

“Es ist ein unglaublicher Betrug.”
Ingeborg Bachmann’s literary critique
of the journalistic media

by

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Abstract

Despite the consistency and regularity of Bachmann's critique of journalists and journalistic content, there has been to date no dedicated study of her portrayal of the journalistic media in individual works or her work as a whole. This dissertation addresses this gap in Bachmann studies by undertaking a detailed and comprehensive analysis of Bachmann's literary portrayal of the journalistic media from the time she first came into the literary spotlight in the early 1950s until her 1972 *Simultan* collection, the last work to be published in her lifetime.

The primary focus of this dissertation is a close textual analysis of literary works in which Bachmann makes significant references to journalists and journalism, examining these references closely in the context of existing scholarly analyses. In a systematic analysis of each literary genre that Bachmann tackled—poetry, radio plays, short prose and novels—this study demonstrates that Bachmann's critique of journalists and journalism recurs with notable frequency and consistency throughout her work from 1952 onwards. The detailed analyses show that Bachmann's critique of the “fourth estate” ranges from the mildly critical to the vitriolic, and constantly returns to a core set of concerns about the misrepresentations perpetrated by the journalistic media. The negativity of Bachmann's critique is, however, almost always offset (and even undercut) by evidence that the journalistic media are not always successful in their (according to Bachmann's portrayal) deceitful and destructive practices. This results in the oxymoron encapsulated in a literal interpretation of Ich's declaration in *Malina* that the press is “ein unglaublicher Betrug”: while Bachmann does her utmost to depict the press as “Betrug”, she simultaneously reveals to us that it is also “unglaublich” in the sense of “ungläubhaft”. What also emerges from this study is that Bachmann's literary critique of the journalistic media as both deceptive and inherently destructive is often counterbalanced by a more positive and contrary element that points towards where and how we might find the truth that the journalistic media do not and cannot convey.

Acknowledgements

While every doctoral dissertation represents the end result of a long and difficult journey, this one was perhaps a little longer and more challenging than many others. My current PhD candidature started in 1998, but the history of my fascination with Ingeborg Bachmann dates back to 1974 when I began a postgraduate research project into her poetry, that soon developed into a master's thesis on *Malina*, but was abandoned due to lack of confidence that I could do justice to this bewildering but fascinating novel.

Two decades later, I returned to my *Malina* project, this time at doctorate level. What a shock to discover that there had not only been a “Bachmann-boom” in the time I had been away from my project, but that *Malina* was at last widely recognised, not only for its narrative artistry but its social relevance. Although my return to postgraduate studies was therefore made much more interesting, it also proved to be a greater challenge because of the wealth of research now available. This, however, proved to be the least of my challenges, for the last decade of life has thrown many handgrenades in my path. But at last it is done! No longer a study exclusively devoted to *Malina* but one that was certainly inspired by that novel. And there are many people that I must thank for helping me in this labour of love.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background to this study

According to *Der Spiegel*, the 1997 discovery of transcripts of Bachmann's work for Radio Bremen revealed "eine kaum bekannte Seite der Lyrikerin" ("Dank für die Lebensrettung" 248). Although it was known that Bachmann had been employed at the Viennese radio station Rot-Weiß-Rot for almost two years starting from September 1951,¹ and had later written occasional reports for the Essen-based *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ)*,² it was not generally known that, under the pseudonym of Ruth Keller,³ Bachmann had worked as Radio Bremen's political foreign correspondent in Rome from July 1954 until mid-1955. In his epilog to *Römische Reportagen*, the editor of the published transcripts emphasises the surprising nature of this find in his observation, "daß [Bachmann] auch leicht verderbliche Korrespondentenware für den Bremer Funk lieferte, das ist neu und war nicht einmal den Bachmann-Bibliographen bekannt" (Kogel 84).

McVeigh makes the following observation about the way in which Bachmann underplayed the extent and nature of her work at Rot-Weiß-Rot during a 1953 radio interview: "Certainly one cannot fault the young author for concealing that [...] part of her work that she found incommensurate with the image of a poetess she wished to project." ("Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer" 35) It is therefore hardly surprising that Bachmann did not draw attention to her subsequent "Brotarbeit" as a journalist for the *WAZ* or Radio Bremen, especially at a time when she was becoming the focus of increasing media attention herself, thanks not only to winning the "Gruppe 47" prize in May 1953, but also as a result of the August 1954 edition of *Der Spiegel*, which featured her photograph on the cover and celebrated her as a rising star in post-war German lyric poetry (Wagner "Stenogramm der Zeit").⁴

Because of Bachmann's long-standing high profile in the media, the publication of *Römische Reportagen* was greeted with general enthusiasm and surprised delight in the press. Basing their responses primarily on Kogel's epilogue, "Geschichte einer Wiederentdeckung", most press reports and reviews of Kogel's publication focussed on the combination of luck and perseverance that led to the identification of Bachmann as the true author of the broadcast manuscripts that had been archived

¹ Even before her work at Rot-Weiß-Rot, Bachmann had worked in a journalistic environment, as a "typist for *Neues Österreich*, a newspaper published by the Americans" (Lennox *Cemetery* 302).

² See Albrecht and Götsche ("Leben und Werk im Überblick" 4f.), Haider-Pregler (24ff.), Hapkemeyer (*Entwicklungslinien* 43ff.), Hoell (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 77f.), Höller (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 46ff.), Kogel (85), Lennox ("Hörspiele" 84f. and *Cemetery* 244f.), McVeigh ("Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer" 38) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 564),

³ This is the same pseudonym Bachmann had used when writing for the *WAZ* (Kogel 85).

⁴ For a forensically detailed analysis of the *Spiegel* article and the accompanying cover photo, see Hotz (43–62). For more general accounts of Bachmann's celebrity, see Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 1–16) and Hoell (69ff.). Hotz's close study of the literary celebrity known as "Die Bachmann" created by and in the mass media may be seen as a companion piece to my own study which discusses Bachmann *on* the journalistic media in contrast to Hotz's account of Bachmann *in* the journalistic media.

under the name of Ruth Keller, many mentioning that even Bachmann's siblings had not known of her journalistic activity.⁵ The *Göttinger Tageblatt* drew attention to Bachmann's gratitude for the "Lebensrettung" that the income from the journalistic reports represented for her as a struggling writer or enthused about Bachmann's "äußerst klarsichtige, kritisch pointierte Reportagen" (Zimmermann "Ingeborg Bachmann. Reportagen aus Rom").⁶ Other more restrained assessments disputed Kogel's claims that the discovery of Bachmann's reports for Radio Bremen constituted "eine literarische Sensation", pointing out that while Bachmann's journalistic efforts were no doubt both sound and professional, there was nothing extraordinary about them. As one commentator observed, Bachmann was no Hemingway and there was nothing in either the style or content of her reports that distinguished them from others: "Würde man den Namen nicht kennen, erraten könnte man ihn nie." (Hansen)⁷

Quite understandably, given that scholars are more interested in Bachmann's literary work than the ephemeral products she produced for the press or radio (products to which she did not even want to put her real name), the academic response to this new Bachmann publication was underwhelming.⁸ For me, however, the publication of *Römische Reportagen* and the accompanying media publicity⁹ drew attention to the frequent and consistently critical portrayal of journalists and the press in Bachmann's literary work. It also highlighted the fact that despite the wealth of research over more than three decades, there had not yet been a study of the critique of the journalistic media that permeates Bachmann's work from the time she first came into the literary spotlight in the early 1950s until her 1972 *Simultan* collection, the last work to be published in her lifetime.

As this dissertation will show, Bachmann's negative portrayal of the journalistic media reaches a crescendo in her *Todesarten* period, most notably in her novel *Malina* and the *Simultan* story "Drei

⁵ For example, Jerichow, Rotermund and Zimmermann ("Zeitgenossenschaft"; "Dank für die Lebensrettung").

⁶ Note that this article was not written by a staff reporter or independent journalist but the literary editor of Radio Bremen, that is, someone who had an interest in promoting Bachmann's *Römische Reportagen*. Other press reports, too, drew heavily on Kogel's assessment of Bachmann's journalistic skills, referring, for example, to Bachmann as "eine präzise arbeitende Journalistin mit gutem Sachverstand und sehr viel Gespür für das Land" (Rotermund).

⁷ A comparison of Bachmann's published transcripts with those written by the journalist-author Gustav René Hocke available in his literary Nachlaß held at Marbach supports this assertion: see for example, his *Korrespondentenberichte aus Italien Juli 1949–1954*. Kogel admitted that in searching for Bachmann's transcripts the only way to positively distinguish hers from those written by others was to check which reports had been submitted under the name of Ruth Keller (Radio Bremen *Lange Radio-Nacht* 01.00–02.00 Uhr). Höller even contends that Bachmann's reports for Radio Bremen and the WAZ "dürften [...] »in wesentlichen Zusammenfassungen«, zum Teil sogar »wörtliche Übersetzungen aus italienischen Zeitungen« gewesen sein" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 91).

⁸ See, for example, Bannasch ("Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa" 172f.) and Höller (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 91f.). As Bannasch notes, however, the discovery of Bachmann's transcripts contributed significantly to correcting "[d]as Klischee der hilf- und ratlosen Frau, das Bachmann spätestens seit den Frankfurter Vorlesungen im Wintersemester 1959/60 anhaftete" (173).

⁹ In addition to the advance publicity and the various press reports and book reviews, *Römische Reportagen* was promoted via Radio Bremen programmes including a 4-hour special on 28 February 1998, entitled "*Römische Reportagen*." *Eine lange Radio-Nacht für Ingeborg Bachmann, Rom-Korrespondentin von Radio-Bremen*. Throughout 1998 the audio of the programme was accessible from Radio Bremen's web site:

http://www.radiobremen.de/rbtexte/rb2/_lit/livebach.htm

Wege zum See”, which both contain scathing attacks on the press and its representatives. At its most extreme, *Malina*’s critique of the press is epitomised in the narrator’s¹⁰ vitriolic reference to “all die Schlagzeilen der Zeitungen aus denen die Pest kommt” (*TP 3.1*: 303)¹¹ and in her damning judgement of the news industry as “ein unglaublicher Betrug” (*TP 3.1*: 591). In “Drei Wege zum See”, journalistic content is described as “Abklatsch” and “diese in die ungeheuerlichste Unwirklichkeit verkehrte Realität” (*TP 4*: 386). Taken in isolation these literary condemnations could be interpreted as subjective reflections of the characters expressing these views. An argument along these lines is, however, untenable in the light of the similarity of the critique in *Malina* and “Drei Wege zum See” to that found throughout Bachmann’s literary work.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this dissertation, then, is to address a longstanding gap in Bachmann scholarship by undertaking a comprehensive and detailed analysis of Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media in her literary work. This analysis will demonstrate that Bachmann’s critique of journalists and journalism is an important and overlooked aspect of her literary oeuvre as a whole and constitutes a theme that recurs with a striking frequency and consistency from 1952 onwards.

In my detailed discussions of Bachmann’s literary work I will also show that, while her critique of the “fourth estate” ranges from the mildly critical to the vitriolic, and constantly returns to a core set of concerns about the misrepresentations perpetrated by the journalistic media, the negativity of her critique is almost always offset (and even undercut) by evidence that the journalistic media are not entirely successful in their (according to Bachmann’s portrayal) deceitful practices. This results in the oxymoron encapsulated in a literal interpretation of Ich’s declaration in *Malina* that the press is “ein unglaublicher Betrug”: while Bachmann does her utmost to depict the press as “Betrug”, she simultaneously reveals to us that it is also “unglaublich” in the sense of “unglaublich”. Furthermore, I intend to show that Bachmann’s literary critique of the journalistic media as both deceptive and inherently destructive is also often counterbalanced by a more positive and contrary element that points towards where and how we might find the truth that the journalistic media do not and cannot convey.

