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Historically, Chapter 10. Bachmann and
Materialist Feminism: Gender and the
Cold War

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CHAPTER 10

Bachmann and Materialist Feminism

GENDER AND THE COLD WAR

Probably no one believes any more that writing literature takes place outside of the historical situation—that even a single writer exists whose starting point isn't determined by the conditions of the time.

—Ingeborg Bachmann, *Werke*

Two apparently contradictory arguments underwrite this book which I want to address explicitly here. On the one hand, I have maintained that Bachmann's writings *should* be read historically, though they often are not; on the other hand, I have asserted that all readings of Bachmann are *necessarily* historical: that is, informed by the historically specific concerns of readers, whether or not readers are aware of it. Walter Benjamin again helps to reconcile this apparent contradiction. His "Theses on the Philosophy of History" helps us to understand that all readings are necessarily "presentist" in that they take from the text that which "flashes up in a moment of danger" (255); that is, they appropriate the text in a way that corresponds to the reader's present needs. But Benjamin seems to insist in addition that the "historical materialist" (the reader of history who understands the past as Benjamin recommends) needs to recognize the pastness of the past, for he or she is called upon to redeem the past, to prevent it from being lost forever by retrieving it for the present. Hence the danger of a reading that is only presentist: readers find in the text what is familiar but not what is strange or genuinely historical or different from the present.

In my own view, readings that do not acknowledge the pastness of products of the past are something like ethnocentric readings that find only the familiar in other cultures' artifacts: they betray, do violence to, the past because they do not permit the past its otherness. Benjamin writes: "Nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. To be sure, only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for a redeemed

mankind has the past become citable in all its moments" (254). "A redeemed [hu]mankind" I take as a (utopian) description of the state to which humanity accedes after "our" efforts to achieve qualitative social change have succeeded ("after the revolution," as we used to say, or "when the Messiah comes"). The "historical materialists" of Benjamin's "Theses" have, as he puts it, "a weak Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (254). Our charge as "historical materialist" historians or literary scholars is to fulfill our ethical obligation to the past by redeeming as much of the past as our "weak Messianic power" allows. Though we will always read historically in the one sense, producing readings informed by the historical situations in which we are embedded (as I hope I have shown in part 2 of this book), in the other sense reading texts historically will always only be the outcome of a great effort to understand the historical situation from which they derive and to which they respond.

In this final chapter I want to read Bachmann's texts historically, using the methodology of "materialist feminism," a contemporary approach to cultural analysis that I regard as most akin to the historical materialism that Benjamin advocated and as best equipped to help us understand texts within their historical contexts. An approach calling itself materialist feminism first emerged in the late 1970s, often designating efforts to turn Marxist-derived methods to feminist ends, but by the 1990s the term had come to refer to a methodology that combined post-Althusserian Marxism with postmodern discourse theories. Committed to a multifactor analysis of women's complex social positioning, contemporary materialist feminists refuse to privilege gender oppression over other forms of domination under which women (and men) suffer. Materialist feminism distinguishes itself from Marxist feminism in its refusal to construe the economic sphere as the prime mover of social change "in the last instance." Instead, materialist feminists insist upon the crucial work done by discourse/ideology, defined as "the array of sense making practices which constitute what counts as 'the way things are' in any historical moment" in constituting, calling into being, or "interpellating" human subjects within particular social relations (in the words of Rosemary Hennessy [14], a prominent materialist feminist). Materialist feminists would, however, also insist that discourse/ideology cannot be detached from material practices and conditions or even, except perhaps heuristically, be understood as separate "spheres" at all (in the manner of the old base/superstructure division). Rather, all social practices are "overdetermined," and all elements of the social order inflect and influence each other in complex and unpredictable ways. Materialist feminists understand literary and other texts—produced and read by discursively constructed subjects—as interven-

tions into meaning-making practices that can variously support or unsettle prevailing social arrangements. Signifying practices are thus imbricated within the historically specific social relations that produce them and that they (dialectically) help to produce, and a materialist feminist reading strategy takes the form of ideology critique, probing texts to discover how they work to support, document, and/or challenge the existing social order. Materialist feminism's insistence on embedding cultural analysis within the historically specific conditions of cultural production should mean that materialist feminist literary scholars work in the closest collaboration with like-minded historians, but in my experience very few literary and cultural studies scholars are informed about current research or debates within the discipline of history. The investigation that follows constitutes my attempt to draw on recent historical scholarship both to read Bachmann in the context of the historical conditions that obtained when she wrote and to contribute to the further elaboration of the methodology of materialist feminism.

As this book has insisted (and as my epigraph to this chapter, taken from the 1959 Frankfurt lectures, also suggests), Bachmann was, like every other writer, a product of the historical conditions of her time. Unlike many writers, she herself insisted upon the importance of history for literary production, maintaining in a 1973 interview, for instance: "History is essential for the writer. One can't write when one doesn't see the entire historical context that led to the present" (*Gul* 133). In a 1969 interview she explained that the massive writing project called "Ways of Death" on which she had embarked would focus upon contemporary history: "To me it's not a novel, it's a single long book. There will be several volumes, and first of all two that will probably appear at the same time. It's called 'Ways of Death' and for me it's a single large study of all the possible ways of death, a compendium, a *manuale*, as one would say here [in Italy], and at the same time I imagine that it could provide an illustration of the last twenty years, always with Vienna and Austria as the setting" (*Gul* 66). In this final chapter I examine Bachmann's life and her texts in the context of the Cold War, which preeminently established the frame within which those "last twenty years"—that is to say, Austrian history since the end of World War II—must be situated.

Though Austria was occupied by the four victor powers until the state treaty of 1955 that declared the country officially neutral, efforts to win Austria for the Western free-market system and to deter Soviet efforts to incorporate it into their own sphere of interest began even before the war's end. According to Charles Maier, the primary vehicle integrating postwar European economies

into Western capitalism, the Marshall Plan, undertook to transform the ideological conflicts of Europe by bringing about a Western- and Central-European-wide consensus on the value of economic productivity, efficiency, and growth, portrayed as politically neutral goals. As Maier puts it, the working-class parties of postwar Europe were to be induced “to abandon their claims to the redistribution of property, income and power and to accept higher absolute earnings instead, thus to exchange greater equality for greater growth” (48); specifically, the parties of the working class were called upon to give up their aspirations for power at the state level and instead accept American-style, “nonpolitical” collective bargaining for specific benefits at the level of the individual enterprise (Tweraser 225–226). The economic recovery that the Marshall Plan promoted thus also necessitated a significant ideological and cultural readjustment, as Michael Hogan argues: “In the most profound sense, it involved the transfer of attitudes, habits and values as well, indeed, of a whole way of life that Marshall Planners associated with progress in the marketplace of politics and social relationships as much as they did with greater output in industry and agriculture. This was the American way of life. Through the technical-assistance program, in other words, the Marshall Planners aimed to implant in Western Europe the seed of a democratic neo-capitalism that had flourished in the United States” (415). Expanding on the Allies’ 1943 Moscow Declaration proclaiming Austria to be the first victim of National Socialism, Austrian politicians “*invented* a version of history that would liberate them from the burdens of the past . . . [and] extricate the painful memory of the war from the complicity in a hideous race war against legions of innocent people,” as Günter Bischof has put it (*Austria* x–xi). Political leaders cast their lot with the West from the outset but also shrewdly used the threat of a potential communist putsch to win more resources for their nation. Bischof maintains that the West won Austria via what the British historian David Reynolds had termed “containment by integration,” fending off communism in Austria by a “quasi-integration” of Austria into the West (Bischof, “Austria looks” 184), turning Austria despite its nominal neutrality into “ein geheimer Verbündeter des Westens”—a secret ally of the West (Bischof, “Österreich”).

As Reinhold Wagnleitner has elaborated in *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, U.S. efforts to win over Austrian hearts and minds to the cause of anti-communism, the free-market economy, and the American way of life were also focused on the cultural sphere. Although the Allies, Wagnleitner explains, directed a policy of “reorientation” toward the defeated Austrians “softer” than

the reeducation measures imposed upon Germany, “American plans for Austria still contained a strict program of cultural control, denazification, and cultural reform” (*Coca-Colonization* 67). But, invoking increasingly popular notions about totalitarianism that equated the Nazi and communist systems as their justification, U.S. efforts to assume control of Austrian cultural life by the late 1940s were directed in the main against the influence of an opponent the Americans now regarded as more insidious than recalcitrant Nazis: the Soviet Union. The U.S. “Country Plan for Austria” emphasized in 1950 that the goal of U.S. cultural engagement was now “to counteract totalitarian influences in Austria, whether from the communist left or the neo-Nazi right, and particularly to encourage democratic stability by exposing and attacking communist attempts to encroach upon the authority of the Austrian government” (*Coca-Colonization* 3). Together with economic initiatives such as the Marshall Plan, American occupation authorities undertook measures that affected every aspect of Austrian cultural life: the press (U.S. authorities licensed only those publications that hewed to the American line; provided news articles and photographs through the services of the Amerikanischer Nachrichtendienst, AP, and UPI; distributed a large range of specialized journals to special-interest groups; and trained Austrian journalists in U.S. journalistic techniques); radio (the American station Rot-Weiss-Rot had the strongest transmitters and enjoyed the greatest degree of public acceptance, hiring, as a 1951 State Department memo put it, “high-caliber Austrian personnel” to make the station an “ideological weapon of major impact” that could also be aimed at German-speaking peoples “deep behind the iron curtain” [*Coca-Colonization* 112–113]); book publication (there were twelve America Houses in Austria by 1953 plus a traveling bookmobile—circulating books that had been carefully selected for their anticommunist orientation—and subsidized translations of U.S. books); education (efforts were made to implement a redesigned Austrian school system and curricula based on the U.S. model); and film (propaganda films, newsreels, and a flood of Hollywood movies, including a large number with an explicitly anticommunist message). Such “Americanization,” Wagnleitner asserts, describes “the development of a consumption-oriented social order within capitalist societies—the pursuit of happiness as the pursuit of consumption” (*Coca-Colonization* 6–7). Despite some degree of Austrian contempt for the vulgar, bad-mannered Americans and their tasteless cultural forms, American cultural products (as well as consumer goods) were in the main eagerly welcomed by an Austrian public, whose embrace of the American way of life could also serve as a welcome alternative to National Socialist culture, allowing Austrians to move toward the future while forgetting—or repressing—the past.

Inge von Weidenbaum maintains that “Ingeborg Bachmann first started thinking historically in the strictest sense only when she began her studies in Vienna” (25). From then until she left Vienna in 1953, Bachmann’s activities were steeped in the atmosphere of the Cold War. Her first jobs after receiving her doctorate were in the secretariat of the American occupation forces, first, beginning in spring 1951, as a typist for *Neues Österreich*, a newspaper published by the Americans, then, from fall 1951 on, as a scriptwriter for the American radio station Rot-Weiss-Rot, located one flight up in the same building. “Rot-Weiss-Rot,” Wagnleitner reports, “had become the most important propaganda medium for the United States in Austria by at least 1950” (*Coca-Colonization* 109). According to Andreas Hapkemeyer, Bachmann’s department was given the task “of evaluating, editing, and writing manuscripts both in the area of politics as well as in that of literature and entertainment” (*Entwicklungslinien* 43). Rot-Weiss-Rot broadcast several of her poems, her translations of Louis McNeice’s *The Tower* and Thomas Wolfe’s *Mannerhouse*, and her own radio play “A Business with Dreams” (Hapkemeyer, *Entwicklungslinien* 45). Joseph McVeigh has discovered that Bachmann was also coauthor of the Rot-Weiss-Rot radio series *The Radio Family*, fifteen of whose scripts she wrote entirely or in part, in collaboration with her colleagues Jörg Mauthe and Peter Weiser, in the period between early 1952 and summer 1953. In 1994 Weiser recalled how they had conceived of the series: “It will be a political radio series, though the listener won’t understand that; it will be a socially influential radio series, though the listener won’t understand that; and it will be a funny radio series, and that’s the only thing the listener will understand” (26). That was also precisely Rot-Weiss-Rot’s program: of using entertainment as the vehicle to convey its Cold War message.

As well, in the early 1950s Bachmann published a number of poems in *Die Neue Zeitung*, the American newspaper in Germany that was in the earliest years of occupation permitted an independent editorial policy but, as Jessica Gienow-Hecht explains in a study of the paper’s history, by 1949 had “turned into a more pro-American mouthpiece of the U.S. military government. . . . Now the Germans were told what was right and wrong and what their future was to be. . . . Virtually every major field of interest—including the coverage of television, advertising, politics, philosophy, and history—reflected the effort to propagandize a Western way of life, defended by the United States of America” (161–162). Bachmann also published poetry in the Viennese journal *Stimmen der Gegenwart*, a multiyear anthology edited by Hans Weigel (a Viennese Jew returned from exile in the United States and for a time Bachmann’s lover [Hans

Weigel]) with the encouragement of the Austrian branch of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a CIA-sponsored, Europe-wide cultural initiative (Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization* 63).

