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In the Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina*

Abstract

Bachmann's novel *Malina* is about the absence of a female voice. The unnamed female I of this novel defines herself with respect to two male figures. Malina is her *Doppelgänger*, the voice of male reason which women must assume if they wish to speak at all. In relationship to Ivan, her lover, the I constitutes herself as traditionally feminine and suffers the agonies of romantic love. Though evidently miserable, the I must represent herself as content with her position between these two men, simply inversions of one another. Yet the novel also contains another story of the I which cannot be given coherent narrative form, for there is no way to speak who she really is. In the middle section of the novel, entitled «The Third Man,» the I gives expression to her distress and pain in a series of nightmares, in which her father, termed by Bachmann «the murderer whom we all have,» figures as her tormentor. That which patriarchy does not allow to speak here cries out nonetheless. Moreover, counterposed to and subversive of the patriarchal subsumption of women is an archaic and Utopian fantasy of sensual joy and freedom which threads its way through the novel. Though the I disappears at the end of the novel, female desire can't be completely silenced. Contemporary feminists thus can use Bachmann by turning this promise of future happiness against the present misery of women which *Malina* depicts.

Keywords

Bachmann, *Malina*, absence, female voice, *Doppelgänger*, male reason, identity, The Third Man, nightmares, tormentor, patriarchy, Utopian fantasy, female desire

**IN THE CEMETERY OF THE
MURDERED DAUGHTERS:
INGEBORG BACHMANN'S *MALINA***

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But do you see, she said, he forgot that on the spot where he erased her she remained anyway. She can be read from it because nothing's there where she's supposed to be.

Bachmann, *Der Fall Franza*¹

Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina* is about the absence of a female voice; in some respects it reads like an illustration of the feminist theory which has evolved since its publication to explain why, within Western discourse, women are permitted no voice and subjectivity of their own. It may be that feminism is the collective struggle of women to constitute that voice, but that battle has barely begun. In what voice, then, does a female scholar write about the absence of a female voice? I have realized that my struggle with *Malina*, Bachmann's struggle to write it, and the struggle she describes in it are part of the larger war in which we women (against our will and often without our conscious knowledge) are combatants—and which may have killed Bachmann. «Our bodies, falling, will dam that great river of sexism,» Tillie Olsen said last year at the MLA, «and over us others will pass.» Feminist literary scholars still speak mostly with that sovereign (male) voice which explains the literary text to less astute readers (What other choice do we have, particularly given our precarious position at the edge of academics?—We have to play by their rules.) But *Malina* shows what women lose when they try to accommodate themselves to the categories of male subjectivity. Though Bachmann is without solu-

tions herself, we feminists can read her novel as part of our struggle to challenge those categories within which we have no right to speak as women, and to construct some other, more authentic, female voice.

Bachmann explained in a 1972 interview that her novel *Malina*, published in the previous year, had provided her with solutions to problems of composition with which she had struggled for years. With *Malina* as opening or overture, she could proceed with her work in progress, a mammoth novel cycle entitled «*Todesarten*»: «I wrote almost a thousand pages before this book, and these last 400 pages from the very last years became the beginning that I had always lacked. I didn't find the entrance to that book—and for me this has now become the book which makes my access to the «Ways of Death» possible.»² How, the interviewer asks, did she happen upon the double figure of Malina and the *Ich* of the novel?

For me it's one of the oldest, if almost inaccessible memories: that I always knew I had to write this book—very early already, while I was still writing poems. That I constantly searched for the main character. That I knew: it would be male. That I could only narrate from the standpoint of a male character. But I often asked myself: Why? I didn't understand, in the stories either, why I so often had to use a male «I». It was like finding my character to be able not to deny this female «I» and nonetheless to emphasize the male «I»...³

Of all the authors mentioned in *Malina*, not a single one is a woman: for Bachmann, there *is* no female narrative voice. At the end of the novel, the female *Ich* disappears into a crack in the wall, and only Malina is left. «It was murder» (III, 337), reads the novel's last line. «Malina will be able to tell us,» Bachmann explains, the 'I,' left behind for him.» what the other part of his character,⁴ These are the «*Todesarten*,» told in Malina's male voice, experienced by the female *Ich* and the cause of her destruction.

The novel *Malina* itself has been badly received and ill-understood since its publication in 1971. Most recently, Marcel Reich-Ranicki called it Bachmann's «late, incidentally weak and confused novel;»⁵ in the latest installment of the *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* Bernd Witte gives

probably the most accurate assessment of the novel yet, but in his limited space must ignore most of the work's difficulty.⁶ But *Malina* is a difficult work, and its relative inaccessibility is tied very closely to its subject matter. Before her death, Bachmann published another volume of prose, the short story collection *Simultan*, which seems to be part of the «*Todesarten*» cycle, since its characters appear also in *Malina* and the cycle's unfinished novels. In 1978, four volumes of Bachmann's collected works appeared, including the mostly completed novel *Der Fall Franza*, the novel fragment *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*, and some longer fragments whose position in the larger cycle is not clear. The *Werke* also contain Bachmann's essays from the fifties and sixties. From these various writings, it is possible to conclude a great deal about Bachmann's purposes for the «*Todesarten*» in general and *Malina* in particular, why these subjects were ones which concerned Bachmann from the time she began writing, and why, most specifically, the struggle to find a narrative voice to tell the «*Todesarten*» realized itself in a text which took the shape of *Malina*.

Trained as a philosopher at the University of Vienna by one of the last of the grand old men of logical positivism,⁷ Bachmann explored her concern with the possibilities of language from her student days onward. From the beginning, however, her examination of language was an idiosyncratic one, more akin to the concerns of present-day poststructuralism than to mainstream logical positivism, as her two essays from the fifties on Wittgenstein show. For what interests Bachmann most about Wittgenstein is not his analysis of what language *can* say, but what it can't: «The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.» For Wittgenstein, a mystical appropriation of the world is also possible which does not participate in the limitations of language: «There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical.» What Bachmann finds in Wittgenstein is the possibility of a response to the world which transcends the categories of occidental reason, as she quite explicitly indicates in her radio essay.

FIRST SPEAKER: Does Wittgenstein not in fact come to the same conclusion as Pascal? Let's hear what the author of the *Pensées* said three hundred years before him: «The last step of reason is the recognition that there is an infinitude of things that surpass it.»

SECOND SPEAKER: Wittgenstein took this last step of

reason. He who says like Wittgenstein: «God does not reveal himself in the world» says also implicitly «Vere tu es deus absconditus.» For about what should one keep silent if not about that beyond limits—about the hidden god, about the ethical and aesthetic as mystical experiences of the heart which take place in the unsayable. (IV, 120)

Moreover, Bachmann pursues this line of thought in Wittgenstein's work into his later *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, where she identifies his project as an attempt to abolish the language of philosophy, understood as a system of abstract categories, and substitute for it some other way of speaking which is closer to the texture of daily life: «It is Wittgenstein's conviction that philosophy has to be brought to rest by us so that it is no longer tormented by questions which place *it itself* in question, and he believed that we can silence the problems if our language functions well and sensibly, if it lives and breathes in *use*. Only where language, which is a form of life, is taken out of use, where it runs dry—and that happens, in his opinion, when it is used philosophically, in the usual sense—do problems come about. These problems are not to be solved, but rather to be gotten rid of» (IV, 124). Using metaphors which will emerge again in the «*Todesarten*,» Bachmann argues that Wittgenstein's philosophy will undertake a healing of the sickness which philosophical problems now represent. «And since language is a labyrinth of ways—as he terms it at another point—philosophy must take up the struggle against the bewitching of our understanding through language. Philosophy must destroy castles in the air and reveal the basis of language, it must be like a therapy, for philosophical problems are sicknesses which have to be healed. It's not a solution, but a cure that he calls for» (IV, 124). The implications of what Bachmann hints at here are far-reaching: she points towards fundamental and inherent defects of our present language (which is to say, of the entire mode of thought that we know), which her choice of metaphor allies with the human body or psyche («therapy,» «sickness») and which can be overcome only through some transformation in the present condition of language/philosophy, that is, of present human categories of thought.

