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Part Two: A History of Reading Bachmann, 1984, Chapter 5. Gender, Race, and History in The Book of Franza, with essay titled, Reading Bachmann in 1984

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Even feminists themselves sometimes recall the mid-1980s as a period of decline for the U.S. women's movement. One of the longtime feminist activists that Nancy Whittier interviewed for her *Feminist Generations*, for instance, characterized those years as "a time of this horrible backlash, a fear-producing, economically self-motivating time, when lots of stuff was driven out of the visible realm into the personal again" (85). Certainly it is true that during this period funding for feminist projects was cut, numbers of shorter- or longer-term feminist organizations and initiatives folded, grassroots feminist activism waned, and the influx of younger women into the movement slowed. And such developments delighted many media commentators, who could allege that the "post-feminist" younger generation disdained the women's movement because they had now successfully "made it" in all the arenas to which feminists had sought access.

But this waning support for feminism's goals and activities is only part of the story. It is also possible to regard the Reagan era as a time when feminist strategies and tactics were reconfigured in response to the new political landscape. As early as 1982 the journal *Feminist Studies* had called upon feminists to "dig in" and confront these changed political circumstances by building institutions and forming alliances. The exuberant countercultural practices of feminism in the 1970s no longer sufficed as a response to the new conditions. "After a decade of experience," the editors observed soberly, "we realize that a magic sisterhood cannot sustain a woman's movement, especially through hostile and shifting circumstances." Particularly, they argued, "we feel it essential that our ties to the 'movement' acquire the solidity and specificity of alliances" (Ryan iv). Often quoted in this period were the words (cited at greater length in my introduction) that Bernice Johnson Reagon (civil rights activist, Smithsonian Institute anthropologist, and founder and lead singer of the a cappella group "Sweet Honey in the Rock") had directed at participants in a (mostly white) lesbian feminist music festival in 1981: "In a coalition you have to give, and it is different from your home. You can't stay there all the time. You go to the coalition for a few hours and then you go back and take your bottle wherever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more" (359).

As a consequence both of the changed political context, which seemed to demand coalitions and alliances, and of debates around differences of race, class, and sexual practice among women, many feminists of the mid-1980s moved into

more generally left-of-center political activities, bringing their feminist political priorities with them. One of Whittier's activists mused: "I haven't forgotten the women's movement. But to me it's a piece of this larger issue, in which we need to think about how all people can be empowered, as who they are. It's the feminist criticism, I think, that has expanded our consciousness to the point where we can even see that there's a problem. But I guess I don't see feminism as my guiding call anymore. It's sort of part of the whole picture" (99).

Although large political demonstrations for peace subsided after the stationing of cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe in November 1983, feminists continued to be active in organizations for peace and against militarism and nuclear weapons, particularly under the aegis of the National Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign. CIA subversion of the leftist Sandinista regime that had come to power in Nicaragua in 1979 and U.S. support for the right-wing regime in the civil war in El Salvador called into birth a range of support organizations for Central America. (Margaret Thatcher's war over control of the Falklands/Malvinas in 1982 and Reagan's invasion of Grenada in October 1983 showed that these new right-wing leaders were quite prepared to use military force to ensure constellations of power favorable to their interests in the rest of the world.) Campaigns urging institutions to withdraw their investments from firms that did business with South Africa's apartheid regime achieved significant successes in the mid-1980s. Of long-range importance were coalitions of feminists and black electoral candidates that coalesced under the umbrella of the Rainbow Coalition, first formed to support black progressive Mel King's campaign for mayor of Boston in fall 1983. Many feminist groups participated in the August 1983 March on Washington, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Martin Luther King's 1963 march. In 1984 these coalition efforts converged in Jesse Jackson's candidacy for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. Like those of Rainbow Coalition mayoral candidates, Jackson's platform included strong feminist planks written for him by his feminist supporters. The Jackson campaign inspired widespread feminist enthusiasm and left in its wake broad coalitions prepared to work for progressive political change at the local level.

Except for cuts in research funding, feminist scholarship was probably less affected by the Reagan era than feminist activism, but it is possible to discern research trends that to some degree parallel political transformations outside the academy. On the one hand, the broadening of feminist emphases to include a wider range of political concerns was, possibly under the influence of ecofeminists and women in the peace movement, accompanied by quite grand efforts to theorize the connections of women's oppression to everything else—not so different from the arguments made by Christa Wolf. The autumn 1983 issue of *Signs*, for instance, focused on women and religion and alleged in its prefatory editorial that religion was, as Virginia Woolf had commented of science, "not

sexless; she is a man, a father, and infected too” (Woolf 139). The editors of the issue continued: “The infection of both science and religion does not lie in masculinity itself but in the infusion of masculinity with dominance. As [Hilary] Rose points out [in an article in this same *Signs* issue], an ideology of dominance twists scientific investigation into the study of the means of control over nature, with an accompanying loss of feeling for the sacredness of all life.” Indeed, the editorial goes on to allege, exactly such qualities may in fact constitute “the central malaise of Western culture: one in which conflict for dominance, beginning with dominance over women, becomes obsessive. Such conflict, when it finds its expression in international politics, makes nuclear armament the ‘business’ of science, as Rose points out” (“Editorial” 1983 1-2). Such grand and all-encompassing theoretical models revealed their indebtedness to cultural feminism particularly in their effort to portray the oppression of women as primary and as prior to all other forms of domination.

In some contrast to attempts to elaborate large theoretical paradigms, however, other feminist scholars called for much more careful attention to historical and cultural specificity in order to acknowledge diversity among women. In that same issue of *Signs*, black feminist Gloria Joseph, reviewing Angela Davis’s *Women, Race, and Class*, remarks: “Mainstream white feminists must realize that feminist theory, feminist organizing, women’s conferences, and women’s studies courses generally lack an ideological philosophy capable of systematically encompassing the histories, experiences and material need of Black and working-class women” (136). Such observations necessitated a fundamental rethinking of certain basic feminist premises. Some U.S. scholars followed the lead of British feminist Michèle Barrett in maintaining that even the use of the term “patriarchy” obscured significant differences in the way male dominance was exercised transhistorically and -culturally (Van Allen 85). Others maintained that the use of the analytic category “women” confused more than it clarified, Marilyn Power arguing in *Feminist Studies* with respect to Reaganomics, for instance, that “women cannot be analyzed as a sexual class. To understand the impact of Reagan policies on women, and the implications for political activity by women, we must remain aware of class and race differences among women” (31). And Roger Gottlieb, writing in *Socialist Review*, convincingly demonstrated the inability of psychoanalytic feminist theories such as Chodorow’s and Dinnerstein’s to account for historically specific psychic structures. Many articles in feminist journals, particularly those written by historians and anthropologists, now concentrated on the wide varieties of female experience in the world. Increasingly, feminist conferences focused on differences among women worldwide and in the United States: for example, the University of Illinois conference “Common Differences: Third World Women and Feminist Perspectives” and the pathbreaking Five College conference on the intersection of Black Studies and Women’s Studies, both held in April 1983. On the other hand, despite pious

disclaimers like that of the *Signs* editorial in the spring 1983 issue focused on “women and violence”—“Yet we should remain mindful that women are participants in violence as well as victims of it and note that feminist scholars up to this point have given little attention to this fact” (Freedman/Gelpi 399), feminist scholars nonetheless seemed to remain loath to concede that some women might really be fundamentally antagonistic to the goals claimed by feminists and other progressives. Examinations of even the most unlikely groups (women of the Moral Majority [Pohli], women missionaries seeking “to convert heathen savages” [Grimshaw], Mormon women in polygamous marriages [Dunfey]) continued to discover that they too displayed at heart a germ of true feminist consciousness.

In some articles written in 1983-1984 it was nevertheless possible to discover faint traces of a paradigm shift that would not be fully evident until the late 1980s. Though Gayle Rubin (sex radical as well as anthropologist) had first proposed the examination of women’s lives in the context of a “sex/gender system” in a 1975 article, it was only in the mid-1980s and particularly in connection with the sex debates that feminists more generally began to discuss the necessity of understanding femininity as a reciprocal term always defined in relationship to masculinity, the assumption on which the term “gender” rests. As well, feminist scholars began in this period to investigate the “social construction” of gender and sexuality, again in the context of the debates around sexuality. As Kate Ellis put it, “The question is: does sexuality begin as an unmediated ‘it’ that is later constructed by societal input, or is sexuality like language, only brought into being through the process of ‘learning’ it?” (119). Ellis also suggested that the social construction of sexuality and femininity is the notion that fundamentally divides cultural and socialist feminists, and it seems to me that it was indeed social constructionism that pounded the final nail in the cultural feminist coffin.

It is not surprising that Michel Foucault entered feminist discussion at about this moment, particularly via the sex debates. From him, feminists began to acquire a new conception of power not just as repressive and negative but as productive and positive—a notion that would be central to the elaboration of social constructionism. In feminists’ attention to Foucault it is possible also to discern some stirrings of suspicion about the utility of grand theory and totalizing models altogether: Bidy Martin, for instance, one of the earliest U.S. feminists to emphasize the importance of Foucault for feminist scholarship, argues that conceptions of capitalism and patriarchy as “total theories of monolithic control or power held by a clearly identifiable and coherently sovereign group” have made it impossible “to get at the operations of power and the possibilities for resistance in modern Western societies, to comprehend the constitution and the transformation of power relations at the level of the local and everyday” (5). Yet in the mid-1980s, as the tensions of the Cold War were reinvigorated

by a president who saw America “standing tall” again, a conception of power disseminated from the top downward seemed after all not so far-fetched, and it may be that the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War would be necessary before Foucault would find final favor with feminists.