Nor was Bachmann able to escape Cold War pressures by her move to Italy. In 1954 her friend and sometime housemate Hans Werner Henze premiered his *Boulevard Solitude* at a dazzling two-week International Conference of Twentieth-Century Music sponsored by the Congress of Cultural Freedom, its promotion of avant-garde composition deriving from the fact that this was the kind of music Stalin expressly forbade (Saunders 221–223). Henze's twelve-tone opera was so badly received by a loud and hostile audience that Bachmann fainted during the performance and had to be taken home (Henze 163). As well, the radio reports on Italian politics that Bachmann prepared for Radio Bremen from September 1954 to summer 1955 draw upon familiar Cold War discourses: for instance, à la U.S. McCarthyism, Bachmann portrays the Italian Communist Party, supported by foreign powers, as engaged in infiltrating all areas of Italian society: "Investigations showed that the Communist Party has established a broad net of business connections throughout the whole country, facilitated and encouraged by political conspiracies within the administration and illegal communist-led infiltration of the administration, but also due to the 'complicity' of certain private enterprises as well as the 'support' of foreign states" (*Römische* 32). Furthermore, as I noted in chapter 8, in 1955 Bachmann joined many other Austrian intellectuals participating in U.S. exchange programs by attending Henry Kissinger's Harvard Summer School; as a State Department memo to the officer in charge of the American mission in Vienna underlined in 1950, invitations to the United States were offered to individuals who were chosen not "because of any specially urgent need on their part for psychological reconditioning but because they are considered especially useful in communicating information about the United States and its democratic institutions to their fellow citizens, they themselves being already most favorably disposed in that direction" (Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization* 77). And in 1962, Bachmann received a fellowship from the Ford Foundation (an organization, as Frances Stonor Saunders has shown, that frequently worked hand in hand with the CIA) to spend a year in Berlin. This consideration of Bachmann's very full immersion in American cultural imperialism may provide a new perspective from which to read her oft-stated assertion that the very fact that Austria had stepped out of history offered her a privileged vantage point from which to view—and write about—contemporary events. If the post-1945 United States can be viewed as the metropole that has come to represent capitalist modernity,

Austria (subcolony of the colony Germany, as Wagnleitner remarks) offered Bachmann a smaller and more manageable stage on and from which to observe modernity's effects. As she told an interviewer in 1971, "From the perspective of this small, decaying country one can see phenomena much more precisely that are obscured in large countries" (*Gul* 80).

For women, the Cold War had particular consequences that also left their imprint on Bachmann's writing. Elaine Tyler May and many others have observed that a new emphasis on domesticity lay at the center of Cold War ideology and practice; if containment of communism was the overarching principle guiding the foreign policy of the United States and its allies, a conception of domestic containment shaped policy on the home front, where women could now abandon their strenuous war-related efforts in the public arena and return to their "proper" sphere: the private realm, home, and family. In fact, as May shows, women's "freedom" to remain in the home was taken as evidence for the superiority of the capitalist system to communism, where women were compelled to work side by side with men. As Robert Moeller has detailed, the redomestication of women was a hallmark of gender relations in the Federal Republic. Indeed, he notes, the restabilization and reprivatization of the family after the arduous rubble years could be hailed as evidence of West Germany's repudiation of the Nazi past and superiority to the East German present (138). "Experts" such as sociologist Helmut Schelsky located the great "tenacity" of the family in "the biological ground of sexual relations and a mother's existential care for the next generation"—that is, in universal, historically invariable structures of femininity and masculinity (Moeller 118)—so, often under the influence of postwar American sociology, such experts also privatized social conflicts, offering psychological, not political, explanations for social conflicts and therapeutic coping strategies to problems conceived of as private matters. "In this way," as Elaine May puts it, "domestic containment and its therapeutic corollary undermined the potential for political activism and reinforced the chilling effects of anticommunism and the cold war consensus" (14).

But more immediately, the German and Austrian fascination with American consumer goods also served Cold War needs. The "freedom to consume" enjoyed in postwar Germany and Austria was, their politicians maintained, a marker of those countries' embrace of the values of Western democracies, and simultaneously, as Erica Carter puts it, "a strong economy in a stable society formed the most effective bastion against the Red threat" and offered a safeguard against communist encroachment (*How* 80). Increased access to a variety of consumer goods seemed conversely to prove that the free-market system could

deliver on its promises, as Schelsky observed in 1956: “Universal consumption of industrial and publicistic mass production is responsible for the fact that in all areas of life almost everybody can develop a feeling corresponding to his capacities that he isn’t ‘way at the bottom’ anymore, that he too is already sharing in the plenitude and luxury of existence” (“Gesellschaftlicher” 340). Ludwig Erhard, Konrad Adenauer’s economics minister and then German chancellor himself, drew direct connections between consumption and women’s domestic role, as Moeller has pointed out: “The ‘will to consume’ [*Wille zum Verbrauch*] was the engine that drove uninterrupted output, economic rationalization, efficiency, and gains in productivity; as ‘economics ministers’ of their families, women controlled the throttle. . . . Only within this economic framework would the ‘state-free sphere of the family’ be possible. The experience of totalitarian and communist state-run economies, their attempts to subordinate families to their needs, was proof positive” (139–40). Within the domestic sphere, Carter has argued, women had the specific responsibility of presiding over consumption, the means whereby cultural order was restored and a specifically Western national identity was established. Even female management of this sphere apparently extrinsic to politics was itself shaped by new U.S.-influenced patterns of consumption. For the housewife’s task was the production, at the level of everyday life, of the assurance of continuing prosperity, as Michael Wildt observes in examining the transformation of the German diet over the course of the 1950s: “The rhetoric of recipes pertained less to the kitchen as a site of food preparation than to the kitchen as the ‘factory of dreams’” (238).

Elizabeth Heineman has shown that within the context of the restoration of traditional gender hierarchies and responsibilities, single women or “women standing alone” emerged as a particular problem, their superfluity in post war society captured in the term used to describe their excess numbers: *Frauenüberschuß* (surplus of women) beyond the available number of marriageable men. In a 1955 article in *Merkur* (where, as I noted in chapter 8, Bachmann also published a number of poems in the 1950s), “Die gelungene Emanzipation” (Successful emancipation), Schelsky cites experts who warn that desexualization threatens the woman who engages in the rationalized and impersonal activities of modern production and management so alien to her nature, transforming her into a neuter or *Abbild des Mannes* (copy of a man) (“Gelungene” 364). And, paradoxically, single women could at the same time be seen as manifesting a dangerous hypersexualization. To fend off the dangers of a female sexuality eluding male control, the female body itself was subjected to regulation and discipline. For the first time since the 1920s, the corset—or in more modern form the long-line bra and

girdle—was reintroduced, worn willingly by women of all ages and sizes, and valued as a sign of respectable femininity. Christian Dior’s enormously successful “New Look,” introduced in 1947, also served as a mechanism to refeminize women, who would thus repudiate the more androgynous garb of the war and postwar period: “The ‘New Woman’ with her wasp waist, high-heeled shoes, romantic flounces, and pale complexion now was to appear dependent, exclusive, fragile. . . . After wartime, the time of uniforms, women with wide boxer shoulders doing compulsory service, Dior sketched flower-like women, waists slim as vines, wide skirts that opened like flower blossoms” (Delille/Grohn 108). The new foundation garments produced standardized curvaceous bodies to fit the new fashions. Other parts of the female body also needed the attention of consumer products to achieve acceptability: “More and more products imported from America incited worries about body odor, bad breath, dandruff, broken nails, and gray hair. Women’s bodies were stringently disciplined via this ideal of cosmetic beauty” (Schmidt-Linsenhoff et al. 117). As Carter has maintained, for the female consumer in postwar West Germany, “the focal point of leisure, pleasure, and personal freedom [was] . . . the female body itself” (“Alice” 205).

How do Bachmann’s texts document or, alternatively, contest German and Austrian collusion in Western Cold War policies and their particular aims for women, and to what degree do they remain blind to, implicated in, or even supportive of those historical arrangements? As I have pointed out in other chapters, 1950s journalists turned Bachmann into an “exemplum for [Germany’s] reconstruction, its reattainment of international standards, its reachivement of recognition in the world” (Hotz 72), and many conservative critics of that period denied that her poems had anything to do with politics whatsoever. In that respect, Bachmann’s lyric production coincided perfectly with the modernist directions promoted by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its Cold War allies, altogether distinct from the accessible, realistic, and problem-oriented texts that characterized both the *Kahlschlag* (immediate postwar) period of West German writing and East German socialist realism. Of course, many subsequent Bachmann readers have distanced themselves vehemently from a 1950s stance that viewed her writing as entirely unrelated to politics. In 1982, Hans Höller argued strenuously for the historicity and political relevance of her lyric poetry, declaring that the poems’ complex images thematize, for instance, the promises and perils of new beginnings, disappointment over the political directions taken; human alienation within a particular social context, the contamination of the German cultural heritage through its association with the Holocaust, and the repression of the memory of the violent past (“Gestundete”). Some

poems, of course, speak explicitly to or about contemporary political dilemmas: “Advertisement” about the lures of consumer society; “Safe Conduct” about the dangers of the bomb; “Early Noon” about Nazis’ resumption of powerful political positions; “Every Day” perhaps about the Cold War itself. If the two poetry volumes thematize gender dilemmas of the 1950s, it was in formulations too subtle for the public of that era to decipher, and it has remained for later readers (e.g., Christa Wolf, Sabine Gölz) to elaborate the aspects of the poetry that speak to gender issues.

In contrast to her poems, Bachmann’s radio plays and stories of the 1950s overtly address the social arrangements of that period and their subjective consequences, simultaneously contesting the decade’s social relations and to some degree also apparently uncritically reproducing them. Her great accomplishment in these texts was the challenge they posed to the privatization of social problems. Uta Poiger has argued that a particular “achievement” of West German Cold War liberalism in the late 1950s was its success at depoliticizing the issues of consumption, popular culture, and sexuality (in contrast to East Germans, ever alert to rebellion against Socialist Unity Party policies in those areas), portraying them as questions of lifestyle relevant only in the private arena (121). Not until the radical movements of the late 1960s, Poiger maintains, could such assumptions of Cold War liberalism be drawn into question, especially by feminists who insisted that “the personal is political” (219). Thus, for most of Bachmann’s Western readers, the absence of a language that would allow her to identify concretely what was wrong and how it might be changed occluded the social dimensions of her writing. This meant that reviewers with a very different horizon of expectations took these texts to be—at best!—no more *verbindlich* (connected to real life) than her poetry.

Some of those texts brilliantly illuminate the instrumentalization of women to meet the needs of the Cold War period. “Among Murderers and Madmen,” set in Vienna in 1955, represents the domestic containment of women as part and parcel of the restoration of pre-1945 power relations and the repression of the fascist past. To understand the urgency that underwrote this text about the unmastered National Socialist past in Austria and the context in which Bachmann wrote it, it is probably important to know that in 1954 a number of former Nazi generals visited Austria to hold demonstrations and meetings of “Old Comrades’ Associations,” at which, dressed “in uniform and with all insignia and decorations,” they advocated a new German *Anschluß* of Austria (Lütgenau 246–247). Focused on a *Stammtischrunde* (group of [male] friends who meet regularly at a pub), the story explicitly addresses the restoration of male author-

ity and stabilization of male identity (enabled by the lies men tell each other about what happened before 1945). The story's first sentence reads: "[The] men are on the way to themselves when they get together in the evening, drink and talk and express opinions" (TY 83). The frame for Bachmann's investigation of the misrepresentations and betrayals that underwrite these men's confident self-presentations is the cost for women of men's reassertion of themselves as "Titans and demigods" (TY 84). It is their wives at home who rage and suffer:

Barefoot or in slippers, with tied-up hair and tired faces, the women wandered round at home, turned off the gas and looked fearfully under the bed and in the cupboard, soothed the children with absent-minded words or sat dejectedly by the radio and then went to bed after all with thoughts of vengeance in the lonely house. The women lay there feeling like victims, with wide-open eyes in the darkness, full of despair and malice. . . . And in the first dream they murdered their husbands, made them die in car crashes, of heart attacks and pneumonia; made them die quickly, or slowly and miserably, according to the magnitude of the reproach, and under their closed delicate eyelids tears welled up in sorrow for the death of their husbands. They were crying over their husbands who had gone out, ridden out, never come home, and finally they wept over themselves. They had come to their truest tears. (TY 84–85)

Bachmann perceptively shows that male activity in the public arena is enabled by women at home; however, in some contrast to her later texts, she also here tends to exempt women from accountability for the past and present social arrangements for which she reproaches the men of her story.