But Bachmann's essays also identify ways of speaking already outside the categories of Western reason. Particularly interesting is her essay on Georg Groddeck, to whom her short story «Ihr

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glücklichen Augen» in *Simultan* is dedicated. Groddeck, a psychoanalyst slightly older than Freud and loosely allied with him, originated the term «It» («Id») which represented for him the speech of the body. For Groddeck, Bachmann explains, a physical symptom «is a production, like an artistic one, and sickness means something. It wants to say something, it says it by its particular way of appearing, running its course, and disappearing or ending fatally. It says what the sick person doesn't understand, although it's his most particular expression...» Passionately, Bachmann speaks of Groddeck's recognition of the power of the It over the relatively powerless ego: «The *It* is a word he uses for lack of better, it's not a thing in itself but is supposed to mean something's there, it's there and stronger and much stronger than the ego, for the ego can't even intentionally intervene in breathing, in digestion, in blood circulation, the ego is a mask, a pretension with which all of us go about, and we are ruled by the *It*, the *It* does that, and it speaks through sickness in symbols.» (IV, 352). Important here is Bachmann's insistence that human desire cannot be contained, though its needs refuse the categories which the ego has accepted, and her allying of the speech, the attempt to signify, of Groddeck's It to artistic productions, where that which the ego had not wanted to say or known it was saying can break through into signifying material and speak itself behind the back, against the will, of the signifying subject.

Finally, a variety of Bachmann's essays from this earlier period as well as several short stories and her radio play *Der gute Gott von Manhattan* address head on the role of Eros as source both of resistance to this social order and of the possible articulation of some alternative to it. The subversive power of Eros is also associated with the mysticism on which she had touched in the Wittgenstein essay, a mode of articulation beyond the borders of language. The influence of Critical Theory is apparent here, not simply Marcuse, but also Bloch: love is a concrete utopia which points towards some future social order less hostile to human happiness. However, to understand the relevance of these utopian love affairs for the «*Todesarten*» it is also necessary to recognize that they are anti-social, contravening fundamental social taboos, and this dimension of the revolt of desire is exactly what constitutes their utopianism. Bachmann's radio essay on Proust, whom she terms a «positivist and mystic» (IV, 180), concentrates mainly on the theme of homosexuality in his work: «The latent revolt of the individual against society, nature against morality, lead him to the

conception of the 'homme traqué,' the hounded, surrounded human being of whom the invert is only an especially clear example» (IV, 160). As Bachmann explains it, the love of Musil's Ulrich for his sister Agathe more clearly still elaborates a utopian alternative with explicit social relevance. This love is an alternative, ecstatic, quasi-mystical condition of mind which, though not itself applicable to a changed social order, fulfills its function in negating and disrupting the present dominant order: «It's true that the 'other condition' leads from society into absolute freedom, but now Ulrich knows that the utopia of this other life makes no prescriptions for the practice of life and for a life in society has to be replaced by the utopia of the given social condition—Musil calls it that of the 'inductive attitude.' But both utopias bring about the replacement of closed ideologies with open ones» (IV, 27). Moreover—and this is of major importance for the «*Todesarten*»—for Bachmann the order of thought that Ulrich's ecstasy opposes, those closed ideologies, has a direct and causal connection to war, a term which here includes not just the national conflicts of the twentieth century, but the general state of contemporary society: «Not only the case of Kakania has shown that thinking in closed ideologies leads directly to war, and the permanent war of faith is still the order of the day» (IV, 27).

A variety of Bachmann's earlier creative writings also locate a basic resistance to the dominant order of thought in love, so that to pursue this love would be almost to foment revolution, to change the world utterly: «Ein Schritt nach Gomorrah,» «Ein Wildermuth,» «Undine geht» from *Das dreifigste Jahr*. But though with the exception of «Ein Schritt nach Gomorrah» these loves are taboo only in that they are illicit, what is important to notice with respect to the particular relevance of these stories to the «*Todesarten*» is that the promise of satisfaction for which desire longs is embodied in women. In *Der gute Gott von Manhattan*, love is «the other condition» and a «border crossing» (I, 317), which Jan, the man, cannot sustain. He retreats to a corner bar, «relapsed, and for a moment order reached out its arms to him» (I, 327). Jennifer, the woman, keeps the faith, and is blown sky-high by the Good God to reestablish his divine, patriarchal normality.

It is not clear (nor does it matter much) whether a coherent theory underlies these various concerns of Bachmann's earlier writing—though it is hard to believe that this erudite woman, with her particular interests in philosophy, psychology, and language,

did not follow the latest developments in European thought in the sixties and seventies. But, in any case, that theory exists now (a theory which addresses the problem of coherence and incoherence), and can be used to explain the conjuncture of interests that meet in the «*Todesarten*.» For even the most superficial reading of Bachmann's late prose should make clear *who* is being killed in these various ways (and also that «Tod» can be the death of the spirit as well as of the body): women. Recent feminist theory, drawing particularly on the work of Derrida and Lacan, argues that the oppression of women is structured into the fundamental categories of our thought, which must be transformed if women are to achieve an autonomous subjectivity of their own. This order, as Derrida argues, is logocentric, predicated on the assertion of a logos, a central term or presence-to-itself (whose name has varied historically: God, essence, substance, consciousness, man, etc.) against which all other terms are measured. The laws of logocentricity which structure all our thought are learned through the child's appropriation of language and comprise its fundamental categories. But as Lacanian psychoanalysis maintains, through this entry into language infants are also constituted as gendered human beings: to take on language means to accede to the channelling of infant desire into socially appropriate expressions and to assume one's proper place in the gendered order. For women, this means to accept both the preeminence of the phallus, Lacan's «transcendental signifier,» and the «fact» of their own castration. So long as they fail to revolt against this order, women logically and in fact will be associated with the negative term of a logocentric and phallogocentric order: object, nature, other, absence, silence, lack. Derrida's endeavor is of course to deconstruct self-identity, presence-to-itself, by showing that it was never that which it asserted itself to be. Bachmann's intent in the «*Todesarten*» and more particularly in *Malina*, I would like to argue here, is a similar one. This work, with which she struggled for so long, shows that the destruction of women—though it be a destruction they accept themselves—is a necessary consequence of the order in which they live. But even as they are destroyed, they speak, cry out, rebel: their desire will not be completely contained. Feminism barely existed when Bachmann died in 1973, and she can only conceive of women as victims. Perhaps we are farther than that today—but it is important that we know what she has to tell us.

