The women’s development plan quite literally represents the return of the

³⁹ Milda, as my husband, minimized the abilities of this individual. This made me suspicious that Milda, in my old body, not only knew about all of this, but was also in league with this other woman.

⁴⁰ Woman’s development plan, that’s what they called it; this witchcraft, this instrument of revolution that would place women in power.

repressed; the women who have been repressed in their false equality are emerging from obscurity to gain their rightful influence and place in the community. Milda (in Arnold's body) addresses the ideology behind this move at the end of the bulletin and writes, "Das Ende der Klassenherrschaft ist notwendigerweise auch das Ende der Herrschaft des Mannes über die Frau" (105)⁴¹. This quote is essentially an abridged version of Engel's argument in the whole of *Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und der Staat*. The women in this story are aware of what the state ideology should provide them, and are also therefore aware of the hypocrisy behind the patriarchal laws set in place. The act of witchcraft which placed Milda in Arnold's body would not have been necessary if it were not for the false equality in the GDR.

Ultimately the women are unsuccessful in their attempt to gain control of the community. The fact that Milda and Arnold are returned to their original sexes is symbolic of this failure⁴². Through a string of misfortune, Blawasch is killed and her death reverses the curse set upon Milda and Arnold. Despite these unfulfilled plans, Arnold cannot shake off his experience, and it haunts him. This story is different than the others because 1) we do not live it through the perspective of the female character and 2) the monstrous femininity is embodied by a character who does not undergo a mysterious transformation like in the other two stories. Regardless, "Das Rübenfest" very obviously uses the motif of witches to address the topic of unrealized equality. In this way, monstrous femininity is still shown to be a product of the illusion of gender equality.

Conclusion

Monstrous femininity in German art is not unique to this story. Starting with the art, expressionist films of the Weimar Republic, monstrous femininity has continued throughout

⁴¹ The end of class rule is inevitably also the end of the rule of man over woman.

⁴² Here one can also see a connection to "Selbstversuch" because both transformations ultimately fail.

horror film and literature. Discussing the role of women in horror films is a useful tool to understand the larger social anxieties at play in any given culture. This strategy has been underutilized in the context of the German Democratic Republic. While many scholars analyze these stories through a science fiction lens, I believe that they are better suited to the horror genre. Science fiction and horror function in similar ways, in that they allow for more freedom in critique since they seem removed from reality. The largest difference, I believe, is that horror deals with hidden truths that have been repressed in a way that science fiction does not. In a society that repressed so many truths apart from just the equality of the genders, horror is the perfect genre to encapsulate this environment. I have only scratched the surface of this possible field of thought. One could also look at the professor as a horror figure because of his similarity to the mad scientist figure of some horror stories dealing with unnatural births/origins. The doppelgänger analysis also opens up the discussion of the East versus West German dichotomy; the doubling of Germany itself. More should be written about the relationship between the horror genre and East Germany because it opens up so many possible interpretations of texts that could give greater insight into what life was like in the GDR.

The monstrous figures like doppelgängers and witches in the *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel* anthology tell us a great deal about the role of women in East German society. In a supposed utopia, these figures should not exist. Based on Marxist ideology on which the GDR was founded, the institution of marriage should not have existed. Despite this fact, the laws set women up to live life with two distinct roles giving no thought to legislating the roles of the man and father. This illusion of gender equality is what leads to the doppelgänger and witches that one sees in these texts. While no GDR literature that I have found has been characterized as horror, I believe that there is at least one work that fits in this genre: *Blitz aus heiterm Himmel*.

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