Though "Among Murderers and Madmen" most clearly connects the 1950s redomestication of women to Austrians' failure to address their complicity in National Socialism and Austria's "remasculinization," it is possible to derive a sustained, if somewhat subdued, critique of the decade's gender arrangements and expectations from Bachmann's texts of the period. The radio play "A Business with Dreams" shows how fantasies of consumption that are focused on femininity stabilize class-based social relations, and the male protagonist of "The Thirtieth Year" cuts a wide swath through the surplus of women ("he loved a myriad [*Milliarde*] women, all at the same time and without distinction" [TY 26]), playing fast and loose with its somewhat interchangeable (all named some variant of "Helena") embodiments: deceiving Eleni with another woman; leaving pregnant Leni alone in a ski hut while he cavorts with two blonde ski bunnies; politely making love to Helene whom he finds repulsive. Several other stories of *The Thirtieth Year* touch on the destructive consequences of bourgeois marriage for women. Here, too, Bachmann represents marriage as a sustaining

pillar of an entire social order; that is, the private realm is understood to be not extrinsic to the public but its necessary corollary. In “Undine Goes,” Undine mounts a frontal assault on the deadly repetitiveness of male-dominant, female-submissive domestic partnerships wherein husbands control power and money in the public arena and expect loyal wives, in return for financial support, to create a nurturant private sphere:

You monsters with your phrases, you who seek the phrases of women so that you have all you need, so that the world is round. You who make women your mistresses and wives, one-day wives, week-end wives, lifetime wives and let yourselves be made into their husbands. . . . You with your jealousy of your women, with your arrogant forbearance and tyranny, your search for sanctuary with your women; you with your housekeeping money and your joint good-night conversations, those sources of new strength, of the conviction that you are right in your conflicts with the outside world, you with your helplessly skillful, helplessly absent-minded embraces. I was amazed to see that you give your wives money for the shopping and for clothes and for the summer holiday, then you invite them out (invite them, that means you pay, of course). You buy and let yourselves be bought. (*TY* 179–180)

In “A Step towards Gomorrah,” marriage is considered, to use Althusserian terminology, an ideological form that interpellates individuals into particular subject positions: “Wiser than Charlotte, [her husband] had long ago recognized marriage as a state that is stronger than the individuals who enter it, and which therefore also leaves more of a mark upon their partnership than they could have marked or even changed the marriage. However a marriage is conducted—it cannot be conducted arbitrarily, inventively, it cannot tolerate innovation or change, because to enter into marriage already means to enter into its form” (*TY* 127). As many commentators have observed, the tragedy of this story derives from Charlotte’s own entrapment within ideological constructions that permit her to envision a romantic connection only within the parameters her era provides: “She would be able to subjugate Mara, to guide and push her. She would have . . . somebody for whom the only important thing was to take part in her life and for whom she was the measure of all things, somebody for whom it was more important to keep her linen in order, to turn back her bed, than to satisfy another ambition—somebody, above all, for whom it was more important to think with her thoughts than to have a thought of her own” (*TY* 125). In *The Thirtieth Year* it is already possible to perceive the connection between the banality of everyday male-female relationships and a social order that kills the spirit and, as in “Among Murderers and Madmen,” sometimes also the body as well.

On the other hand, it is difficult not to conclude (as I have argued in chapter 8 and elsewhere) that Bachmann also simultaneously reproduces conventional 1950s notions of femininity. With the exception of Charlotte of “A Step towards Gomorrah,” a concert pianist, and possibly Jennifer of “The Good God of Manhattan,” a student, all these women are confined to the private sphere, and even Charlotte is an obedient and attentive wife. In “Everything” and “A Wildermuth,” both male protagonists are granted a “good” and a “bad” woman partner: a cheery, chatty bourgeois wife who happily fulfills her domestic obligations, and a proletarian mistress, Betty in “Everything,” “offhand, undemanding, subservient” (*TY* 75); silent, sultry Wanda in “A Wildermuth.” Neither “mistress” is an emancipated or rebellious woman herself: it is their mere class, gender, and sexual presence as an alternative to marriage that constitutes a disruption and a danger, their challenge to domesticity conceived of as the seductive threat of an uncontrolled female sexuality exuded by surplus women. The wives correspond to the worst of 1950s stereotypes, veritably “ditzy dames” in the manner of Lucille Ball in the television show *I Love Lucy*, and though Bachmann may thereby have been attempting a critique of the grim masculine pursuit of incontrovertible truth, the alternative she proposes is at women’s cost, drawing upon gender dichotomies that represent women as incapable of rational thought. In “A Step towards Gomorrah,” Charlotte’s complaint about the language of women summarizes this position: “The language of men, insofar as it was applied to women, had been bad enough already and doubtful; but the language of women was even worse, more undignified—she had been shocked by it ever since she had seen through her mother, later through her sisters, girl friends and the wives of her men friends and had discovered that absolutely nothing, no insight, no observation corresponded to this language, to the frivolous or pious maxims, the jumble of judgments and opinions or the sighed lament” (*TY* 133). Certainly the masculine identity of these figures is unstable as well, and in that respect these stories may also be understood as Bachmann’s far-reaching critiques of the culture of the West German economic miracle. But by exploring masculine insecurities as they are played out within relationships to women, by solving men’s problems at women’s cost, Bachmann also shows herself to be both influenced by and contributing to the reassertion of male control over women during the postwar years.

“A Step towards Gomorrah,” “Undine Goes,” and “The Good God of Manhattan” focus directly on autonomous female sexuality, and in all three cases Bachmann concludes, for somewhat different reasons, that an independent female sexuality is irreconcilable with the social order. Perhaps inadvertently

revealing the limitations of her own understanding of gender, Bachmann conceded in a speech in 1959 with respect to “The Good God,” “It is also clear to me that we have to remain inside the [social] order, that there’s no escape from society” (*W* 4: 276). Undine and Jennifer, akin to Wanda and Betty, show that the cost of female sexual self-determination is at best isolation and abandonment, at worst victimhood and death. Most clearly in “The Good God of Manhattan” (see chapter 8), Bachmann packages her assault on an Americanized, post-Hiroshima economic wonder in the very images that incited grave anxiety in that era, those of female sexuality out of control, and she simultaneously confirms dominant gender norms that contrast the public realm of masculinity to the intimate realm of women. Moreover, if, as May has argued, unfettered female sexuality was associated with atomic catastrophe—the bikini was named after the atoll where atomic tests were carried out—Bachmann in contrast makes eroticism the antagonist of the Manhattan Project; if the containment of women is a mechanism to stave off totalitarianism, Bachmann makes female autonomy a threat to the all-embracing order that the God of Manhattan represents. Yet in merely reversing these images without deconstructing them altogether, Bachmann continues to show that she too is a creature of the discourses to which her characters fall victim; as Rita Felski puts it, “the nostalgia for such a nonalienated plenitude is itself a product of modern dualistic schemas which positioned woman as an ineffable Other beyond the bounds of a masculine social and symbolic order” (21). Bachmann’s formulation of the problem of female independence, one might argue, by constructing both female autonomy and sexuality as indeed constituting a peril to social order which any society should endeavor to contain, already yields the terrain on which she might have wished to argue against 1950s gender conventions. Hence, though now it is possible to read these stories as glosses on gender relations which anticipate the “Ways of Death,” it is likely that readers of her period could read these texts only as a contribution to and confirmation of the reassertion of male control over women at which 1950s gender discourses aimed.

What assisted Bachmann in overcoming this impasse was a shift in the West German cultural climate in the late 1950s. As Anson Rabinbach has documented, from 1959 onward the Federal Republic experienced a “crisis of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* [coming to terms with the past—the German euphemism for addressing the legacy of the Holocaust]” that involved its relationship both to the National Socialist past and to “the multiple sins of the Adenauer years” (52). Signaling this change was Theodor Adorno’s famous 1959 essay “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?” in which he maintained that “the con-

tinued existence of National Socialism *within* democracy” was in his view “potentially more threatening than the continued existence of fascist tendencies *against* democracy” (Adorno, “What” 115). Adorno and, a few years later at a more popular level, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich in *The Inability to Mourn* (1967) argued that the German relationship to the Nazi past had been characterized by repression, denial, the “loss of history,” the “eradication of” or “flight from memory”; it was the product of a “deep psychic debility” that left behind a “latent explosive potential for irrational behavior” (Rabinbach 54). As Rabinbach notes, these arguments were premised on “a therapeutic model of historical discourse” (thus displaying some similarities to other social scientific explanatory paradigms of the 1950s) and placed more emphasis on elements of National Socialism that were *not* unique to National Socialism and could be discerned in the present: authoritarianism, anti-Semitism and racism, anticommunism, antiliberalism, elements of continuity or similarity between fascism and contemporary capitalism (52–57). The new antifascist critique of contemporary fascism (which would be picked up by the New Left of the 1960s and 1970s) provided Bachmann with an explanation both of what was wrong with the present and of how and why it left its imprint on contemporary subjectivity. From the perspective of these developments, some otherwise puzzling aspects of Bachmann’s treatment of fascism become quite comprehensible.

Bachmann’s organicist explanation of the causes of the “ways of death” that her novel cycle was to delineate bears a remarkable resemblance to Adorno’s statement on the survival of National Socialism into the present. In her preface to a reading from *The Book of Franza* in 1966, Bachmann represented the cause of National Socialist criminality as a virus that remained contagious in the post-war period: “I’ve often wondered, and perhaps it has passed through your minds as well, just where the virus of crime escaped to—it cannot have simply disappeared from our world twenty years ago just because murder is no longer praised, desired, decorated with medals, and promoted. The massacres are indeed over, the murderers still among us” (*Franza* 3–4). Adorno similarly viewed National Socialism as an organic substance that continues to infect humans or their social relations: “National Socialism lives on, and to this day we don’t know whether it is only the ghost of what was so monstrous that it didn’t even die off with its own death, or whether it never died in the first place—whether the readiness for unspeakable actions survived in people, as in the social conditions that hem them in” (“What” 115). If “National Socialism” or “fascism” designates not a particular state form or social order but rather a set of more or less universal characteristics discernible in the individual psyche, as evi-

dent today as in the past, then it is altogether reasonable for Bachmann to maintain in a 1973 statement that fascism “doesn’t start with the first bombs that are thrown, it doesn’t start with terrorism, which you can write about, in every newspaper. It starts in relationships between people. Fascism is the first thing in the relationship between a man and a woman (*Gal* 144). If Adorno’s explanation is correct (as might, of course, be contested) that fascist personality types continue to impose their violent will on victims in the present, then the central metaphor of both *The Book of Franza* and *Malina*, the cemetery of the murdered daughters, is not an illegitimate appropriation of the suffering of National Socialism’s real victims by a contemporary woman of Germanic ancestry but an image that accurately captures the presence of the past in the present.

Under the new conditions of the changed cultural climate in Germany, Bachmann’s first public fictional effort explicitly to thematize the relationship of politics to subjectivity (or, as the editors of the critical edition put it, the “juxtaposition of private history and ‘big history’” [*TP* 1: 524]), directly addressed the consequences of the Cold War. Her 1964 Büchner Prize speech, “A Site for Coincidences,” focuses on contemporary Berlin (a site, she had remarked in a draft eulogy to Gombrowicz, that “smells of sickness and death” [*W* 4: 326]), where she had spent the previous year on a fellowship from the Ford Foundation. Bachmann’s comments on earlier drafts of the speech, included in the critical edition, clarify her intentions for this piece, and those intentions, I want to maintain here, continue to inform her writing practice in the “Ways of Death.” First, Bachmann declares herself always to be writing about politics even when the concerns of her texts seem very far away from contemporary political issues: “For me the realms can’t be separated; even if thinking doesn’t always show visibly that it’s political, sometimes it has to understand itself that way, not as a single statement but rather integrated, not an athletic activity in public, but as a constant infiltration” (*TP* 1: 177). Second, in a passage that culminates in an allusion to one of the most terrifying moments of the Cold War, the U.S.-Soviet confrontation at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, Bachmann indicates that the politics she finds most threatening and dangerous are those of the postwar period, of the Cold War era: “And the threat doesn’t take place in war, not in times of naked violence, where survival is the main thing, but rather before and afterward, in peacetime, and I truly had only a suspicion, no certainty, when after the war I started to think and stopped trying to survive, now it seemed guaranteed, then the suspicion occurred to me, that peacetime would be harder for us. In the traumatic hours two years ago, was it Thursday, listening to the radio again, irony again and blasphemous cheerfulness, with the fear

we admitted to—who wasn't fearless [*angstlos, sic*]. It looked like everything could end so easily, in a single stroke" (*TP* 1: 176). Finally, Bachmann advances a psychological/therapeutic explanation of how the Cold War division of Germany as well as the after-effects and continuing presence of fascism affect the residents of Berlin. Like the title figure of Georg Büchner's *Lenz*, references to whom accompanied Bachmann's first efforts to formulate her address, Berliners had been made sick, driven mad, by contemporary social reality: "Sickness is in the time, it didn't enter the world with Lenz, wandering, vegetating away. . . . What made these people so sick, what made them half crazy? . . . Their craziness is nothing more than the physical, psychic expression for something unbearable, thus the expression of the fact that reality has defeated them. But it's simultaneously the defeat of reality by the spirit, which would rather go crazy than give in, than let this be pounded into them" (*TP* 1: 175).