¹⁰ Hereinafter I refer to this female narrator by the name that Bachmann gives her in the opening section of the novel, that is, Ich (*TP 3.1*: 276). German academic studies usually refer either to “das Ich” (Herrmann “Poetik der Kritik” 59; Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 550) or to the “Ich-Figur” (Bail; Summerfield *Malina*). Both of these terms are also used by Götttsche and Albrecht (*TP 3.2*: 710; 788). Other scholars refer to “die Ich-Erzählerin” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann*; Kohn-Waechter *Das Verschwinden in der Wand*; Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften*). Lennox refers to this character as “the ‘I’” (*Cemetery* 225) but this construction can become typographically awkward in the possessive case and when used within a quote—hence my decision to simply use Ich. Other English scholars avoid the awkwardness altogether by using the term “narrator” (Achberger *Understanding* 96; Frieden “Bachmann’s *Malina* and *Todesarten*” 62), but this evasion fails to adequately recognise the role of the narrator as a character (and main protagonist) in the novel.

¹¹ This abbreviated citation refers to the »*Todesarten*«-Projekt edition. See “Citation conventions and abbreviations” on page 5 for a list of abbreviations used in this study.

1.3 Definitions and conventions

Definitions

According to the Deutsche Journalisten-Verband:

Journalist [ist], wer hauptberuflich, produktiv oder dispositiv [...] Informationen sammelt, auswertet und/oder prüft und Nachrichten unterhaltend, analysierend und/oder kommentierend aufbereitet, sie in Wort, Bild und/oder Ton über ein Medium an die Öffentlichkeit vermittelt oder den publizistischen Medien zu dieser Übermittlung bereitstellt. (qtd in Meyn *Massenmedien in Deutschland* 239)

For the purposes of the present study, a simplified version that is consistent with this definition will be adopted, and thus a *journalist* will be considered to be *someone who writes, edits or produces content for the print or broadcast media*. The term *journalism* will be used to refer to *the journalistic profession as a whole as well as its collective product (that is, the form and content of print and broadcast media)*.¹²

In this dissertation, the term *print media* will be used synonymously with the term *the press*, and will be considered to encompass newspapers and other periodicals such as news journals and popular magazines. The more generic term *journalistic media* will be used to refer to the journalistic content of the broadcast media of radio and television as well as the print media.¹³

For the purposes of this study, the term *mass media* will be used to refer to *the means by which information and entertainment content is disseminated to an unknown and large audience*.¹⁴ The term mass media therefore includes what I shall sometimes refer to as the *journalistic (or news) media* (that is press, radio and television) as well as entertainment media such as cinema.¹⁵ While not explicitly

¹² Cf. The definition of journalism in the *Macquarie Dictionary* is “the occupation of writing for, editing, and producing newspapers and other periodicals, and television and radio shows” and “such productions viewed collectively”. For an alternative, more sociologically-based description of journalism and a discussion of journalism’s claims to truth, see McNair who defines journalism as: “Any authored text, in written, audio or visual form which claims to be (i.e. is presented to its audience as) a truthful statement about or record of, some hitherto unknown (new) feature of the actual, social world.” (4) Hartley, on the other hand prefers the term “mass communication” to refer to much the same thing, namely, “the practice and product of providing leisure entertainment and information to an unknown audience by means of corporately financed, industrially produced, state-regulated, high tech, privately consumed commodities in the modern print, screen, audio and broadcast media, usually understood as newspapers, magazines, cinema, television, radio and advertising; sometimes including book publishing (especially popular fiction) and music (the pop industry)” (*Communication, Cultural and Media Studies* 138). Other media analysts see the term “mass media” even more broadly by including “not only the electronic and print forms traditionally classified as media (radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines, books) but a wide range of non-traditional forms, such as comics, graffiti, clothing, or music” (Glessing and White “Introduction” v).

¹³ It is arguable that filmed documentaries should also be included here given that they can be the cinematic equivalent of a radio or television documentary. Watson, for example, sees journalism as “news and other programmes such as documentaries, dealing with information as a public commodity” (188).

¹⁴ In this way, the mass media are distinguished from interpersonal media such as letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and so on. Thus Downing, Mohammadi and Sreberny-Mohammadi define the mass media as “media that reach many people, or the masses (also called mass communication); it may be thought of as the opposite of interpersonal communication” (487).

¹⁵ While not explicitly including film in its definition of mass media, the *Macquarie Dictionary* does not exclude it either. Its definition is, however, closely based on its definition of journalism, in describing mass media as “the means of communication, as radio, television, newspapers, etc., that reach large numbers of people”.

defining the mass media, Meyn assumes in his book, *Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, that the term encompasses “Presse, Hörfunk, Fernsehen und Film” (8),¹⁶ which accords closely to the definition used in this dissertation.

Citation conventions and abbreviations

For Bachmann’s work

When citing Bachmann’s work, this study uses the following abbreviations.

Abbreviation	Publication
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<i>W</i>	<i>Werke</i> . Ed. Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum and Clemens Münster. 4 vols. München: Piper, 1978.
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<i>TP</i>	»Todesarten«-Projekt. Ed. Dirk Götsche and Monika Albrecht. 4 vols. München: Piper, 1995.
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When referring to Bachmann’s writing project of the same name, I use the following convention: “Todesarten-Projekt”.

<i>GuI</i>	<i>Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden: Gespräche und Interviews</i> . Ed. Christine Koschel und Inge von Weidenbaum. München: Piper, 1983.
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Other abbreviations

Other abbreviations and conventions used in this study are as follows.

Abbreviation/ Convention	Meaning
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[...]	Square brackets around ellipses indicate that words and/or punctuation have been omitted from a quote. The omission of square brackets indicates that the ellipses are in the original text.
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a.p.o.	Stands for “as per original” and indicates that the quote is a direct replication of formatting, spelling or errors in the original quote.
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<i>GS</i>	<i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> . Used when citing the collected works of either Walter Benjamin or Theodor Adorno.
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m.e.	Stands for “my emphasis” and indicates that I have used italic font to highlight particular words or phrases.
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qtd	Stands for “quoted”.
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¹⁶ A later edition of his book includes the Internet (*Massenmedien in Deutschland* 11ff.).

1.4 Academic research context

To allow for a contextualised (and thus more meaningful) discussion and assessment of arguments advanced by individual scholars, I will be engaging in detail with the academic literature pertinent to this study within my individual analyses of Bachmann's work. Therefore, instead of including a detailed survey of relevant research in this introduction, I am providing an overview of the academic research context of the present study. This overview is intended to be indicative of the number and range of scholars who have touched on the theme of journalism in Bachmann's work, and how they have dealt with it.¹⁷

Given the wealth of academic literature on Bachmann's literary work and the explicit and trenchant critique in *Malina* and "Drei Wege zum See", it is surprising that her portrayal of the journalistic media has received so little academic attention. Indeed, there have been to date no studies that focus solely on Bachmann's critique of journalism as expressed either in individual works or in her literary oeuvre as a whole. Although many studies have referred to or discussed instances of Bachmann's critique of the journalistic or other mass media, this aspect of her work has generally been addressed either very briefly and in passing, or in a completely different (and often broad) context.

The earliest study to touch on Bachmann's critique of journalism is Fehl's 1970 dissertation *Sprachskepsis und Sprachhoffnung im Werk Ingeborg Bachmanns*, a comprehensive analysis of Bachmann's poetry, which includes a discussion of the poems "Herbstmanöver", "Holz und Späne" and "Reklame"¹⁸ and their depiction of the way in which "Publikationsmittel und Massenmedien" (76) contribute to the decline of language into cliché. It was almost a decade before the next significant reference to Bachmann's critique of the journalistic media in Steiger's 1978 monograph *Malina: Versuch einer Interpretation des Romans von Ingeborg Bachmann*. Although the primary focus of his study is "die Ergründung des Problemkreises Innerlichkeit" (28), specifically in relation to *Malina's* Ich, Steiger provides a detailed (though somewhat laboured) analysis of key passages of media critique in the Mühlbauer interview scene¹⁹ and two other passages, arguing that Ich's reaction to the mass media is both symptomatic of, and a reaction to, her lack of engagement with the outside world. Steiger's argument, however, fails to take into account the numerous other instances of Bachmann's critique of the mass media elsewhere in Bachmann's work, which show that this theme is neither unique to *Malina* nor purely an indication of Ich's idiosyncratic hypersensitivity. Although Jacobowicz-Pisarek sees Steiger's study as banal and long-winded (*Stand der Forschung* 23ff.),²⁰ his

¹⁷ For an excellent summary of the academic reception of Bachmann's work as a whole, see Lennox ("Rezeptionsgeschichte"). Another useful resource, though brief and now out of date, is Achberger's annotated bibliography (*Understanding* 178ff.).

¹⁸ These poems are discussed at length in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

¹⁹ I discuss this scene in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

²⁰ Beicken too considers Steiger's work to be a "langatmige und nicht sehr ergiebige Erörterung" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 193). Hapkemeyer, on the other hand, cites Steiger frequently without passing critical judgement (*Sprachthematik* 27ff. et passim).

book deserves recognition as the first academic study to explicitly highlight *Malina*'s media critique and to discuss it at length.

Bartsch's 1979 "Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachman" is not only the first journal article to provide any significant discussion of Bachmann's critique of the mass media but the first to draw attention to the importance of this theme in her radio plays. In his article, Bartsch refers to examples of Bachmann's media critique as part of her critique of mass culture and capitalism in all three of her radio plays and notes the way in which those plays highlight the "Gefahr der Bewußtseinstrübung durch die Massenmedien" (328). Bartsch's references to Bachmann's critique of the mass media are, however, part of a much broader context that examines Bachmann's depiction of "Ausbruchsversuche aus dem gewöhnlichen, der Entfaltung des Ichs kaum Spielraum lassenden Leben" (323f.).

The next major contribution to a discussion of Bachmann's media critique was Hapkemeyer's 1982 study *Die Sprachthematik in der Prosa Ingeborg Bachmanns: Todesarten und Sprachformen* whose focus was, as the title suggests, "das die späten Texte leitende Sprachverständnis" (1). Within this context, Hapkemeyer engages with Steiger's study, disagreeing with some aspects but supporting much of his analysis and providing a detailed account of how the "Werbeslogans"²¹ passage in *Malina* illustrates the system of manipulation undertaken by the mass media, "das den Menschen ihre Gedanken, Bedürfnisse und Wünsche mit psychologischem Kalkül vorspricht und einhämmert, das eine selbständige Sprache durch vorformulierte Sätze zu verdrängen droht" (43). Hapkemeyer is also one of the first to specifically draw attention to Bachmann's identification with Benjamin's views on the connection between the mass media and "Erfahrungsschwund" and how this "Erfahrungsschwund" is portrayed in Bachmann's later work.²²

Die Möglichkeit und die Fähigkeit zur bewußten Verwendung [von Dingen] verkümmern zusehends in der Massen- und Konsumgesellschaft westlicher Prägung. Ingeborg Bachmann sieht im Verlust eines ursprünglichen Zugangs zu den Dingen, eines genuinen Erlebens und Denkens eine kapitale Gefahr. "Ich würde Benjamin recht geben, denn es ist dieser Erfahrungsschwund, der immer mehr auftritt, durch die Entwicklung der Massenmedien, durch das Leben aus zweiter Hand". Ingeborg Bachmann konstatiert in ihrem Spätwerk den "Erfahrungsschwund" also auch als Folge einer über die Medien vermittelten "sekundären" Wirklichkeit. Die Massenmedien [...] tragen, sei es als Informationsquellen, sei es als Unterhaltungsmittel, entscheidend zum Entzug eines individuellen Sprechens und Denkens bei. (44)

Disappointingly, however, Hapkemeyer's chapter on "Sprachlosigkeit und Isolation" in Bachmann's *Simultan* stories, does not include a discussion of "Drei Wege zum See" even though this story explicitly refers to and depicts both "Erfahrungsschwund" and "Sprachverlust". It was not until 1983, a full decade after the publication of *Simultan*, that scholars began to turn their attention to Bachmann's critique of the mass media in "Drei Wege zum See". Omelaniuk's 1983 article, "Ingeborg Bachmann's *Drei Wege zum See*: A Legacy of Joseph Roth", and Lensing's 1985 study, "Joseph Roth and the Voices of Bachmann's Trotts: Topography, Autobiography, and Literary History in »Drei

²¹ I discuss this passage in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

²² Other scholars who discuss Benjamin's statement about "Erfahrungsschwund" in connection with Bachmann's work include O'Regan, who connects it to Bachmann's "idea of a utopian language" (23) and Bannasch who refers to its significance for Bachmann's critique of journalism in "Drei Wege zum See" (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 105ff.). I examine the importance of Bachmann's reference to Benjamin in the next chapter.