Finally, though feminist literary scholarship made no great leaps forward in the period up to 1984, some hints of things to come could be detected in that arena. In 1982 Stephen Greenblatt had first coined the term “new historicism,” a method which was at that point was, and for several years to come would remain, astonishingly oblivious to gender issues yet which nonetheless served as a harbinger of the new, more historically based approach inflected by cultural studies, cultural materialism, and Foucault which feminists would embrace in the 1990s. In a 1984 report in *Signs*, “Towards a Feminist Literary History,” Marilyn L. Williamson pointed feminist literary scholars in a similar direction. Williamson proposes that, rather than attempting to add great women writers to the canon, feminists should abandon the notion of the canon altogether. Instead, they should seek to examine women’s non-traditional writing, and for that they would need to draw upon the conclusions of other disciplines and develop an interdisciplinary approach: for “providing a cultural setting for non-traditional works through the study of history and ideology may be a more effective method than one governed by purely literary concerns” (137). Moreover, she proposed to abandon a concept of the autonomous text set against the backdrop of its context in favor of understanding how each helped to configure the other: “The ideological approach, moreover, will not privilege aesthetic discourse: it will not see social and economic conditions as a background reflected in literary products. Instead such an approach will view literature as part of a general discourse produced by a given culture, all aspects of which at once create and reflect its value system” (143). (Louis Montrose would later famously capture Williamson’s insight in the chiasmus “the historicity of texts” and “the textuality of history” [“Professing” 20].) In the light of things to come in feminist literary scholarship, Williamson’s conclusion is remarkably prescient: “And so it appears that as contemporary theories gradually transform our curricula and habits of mind, the historical, ideological study of women’s nontraditional writing will take its place among many accepted ways to organize and study a great variety of texts” (147).

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CHAPTER 5

Gender, Race, and History in The Book of Franza

*Philosophical problems are illnesses that
must be healed.*

—Ingeborg Bachmann, *Werke*

Though *The Book of Franza* was uncompleted at the time of Bachmann's death, it was begun as the first of the "Ways of Death" novels. As the editors of the *Werke* explain, Bachmann had conceived her plan for the novel cycle even before she completed *The Thirtieth Year* and originally intended "Ways of Death" as the title for the novel which was to become *Franza*. In 1967, after having written the portions that have now been printed, she laid *Franza* aside, to begin work on *Malina*. She explained in a 1971 interview that only *Malina* had made access to the world of the "Ways of Death" possible for her: "I wrote almost 1,000 pages before this book, and these last 400 pages from the very last years finally became the beginning that I had always been lacking" (*Gul* 96). One can understand the importance of the novel *Malina* for a novel cycle which was to be narrated by a male figure; that first published novel explains why there could be no female narrative voice for the "Ways of Death." But, perhaps because of its subject matter, that difficult first novel of the "Ways of Death" cycle was badly received, and only now are we beginning to grasp all that is responsible for the destruction of the "I" of *Malina*, that, as Bachmann put it, "the sickness of the world and the sickness of this person is the sickness of our time for me" (*Gul* 72). Should Bachmann have completed and published *The Book of Franza* before *Malina*, the misunderstandings to which *Malina* was subjected might have been fewer, for *The Book of Franza* more explicitly and concretely locates the female "ways of death" of which her cycle

speaks in a social and historical context. The reading of *The Book of Franza* I offer here is thus intended both as an interpretation of this daring, complex, and fragmentary novel and also as an attempt to illuminate, via an understanding of *Franza*, Bachmann's intentions for the entire "Ways of Death" cycle.

I consider this endeavor of particular importance because in my view Bachmann's work, after her rediscovery and reinterpretation by feminist literary scholars of the late 1970s, now faces the danger of a second dehistoricization and *Verharmlosung* (domestication). Several recent scholars have shown how Bachmann's fame as a poet in the 1950s was purchased at the cost of the extraction of a social context from her work. Bernd Witte argues, for instance, "For secret conservatives of all hues her moderate modernism thus became the appropriate contemporary continuation of pure poetry" (*Kritisches*). Such preconceptions continued to shape the reception of her later fiction—with which critics seemed powerless to come to terms. Now the feminist rereadings of Bachmann, particularly facilitated by the works of the French feminist theorists Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, have given us a lens through which to view that late fiction, showing us how Bachmann's "Ways of Death" investigate the psychic states of women in a world dominated by men. These new feminist interpretations have permitted extraordinary insights into Bachmann's work, and we now understand dimensions of it which without feminism we perhaps might never have seen at all. Nonetheless, it has seemed to me recently that there is an inclination in feminist literary scholarship in general and in Bachmann scholarship in particular to use gender as the single category through which to understand works by women writers. Encouraged by French and American psychoanalytic feminist theory and by the influential American literary scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, such scholarship often treats the category "woman" as if it were one that did not vary historically and culturally, as if gender were the only source of oppression from which women have ever suffered, and as if all women were only innocent victims of male power, not also members of classes and cultures in which they possess (some) privilege and power, including the power to oppress other women and men. At a point at which Bachmann's deep concern with the status of human (and particularly female) subjectivity *in the contemporary world* is only beginning to be grasped in its fullness, such ahistorical feminist interpretations seem to me, despite their contributions, once again to do violence to her works, by truncating the breadth of their politics and depth of their suffering and depriving them of their full radicality.

In this essay I want thus to stress what I believe to be *The Book of Franza's* most central theme, the location of the "ways of death" suffered by contempo-

rary European women within the trajectory of European and world history. Fundamental to my analysis is an understanding of the course of European history which draws heavily upon Critical Theory: I assume here (and document in *The Book of Franza*) that Bachmann also believes European history to be characterized by increasing tendencies toward domination and control, accomplished particularly through the eradication of the qualitatively different, the other. These efforts manifest themselves not just through the use of overt violence and force but also through the management of consciousness. In the realm of human thought the eradication of otherness takes the form of the domination of the abstract and interchangeable over the specific or unique, what Horkheimer and Adorno, following Weber, call the disenchantment of the world, the elimination of magical thinking. To create the human beings who are the agents and the objects of this domination, violence also had to be done to the human psyche, as Horkheimer and Adorno remark: “Men had to do fearful things to themselves before the self, the identical, purposive, and virile nature of man, was formed, and something of that recurs in every childhood” (33). Only a repressed residue remains that can express itself in dreams, parapraxes, neurotic symptoms, and madness. Language as well is complicit in domination, subsuming the particular under the rule of the concept; with the increasing separation of science from poetry, nonliterary language is employed to control the object world, not to be like it or to know it in its otherness. Women (or at least those women lacking a “manly character”) cannot be the agents of domination: they are included among the others, an “image of nature, the subjugation of which constituted that civilization’s title to fame.” On the other hand, alone of all the dominated object world, women are allowed to participate in the human world, to enjoy the spoils of domination if they agree to accede to their oppression and to celebrate their masters’ accomplishments: “Woman herself, on behalf of all exploited nature, gained admission to a male-dominated world, but only in a broken form. In her spontaneous submission she reflects for her vanquisher the glory of his victory, substituting devotion for defeat, nobility of soul for despair, and a loving breast for a ravished heart” (Horkheimer/Adorno 248–249). This is mostly the situation of the women Bachmann depicts in the “Ways of Death.”

What is missing from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and from most of Critical Theory is what Bachmann, building on this understanding of history, brings to *The Book of Franza*. Horkheimer and Adorno wrote from the perspective of what they believed to be the world-historical triumph of domination: National Socialism in Germany on the one hand, the culture industry of the United States on the other (developments that obviously concern Bachmann as well). But they

virtually ignored the most obvious of enlightenment's efforts at domination: Western imperialism and neoimperialism, which surpass National Socialism in their brutality if not in their efficiency. In a parallel omission, Horkheimer and Adorno also fail altogether to acknowledge that there are cultures in the world which operate according to quite different rules, still at least in part outside the grip of enlightenment. Western history is not the whole of human history, and one suspects that in omitting any mention of that which is not subsumed by the West, Horkheimer and Adorno show themselves to be entrapped in the very dialectic of enlightenment that their book details. In *The Book of Franza*, however, Bachmann pushes the logic of their analysis further, particularly as regards Western women and also as regards their possibilities for liberation. The questions this novel poses are ones that it is central for feminism to address. If Western women are implicated in enlightenment, simultaneously its victims and its beneficiaries, what standpoint can they assume to struggle for their own liberation, and what will be the relationship of their struggles, within the West, to the struggles of other victims of the West who stand outside of it? Can history take a course which is not just that of increasing domination? Do white women have a place in such a history, or is their fate inextricably tied to that of the West? Where does their own story (told in the "Ways of Death") fit in? To these difficult and painful questions Bachmann has only the beginnings of answers, but her novel attempts to explore these dilemmas in their full complexity, revealing the truth to her readers—a charge she had set herself as a writer, for "Man can face the truth [*Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar*]" (*W* 4: 275-277).

The historical event central to *The Book of Franza* provides a concretization of the quandaries white women face. In flight from the white man in Vienna who had tried to drive her mad, Franza, in the company of her brother Martin, finds herself in Luxor, Egypt, on 14 May 1964. They had, we are told, "traveled into a historical event" (*Franza* 105, translation modified). On that day Nikita Khrushchev, Gamal Abdel Nasser, and three other Arab presidents—Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Abdel Salam Arif of Iraq, and Abdullah al-Salal of Yemen—"standing on a granite bluff high over the site of the Aswan Dam Project, pressed a button . . . setting off a dynamite charge that opened a channel to divert the waters of the Nile," reported the *New York Times* of 15 May 1964 on its front page. "The explosion marked the completion of the first stage of the billion-dollar power and irrigation project which is designed to remake the face of this ancient and undeveloped land" (Walz 1).

The ramifications of this event for the themes of the novel are great. The story of the building of the Aswan Dam is centrally entwined with the activi-

ties of the whites in Africa. Perhaps the dam itself can be regarded as an image something like the grand technological plans for progress at the end of *Faust II*, for, as the *Times* reported in another article of the same day, “a gigantic high dam that would harness the Nile became the dream of Egyptian reformers” (Mohr 3)—European technology used to channel the powers of nature, turning them to human purposes. In the 1950s, the United States, Britain, and the World Bank initially agreed to finance the building of the dam. President Nasser, objecting to their condition that the Egyptian economy be supervised during the dam’s construction, began negotiations with the Soviet Union. When the Americans withdrew their offer, Nasser seized the internationally owned Suez Canal Company, and the Israelis, French, and British invaded Egypt in retaliation, an act many regarded as blatant imperialism, bringing the world to the brink of war.

