Gender, the Cold War, and Ingeborg Bachmann

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Ingeborg Bachmann was, like every other writer, a product of the historical conditions of her time. Unlike many writers, she herself also insisted upon the importance of history for literary production, maintaining in a 1973 interview, for instance: "History is essential for the writer. One can't write when one doesn't see the entire historical context that led to the present" (*Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden* 133). In this essay I will explore Bachmann's relationship to "the entire historical context that led to the present" by using the methodology of materialist feminism to investigate her life and her writing.

As an approach to literary studies, materialist feminism first emerged in the late 1970s as feminists attempted to turn Marxist-derived methods to feminist ends, but by the 1990s the term had come to refer to a methodology that combined post-Althusserian Marxism with postmodern discourse theories. Committed to a multi-factor analysis of women's complex social positioning, materialist feminists refuse to privilege gender oppression over other forms of domination under which women (and men) suffer. It distinguishes itself from Marxist feminism in its refusal to construe the economic sphere as the prime mover of social change "in the last instance."

Instead, materialist feminists insist upon the crucial work done by discourse/ideology, defined, in the words of Rosemary Hennessy, a prominent materialist feminist, as "the array of sense making practices which constitute what counts as 'the way things are' in any historical moment" in constituting, calling into being, or "in-

terpellating" human subjects within particular social relations (14). Materialist feminists would also insist, however, that discourse/ideology cannot be detached from material practices and conditions; rather, all social practices are "overdetermined," and all elements of the social order inflect and influence each other in complex and unpredictable ways. Materialist feminists understand literary and other texts—produced and read by those discursively-constructed subjects—as interventions into meaning-making practices that can variously support or unsettle prevailing social arrangements. Signifying practices are thus imbricated within the historically-specific social relations that produce them and that they (dialectically) help to produce, and a materialist-feminist reading strategy takes the form of ideology critique, probing texts to discover how they work to support, document, and/or challenge the existing social order.

Materialist feminism's insistence on always embedding cultural analysis within the historically-specific conditions of its production should mean that materialist feminist literary scholars work in the closest collaboration with like-minded historians, yet very few literary and cultural studies are informed about current research or debates within the discipline of history. The investigation which follows comprises my attempt to draw on recent historical scholarship both to read Bachmann in the context of the historical conditions that obtained when she wrote and to contribute to the further elaboration of the methodology of materialist feminism.

In a 1969 interview Bachmann explained that the massive writing project called *Todesarten* (Ways of Death) on which she had embarked would focus upon contemporary history: "To me it's not a novel, it's a single long book. There will be several volumes, first of all two that will probably appear at the same time. It's called 'Ways of Death' and for me it's a single large study of all the possible ways of death, a compendium, a 'manuale,' as one would say here [in Italy], and at the same time I imagine that it could provide an illustration of the last twenty years, always with Vienna and Austria as the setting" (*Wir müssen* 66). Here I will examine Bachmann's life and texts in the context of the Cold War, which preeminently established the frame within which those "last twenty years" must be situated—that is to say, Austrian history since the end of World War II.

Though Austria was occupied by the four victor powers until the state treaty of 1955 that declared it officially neutral, efforts to win Austria for the Western free-market system and to deter Soviet efforts to incorporate it into their own sphere of interest began even before the war's end. Charles Maier has argued that the primary vehicle integrating postwar European economies into Western capitalism, the Marshall Plan, undertook to transform the ideological conflicts of Europe by bringing about a Western- and Central-European-wide consensus on the value of economic productivity, efficiency, and growth, portrayed as politically neutral goals (Tweraser 225-26). The economic recovery that the Marshall Plan promoted thus also necessitated a significant ideological and cultural readjustment, as Michael Hogan argues:

> In the most profound sense, it involved the transfer of attitudes, habits and values as well, indeed, of a whole way of life that Marshall Planners associated with progress in the marketplace of politics and social relationships as much as they did with greater output in industry and agriculture. This was the American way of life. Through the technical-assistance program, in other words, the Marshall Planners aimed to implant in Western Europe the seed of a democratic neo-capitalism that had flourished in the United States. (415)

Expanding on the Allies' 1943 Moscow Declaration declaring Austria to be the first victim of National Socialism, Austrian politicians also "invented a version of history that would liberate them from the burdens of the past . . . [and] extricate the painful memory of the war from the complicity in a hideous race war against legions of innocent people," as Günter Bischof has put it (*Austria in the First Cold War* x-xi). Political leaders in Austria cast their lot with the West from the outset but also shrewdly used the threat of a potential communist putsch to win more resources for their nation. Bischof maintains that the West won Austria via what British historian David Reynolds had termed "containment by integration," fending off communism in Austria by a "quasi-integration" of Austria into the West and turning it, despite its nominal neutrality, into "a secret ally of the West" ("Austria looks to the West" 184).