The dilemma that Bachmann confronts and represents in

Malina involves women's place in the symbolic order. How can it be possible for her, a woman, to write about women when exactly what she wishes to assert makes her own position as woman wielding the pen impossible? This awareness of oneself as a contradiction in terms traces its way through *Malina* in recurrent phrases which express both extraordinary pain and perseverance: «Those who have to live a Why can endure almost any How» and, most poignantly, in view of Bachmann's own death by fire, «Avec ma main brûlée, j'écris sur la nature du feu.» Damaged herself, she will insist on overcoming her injuries to write of their causes. But what voice does she assume? In her introduction to *The Lesbian Body*, Monique Wittig addressed this problem of the lack of a female I in our language: subjectivity is generically human, which is to say male, in Western thought:

'I' [*Je*] as a generic feminine subject can *only* enter by force into a language which is foreign to it, for all that is human [*masculine*] is foreign to it, the human not being feminine grammatically speaking but he [*il*] or they [*ils*]. «I» [*Je*] conceals the sexual differences of the verbal persons while specifying them in verbal interchange. 'I' (*Je*) obliterates the fact that *elle* or *elles* are submerged in *il* or *ils*, i.e. that the feminine persons are complementary to the masculine persons. The feminine 'I' [*Je*] who is speaking can fortunately forget this difference and assume indifferently the masculine language. But the 'I' [*Je*] who writes is driven back to her specific experience as subject. The 'I' [*Je*] who writes is alien to her own writing at every word because this 'I' [*Je*] uses a language alien to her; this 'I' [*Je*] experiences what is alien to her since this 'I' [*Je*] cannot be 'un écrivain'. If, in writing *je*, I adopt this language, this *je* cannot do so. J/e is the symbol of the lived, rending experience which is m/y writing, of this cutting in two which throughout literature is the exercise of a language which does not constitute m/e as subject. J/e poses the ideological and historic question of feminine subjects.⁸

Wittig drew attention to her problem by orthographic splitting; Bachmann's solution is analogous, as we will see.

Moreover, if another writing is necessary to even begin to examine the possibility of the female articulation of subjectivity, it is clear that, for us, another, different, reading will be entailed as

well—as feminist critics, most brilliantly Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, have begun to argue. For, as Gilbert and Gubar point out, what traditional scholarship regards as the strangeness of women's writing may result both from their own difficulty in writing with a male «I» and from the necessity to transform male narrative to fit the forms of female lives:

They [women writers] may have attempted to transcend their anxiety of authorship by *revising* male genres, using them to record their own dreams and their own stories *in disguise*. Such writers, therefore, both participated in and...«swerved» from the central sequences of male literary history, enacting a uniquely female process of revision that necessarily caused them to seem «odd.»...[W]omen...produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible, (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning.⁹

No doubt, many scholarly difficulties with Bachmann's writing result from the attempt to understand it in terms of exactly those categories that Bachmann is trying to subvert. Cited in the center of Bachmann's novel is the Ibsen play which also gives its title to Adrienne Rich's famous essay on female creativity. Rich's essay begins: «Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* is a play about the use that the male artist and thinker—in the process of creating culture as we know it—has made of women, in his life and in his work, and about a woman's slow struggling awakening to the use to which her life has been put.» Women in the «*Todesarten*» rarely awaken to an understanding of the male order (though they often cry out in their sleep), but a feminist reading of Bachmann's late works could be part of our awakening. Rich continues:

Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how

we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how can we begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh.¹⁰

This, evidently, is part of Bachmann's purpose in *Malina*.

To begin this strange book is already to be put off balance. The «Malina» of the title appears to be the first name of a woman but is identified in the initial cast of characters as the last name of a man. (There are in fact plenty of last-name Malinas in the Vienna phone book, yet it is clear that this confusion is intentional.) The *Ich*, whose female identity emerges only slowly, has no name at all, though shares some qualities with Bachmann herself: «born in Klagenfurt» (III, 12). But Malina also has some characteristics which, ironically transformed are reminiscent of Bachmann: «Author of an apocrypha which is no longer available in bookstores and of which a few copies were sold in the late fifties» (III, 11). Apocrypha: writings of doubtful authenticity or authorship. Malina's occupation puts him in his place once and for all: «employed in the Austrian Army Museum» (III, 11), to preside over the relics and mementoes of past wars, of an empire and way of life which has already succumbed to history. (Elsewhere in the novel the *Ich* remarks of Vienna: «I am very glad to live here, for from this spot of the world where nothing happens anymore it is much more deeply horrifying to see the world, not self-righteous, not self-satisfied, because this isn't a protected island, but rather there's decline at every spot, it's decline everywhere, with the decline of present and future empires before my eyes» [III, 96].) Though Malina is presented as an independent character and continues to be elaborated as one throughout the novel, it is clear early on that there is something odd about his relationship to the *Ich*:

My relationship to Malina for years consisted of awkward encounters, the hugest misunderstandings and some stupid daydreams—I mean, of much huger misunderstandings than those with other people. It's true that from the beginning I was placed *under* him, and I must have known early that he would be my undoing, that Malina's place was already occupied by Malina before he established himself in my life.

Bachman has made clear enough in a number of interviews that Malina is the double of the *Ich* (though, she says, the reader need not necessarily grasp the relationship to appreciate the novel), and that he represents male subjectivity, a position which a woman must occupy, a guise which she must assume, according to the rules of this social order, if she is to possess any subjectivity at all. It does not make sense within a Freudian paradigm to assert, as Walter Helmut Fritz does, that Malina is sometimes a super-ego for the *Ich*;¹² among other things, he is far too nice to her. To be quite clear: Malina is the persona that women must assume when they enter the project world; they must become the genderless (that is to say, male), liberal, bourgeois subject, suppressing their female qualities. Malina is the voice in which Bachmann mostly narrates, the only voice available to professional and academic women, and the voice in which I am writing this essay, a borrowed voice, not our own.

Now, it is apparent that the invention of Malina solves a good many problems for both Bachmann and the *Ich*. In the voice of Malina, Bachmann can narrate the rest of the «*Todesarten*» in a form apparently coherent, realistic, and accessible—as various reviewers remarked with relief of *Simultan*.¹³ If Malina does not break with the categories of the order he depicts, he nonetheless gives account of the tragedies it occasions with kindness and compassion. Bachmann's fondness for her figure is evident in the Kienlechner interview: «There is an important place in the book for me where the «*Ich*» says that Malina is not out for the demasking that we know from literature, that x-ray glance at people which humiliates them, that Malina does not look through people but looks at them, that he's fair to everyone—for otherwise irony can easily lead to diminishing people...»¹⁴ But though Malina moves in the direction of a nineteenth-century narrator, the moral burden of what he has to tell us is none the weaker for that; it is only that we must read the moral out of his narratives. In drafts for the figure of Malina published in the *Werke*, Bachmann makes his moral purpose clear. Observing, for instance, the wreckage of a civilization at the Frankfurt Book Fair, Malina thunders his wrath like an Old Testament prophet:

You hear, I obey an old language and old concepts, I look back like all people who gaze at what has happened and are turned rigid, and perhaps an angel will tell you in time,

don't look back, and then you won't see Frankfurt consumed in smoke and sulphur vapors, as I see it consumed today and twice every year, for vengeance has come. Not mine, for I have come to tell and not to judge, but judging haunts all the stories, and crying in the smoke and it ascends to heaven and is told.¹⁹(III, 552-3)

Malina tells; we judge.

For the female *Ich* in Bachmann's novel, Malina is also a convenient figure, a kind of reality principle. He is the one who pays the bills, remembers appointments, keeps her affairs in order. He is also the calm and soothing voice of male reason, who comforts her when she awakens in terror from her nightmares. What would we do without him, especially in the middle of the night? It is foolishness, nonsense, forget it and go back to sleep. (Or, at least as often: the voice of a sovereign male reason which, in a sober and distanced way, tries to analyze the psychological motives for the terror which emerges in the dreams: «I'm pursuing the matter. Why is your ring missing? Have you ever worn a ring? But you never wear a ring» [III, 220].) Lina, the cleaning lady, who is a further splitting off from Malina, is also a useful figure: she is clean and orderly and can move furniture all by herself, that autonomous, if subservient, super-woman: «Men, Madame, we don't need any men for that!» (III, 119).