In the novel, Martin and Franza pass through Suez and allude to that crisis, though Suez shows no trace of such momentous events: “Suez was a surprise, for no immediate drama presented itself to the eyes, nor any trace of a past war” (*Franza* 90). Instead, the Soviets financed the building of the dam: Egypt chose a course of development not that of Western Europe but one that might nonetheless be regarded as the culmination of enlightenment thinking. As Khrushchev pointed out during his visit (a visit which, the novel tells us, Martin followed avidly in the newspapers), the dam can be regarded as a “symbol of peaceful cooperation” and “proves that through socialism there is progress” (Walz 1). Indeed, the dam will achieve for Egypt the inundation and fertility which Franza, as I show below, is unable to find: the *Times* notes that the dam is “designed to raise the Nile nearly 200 feet. It will store water in a lake 300 miles long. The lake will enable Egypt to increase tillable acreage from six million to eight million acres” (Walz 3). On the other hand, the day on which the statesmen loose the Nile waters is the same day on which Franza is buried alive in the hardening Nile mud. She says: “What have I seen? A limousine, a ship, and rose petals. Then they will open the sluices, the water will come out. History will dub it the Day of the Water. And I was buried alive” (*Franza* 106-107). Probably this history is preferable to that of outright colonial exploitation, though it is not clear that such progress leads in the direction of human liberation. It is also not at all clear what this larger course of history has to do with Franza’s own story, for the history made by the statesmen of the Second and Third World is not one that she shares. Or, as she asks: “My story and the story of all those who make up the larger history, how do these find a place within the whole of history?” (*Franza* 107).

In this novel Franza's story has three parts, which stand simultaneously for different cultural locations, different points in history, and, most important, for different regions of the psyche or stages of psychological development, as Bachmann explained in her draft of a preface to the novel: "The settings then are Vienna, the village of Galicien and Carinthia, and the Arabian, Libyan, and Sudanese deserts. The real settings, the interior ones laboriously concealed by the external, are elsewhere" (*Franza* 4). The different locations of the novel allow Bachmann both to explore the development of Franza's illness and also to interrogate its causes, to pursue the reasons for Franza's death: "The book, however, is not simply a journey through an illness. Ways of death also include crimes. This is a book about a crime" (*Franza* 3). For, as Bachmann goes on to explain in the preface, "the virus of crime . . . cannot have simply disappeared from our world twenty years ago [i.e., in 1945]" (*Franza* 3). Instead, in our society, the attitudes of mind which produced National Socialism now exercise their brutality in the realm of consciousness: "Crimes that require a sharp mind [*Geist*], that tap our minds and less so our senses, those that most deeply affect us—there no blood flows, but rather the slaughter is granted a place within the morals and customs of a society whose fragile nerves quake in the face of any such beastliness. Yet the crimes did not diminish, but rather they require greater refinement, another level of intelligence, and are themselves dreadful" (*Franza* 4).

The novel's second chapter, "Jordanian Time," explores, as I detail below, how these destructive practices are most commonly carried out within European culture (only apparently not at war) in the domination of women by men. To demonstrate, however, that male dominance (or domination altogether) is neither an ontological nor a historical constant, Bachmann shows in the novel's first chapter, "Return to Galicien," that there existed a time, a culture, and a point in psychological development—now all irretrievably lost—when peace was possible. In the novel's final chapter, "The Egyptian Darkness," Franza flees Europe in search of a cure for the madness into which her husband, agent of the crimes of her culture, has driven her. In North Africa, however, she discovers the extent of the crimes of Europe. Her imprecations are thenceforth delivered against "the whites" as well as against her husband, her dying words: "The whites should. They should be damned. He should" (*Franza* 142). Franza finds in the North African desert no cure for the situation of women in contemporary Europe, no standpoint from which she can assert an alternative to the cultural dominance of the white fathers—though she may have learned there at least how to break out of the psychic structures imposed upon her by European men, and perhaps even how to rebel against them. But the novel seems to

conclude with the suggestion that if there is a solution for humankind, it may not be one that would include white women like Franza. To explain fully the relationship of Franza's story to "the whole of history," the remainder of this essay investigates these points at greater length.

Franza's "case" begins in contemporary Vienna, the site of *Three Paths to the Lake* and the other "Ways of Death" novels, whose characters appear again in this work. Here, as elsewhere in Bachmann's work, geography and landscape have a paradigmatic, sometimes even symbolic function. The elite social stratum Bachmann describes in Vienna embodies some central qualities of the *grande bourgeoisie* in contemporary Europe, and her Vienna recalls Balzac's Paris in its emphasis on social success, in its cold-blooded opportunism, in its constantly shifting liaisons, in the dirty or vicious secrets that lie beneath its polished surface. But simultaneously, Vienna (or more generally, Austria), because it is now no longer central to the course of European history, provides Bachmann a privileged perspective from which to view events elsewhere, as she remarked in a 1971 interview: "It [Austria] differs from all other small countries today in that it was an empire and it's possible to learn some things from its history. And because the inactivity to which one is compelled there enormously sharpens one's perspective on the big situation and on today's empires. Those who have declined themselves know what that means" (*Gul* 106). As "interior setting," Vienna stands for the psychic structures demanded and imposed in contemporary Europe, in Franza's case a feminine psyche as her culture constructs it. To succeed in Vienna, Franza must be *gleichgeschaltet* (forced into conformity), obliterating her provincial eccentricities and other nonsynchronic residues of her past; she must learn and accept her place in the social and linguistic order, where she is the object, not the subject. Talented at languages, Franza learns the language of her domination well, becoming a "young lady [who] had changed her hairstyle and dropped the Galicien accent, exchanging it for a different accent in Vienna, walking through Herrengasse and through the Kohlmarkt as if she had never walked over the Matchstick Bridge at home" (*Franza* 22). The sites at which Bachmann locates Franza in Vienna are significant: sipping coffee in the Café Herrenhof, strolling through the Herrengasse, Franza has agreed to acknowledge men as her masters. To be able to enjoy the privileges available to the wife of her husband, to become "Frau Jordan, who was used to being admitted" (*Franza* 126), Franza has been obliged to become feminine, following an almost classically Freudian model: "She was twenty-three, about to give up her studies, allegedly having fainted [*ohnmächtig geworden*] in a hall of anatomy, or in an equally romantic tale she fell into the Fossil's [Jordan's] arms" (*Franza* 9).

Anatomy teaches her her powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*): she cannot become the doctor but must marry someone who is—Leopold Jordan.

Though Martin terms Jordan a fossil, Franza knows that is wrong: “Why did you call him the Fossil? Oh, no, you’re wrong, for he’s more contemporary than I am, he is the type that rules today, that succeeds today, that attacks and lives to do so, for I’ve never seen a person with so much aggression” (*Franza* 79). An esteemed psychoanalyst, Jordan can be regarded as an administrator of consciousness, responsible for discriminating between sanity and madness and for restoring those who deviate to normality. Like the agents of domination whom Horkheimer and Adorno describe, Jordan uses his science to reduce his patients to that alone which his categories can contain: “He dissected everyone until nothing more was left, nothing remaining except a finding that belonged to him. . . . [H]e couldn’t allow any person to deviate from the norm he established for them” (*Franza* 73). Martin uses the term fascism to describe a form of rationality which has turned into its opposite, and here Franza concurs: “He must be crazy. And there’s no one who seems more rational” (*Franza* 76). Jordan’s great work, a study of the medical experiments done on concentration camp victims (a preliminary study for the work mentioned in “The Barking,” titled “The Significance of Endogenous and Exogenous Factors in Connection with the Occurrence of Paranoid and Depressive Psychoses in Former Concentration Camp Inmates and Refugees” [*Paths* 106]), is thus a model for and description of his own practice. Jordan prefers particularly those who willingly and completely give themselves into his hands, his wives: “He didn’t like women, and yet he always had to have a woman in order to provide him with the object of his hatred” (*Franza* 72). “Why was I hated so much?” asks Franza, and corrects herself, “No, not me, the other within me” (*Franza* 62), the otherness of women that escapes the parameters of male control.

The accomplishment of this novel in the area of gender relations, then, is its dramatization of how a woman accedes to and is destroyed by a man’s power. In two respects this novel is different from the other “Ways of Death” works: first, because rationalized male power is embodied in a figure deliberately and calculatedly brutal, and second, because Franza, probably alone of all the “Ways of Death” figures, is allowed to come to consciousness of her own condition. Franza discovers that Jordan has intentionally set about to manipulate and destroy her: “He was working on me, he was working on me as his case study. He hounded me” (*Franza* 82). She succumbs, falling prey to hysterical attacks of coughing and breathlessness, phobias, and paralyzing anxieties. Object of his scientific calculation, Franza is an experiment, like those of the concentration camps, as

she explains bitterly: "A magnificent experiment was made on me. To put it vulgarly: How much can a person stand without kicking the bucket?" (*TP* 2: 62, passage omitted in translation). Jordan's omission of her name from even the foreword to his great work represents an attempt to remove her from discourse altogether: "He wanted to erase me. My name should simply disappear in order that I could disappear for real later on" (*Franza* 63). And in contrast even to the concentration camp victims, there are no words to describe what is being done to her, no one to whom to appeal, no allies against this sort of fascism:

I was suddenly no more a co-worker, no longer married. I was separated from society with my husband, living in a jungle in the middle of civilization, and I saw that he was well armed and that I had no weapons at all.

But what am I saying? I'm missing the central point. No, no, I wasn't in any jungle, I was in the middle of civilization, along with its definition in the dictionary, and its verbal ability to handle any situation. (*Franza* 81-82)

The turns of phrase obliterate her actual situation, will not allow her to tell the story of her victimization by the male subject of this civilization.