As Reinhold Wagnleitner has elaborated in *Coca-Colonization*

*and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Aus-
tria after the Second World War*, U.S. efforts to win over Austrian
hearts and minds to the cause of anti-communism, the free-market
economy, and the American way of life were also focused on the
cultural sphere. Though the Allies, Wagnleitner explains, directed
a "softer" policy of "reorientation" towards the defeated Austrians
than the reeducation measures imposed upon Germany, "Ameri-
can plans for Austria still contained a strict program of cultural
control, denazification, and cultural reform" (67). Together with
economic initiatives like the Marshall Plan, American occupation
authorities undertook measures that affected every aspect of Aus-
trian cultural life: the press—U.S. authorities licensed only those
publications that hewed to the American line, provided news ar-
ticles and photographs through the services of the Amerikanischer
Nachrichtendienst, AP, and UPI, distributed a large range of special-
ized journals to special-interest groups, and trained Austrian jour-
nalists in U.S. journalistic techniques; radio—the American station
Rot-Weiß-Rot had the strongest transmitters and enjoyed the great-
est degree of public acceptance, hiring, as a 1951 Department of
State memo put it, "high-caliber Austrian personnel, to make the
station an "ideological weapon of major impact" that could also be
aimed at German-speaking peoples "deep behind the iron curtain"
(112-13); book publication—there were twelve America Houses in
Austria by 1953, plus a traveling bookmobile circulating books that
had been carefully selected for their anti-communist orientation
and subsidized translations of U.S. books; education—efforts were
made to implement a redesigned Austrian school system and cur-
ricula based on the U.S. model; and film—there were propaganda
films, newsreels, and a flood of Hollywood films, including a large
number with an explicitly anti-communist message. Such "Ameri-
canization," Wagnleitner asserts, describes "the development of a
consumption-oriented social order within capitalist societies—the
pursuit of happiness as the pursuit of consumption" (6-7).

   Inge von Weidenbaum maintains that "Ingeborg Bachmann
first started thinking historically in the strictest sense only when she
began her studies in Vienna" (25). From then until she left Vienna
in 1953, Bachmann's activities were steeped in the atmosphere of
the Cold War. Her first jobs after receiving her doctorate were in

the secretariat of the American occupation forces, first, beginning in spring 1951, as a typist for *Neues Österreich*, a newspaper published by the Americans, then, from fall 1951 on, as a scriptwriter for the American radio station Rot-Weiß-Rot, located one flight up in the same building. "Rot-Weiß-Rot," Wagnleitner reports, "had become the most important propaganda medium for the United States in Austria by at least 1950" (109). According to Hapkemeyer, Bachmann's department was given the task "of evaluating, editing and writing manuscripts both in the area of politics as well as in that of literature and entertainment" (43). Rot-Weiß-Rot broadcast several of her poems, her translations of Louis McNeice's *Der Turm* (The Tower) and Thomas Wolfe's *Das Herrschaftshaus* (The Manor House) along with her own radio play "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen" (A Business with Dreams; Hapkemeyer 45). Joseph McVeigh has recently discovered that Bachmann was also co-author of the Rot-Weiß-Rot radio series "Die Radiofamilie" (The Radio Family), fifteen of whose scripts she wrote entirely or in part, in collaboration with her colleagues Jörg Mauthe and Peter Weiser, in the period between early 1952 and summer 1953. In 1994 Weiser recalled how they had conceived the series: "It will be a political radio series, though the listener won't understand that; it will be a socially-influential radio series, though the listener won't understand that; and it will be a funny radio series, and that's the only thing the listener will understand" (26). That was also precisely Rot-Weiß-Rot's program of using entertainment as the vehicle to convey its Cold War message. As well, in the early 50s Bachmann published a number of poems in *Die Neue Zeitung*, the American newspaper in Germany that in the earliest years of occupation was permitted an independent editorial policy but, as Jessica Gienow-Hecht explains in a study of the paper's history, by 1949 had "turned into a more pro-American mouthpiece of the U.S. military government. . . . Now the Germans were told what was right and wrong and what their future was to be. . . .Virtually every major field of interest—including the coverage of television, advertising, politics, philosophy, and history—reflected the effort to propagandize a Western way of life, defended by the United States of America" (161-62). Bachmann also published poetry in the Viennese journal *Stimmen der Gegenwart* (Voices of the Present), a multi-year anthology edited by Hans Weigel (a Viennese

Jew returned from exile in the U.S. and for a time Bachmann's lover) with the encouragement of the Austrian branch of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a CIA-sponsored, European-wide cultural initiative (Wagnleitner 63).