The political intervention Bachmann undertakes in the Büchner Prize speech can thus be understood as a response to Adorno's dire analysis of the contemporary period. To Adorno, the totalitarian potential of his time arises from its demand for the total conformity of the populace to a hegemonic order: "If they want to live, they have no choice but to adapt themselves to the given circumstances, to conform; they have to put under erasure their status as autonomous subjects, which the idea of democracy appeals to; they can only maintain that status at the cost of renouncing it" ("What" 124). Bachmann concurs entirely with Adorno's argument here and elsewhere about pressures on individuals to accommodate themselves to a dominant social order; indeed, as I will maintain shortly, that is a premise on which the "Ways of Death" is founded. Her textual strategy in "A Site for Coincidences" can be read as an effort to reveal the costs of such accommodation, to read the texts of culture against the grain to show the ruptures, disjunctures, lapses, and incoherences in a social system that alleges its superiority to its "totalitarian" adversaries.

To understand how Bachmann here and in later texts exposes the underside of the Cold War order, it is useful to compare the textual practices of "A Site for Coincidences" with those of "To Die for Berlin" (an unfinished and unpublished story that she wrote in November 1961 after a brief trip to Berlin, where the Berlin Wall had been erected three months earlier) and to read both as antecedents to the various narrative strategies she would pursue in the "Ways of Death." "To Die for Berlin" is a realistic third-person narrative told from the point of view of its unnamed, German-speaking male protagonist, who has traveled to Berlin from an unspecified non-German-speaking country to deliver a lecture. The title of the story, according to the editors of the critical edition, is

taken from the title of an article by Stewart Alsop in the 15 November 1961 *Spiegel*, “Sterben für Berlin? [To die for Berlin?]” in which Alsop discusses whether American forces would indeed be willing to defend Berlin if they thereby ran the risk of loosing an atomic war that might destroy all of humankind (*TP* 1: 523). Confronted in Berlin with the reality of the German past and present, the protagonist’s response is (in accord with Adorno’s arguments) denial and repression: on his visit he prefers not to listen to German, refuses to view Berlin’s sights or to attend its cultural events, to observe the Wall, to look into his hosts’ faces. To his own surprise he entertains himself in Berlin by spending the evening in a bar—where young Germans drink Coca-Cola—and by gazing at animals in the zoo. When he calls his French wife to tell her that fog has prevented his flight from leaving, he reveals his anxiety about his presence in this cold war trouble spot when he thinks—but only in French!—“Peut-être je ne rentre plus, pensait-il, mais il ne le prononçait pas [Maybe I won’t return, he thought, but he didn’t say it]” (“To Die” 10). This story focuses, though only, it appears, by indirection, on the psychic distress that “Berlin”—here a trope for an entire world order as well as a real historical site—occasions in the protagonist and others, for even the football fans, in Berlin to attend the soccer playoffs between Sweden and Switzerland (neutral countries aligned with neither NATO nor the Warsaw Pact!) and who slug their buddy as they wait for their flight out, are brutalized by their exposure to “Berlin.” “This is a situation you couldn’t imagine existing anywhere else,” a Berliner tells the protagonist. “Can you imagine it even here?” he retorted (“To Die” 16). Bachmann expects readers of this understated story to comprehend what eludes its characters, that the political reality they are too frightened to confront directly has nonetheless inscribed itself upon them in ways they are not equipped to understand.

“A Site for Coincidences” in contrast resorts to expressionist or surrealist techniques to represent how “Berlin” leaves its mark on its inhabitants. In her introduction to the Büchner Prize speech, Bachmann explained that in Büchner’s *Lenz*, “coincidence” (*Zufall*) was the term used to refer to *Lenz*’s attacks of madness. That madness, she continued, is a result of the “consistency” [*Konsequenz*] *Lenz* demanded from himself: “Consistency, the logical, in pursuing the crack [*Riß*]—the crack that ran through the world for *Lenz*.” Bachmann concludes: “Consistency, the consistent is terrible in almost every case, and relief, consolation, the livable, that’s the inconsistent part” (*TP* 1: 228–229). In this text Bachmann pursues the effects on individual and collective consciousness of the crack that now runs through the world, Europe, Germany, and “Berlin.” She concludes her introduction by observing: “Madness can also come from outside

toward the individual, thus much earlier it went from inside the individual to the outside, then it turned around, in situations we're familiar with, in the heritage of this time [*in den Erbschaften dieser Zeit*] (*TP* 1: 229)—the last phrase a reference to Ernst Bloch's 1935 exploration of explanations for fascism's mass appeal. This text is thus formulated so as to reproduce, from the collective perspective, on the one hand, of Berlin's insane—those institutionalized and especially sensitive to a madness induced by external causes—and, on the other, perhaps, of the totality of all Berliners. They live in the context of a nonsynchronous, violent, and omnipresent past: "At the sharp bend of the Koenigsallee, shots, now quite muffled, are fired at Rathenau [German-Jewish foreign minister assassinated by right-wing nationalists in 1922]. Hanging takes place in Plötzensee" [the site where the 20 July 1944 conspirators against Hitler and others were executed]. They cannot avoid reminders of the defeat, occupation, and division of Germany—"an American, probably made of lead, with a short white helmet and a lowered automatic pistol, . . . the convoy of trucks with young ruddy-nosed Englishmen, . . . two Soviet sentries"—and the constant, through repressed, potential for conflict among them; the absurd suspicious rituals at border crossings between East and West: "Then you have to peel the paint off the car, it goes quickly, the paint comes off in strips like cold wax, then you have to knock on the metal three times, kick the tire once, then you get a mark, you have to throw it on the ground, heads or tails" (*TP* 1: 219–221).

Meanwhile, the patients are well cared for in the Berlin of the "economic miracle": they participate in an orgy of consumption in the city's great department stores—"the escalators are jammed, the elevators are stuffed full with scarves and dresses and coats" (*TP* 1: 209)—crowd into Berlin's many bars and night clubs, stuff themselves with cake. Women especially are susceptible to lavish consumer excess: "In Café Kranzler the women pull their felt hats firmly down over their eyes, they chew and reach for more, like back then" (*TP* 1: 219). (In an earlier draft, Bachmann added the sentence "They eat their sweet secrets of twenty years ago [i.e., 1944, the Nazi period], they keep silent and get fat under their hats" [*TP* 1: 188].) Yet the consolations of consumption—"all the people are wrapped in waxed paper, . . . myriads of beer bottles" (*TP* 1: 206) aside—the "Berlin" the patients confront is entirely unpredictable, threatening, and dangerous: "Once a minute an airplane flies through the room" (*TP* 1: 206); "in the next plane-free moment all the church bells of Berlin chime, churches spring up from the ground" (*TP* 1: 207); the roof of the S-Bahn collapses on them and they are saved only by the "huge muscles and hands" (*TP* 1: 211) of the East German woman conductor (one of those working women whom Western

women were so thankful not to have to emulate); and “owing to politics the streets rise forty-five degrees” (*TP* 1: 214).

As the speech nears its end, Bachmann indicates that there is no solution, no cure, for this madness, yet the patients and their medical attendants refuse to confront the seriousness of their condition: “People don’t know if there’s hope, even if there isn’t any hope, it’s not really terrible, it’s not as bad as it was, it isn’t necessarily hope, it could be something less, it could be nothing, it’s nothing, it’s. . . . It was a little confusion, nothing else. It won’t happen again” (*TP* 1: 227). If, then, in “To Die for Berlin” Bachmann displays the impact of Cold War politics upon subjectivity from “without,” as it were, from a perspective that releases only information to which the figure in the story is prepared to allow himself conscious access, “A Site for Coincidences” reveals the repressed contents of consciousnesses that have been subjected to similar conditions, devising images to represent a chaotic and contradictory intrapsychic reality that cannot be acknowledged: “It’s nothing [*Es war nichts*],” says Bachmann here and elsewhere.

Thereafter, I want to argue here, Bachmann’s texts would oscillate between these two narrative approaches as she attempted to develop a textual strategy for the “Ways of Death” that would continue to allow her to address the evasions and anxieties of the post-1945 period. The novel *Malina* pursues the narrative strategy of “A Site for Coincidences” (particularly in its middle, dream chapter); “big history” is presented via the scars it has left on the psyche. This is why Bachmann needed *Malina* as the “overture” to her novel cycle: to show both how history deforms and cripples the psyche *and* why, in the “Ways of Death,” that damage will never again be so visible—since the “I,” the figure who cannot narrate (*erzählen*) but can *display* her psychic wounds, disappears into the crack (*Riß*) in the wall at the novel’s end. Subsequent to the novel *Malina*, the figure Malina will in contrast take on the narrative standpoint of “To Die for Berlin” (as I detail later in this chapter): he will tell (*erzählen*), in the third person and past tense, stories in which neither the characters nor Malina himself will be able to reveal anything of which the characters are not consciously aware. One might maintain that Malina is the autonomous nineteenth-century bourgeois subject (now eroded by mass society) who assumes a narrative stance, that of the “self-assured, unbroken, unquestionable identical I/subject” (*W* 4: 220), which Bachmann’s Frankfurt lectures on poetics decreed to be no longer tenable in twentieth-century literature. Indeed, in a draft probably intended as an introduction to the Eka Kottwitz or Fanny Goldmann fragment, Malina, speaking to a younger, more experimental writer at the Frankfurt Book Fair, describes himself as the custodian of an older language and (veritably Old Testament)

morality: “I obey an old language and old concepts, and I turn back like all people who gaze at what has happened and are turned to stone, and perhaps an angel will tell you in time, don’t look back, and then you won’t see Frankfurt consumed in smoke and brimstone as I see it consumed today and twice every year, for vengeance has come. Not my vengeance, because I came to tell and not to judge, but judgment haunts all the stories and lamentation in the smoke when it rises to heaven and is told” (*TP* 1: 364). Similarly, in an earlier draft of *Malina*, the “I” remarks that unlike herself, anachronistic Malina hears (and presumably will recount) a univocal truth: “Malina is not à la page, not up to date, in his anachronistic museum he uses everything, also with me, that anachronism, and he waits, because it will appear, true and with the many visages of truth, Malina listens to truth’s single voice, and I don’t know that voice, only the many voices, all the variations, that swamp me, I don’t know the voice” (*TP* 3.1: 209).

Malina, one thus might argue, is the narrator of a novel cycle that Bachmann conceived as an ironic twentieth-century version of the nineteenth-century realist novel à la Balzac. She herself suggested the proximity of the “Ways of Death” to the great novels of nineteenth-century realism such as *Madame Bovary* or *Anna Karenina* when she observed of *Three Paths to the Lake*: “It occurred to me that earlier the great writers, even the French, laid a lot of weight on something the Germans didn’t succeed at, showing the mores of a time via a series of women’s portraits” (*Gul* 140). Certainly, many of Bachmann’s parodic “speaking names”—Gernreich, the publisher; Fräulein Immer schön, the name given to the secretary of the “I” in early drafts of *Malina*; Rappatz, initially called Geldern, one of the richest men in Austria in *Gier*—strongly recall Dickens and other realist novelists. Similarly, Bachmann’s use of the Balzacian technique of recurring characters connects her both to novels of nineteenth-century realism and to twentieth-century novelists who have employed that strategy to mark the difference between realist novels and their own. For if in Balzac, the recurring characters of the *Comédie humaine* suggest that all of French society is a comprehensible social totality (one reason for Marxists’ fondness for Balzac’s novels), in authors like William Faulkner and Uwe Johnson they emphasize the disappearance of a familiar social world. One might maintain, then, that the recurring characters of Bachmann’s own cycle, “an image of the last twenty years . . . always with the setting Vienna and Austria” (*Gul* 66), were intended to convey a similar message, underlining the distinction between what appeared—also to most of her figures—to be a comfortable and familiar social world but was in fact the underside of the social order that National Socialism and the Cold War had created. As Malina

remarked to the young avant-garde author, “I collect only stories that aren’t known, and only stories with a fatal outcome” (*TP* 1: 388).