In Vienna, what reveals Franza's real situation to her are her dreams. Those dreams speak in the language of the unconscious, which refuses to acknowledge the rules of gender and discourse as culture imposes them but articulates in its own language its desire and distress. "When you learn this in the same manner within yourself, on the trip through the tunnel in the night, then you know it's true" (*Franza* 79, translation modified). (This is, it appears, the same metaphorical tunnel through which Martin passes at the book's beginning, a creative process drawing on the unconscious which produces the words on paper, the truth of this novel: "The words line up together, and brought along out of the darkness of the tunnel passage . . . the originals and the copies roll on, the illusions and the true conceptions rolling into the light, rolling down through the head, emerging from the mouth that speaks of them and asserts them and is reliable because of the tunnel in the head" [*Franza* 9, translation modified].) Franza's dreams tell her the story of patriarchy and power: "the dream . . . presenting you with your own great drama, your father and a henchman named Jordan together in one person as equally important as any great figure. . . . Your free-floating fear, for which you have no basis, presents a story that assaults your sight and hearing, and you know for the first time why you feel such angst. I saw a graveyard at sunset, and the dream told me: that is the Graveyard of the Daughters" (*Franza* 78). Both this dream and the dream of being gassed in a gas chamber ("and Jordan held the knob and was letting the gas in" [*Franza* 70]) appear also in

Malina. Here is the explanation for the “ways of death” endured by Bachmann’s women, stories that can be told only outside a cultural framework that regards such treatment of women as natural and legitimate.

Her dreams let Franza generalize from her own oppression to that of other victims of this culture’s power: “What I have realized is that I am from a lower race. Or perhaps it’s a class” (*Franza* 79). She stresses particularly the affinities between the power exercised against her and that which white imperialism has directed against nonwhite peoples: “He stole all of my goods. My laughter, my tenderness, my capacity for joy, my compassion, my ability to help, my animal nature, my shining rays, for he stomped out everything that rose up until it could no longer rise again. Why someone does that I don’t understand, but it’s incomprehensible why the whites took all the goods from the blacks. Not just the diamonds and the nuts, the oil and dates, but also the peace in which such goodness grows, and the health without which one cannot live” (*Franza* 80; translation modified). Like the Papuas, she is dying of “deadly despair”: “I am a Papuan,” she proclaims (*Franza* 80). Only in the third chapter do we learn that Franza finally left Jordan because he had also taken her only child from her, forcing her into an abortion conducted by “a sterilized surgeon dressed in a snow-white uniform,” a white scientist, an “authority” like Jordan. Franza foresees that the aborted fetus will be thrust, like the Nazi victims, into the cremation ovens. Falling on her knees in the operating room, revealing the real authority relationship in effect, she begs that the child be preserved (analogously to the Egyptian mummies) in a canning jar, or that she be allowed to reincorporate it into herself, to eat its heart (like Isis and Osiris in Musil’s poem discussed below). It is Franza’s behavior, of course, that is judged to be mad, while the men who control her are regarded as normal. Despite her psychic state, Jordan decrees that her expropriation continue: “Jordan, the psychotherapist in charge, knew best whether there was any cause for concern, and Jordan the authority assured him authoritatively: There’s no need to worry” (*Franza* 94). For in the language of this white science, one need not worry about the fate of the victims, and the victims are unable to speak in their own behalf.

To be able to tell her own story, as Franza succeeds nonetheless at least partially in doing, two conditions seem to be necessary. First, she must have some way of moving outside the limits European thought sets her. She does so in her dreams but also geographically: the second chapter, “Jordanian Time,” takes place on shipboard, under way from Genoa to North Africa, within the boundaries of no land at all (a situation somewhat analogous to the dream also in its relationship to water). Second, she seems to need a sympathetic listener;

she needs to be able to turn the analytic relationship against the aims of psychoanalysis that Jordan represents, using it to gain access to events and meanings that Jordan refuses to acknowledge, to create a history for herself different from Jordan's history. Even before their trip, Martin had noticed that inducing Franza to speak of her experiences helped her to combat the hysterical attacks which overcame her—precisely the same discovery Freud had made with his own hysterical patients. Thus what needs to be asked here as well is the status in the novel of this sympathetic listener and interlocutor, Martin. Is he the lost brother/lover whom women seek? What does the relationship of Franza and Martin tell us about the possibility of understanding and love between men and women in this culture?

As even the linguistic similarities of their names indicate, Martin plays in this novel a role somewhat similar to that of Malina in the novel of that name (Martin/Malina; cf. Jordan/Ivan). Martin and Franza as children, before each accepted the gendered rules for adulthood, spoke the same language (or sometimes no language at all), and hence could understand each other. But in the present time of this novel, Martin has also succeeded in the Viennese high society of the "Ways of Death," which means he has become a successful man. The novel's first sentence suggests that his relationship to Franza is almost as proprietary as Jordan's: "The Professor, the Fossil, had destroyed his sister for him" (*Franza* 7; translation modified). Martin also possesses other characteristics of men in this society, sometimes even a caricature of their qualities. He regrets, for instance, his sister's illness particularly because it interferes with his carefully calculated love affair with Elfi Nemeč, the model who will become Jordan's next wife after Franza's death. In a rather comic scene Martin tries, in analogy to Jordan, to understand Franza's illness using geological categories, the only science he knows (and here portrayed as a particularly positivistic one): "His sister was cut through by pain and by something he was unable to explore, given his specialty, for he had no desire to describe or identify the grind [*Schliff*] of his sister, which was from the Modern Era and not from the Mesozoic" (*Franza* 29; translation modified). Even outside Europe, in the desert, "the immense sanatorium" (*Franza* 89), Martin mostly fails Franza; he cannot understand what she is trying to say, even when she is dying, and at the end of the novel returns to Vienna apparently untroubled, "a white man among white people" (*Franza* 145; translation modified). He came "home," Bachmann tells us, "where he felt at home again, there in the third district, and went to sleep and never thought this way again" (*Franza* 146).

Why does Martin fail Franza? His fascination for Breasted, an Egyptologist

(to whom Franza is indifferent!), provides a clue. James Henry Breasted was the author of *The Dawn of Consciousness* (1933), a work that Freud used to support his argument in *Moses and Monotheism* (1937–39) that Moses was actually an Egyptian, not a Jew. According to Freud, Moses derived the monotheism he introduced to the Jews from the Egypt of Amenhotep IV (better known as Akhnaton) of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Amenhotep IV forced monotheism on his Egyptian subjects, says Freud, a religion that was “contrary to their thousands-of-years old traditions and to all the familiar habits of their lives.” It was a strict monotheism, Freud continues, “the first attempts of the kind, so far as we know, in the history of the world, and along with the belief in a single god religious intolerance was inevitably born, which had previously been alien to the ancient world and remained so long afterwards” (23: 20). The roots of monotheism go back to the reign of Thothmes III (also known as Thutmose), who was responsible for making Egypt a world power. “This imperialism,” Freud says, “was reflected in religion as universalism and monotheism” (23: 21). Thothmes III was the successor (and also half-brother and husband) to Hatchepsut, the first female queen in Egyptian history, and tried to eradicate every trace of her, a fact upon which Franza remarks when she visits Hatshepsut’s temple in the novel’s third chapter. Freud of course connects monotheism, the worship of a universal, all-powerful Godfather, to the internalization of patriarchal values resulting from the successful traversal of the oedipus complex. Martin’s admiration for Breasted can thus be read as a kind of shorthand on Bachmann’s part, an indication of how Martin—as a successful young white man—is also inheritor to a system of values that rest upon universalism, abstraction, imperialism, and male power (as well as a conception of linear progress from the past to the present)—while Franza is the victim of these values, at their mercy. Thus Martin, like Malina with the “I” and despite his evident love and sympathy for Franza, is also part of the order which is destroying her; hence, he cannot really understand her or come to her aid. At the beginning of the novel Martin believes that he has understood Franza’s “message [Mitteilung]” (the telegram she sends him appealing for help), that he could be a Champollion for Franza, like the translator of the Rosetta stone, “the first to shed light on a forgotten form of writing [Schrift]” (*Franza* 7), finding an equivalent in his language. But Franza cannot be translated into Martin’s language, as the “I” cannot be into Malina’s.

Bachmann suggests, however, that Martin and Franza were not always so estranged, and the novel’s first chapter, “Return to Galicien,” returns to a time in human psychological development and in European history before the reign of terror (to which “Jordanian Time” testifies) held such complete sway. In this sec-

tion, as elsewhere in Bachmann's writing, the Austrian province Carinthia plays an important role as a nonsynchronic alternative to contemporary Vienna, scene of the crimes of the "Ways of Death." Because it is in the "language triangle" [*Sprachdreieck*] or on the border, Bachmann also seems to regard it as an area where the limits of language are not drawn so firmly, whence transgressors of boundaries (*Grenzgänger*) derive. This aspect of Bachmann's work, its productive use of an Austrian tradition, has only begun to be investigated, but I can advance here at least some initial observations. The Galicien to which Martin and Franza return home is an imaginary village near the real town of Villach on the Gail River in Carinthia. But "home" seems also to be the site of an original, nonalienated relationship of man and woman to each other, to culture, and to nature. In this respect, of course, Bachmann's attempt at a "return home" recalls Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*, a work that she identified in the Frankfurt lectures as a major influence on contemporary writing. In psychological terms, the young Franza and Martin demonstrate the possibility of love between the sexes before they have assumed their role in the patriarchal order as adult man and woman. Alone, without parents, they have avoided the oedipal "family romance" and can love each other as equals; because their love precedes the institution of the incest taboo, it is also erotic, and it is possible that Martin and Franza become lovers in Egypt. This erotic and maternal older sister-younger brother relationship traces its way through Bachmann's published work from the poems (especially "The Game is Over") to "Three Paths to the Lake," an alternative to the present-day "tangle and confusion, the discrepancy inherent in all relationships" (*Paths* 175) between men and women.