Nor was Bachmann able to escape Cold War pressures by her move to Italy. In 1954 her friend and some-time housemate Hans Werner Henze premiered his *Boulevard Solitude* at a dazzling, two-week International Conference of Twentieth-Century Music sponsored by the Congress of Cultural Freedom (its promotion of avant-garde composition deriving from the fact that this was the kind of music Stalin expressly forbade; Saunders 221-23). Henze's twelve-tone opera was so badly received by a loud and hostile audience that Bachmann fainted during the performance and had to be taken home (Henze 163). The recently-discovered radio reports on Italian politics Bachmann prepared for Radio Bremen from September 1954 to summer 1955 also draw upon familiar Cold War discourses: for instance, she describes Italy as threatened by "totalitarianism from the left as well as from the right" (*Römische Reportagen* 31), and, à la U.S. McCarthyism, portrays the Italian Communist Party, supported by foreign powers, as engaged in infiltrating all areas of Italian society. In 1955 Bachmann joined many other Austrian intellectuals participating in U.S. exchange programs by attending Henry Kissinger's Harvard Summer School, and in 1962 she received a fellowship from the Ford Foundation (an organization that, as Frances Stonor Saunders has shown, frequently worked hand-in-hand with the CIA) to spend a year in Berlin. This consideration of Bachmann's very full immersion in American cultural imperialism may provide a new perspective from which to read her oft-stated assertion that the very fact that Austria had stepped out of history offered her a privileged vantage point from which to view—and write about—contemporary events. If the post-1945 United States can be viewed as the metropole that has come to represent capitalist modernity *tout court*, Austria (subcolony of the colony Germany, as Wagnleitner remarks) offered Bachmann a smaller and more manageable stage on and from which to observe modernity's effects: as she remarked to an interviewer in 1971, "From the perspective of this small, decaying country one can see much more precisely phenomena that are obscured in large countries" (*Wir müssen* 80).

For women the Cold War had particular consequences that also left their imprint on Bachmann's writing. As Elaine May and many others have observed, a new emphasis on domesticity lay at the center of Cold War ideology and practice: if containment of communism was the overarching principle guiding the foreign policy of the United States and its allies, a conception of domestic containment shaped policy on the home front, where women could now abandon their strenuous war-related efforts in the public arena and return to their proper sphere, the private realm, home and family. In fact, as May shows, women's "freedom" to remain in the home was taken as evidence of the superiority of the capitalist system over communism, where women were compelled to work side-by-side with men. As "experts" like sociologist Helmut Schelsky located the great "tenacity" of the family in "the biological ground of sexual relations and a mother's existential care for the next generation," i. e. in universal, historically invariable structures of femininity and masculinity (see Moeller 118), so, often under the influence of postwar American sociology, such experts also privatized social conflicts, offering psychological, not political, explanations for social conflicts and therapeutic coping strategies for problems conceived to be a private matter. "In this way," as May puts it, "domestic containment and its therapeutic corollary undermined the potential for political activism and reinforced the chilling effects of anticommunism and the cold war consensus" (14). Within the domestic sphere, as Erica Carter has argued throughout *How German Is She?*, women in Germany had the specific responsibility of presiding over consumption, the vehicle whereby cultural order was restored and a specifically Western national identity was established. As Ludwig Erhard, Adenauer's Economics Minister, frequently emphasized, women in their specifically female way as wives, mothers, and household managers played a role of central importance in postwar economic expansion.

Elizabeth Heineman has shown that, within this context of the restoration of traditional gender hierarchies and responsibilities, the "woman on her own" emerged as a particular problem. In a 1955 article in *Merkur* (a journal in which Bachmann also published a number of poems) on "Die gelungene Emanzipation" (Emancipation Accomplished), Schelsky notes the emergence of fears that

desexualization might threaten the woman who engaged in the rationalized and impersonal activities of modern production and management so alien to her nature, transforming her into a neuter or "replica of a man" (364). Paradoxically, single women could at the same time also be seen as manifesting a dangerous hypersexualization. To fend off the dangers of a female sexuality eluding male control, the female body of the fifties itself was subjected to regulation and discipline. The new foundation garments produced standardized curvaceous bodies to fit the new fashions, while other parts of the female body also needed the attention of consumer products to achieve acceptability: "More and more products imported from America incited worries about body odor, bad breath, dandruff, broken nails, and gray hair. Women's bodies were stringently disciplined via this ideal of cosmetic beauty" (Schmidt-Linsenhoff 117). Carter has maintained that for the female consumer in postwar West Germany, "the focal point of leisure, pleasure, and personal freedom is . . . the female body itself" ("Alice in the Consumer Wonderland" 205).

How do Bachmann's texts, document, or, alternatively, contest German and Austrian collusion with Western Cold War policies and their particular aims for women? Many conservative critics of the 1950s denied that her poems had anything whatsoever to do with politics (though of course many subsequent Bachmann scholars have distanced themselves vehemently from that stance). In many respects Bachmann's lyric production could be read as coinciding perfectly with the modernist directions promoted by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its Cold War allies and altogether distinct from the accessible, realistic, and problem-oriented texts that characterized both the *Kahlschlag* (clear-cutting) period of West German writing and East German socialist realism. In contrast to her poems, Bachmann's radio plays and stories of the 50s more overtly address the social arrangements of that period and their subjective consequences. The radio plays *Ein Geschäft mit Träumen* and *Der gute Gott von Manhattan* (The Good God of Manhattan) draw connections between consumption and gender relations, while many of the stories of *Das dreißigste Jahr* (The Thirtieth Year) explore the consequences of unhappy gender arrangements. In general Bachmann's great accomplishment in these early texts was to challenge the privatization of social problems. Not until the radical move-

ments of the late 60s, Uta Poiger maintains, could such assumptions of Cold War liberalism be more generally drawn into question, especially by feminists who insisted that "the personal is political" (279). However, though now it is possible to read these stories of the 50s as glosses on gender relations and the state of subjectivity anticipating *Todesarten*, it is likely that for readers of her period these texts could only be understood as a contribution to and confirmation of the reassertion of male control over women at which 50s gender discourses aimed.