But there are also disadvantages when a woman assumes a male persona, something like the «double consciousness» of black people which W.E.B. DuBois described: we know who we are seen to be, we know what we assert ourselves to be, we have some idea of who we are—and those are not the same thing. The tension involved in holding together these disparate parts of the personality is difficult to sustain. What a fortune teller reads out of the palm of the *Ich* is no surprise to her:

She said an incredible tension could be read from it at a glance, it really wasn't the picture of one person, but rather of two who contrasted in the most extreme way with each other, I must be constantly rent to pieces, given these aspects, if I'd given her the right dates. I asked politely: the rent man, the rent woman, right? Separately, Mrs. Novak thought, it was livable, but the way it is, hardly, plus the male and the female,

reason and emotion, productivity and self-destruction stood out in a remarkable way. I must have been wrong about the dates, for she liked me at once, I was such a natural woman, she likes natural people. (III, 248)

Of course she is a natural woman; hanging on despite the fact that this tension has become second nature to us. But an even more critical disadvantage to asserting (and believing) ourselves to be generically human and not specifically female is that we have no access to the female side of ourselves. Subsumed in the male, we do not attend to it, and cannot tell about it. It is in good part because Malina exists, as a dimension of the *Ich* to which she clings, that she has no narrative voice, as she sometimes recognizes: «Malina interrupts me, he protects me, but I believe that his protectiveness leads to my never being able to tell my story. It is Malina who keeps me from telling my story» (III, 265). As in Christa Wolf's story «Selbstversuch,» for women to become men seems the most obvious solution to centuries of women's oppression. But it may also mean that women lose what is most important to them.

Yet to demonize men as somehow ontologically incompatible with the female is also too easy a solution. As it has been the burden of deconstruction to show, male subjectivity is not altogether unproblematic or identical with itself, either. How much more this must then be the case of a male subjectivity assumed by a woman! Examined more closely, Malina himself is also a suspicious figure; perhaps it's for this reason that he can narrate the »*Todesarten*« at all. As Rainer Nägele has pointed out, «Shuffled anew, the letters of the name produce an ANIMAL which, if you cut off its tail, spiritualizes itself into an ANIMA.»¹⁶ An «animal» is hidden in Malina, a metaphor which Bachmann also pursued in her short story «Das Gebell,» where the old woman finally rebelling in her senility against her tyrannical son is overwhelmed by the imaginary barking of the dog her son had hated (It is also interesting that, in her loving topography of Vienna's Third District, the one large landmark the *Ich* suppresses is the Tierärztliche Hochschule, right around the corner from the Ungargasse). Malina also has a female double in the novel, Maria Malina, a Viennese actress much more famous than he, her male name combining the two most popular stereotypes about women, sainthood plus carnality: Maria Animal. In the drafts for the Malina figure, Maria Malina, «who on stage was a dream, an animal,» is

revealed—by a male narrator—to be «unassuming» in real life: «a vehemence, a silence, a sob, a smile, those stooped shoulders and big feet and her nose was rather thick, she didn't have make-up on, she had a bad complexion and too thick a nose, and she wasn't thin and wasn't fat, a medium-sized body, not unrobust, and her hair was greasy, stringy, dishwater blond, that was the Malina woman...» (III, 534). A woman must be a consummate artist to meet men's expectations of her, and her reality is bound to disappoint them. Maria Malina is eaten by a shark at age thirty-four—or this, at least was the report given by the man with whom she had travelled to Greece, the only witness to her death. Malina has experienced 'Todesarten,» too.

The *Ich*'s first encounter with Malina is also an interesting allusion to his lack of self-identity and to the possibility of suppressed psychic qualities emerging into male bourgeois consciousness which could destroy all its achievements. If Bachmann's name itself reveals the split personality to which *Malina* gives expression, the «Bach,» fluidity of the female, channelled by the masculine, «Mann,» it is a «Mann»—Thomas—whose themes *Malina* varies in displaying its own problems with a threatened and dying society to which no alternative seems to offer itself. The *Ich* first glimpses Malina in a scene which draws upon the experiences of Gustav von Aschenbach (who shares a portion of Bachmann's name and combines the fire and water motifs that trace their way through *Malina*): she waits for a streetcar on the edge of a park (the Stadtpark, which, as I will show later, represents the allure and threat of psychic non-differentiation), boards, and looks about for Malina, who has vanished. But of course the figures are reversed here: it is Malina who represents the firm male ego boundaries which will be confirmed at the end of this work, though dissolved at the end of Mann's. Malina is first observed with a newspaper in his hand: he has the access to the language of social communication (here somewhat debased) which Aschenbach also possesses and which is lacking this female *Ich*. Moreover, this *Ich* will never even make it to Venice. Though it represents as for Aschenbach the promise of sensual fulfillment, the *Ich* must experience it as distinct and separate from herself, in the «movie theater behind the Kärntnerring in which I saw Venice for the first time, immersed in colors and in much darkness, the strokes of the oars into the water, a music moved with lights through the water, and its dadim, dadam drew me along over into the figures, the double figures and their

dance steps. Thus had I come to the Venice that I will never see, on a windy, rattling winter day in Vienna» (III, 26). Of yet more central importance to *Malina* is the opposition which is central to Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, of Beethoven and Schönberg. If Adrian Leverkühn's masterwork, «Fausti Weheklage,» is written to rescind Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, to remand that joyful affirmation of a social order, Bachmann's «*Todesarten*» aim at the same intention. Across from the house where this silenced female *Ich* lives, Ungargasse 6, is Ungargasse 5, the Beethovenhaus, where the deaf Beethoven wrote his Ninth Symphony. Yet the central musical composition whose thematics shape Bachmann's work is by the figure whom Mann construed as Beethoven's negation, Schönberg. But as I will explain in more detail below, the Schönberg work, «*Pierrot lunaire*,» on which *Malina* draws, not only negates current cultural categories like Leverkühn's composition but also hints simultaneously at some other, utopian possibilities for human happiness.

By far the most intriguing indication that *Malina* is more than he appears to be is found here in a reference to the work of Bachmann's admirer Christa Wolf, whose work circles about many of the same themes as Bachmann's own. In *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, the one extended narrative which Christa T., that thwarted and utopian figure, is able to write is entitled «*Malina, die Himbeere*,» and involves a journey of a thirteen-year-old girl to Kalisch, then (in 1940) a district of Russian Poland occupied by the Nazis. The young narrator insists she is travelling to a foreign country, though her mother maintains it is German. The story breaks off with their arrival in Kalisch. «Now one ought to know why she stopped at this point, the narrator of *Christa T.* continues. What was to be the outcome of the Polish strawberry [sic: *Himbeer* = raspberry]—*Malina*—for which she had raised the whole magic structure, with Brockhaus 1889, the journey to a foreign country which wasn't any such journey, her mother and herself, talking and replying...you asked what testimony I've got. Well: the tone of these pages of hers, for example. She speaks so you can see her.¹⁷ To speak about and across borders which are not physical ones is a task of female writing, especially in a land occupied by a foreign invader, one whom Bachmann might even be inclined to define more precisely as fascist, as in Wolf's work.¹⁸ Christa T. couldn't write either; even the story «*Malina*» is unfinished, and she laments «the difficulty of saying I.» Nevertheless,

in Wittgensteinian terms, Christa T. does venture to cross some borders, and both the *Ich* of *Malina* and Malina himself come from the border, where the rigid boundaries each language sets become softened a little. This pressure on the limits of language is one of the themes and strengths of Bachmann's novel.