It is because Martin is also psychologically not of a single piece, because he also preserves archaic recollections of other possible relationships between men and women "beneath" the psyche he has acquired as an adult male, that he can respond to Franza at all. In their childhood, Martin recalls, he called her "girl" in a different language, "For that's what he had called her, 'Gitsche,' the Windish word for girl, 'Gitsche,' who was the essence of all the Gitsches" (*Franza* 21–22). Because of their prepatriarchal connections, Martin and Franza can sometimes communicate across space and time, without words. Thus expressly "against all reason [*Vernunft*]" (*Franza* 18), Martin knows that Franza, in flight from Jordan, would have gone home to Galicien.

In a manner somewhat analogous to Freud himself, who used the metaphor of an earlier civilization, the Minoan-Mycenean, chronologically anterior to Greece, to explain the existence of a preoedipal psychic phase especially important for women, Bachmann appeals to Egypt to explain the nature of this

preoedipal sibling love. The “special saying [*Kult-Satz*]” of the siblings, which Martin recalls only imperfectly, derived from a poem of Robert Musil’s, “Isis und Osiris”: “Among a hundred brothers there is one. And he ate her heart. . . . And she ate his [*Unter hundert Brüdern dieser eine. Und er aß ihr Herz. . . . Und sie das Seine*]” (*Franza* 58). Bachmann alludes here of course to the love of Ulrich and Agathe in *The Man Without Qualities*. She quoted the Musil poem for the first time in a radio essay written sometime after December 1952, explaining there how Ulrich and Agathe’s love was a failed attempt to achieve a “different condition [*anderen Zustand*]” through love, a utopia intended as an attack on “the dominant orders, in which every thing is solely a singular example of its possibilities” and also an alternative to the impending war, “which initiated the collapse of culture and thinking about culture” (*W* 4: 100, 102). Musil’s importance for Bachmann needs still to be investigated, for here as in other respects there seem to exist deep affinities between their writings, and Bachmann has acknowledged his work as one of her most important literary influences (*GuI* 56).

In *The Book of Franza*, however, even more important is Bachmann’s allusion to the Isis and Osiris myth itself. As Freud recounted in *Moses and Monotheism*, the religion of Aten (associated by Freud with imperialism, abstraction, and the power of the father) kept “complete silence about the god of the dead, Osiris, and the kingdom of the dead” (23: 24). According to Breasted, traditional Egyptian thinking “was always in graphic form. The Egyptian did not possess the terminology for the expression of a system of abstract thought; neither did he develop the capacity to create necessary terminology, as did the Greek. He thought in concrete pictures” (7-8). Hieroglyphic writing (or the “royal cartouches” to which Bachmann refers) exemplifies Egyptian concreteness, and it is also of course according to Freud the technique the unconscious uses to construct a dream: “The dream-work makes a translation of the dream-thoughts into a primitive mode of expression similar to picture-writing” (15: 229). In the earliest Egyptian thinking, Osiris is identified with the Nile, with water in general, and sometimes also with the land; he is in general a god of fertility. After Osiris was killed by his evil brother Set, his faithful wife Isis retrieved the dismembered parts of her husband, and he was revived to rule over the kingdom of the dead; according to Sir James Frazer, both Isis and Osiris can be regarded as corn deities. Though Martin, apart from his love for Franza, bears little resemblance to Osiris, Bachmann hints that Franza has qualities in common with Isis. Martin recalls Franza in her girlhood, “who went around with lighted pumpkins, who in the afternoon had climbed the ladder to the hayloft with Martin to tunnel

through stacks of hay, who had taught him how to carve pumpkins and roast corn and to live stretched out in the hay as if that was all he would ever need to live" (*Franza* 21, translation modified). Recalling how she had rescued him from drowning in the Gail, Martin calls her "a mythic figure" (*Franza* 20). From these hints and suggestions (Franza's age, thirty-three, also alludes to deities who die and are born again), one can begin to surmise what Bachmann intends with the Isis and Osiris myth. It performs a function something like the myth of matriarchy in feminism, indicating a time in personal and human history before the patriarchal estrangement of the present, when thought was still magical and concrete and those of different sexes could still love each other as equals. *Franza's* third chapter, "The Egyptian Darkness," will undertake, then, to explore the possibilities of retrieving this psychic and historical Egypt in the present.

To understand, however, why Egypt cannot answer Franza's needs, one must look at another dimension of the "Return to Galicien" chapter which is intertwined with Bachmann's investigation of prepatriarchal psychology. Galicien also stands for a time in the history of Europe before domination had achieved its present guises, for alternative forms of social relations that, though lost, are preferable, despite their problems, to the present. The relationship of their grandparents Nona und Neni, whose wedding portrait hangs over the beds in Galicien, if not a happy one, was far more desirable than any contemporary relationship of men and women in Bachmann's works: "Nona was undefeated, gazing across at the picture of Neni, . . . though he too was undefeated and under attack only by the picture opposite, whose face was not ready to sign any armistice in a silent marriage war that they would end together, and out of which each would emerge the victor. They were both the unvanquished, the two of them up there, and Franza said without a smile, that was her opinion too" (*Franza* 52; translation modified). Nona and Neni died at the end of World War II. It was not this sort of marital battle, between equal antagonists, in which she was engaged, Franza insists.

The incident with which Martin's and Franza's time in Galicien concludes suggests that out of Galicien a possibility might have come for saving Franza. On the last evening before the departure for Egypt, Franza tries to drown herself in the Gail, an attempt that can be read as an endeavor to stay in Galicien or, perhaps more accurately, as an effort to withdraw, like Undine, from the deadly world of men altogether to return to her original watery realm. Franza is retrieved from the water by a mysterious "man from Müllnern," an "experienced, knowledgeable, schnapps-besotted rescuer who lightly swayed, but who, like a rider in the Wild West, clamped the motorcycle between his thighs and, as ever, headed his

horse in the right direction" (*Franza* 56). This incident recalls the utopian tale from *Malina*, "The Secrets of the Princess of Kagran," in which the Princess (and her horse) are likewise saved from the water by a mysterious knight whose appearance prefigures the possibility of the erotic love and happiness between men and women for which the "I" longs.

Within *Franza*, the incident also alludes to the images Bachmann uses to indicate a real historical course that Galicien could have chosen after 1945, a peace that might have prevented the "ways of death" that her works lament. For Franza recalls (though Martin cannot remember) the "most beautiful spring" of May 1945, when peace came to Galicien in the person of another knight, an English captain, Sir Perceval Glyde, an innocent man. For Franza, aged fifteen, left virtually alone in Galicien when the peasants flee the village, the peace, the extraordinary spring, and her own awakening sexuality intertwine, and she waits in Galicien for a "miracle, . . . that's what she called her sense of restlessness," heralded by the air force squadrons overhead, the "heavenly hosts" (*Franza* 38; translation modified). If, as Franza contends in the third chapter, Jordan later eradicates her sexuality, here she experiences the coming of peace with an erotic intensity expressed nowhere else in this novel: "Franza had fallen into such a state that there was hardly any more room in her body for such excitement" (*Franza* 39). In the charming and archaic English she has learned in school she hands Galicien over to the man who stands for peace: "Sire, this village is yours. We have no arms. . . . We have no Germans and no SS. The people has left (was that right, or was it lived?) the village, because of fear" (*Franza* 41). Unlike even her brother, this man understands, despite their different languages: "And Sire and the peace, this king and this first man in her life, realized what she meant and continued to understand even when she stopped shaking. . . . And the miracle continued" (*Franza* 41-42; translation modified). From this man, her first love, Franza receives her first kisses, which she terms "the English kisses." Later, she protests vigorously when Jordan tries to convince her that this description is a parapraxis, that she had meant not "English" but "angelic," yet she insists on the real-worldly content of her first encounter with love and peace. But Sir Perceval leaves Galicien, and when Franza, grown up, encounters him later at a conference in London, he is part of Jordan's world, a promise of peace that has been betrayed, to whom Franza could no longer offer her love and her body: "For it was a long way from the onset of peace to the middle of an extended peace, and amid the latter there was nothing one could do, . . . the peace having become a mirage" (*Franza* 48).

If, however, peace has been betrayed, if the fascism virus continues in the

postwar period, if, as the “I” of *Malina* observes, “It is the eternal war” (*Malina* 155), Franza does not forget the promise of a peace that would save her. On her way to the desert she remembers peace and asserts, “Sire, I arrive” (*Franza* 90, translation modified). She remembers peace again when during a hashish experience she achieves an “other condition” and proclaims, “I want to fly again, I want to arrive, Sire, I want to arrive” (*Franza* 117, translation modified). But the “ways of death” result from Europe’s failure to eradicate domination with the military defeat of fascism. Until fascism in this broader sense is overcome, European women like Franza will not find the peace that could make them happy.

If, for a moment, peace, the liberation from fascism in all its guises, seemed possible in Europe, why is it not realized? In part, this is the subject that the third chapter addresses. One suspects that Bachmann, in turning to the Third World, is attempting to assert that domination of the rest of the world is essential to the West, to enlightenment as a system, hence impossible to abandon on a worldwide scale, despite the eradication of domination in its most extreme political forms in Europe. Like “Return to Galicien,” the novel’s third chapter, “The Egyptian Darkness,” can be understood as functioning on several separate if intertwined levels. On the one hand, the settings are again interior ones, and the journey to Egypt may be understood as an attempt to arrive at a layer of the psyche uncolonized by twentieth-century European structures of thought. Franza and Martin’s father dies in the battle of El Alamein, one of the turning points of the Second World War. Egypt thus stands for the defeat of fascism and the death of the father. But on the other hand, Egypt in this novel is not just a metaphor for Franza’s (or white women’s) prepatriarchal psychic strata. (Indeed, to make it such would represent a kind of imperialist arrogance of the sort Bachmann is here critiquing—nothing allowed to exist which is not of relevance to the European subject.) It also literally represents the Third World with its victims of white domination in the form of European imperialism. *Vis-à-vis* the Third World Franza is part of the oppressor culture, not its ally. Both in its past and its present, Egypt is a land that is foreign to Franza, within which she is a white person (though also a victim of white men). Thus the Egypt of this novel reveals itself to be neither a possible site of refuge nor a source of healing for Franza, though it enables her to envision, for a utopian moment, a world that would permit her to live rather than die. It is this second aspect of the third chapter I would like to consider first, and then the consequences for Franza’s psyche of the estrangement of this white woman from the nonwhite world.