What assisted Bachmann in overcoming this impasse and finally, I would argue, allowed her to write *Todesarten* was a shift in the West German cultural climate in the late 50s. As Anson Rabinbach has documented, from 1959 onwards the Federal Republic experienced a "crisis of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*" (coming to terms with the past) that involved its relationship to both the National Socialist past and "the multiple sins of the Adenauer years." Signaling this change was Adorno's famous essay of 1959, "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?," in which he maintained that "the continued existence of National Socialism *within* democracy" was in his view "potentially more threatening than the continued existence of fascist tendencies *against* democracy" (see Rabinbach 115). Adorno—and a few years later at a more popular level Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich in *The Inability to Mourn* (1967)—argued that the German relationship to the Nazi past had been characterized by repression, denial, the "loss of history," the "eradication of [or] flight from memory," the product of a "deep psychic debility" that left behind a "latent explosive potential for irrational behavior." As Rabinbach notes, these arguments were premised on "a therapeutic model of historical discourse" (thus displaying some similarities to other social scientific explanatory paradigms of the 50s) and placed more emphasis on elements of National Socialism that were not unique to National Socialism and could be discerned in the present—authoritarianism, anti-Semitism and racism, anticommunism, antiliberalism, elements of continuity or similarity between fascism and contemporary capitalism (52-57). The new antifascist critique of contemporary fascism (which would be picked up by the New Left of the 1960s and 70s) provided Bachmann with an explanation both of what was wrong with the present and how

and why it left its imprint on contemporary subjectivity.

Bachmann thus elaborated an organicist explanation of the causes of the *Todesarten* her novel cycle was to delineate that bears a remarkable resemblance to Adorno's statement on the survival of National Socialism into the present. In her preface to a reading from *Das Buch Franza* (The Book of Franza) in 1966, Bachmann represented the cause of National Socialist criminality as a virus that remained contagious in the postwar period: "I've often wondered, and perhaps it has passed through your minds as well, just where the virus of crime escaped to—it cannot have simply disappeared from our world twenty years ago just because murder is no longer praised, desired, decorated with medals, and promoted. The massacres are indeed over, the murderers still among us . . ." (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 2: 77). Adorno similarly viewed National Socialism as an organic substance that continues to infect humans or their social relations: "National Socialism lives on, and to this day we don't know whether it is only the ghost of what was so monstrous that it didn't even die off with its own death, or whether it never died in the first place—whether the readiness for unspeakable actions survived in people, as in the social conditions that hem them in" ("Coming to Terms with the Past" 115). If "National Socialism" or "fascism" designates not a particular state form or social order, but rather a set of more or less universal characteristics discernable in the individual psyche, as evident today as in the past, then it is altogether reasonable for Bachmann to maintain in a 1973 statement, "where does fascism start. It doesn't start with the first bombs that are thrown, it doesn't start with terrorism, which you can write about in every newspaper. It starts in relationships between people. Fascism is the first thing in the relationship between a man and a woman . . ." (*Wir müssen* 144).

In "Dying for Berlin," an unfinished and unpublished story that Bachmann wrote in November 1961 after a brief trip to Berlin (where the Berlin Wall had been erected three months earlier), she was first able to thematize explicitly the consequences of Cold War politics for subjectivity, though not yet for gender relations. Here I will argue that it is possible to read that text as an anticipation of the narrative strategy she would pursue to address connections between gender relations and the Cold War in *Todesarten*. "Dying for Berlin"

is a realistic, third-person narrative told from the point of view of its unnamed, German-speaking male protagonist, who has traveled to Berlin from an unspecified non-German-speaking country to deliver a lecture. The title of the story, according to the editors of the critical edition, is taken from the title of an article by Stewart Alsop in the 15 November 1961 *Spiegel*, "Sterben für Berlin?," in which Alsop discusses whether American forces would indeed be willing to defend Berlin if they thereby ran the risk of losing an atomic war that might destroy all of humankind (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 1: 523). Confronted in Berlin with the reality of the German past and present, the protagonist's response is denial and repression: on his visit he prefers not to listen to German, refuses to view Berlin's sights or attend its cultural events, to observe the Wall, to look into his hosts' faces. When he calls his French wife to tell her that fog has prevented his flight from leaving, he reveals his anxiety about his presence in this Cold War trouble spot when he thinks—but only in French!— "Peut-être je ne rentre plus, pensait-il, mais il ne le prononçait pas" 'Maybe I won't return, he thought, but he didn't say it out loud' (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 1: 73). This story focuses, though only, it appears, by indirection, on the psychic distress that "Berlin"—here a trope for an entire world order as well as a real historical site—occasions in the protagonist and others—for even the football fans, in Berlin to attend the soccer playoffs between Sweden and Switzerland (neutral countries aligned neither with NATO nor the Warsaw Pact!), who slug their buddy as they wait for their flight out, are brutalized by their exposure to "Berlin." "That is a situation that one can't imagine anywhere else," a Berliner tells the protagonist. "Can one imagine it here? he asked back" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 1: 80).