Wege zum See«”, both contain perceptive observations about Bachmann’s critique of journalism in “Drei Wege zum See”²³ but their primary focus is, as their titles suggest, the intertextual relationship between Bachmann’s story and the work of Joseph Roth. Similarly, Schmidt’s 1986 study of “geschichtlicher Erfahrung” examines the “zeit- und gesellschaftskritische Dimension” (479) of the *Simultan* collection and in doing so alludes briefly to Bachmann’s portrayal of the press in “Drei Wege zum See” but undertakes no detailed analysis.²⁴

Höller’s 1987 *Ingeborg Bachmann: Das Werk. Von den frühesten Gedichten bis zum ‘Todesarten’-Zyklus* represents the first comprehensive and detailed analysis of Bachmann’s work as a whole. In this monograph Höller discusses instances of Bachmann’s critique of the culture industry and mass culture within the context of a broad-ranging examination of Bachmann’s “Gesamtwerk” that adopts what constitutes for Bachmann scholarship a ground-breaking historical perspective (Lennox “Rezeptionsgeschichte” 29). Like Hapkemeyer, Höller draws attention to Bachmann’s support for Benjamin’s views on the “Erfahrungsschwund” caused by the mass media (9, 86, 267). Thus Höller sees in Bachmann’s radio plays and the poems “Herbstmanöver”, “Holz und Späne” and “Reklame”, “die kritische Konfrontation mit der Erfahrungsarmut der Reklame, der Klischees der Alltagssprache und der Phrasen der Zeitungen” (86). Other examples of Bachmann’s journalistic critique that Höller discusses include Ich’s account of her work experience at the “Nachrichtendienst” (265).²⁵

Like Höller’s study, Bartsch’s 1988 monograph, *Ingeborg Bachmann*, makes frequent reference to Bachmann’s critique of mass culture, capitalism and the mass media, and occasionally alludes to Bachmann’s portrayal of journalism. While Bartsch’s study represents a comprehensive and invaluable contribution to Bachmann research, particularly in its historical and sociological perspectives on Bachmann’s work as a whole,²⁶ its focus is so broad that the significance of Bachmann’s critique of the mass media as a pervasive and consistent theme throughout her work gets lost amidst the wealth of analysis dealing with other aspects of Bachmann’s oeuvre.

A completely different approach is taken by Hotz, whose 1990 examination of Bachmann’s life and work as reflected “im journalistischen Diskurs” is, according to Bartsch, “materialreich” but provides “keine neuen Einsichten” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 6). Lennox, on the other hand, is not so dismissive, describing it as an:

innovative Studie, [die] die Rezeptionstheorie, den Strukturalismus und die Semiotik heran[zieht], um zu zeigen, wie zu Bachmanns Lebzeiten ein journalistischer Diskurs über sie entstand, der weniger mit

²³ In particular, Omelaniuk (258ff.).

²⁴ More recently, Kanz’s 2002 article refers in passing to the media critique in “Drei Wege zum See” in her extended examination of Elisabeth Matrei’s character (“Viel couragierter” 210ff.). In the same anthology, Greber briefly discusses Bachmann’s reference to the televised race at the end of the “Simultan” story (188f.).

²⁵ I discuss this passage at length in Chapter 7 of this study.

²⁶ As Lennox observes, Bartsch’s study continues to be “ein Standardwerk” thanks to its “ausführlichen und ausgewogenen Gesamtdarstellung bei besonderer Betonung der gesellschaftskritischen und zeitgeschichtlichen Problemstellungen des Werks”, and Höller’s 1987 monograph, too, must be seen as “[eine] ähnlich grundlegende Monographie” (“Rezeptionsgeschichte” 29).

Bachmanns Schreiben als mit verschiedenen ideologischen Zielvorgaben zu tun hatte. (“Rezeptionsgeschichte” 33).

Although Hotz does not address Bachmann’s critique of the journalistic media, her book provides a useful perspective on the extent to which Bachmann was herself a creation of the mass media and the reasons why she was perhaps so critical of journalism in her public statements and inclined to portray them in such an unflattering light in her literary work.

A study that has received almost no attention in Bachmann scholarship is Folkvord’s 1995 thesis, *Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählung Drei Wege zum See. Eine Interpretation*.²⁷ Based on “rationalitätskritische und psychoanalytische Aspekte der modernen Frauenforschung” (3), Folkvord’s study includes an extended and thoughtful analysis of Bachmann’s critique of journalism and the mass media in “Drei Wege zum See”, which reveals a primary focus of that critique to be their exemplification of “das Leben aus zweiter Hand” (76ff.). Bachmann’s critique of the mass media is, however, not a major focus of Folkvord’s dissertation, which is primarily concerned with “weibliche[r] Identitätssuche und [...] Erinnerungsproblematik” (7).

In her 1997 book on the *Simultan* collection, *Von vorletzten Dingen*, Bannasch provides a detailed analysis of Trotta’s critique of journalism in “Drei Wege zum See” and even discusses this critique in terms of Bachmann’s observations about the “Phänomen des Erfahrungsschwundes” (106), but the context of Bannasch’s discussion is the much broader topic of “Erzählen und Verschweigen”, not Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media. Taking a more ecumenical approach, Mahrtdt’s 1998 *Öffentlichkeit, »Gender« und Moral* looks at the concept of “the public sphere”, using as its starting point “die Theorie der Frankfurter Schule, um ihre These zu stützen, daß die bürgerliche Gesellschaft die Privatsphäre hervorbringt, an der Bachmanns weibliche Figuren leiden” (Lennox “Rezeptionsgeschichte” 33). While Mahrtdt’s study includes the work of other writers including Theodor Fontane, Heinrich Mann and Marieluise Fleißer, Bachmann is the end focus of the study, which concludes with a detailed analysis of the portrayal of the public sphere in three of Bachmann’s works: “Unter Mördern und Irren”, the *Todesarten* cycle and “Drei Wege zum See”. Mahrtdt’s Bachmann chapter includes a 5-page section on “Medienkritik” (231–236), which is, however, neither detailed nor comprehensive, addressing only a selection (albeit a representative selection) of Bachmann’s critical references to the media in *Malina* (primarily, the Mühlbauer scene). Mahrtdt’s analysis does not consider the media-specific aspects of critical theory but does draw attention to the way in which Benjamin’s views are reflected in Bachmann’s literary portrayal of the mass media (235f.).

Although many scholars have referred in passing to Bachmann’s humour and superb satirical skills, Achberger is the first to address this topic specifically in her 1998 article “»Bösartig liebevoll« den Menschen zugetan”, which includes three passages from *Malina* (taken from early drafts as well as

²⁷ To my knowledge, the only reference to Folkvord’s thesis (which is equivalent to a German “Magister-Arbeit”) is in a footnote in Mahrtdt (*Öffentlichkeit* 256).

the final version of the book) where the humour is at the expense of journalists or journalism, particularly in Bachmann's skilful dissection of celebrity interviews in the Mühlbauer passage (234f.).²⁸

Weigel's 1999 *Ingeborg Bachmann. Hinterlassenschaften unter Wahrung des Briefgeheimnisses* represents both a new and important direction in Bachmann scholarship, providing an:

Aufarbeitung von Bachmanns intensiver Auseinandersetzung mit den Nachwirkungen des Nationalsozialismus in Deutschland und Österreich, die zugleich auch die Beziehungen der Autorin zur Kritischen Theorie und zu wichtigen jüdischen Persönlichkeiten ihrer Zeit nachzeichnet. (Lennox "Rezeptionsgeschichte" 30)

This detailed study, which is replete with new research findings, sheds much light on Bachmann's relationship with figures like Benjamin and Adorno, whose views on the mass media, I will be arguing, resonate in Bachmann's work. Weigel's publication includes discussions of the Mühlbauer passage in *Malina* (*Hinterlassenschaften* 89f.) and Bachmann's allusions to the mass media in "Die Zikaden" (183ff.), drawing attention to the fact that, although Bachmann is a "geniale Medientheoretikerin und Diskursanalytikerin *avant la lettre*" (27), there is a notable dearth of research into Bachmann's "Medienkritik". According to Weigel, *Malina* in particular continues to be "ein Roman [...], dessen medientheoretische Bedeutung bisher weitgehend übersehen wurde" (543). The context of Weigel's assertion is, however, not a reference to the mass media as understood in "Kommunikationstheorie und Publizistik" (549) but a much more selective definition that includes *inter alia* interpersonal media: "Durchgehend ist [in *Malina*] von Medien die Rede: Telephon, Radio, Schallplatte, Tonband, Büchern und Film, von Briefen, Telegrammen und Briefträgern, aber auch von Schreibmaschine und Sekretärin." (543f.)²⁹ In line with this definition of media, Weigel's 13-page analysis under the title of "»Malinas« Medientheorie" restricts itself primarily to the interpersonal media of "Telefon, Post, Schreibmaschine" with only a brief acknowledgement of Ich's "ausdrückliche[...] Abstinenz, ja Abwehr gegenüber den Medien einer nachrichten-, informations- und meinungsförmig organisierten Öffentlichkeit, also dem, was Kommunikationstheorie und Publizistik Medien nennen" (549).

Published in 2002, Albrecht and Götsche's invaluable *Bachmann-Handbuch* includes an examination by Bannasch of Bachmann's essayistic and journalistic writings, including her *Römische Reportagen* ("Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa"). The *Bachmann-Handbuch* also contains a number of articles that touch on Bachmann's critique of the journalistic media—for example, Lennox's extended contribution on Bachmann's radio plays ("Hörspiele") and Herrmann's excellent though brief analysis of the Mühlbauer scene in *Malina* ("*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*" 139)—but there is no extended discussion of Bachmann's portrayal of the journalistic media. Herrmann does, however,

²⁸ Other scholars to refer to the Mühlbauer interview in *Malina* include Frieden (67), Kohn-Waechter (*Das Verschwinden in der Wand* 129) and Thau (13ff.; 91).

²⁹ Scholars to draw attention to the significance of interpersonal media include Folkvord, who examines the theme of "Flucht ans Telefon" in "Drei Wege zum See" (*Drei Wege* 81ff.), and Mahrdt, who discusses the motifs of "Telefon" and "Post" in *Malina* (*Öffentlichkeit* 244ff.).

highlight the need for research in this area when she notes that, while further research into the “Kommunikationsmedien und –formen (Telefon, Brief) innerhalb des Romans [*Malina*]” may indeed be desirable, as contended by Weigel, an even more fruitful area of research would be “intertextuelle Analysen des Romans, die noch stärker aus kulturwissenschaftlicher und intermedialer Perspektive erfolgen” (143)—a direction of research that my own dissertation proposes to address.

Most recently, Lennox’s expansive and innovative *Cemetery of the murdered daughters*, published in 2006, has undertaken an extensive study of works whose critique of journalism I discuss at length in my dissertation (primarily, “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, *Malina* and “Drei Wege zum See”).³⁰ Drawing on the research of both Wagnleitner and Carter, Lennox also provides particularly detailed accounts of Bachmann’s work at Rot-Weiß-Rot (RWR) and the political and cultural climate of Germany and Austria in the early Cold War era.³¹ Although her analyses shed light on many aspects of Bachmann’s work that are relevant to my dissertation, Lennox’s work generally addresses Bachmann’s media critique only briefly and incidentally in her close examination of “Bachmann and Materialist Feminism: Gender and the Cold War” (297ff.).

1.5 Scope, approach and structure

Scope

This dissertation begins with an investigation of Bachmann’s personal (but publicly voiced) views about journalism, as expressed in her non-literary work (for example, her speeches, lectures, essays and media interviews) to consider the extent to which her literary portrayal of the journalistic media might be a reflection of her own beliefs and attitudes towards journalism. It also examines some intellectual affinities that emerge from the discussion of Bachmann’s views on the journalistic media as a further context for Bachmann’s literary portrayal of journalism.