As Franza travels farther into Africa, she first recognizes with relief her growing distance from the whites: “The whites. Finally they were nowhere

to be seen. Here she no longer had to turn around and hear them behind her and be afraid of being strangled, pressed against a wall in fear, pushed from a car into the snow" (*Franza* 95). She stops wearing her underwear, "the sweaty nylon and lace, . . . since they had left Europe behind them, there being no reason for her to remain a white woman with habits, taboos, and residues of the past" (*Franza* 97), and with an almost mystical fervor embraces the—somewhat romanticized—customs of the nonwhite world. "Who here feared the bacteria catalogued by the whites? Who washed out a cup? Who boiled water? Who disinfected the lettuce leaves? Who closely examined the fish? Hunger, thirst, discovered once again. The danger, discovered once again. The ears, the eyes, were sharpened, directed toward the outer world, a sense of purpose having been regained" (*Franza* 98). Believing that other laws obtain here, Franza proclaims confidently, "I am discovering my rights" (*Franza* 102). But of course she remains a white woman, and curious Arab children touch her "reddish-brown arm again and again, since it still looked white compared to theirs" (*Franza* 110). And she discovers that the whites are not so easily evaded, that they, or their way of thinking, are almost everywhere: "The whites are coming. The whites are landing. And if they are driven back, then they will come again. No revolution or resolution can prevent it, nor any controls over the currency. They will come again in spirit if there's no other way for them to come. And they will resurrect themselves in a brown or black brain, which will become white once again. They will take over the world through such indirect means" (*Franza* 112). Further, it is not at all clear to her that the customs she encounters are any more humane than those she had left behind, and she is haunted by images of a camel slaughtered at a wedding, a belly dancer, a madwoman in Cairo bound by her hair. As a white woman she is, like the woman in Cairo, bound to Jordan, her fascist husband: "I am bound and tied. I never escape" (*Franza* 132).

At the level of her psychic development, Franza also expects that the desert will cure her. As Sigrid Weigel has argued, one can view Franza's recourse to the desert as an effort of decomposition or deconstruction, an attempt to destroy psychic structures of domination as a first step toward the establishment of new structures beyond the "ways of death" ("Ende"). The desert is termed "the immense sanatorium" and "the great padded room of the sky, light and sand all about me," or, alternatively, "the immense inescapable purgatory" which will burn away the dross of this existence (*Franza* 89–90). Franza hopes here like Undine to be able to return to the water, to the original Nile of Isis and Osiris. But she is in Egypt in May, at the worst time for that fruitful inundation, and access to the water is blocked by monsters, jellyfish and

snakes. Instead of flowing into the Nile, she finds herself covered with hardening Nile mud, unable to move or speak or scream (“I wanted to scream, I kept wanting to scream. But I simply wasn’t able to scream” (*Franza* 107); she was “buried alive” as in Vienna (*Franza* 106). And she also finds she cannot escape the European God (her father, her husband), who appears to her in a vision. Though she has vowed never again to bend her knee to anyone, again as in the operating room she falls to her knees before this image that wants to eradicate both her and her otherness:

She remained lying there, suffering convulsions as she had in the hallway in Vienna, on a parquet floor, a linoleum floor, a hospital bed, and again on the sand, on the sand bloodied by a camel, as she laughed and laughed and laughed—her laughter providing the opening for the decomposition that began: Who am I? Where did I come from? What’s wrong with me? What am I looking for in this desert? Something happened and yet did not happen, since nothing can happen, only something stepped on her and alongside her walked something else, part death, part consciousness, part animal, part human, part of the five senses, one a sister, the other a woman, the flesh directed by the sun toward ruin, en route toward something that is unrecognizable. (*Franza* 119)

If deconstruction is Franza’s necessary first step, she cannot escape entirely the European patriarch who has colonized her head, and the desert cannot save her from dying.

Franza’s death, and its cause, follow then with a deadly logic from her experiences in the desert: it is appropriate to the course of events in the novel, perhaps even inevitable. Martin wishes to climb the Great Pyramid before they leave Egypt; as he climbs, Franza walks around the pyramid, wading through the sand. She encounters there a white man who, while masturbating, hits her with his stick and then, returning, rapes her. Franza recalls that Jordan had also raped her in their library in Vienna: “When she wanted to escape he had shoved her against the hard edges of the shelves and done it” (*Franza* 139). After the rape, in a gesture that is in part self-destructive, in part rebellious, she brings about an injury that causes her death: “Then she hit the wall, smashing her head, slamming it with full force, her head smashing against the wall in Vienna and the stone wall in Giza” (*Franza* 140). Franza had agreed to visit the pyramid to please Martin, telling him, with great unconscious irony, “You’ve already missed so much” (*Franza* 137). Martin’s ambition to climb this enormous edifice, his desire to conquer it through his human effort, is surely intended to refer to such general habits among white men. The *Blue Guide* to Egypt [1983] reports that “because of the frequency of accidents climbing the pyramids is forbidden

except with special permission" (Seton-Williams and Stocks 399); it is significant that Martin, unlike Franza, can break the rules with impunity. At another level the Great Pyramid, as Hegel argued, can represent the body of the sign, the beginning of an alphabet which is nonhieroglyphic: hence the discourse and language within which there is no place for Franza (Derrida, "Pit"). That sexual violence should occasion Franza's death is fitting, since violence deriving from definitions of gender (including the violent attempt to eradicate Franza's sexuality: "I have no sex, no longer, it was ripped out of me" [*TP* 1: 278; passage omitted in translation]) is in a more general sense responsible for the "way of death" that Bachmann describes in this novel. Finally, it is not surprising that Franza's last injury should be self-occasioned, since the order responsible for her destruction is, as Bachmann underlines, one of which she is the victim but one to which she has also acceded.

If this were the full story of Franza's death, however, she would be no different from the other victims of the "Ways of Death." It is what Bachmann adds to Franza's story, her rebellion and resistance, that makes this novel so remarkable. Franza's initial response to her rapist is an acceptance of such violence done to her as necessary and inevitable. Again she does not cry out against what is killing her:

Perhaps she should yell for help. She only had to let loose a scream, but why call for help? He was already at the corner. What was the point of screaming, why do it? The poor devils, they need to do it, to frighten someone.

She smoothed flat the linen dress behind her. It's nothing, nothing happened, and even if it did, what did it matter? (*Franza* 139)

Then, however, she breaks loose from those structures of thought that legitimate domination, rejecting (as she smashes her head against the stone) the violence committed against her in Egypt and Vienna: "Her thinking broke off, and . . . her other voice returning, she said aloud: No. No" (*Franza* 140, translation modified). Her last words, then, are an assertion of the destruction of the categories of domination and an imprecation against the whites and against a "he" who carries out the white will:

All conceptions shattered.

The whites.

My head.

The whites should.

They should be damned. He should. (*Franza* 141-142; translation modified)

The ability of Franza, virtually alone among the “Ways of Death” figures, to rebel derives from a highly significant encounter with an oppressor figure from which she does emerge the victor. Seeking some alleviation of her suffering, Franza is directed to consult a “doctor who worked miracles,” “one of those Germans, you know the type” (*Franza* 124-125). Franza recognizes this doctor, SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr. Kurt Körner, in fact Viennese, from her husband’s great work: he had participated in the Nazi euthanasia program for the mentally ill, “the eradication of undesirables” (*Franza* 129). “I know who you are,” Franza tells Körner, and demands also to be eradicated (*Franza* 127). That is, acknowledging his power, Franza accedes to her destruction, seeking only to speed it along. Körner of course refuses, outraged and indignant. But to her astonishment when she next visits Körner, Franza discovers that he has vanished, afraid of her; she has vanquished him by confronting him:

Körner had really left because of her, because he was afraid of her. Someone had been afraid of her, for the first time afraid of her rather than her being afraid of someone.

On the drive to Giza [to the Great Pyramid], she said to Martin in the taxi:

He—she corrected herself—Jordan was never afraid of me. He was so sure that I would tell no one, that I would rather die first (as well as until death did us part). He never once displayed any kind of uneasiness. But I still have made someone afraid. One of them. Yes, that I have done. (*Franza* 136)

What she has to say, however, is something Martin of course cannot, does not want to hear; this is a rebellion which he also must subdue: “Martin saw that her fists were balled up. He didn’t understand her remarks, for the discontinuity of such sentences made it hard. In order to pull her out of her trance he took her hand and gently opened her fist and talked casually about something else” (*Franza* 136). Nevertheless, Franza’s capacity not just to revolt but to revolt effectively, to put “one of them” to flight, suggests a strategy for women like herself which might move them beyond victimhood: to refuse this deadly order, actively to challenge their oppressors. (That “three muscular, older Dutch women” “pick up [*aufheben*]” Franza after her rape suggests how such a refusal might be carried out collectively, while their nationality hints that there may exist a Germanic people who refuse collusion with fascism or even actively resist it [*Franza* 140]). This strategy might move such white women not backward, into an imagined prepatrilial past, but forward, past the crimes of whites in the present toward a future which is their own.

But this does not, of course, happen in the novel. Even if, as the imagery of

this novel sometimes hints, Franza's "fall" (her "senseless fall [*Sturz*]," as Martin terms it [*Franza* 142]), has also a religious meaning, there is no grace for her, and she dies unredeemed. Thus the final question this novel addresses is whether, within the trajectory of human events that the novel describes, within human history, there can be a solution for women like Franza. I would like to propose here that, though this is a problem broached in the novel, Bachmann did not, perhaps could not, resolve it, and this is at least one of the reasons *The Book of Franza* remained unfinished.