Three years later, in 1964, in "Ein Ort für Zufälle" (A Site for Coincidences), her Büchner Prize speech, Bachmann again addressed Cold War politics but in contrast resorted to expressionist or surrealist techniques to represent how "Berlin" leaves its mark on its inhabitants. Here Bachmann advances a psychological/therapeutic explanation of how the Cold-War division of Germany, as well as the after-effects and continuing presence of fascism, affect the residents of Berlin: like Büchner's Lenz, Berliners have been made sick, have been driven mad, by contemporary social reality. She concludes the introduction to her speech by observing: "Madness can also come

from outside towards the individual, thus much earlier it went from inside the individual to the outside, then it turned around, in situations we're familiar with, in the heritage of this time" ("*Todesarten*"-*Projekt* 1: 229)—the last phrase a reference to Ernst Bloch's 1935 exploration of explanations for fascism's mass appeal. This text is thus formulated so as to reproduce the collective perspective of, on the one hand, Berlin's insane, those institutionalized and especially sensitive to a madness induced by external causes, and, on the other, perhaps the totality of all Berliners. They are confronted by Berlin's nonsynchronous, violent, and omnipresent past replete with reminders of the defeat, occupation, and division of Germany while participating in orgies of consumption in the city's great department stores and cafés. Yet the consolations of consumption aside, the "Berlin" the patients confront is entirely unpredictable, threatening, and dangerous: "Once a minute an airplane flies through the room" ("*Todesarten*"-*Projekt* 1: 206); the roof of the S-Bahn collapses on them and they are saved only by the "huge muscles and hands" ("*Todesarten*"-*Projekt* 1: 211) of the East German woman conductor (one of those working women whom Western women were so thankful not to have to emulate). The patients and their medical attendants, however, refuse to confront the seriousness of their condition: "It was a little confusion, nothing else. It won't happen again" ("*Todesarten*"-*Projekt* 1: 227). Whereas "Dying for Berlin" portrays the impact of Cold War politics upon subjectivity from "without," as it were, from a perspective that releases only information to which her figure is prepared to allow himself conscious access, "Ein Ort für Zufälle" devises images to represent a chaotic and contradictory intrapsychic reality that cannot be acknowledged. Henceforth, I want to argue here, Bachmann's texts oscillate between these two narrative appoaches as she attempted to develop a textual strategy for *Todesarten* that would allow her to address gender relations and the Cold War via a focus on the evasions and anxieties of the post-1945 period.

   The novel *Malina*, I'd thus like to maintain, pursues the narrative strategy of "Ein Ort für Zufälle": in this text (and particularly in its middle, dream chapter) history is presented only via the scars it has left on the psyche—"die Geschichte *im* Ich" 'history within the I' (*Werke* 4: 230). Subsequent to the novel *Malina*, the figure

Malina will take on the narrative standpoint of "Dying for Berlin," telling, in the third person and past tense, stories in which neither the characters nor Malina himself will be able to reveal anything of which the characters are not consciously aware. Following a suggestion by Helgard Mahrdt, I would like to investigate *Malina* with respect to the categories of private and public, which roughly correspond to spheres allocated to women and men, respectively, in the ideologies of the postwar period. From that perspective, it is possible to read this novel's often-noted unity of time and place in Vienna's Ungargasse, where the "I," her *Doppelgänger* Malina, and her lover all live, as emblems of the private sphere, performing the function allotted to the home in the 1950s, protecting its inhabitants from a hostile and alienating public sphere, the only arena where the "I" feels comfortable and safe. The "I" both concedes that "home" is not in fact independent of the economic infrastructure and public affairs and simultaneously proclaims her determination not to attend to them: "But Washington and Moscow and Berlin are merely impertinent places trying to make themselves important. In my country, in Ungargassenland no one takes them seriously . . . no longer can they have any impact on my life . . ." (*"Todesarten"- Projekt* 3.1: 299). The attempt of the "I" to extract the Ungargasse from the larger sphere of "big history" can at least in part explain the "unity of time" in *Malina*—why the novel is written in the present tense and takes place within an eternal "Today." Conceived as a refuge from politics and history, the private sphere is alleged to be an arena whose activities of reproduction and nurturance never change. That the "I" refuses to concern herself with either current events or history—"the past doesn't interest me," remarked the "I" in an early draft (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 52)—or to remember the Nazi past and occupies a realm which is not narratable because its characteristic activities consist of the eternal return of the same helps in good part to explain what the "I" continually laments: "I can't narrate, I can't tell my story" (Ich kann nicht erzählen). "There just isn't any story/history in *Malina*," Bachmann stated in an interview (*Wir müssen* 73).