Yet perhaps this discussion of *Malina* has been somewhat misleading, for *Malina* is not, strictly speaking, whom the novel is about. The other and more overtly tyrannical figure in relationship to whom the *Ich* constitutes herself is Ivan, her lover, and it is this relationship which structures the novel: after a short introductory section, the first longer portion of the novel is called «Glücklich mit Ivan» and gives an account of their love affair. The middle section, «Der dritte Mann,» consists mainly of the *Ich*'s dreams of persecution, in which her father plays the major role. In the third section with its apocalyptic title «Von letzten Dingen,» the relationship with Ivan trails off and the disappearance of the *Ich* is prepared. As Bachmann pointed out in an interview, Ivan is also probably a kind of double for the *Ich*,¹⁹ which is to say, he also resides in the female psyche: he represents the tyranny of romantic love, of compulsory heterosexuality, whose laws women accept and interiorize. Like other lovers in Bachmann's works, Jan in *Der gute Gott von Manhattan* and «You monsters called Hans!» (II, 253) in «Undine geht,» Ivan is a «john,» a more or less interchangeable male lover. That is why, unlike *Malina* and the *Ich*, he is a signifier identical with his signified, or perhaps more accurately, a signifier without a signified, as the *Ich* remarks: *Malina* and I have, for all our differences, the same shyness about our names, only Ivan is completely subsumed in his name...» (III, 86). For the same reason Bachmann could assert in an interview (though what she says is not quite true), «We never learn: what did Ivan do before, what will he do later, what's going to happen at all, who is this man?»²⁰ In the final section of the novel, Bachmann makes extremely clear that for women loving a john is a far from idyllic or utopian experience, nor does it allow women the exploration and elaboration of their own sensuality and eroticism. Men make love as suits their tastes, and their female partners must arrange themselves as best they can:

People are happy sometimes, but certainly most women are never happy. What I mean has nothing to do with the fact that there are supposed to be a few good lovers, for there aren't any. That's a legend that ought to be destroyed some-

day, at best there are men with whom it's completely hopeless and a few with whom it isn't quite so hopeless. That's where the reason should be sought which nobody's looked for yet, why only women always have their heads full of their feelings and their stories with their man or their men. Thinking about it really does take up most of every woman's time. But she has to think about it because otherwise, without her never tiring emotional activity, emotional ferment, she literally could never stand it with a man who after all is sick and scarcely concerns himself with her.

«A Legend» «literally»—love is an elaborate symbolic system, a game or dance, the responsibility for which falls on women, who nevertheless do not expect their sick male lovers to make them happy.

This illness leads to the heart of Bachmann's argument: all men are sick, and all women must come to terms with these diseased gender arrangements: «one could say that the whole attitude of a man towards a woman is sick and moreover sick in a very particular way, so that one will never be able to free men from their sicknesses. Of women one could at best say that they are more or less marked by the contagious infections that they contract, by their sympathy with the malady» (III, 269). It is this sickness which Bachmann's «*Todesarten*» are directed at revealing, as she has made quite clear in interviews. Thus, asked of *Malina*, «Then one should understand it as a document of contemporary existence, of human beings who are themselves destroyed by this destruction—as one of their ways of death? «she replied,» Yes, there is a correspondence between their sickness and the sickness of the world and the society.»²¹ A closer examination of the love between Ivan and the *Ich* will reveal the far-reaching implications of this sickness.

It is important to notice the absences in this love affair. Love itself is rarely mentioned; never do they say «I love you.» Sex is never discussed and barely alluded to: this is not a relationship where a female subject discovers her *jouissance*. Even at the level of realism, this is obviously a miserable relationship, with the *Ich* steadfastly refusing to concede her own unhappiness; yet I would suspect that for most women this «Hörigkeit» is quite convincing: of course she will not break with him, for she loves him. Or one might formulate this somewhat differently: Ivan is the presence

that makes it possible to constitute reality, a «fix» which must be renewed for it to have its effect on her:

I think of Ivan.
I think of love.
Of the injections of reality.
Of their duration, only so few hours.
Of the next, the stronger injection. (III, 45)

For her, Ivan is «my Mecca and my Jerusalem» (III, 43); «Everything is of the brand of Ivan, of the house of Ivan» (III, 30). In this relationship the *Ich* is thoroughly female: «But, young lady, we are very feminine» (III, 140), says Ivan. But this is a femininity socially defined, offering her no more access to an authentic female voice than the assumption of Malina's male subjectivity. Ivan is a father with two children, but he is «the Only Begetter» (III, 95); the mother does not exist in this story. The children's names suggest some relationship to the original differentiation which makes language possible: Belá, Andras, b-a. But Ivan has accomplished this on his own, while the woman is absent and unnamed. The *Ich* regards Ivan's function for her to be the assurance of her entry into language. «For he has come to make the consonants firm and palpable again, to open the vowels again so that they sound fully, to allow words to emerge from my lips again, to reestablish the first, destroyed coherencies and to solve the problems, and so I will budge not an iota from him....» (III, 32). Yet the language Ivan gives her to speak is one in which women are permitted to exist only in relationship to men and have no independent voice of their own at all.

Ivan places a variety of limits on the *Ich's* right and ability to speak. The most frequent conversations reported between them are telephone calls (a «Verbindung,» connection, facilitated by the cord, always impossibly tangled, which connects her to him). At their best, the calls are banal and boring, mis-communication—the *Ich* running gasping and desperate to answer the telephone, then maintaining, in a futile endeavor to protect herself from him, that she really has no time to talk.²² Usually the telephone conversations reported are not even complete sentences, completely inadequate vehicles for conveying her emotions, precodified sets of propositions: «example sentences» «fatigue sentences,» «curse sentences.»

By the time we arrive at that last, ominous set of sentences, the self-

deception in the *Ich*'s assertion that she is «glücklich mit Ivan» is quite clear, for he directs the terms at her which men have often used to express their terror and loathing of women: «Witch,» «slut,» «carrion.» But Ivan insists that she nonetheless proclaim her happiness with him; in the language that it is given her to speak, all is well between men and women (All the books in the *Ich*'s huge library don't help her deal with Ivan—those books are written by men. The one book she needs is missing: a cookbook). Ivan explicitly forbids her to continue writing the drafts of the «*Todesarten*» he has found in her apartment:

I have left a few pages on the chair. He picks up another and reads with amusement: Ways of Death. And from another scrap of paper he reads: the Egyptian Darkness [a section of *Der Fall Franza*]. Isn't that your handwriting, didn't you write that? As I don't answer, Ivan says, I don't like that, I suspected as much, and all these books lying around here in this tomb, nobody wants them, why are there books like them, there should be other ones too, ones like EXSULTATE JUBILATE, so that people can jump out of their skins for joy, you often jump out of your skin for joy, so why don't you write that way. (III, 54)

And the *Ich* vows obediently henceforth to rejoice in and write about the bliss which this affair has brought her: «Ivan said to me: You probably have figured that out. I love nobody. The children, obviously, but nobody else. I nod, although I didn't know it and Ivan finds it obvious that I too find it obvious. JUBILATE. Hanging over an abyss, I nonetheless recall how it is supposed to begin. EXSULTATE» (III, 58). This «*Todesart*» can't be written either.