European history, history as progress, is implicated in Franza's destruction. her horror at how the whites have treated Egyptian graves ("The whites. They violated the . . . , they didn't allow the dead to rest in peace" [*Franza* 109]) strongly recalls Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History." "Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past," says Benjamin, "who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (255). The history written by the enemy regards as significant only those events that contribute to the production of the present—a present that the enemy controls. *This* history has no place for Franza's history, indeed, has eradicated it (whereas, says Benjamin, "a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past," a "past citable in all its moments" [244]). Franza and Martin are astonished at the effort taken by the third Thothmes (associated with the introduction of abstraction and monotheism) to destroy any evidence of the reign of Hatshepsut, Egypt's first queen—"this urge to destroy, . . . this desire to erase a great figure" (*Franza* 110)—but Franza consoles herself with the recognition that Hatshepsut's absence also speaks: "Look, she said, but the pharaoh forgot that though he had eradicated her, she was still there. It can still be read, because nothing is there where in fact something should be" (*Franza* 109). As a queen, Hatshepsut occupied the location of a man, even calling herself a king and wearing a false beard—thus becoming memorable within a history that is a history of domination. In the case of Franza and of white women like her, there is the danger that history may not even remark her absence, that she will be extinguished altogether. On the other hand, if Franza exists in the present only as part of white history, the history of domination, it is not clear how her story can in the future become part of the history of the former victims. She belongs neither to the Second nor to the Third World, responsible for fruitful inundation at Aswan, and her own history may not intersect at all with the "historical event" she observes at Luxor.

If there is hope within history for Franza, it is given expression in the curious fragments of chapter three included at the end of the *Franza* volume in the

Werke (passages omitted from the translation but located within the “Wüstenbuch” in volume one of the “*Todesarten*”-Projekt). The editors of the *Werke* tell us that these sections were intended to be inserted between the first and second parts of the third chapter: “In the typescript of part I a page follows with the handwritten note: Here a piece is missing with the stations Aswan and Wadi Halfa, before the return of the siblings to Cairo” (*W* 3: 561). That Bachmann intended an integration of those sections is indicated by the novel’s conclusion, which refers back to them in a manner extremely significant for a final interpretation of this work.

The section with which these fragments begin, set in Luxor, is further substantiation for an interpretation of this novel through the lens of Critical Theory, for the passage suggests that in Egypt, Franza finds a nonreified relationship to the world of production: here both the producer and the consumer retain a human relationship to things, a relationship irretrievably lost in advanced capitalism. Franza remarks: “Luxor: all artisans’ shops are open, I see for the first time how a shoe is made, again for the first time since childhood how bread is baked. The cobbler doesn’t make a beautiful shoe but a durable one, the two men work all day in plain sight of everyone, they smile when you sit down with them, they don’t let me pay for the tea that I fetch for them, every customer gets to sit down, in the shadows, gets tea or coffee to drink and gets to watch while they’re working” (*TP* 1: 253). Bachmann goes on to specify, in almost classically Marxist fashion, the consequences of a way of life in which we have lost an organic relationship to the products of human labor: “It’s not fondness for the simple life but rather merely the thought that we no longer see anything of how things come to be, which we need, that our children might again know where their food, their clothing comes from, that toys are palmed off on them that abuse the imagination so that it’s all wrong from the outset, that their knowledge has no foundation” (*TP* 1: 253). Similar passages may be found in Bachmann’s work as far back as *The Thirtieth Year*, but this one may represent Bachmann’s clearest statement anywhere that the developments in the realm of thought which her works chronicle and lament have both a material basis and historical causes.

Yet more significant for the interpretation of this novel are Franza’s experiences at Wadi Halfa, a town on the Nile in the Sudan, just south of the Egyptian border. The original Wadi Halfa will be submerged under the waters of Lake Nasser when the Aswan Dam is completed, a destruction that is a consolation and solace to Franza: “I’m traveling to Wadi Halfa. I can hang on to that. For it will perish [*untergehen*]” (*TP* 1: 278). On the one hand, for Franza,

Wadi Halfa has a meaning similar to that of the desert (“Oh, it is also there, the desert, what else should be” [TP 1: 279], she says), standing for the eradication of white thinking. Here the destruction of white thought takes the specific form of a refusal to recognize white symbols of exchange and communication (metaphors, it appears, for language altogether): at the closed post office, stamps are beautiful (“pretty stamps, a whole set”) but useless, and a sign reads “telegrams are for delay.” “Nobody needs telegrams here,” Franza recognizes, “nobody ever needed them, as little as the stamps, the seals, the file folders” (TP 1: 279). Outside of Egypt and farther south, Wadi Halfa as interior setting may represent a layer of Franza’s psychology antecedent even to the deconstruction of conceptions she achieves in the desert. But one may also regard Wadi Halfa as a utopian projection “forward” in that it represents the response of a community that is not white to white thought and a revenge on the whites: “gentle revenge, unconscious, on the whites is the legacy that stares back at them” (TP 1: 279). The question that then remains is that of Franza’s relationship to that community.

In Wadi Halfa, for a moment, Franza finds that connection to a community in a setting that is almost religious, a kind of last supper. She drinks, like the Arabs, from the communal jug, finally finding her way to the water: “I have to drink, it tastes just like water, it’s Nile water, the gnats don’t matter” (TP 1: 280). Led by an old Arab to a house at the edge of the town, Franza there silently, without language, eats from a bowl of beans, her hands dipping into the bowl along with those of the Arabs and Nubians. For Franza this is a moment of total awareness and total peace: “It’s the most conscious moment, the most natural, the first and only meal has taken place, is taking place, it is the first and only good meal, would perhaps remain the only meal in a lifetime that was not disturbed by barbarism, indifference, greed, thoughtlessness, calculation, by none at all” (TP 1: 282). Franza refers to this meal in specifically religious terms: she seems to view it both as confirming the possibility of comprehending the world “magically” (that is, non-instrumentally), as she has attempted to do, and simultaneously suggesting that it is possible to grasp that magic mode differently than she, in her madness, had hitherto been able to do: “I knew that the ingredients, the magic ones, of my world were given preference by my superstitions, I knew that the ingredients could be changed, but the experience of their variability was nothing less than a revelation” (TP 1: 282). The meal in Wadi Halfa thus (like John the Baptist, preaching in the desert, baptizing in the River Jordan, preparing the way for a savior whose time is not yet come) holds out the promise of a

redemption for Franza on the far side of the world of the whites: “Thus I came to a sermon that nobody spoke and that was not held under a temple roof, to a sermon of the desert and unformulated laws, to mouthfuls of water and bites of food, ways of walking and sleeping, which waited under a thin crust of another kind of comprehension for their hour, for the mystical connection of breathing in and breathing out, of moving and resting, for the hallelujah of survival in nothingness” (*TP* 1: 283). With nonwhite people, Franza discovers that secular mysticism that traces its way as a utopian image through Bachmann’s work from the beginning.

For Franza, of course, that image is only utopian. Though she succeeds in her efforts of destruction, there is nothing more she can attain, as the novel’s last sentence indicates: “The Egyptian darkness, that one must grant her, is complete” (*Franza* 146; translation modified), and after her death Wadi Halfa is submerged as well, as Martin, returned to Vienna, learns from Viennese newspapers. The novel’s difficult final paragraph suggests other consequences, though it is not altogether clear what we are to conclude from them. The communion of Wadi Halfa is continued, Bachmann tells us, but celebrated now only by nonwhite people, the hands of the white woman expressly excluded from that communal bowl. “But one can assume that the post office . . . was evacuated on schedule, despite an unscheduled delay, and that the brown and black hands would find themselves together again, reaching into a dish of beans in a new settlement further south. But Franza’s white hand could no longer reach into a bowl in search of another morsel, and the silent woman near the wall would never learn that she had prepared the meal that had tasted better to her than all others” (*Franza* 146). If there is a historical realization of this utopia, it is not one in which a white woman like Franza participates.

On the other hand, the image with which this paragraph concludes is one of hope for history, though only in the most general of senses. A beacon remains at Wadi Halfa as a promise: “Even if it were forgotten by the departing refugees, there was a light in Wadi Halfa that would be lifted up by the Nile.” With emphasis, Bachmann underlines the Hegelian term *aufheben*—to cancel, to preserve, to raise to a higher stage—to which she here makes recourse: “It wouldn’t be swept away, for nothing can be swept away. It couldn’t be dragged under, for it drags nothing down. Lift up [*aufheben*]. The inundator” (*Franza* 146; translation modified). What Bachmann’s image does not clarify here is for whom the promise of the lantern is *aufgehoben*, or for whom it will be redeemed. If history, the passage of time, or nature itself (for we cannot tell how Bachmann wishes us

here to understand the flooding of the Nile) will not solve the problem of domination, what hope is there for the Franzas of this world, for us? The example of Franza's resistance, the utopian image of human community beyond domination, and the promise of historical change may be as close as this novel can come to an answer to the problems of white women that it so carefully details.

READING BACHMANN IN 1984

This essay was first published in German in 1984 in the special *text + kritik* issue on Ingeborg Bachmann guest-edited by Sigrid Weigel; it appears here for the first time in English. Written in the spring of 1984, it was strongly influenced by contemporary debates both inside and outside of feminism. The two-year-long Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education—sponsored Five College faculty seminar on the intersection of Black Studies and Women’s Studies, culminating in a major conference in April 1983 (Karcher), made a profound impact on me which has lasted to the present. Apart from discovering that I knew virtually nothing about black women, black history, and black culture in general (a gaping hole in my knowledge that I have tried to fill since then), I was brought into confrontation with two further aspects of black life that would cause me to reconsider my own feminist premises. First, it was impressed upon me that, whereas white feminists lamented their powerlessness and, as a solution, counseled retreat into preserves where men could not bother them, black history in contrast revealed (most obviously, of course, in the civil rights movement) a black determination to confront white power in order to gain for black people what was rightfully theirs. That recognition occasioned a transformation in both my theoretical and practical understanding of how feminists might contend with male power. Among other things, I drew upon the black example to encourage myself to become more feisty when I dealt with men, and that is why, in the essay, I am so pleased that Franza discovers it is possible to stand up to, even say no to, white men.