As Bachmann herself pointed out, however: “Meinungen hat jeder, die eines Schriftstellers sind belanglos, und was nicht in seinen Büchern steht, existiert nicht.” (W 4: 296f.) Although I do not agree that Bachmann’s views are completely “belanglos”, given that they provide useful pointers to key aspects of Bachmann’s concern about the journalistic media, I do nevertheless agree that what really matters is her literary sublimation of those concerns. The major focus of my study will therefore be a close analysis of Bachmann’s literary portrayal of journalism in her poetry, radio plays, short prose and novels from 1952 onwards, including the drafts and fragments that were only published after her death in Göttsche and Albrecht’s »*Todesarten*«-Projekt.

Although Bachmann’s body of work includes poems and prose written before the 1950s, my

³⁰ Lennox’s 2004 article “›Gender‹, Kalter Krieg und Ingeborg Bachmann” covers similar territory.

³¹ For an excellent account of Bachmann’s employment at RWR, and the political and cultural environment of that period, see McVeigh (“Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer” and “Die Stille um den ›Mordschauplatz‹”).

search of the material currently available (and accessible) in the Bachmann-Nachlaß at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna found no significant references to the press in these very early works. They are therefore not addressed in this study. Similarly, this study does not include Bachmann's collaborative works (for example, the libretti she wrote for Hans Werner Henze) or her adaptations and translations (such as "Der schwarze Turm", "Herrschaftshaus", "Die Schwärmer" and "Vinzenz und die Freundin bedeutender Männer"), which, despite the occasional presence of themes that echo thematic concerns related to Bachmann's portrayal of the mass media elsewhere,³² do not contain direct and significant allusions to the journalistic media.³³

Approach

This dissertation undertakes a close textual analysis of literary works in which Bachmann makes significant references to journalists and journalism, examining these references closely in the context of existing scholarly analyses of each work. Where relevant to her treatment of the journalistic media, references to other branches of the mass media, such as cinema, will also be briefly discussed. This dissertation also addresses references to advertisements in the print and broadcast media because of the close financial connection between journalism and advertising, and the consequent impact on journalistic content. While a comprehensive analysis of Bachmann's critique of mass media in the broader context of mass culture (which includes not only cinema, but also globalisation, branding and mass consumption) is long overdue, such an investigation is well beyond the bounds of my study, which, due to the constraints of time and space has chosen as a primary focus Bachmann's portrayal of the journalistic media.

To examine the pervasiveness and consistency of her literary critique of journalism and journalists, Bachmann's work will be examined in a broadly chronological sequence (based on the publication date), starting with her lyric poetry and concluding with *Simultan*. This chronological approach has been adopted to facilitate the identification of any evolutionary trends in Bachmann's portrayal of the press over the period of her literary productivity. Within this chronological approach, a demarcation has been set up between those works that belong to Bachmann's pre-*Todesarten* period and those that fall within her "Todesarten" period, which is generally considered to be the period after the 1961 publication of *Das dreißigste Jahr*. As Göttsche and Albrecht point out, the *Todesarten* period represented for Bachmann a turning point in her literary creativity—"ein[en] Neuansatz" (*TP 1*: 489).

³² Bartsch, for example, sees in *Der junge Lord* a comment on the bourgeoisie's role in the rise of Hitler and fascism because of the way in which it pokes fun at bourgeois prejudices and the kind of pretentiousness that can lead to mindless conformity and slavish mimicking of the fashionable or socially desirable (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 91f.). To the extent that Bachmann's critique of the journalistic media is related to her critique of events in Austro-German political history and a critique of mass deception and inauthenticity, *Der junge Lord* echoes themes that Bachmann uses in conjunction with her portrayal of the mass media elsewhere in her work, but the connection is not direct enough to warrant close examination in this dissertation.

³³ Another consideration here is that Bachmann did not have sole artistic control over thematic development in the libretti and translations, and therefore any portrayal of the mass media in these works does not have the same significance as elsewhere in her work.

The distinction between *Todesarten* and pre-*Todesarten* works has therefore been made to help identify any differences in Bachmann's critique of journalism in this important period of her productivity.

Using this broadly chronological framework, the literary analyses of Bachmann's work have been grouped into six separate genre-based chapters. This genre-based taxonomy is also intended to assist in determining the extent to which Bachmann's critique of journalism is more prevalent within one genre than another.

Structure

This study is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 investigates the references to journalism in Bachmann's non-literary work (theoretical writings, interviews, essays), with a view to establishing both a theoretical and personal foundation for Bachmann's literary critique of journalism. In Chapter 3, I undertake a brief study of the intellectual affinities between Bachmann and a selection of writers and thinkers, whose views on journalism and the mass media may have informed those of Bachmann.

Chapter 4 begins the examination of Bachmann's literary work by analysing the references to journalism in Bachmann's poetry in the period before she began work on the *Todesarten* cycle, while Chapter 5 looks at the radio plays of the same period, and Chapter 6 investigates the short story collection, *Das dreißigste Jahr*, and other short prose of Bachmann's pre-*Todesarten* period. Chapter 7 discusses *Malina* and the drafts and fragments of Bachmann's *Todesarten* cycle of novels. In Chapter 8, I analyse the portrayal of the journalistic media in the short prose of Bachmann's *Todesarten* period, with a particular focus on "Drei Wege zum See", in which the reflections (and life) of the protagonist, a celebrated photojournalist, provide particularly detailed insights into the nature and function of Bachmann's literary critique of the journalistic media. Finally, Chapter 9 summarises and draws conclusions from my analyses of Bachmann's work.

Chapter 2. Ingeborg Bachmann on journalism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the “Zeitungsdebatte”, that is, the long-standing and ongoing debate about the perceived and proclaimed virtues and vices of the press. The aim of this overview is to provide a broad socio-historical context for Bachmann’s statements about the journalistic media and my subsequent discussion of the media critique of specific writers and thinkers whose views on journalism and the mass media Bachmann seems to have shared.

In this chapter I do not refer to either specifically Austrian or specifically German “Pressekritik”, because the primary and secondary source material does not generally distinguish between the two except indirectly in referring to individual critics of the press, who were known to be either German or Austrian. Furthermore, given that at the time when newspapers first appeared and the debate about their value first started—and for more than two centuries after that—there were no separate national entities called “Germany” or “Austria”, it is reasonable, I believe, to simply use the term “Zeitungsdebatte” to refer to the debate that has taken place in the “German-speaking world”.

2.2 The long tradition of the “Zeitungsdebatte”

Bachmann’s critique of the press, as referred to briefly in the introduction to this dissertation and as expressed in the speeches and other public statements that I examine later in this chapter, is part of a long tradition of complaints about “Zeitungsdeutsch” and press content, whose history dates back to the first newspapers.¹ As early as 1609, Gregor Wintermonat, the editor of the *Leipzig Calendarium Historicum Decennale – oder zehnjährige Historische Relation*, presented arguments for and against the nascent press of the “Newen Zeitungen”, the one-page newsletters that were proliferating in Germany at the time (Kurth and Pavlu “Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung” 13).

While praising the educational value and consequent social benefits of newspapers for disseminating historical, legal and political knowledge, Wintermonat conceded that the press might be seen as harmful because it could also purvey information that was either false, misleading or manipulated (ibid.). Wintermonat also acknowledged that there was evidence to support claims that those in power were exploiting the press for political purposes, and that newspapers had occasionally been responsible for bringing disaster to a country (ibid.). Although neither sophisticated nor detailed, Wintermonat’s brief exposition of the pros and cons of the press delineate the broad parameters of subsequent debate in Germany about the power of the press and its role in society. As Straßner

¹ It is generally accepted that Germany was the home of the first periodical newspapers, which were published in Strassburg and Wolfenbüttel in 1609. See Brand and Schulze (17), Kurth and Pavlu (“Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung” 13) and Straßner (70).

observes in relation to the “Zeitungsdebatte” that began in earnest towards the end of the seventeenth century: “Im Mittelpunkt der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kritikern und Befürwortern der Presse steht ihre Wirkung, die je nach Standpunkt des Autors *als Gefahr oder als Nutzen* aufgefaßt wird.” (*Zeitung* 69, m.e.)

2.2.1 The press as “Gefahr” and “Lüge”

Although some opponents of the press criticised its content as mere trivia, fiction or “als jeder ernstesten wissenschaftlichen Wertung unwürdig, als bloßes Mittel zur Unterhaltung” (Kurth and Pavlu “Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung” 23), more vehement critics challenged the “Wahrhaftigkeit” of the press.² Christoph Besold’s 1629 *Thesaurus Practicus*, for example, framed his views in the strong terms of “das Problem der Presselüge” (8). In his study, Besold claimed that the “neuen Zeitungen” were not only spreading “bloße Torheiten, sondern bisweilen auch pseudopolitische Geheimnisse. [...] Es werden Siege ausgeprengt, die Gegenseite wird niedergedrückt, Niederlagen werden erfunden, um das Volk (*weil die Welt, wie man sagt, betrogen werden will*) kopflos zu machen, damit es für diese oder jene Partei eintrete” (32, m.e.). Besold is one of the first critics to point to the commercial motivation and benefits that can flow from the dissemination of false information, citing as an example a military defeat that had been written up as a victory by the Duc de Mayne, who had pointed out: “eine solche Lüge, wenn man es auf wenige Tagen [*sic*] beharren könne, sey viel 1000 fl. werth” (32).³ At the turn of the century, Johann Peter Ludewig, too, warns of the “Manipulationsmöglichkeiten, die der Obrigkeit durch die Zeitung ermöglicht werden” (*Straßner Zeitung* 69).

Some fifty years later, Ahasver Fritsch accuses the press of purveying “erfundene Nachrichten”, “Unwahrheit” and “Unmöglichkeit”, citing in support of his case a fellow critic, Arnold Mengerling, who claimed that press content is “erstuncken und erlogen” (41f.). Fritsch was so incensed about “Falschmeldungen” that he recommended a range of severe punishments including the death penalty for transgressions (*Straßner Zeitung* 73). To test the “Wahrhaftigkeit” of press content the German scientist and aphorist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799) suggested comparing two or more different newspapers as a means of assessing the truthfulness and accuracy of the reporting (Riha 56).⁴ Lichtenberg’s own analysis of press content came up with the sobering statistics: “50 Teile falsche Hoffnung, 47 falsche Prophezeiung und 3 Teile Wahrheit. Diese Lektüre hat bei mir die Zeitungen von diesem Jahre sehr herabgesetzt, denn ich denke: was diese sind, das waren jene auch.” (qtd in *Straßner*

² See Brand and Schulze (17ff.) for a summarised history of the press in Germany; Haybäck for an interesting article on truth in journalism; Riha (56–64) for a closer look at “Pressekritik” since Lichtenberg; and *Straßner* (69ff.) for a summarised history of German “Pressekritik”.

³ While the main body of Besold’s article was converted to new German, Kurth retained the old German spelling for quotes within articles.

⁴ In *Malina*, Ich undertakes a similar exercise with a pile of old newspapers (*TP* 3.1: 588). I discuss this passage in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

Zeitung 75)

The emergence of the first forms of the “Massenpresse” around the middle of the nineteenth century alongside the “bürgerliche Parteipresse” heralded a surge in the significance of newspapers “im Prozeß der geschichtlichen Entwicklung” (Riha 56). The transformation of the press into a mass medium brought with it a number of changes in the format and content of newspapers. “Stark aufgelockerter Umbruch und vielfältige Illustrationen” (Straßner *Zeitung* 64) made newspapers more appealing and accessible to greater numbers of people, and a different reading audience was being wooed with a decreasing emphasis on politics: “Aus dem politisch rasonierenden Publikum wird ein kulturkonsumierendes. [...] [M]enschliche Schicksale stehen vor Staatsaffären, Unglücksfälle, Verbrechen sowie Lokales interessieren mehr als politische Entscheidungen und Ereignisse.” (64f.) At this time, too, press content begins to look more like what we find in today’s newspapers: “Zunehmend erhalten Nachrichten Formen der Einleitung, werden vom Format bis ins stilistische Detail einer Erzählung angeglichen, treten die zentralen Kerne der Nachricht zurück in der breiteren Schilderung des Berichtes oder der Reportage.” (65)

This significant social and historical development in the press did not, however, signal any significant change in the nature of the criticisms levelled at the press, and perhaps even amplified the concerns that had already been raised over the previous two centuries. Thus Ferdinand Lassalle, writing in 1863, was even more trenchant in his criticism than Lichtenberg the century before him, accusing reporters within the liberal press of “stupide Unwissenheit” and “Gewissenlosigkeit”, and of trying to instil in the reading public their own “Eunuchenhaß gegen alles Wahre und Große in Politik, Kunst und Wissenschaft” (75). For Lasalle the press was therefore “der Hauptfeind aller gesunden Entwicklung des deutschen Geistes und des deutschen Volkstums” (qtd in Riha 58).