Since the *Ich* accepts the rules for entry into the symbolic order of compulsory heterosexuality, she constitutes herself according to the social rules of femininity even away from Ivan. There is great and painful irony in the scene in which the *Ich*, on her own, «fabulously distant from men,» nonetheless recreates herself as the woman the fashion industry has told her to become:

A composition comes into being, a woman must be created for an at-home outfit. In deep secrecy is planned again what a woman is, it's something completely primeval, with an aura for no one. The hair has to be brushed twenty times, the feet

rubbed with body lotion and the toenails polished, the hair on the legs and in the armpits has to be removed, the shower is turned on and off, a cloud of body powder rises in the bathroom, the mirror is gazed into, it is always Sunday, the mirror is interrogated, on the wall, it could be Sunday already. (III, 136).

The natural, independent woman: painted, powdered, dehaired, self-created as an image for the mirror on the wall, of which a woman asks—naturally?—«Who is the fairest of them all?» As John Berger argues, since women are born into a world which men control, they are constrained to become the observers of themselves, for how they appear determines how men will treat them. Women interiorize this doubleness and constitute themselves as comprising both «surveyor and surveyed.» «The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.»²³ Or one might theorize this scene as Susan Gubar does: such female narcissism exists for lack of other expressive possibilities. Without language, female creativity is expressed through the female body itself—though still within a referential system which pre-defines what those possibilities for creativity may be.²⁴

The *Ich* thus suffers from the dis-ease of misrepresentation—though it's the only representation she's got. We are warned not to believe anything she maintains about herself. It's clearly not the case that Ivan (or Ivan plus Malina) provides the solution to all her problems, nor is, contrary to her assertions, the Ungargasse the home for which she has longed. For a reader sensitized to issues of sexual politics, the irony in the following passage is very strong:

Here [between Ungargasse 6 and 9] the trembling nervousness, the high tension which lies over the city and presumably everywhere, is almost put to rest, and the schizothymia, the schizoid quality of the world, its insane, widening split closes unnoticeably. The only excitement is a hurried search for hair pins and stockings, a mild trembling while putting on mascara and applying eye shadow, while using the thin brushes for eyeliner, while dipping the airy cotton balls into light and dark powder. (III, 31)

Of course it is precisely this crack in the world into which *she* disappears at the end; the Ungargasse is not a refuge for her after all.²⁵ Before meeting Malina and Ivan, the *Ich* had lived in the Beatrixgasse, where she, if, à la Dante, participating in the male order, nonetheless preserved a certain virginal inaccessibility. Now she has moved around the corner to the Ungargasse, which derives its name from the penetration of foreigners into Vienna. Malina lives at 6, Ivan at 9; two men, simply inversions of one another, not different in quality. The *Ich* is un-gar, unfinished, undone. Neither of these male voices permits her to express herself at all.

Yet this isn't the complete story on the *Ich* (if it were, we'd have a different text: a female *Bildungsroman*, perhaps, or a Gothic love story). It is to her credit that, despite Ivan's urgings, she is not happy: she is not totally subsumed in the ideology of romantic love through which her identity had been constituted and does not write that book EXSULTATE JUBILATE. Her story speaks through her unhappiness, a sickness which moves towards madness. One is reminded of the statement by S. Weir Mitchell, cited as an epigraph to the second chapter of Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*: «The man who does not know sick women does not know women.»²⁶ It was, after all, his patient, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose protagonist in *The Yellow Wallpaper* also tries to disappear into the wall because her doctor, based on Weir Mitchell, had forbidden her to write. But what it is important to emphasize here is that the other story of the *Ich can't be told*: there is no language which this story can be told in. Like the female schizophrenics whom Luce Irigaray studied, there is no metalanguage for this dis-ease: «A woman in a state of madness does not have, for some reason, the means for elaborating a delirium. Instead of language being the medium of expression of the delirium, the latter remains within the body itself. The dominant element in feminine schizophrenia is corporal pain, the feeling of deformation or transformation of organs, etc.»²⁷ Repressed, it must struggle to speak in spite of the proscriptions upon expression, here not so much through symptoms of the body (though this is the case elsewhere in Bachmann, for instance in «Ihr glücklichen Augen») as in the dreams and parapraxes which Freud indicated to be the signifying material of the repressed. But there *is* no coherent narrative of the *Ich*: to argue that there is would be to recuperate her own distress and misunderstand Bachmann's novel. Instead, we need to look for places where the *Ich mis*-writes herself, «sich

verschreibt,» as Bachmann puts it.²⁸ At best, we can indicate some areas in which that which she cannot say tries nonetheless to speak.

The narrative structure of the book itself is one of those places. The central thematic concern structuring the traditional novel, the relationship of the individual to the social world, is the one that's missing here, except for one short, funny examination of the vacation habits of the Viennese upper crust. (So inclined, Bachmann can write social satire with the best of realist novelists. But there's an ominous undertone even here; it's hinted that the brilliant articulate women who oversee these social games have their dark side, too: «To Antoinette every man is a complete riddle» (III, 160); «What do you have to say about Christine's hysteria» (III, 162).) If the lack of coherent plot development or even of an identifiable narrative stance has been responsible for some of reviewers' and scholars' problems with the book, it's also an assertion of the lack of coherence available to the *Ich*. It's interesting, too, that this is the area of the novel which Bachmann identified as closest to experimental writing proper: «What I regard as experiments with prose the reader isn't bothered with, for my experiments land in the waste basket—although I certainly need them. But I don't believe they're there to be published. In this novel, which isn't a seamless narrative—it isn't that at all—there are quite different elements, from the dreams to the dialogue to the musical score-like ending—I call those a no longer visible experiment with narrative possibilities.»²⁹ But one might also regard these failure of the text to constitute a seamless narrative, and even those opaque and mysterious allusions which remain resistant to interpretation, as a utopian hint—though only a hint—in the direction of another, less oppressive discourse which feminists could make use of. In this reading of the text we might explore Bachmann's suggestion with respect to the complexity of her novel, «how interconnected it is, so that there's almost no sentence which doesn't refer to another one.»³⁰ This might be a logic of association and «both/and» rather than of causality and «either/or.» This might be a subjectivity which does not do violence to itself by asserting its self-identity but concedes its disunity and nonsynchrony. For, without, one hastens to add, giving up on reason altogether, a feminist voice, however it finally constitutes itself, will need to admit that which the binary oppositions of logocentricity haven't wished to permit within present patriarchal discourse.³¹

«But it's in the night and alone that the erratic monologues

come about, and they remain, for a human being is a dark creature, he is only master of himself in the darkness and by day he returns to slavery» (III, 101). Most clearly we discover that which the *Ich* can't say in the middle, dream section of the novel. Bachmann told Kienlechner, «We learn nothing about the life of this *I* or about what's happened to her—that's all in the dreams, partially concealed and partially expressed. Every conceivable kind of torture, destruction, harassment....»³² As these are dreams, even though literary ones, we cannot expect to be able to interpret them completely; indeed, as Freud cautioned, «We must not concern ourselves with what the dream *appears* to tell us, whether it is intelligible or absurd, clear or confused, since it cannot possibly be the unconscious material we are in search of.»³³ Nonetheless, as Bachmann suggests, not everything is concealed here, and some themes emerge which help us to understand the constraints of consciousness. The most obvious common element of these varied dreams is the father figure, who emerges again and again as the *Ich*'s persecutor and tormentor. Bachmann has stated explicitly that this omnipotent father is the figure who is responsible for the *Ich*'s destruction, her «murder»:

All the stories which are not included here because the *Ich* is not permitted to tell anything about herself—for her Doppelgänger forbids her to—they appear in the dreams, for instance the explanation for her destruction, for her almost having been annihilated by a prehistory brought about by the overpowerful father figure, about whom we discover that this figure is the murderer, and more precisely, the murderer whom we all have.³⁴

This is a patriarchal, an Oedipal tragedy which strikes all of us. Under threat of the most terrible of punishments, the deprivation of our sexuality, we submit ourselves to the Law of the Father which spells death to an independent desire expressing itself outside of socially prescribed channels.