Malina thus presides over a social world in which subjects *appear* to be agents in control of their own fate, as in the realist novel (in Bachmann’s words: “the I/subject spends his time *within* history [*das Ich hält sich in der Geschichte auf*],” *W* 4: 230) but in which they are in fact instead entirely products, creatures of that society (“die Geschichte *im* Ich [history within the I/psyche],” *W* 4: 230). Social theory has provided a variety of terms to describe the figures Bachmann constructs in the “Ways of Death”: in Frankfurt School terms, they consent to their own domination; in Althusser’s language, they are interpellated by ideology into particular subject positions; in Foucault-influenced theory they are discursively constructed subjects; in Antonio Gramsci’s words, they are products of hegemony—“that process,” as Terry Eagleton has put it, “whereby the particular subject so introjects a universal law as to consent to its imperatives in the form of consenting to his own deepest being” (32). That is, Bachmann attempted to represent figures who are, I want to argue here, totally constituted or called into being by dominant discourses; they are entirely congruent with hegemonic ideologies (and that is why they have no capacity for resistance, as feminist readers have complained). From the perspective of this analysis of the “Ways of Death,” it becomes easier to understand Bachmann’s dissatisfaction with *The Book of Franza*: Franza understood what was wrong with her and even, at the end, found the strength to say “no” to her tormentor, but Bachmann wanted to show instead how difficult it was for discursively constituted products of cold war society to understand not just what was wrong with their social order but even that anything was amiss at all.

The political project of *Malina* might have been better grasped if, as the editors of the critical edition explain, Martin Walser, at the behest of the Suhrkamp Verlag, had not succeeded in convincing Bachmann to remove three critical sections from the novel that situate its story of love and death in the private arena of the Ungargasse within the larger political context of the late 1960s to early 1970s in Vienna: “Sightseeing in an Old City,” the tour of Vienna taken by Malina and the “I” on a tourist bus; the Michael Frank episode, an account of a murder committed by a young neo-Nazi; and the flower power episode, Malina’s explanation of young people’s politics in Vienna.

“Sightseeing in an Old City” establishes the parameters of an Americanized Vienna in which the monuments and heroes of Austrian history are invisible and irrelevant. Though the tour guide boasts in hyperbolic pidgin English that Austria’s imperial accomplishments surpass those of the British Empire (“This

was the biggest country which ever existed in the world and it gave a famous word, in this country the sun never goes down” [“Sightseeing” 5]), the Vienna he constructs for his customers is a land of operettas and the beautiful blue Danube. It is one that panders and corresponds to American expectations, a melange of fast food and drink, shoddy simulacra, and kitsch: fountains from which they drink “the most famous water in the world” (“Sightseeing” 3); “a dried-out imitation of Mozartkugeln from Salzburg” (“Sightseeing” 4); the “Doppelgänger of the emperor of peace” (“Sightseeing” 4) in Schönbrunn; conceptions of femininity that hark back to invented Austrian tradition (“Sissy” films about the Empress Elisabeth popular in the 1950s, “Csárdás princesses,” “the merry widow”); yodelers and “Tales from the Vienna Woods” in the city’s night clubs (“Sightseeing” 5). This section thus situates *Malina* within the Americanized consumer culture—the Austria of the musical *The Sound of Music* (see Vansant), say—imposed upon and embraced by Austrians after 1945 as the United States attempted to win Austrian hearts and minds for the cause of anticommunism.

The Michael Frank passage, on the other hand, shows that the imprint of the National Socialist past still remains vivid in Vienna. The seventeen-year-old Frank, whose grandfather had spent the entire war in a concentration camp and whose devout Catholic family had also suffered under the Nazis, had written in his journal: “One day I will kill myself, like HIM, with a revolver shot in the mouth. I admire and love that great ideal. My useless existence disgusts me. Suicide is a noble deed. All SS-men thought so, and I think so too” (*TP* 3.2: 715). Dressed in SS uniforms and insignia, Frank and two younger friends decide to carry out executions: “The youngest, Uli N., accepted the command, but it doesn’t say anywhere whose command, and shot Michael Frank dead” (*TP* 3.2: 714). This passage locates *Malina* in a social context in which the fascist “crime virus,” as Bachmann termed it, is still virulent.

Finally, in the third excised section, three foreign visitors ask Malina and the “I” about “flower power” and “flower children” in Vienna. Malina replies that Viennese youth destroy flowers and demolish telephone booths: “You can’t really ask for more from the young people . . . In our areas especially you probably can’t expect the power of flowers any more. . . . Children are born too old here” (*TP* 3.2: 712). Bachmann is acknowledging that though her novel is set in a revolutionary period when young people elsewhere are demanding radical social change, opposition does not exist in the Vienna in which the Ungargasse of this novel is located. In the social world about which Malina will tell his stories, there are no radical alternatives to the present social order, no cultural revolutionaries

who might declare: “Be realistic, demand the impossible!” or proclaim, “All power to the imagination!”

Nonetheless, despite the omission of these three significant sections, Bachmann hoped and intended that her readers would understand her novel’s more limited focus as an effort to address contemporary political and social dilemmas, as she somewhat aggressively insisted to an interviewer shortly after *Malina* appeared: “And didn’t you try to reproach me for isolating myself to this Ungargasse, to these two figures? But that’s not isolation for me. Because, what does it actually mean to describe all of society, the nature of an era’s consciousness? That doesn’t mean that you repeat the sentences that society speaks, it has to be shown differently. And it has to be shown radically differently, because otherwise nobody will know what our time was. And the sickness, the torment in it, and the sickness of the world, and the sickness of this person, that is the sickness of our time for me” (*Gul* 71–72).

Following a suggestion by Helgard Mahrtdt, I want to investigate *Malina* via the categories of private and public (Mahrtdt, “Society”), which roughly correspond to spheres allocated to women and men in the ideologies of the postwar period. From that perspective, it is possible to read this novel’s often-remarked unity of time and place in Vienna’s Ungargasse, where the “I,” her doppelgänger Malina, and her lover all live, as emblems of the private sphere, protected from the invasive attentions of tourists and other strangers by its ordinariness: “a stranger would never lay eyes on it, as it is strictly residential and devoid of tourist attractions [*ein Fremder wird sie nie zu Gesicht bekommen, weil es in ihr nichts zu besichtigen gibt und man hier nur wohnen kann*]” (*Malina* 3; *TP* 3.1: 281). The “Ungargasse” performs the function allotted to the home in the 1950s, protecting its inhabitants from a hostile and alienating public sphere, the only arena where the “I” feels comfortable and safe. The “I” both concedes that “home” is not in fact extracted from the economic infrastructure and public affairs (of the Cold War!) and simultaneously proclaims her determination not to attend to them: “But Washington and Moscow and Berlin are merely impertinent places trying to make themselves important. In my country, in Ungargassenland no one takes them seriously . . . no longer can they have any impact on my life” (*Malina* 12). The attempt of the “I” to extract the Ungargasse from the larger sphere of “big history” can at least in part explain the “unity of time” in *Malina*, why the novel is written in the present tense and takes place within an eternal “Today.” Conceived as a refuge from politics and history, the private sphere is alleged to be an arena whose activities of reproduction and nurturance never change; in effect, then, the private sphere could be represented as an on-going

present time. In addition, in Austria in the postwar period, as noted earlier, the private arena is specifically imagined as a refuge from the memory of National Socialism. That the “I” refuses to concern herself with either current events or history (“the past doesn’t interest me,” she remarks in an early draft [*TP* 3.1: 52]), will not remember the Nazi past, and occupies a realm which is not narratable because its characteristic activities consist of the eternal return of the same also helps to explain why the “I” continually laments: “I can’t narrate / I can’t tell my story [*Ich kann nicht erzählen*].” “There just isn’t any story/history in *Malina*,” Bachmann emphasized in an interview (*Gul* 73).

Within the private refuge of the Ungargasse, the “I,” though not a mother or wife, is nonetheless represented as completely a product of the gender discourses of the period in which Bachmann learned to be a woman. Alternatively, one might say, the “I” is the historically specific representation of what a particular era defined as feminine, and though the novel takes place in the mid-1960s, this is a notion of femininity derived from a period prior to 1960s upheavals: there are no flower children in this Vienna. As Bachmann emphasized frequently in interviews, in this “spiritual, imaginary autobiography” (*Gul* 73), she in fact conceived the “I” and Malina as two halves of a single person, each respectively possessing qualities that their author identified with femininity and masculinity—another indication of the degree to which she also was a product of her age. In early *Malina* drafts the “I” laments that she is really a woman only when she is in bed with a man—“When I get up from a bed . . . I know that I belong to [the men] again, I was only gone, on the other side, because I was lying in the bed” (*TP* 3.1: 90)—and that she is really “two people, . . . a man and a woman” (*TP* 3.1: 134); in the final, printed version of *Malina* an astrologer tells her that she is split into male and female parts. It is instructive to relate this division of the personality or the psyche into masculine and feminine portions to the problems and experiences of the “woman standing alone” in Bachmann’s era; in carrying out the tasks of men as well as women, her figures may have felt that they too were at risk of succumbing to the fate that menaced the “emancipated woman”: metamorphosing into a “copy of a man.”

If the figures of *Malina* are indeed representatives of an era’s constructions of masculinity and femininity, then the appropriate reading strategy for *Malina* is not to identify with its female figure, as so many of Bachmann’s readers have done (probably because they themselves are products of the same gender discourses as the “I”) but rather to read the text critically and ironically, attempting to discern how the figure of the “I” might manifest “the thinking that leads to dying,” how “big history” might have left its imprint on the “private history/

story” of the “I.” Indeed, Bachmann has strewn *Malina* with a number of hints that readers should distance themselves from the standpoint the “I” assumes (what she termed her “self-irony” in the Kienlechner interview [*Gal* 98]). The most striking indication of Bachmann’s ironic distance from the “I” is perhaps the latter’s dismay that she, unlike other Austrian and German women at the end of the war, was not raped by Russian or black American soldiers (rapes that actually took place but, as Atina Grossmann has shown, were also discursively pre-structured by Nazi ideology). “No normal man with normal drives has the obvious idea,” the “I” laments, “that a normal woman would like to be quite normally raped” (*Malina* 180). Grossmann has also suggested that the mass rapes confirmed German women’s conviction of their own victimization and *Mißbrauch* (abuse, the contemporary euphemism for rape) by the Allies; this, together with men’s tribulations in prisoner-of-war camps, “construct[ed] a new national community of suffering that served not only to avoid confrontation with Nazi crimes, but also, of course, as a strategy for reauthorizing and reestablishing the unity of the *Volks*” (51). In Austria, where women were targets of rape especially by Soviet soldiers, as Bischof has shown (*Austria* 32–34), Austrians could construe themselves as double victims, the “first victims” of National Socialism and now subjects of abuse by their liberators as well. The desire for rape expressed by the “I” may thus also be related to her repression of the Nazi past. In any case, since even antifeminist readers will find it difficult to believe that normal women in fact really *want* to be raped, Bachmann should be able to count on her readers’ recognition of a distance between the views of her character and her own.

A more difficult case is the often debated “mirror scene” of the first section, its interpretation particularly complicated by the discovery that Bachmann is probably replying to a Celan poem here (Weigel, *Ingeborg* 422–423): having bought herself a new dress, the “I” adorns herself and admires the result in the mirror, “fables removed from the men. For an hour I can live without time and space, deeply satisfied, carried off into a legend, where the aroma of the soap, the prickle of a facial tonic, the rustle of lingerie, the dipping of brushes into pots of powder, the thoughtful stroke of an eye-liner are the only reality. The result is a composition, a woman is to be created for a dress. In complete secrecy designs for a female are redrawn, it is like a genesis, with an aura for no one in particular” (*Malina* 86). Sigrid Schmid-Bortenschlager reads this passage as evidence of the degree to which Bachmann herself remained captive to the symbolic systems she wished to critique (“Spiegelszenen”). But Baackmann protests: “The site at which this scene takes place, the house, is not a unique, authentic site at which an identity independent of the other sex can be unfolded but rather already a

space allocated to women by men" (*Erklär* 810). The parapraxes of the "I"—*Summermorde* (summer murders/fashions), *Wintermorde* (winter murders/fashions) (cf. *Malina* 137)—underline the destructive quality of women's apparently "natural" attention to such traditionally female concerns as fashion and cosmetics and the ways they are advertised (by 1958 the Bundesverband deutscher Zeitungsverleger [federal association of newspaper publishers] estimated that between 50 and 60 percent of German women were regular readers of newspaper advertisements [Carter, *How* 94]). In this case the "I" has embraced an image of female autonomy (located in the home, the preferred female realm of this antifeminist era) which is in fact the product of fashion designers, women's magazines, and the cosmetics industry.