The constancy and consistency of issues in “Pressekritik”

In the almost four centuries that have elapsed since the earliest critique of the first mass medium, the broad thrust of those who disparaged the press and other instances of the mass media has not changed very much except in the detail of their argument. Thus, for example, Ahasver Fritsch’s support in the late 1600s for the claim that press content is “erstuncken und erlogen” is not dissimilar to Lasalle’s nineteenth century attack on the “stupide Unwissenheit” or Karl Kraus’s lambasting of the Viennese press from 1899 onwards. Kraus was well-known for his attacks on “Zeitungsdeutsch” but he was not the first to excoriate the press for its misuse of language: as far back as 1643, Christoph Schorer’s study called “Vnartig Teutscher Sprachverderber” launched “heftige Vorwürfe gegen die in den Zeitungen übliche Sprache”, claiming that newspapers “leuchten unter den Sprachverderbern am allermeisten hervor, vor allem, weil sie Fremdwörter dort gebrauchen, wo es auch deutsche Begriffe gäbe” (Straßner 73). Over the centuries that passed between Schorer and Kraus there were many others who attacked the language of the press including Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and even Marx, who some 50 years before Kraus had decried the use of “Polemik und Phrase als [...] Hauptinstrument[e] der

Manipulation und Indoktrination” (Riha 57).⁵ Ferdinand Kürnberger, too, was a vehement defender of the “Geheimnis des Wortes” and therefore objected to its misuse in generating “Nebel” and “Mystifikation”, especially in the form of political catchcries and “sogenannten Fortschrittsparolen” (58). According to Kürnberger, the phenomenon of “Phraseologie” was not even limited to the written word but extended to the increasing use of images in the form of “[das] Bild, das nun verstärkt um sich greifende Illustrationswesen, das illustrierte Blatt, die Bilder-Zeitung, der »Übergang von Lesen zum Nichtlesen«” (ibid.).

The constancy and consistency of the major themes in Austrian and German “Pressekritik” is also evident in more recent critical studies—even those that have broadened their focus to include the younger offspring of the mass media. Thus, while they bring a specifically Marxist slant to their case, the mid-twentieth century media critique of the Frankfurt School (as elaborated below) can be seen as a modern variation of Wintermonat’s precocious contentions in 1609 that the ruling classes used newspapers for their own political purposes, and that the press often contained false, misleading or manipulated information that was turned to commercial advantage.⁶

Critique of the journalistic and other mass media did not, of course, stop with the Frankfurt School. For example, there were many others after the Frankfurt School who deplored the exploitation and manipulation of the mass media by the National-Socialists in Germany and wrote about “a lying and censoring press and radio in a totalitarian state”, noting the impact on the German population of “a steady diet over the years of falsifications and distortions” (Shirer 308). The concerns of other more recent critics of the journalistic and other mass media include the increasing concentration of media ownership that started in the mid-1950s in Germany (Pürer and Raabe 112 ff.). The media critique of the Frankfurt School is, however, particularly important for this study, not only because the Frankfurt School “produced the first in-depth studies of the media and were the first to see the media as industries” (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler 11), but also because the work of the Frankfurt School represents the apotheosis of the “Presse als Gefahr” side of the “Zeitungsdebatte”. Even more importantly, there is, as I explain later in this study, a connection (via Walter Benjamin) between their critique and Ingeborg Bachmann’s public statements about the journalistic and other mass media.

The Frankfurt School

In their philosophical fragment “Kulturindustrie. *Aufklärung als Massenbetrug*”,⁷ which was

⁵ See also Straßner (75ff.). I discuss the “Pressekritik” of Karl Kraus in the next chapter.

⁶ For a useful summary of the history of media critique in German-speaking countries, see Straßner (69ff.). For discussions of the mass media in Germany under National-Socialism, see Frei and Schmitz; Shirer (204–308); and Straßner (58f., 83f.). For discussions of Adorno and Horkheimer, see Agger (78–98); Curran and Seaton (264ff.); Downing, Mohammadi and Sreberny-Mohammadi (329f.); Held (88f. et passim), Michael Johnson (92f.), Kellner (“Adorno and the Dialectics of Mass Culture”; *Advertising* 341f. et passim); Sherratt; Watson (62); and Wiggershaus.

⁷ This fragment is one of a number of “[p]hilosophische Fragmente” that comprise the work known as *Dialektik der Aufklärung*. Although the most widely known critique of the “Kulturindustrie” is contained in this fragment, Adorno’s critique is also found in essays like “Résumé über Kulturindustrie” (*GS 10.1*: 337ff.).

first published in 1944, the two leading members of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, introduced and described the key concept of “Kulturindustrie” (Adorno *GS* 3: 141ff.),⁸ a term that encompassed the various forms of the mass information and mass entertainment media (for example, the popular press, radio broadcasting, film and popular music industries)⁹ that were flourishing under modern capitalism in the first half of the twentieth century: for Adorno and Horkheimer the culture industry¹⁰ was part of a pervasive, all-encompassing system that masqueraded as a competitive free market, but was in fact a monopoly that testified to “der totalen Kapitalmacht” (141).

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the “Kulturindustrie” was a form of “Massenbetrug” (141ff.): its role was to produce “[einen] spezifische[n] Warentypus” (144), whose primary purpose was “Kontrolle [...] des individuellen Bewußtseins” (142)—a covert but, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, extremely effective form of mass brainwashing (along the lines of the propaganda programmes of National-Socialist Germany), aimed at ensuring large-scale conformity, unquestioning acceptance of the status quo, and thus the maintenance—and indeed the entrenchment—of monopoly capitalism. In such a system, overt physical and political force is not necessary because the covert messages of the culture industry ensured that the individuals who made up mass society were not even conscious of their enslavement and exploitation. Blinded to the reality of their exploitation and oppression, the masses felt no need to rebel or question the system—the prisoners were effectively their own gaolkeepers: “[D]ie betrogenen Massen [...] bestehen [...] auf der Ideologie, durch die man sie versklavt. Die böse Liebe des Volks zu dem, was man ihm antut, eilt der Klugheit der Instanzen noch voraus.” (155)

Adorno and Horkheimer painted an extremely bleak view of a mass capitalist society, in which working life for the great majority of the masses consisted of physical and mental drudgery that left workers empty and exhausted at the end of the day, and without the energy to engage in any form of demanding leisure time pursuit. The monotonous conformity of working life created, Adorno and Horkheimer contended, a craving for some form of relief and stimulation: “Amusement ist die Verlängerung der Arbeit unterm Spätkapitalismus. Es wird von dem gesucht, der dem mechanisierten

⁸ Although Adorno and Horkheimer used the term “mass culture” in early versions of their work—for example, in the posthumously published fragment entitled “Das Schema der Massenkultur” (Adorno *GS* 3: 299)—the term was subsequently replaced with the concept of “culture industry”. In this way, they hoped to emphasise the fact that the cultural phenomenon that they were describing was not “spontan aus den Massen selbst aufsteigende Kultur”, but something that had been externally imposed upon them (Adorno *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* 337).

⁹ In *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Adorno and Horkheimer cite “Kino, Radio, Jazz und Magazin” as the “charakteristischen Medien” of the culture industry (Adorno *GS* 3: 153f.), while in “Das Schema der Massenkultur” Adorno describes “Film und Jazz” as “die beiden charakteristischsten Formen der Massenkultur” (308). Adorno’s radio talk, “Résumé über Kulturindustrie”, on the other hand, singles out “Illustriertenromane[...] und Filme[...] von der Stange, mit zu Serien ausgewalzten Familien-Fernsehspielen und Schlagerparaden, mit Seelenberatungs- und Horoskopspalten” as instances of the culture industry (Adorno *GS* 10.1: 341).

¹⁰ This dissertation uses the term “mass culture” interchangeably with the term “culture industry”. Despite Adorno and Horkheimer’s reservation about the potentially positive connotation of “mass culture”, the notion of “mass” or “masses” is these days generally considered to have negative connotations (Downing, Mohammadi and Sreberny-Mohammadi *xvi*).

Arbeitsprozeß ausweichen will, um ihm von neuem gewachsen zu sein.” (158) The culture industry exploited this situation in a number of ways: on the one hand it sold products and services that met the need for diversion and escape (a need that their system has created in the first place); at the same time, however, it ensured that the stimulation provided by those products and services fell short of the kind that would prompt individuals to consider alternative social structures.

Furthermore, primarily through the mechanism of commercial advertising, the culture industry manipulated the consciousness of consumers by exacerbating existing anxieties or fabricating artificial problems, and then offering a range of ready-made commercial solutions: “[A]dvertising forms part of a whole promotional culture that shapes citizens into consumers, transmitting endlessly the message that buying and consuming will solve problems and bring about happiness [...]” (Kellner “Advertising and culture” 333)¹¹ Advertising not only channels consumers towards commercial solutions but also distracts them from identifying the real underlying problem in their lives—namely, their state of enslavement and exploitation. These artificially stimulated or manufactured anxieties and their “over-the-counter” solutions represented “Ersatz” experience, which worked to distract consumers, lull them into a state of torpor and prevent them from rebelling against the existing social structures, undermining their very ability to even contemplate either the need for, or possibility of, alternative social structures. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, then, the culture industry inundated consumers with artificial problems for which they pushed equally artificial but commercially lucrative solutions, and then foisted upon them entertainment that consisted of fabricated conflicts and vicarious experience, robbing them of genuine personal experience, and as a consequence, lessening their capacity for independent thought and feeling.

Adorno and Horkheimer’s pessimistic view of individuals as “helpless and passive subjects of capitalist totalitarianism” (Windschuttle 20) has been criticised by media analysts who observe, for example, that “if everyone was dominated by the culture of capitalism [...] we might well ask how anyone who shared that culture could escape [and] think in any way different to the mindless masses” (23). Other analysts suggest Adorno and Horkheimer’s views are either outdated, naïve or unwarrantedly paranoid in ascribing so much power to the purported “gaolkeepers” of the system:

[T]he Frankfurt School has been accused of presenting an unsatisfactory notion of domination within the cultural industries. In portraying mass culture as means to a type of ‘thought control’, Adorno and Horkheimer in particular overestimate the deliberate, conspiratorial use of technology to shape attitudes. This approach ignores the fact that culture is created out of a complex interplay of a range of influences and institutions and that audiences are capable of engaging with and selecting culture rather than being merely passive recipients. (Hartley *Communication, Cultural and Media Studies* 92)¹²

¹¹ Adorno and Horkheimer elaborate their views on advertising in “Das Schema der Massenkultur” (Adorno *GS* 3: 299–335).

¹² Thus Hartley criticises as outdated and naïve “cultural and literary critics for whom industrialisation and modern society in general remain a regrettable aberration from values and habits which these writers fondly imagine used to prevail before the invention of machines, democracy and the like” (*Communication, Cultural and Media Studies* 139). According to Hartley a mass society theory like that of the Frankfurt School represents an “[a]n early twentieth century model of the social organisation of industrial/capitalist societies” where “a vast workforce of atomised, isolated individuals without traditional bonds of locality or kinship, [...] were alienated from their labour by its repetitive, unskilled tendencies and by their subjection to the vagaries of the wage

Notwithstanding such criticism, the position put forward by Adorno and Horkheimer (and others of the Frankfurt School) represents an important stream of thought that was very influential, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s—at a time when Bachmann was arguably at the peak of her literary productivity—and still finds support amongst media and cultural analysts. In his 2003 study on Adorno, for example, Witkin asserts:

If the defenders of popular culture have not been persuaded by Adorno, they have often been discomfited by him, and his thesis, like a bone in the throat, still commands their attention. [...] What Adorno offers is not a judgment of taste but a theory concerning the moral and political projects inhering in both ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ art. (1)

Other scholars have pointed out the flawed thinking in the blank dismissal of the relevance of Adorno’s work beyond his own era, for example, Bernstein, whose foreword to an English translation of Adorno’s essays on the culture industry insists that the:

[...] current situation [of our cultural landscape] may be a great deal less sanguine than its proponents suppose. Even if some of the historical and sociological details of Adorno’s analyses were composed to address a specific context, it does not follow that his critical diagnosis of the predicament of culture is not applicable to the present. (1f.)