From the first dream, from which I have borrowed the title of this essay, the crime for which the father is responsible emerges: its setting is «the cemetery of the murdered daughters» (III, 175), and he is the perpetrator of the «Todesarten.» Murder (along with lesser offenses) is accomplished in the greatest variety of ways. In the second dream she is gassed in a gas chamber; later she is

transported to Siberia with other Jews (more substantiation for Bachmann's association of patriarchy and fascism). She is frozen in ice and plunged into fire, subjected to electroshock, buried under an avalanche, electrocuted, and eaten by a crocodile. With yet clearer symbolism her dreams frequently refer to her incest with her father, a connection she regards with abhorrence, though Melanie, a recurrent figure who, analogous to Malina, is another of her doubles, is pleased enough at the advantages of the relationship. «Mela-Nie,» thinks the *Ich*. Her mother, who sometimes allies with the father, is a dog, «who devotedly lets herself be beaten» (III, 189). Her father directs an opera «My father went to the theater. God is a performance/conception (III, 181),» in which she is prepared to sing a duet with a young man, yet she recognizes «that in the duet only his voice could be heard anyway, because my father wrote the voice for him alone and naturally nothing for me, because I don't have any training and am only supposed to be displayed» (III, 188-9). In various ways he denies her speech: he will not permit delivery of letters to her friends and tries to gain control of the sentences dried on her tongue as she dies of thirst. But what is constant in these dreams is her resistance to her father and her refusal to be murdered: «Sometimes my voice abandons me: I allowed myself to live nonetheless. Sometimes my voice comes and can be heard by everyone: I live, I will live, I take my right to my life» (III, 231). By the end of these dreams, the *Ich* (with Malina's help) has understood that despite the apparently harmless ball scene from *War and Peace* which recurs in her dreams, what she has experienced here is only war, and the section concludes with this recognition:

Malina: So you will never again say: War and Peace.

Ich: Never again.

It is always war.

Here there is always violence.

Here there is always struggle.

It is eternal war. (III, 236)

If «der dritte Mann»—the title of this section—prevents her self-articulation like the other two, the *Ich* is at least left with the possibility of refusing their definition of her: «In another language I say Ne! Ne! And in many languages: Nein! Nein! Non! Non! Niet! Niet! No! Nem! Nem! No! For in our language, too, I can

only say no, otherwise I find no other word in a language» (III, 176-7).

The *Ich*'s waking life is also informed by a desire to write, to articulate herself, which cannot be fulfilled. Interspersed through the first and third sections of the book are letters by the *Ich* which represent her attempt to take up the pen. They are mostly written «in utmost fear and greatest haste,» a recurrent phrase which also characterizes, the *Ich* had reported in the introduction, the unity of time—«Today»—in which she is compelled to live. If the letters are completed at all, they are signed «an unknown.» At the beginning of the novel's third section the *Ich* explains that these mysterious and cryptic letters are connected to her experience of a postal crisis concerned with the mature of the «privacy of the mail (literally: letter secret)» Her own meditations on the «privacy of mail» and the unmailed letters mostly written deep in the night are released by the case of the letter carrier Otto Kranewitzer in Klagenfurt who, suddenly struck by the enormity of his postal duties, was no longer able to deliver the mail. For this crisis, the *Ich* asserts, is one with immense existential and ontological implications:

After the Kranewitzer case I burned my mail of many years, afterwards I began to write quite different letters, mostly late at night, until eight in the morning. But it's these letters, none of which I sent, which matter to me. In these four or five years I must have written around ten thousand letters, for me alone, in which there was everything. I also don't open many letters. I try to practice the letter secret, to bring myself to the height of this thought of Kranewitzer's, to grasp what is impermissible about reading a letter. (III, 243)

No doubt the «privacy of mail» is illuminated by a multilingual pun, the overlapping of the two meanings of letter/lettre in English and French. For the *Ich* had betrayed the secret earlier in the book to her baffled and frustrated interviewer Herr Mühlbauer, «I will reveal a frightful secret to you: language is the punishment» (III, 97).

Nonetheless, there are moments at which, despite herself, that which the *Ich* is forbidden to say breaks through into her waking language as well. The *Ich* recognizes (and tips us off to) the parapraxes which allow the repressed to emerge in this book: «Then I also began to read everything I read in a distorted way.

When 'summer fashions' was printed somewhere I read 'summer murders.' That's only one example. I could give you hundreds» (III, 209). Thus, it seems, we are also to look at the language of this book for that which is not supposed to be there. Reading closely, one can find, below the apparent narrative, some subterranean themes which tell a different story than the one the *Ich* intends. The «Pierrot lunaire» motif to which I have already referred is one of these. The first line from the last poem of the cycle which recurs through *Malina*—«O old fragrance from fairy tale times»—points in the direction of archaic reminiscences which the *Ich* has repressed and to which she now barely has access, having constituted herself in a different time, a present, «Today,» «a word that only people who commit suicide (of which, it appears, she is one) should be permitted to use» (III, 15). (The dreams in contrast deny synchronism altogether: «The time is not today. Time doesn't exist any more at all, for it could have been yesterday, a long time ago, it could be again, could be constantly, some of it never was.» [III, 174] Yet it seems that the *Ich* is able to resist these men at all only because of her archaic reminiscences of an original satisfaction now denied. The *Ich* first hears her Schönberg song sung by a «chalkwhite Pierrot with a squeaky voice» (III, 15) in the Stadtpark, to which neither Ivan nor Malina wish to accompany her and of which she herself is afraid, for it is a place of «shadows and dark figures» (III, 137), that is, a site of night and dreams: «the human being is only master of himself in the darkness.» The Stadtpark also seems to be the site of an original polymorphous perversity where in the immediate postwar period illicit sex of all varieties took place: «There can scarcely have been anyone who didn't encounter every man with every woman there» (III, 289). For the *Ich*, the Stadtpark is associated as well with water and with the fear of drowning, from which her men in the Ungargasse save her:

I am in safety again, no longer near the nocturnal city park, hurrying past house walls, no longer on the detour in the darkness, but already a little at home, on the plank of the Ungargasse, my head saved in Ungargasse-land, with my neck out of the water a little, too. Already gurgling the first words and sentences, already beginning, already starting. (III, 138)

The *Ich* flees water, which may suggest to her the «oceanic feeling» before psychic differentiation and the more fluid ego boundaries of

the female. Instead, she's chosen to associate herself with Malina, whom she imagines to be a phallic hero creating order out of watery chaos, allowing, so the legend has it, Klagenfurt (a ford of lamentations?) to arise from suspiciously female swamps, Klagenfurt, the city where she was born: «But I most liked to let him be Saint George, who killed the dragon so that Klagenfurt could arise, from the great swamp in which nothing grows, so that my first city could come out of it....» (III, 21) Yet the «Pierrot lunaire» motif recurs throughout the novel: in the Beatrixgasse, at a moment of despair in Vienna society, as a reprise at the end of the novel before the *Ich* vanishes into the wall. That old fragrance wafts a promise of happiness which can't be completely forgotten.