That point is made even more clearly in a scene in *Malina* where the "I" attempts to prepare a gourmet dinner for Ivan while trying to remove the onion smell from her hands and to dress for the evening: "Ivan is only allowed to see the result: the table set and the candle burning, and Malina would be amazed that I've managed to chill the wine in time, warm the plates, and between basting and toasting the rolls I apply eye shadow and mascara in front of Malina's shaving mirror, pluck my eyebrows to their proper shape, and this synchronized labor which no one appreciates is more strenuous than anything I've ever done before" (*Malina* 50). Carter maintains of the postwar period that "this, finally, was the defining element of the consumerized household: the erasure of the traces of strenuous labor—cooking smells, for instance . . . —not only from the domestic environment in general but, more particularly, from the body of a housewife who herself was to be transformed into a commoditized component of consumer lifestyle" (*How* 69–70). There is thus every reason to believe that even (or especially) when the "I" believes she is the autonomous, self-determined agent of her own actions, she is in fact obeying the dictates of a particular, historically specific era, attempting to adapt herself to the given, as Adorno might have put it, consenting to the imperatives of hegemony in the form of consenting to her own deepest being, in Eagleton's words (32).

In these apparently banal and benign images thus coalesce the social determinants of female behavior in the postwar era: this is how history has left its imprint on female subjectivity of this period. In her love affair with Ivan the "I" is following the script the Cold War era (and many earlier time periods) wrote for women: of establishing a relationship with a man as woman's highest priority; of female subordination and male dominance; of a femininity devoted entirely to the concerns of the private arena and interpersonal relations. Had Bachmann not changed the title of *Malina's* first section, her readers might

more readily have understood that all was not as it seemed in the love affair of the “I”: before going into the page proofs, the novel’s first section was called “Sleeping Happily with Ivan [*Glücklich schlafen mit Ivan*],” though not a single instance of “sleeping” with Ivan in the sense either of sex or of rest is present in the chapter. Even the final title of that section, “Happy with Ivan,” should give pause to readers, for very little “happiness with Ivan” can be found here. But the “I” needs to love in order to exist as a woman at all: it is only in relationship to a man who loves her that her femininity is “awakened” (in the parlance of those times), becomes significant and meaningful. Bachmann herself suggests that Ivan and the “I” are playing discursively preordained roles when she remarks, “As I had to read that all again when I corrected it, I noticed that it’s not so easy with Ivan, that maybe he is also a doppelgänger or a triple figure” (*GuI* 88); that is, the “I” projects onto him the qualities the men whom she loves need to possess—qualities to which she then attempts to accommodate herself. (In the third section of the novel the “I” explains to Malina as if it were self-evident that women must adapt themselves to each new lover’s erotic whims, whereas men continue to behave just as they please.) That is why Ivan can be described as a sign or token (*Zeichen*): in Sigrid Weigel’s elegant phrase, he is a “place-holder for the cause of desire” (*Bilder* 13).

Nonetheless, because in Bachmann’s view the eroticization of subordination and pain is a central component of socially constructed female desire, the “I” truly suffers because of how Ivan treats her, and she traces the lineage of this love affair, or perhaps of her whole character structure (“sometimes you really do know exactly when it began” [*Malina* 10]) to the boy on the Glan Bridge when she was six who promised to give her something and hit her in the face instead—her first experience “of someone else’s deep satisfaction in hitting” (*Malina* 10). Ivan thus joins the company of sadistic men who have mistreated the “I” (what Bachmann would doubtless call the fascism between women and men) via his “swearing sentences”: “Les hommes sont les cochons. Les femmes aiment les cochons [Men are pigs. Women love pigs],” says Ivan (*Malina* 52). In selecting the love affair as the central event of the overture to her “Ways of Death,” Bachmann makes the point that women and men are, for sociohistorical reasons, so constituted as to make the utopian connection at which they aim impossible.

There is thus every reason to treat the “Mysteries of the Princess of Kagran,” which the “I” spins out to explain why Ivan was the lover intended for her from the beginning of time, with as much skepticism as the love affair that takes place in the novel’s “Today.” Felski suggests that “‘the magical fictions’ of romantic fantasy should be seen less as an abandonment of the secularized, disenchanted

perspective of modernity than as another recurring dimension of the modern itself" (131). That is, such fantasies are projections of alternatives to a boring and banal quotidian reality (the daily life of the housewife, say) that are themselves generated by that reality. From this standpoint it is possible to find an explanation for Bachmann's otherwise mysterious plagiarism of Algernon Blackwood's short story "The Willows" (1906) to provide the description of the Danube swamps through which the princess travels. To Bachmann, passages from others' texts were of key importance, not to be regarded as quotations, as she announced somewhat cryptically: "There aren't any quotations for me, but rather the few passages in literature that have always excited me, they are life for me" (*Gul* 69). I propose that like the name of Perceval Glyde, borrowed from Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* (see chapter 7), or the citation from D. H. Lawrence whose meanings I investigate in chapter 9, Bachmann's appropriation of Blackwood's story is one more indication that this text should be read against the grain, that here all is not as it seems. Or, to phrase this point differently, one could maintain that Bachmann's many citations are ironic gestures to indicate that her own text moves within the discursive parameters of the works—by Wilkie Collins, Rimbaud, Lawrence, Barbey d'Aurevilly, and Blackwood, among many others—from which she quotes and from which we as readers should distance ourselves. Though Blackwood's tale of a boat trip down the Danube begins as an idyll, it ends as a horror story in which the human actors are besieged by mysterious and ominous forces beyond their control (the "very ordinariness" of the landscape, the narrator in Blackwood's story meditates, "masked what was malignant and hostile to us" [183]), and those forces finally demand a human sacrifice. Similarly, one might maintain, the "real-life" romance of the "I" and Ivan, brushed against the grain, also reveals itself to be a tale of mounting terror and anxiety ending in death: love is murder.

It would nonetheless be wrong to conclude that love does not remain a utopian state of being for Bachmann in the novel, if a historically very determinate one, and that is part of the poignancy of *Malina*. Bachmann never ceases to remind her readers that the utopia of *luxe, calme et volupté*, which was to inform the "beautiful book" that the "I" is incapable of writing, is her utopia, too, "when all mankind will have redgolden eyes and starry voices, when their hands will be gifted for love, and the poetry of their lineage shall be recreated" (*Malina* 88). In one of the last statements of her life she continued to maintain that "I don't believe in this materialism, in this consumer society, in this capitalism, in this monstrosity that's taking place here, and people who enrich themselves on us without having any right to do so. I really do believe in something, and I call it

'A Day Will Come.' And one day it will come. Well, probably it won't come, because it's been destroyed for us so many times, for thousands of years it's been destroyed. It won't come, but I believe in it nonetheless. For if I weren't able to believe in it, then I couldn't write any more" (*Gul* 145). There is no reason not to take seriously the sentence that ends the description of Bachmann's novel on the dust jacket of its first edition: "Of its own accord, the book *Malina* protests that we are so murderously reasonable and laments that we are unable to love" (*TP* 3.2: 741)—though for Bachmann the incapacity to love is a consequence of causes far more social and political than *Malina*'s first reviewers were able to perceive. In a review with which Bachmann was very pleased (Albrecht, "Mann"), Hans Mayer chastised such critics: "In reviews people accused this 'heroine' and her author of being someone who, in the midst of bourgeois prosperity, is only striving for individual happiness. The misery of the world didn't seem to matter. Those who read that way have misunderstood the novel. The self-realization of the 'I' is prevented by the social conditions that always stand in the way of such fulfilled moments" (164). To Mayer, the female protagonist of this novel is a container for the hopes and dreams of the individual subject whose realization is thwarted by the present social order: "The female of this double ego represents the claim for a life filled with meaning in which feelings and thought achieve harmony. . . . Malina as male reason demonstrates to his female partner why this can't be possibly in Vienna 'today,' that is, in an alienated world. Thus he brings about the death of this soul, who does not die of her own disorder but rather—like the lovers of Manhattan—of a disorderly world" (164–65).

Who or what is responsible for thwarting the utopia Bachmann envisions? Exploring that question was the task of the middle chapter of *Malina*, titled "The Third Man," where Bachmann particularly draws upon the representational strategies she had first explored in "A Site for Coincidences." Said Bachmann: "And for myself I'm very certain that everything frightful that happens in this time is in the dreams, and that we all are murdered" (*Gul* 70). What combination of forces, then, congeal in the figure that in the dreams persecutes and torments the "I": the third man, the father, "this overpowerful father figure," as Bachmann put it, "about whom we discover that this figure is the murderer, and more precisely, the murderer whom we all have" (*Gul* 89)? Like all dream symbols, the father is "overdetermined"; a variety of "latent" concerns are displaced and condensed (to use Freud's terminology) to form the "manifest" elements of the "dreams of this night" for the "I" (*Malina* 113). As Bachmann explained: "A realist would probably tell about lots of frightful things that happen to a particular person or persons. Here it's compressed into this big figure which carries out

what society carries out" (*Gul* 97). In accordance with my argument here that Bachmann's texts are suffused in a Cold War culture so natural to her characters that they are unable to recognize its damaging malevolence, it may be important to note first the connections of the father to "Amerika" and "Rußland." In one of the earlier dreams, the father telephones from America and in a later dream has just returned from America. "I can hear America well," says the "I" (*Malina* 117). Later the father also returns from Russia, where he has studied torture methods. Arnd Bohm, commenting on a version of this chapter given as a talk, suggested that references in *Malina's* middle chapter to wintry weather, the frozen lake that borders the cemetery of the murdered daughters, and various kinds of ice are allusions to the cold war—a point that now seems so obvious that I am embarrassed I didn't think of it myself. Perhaps the novel's clearest explicit reference to the politics and social history of the postwar period, oddly enough virtually ignored by Bachmann scholarship, is the title of the dream chapter, "The Third Man," borrowed from the 1949 film set in the ruins of postwar Vienna, starring Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton. Hermann Glaser has written: "The little tragedies of the black market years, which add up to the great guilt of the times, found their almost legendary formulation in the English film *The Third Man* (directed by Carol Reed, script by Graham Greene). . . . The fact that the film, with Anton Karas's nervous zither music, moved people of the rubble era deeply and spoke to them almost mythically was not the least because here an especially longed-for medicament [penicillin] was made the object of criminal manipulation. The Americanization of life: that promised liberation from sickness and epidemics, of which there was no lack in defeated Germany" (76).

Elsewhere in *Malina*, Bachmann emphasizes continuities between the corruption and deceit of the immediate postwar period, thematized in *The Third Man*, and the present, clearly intended as a critique of Austria's embrace of the Western capitalist system:

I would never have thought that everything would first have to be plundered, stolen, pawned and then bought and sold three times around the corner. The biggest black market was supposedly at the Resselpark, because of its many dangers you had to give it plenty of room, beginning in the late afternoon, all the way up to Karlsplatz. One day the black market ostensibly ceased to exist. But I'm not convinced. A universal black market resulted, and whenever I buy cigarettes or eggs, I know—but really only as of today—that they come from the black market. Anyway the whole market is black through and through, it can't have been that black before because it still lacked a universal density. (*Malina* 173)

The allusion the “I” makes to the “universal prostitution” (*Malina* 172) of the postwar period is multivalenced. On the one hand, it is the phrase Marx used in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* to describe wage labor under capitalism (Tucker 82). The “I” ponders, “Everyone who worked was a prostitute without knowing it, where have I heard that before?” (*Malina* 172). Moreover, “universal prostitution” refers to the ubiquitous spying that characterized the occupying powers’ machinations in pre-1955 Cold War Vienna, Viennese selling themselves off to the highest Allied bidder: “Everyone was working for some side or another, without even knowing it. No side revealed its true identity” (*Malina* 172). And finally, “universal prostitution” describes the sexual chaos of the postwar period, when, as the “I” puts it, “the whole city participated in this universal prostitution, everybody must have lain on the trampled lawn with everyone else or else they leaned against the walls, moaning and groaning, panting, sometimes several at a time, by turns, promiscuously” (*Malina* 181).