Within the private refuge of the Ungargasse the "I," though not a mother or wife, is nonetheless represented as completely a product of the gender discourses of the period in which Bachmann learned

to be a woman. Or, alternatively, one might say, the "I" is the his-
torically-specific representation of what a particular era defined as
feminine, and, though the novel takes place in the mid-1960s, this
is a notion of femininity derived from a period prior to 60s upheav-
als: as Malina observes in a section omitted at the last minute from
the novel's final version, there are no flower children in this Vienna
(*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.2: 712). The most striking indication of
Bachmann's ironic distance to the "I" is perhaps the dismay of the
"I" that she, unlike other Austrian and German women at the end of
the war, was not raped by Russian or Black American soldiers. Here
the "I," like Jennifer in *Der gute Gott von Manhattan*, is shown to be
a product of discourses on sexuality which construct a masochistic
female desire whose erotic satisfaction derives from its sexual subor-
dination. The "mirror scene" of the first section, like the "I"'s para-
praxes—"Sommermorde" 'summer murders/fashions,' "Winter-
morde" 'winter murders/fashions'—show that the "I" has embraced
an image of female autonomy (located in the home, the preferred
female realm of this pre-feminist era) that is in fact the product of
fashion designers, women's magazines, and the cosmetics industry.
A similar point is made even more clearly in an earlier draft of *Ma-
lina* where the "I" tries to prepare a gourmet dinner for Ivan while
trying to remove the onion smell from her hands and dress for the
evening. As Carter has observed: "[T]his, finally, was the defining
element of the consumerized household: the erasure of the traces of
strenuous labor—cooking smells, for instance . . .—not only from
the domestic environment in general but, more particularly, from
the body of a housewife who herself was to be transformed into a
commoditized component of consumer lifestyle" (*How German Is
She?* 69-70). There is thus every reason to believe that even (or espe-
cially) when the "I" believes she is the autonomous, self-determined
agent of her own actions, she is in fact obeying the dictates of a
particular, historically-specific era.

    In her love affair with Ivan, the "I" is also following the script
the Cold War era has written for women: of establishing a relation-
ship with a man as woman's highest priority; of female subordina-
tion and male dominance; of a femininity devoted entirely to the
concerns of the private arena and interpersonal relations. Bach-
mann herself suggests that Ivan and the "I" are playing discursively

preordained roles when she remarks, "As I had to read that all again when I corrected it, I noticed that it's not so easy with Ivan, that maybe he is also a *Doppelgänger* or a triple-figure . . . " (*Wir müssen* 88); that is, the "I" projects onto Ivan the qualities the men whom she loves need to possess—to which she then attempts to accommodate herself. In selecting the love affair as the central event of the overture to her *Todesarten*, Bachmann makes the point that women and men are, for socio-historical reasons, so constituted as to make the utopian connection at which they aim impossible. There is thus every reason to treat the "Legend of the Princess of Kagran" (36-41), which the "I" spins out as an explanation for why Ivan was the lover intended for her from the beginning of time, with as much skepticism as the love affair that takes place in the novel's "Today": such fantasies are projections of alternatives to a boring and banal quotidian reality (the daily life of the housewife, say) and are themselves generated by that reality. Yet it would nonetheless be wrong to conclude that love does not remain a utopian state of being for Bachmann in the novel, if a historically very determinate one, and that is part of the poignancy of *Malina*. As Hans Mayer observed in his very perceptive review of the novel, the female protagonist of this novel is a container for the hopes and dreams of the individual subject whose realization is thwarted by the present social order: "In reviews this 'heroine' and her author were reproached for striving for individual happiness in the midst of bourgeois prosperity. The misery of the world didn't seem to matter. Those who read like that have misunderstood the novel. All attempts of the 'I' to realize herself are thwarted by social conditions, which have to prevent such fulfilled moments" (164-65).