Perhaps this can help us understand the one extended narrative, running in italics through *Malina*, which the *Ich* seems to have written, the story of the Prinzessin von Kagran which anticipates her love affair with Ivan. The princess comes from a region near the Danube where St. George had also triumphed over the floods. When she has to decide between the floods and the fearsome willows, she allows herself to be rescued by the stranger in the dark coat who prefigures Ivan. What other possibilities did she have, what other narrative could she have written? She has to tell *this* story: there is no other way for her to imagine the satisfaction of her desire. But this does not mean that her utopian vision is altogether wrong, only that it must be channelled into the language which is given her to speak. The transformation she longs for is a vision of «luxe, calme et volupté» which nonetheless draws upon her own specifically female desire. Bernd Witte has argued this most persuasively:

Attached to the fairy tale, also characterized externally as connected by the same italics, are further fragments of a vision of a perfect society in later portions of the first chapter. «A day will come on which women have golden red eyes, golden red hair, and the poetry of their sex will be created again...» The return of the golden age here emanates quite obviously from women. Only several pages later, when this sentence is repeated, is the word «women» replaced by «people,» while the arrival of paradise is linked to the condition that «their hands will be gifted for love.»³⁵

Counterposed to and subversive of *Malina's* patriarchal subsump-

tion of women is a feminist utopia of sensual pleasure and erotic joy. It is from this narrative that Bachmann herself read when asked for her own vision of utopia:

A day will come on which people have golden black eyes, they will see beauty, they will be freed of dirt and of every burden, they will raise themselves into the air, they will go under water, they will forget their welts and their distresses. A day will come, they will be free, all people will be free, also of the freedom in which they believed. There will be a greater freedom, it will be beyond bounds, it will be for a whole life....³⁶

Now, what are feminists to make of this? The vision is beautiful, but scarcely realizable; the patriarchal reality, terrifyingly familiar and concrete. The *Ich*'s story of Marcel, a clochard of Paris (and, it seems, a compatriot of Proust) comes to mind: like the *Ich*, he is one of the «injured,» and he simply dies when a well-meaning social-worker tries to redeem him «for a new life which doesn't exist» (III, 283). As Myra Love once remarked to me, Bachmann lacked the context. But we might also derive some comfort and assistance from the *Ich*'s single vow. Having passed the Rigorosum of the University of Vienna, she swears upon its staff, and armed with this knowledge, triumphs over both the waters and her father's might: «And with a handful of sand which is my knowledge I go over the water, and my father cannot follow me» (III, 187). Perhaps we need not, like Leda, put on patriarchal knowledge with his power. Perhaps there is another and more liberating use to make of knowledge; perhaps, from within the cemetery of the murdered daughters men's knowledge can be turned against them. Bachmann is neither the *Ich* nor Malina; she found a language to write the story of women without language. We know this now. «A woman who completely expresses herself has not done away with herself,» wrote Christa Wolf of Bachmann in her recent Büchner-Preis-Rede, «the wish to do away with herself remains as a witness. Her part will not be lost.»³⁷

NOTES

1. Ingeborg Bachmann, *Der Fall Franza*, in *Werke*, ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, and Clemens Münster (Munich and Zurich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1978), III, 436. All further references to Bachmann's works will be taken from this edition and cited with volume and page number in the text. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
2. Toni Kienlechner, «Gespräch mit Ingeborg Bachmann,» *Die Brücke*, 1, No. 1 (Spring 1975), 102.
3. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 104.
4. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 102.
5. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, «Tageslicht statt Aureolen: Zu einem Fernsehfilm über Ingeborg Bachmann,» *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 16 September 1980.
6. Bernd Witte, «Ingeborg Bachmann,» *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, 6. Nachlieferung (October 1980).
7. See the interview with Ekkehart Rudolph, *Aussage zur Person: Zwölf deutsche Schriftsteller im Gespräch mit Ekkehart Rudolph* (Tübingen and Basel: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1977), p. 15.
8. Monique Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David LeVay (New York: Avon Books, 1975), p. x. According to Marilyn Schuster of Smith College, this author's note does not appear in the French edition and seems to have been written for the English translation.
9. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), p. 73.
10. Adrienne Rich, «When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision (1971),» in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), pp. 34-35.
11. For a full discussion of the various ways this relationship is presented in the novel, see Ellen Summerfield, *Ingeborg Bachmann: Die Auflösung der Figur in ihrem Roman 'Malina,'* Studien zur Germanistik, Anglistik und Komparatistik, Bd. 40 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1976).
12. Walter Helmut Fritz, «Über Ingeborg Bachmanns Roman 'Malina,» *Text und Kritik (Ingeborg Bachmann)*, No. 6 (May 1976), p. 24.
13. See, for instance, Sibylle Wirsing's review of *Simultan*, *Neue Deutsche Hefte*, 19, No. 4, Heft 136 (1972), 149-151.
14. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 103.
15. In the Proust essay and in her story «Ein Schritt nach Gomorrah,» Bachmann uses the Sodom and Gomorrah motif positively, as the attempt to establish a new order by breaking the sexual taboos against homosexuality. But of course *Malina*,

who belongs to the old order, could understand Sodom and Gomorrah only as the destruction of one civilization, not as the simultaneous attempt to construct a new one.

16. Rainer Nägele, «Die Arbeit des Textes: Notizen zur experimentellen Literatur,» in: *Deutsche Literatur in der Bundesrepublik seit 1965*, ed. P. M. Lützeler and E. Schwarz (Königstein: Athenäum, 1980), p. 38.

17. Christa Wolf, *The Quest for Christa T.*, trans. Christopher Middleton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 1970), p. 90.

18. In an interview given in Poland, Bachmann maintained that the Italians had recognized that the central theme of *Malina* was fascism. Fascism in its relationship to the destruction of women is also an explicit theme of *Der Fall Franza*. Clearly Bachmann means by «fascism» something more than the socio-political systems of Italy and Germany in the period leading to the Second World War. It might be useful to examine Bachmann's conception of the male and female psyche using the frame of analysis which Klaus Theweleit advances in *Männerphantasien*.

19. Rudolph, *Aussage zur Person*, p. 22.

20. Rudolph, *Aussage zur Person*, p. 23.

21. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 104.

22. Some feminist should investigate the gender-specificity of people's relationship to the telephone. A good start would be Dorothy Parker's «A Telephone Call.» The central female figure there waits as desperately for her male lover to call as Bachmann's *Ich* does.

23. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), p. 47.

24. Susan Gubar, «'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity,» forthcoming in *Critical Inquiry*.

25. In the stories of *Simultan* Bachmann is much more obvious in her use of city locales which are intended to be understood both realistically and metaphorically, for instance the Blutgasse, in «Ihr glücklichen Augen» or the hairdresser René in «Probleme Probleme.» The central female character in «Probleme Probleme» is a narcissistic demi-vierge named Beatrix.

26. Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 45.

27. Luce Irigaray, «Women's Exile,» *Ideology & Consciousness*, No. 1 (May 1977), p. 74.

28. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 102.

29. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 102

30. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 98.

31. For a remarkably interesting discussion of this subversive other discourse, see Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

32. Kienlechner, *Gespräch*, p. 102.

33. Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1966), p. 114.
34. Rudolph, *Aussage zur Person*, p. 23.
35. Witte, «Ingeborg Bachmann,» p. 11.
36. Rudolph, *Aussage zur Person*, p. 27.
37. Christa Wolf, *Büchner-Preis-Rede 1980*, Sonderdruck für die Freunde des Luchterhand Verlages, p. 12.