2.2.2 The press as “Nutzen”

As already mentioned, the media pessimism of the Frankfurt School represents the extreme end of the “Presse [...] als Gefahr” side of the “Zeitungsdebatte”. On the other side of the debate, the history of arguments in support of the press as a benign and beneficial institution is almost as long, and the conviction behind these arguments is equally passionate. Thus, for example, one of the earliest defenders of the press, Christian Weise, wrote a comprehensive treatise in defence of newspapers in 1685, arguing that their benefits far outweighed any negative impacts.¹³ While acknowledging that the press dealt with “manches Unwichtige und auch Kleinliche”, Weise stressed the educational value of newspapers and concluded that newspapers were on the whole “zu praktischen als auch zu wissenschaftlichen Zwecken nutzbar” (Kurth and Pavlu “Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung” 19f.). Implicit in this positive evaluation of the press is the assumption that the information disseminated in newspapers was reasonably accurate or truthful—an assumption that is brought out in the first definition of “Zeitungen” as “Gedruckte Erzählungen” about “*wahrhaftig oder vermeintlich vorgangenen Dinge*” (Straßner *Zeitung* 1, m.e.).

This early view of the press as primarily “Nutzen” continues to find expression in more contemporary commentary on the press, particularly in publications written by or for those working within the industry. Thus, for example, German media handbooks often describe the liberal-democratic

relationship [...] and the fluctuations of the market.” In such a system individuals are indeed “entirely at the mercy of totalitarian ideologies and propaganda [...] [and] influence by the mass media (comprising, in this period, the press, cinema and radio)”. Although “an understandable response to the economics and politics of the 1930s” it was no longer a valid one (ibid.). See also Fiske’s *Reading the popular* and *Understanding Popular Culture*.

¹³ Weise was Professor of “Eloquenz, Politik und Poesie” at the “Gymnasium zu Weißenfels”, and his publication is considered to have inspired the first academic dissertation on “das Zeitungswesen” at a German university (Kurth and Pavlu “Die ältesten Schriften für und wider die Zeitung” 22).

press of post-war Germany as an indispensable element of modern society:

Die Presse erfüllt in einem pluralistischen System wie dem der Bundesrepublik eine zentrale Aufgabe. Sie ist ein unverzichtbares Instrument, um unabhängig von staatlichen Einflüssen Öffentlichkeit über alle bedeutenden Vorgänge in Politik, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur herzustellen. (Pürer and Raabe 260)¹⁴

According to this view, the press by and large performs a vital public service in liberal democratic societies by acting as a benevolent watchdog that monitors and reports on political or administrative misdeeds:

Eine weitere im demokratischen Gemeinwesen wichtige Funktion erfüllt die Zeitung als Kontrollorgan, indem sie das gesetz- und rechtmäßige Handeln von Regierung, Parlament, Verwaltung, Rechtsprechung und von Institutionen im öffentlichen Raum überwacht. Sie nimmt damit—wie es in den meisten Landespressegesetzen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland heißt—eine „öffentliche Funktion“ wahr, „indem sie in Angelegenheiten von öffentlichem Interesse Nachrichten beschafft und verbreitet, Stellung nimmt, Kritik übt oder auf andere Weise an der Meinungsbildung mitwirkt“, wie es in einigen Landespressegesetzen heißt. (Brand and Schulze 14)¹⁵

Those who support the view of the “Presse als Nutzen” also believe that the press performs an essential public service in explaining and clarifying an increasingly complex world to its readers: “In der modernen Industriegesellschaft trägt die Zeitung dazu bei, die immer undurchsichtiger und komplizierter werdenden Vorgänge der Umwelt zu durchleuchten und dem Leser den Zugang zu ihnen zu eröffnen.” (ibid.)

2.2.3 The importance of journalism as a medium

Regardless of the actual position taken by individual commentators in relation to whether the press is the source of useful and true information, or the provider of fiction, lies and personal opinions, what does emerge clearly from the often vehement discussion on both sides of the debate, even in the earliest days of media critique, is an acknowledgement of the power of the press: “Denn selbst diejenigen, die sie bekämpften, erkannten damit an, daß es sich um ein Mittel von größter politischer und kultureller Wirkungskraft handelte.” (Kurth and Pavlu 16)¹⁶ This represents a view that has been expressed not just in relation to the press but the journalistic media as a whole. As a contemporary media sociologist puts it: “[J]ournalism is an important element in the cultural life of contemporary capitalist societies [...]. Journalism matters economically and sociologically.” (McNair 34) The news media, in particular, enjoy a special status because they are held to be an important source of information about people, events and issues of which we have no direct experience or knowledge: “The news is important to us because it purports to represent ‘the world out there’; its realities. We need only pause for a moment to assess just how much of our knowledge of the world is *mediated* by the

¹⁴ Similarly, Brand and Schulze state: “Die Zeitung ist, neben der Zeitschrift und neben Hörfunk und Fernsehen, ein unentbehrliches Mittel der Verständigung (Kommunikation) in der Gesellschaft: ein Mittel der Information, der Meinungsbildung und der Unterhaltung. [...] Im freiheitlich verfaßten Staatswesen will die Zeitung primär Öffentlichkeit herstellen, ein Forum bieten, ohne das der moderne demokratische Rechtsstaat mit seinen pluralistischen Interessenvertretungen nicht funktionsfähig wäre.” (14) See also Pürer and Raabe (306ff.) and Straßner (20ff.).

¹⁵ See also Pürer and Raabe (260f.) and Straßner (20ff.).

¹⁶ See also McNair (*vii*) and Watson (207, 216).

newspapers, radio and TV.” (Watson 4f., emphasis a.p.o.)

2.2.4 Journalism’s claims to truth

Furthermore, despite the contentions of those like Lichtenberg, who accuse the press of purveying falsehoods, and those like Adorno and Horkheimer, who see the mass media, including the press, as a form of “Massenbetrug”, journalism has, on the whole, long enjoyed a privileged status in society as “a uniquely truthful source of knowledge” (McNair 39). At the heart of this special status is journalism’s general claim that it presents factual (and hence true and meaningful) information about our world and events in it: “[J]ournalism often lays claim to the qualities of truthfulness and accuracy [...]. Journalism asks to be accepted as, at the very least, an *approximation* to truth, and certainly close enough to the truth to be worthy of our trust in its integrity” (4).¹⁷ This special status that journalism enjoys, stemming from its claims to truth, ensures that the reading public generally accepts its depiction and interpretation of the world unless that depiction contradicts personal experience or knowledge (Watson 159).

2.3 Bachmann on the journalistic media

Having considered the broad parameters of the “Zeitungsdebatte” over almost four centuries, I will now examine the views that Bachmann expressed about journalism and the mass media in forums external to her literary work. The following analysis takes as its starting point, the assumption that the views Bachmann expressed in her theoretical writings (that is, in her lectures and essays) about the nature and role of literature are important in shedding light on the execution of Bachmann’s literary work. This view is generally accepted within Bachmann scholarship where, for example, Pichl, refers to the “grundsätzliche[...] Momente in Ingeborg Bachmanns Konzept von der dichterischen Bewältigung der Wirklichkeit, aus denen die konkrete künstlerische Durchführung erst verständlich wird” (“Probleme und Aufgaben” 378), and Bartsch observes that “[d]ie poetologischen Äußerungen von Ingeborg Bachmann [...] für jede Untersuchung eines ihrer Werke gewissermaßen als hermeneutische Basis dienen [können]” (“Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachmann” 311).

A survey of those theoretical writings, however, reveals few direct references to journalism. Bachmann’s speeches and interview statements, too, mention the journalistic and other mass media on only a handful of occasions. These few references in her speeches and interviews are, however, consistent with (and even complement) the views expressed in her theoretical pronouncements. A composite analysis of all of these sources therefore provides a useful theoretical and personal context

¹⁷ Because journalism claims to provide a reasonably accurate and objective reflection of contemporary reality, the news has often been portrayed (primarily by journalists themselves!) as “the first draft of history” (Pilger *xiii*). Indeed, its relationship to the truth has been compared with that of history and contrasted to fiction: “We expect histories and news items to be ‘true’, in the pedestrian sense of ‘corresponding to the state of the world’, whereas we are content for fiction to be true, if at all, only in the much weaker sense of being ‘true to life’” (Barnes 124). See also Conley (54) and Haybäck (18ff.).

for Bachmann's literary critique of the journalistic media.

2.3.1 Journalism as "Phrasen" and "Kundgebung von Meinung"

One of Bachmann's most explicit and significant references to journalism can be found in her 1971 radio interview with Ekkehart Rudolph. In this interview Bachmann's focus is on the role of "Literatur",¹⁸ but in making a point about the unique way in which literature uses language, Bachmann uses journalism as a contrast to literature: "Ich meine, *der Sprache bedient sich vielleicht der Journalismus oder jemand, der bestimmte Ansichten zu verlautbaren hat. Ein Schriftsteller kann sich der Sprache überhaupt nicht bedienen.*" (*GuI* 83, m.e.) This interview statement echoes the view that Bachmann expressed in her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen"¹⁹ more than 10 years earlier when she contended that writers distinguish themselves from journalists by not using language simply as an "unerschöpfliche[n] Materialvorrat" (*W* 4: 192); instead, writers have a highly problematical relationship to language—unlike journalists writers cannot take language at face value and so, frequently find the meaning of words to be elusive and problematical; in this way writers often find themselves effectively at the mercy of language rather than the other way around. (*GuI* 83f.)²⁰

Bachmann sets up a similar opposition between "Journalismus" and "Schriftsteller" implicitly later in the same interview when elaborating on the misuse of language in everyday life.

Daß man ein Wort anders ansieht; schon ein einzelnes Wort—je näher man hinsieht, von um so weiter her schaut es zurück—ist doch schon mit sehr vielen Rätseln beladen; *da kann ein Schriftsteller sich nicht der vorgefundenen Sprache, also der Phrasen, bedienen, sondern er muß sie zerschreiben. Und die Sprache, die wir sprechen und fast alle sprechen, ist eine Sprache aus Phrasen.* (*GuI* 84, m.e.)

Bachmann's explicit attack on the degeneration of language into "Phrasen" is very much in the spirit of her renowned fellow Austrian (and acerbic villifier of the Viennese press), Karl Kraus, and represents a criticism that recurs quite frequently in her public statements, particularly in connection with the press.²¹ In her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen", Bachmann describes "Phrasen" as a subset of language that has become "abgenutzt": they are like a "Gebrauchswort, das alles, was es bezeichnen soll von Fall zu Fall, degradiert" (*W* 4: 219; punctuation a.p.o.)—or to use a description from Bachmann's story "Ein

¹⁸ Here Bachmann is referring to "Literatur" in the sense of "Belletristik", or as she puts it—"was für mich wirklich geschrieben ist" (*GuI* 84)—not "Massenliteratur" for the "Literaturindustrie" or the exploitative publications of someone like the ruthless Toni Marek in *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* (as discussed in Chapter 7 of this study). Instead, Bachmann has in mind the work of writers such as Joyce, Proust, Kafka and Musil, to whom she refers in her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen" (*W* 1: 191f.)—writers whose work reflects the literary and moral ideals that she elaborates in those lectures.

¹⁹ Bachmann presented these "Frankfurter Vorlesungen" in the winter semester of 1959/1960 (*W* 4: 421).