Who or what is responsible for thwarting the utopia Bachmann envisions? Exploring that question was the task of the middle chapter of *Malina*, entitled "The Third Man," where Bachmann particularly draws upon the representational strategies she first explored in "Ein Ort für Zufälle." What combination of forces, then, congeal in the figure that persecutes and torments the "I" in dreams: "this overpowerful father figure," as Bachmann put it, "who turns out to be the figure of the murderer, and more specifically of the murderer whom we all have" (*Wir müssen* 89)? An obvious connection to the politics and social history of the postwar period, oddly enough until

very recently virtually ignored by Bachmann scholars, is the film set in the ruins of postwar Vienna and starring Orson Welles and Joseph Cotten from which the dream chapter derives its name, *The Third Man* (1949). Elsewhere in *Malina* Bachmann emphasizes continuities between the corruption and deceit of the immediate postwar period thematized in *The Third Man* and the present, clearly intended as a critique of Austria's embrace of the Western capitalist system, and her allusion to "universal prostitution" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 396) in the immediate postwar period is multivalenced. On the one hand, it is the phrase Marx used in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* to describe wage labor under capitalism (82): "Everyone who worked was a prostitute without knowing it, where have I heard that before?" ponders the "I". Moreover, "universal prostitution" refers to the ubiquitous spying that characterized the occupying powers' machinations in pre-1955 Cold War Vienna, Viennese selling themselves off to the highest Allied bidder: "everyone was working for some side or another, without even knowing it. No side revealed its true identity" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 396). And finally, "universal prostitution" describes the sexual chaos of the postwar period, when, as the "I" puts it, "the whole city participated in this universal prostitution, everybody must have lain on the trampled lawn with everyone else or else they leaned against the walls, moaning and groaning, panting, sometimes several at a time, by turns, promiscuously" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 615). In fact, the high value placed on penicillin in this period is due not just to its utility for healing sick children, as the film delicately puts it, but because it could cure venereal disease: 19,000 new cases were reported in Vienna in 1946 (the year Bachmann arrived there), and, apparently as a result of the carryings-on *Malina* recounts, in 1948 one out of five young Viennese women between thirteen and twenty-one was infected with VD (Mattl 111). In this reading, the "third man" of the text, the corrupt black market manipulator of penicillin, is a metonymic representative of an entire postwar economic, social, and sexual order that entered with the occupying forces and prizes profits over all other forms of human connection, and the "frightful things" perpetrated in the dreams by the "murderer whom we all have" are displaced and/or condensed images of the atrocities that order makes possible.

But a further peculiarity about Carol Reed's film is that no-where in the film is explained *why* Vienna lay in ruins in 1947; in this film National Socialism is entirely repressed. This "disappear-ing" of the reasons an Americanized "universal black market" had the opportunity to seize control of Austria suggests an additional interpretation of the forces contained in the third important man in the life of the "I," the powerful and violent father. One might argue that what Bachmann is revealing here (whether deliberately or not is not very relevant) are precisely the moves of the post-Holocaust German or Austrian psyche that enabled it to conveniently "forget" the Holocaust. Bachmann recalled that it was the National Social-ist conquest of Austria that began her own process of remember-ing: "There was a particular moment that destroyed my childhood. Hitler's troops' invasion of Klagenfurt. It was so horrible that my memory begins on that day. The enormous brutality that you could feel, the shouting, singing, and marching. . . . A whole army entered our quiet, peaceful Carinthia . . ." (*Wir müssen* 111). But Botz ob-serves that Bachmann here also to some degree succumbs to the "Austria as first Nazi victim" myth, since the commotion was most likely in fact made by the large Nazi population of Carinthia (201). Botz's argument is strongly supported by Hans Höller's recent rev-elation that Bachmann's own father joined the Nazi party in 1932 (25), though Bachmann herself never acknowledged that she was raised in a Nazi family and perhaps, as the above quotation suggests, even put some effort into obscuring her own Nazi connections. One might speculate that one reason the "I" can't remember what she needs to know to tell her story is that she, like many of her country-people in the postwar period, can't—or won't— remember her own relationship to the Holocaust, and is then haunted in her dreams by her own unmastered past. That might also explain why the "I" repeatedly dreams of sex with her father, which from a psychoana-lytic perspective is an indication that she has accepted her place in the sex/gender system over which her (or *the*) father presides—*and* accepted all the other values that the father represents. "I wouldn't have betrayed you" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 503), says the "I" to her father; Malina tells the "I," "Maybe you didn't know, but you were in agreement" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 551).

After the "I" has bared the scars on her soul for which even she

cannot account, what does it mean that she disappears into a crack in the wall at the end of this novel? How should we understand the last sentence: "It was murder" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 695)? For many, many feminist scholars the answer has seemed simple: men kill women. But here I would like to make a somewhat different argument that begins by taking seriously Bachmann's own argument that both Malina and Ivan are doubles of the "I." The Cold War encouraged dualisms of many sorts, and the apparently natural opposition of men and women was one of the fundaments on which the normative heterosexuality of Cold War culture rested. Of course discursive constructions of this sort do not in fact precisely describe (though they certainly profoundly influence) what "real people" "actually" are and do: in the Cold War period, "real" female subjects were nodes at which mutually irreconcilable discourses intersected. In the period during which Bachmann wrote, it seemed perhaps literally inconceivable that one could be the kind of person who could both love ecstatically and pay one's bills on time. The "I" thus performs gender burlesques when she tries to operate in a man's world, while only Malina can keep her life in order as she performs pre-choreographed steps in her elaborate ballroom dance with Ivan. But just as Bachmann herself was described (for a time at least) as sovereignly managing a difficult balancing act, charmingly inept at dealing with the conditions of daily life yet extremely savvy about her business affairs, similarly it is important to stress that all of these figures—Ivan, Malina, and "I"—comprise the radically disunified self of the woman, or at least the woman intellectual, of this period. It is not necessary to make Malina a villain in order to understand the claim of the "I": "I have lived in Ivan and die in Malina" (*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 692). After Ivan decamps, the capacity of the "I" to love—which, within the discursive frame within which this novel moves, means her femininity—is no longer evoked, and she is reabsorbed in Malina. But, as Bachmann repeatedly emphasized, the "I" of course is Malina; or Malina is she.