Second, a quite spectacular row in the seminar compelled me to acknowledge that the perspectives and modes of interaction elaborated by white feminists might not be the only forms opposed to those of dominant white men; that, indeed, the assertion of the superiority of white feminist models (with respect to how to conduct a seminar discussion, say) might itself be seen as an expression of white racial privilege. From these somewhat heated interactions I derived two far-reaching insights that would have a long-term impact on my conception of feminism: first, that white women (or “women” in general) are not inevitably on the “right” side; and second, that white women, even white feminists, can—quite unknown to themselves—think and act in ways that perpetuate their racial and class privilege (as in Marx’s “social being determines consciousness”). In loose association with the faculty seminar two colleagues and I cotaught a rather large and somewhat disastrous undergraduate course called “Feminism, Black Nationalism, Marxism” in which, to my great dismay, the inadequacies of feminist analyses (and my own rhetorical skills) emerged in stark relief. (The French feminist paradigm was a particular casualty of the course.) The upshot of these experiences for me was quite a lot of confusion (not to say downright

skepticism) about the validity of the assumptions I had hitherto relied upon to found my feminism.

But like many other feminists of this era, I had other, very compelling political concerns to occupy my time. In spring 1984, Jesse Jackson's campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, waged under the banner of the Rainbow Coalition, called forth an astonishing cross-racial, cross-class coalition in the area of western Massachusetts where I live: academics and local townspeople of all races, ethnicities, and ages; Democratic Party politicians; trade unionists; students. I became cochair of the Five College Faculty and Staff Committee for Jackson (my greatest accomplishment a full-page signature ad in the local paper the Friday before the primary); the Students for Jackson committee was organized by students in the interdisciplinary program I direct, the Social Thought and Political Economy Program. The campaign produced both an exuberance and a sense of hope and wonder (particularly at seeing such an unlikely grouping of people assembled in one room working for the same end) that I had not experienced since the 1960s. The day of the primary, as I was driving voters to the polls, I recall seeing an old white man dressed in polyester pants hobbling slowly up the sidewalk to the polling place. "Jackson's for the poor," he said cheerfully. "I've been poor all my life. I'm voting for Jackson!" My deep admiration for the image of community that Bachmann invokes in the novel as Franza's white hand, brown hands, and black hands dip silently into a common bowl at Wadi Halfa derives from my own experience of community in the Jackson campaign. As well, the distress felt by Jews associated with the campaign after Jackson was reported to have said that he was going up to "Hymietown" forced me for the first time to confront the importance of ethnicity in American life, my own white Protestant Northern European ethnicity having shielded me hitherto from registering that ethnic background was of great importance to other Americans, including other feminists and, to my surprise, many of my friends, though not at all to me. The struggle and pain that emerged from this aspect of the Jackson campaign reinforced my commitment to the now not just theoretical but obviously also very practical urgency of addressing the question of differences among women.

Somewhat to my own astonishment, I wrote this essay in the spare moments I could steal from my work on the Jackson campaign: the intensity of the political work seemed to fill me with such buoyant energy that even academic writing came easily. In addition, I felt strongly that I was addressing at the level of my intellectual work many of the same issues that I confronted in my practical politics, and that made the essay take on a significance to me somehow akin to the importance of helping Jesse win. By this time, I had come to an understanding of Bachmann's work very like that of Christa Wolf's 1966 essay: all of Bachmann's writing, but the "Ways of Death" with greatest success, could be understood as an effort to illuminate the condition of (female) subjectivity at a particu-

lar place and in a particular period of human history—a reading quite different from that of chapter 3, “In the Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters,” and one obviously called into being by the new attention to difference among feminists and among women in general and by the fascinating historical and anthropological investigations into the specificity of gender arrangements across time and culture appearing in recent feminist journals. Like probably all feminist Bachmann scholars, I had been dismayed by male scholars’ condescending dismissal of her in the period before the advent of the second wave of feminism, but I had also grown concerned about her reception by feminists, since (as I suggest in chapter 2), they seemed to view Bachmann through a feminist lens that itself treated gender so ahistorically that the political dimensions of her undertaking disappeared. My essay here was an effort to draw on what I had learned in the 1980s from debates inside and outside of feminism in order to advance a new, more historically specific model of analysis.

Looking back on the essay now, it appears to me to be informed by two not very compatible feminist discourses, both of which were current in U.S. academic feminism at the time it was written. As I’ve already suggested, the new feminist attention to race and my own experiences in addressing questions of race were obviously factors motivating my writing of this essay. (At the time, I did not know that the use of the term *Rasse* was problematic in German because of its association with the Nazis’ racial policies.) To the best of my knowledge, this is the first essay in Bachmann scholarship to deal straightforwardly with questions of race and the non-Western world (that is, to treat Franza’s imprecations against “the whites” as not merely a metaphor for something other than race), and I believe it is among the first in feminist German Studies altogether to thematize the question of race (a topic around which something of a cottage industry has developed in the meantime). My own struggles with my position vis-à-vis racism also prevented me from regarding Franza only as a victim and exempting her from complicity in the culture she is trying to escape (an unusual position for those days), and I ask in this essay whether Franza’s history is inevitably linked only to the history of the racist/imperialist West, a question of very grave concern to white feminists in general. I was at the time quite smug about being the first to whom it occurred to investigate the “historical event” that Martin and Franza encounter in Egypt and thus to be able to develop a whole historically based strand of argument that links the siblings specifically to First and Second World neoimperialism. (Now, I would also want to point out how that event emphatically situates Franza within the context of cold war tensions.) By turning to Critical Theory, I avoided an argument that uses gender as its single analytical category, though I was also sensitive enough to Eurocentrism to recognize that *Dialectic of Enlightenment’s* failure to discuss the non-Western world was a serious theoretical limitation. Finally, the alert reader will notice that even in 1984, this essay only uses the term “patriarchy” a single time.

Nevertheless, I think this essay still displays a recourse to totalizing theories with (white) women at the center which recalls the “Women and Religion” special issue of *Signs*. My appropriation of the Frankfurt School here is scarcely distinguishable from the Christa Wolf of *Cassandra* and is quite compatible with cultural/ecofeminist analyses or at least does not break with their founding premises. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno identify a single, all-encompassing system of domination presided over by (possibly ruling-class) white men responsible for the subordination of everyone and everything else; the alternative to this model of thought is “magical thinking” of the kind that Franza displays. Within such a system, as Horkheimer and Adorno also suggest, the (white) woman-as-victim plays a central role. I would now consider theories making such grandiose claims to be examples of precisely the tendencies they believe they are challenging, displaying the hubris of a Western reason that believes its categories can adequately comprehend everything within its sway, that simultaneously elevates Western women to central status (thus merely the mirror image of the Western male subject) and lets them off the hook by maintaining that they are the innocent objects of a system for which men alone are responsible. (At best, they have access to the spoils “only in a broken form,” as Horkheimer and Adorno put it [249], once they have submitted to their masters.) Moreover, in its assertion of the possibility of an uncontaminated, non-alienated existence temporally or spatially outside the system (an allegation central to many varieties of Western theory, not the least to psychoanalysis), this theory (like cultural feminism) makes exactly the claim that Foucault refuses (in *The History of Sexuality*), that some fundamental areas of human experience escape social construction to which humans could potentially retreat as a gesture of resistance or refusal. (Within the novel, Franza’s hysterical symptoms and her flight to a location where she believes she can escape the whites perform this role.)

In general, this essay is far too dependent on psychoanalysis to be genuinely historical or attentive to cultural difference, for, as Stuart Hall has observed, psychoanalysis “addresses the subject-in-general, not historically determinate social subjects, or socially determinate particular languages. Thus it is incapable, so far, of moving its in-general propositions to the levels of concrete historical analysis” (46). My reliance on the Frankfurt School to found a historically based analysis is in general a little paradoxical, since in their attempt to discern broad trends within a historical tradition that appears to begin with the *Odyssey* the Critical Theorists are almost as cavalier about historical detail as subsequent poststructuralists. Moreover, though I treat Bachmann as a writer concerned with historical problems that extend beyond gender alone, I do not examine Bachmann and her texts as historical phenomena themselves. At that point, I believe, a feminist methodology did not yet exist to pose such questions, and that is of course the main project of this book. Finally, I now detect in this essay a

quality that I have discerned in a great deal of “gynocritical” feminist scholarship: my analysis of Bachmann’s writing is not only not critical of her but concludes by determining that she represents a position precisely in accord with what was most au courant in the feminist analysis of the moment!

Despite my criticisms of today, however, I remain quite pleased with this essay. I continue to believe that its analysis of Bachmann’s own utilization of Frankfurt School theory is correct, and I believe that opened up some important areas of research into Bachmann that other scholars have since pursued. Yet somewhat to my dismay, my call for a more historically based Bachmann scholarship did not immediately find a response or even, I think, much initial understanding of what I was trying to do (as reviews of the journal that brushed over my essay seemed to show). On the contrary, I think, partially as a consequence of the position I had taken in “In the Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters,” I was first assumed to be a proponent of the tendencies that dominated feminist Bachmann criticism in 1984. As I also note in chapter 2, this essay first appeared in the landmark issue of *text + kritik* which proclaimed the existence of the “other Ingeborg Bachmann,” whose texts could be regarded as an anticipation of feminist poststructuralism, particularly its assertions about the repression of female otherness by a phallogocentric culture/discourse. Though this was precisely the dehistoricizing tendency with which my own essay was contending, I suspect that by publishing it in that context I in fact lent support to precisely the political direction this essay had attempted to challenge.

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