In fact, the high value placed on penicillin in this period was due not just to its utility for healing sick children, as the film delicately puts it, but because (as the East German literary scholar Eva Kaufmann informed me) it could cure venereal disease: 19,000 new cases were reported in Vienna in 1946 (the year Bachmann came to Vienna), and, apparently as a result of the carryings-on *Malina* recounts, in 1948 one of every five young Viennese women between thirteen and twenty-one was infected with V.D. (Mattl, “Frauen” 111). In this reading, the “third man,” the corrupt black market manipulator of penicillin, is a metonymic representative of an entire postwar economic, social, and sexual order that entered with the occupying forces and prizes profits over all other forms of human connection, and the “frightful things” perpetrated in the dreams by the “murderer whom we all have” are displaced and/or condensed images of the atrocities that order makes possible.

But a further peculiarity about Carol Reed’s film is that nowhere does it address the reason *why* Vienna lay in ruins in 1947; in this film National Socialism is entirely repressed. This “disappearing” of the reasons why an Americanized “universal black market” had the opportunity to seize control of Austria suggests an additional interpretation of the forces figured in the third important man in the life of the “I,” the powerful and violent father. In *The Inability to Mourn* (1967) Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich suggest that the defeated Germanic peoples of the Third Reich refused to come to grips with the fact of their own support for National Socialism, the Allies’ victory over Germany, and “the enormity of the catastrophe that lay behind them” (11). Instead, they sought father figures apart from Hitler—such as the aged father

figure Konrad Adenauer (or possibly “Uncle Sam”?)—upon whom to project their libidinal attachments, identified with the victors, and stylized *themselves* into victims—of National Socialism, Hitler, rape, prisoner-of-war camps, and so on. The Mitscherlich analysis provides a framework for understanding the first two dreams of the “I,” one concerned with the cemetery of the murdered daughters, the other, with a gas chamber in which her father has enclosed her. One might posit that what Bachmann is revealing here (whether deliberately or not is not very relevant) are precisely the moves of the post-Holocaust German or Austrian psyche that enabled it conveniently to “forget” the Holocaust. I am not attempting to suggest that the “I” is not a “victim” of male dominance or of fascistoid elements that survive into the postwar period; rather, I want to maintain that (unconsciously—as the Mitscherliches argue) she represents her historically occasioned distress in ways common to other Germans and Austrians of the period, thus virtually assuring that she, like her compatriots, will be incapable of either understanding or alleviating it. Bachmann recalled that it was the National Socialist conquest of Austria that began her own process of remembering: “There was a particular moment that destroyed my childhood. Hitler’s troops’ invasion of Klagenfurt. It was so horrible that my memory begins on this day. The enormous brutality that you could feel, the shouting, singing, and marching. . . . A whole army entered our quiet, peaceful Carinthia” (*Gul* 111). But Gerhard Botz observes that Bachmann here also succumbs to some degree to the “Austria as first Nazi victim” myth, since the commotion was most likely in fact made by the large Nazi population of Kärnten (201). Botz’s argument is strongly supported by Hans Höller’s revelation that Bachmann’s own father joined the Nazi party in 1932 (*Ingeborg* [1999] 25), though Bachmann herself never acknowledged that she was raised in a Nazi family; perhaps, as the foregoing quotation suggests, she even invested some effort in obscuring her own Nazi connections. One might speculate that one reason the “I” can’t remember what she needs to know to tell her story is that she, like many of her country’s people in the postwar period, can’t—or won’t—remember her own relationship to the Holocaust, and is then haunted in her dreams by her own unmastered past. That might also explain repeated dreams the “I” has of sex with her father, which from a psychoanalytic perspective are an indication that she has accepted her place in the sex/gender system over which her (or *the*) father presides—and accepted all the other values that the father represents. Baackmann suggests what the consequences of this reading of the incest dreams might be: “The father is ever more clearly recognizable as the principle of an omnipotent authority to

which the daughter submits herself unconditionally, to be sure in the belief that she is rebelling against his power" (*Erklär* 87). "I wouldn't have betrayed you," says the "I" to her father (*Malina* 114). Malina tells the "I," "Maybe you didn't know, but you were in agreement" (*Malina* 145).

It appears, then, that the dream chapter of *Malina*, focused on the most interiorized processes of the psyche, also reveals "history within the I/psyche": here the "I" is like Claudia Koonz's German women in *Mothers in the Fatherland*, who are not just products but also proponents of the social order that subordinates them. This reading of Bachmann's notion of femininity is substantiated by a striking scene from an early draft of *Franza*, whose protagonist has mostly been viewed as fascist patriarchy's innocent victim par excellence. Her psychoanalyst husband (in this early version called "Baronig") alleged that his earliest scholarly publication had appeared in 1948, but Franza, whom he has unsparingly put to work as his research assistant, by chance discovers an earlier publication "on a card in the [library] card catalogue, . . . 1941, 1942, though with a harmless title. It would have been wrong to say that Franza had a violent reaction then, on the contrary, she didn't even think much about it, but went back two weeks later and removed the card without looking to see whether the publication could have been incriminating or not. She didn't want to know, and even less did she want to tell her Baron about it or ask him a question" (*TP* 2: 47). Later in the same draft, in a passage narrated from Franza's perspective, Bachmann further underlines Franza's unwillingness to confront her husband's possible Nazi affiliations before 1945: "I found it, when I was working on Riedel, I took the card out of the catalogue in the Nationalbibliothek. I don't know if this work was incriminating for him or not, but I took it away, no, carried it around in my purse for two days, then I threw it away, in Frau Rosi's garbage can between the old lettuce and the bread crust. And then I looked in the garbage can again and got the card out and dropped it into the sewer, through the slots, now it's floating in the sewer pipes, and I don't know, was it something or was it nothing. 1941. Now I'll never know, and nobody can ever look for it. What kind of an article it was and for which medical journal, I don't know any more, I swear. I never wanted to know. . . . I never wanted to know anything" (*TP* 2: 64). Here Franza, by this point in the novel already a victim of her husband's "fascist" treatment of her, colludes nonetheless in what Götz Aly has called the "unwritten code of silence" about academic support for Nazi policies and practices (154). Sigrid Weigel has astutely observed of all the murdered daughters: "In Bachmann's depiction the daughters participate in the 'eternal war.' Not only as a victim or as someone affected—because there isn't a female

refuge outside of history. But rather war continues within themselves, as in all subjects" (*Bilder* 141).

Another passage characterized by "self-irony," which I quote at some length, unites these several themes and also shows how, though in the bourgeois novel women represent subjectivity and in postwar society women are responsible for consumption, the story of the "I" told in *Malina* could also be relevant for men:

Malina asks: Have you never thought how much trouble other people have gone to because of you? I nod thankfully. They have indeed, they didn't spare themselves the trouble of providing me with character traits, they equipped me with stories, and even with money as well, so that I can run around in clothes and eat leftovers, so that I continue to make do and so it won't be too obvious how I am doing [*damit es weitergeht mit mir und nicht auffällt, wie es weitergeht*]. Too quickly tired I can sit down in the Café Museum and leaf through newspapers and magazines. Hope returns to me, I am excited, incited because there is now a direct flight to Canada twice a week, you can fly to Australia in comfort on Qantas, safaris are getting cheaper, in Vienna we should soon see Doro-coffee with its unique aroma from the high sunny plains of Central America, Kenya is advertised, Henkell Rosée lets you flirt with a new world, no building is too high for Hitachi elevators, books for and by men are now available which are just as inspiring for women. So that your world never gets too small for you, there's PRESTIGE, a sea breeze from a far horizon. Everyone is talking about mortgages. You're in good hands with us, proclaims a Mortgage-Bank, you'll go a long way in TARRACO shoes. We coat your Venetian blinds twice so you'll never have to varnish them again, a CALL-computer is never alone! And then the Antilles, le bon voyage. That's why the Bosch EXQUISITE is one of the best dishwashers in the world. The moment of truth is coming when customers ask our experts questions, when management technique, calculation, net profits, packaging machines, delivery times are all up for debate. VIVIOPAL for those who can't remember a thing. Take it in the morning . . . and the day belongs to you! So all I need is Viviopal. (*Malina* 165–66)

First, the "I" clearly acknowledges that she is a product of, has been inserted into, and has embraced the ideological models and narratives that "other people" have provided for her and that the task such discourses preeminently perform is allowing her to continue to perform the social functions prescribed for her without understanding or even noticing their cost to her ("so it won't be too obvious how I am doing"). What she receives in return for her compliance is access to the consumer paradise of postwar capitalism, served up to her by the postwar media, another "dream factory" that dazzles her with endless, ever new consumer possibilities ("Hope returns to me," "flirt with a new world") and on which she, queen of household consumption, is expected to be an expert—hence

the necessity of advertising (“when customers ask our experts questions”). And the possibilities available to her are those of the economic miracle of postwar capitalism that the United States promised to deliver to Western Europe: the home (via a mortgage), clothing, cosmetics, exotic articles to eat and drink, fancy household items. The availability of consumer goods from across the world emphasizes that capitalism is a global system dependent on a world market (anticipating, as do Bachmann’s stories “Word for Word” and “Three Paths to the Lake,” today’s concerns about globalization). Moreover, postwar consumer capitalism puts the entire world at the disposal of the Western tourist, with a particular emphasis on formerly colonized countries: Canada, Australia, Kenya, the Antilles. The “I”—that is, the postwar subjectivity of which she is a metonymic representation—has thus been granted and has accepted membership in (“has bought into,” so to speak) an entire economic, political, and cultural system with race, class, and gender implications. All that is asked of her is that she not “remember a thing”—about the Austrian past that led to this world of wonders, about the global present to which she is now subjected. “So all I need is Viviopal,” the “I” muses; perhaps then nothing will disturb her memory and she will be able to tell her story. But precisely her ironic tone underlines the cost, for men and women, of embracing the postwar capitalist order, their containment by and complicity in a system that is not at all dedicated to the purpose of meeting human needs.

After the “I” has bared scars on her soul for which even she can not account, what does it mean that she disappears into a crack in the wall at the end of this novel? How should we understand the last sentence, “It was murder” (*Malina* 225)? For many, many feminist scholars the answer has seemed simple: as I myself wrote in a 1980 essay (chapter 3 of this book): “Even the most superficial reading of Bachmann’s late prose should make clear who is being killed in these various ways (and also that death can be the death of the spirit as well as of the body): women.” But here I would like to make a somewhat different argument that begins by taking seriously Bachmann’s own argument that both Malina and Ivan are doubles of the “I.” As detailed in chapter 8, the cold war encouraged dualisms of many sorts, and even progressive thinkers of that period (as, indeed, of our own) constructed women as reason’s or the male subject’s other; and, as I maintained earlier in this chapter, the apparently natural opposition of men and women was one of the foundations on which the normative heterosexuality of cold war culture rested. Of course, discursive constructions of this sort do not in fact precisely describe (though they certainly profoundly influence) what “real people” “actually” are and do. In the cold war

period, “real” female subjects were nodes at which mutually irreconcilable discourses intersected. In the period during which Bachmann wrote, it seemed perhaps literally inconceivable that one could be the kind of person who could both love ecstatically and pay one’s bills on time. The “I” thus performs gender burlesques like those of Lucille Ball or Gracie Allen when she tries to operate in a man’s world, and only Malina can keep her life in order as she performs prechoreographed steps in her elaborate ballroom dance with Ivan. But just as Bachmann herself was described as (for a time at least) sovereignly managing a difficult balancing act, being charmingly inept at dealing with the conditions of daily life yet extremely savvy about her business affairs, similarly it is important to stress that *all* of these figures, Ivan, Malina, and the “I,” constitute the radically disunified self of the woman, or at least the woman intellectual, of this period (see Bird). It is not necessary to make Malina a villain in order to understand the claim of the “I” that “I have lived in Ivan and die in Malina” (*Malina* 223). After Ivan decamps, the capacity of the “I” to love—which, in the discursive frame within which this novel moves, means her femininity, is no longer evoked, and she is reabsorbed in Malina. But, as Bachmann repeatedly emphasized, the “I” of course *is* Malina. Or: Malina is she.