²⁰ Bachmann subsequently quotes Nestroy to describe the paradoxical nature of this relationship: "»Ich hab' einen Gefangenen gemacht, und der läßt mich nicht mehr los.«" (*GuI* 84)

²¹ Dericum points out that Bachmann's deep scorn for "Phrasen" was also shared by her one-time partner, Max Frisch, who, in his 1958 Büchner Prize acceptance speech, said: "Wir können das Arsenal der Waffen nicht aus der Welt schreiben, aber wir können *das Arsenal der Phrasen, die man hüben und drüben zur Kriegsführung braucht*, durcheinanderbringen, je klarer wir als Schriftsteller werden, je konkreter nämlich, je absichtsloser in jener bedingungslosen Aufrichtigkeit gegenüber dem Lebendigen, die aus dem Talent erst den Künstler macht." (qtd in Dericum 118)

Schritt nach Gomorrha”, they are “Wort[e] ohne Muskel, [...] nichtsnützig[e] klein[e] Wort[e]” (W 2: 198). For Bachmann, “Phrasen” are the enemy of literature: “[E]rst wenn die Phrasen einer Zeit verschwinden, finden wir die Sprache für eine Zeit und wird Darstellung möglich” (W 4: 185). As this quote makes clear, Bachmann sees the aim and practice of writing as “Darstellung”. It is also about “Ausdruck”, and the enemy of both “Darstellung” and “Ausdruck” is not just “die Phrase”, but the replication of mere opinion as well:

Jedes Wort, ob es nun »Demokratie« oder »Wirtschaft« oder »kapitalistisch« oder »sozialistisch« heißt, muß [der Schriftsteller] in seinem Werk vermeiden, um *darstellen* zu können. Er kann sie jemand in den Mund legen, aber er selbst kann nicht so schreiben. [...] Die Schriftsteller werden wirklich erst abdanken müssen, wenn sie nur noch *die Phrasen* im Mund haben, die die anderen auch haben. ... Daß ich zwar das alles wissen muß, aber daß ich es *ausdrücken* muß. Und Ausdruck ist etwas anderes, das ist eben nicht *die Kundgebung von Meinung*. (Gul 91, m.e.)

Although Bachmann does not directly associate journalism with “Phrasen” and “Kundgebung von Meinung” at this point of the interview, she does make an explicit connection between “Ansicht”, “Meinung”, “Phrasen” and “Zeitung” soon afterwards when answering a question about her “Haltung zu der Gesellschaft”. In her response, Bachmann makes her disapproval of the press quite apparent in the way she equates the language and content of the press with the discourse of the “Wirtshaustisch”—a scene of parochial, and not necessarily sober or deeply considered public discussion.²²

Das könnte wahrscheinlich ein Politiker sehr gut. [...] Ein Kulturkritiker könnte das ganz ausgezeichnet in wenigen Worten sagen; denn er hat ja sein Vokabular. Ich habe keines dafür. Ich habe keine Ansichten, *denn in der Ansicht, in der Meinung—ob sie nun durch die Zeitung kommt oder ob sie an einem Wirtshaustisch von sich gegeben wird—regiert die Phrase, und zwar unweigerlich die Phrase*. Ein Schriftsteller hat keine »Worte zu machen«; das heißt, er hat *keine Phrasen* zu verwenden. (Gul 91, m.e.)

One of Bachmann’s key objections to the use of “Phrasen” and “Kundgebung von Meinung” is her conviction that they represent a form of laziness. As she observes in the interview with Rudolph: “Es wäre für mich das Leichteste, und das Leichte muß man sich verbieten.” (Gul 91) For Bachmann, then, the literary process requires writers to confront challenges and take on risk, or, as she puts it when interviewed by Kuno Raeber: “Schreiben ohne Risiko—das ist ein Versicherungsabschluß mit einer Literatur, die nicht auszahlt.” (Gul 40) An essential element of this need to take on risk and challenges is, in Bachmann’s eyes, the destruction of “Phrasen”: “Ein Schriftsteller hat die Phrasen zu vernichten, und wenn es Werke aus unserer Zeit geben sollte, die standhalten, dann werden es einige ohne Phrasen sein.” (W 4: 296f.) To create such works of literature that do away with “Phrasen”, writers need to have the courage to be creative with language. While this creativity may sometimes make the works of such writers difficult to understand or puzzling, Bachmann believes that “Phrasen” and the other kinds of unthinking, pre-fabricated uses of language that we encounter outside of good literature are much more nonsensical: “So rätselhaft ist das gar nicht; mir kommt es oft sehr viel rätselhafter vor, *was zusammengeredet wird aus diesen vorfabrizierten Sätzen*.” (Gul 83f., m.e.)

²² The concept of “Wirtshaustisch” is discussed in my analysis of “Unter Mördern und Irren” in Chapter 6.

2.3.2 The mass media and “Erfahrungsschwund”

Bachmann makes no other explicit references to journalism’s preponderance for “Phrasen” and “Kundgebung von Meinung” in her lectures or interview responses, but in a 1973 interview with Karol Sauerland²³ Bachmann comments on the mass media (which, by definition, includes the journalistic media).

Ich würde Benjamin recht geben, denn es ist dieser Erfahrungsschwund, der immer mehr auftritt, durch die Entwicklung der Massenmedien, durch das Leben aus zweiter Hand. [...] Es ist natürlich der verzweifeltste Versuch bei diesem Erfahrungsschwund, den Benjamin vorausgesehen hat, den er aber gar nicht so erlebt hat, die Menschen eben dahin zu bekommen, daß sie wieder merken, wo denn wirklich ihre Probleme sind, nicht die, die man ihnen aufschwätzt. (*GuI* 140)

Implicit in this lament about “Erfahrungsschwund” is the belief that “Erfahrung” was something that people could once readily enjoy, but that is now an increasingly rare phenomenon because the mass media provide us with second-hand substitutes for authentic, personally-lived experience—with parallel universes in which we are passive observers instead of active participants. Further, in these “unreal” *ersatz*-worlds created by the mass media, we are distracted from the central issues of life by messages that promote *ersatz*-problems, or, as Bachmann describes them in another interview statement, “Pseudoproblem[e]” (*GuI* 66f.).

As Bachmann observed in the first of her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, the mass media not only promote pseudo-problems but also create pseudo-needs:²⁴ “[D]ie Leute brauchen heute Kino und Illustrierte wie Schlagsahne [...]” (*W 4*: 197)²⁵ In other words, the mass media have brainwashed us into thinking that we need the stimulation and distraction of cinema and glossy magazines—both supreme examples of “das Leben aus zweiter Hand”. And yet, in the same way that “Schlagsahne” is not essential for our physical nourishment (indeed, it is deleterious in its greasy excess), so too the offerings of the mass media, such as Hollywood films and popular magazines, are both superfluous and harmful to our intellect and spirit. Bachmann’s use of the word “brauchen” in this context also seems to suggest that the mass media promote addiction, especially when we read this statement in conjunction with her earlier observation about the literary industry’s increasing reliance on “ein wenig Schock”, which, though temporarily stimulating, leads to a long-term “Gewöhnung [...], eine Abstumpfung oder eine Sucht, wie nach einer Droge” (*W 4*: 197).²⁶

²³ This interview, which took place in May, was one of her last: Bachmann died on 17 October that year.

²⁴ Although Bachmann does not explicitly make the connection between the mass media’s successful promotion of pseudo-problems via its creation of pseudo-needs in her extra-literary commentary, she does so in her literary portrayal of the journalistic media, for example, in “Herbstmanöver” (see Chapter 4).

²⁵ Bachmann’s predilection for imagery relating to food (or the sense of taste) in connection with “Erkenntnis” is also shown in her description of Günter Eich’s poems as “nicht genießbar, aber erkenntnishaltig” (*W 4*: 215) and her image of poetry as “rauchende Worte, verbrannte, mit bösem Geschmack” in the fragmentary piece “Das Gedicht an den Leser” (*W 4*: 307).

²⁶ For Bachmann both the state of addiction and that of intoxication are negative, as we see from her praise for the restraint and sobriety of Celan’s “Sprachgitter”: “Die Metaphern sind völlig verschwunden, die Worte haben jede Verkleidung, Verhüllung abgelegt, kein Wort fliegt mehr einem anderen zu, berauscht ein anderes.” (*W 4*: 216, m.e.)

By contrast to the whipped cream of the mass media (and here Bachmann extends the gastronomic metaphor), literature constitutes “the bread of life”—the coarser and more rough-grained the bread, the better: “»Das Volk braucht Poesie wie das Brot« [...] Dieses Brot müßte zwischen den Zähnen knirschen und den Hunger wiedererwecken, ehe es ihn stillt. Und diese Poesie wird scharf von Erkenntnis und bitter von Sehnsucht sein müssen, um an den Schlaf der Menschen rühren zu können.” (*W 4*: 197)²⁷ As Bachmann observes, this rude awakening is exactly what we need to counteract our natural tendency to deny or avoid things that we find unpleasant or frightening: “Wir schlafen ja, sind Schläfer, aus Furcht, uns und unsere Welt wahrnehmen zu müssen.” (*W 4*: 198)²⁸ This tendency is reinforced by the mass media whose addictive strategies promote a widespread, excess-induced “phantastische[...] Lethargie” (*W 4*: 197). That is why, even though she sees it as the most difficult and frustrating of undertakings—“der verzweifeltste Versuch” (*GuI 140*)—Bachmann believes it to be the first and foremost duty of writers to counteract this “geschichtliche Erfahrungslosigkeit” (Höller *Das Werk* 86) for which the mass media are primarily responsible: “[W]enn man überhaupt fragt, welche Aufgaben ein Schriftsteller hat—das sind meistens sehr rhetorische Fragen –, dann würde ich immer sagen, die Menschen dorthin zu bringen oder mitzureißen, in die Erfahrungen, die die Schriftsteller machen und die ihnen durch die gefährliche Entwicklungen dieser modernen Welt weggenommen werden.” (*GuI 140*)²⁹

2.3.3 Journalism as the contrary of literature

What emerges from the few references to journalism or the mass media in Bachmann’s extra-literary commentary, then, is scorn for journalism’s “Phrasen” and “Ansichten”, and despair over the mass media’s role in depleting people’s lives of genuine and first-hand experience. What also emerges less explicitly but nevertheless clearly from Bachmann’s limited comments is her view of literature as a

²⁷ Bartsch points out that Bachmann has here turned around Kandaules’ call to Gyges, “Nur rühre nimmer an den Schlaf der Welt” in Hebbel’s *Gyges und sein Ring* (“Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 94). Bartsch also notes that the call to “Wachsamkeit” is not only a prominent feature of Bachmann’s lyric poetry, but is also found in the writings of Bachmann’s contemporaries such as Aichinger and Eich, as well as Celan (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 23f.). The symbolic connection between bitterness and wakefulness (and the importance of this connection) is highlighted in Bachmann’s second lecture in her quote from Celan’s poem, “Zähle die Mandeln”: “zähle mich zu den Mandeln, zähl mich dazu ... was bitter war und dich wachhielt.” (*W 4*: 215). Weigel notes that Bachmann has here inverted Celan’s lines, which end “Mache mich bitter. / Zähle mich zu den Mandeln” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 419). According to Koschel, “Zähle die Mandeln” was one of the 22 poems that Celan dedicated to Bachmann by writing the abbreviation f.D. (für Dich) in the copy of “Mohn and Gedächtnis” that he gave to Bachmann (“»Malina ist eine einzige Anspielung auf Gedichte«” 17, 22). For more on the close literary and personal relationship between Bachmann and Celan, see Böschenstein and Weigel.

²⁸ For a discussion of the negative connotations of “Schlaf” for Bachmann and hence the positive connotations of “schlaflos”, see Bartsch (“Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 94), who draws attention to the positive context of Bachmann’s reference to the “schlaflos Ausgesetzten” in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (*W 4*: 203).

²⁹ O’Regan suggests that Bachmann’s argument seems to “overlook the fact that the original experience of the author is only second-hand experience for the reader passed on through the medium of writing” (24). A close reading of Bachmann’s “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, where she elaborates on how great literature engenders a deep response in the reader, shows that Bachmann saw literature as doing more than merely transmitting the experience of the author.

contrary—or “Gegenbild”³⁰—to journalism. In other words, in Bachmann’s eyes, the attributes of journalism are the very opposite of the attributes of literature, and conversely, those qualities that she admires and attests to in literature are the very qualities she sees lacking in journalism. Thus, even though Bachmann makes few references to journalism or the mass media in her public statements, we can extrapolate her views on journalism from her numerous comments on literature in her lectures, speeches and interviews. The following analysis of Bachmann’s views on the qualities and attributes of good literature and the centrality of “Erfahrung” aims to elucidate the areas in which Bachmann might see the journalistic media as deficient.