How was *Todesarten* to continue after the "I" disappears into the wall and Malina becomes their narrator as the "I" had requested ("Go ahead and take over all the stories which make up history. Take them all away from me" [*"Todesarten"-Projekt* 3.1: 688-89])? In subsequent *Todesarten* (which in my view also include the sto-

ries of *Simultan* [Three Paths to the Lake]), Bachmann, abandoning
the "questionable narrative perspective" of Malina, would return to
the apparently realistic narrative form of "Dying for Berlin" and its
seemingly sovereign and all-knowing narrator. Bachmann, I main-
tain, changed narrative strategies for reasons very closely related to
her concept of the production of subjectivity in the Cold War period:
she resorted to the realist form because, in order to represent figures
entirely subjected to the hegemonic ideologies/discourses of their
period, she could not allow them to perceive the cracks and crevices
of the order that constrained them (cracks perhaps like those of
the wall into which the "I" disappears). Instead, she has recourse to
a narrative form corresponding to the ideology of bourgeois indi-
vidualism on which the postwar period depended, premised upon
the notion of an exterior world existing independently of the per-
ceiving subject as well as that of a subject that is a rational, unified,
and coherent bearer of consciousness and conceives itself to be able
to act autonomously and to control its own destiny. Though a sym-
pathetic figure, Malina is constructed as a subject who is a creature
of such ideologies, and he will thus be able only to tell those parts
of the stories for which there are words in the discourse of which
he is part (which is why the figures of those texts so often remark
to themselves, "It was nothing" or "It couldn't be told"). Morever,
the figures of these later *Todesarten*, captives of hegemonic ideolo-
gies or discourses, will also be shown to understand themselves as
the same sort of self-determined, autonomous subjects as Malina
himself, quite unaware of the historical forces and social pressures
inscribed upon them and the actual nature of their own situation.
Marcel Reich-Ranicki's judgment of the stories of *Simultan* in his
1972 review was thus not entirely off-base—though for reasons
quite different from those he advanced:

> Are these stories, in which the chic and the stylish predominate,
> the worldly and the melodramatic triumph, and excessive sentimen-
> tality is mixed with snob appeal—are these stories perhaps not sup-
> posed to be anything more than reading matter for those ladies who
> flip through magazines at the hairdresser's or in the dentist's waiting
> room? That is, consciously and cynically intended to be popular fic-
> tion [Trivialliteratur]? (191-92)

Precisely: Bachmann's figures are exactly such "ladies" whose self-understanding is prefabricated by the categories by which "Trivial-literatur" is also informed. Adorno's painful observation about the conditions of existence in the post-Holocaust, Cold War era thus might do for the figures of *Todesarten*, too: "There's no right way to live in a world that's wrong" 'Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen' (*Minima* 42); like his *Minima Moralia*, Bachmann's *Todesarten* are "Reflections from a Damaged Life."

Materialist feminism regards all readings as political, as interventions into the process of meaning-making which establishes the discursive boundaries of what counts as "the way things are." My readings of Bachmann's texts here are intended as an intervention into discussions about feminist methodology as well as about the interpretation of Ingeborg Bachmann's texts. I have tried to show that women's lives (as well as representations of them) are always situated within a historical context shaped by a multiplicity of discursive and non-discursive historical forces. Thus this essay addresses gender, history, and memory, but with a difference: it probes the willful or involuntary refusal or inability to remember on the part of women who were both victims of and, from their disadvantaged standpoint, complicit in the crimes of National Socialism. As I have shown, Bachmann displays the scars left on them by the inability to remember, as well as the wounds still inflicted today by men and women who bear those scars, i.e. who are not yet healed because they have still not adequately "come to terms with the past." As is usually the case in her writing, Bachmann portrays female figures almost entirely unable to understand what is happening to them, why they are suffering so, and how they themselves have contributed to perpetuating their own situation. We as readers, however, are called upon to think beyond the circumstances that Bachmann represents. What we learn from her texts may help us to comprehend better and subsequently to contend against destructive social forces such as those responsible for producing the disastrous social constellations that Bachmann tried to describe. Because I believe that feminist scholarship should assist in transforming the world as well as interpreting it, I advance this analysis as a contribution to producing the kinds of new social arrangements in which Bachmann would no longer have needed to write her *Todesarten*.

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