How were the “Ways of Death” to continue after the “I” disappears into the wall and Malina becomes their narrator, as the “I” had requested (“Go ahead and take over all the stories which make up history [*die große Geschichte*]. Take them all away from me” (*Malina* 221)? Bachmann commented in a “plot summary”: “The whole book is directed toward the emergence of the figure of Malina, who is objective and sovereign, while the “I” is subject [*sic*] and useless. For that reason the questionable narrative perspective later disappears, then the narration is total because Malina knows everything and can decide what to do with the characters” (*TP* 3.2: 740). In conformance with this and numerous other remarks by Bachmann, I propose here, as I suggested earlier, that in subsequent “Ways of Death,” abandoning the “questionable narrative perspective” of *Malina*, Bachmann would return to the apparently realistic narrative form of “To Die for Berlin” and its seemingly sovereign and all-knowing narrator—the second of the two narrative strategies between which her later writing oscillates. Subsequent “Ways of Death” volumes, I further want to argue, would take a form similar to the stories of *Three Paths to the Lake* (which I consider to be part of the “Ways of Death” cycle), of “Rosamunde,” of “Greed,” of *Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*, and of the Eka Kottwitz fragment. Bachmann, I maintain, changes narrative strategies for reasons very much related to her conception of the production of subjectivity in the cold war period: she resorts to the realist

form because, in order to represent figures entirely subjected to the hegemonic ideologies/discourses of their period, she cannot allow them to perceive the cracks and crevices of the order that constrains them (cracks perhaps like those of the wall into which the “I” disappears). Instead, she falls back to a narrative form corresponding to the ideology of bourgeois individualism on which the postwar period depended, premised upon the notion of an exterior world existing independently of the perceiving subject, as well as that of a subject who is a rational, unified, and coherent bearer of consciousness and conceives itself to be able to act autonomously and to control its own destiny. Though a sympathetic figure, Malina is constructed as a subject who is a creature of such ideologies, and he will thus be able to tell only those parts of the stories for which there are words in the discourse of which he is part (which is why the figures of those texts so often remark to themselves, “It was nothing” or “It couldn’t be told”).

Moreover, the figures of these later “Ways of Death,” captives of hegemonic ideologies or discourses, will be shown to understand themselves as the same sort of self-determined, autonomous subjects as Malina himself, quite unaware of the historical forces and social pressures inscribed upon them and the actual nature of their own situation. The narrator of the story “Word for Word” makes this point very emphatically when he (!) remarks of the interpreter Nadja and her boyfriend Frankel off for a romantic fling to southern Italy: “What was going on in the world these next few days basically had nothing to do with them, how everything changed and how hopeless it all was [*warum es immer auswegloser wurde*]” (*Paths* 14–15; *TP* 4: 117). Almut Dippel has determined that this story takes place in August 1968, at the time of another major event in the history of the cold war: the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the crushing of the Prague Spring’s attempts to develop a “socialism with a human face” (18). Thus what can’t and won’t be revealed in this and other stories of *Three Paths to the Lake* are the constituents of subjectivity that emerge in *Malina*, “history within the I/psyche”—and that is why *Malina* was the necessary overture to Bachmann’s novel cycle, to reveal what would be much more difficult to discover in other “Ways of Death.” Marcel Reich-Ranicki’s judgment of the stories of *Three Paths to the Lake* in his 1972 review was thus not entirely off base—though for reasons quite different from those he advanced: “Are these stories, in which the chic and the stylish predominate, the worldly and the melodramatic triumph, and excessive sentimentality is mixed with snob appeal, are these stories perhaps not supposed to be anything more than reading matter for those ladies who flip through magazines at the hairdresser’s or in the dentist’s waiting room? That is, consciously and cynically intended to be popular fiction [*Trivi-*

alliteratur]?” (191–192). Precisely: Bachmann’s figures are exactly such “ladies” whose self-understanding is prefabricated by the categories by which popular fiction is also informed.

As I observed of “Three Paths to the Lake” in the preceding chapter, the two frame stories of *Three Paths to the Lake* repeat the constellation of *Malina*—with a difference: here the female protagonists are shown to have succeeded brilliantly in the public, male, arena, while in the private realm they are entirely unable to articulate why or even *that* they are unhappy. “Hasn’t it ever occurred to anyone,” Elisabeth Matriei rages, not understanding that she is talking about herself, “that you kill people when you deprive them of the power of speech and with it the power to experience and think?” (*Paths* 173). The three interior stories deal only with the private, female sphere, “their *own world*,” Tanja Schmidt declares, “which they *defend* in their retreat to complete *privacy*” (494). As women in the private arena, even in the late 1960s and early 1970s they conform to the dictates of cold war femininity, as the “I” had observed: “Women always have their heads full of feelings and stories about their man or men. Such thoughts really do consume the greatest part of every woman’s time” (*Malina* 178). Bachmann guides the reading of the stories of *Three Paths to the Lake*, however, so as to reveal the gaps, inconsistencies, ruptures, and incoherences of hegemonic ideologies of which her figures themselves, products of those ideologies, are not aware. Beatrix in “Problems Problems,” for instance, is utterly impatient with the political engagement of Jeanne, a young French veteran of 1968: “It had always been on the tip to her tongue to tell Jeanne that her Parisian head was full of confused ideas and nothing more, you couldn’t be a hippie and go to the opera at the same time, ride the ferris wheel and revolutionize the world, at least not in Vienna” (*Paths* 42). Love is as tormented and unsatisfying for the female figures of *Three Paths to the Lake* as for the “I,” and though they try to conceive of themselves as being in charge of their erotic fortunes—Elisabeth coolly picking out a man to deflower her; Miranda managing her lover’s betrayal of her so she will not appear to be his victim—in fact, they too are at the mercy of the men they need to love them. Because there is really no function in the private sphere for a woman who does not head a household, Beatrix can find nothing to do, apart from the beauty parlor, except sleep; old Frau Jordan vegetates in a tiny apartment on her way toward senility; and Miranda drives female inattention to the public realm to a comic pitch by refusing to wear glasses so she sees nothing of it at all. As Bachmann wrote in a draft of a letter to her publisher, “they’re playing with the wrong cards, but the game they’re playing does them more honor than the crude vulgarities of other women” (*TP* 4: 12). In these

stories, as in *Malina*, we see virtually nothing of the historical conditions in which the lives of the figures are embedded, only their consequences for women who have been instructed not to attend to them. As in *Malina*, even the utopias of the *Three Paths* figures are formulated in the impoverished terms available to them: Nadja in the arms of Christ, Beatrix in the beauty parlor, Elisabeth in her hopeless quest for the New Man. I observed in my introduction that Adorno's painful observation about the conditions of existence in the post-Holocaust, postwar period might do for the figures of the "Ways of Death," too: "There's no right way to live when the world is wrong [*Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen*]" (*Minima Moralia* 42); like Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, Bachmann's "Ways of Death" stories are "Reflections from a Damaged Life."

Historians have termed the period about which Bachmann wrote—from the end of what she called "the first postwar era" in *Malina* (172) to the beginning of the student movement—*die Langen Fünfziger Jahre*, "the long fifty years" (Abelshausen), because of the economic, political, and social homogeneity of that era. Bachmann set herself the task of viewing her times through a gendered perspective in order to illuminate the condition of female subjectivity, perhaps even of human subjectivity altogether. As Irene Heidelberger-Leonard puts it: "It's Bachmann's undisputed accomplishment to have conjoined the political and the private spheres so inextricably. . . . She sharpens our perception of everyday history by reversing the perspectives of crime and normality. In so doing she doesn't make the criminal banal, but she certainly makes the everyday criminal" ("Ernst" 88). In her series of prefaces to *The Book of Franza*, Bachmann connected the "crime virus" that had not disappeared from the world following the defeat of National Socialism to a passage from Barbey D'Aureville's "Vengeance d'une femme," which declared, "Those crimes appeal less to the senses, they appeal more to the intellect; and the intellect, after all, is the deepest part of us . . . [and there] no blood was spilt, and the murder was within the domain of sentiment and custom" (*TP* 2: 73). What clearly both deterred Bachmann in her effort to compose her "Ways of Death" and detracted from her readers' ability to understand what she had written was that the "long 1950s" were a period in which nothing (excepting, of course, the communist threat), was supposed to be wrong at all—especially in the private sphere, now decreed to be the prime source of human happiness and satisfaction, to which women had been restored.

Other talented women of Bachmann's generation were also broken by an era whose vicious qualities they struggled to delineate. In a 1962 poem Sylvia Plath (1932–1963), of German ancestry, identified herself with Jewish victims and condemned her father as a fascist. Her autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* (1963)

locates her account of a young girl's breakdown in the context of the cold war by beginning it with a reference to the Rosenbergs' execution in 1953. In a 1968 draft of a review of *The Bell Jar*, Bachmann wrote of the protagonist: "She is destroyed [*verunglückt*] in such an undiscernible way that one asks oneself after the third reading where this secret unhappiness starts and how, and I am inclined to consider that, like everything you can't find evidence for in a book, as the best and strangest" (*W* 4: 358). In a 1963 poem Anne Sexton (1928–1974) wrote: "I was tired of being a woman / tired of the spoons and the pots / tired of my mouth and my breasts, tired of the cosmetics and the silks" (1995). Anne Parsons (1930–1964), a talented researcher in the social sciences and daughter of the famous sociologist Talcott Parsons (who influenced Helmut Schelsky), wrote after endless psychoanalytic sessions: "All I do know is that my own life became more and more of a void symbolized by the long spaces between my apartment and the suburban houses where I occasionally got invited for dinner to hear about the local school system and within which none of the messages from myself which I sent out in increasingly desperate ways ever came back with more than an echo of 'you, you, you just don't want to be a woman at all.' I began to wish that someone would call me names or throw stones or threaten to send me to a concentration camp so that at least I would know for certain that the world was against me" (quoted in Breines 178). Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962) was born in the same month and year as Bachmann and committed suicide like Plath, Sexton, and Parsons. In her ex-husband Arthur Miller's play *After the Fall* (which Bachmann may have seen in Berlin in spring 1965 [Kohn-Waechter, *Verschwinden* 196]) the character possibly modeled on Monroe says: "I have been hurt by a long line of men but I have cooperated with my persecutors" (234). Meanwhile in West Germany, three notable women writers of the period, Marie Luise Kaschnitz, Ilse Langner, and Oda Schaefer, proclaimed to the Darmstadt Academy for Language and Literature in 1957 that women have an affinity for the world of dreams, the unconscious, and irrationality (Kaschnitz); that the patient, suffering, passive character of women was the determining element in their writing (Schaefer); and that the drama of women's lives, particularly childbirth, made them uninterested in writing drama (Langner) (quoted in Bullivant/Rice 229). We can imagine the cemetery of the murdered daughters as a fitting final resting place for these talented and beleaguered women.

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan began to identify "the problem that had no name," but her account, like those of some other subsequent feminists (including many of Bachmann's readers and commentators), limited

and to some extent trivialized women's problems by reducing the cause of those problems only to their treatment by men and a male-dominated society. I turn one final time to Christa Wolf, who in 1966 wrote of Bachmann's texts: "Suddenly we see what cannot be seen but must be there because it produces effects. We see the past within the present, for instance. Or the boundless desires we always suppress, which can gush out in anyone at any moment. . . . But above all vision means seeing the unity and meaning behind seemingly unrelated and meaningless events. The discovery of what animates them all, and of what really is destroying them—regardless of what they may pretend" (*Reader* 103). Situating her texts in the context of a social reality whose lineaments are discernable only in their effects on her figures, Bachmann represents a "historical situation" in which their condition cannot be ameliorated until, as Christa Wolf knew, everything is changed.

Materialist feminism regards all readings as political, as interventions into the process of meaning-making which establishes the discursive boundaries of what counts as "the way things are." My own readings in this chapter, as in this book altogether, are intended as an intervention into discussions about feminist methodology as well as about the interpretation of Ingeborg Bachmann's texts. I have tried to show that women's lives (as well as representations of them) are always situated within a historical context shaped by a multiplicity of discursive and nondiscursive historical forces. My project here is to amend feminist methodology by, as it were, decentering gender, showing it to be an analytical category always necessary yet never sufficient for an understanding of women's and men's lives. I want thereby to extend feminism's oppositional reach by contributing to a feminist effort to elaborate more complex theoretical frameworks capable of grasping all the determinants that shape women's (and men's) lives at any historical moment. Via such new theoretical paradigms, feminists and other oppositional groupings may be better able both to comprehend and subsequently to contend against destructive social forces such as those responsible for producing the disastrous social constellations that Bachmann tried to describe. Because I believe that feminist scholarship should assist in transforming the world as well as interpreting it, I hope the analysis I advance here may make some contribution to producing the kinds of new social arrangements in which Bachmann would no longer have needed to write her "Ways of Death."

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