2.3.4 Bachmann’s views on literature and “Erfahrung”

The term “Erfahrung”, which was central to Bachmann’s observation about the mass media in the Sauerland interview, is one that recurs time and time again in Bachmann’s theoretical writings and extra-literary statements on the role of literature, so much so, that Höller see Bachmann as pursuing a “literarisch[e] Erfahrungspolitik” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 110). In her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, for example, Bachmann describes “Erfahrung” as “die einzige Lehrmeisterin” (*W 4*: 184) and contrasts it to “Wissen, das durch so viele Hände geht, gebraucht und mißbraucht oft, das sich oft verbraucht und leer läuft, von keiner Erfahrung erfrischt” (*W 4*: 184).³¹ When using the term “Erfahrung” in an interview with Veit Mölter, Bachmann conceded that it was a rather inadequate word, but nevertheless the *sine qua non* of writing: “Was sich anhäuft an Gesehenem, Erlebtem, eben das, was man mit dem hilflosen Wort »Erfahrung« bezeichnet, das macht einen eines Tages fähig, Prosa zu schreiben.” (*Gul* 78). What Bachmann has in mind, however, is not “das ungebrochene Aufzeichnen von ›Selbsterlebtem‹” (Bannasch “Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa” 173) but “ästhetisch[e] Bewältigung eigener Erfahrung” (*TP I*: 565).

“Leiden” and “Schmerz” as preconditions for “Wahrheit”

Of all the experiences that literature can transmit, the most important is the experience of having our eyes opened to “Wahrheit”. As the following excerpt from her much quoted speech “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar” shows, the revelatory experience of “Wahrheit” is, according to Bachmann, inextricably associated with pain.

So kann es auch nicht die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers sein, *den Schmerz zu leugnen, seine Spuren zu verwischen, über ihn hinwegzutäuschen*. Er muß ihn, im Gegenteil, *wahrhaben* und noch einmal, damit wir sehen können, *wahrmachen*. Denn wir wollen alle sehend werden. Und jener geheime Schmerz macht uns erst für die Erfahrung empfindlich und insbesondere *für die der Wahrheit*. (*W 4*: 275, m.e.)

³⁰ Wahrig defines “Gegenbild” as “zu einem Bild den Gegensatz darstellendes Bild, Gegenstück”. Bachmann herself uses the term in her story “Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha” (*W 2*: 212). Bartsch also uses this term several times in relation to Bachmann’s work (for example, in “Geschichtliche Erfahrungen” 446 and *Ingeborg Bachmann* 81, 106). He also uses the term “Gegenentwurf” in a similar context (63). Cf. Bannasch’s use of the term “Gegenmodell” (“Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa” 177), Hapkemeyer’s reference to “Gegenbereich” and “Gegenwelt” (*Früheste Prosa* 66f.) and Oelmann’s use of the term “Gegentext” (59).

³¹ Note the suggestion of staleness here which echoes Bachmann’s reference to “das Leben aus zweiter Hand” that she associates with the mass media in the Sauerland interview (*Gul* 140).

Here Bachmann's description of the experience of "Wahrheit" makes it clear that she is neither referring to the "Welt der empirischen Tatsachen" (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 23) nor to "die dürre, formelhafte, »ewige« Wahrheit der Logik" (W 4: 21) in philosophy, which, for all its "Leidenschaft nach der ganzen Wahrheit", can make no contribution "zur Lösung unserer Lebensprobleme" (W 4: 21). Instead she has in mind an intensely personal and painful form of insight and awareness—a sudden, epiphany-like revelation that comes to us in a state that she describes as "diesen Zustand [...], den hellen, wehen, in dem der Schmerz fruchtbar wird" (W 4: 275)—a state in which we can "begreifen, was wir doch nicht sehen können" (ibid.).³² For Bachmann, the role of art in general (and literature in particular) is to enlighten us: "[D]as sollte die Kunst zuwege bringen: daß uns, in diesem Sinne, die Augen aufgehen" (W 4: 275).³³

As a literary master who succeeds in translating extraordinary depths of human pain into the "Wahrheit" of "Erkenntnis", Bachmann singles out Proust in her 1958 radio essay, "Die Welt Marcel Prousts—Einblicke in ein Pandamonium". In Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps perdu* Bachmann sees not only "ein hartes, tragisches und revolutionäres Buch" (W 4: 157) and a "Vision menschlichen Elends und Untergangs", but also an unerring commitment to the truth: "Proust steht der Sinn [...] nach der Wahrheit und nach nichts als der Wahrheit" (W 4: 159).³⁴ Here as in "Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar", then, Bachmann is expounding an 'epistemology of pain', according to which meaningful knowledge about ourselves and our world is attained via the sublimation of pain. Pain is therefore a positive experience: without it there is no "neue Fassungskraft" (W 4: 192).³⁵ This is a point that Bachmann constantly comes back to: "Immer wieder streicht Bachmann [...] Schmerzerfahrung als Bedingung für Erkenntnis hervor, aber auch als Voraussetzung künstlerischer Tätigkeit, deren Funktion es ist, »sehend« [...] zu machen." (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 23)³⁶

³² As Bartsch points out, Bachmann's position is "[eine] keineswegs originelle, aber auch, wenn man etwa an Gottfried Benns esoterische Haltung denkt, durchaus nicht selbstverständliche Auffassung von der Funktion der Kunst dargelegt" ("Die frühe Dunkelhaft" 34).

³³ According to Höller, Bachmann's use of literary examples constitutes an attempt to set in train in her own reading or listening audience the very process that she describes in her essays and speeches: "Durch ein Denken in literarischen Konstellationen möchte [Bachmann] *Erfahrung* und *Mitdenken* bei den Zuhörern *erwecken*." (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 108, emphasis a.p.o.)

³⁴ In Proust Bachmann sees a particular genius for portraying the interplay of social forces, and argues that his masterpiece *À la Recherche du Temps perdu* does not constitute a socially-isolated, purely aesthetic work (as claimed by some) but rather represents the quintessential depiction of the human condition, that is, the sum of human "Erfahrung" (W 4: 159).

³⁵ According to Schneider this passage encapsulates "Bachmanns Theorie des Erkenntnischocks" (*Kompositionsmethode* 280): her belief that pain, discomfort and unhappiness are prerequisites for insight and awareness, and thus for metaphorically 'staying awake'.

³⁶ Bachmann constantly refers to the importance of "Leiderfahrung" in her extra-literary comments (see also W 4: 197, 208 and *Gul* 139). Bachmann's emphasis on the role of pain and suffering led Hamm to describe her as an artist who exemplified suffering and as someone who promoted a "Kult des Leidens—des Leidens als dem höchsten Zeichen der Ernsthaftigkeit und Auserwähltheit" ("Der Künstler als Märtyrer" 205). Many other scholars have pointed out the central importance of the awareness and experience of pain in Bachmann's work. For example, Gunhild Schneider refers to Bachmann's "fast nicht lebbare Wahrnehmung des Schmerzes, der Zerstörung, die als Leitfaden ihre ganzes Werk durchzieht" (191).

The primary role of literature is therefore not to comfort us or to seduce our attention away from this pain but to transmit this pain and to celebrate it. Indeed, the mission of literature should be to make us deeply unhappy and to cause us the deepest pain, as Bachmann points out in the second of her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, where she quotes Kafka to support her argument about the centrality of the experience of pain.

»Wenn das Buch, das wir lesen, uns nicht mit einem Faustschlag auf den Schädel weckt, wozu lesen wir dann das Buch? Damit es uns glücklich macht ...? Mein Gott, glücklich wären wir eben auch, wenn wir keine Bücher hätten, und solche Bücher, die uns glücklich machen, können wir zur Not selber schreiben ... Ein Buch muß die Axt sein für das gefrorene Meer in uns. Das glaube ich.« (W 4: 210f.)

As an example of such literature, Bachmann cites Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s poem “Verteidigung der Wölfe gegen die Lämmer”:

Und das Gedicht selbst? Was bewirkt es? Ist es nicht vielleicht so, daß, weil uns so ein Gedicht unglücklich macht [...], und weil es neue Dichter gibt, die uns unglücklich machen können, [es] auch in uns einen Ruck gibt, einen erkenntnishaften, unter dem wir den statthabenden nachvollziehen. (W 4: 210)
³⁷

This pain that great writers can impart is in turn part of a veritable cycle of pain, for great literature can only convey the experience of pain (and thereby act as a catalyst for insight) when writers have themselves gone through the mill of suffering: “Ohne die Leiden, selbst die erniedrigendsten, wären wir unmenschlich in unserer Selbstgerechtigkeit, und wir wären geistlos, weil nur der Schmerz uns instand setzt, andere zu verstehen und zu erkennen, zu unterscheiden und Kunst zu machen.” (W 4: 166f.) As Bartsch observes: “Wachen und wahrnehmen ist schmerzvoll, aber der der Wahrheit verpflichtete Dichter hat es auf sich zu nehmen [...]” (“Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 94f.) For Bachmann, Sylvia Plath represents a prime example of just such a writer who embraced pain and suffering:

Es passiert sehr wenig Neues in der Literatur, ich glaube nicht, daß Sylvia Plath etwas Neues ist, sie hat weder die englische Sprache zertrümmert noch zum Auferstehen gebracht, noch etwas geleistet, was ihre Kritiker zu besonders hochtrabenden Einfällen veranlassen könnte. Aber wie die Schriftsteller, die in der Hölle waren, wird sie unter den ersten sein, weil sie unter den letzten war. (W 4: 359)

Höller underscores this aspect of Bachmann when he observes: “Vor allem kommt sie immer wieder auf die *Erfahrung* als Voraussetzung des Schreibens zu sprechen, auf die *Leiderfahrungen* zumal.” (Ingeborg Bachmann 107, emphasis a.p.o.)

The implication from Bachmann’s statements about the role of literature as a catalyst and promoter of pain and unhappiness, and as a doorway to “Wahrheit” and “neue Fassungskraft” must therefore be, that whatever denies or suppresses pain and discomfort is thereby suppressing the “Wahrheit” of personal insight and awareness. The question then, in analysing Bachmann’s portrayal of journalism as an instance of the mass media, must be: to what extent does Bachmann portray journalism as a medium that not only fails to celebrate, but actively suppresses or denies pain and discomfort? A corollary of Bachmann’s views on “Wahrheit”, “Erfahrung” and “Leiden” would appear

³⁷ Bachmann believed that our capacity to be shattered by such literary experiences diminished with age, and thus it was important to expose oneself to literature, “eh’ man sich definitiv auf die Gesellschaft einläßt und immer unstörbarer wird durch die Aufforderungen, die Bücher auch sind, durch die Einsprüche, die Bücher auch einlegen” (Gul 42, m.e.).

to be that, where there has been no personal suffering, there is also no capacity to convey that suffering and hence there can be no “neue Fassungskraft” or “Wahrheit”.

The centrality of personal experience

In her lectures and interview statements, Bachmann also makes it clear that another vital criterion for the fostering of insight and truth is the transmission of *authentic* experience; that is, the experience communicated via literature must be born of a writer’s own personal encounter with suffering: “[E]h’ man sich nicht die Hand verbrannt hat, kann man nicht darüber schreiben” (*GuI* 71).³⁸ Authentic experience is not something that can be fabricated or conjured up out of thin air: “[E]ine neue Erfahrung wird *gemacht* und nicht aus der Luft geholt. Aus der Luft oder bei den anderen holen sie sich nur diejenigen, die selber keine Erfahrung gemacht haben.” (*W* 4: 190) Time and time again, Bachmann emphasises the centrality of *personal* suffering in connection with experience that enables literature to convey truths that are personal and yet of universal relevance. It is only authenticity of expression that can transform an account of personal suffering into one of universal relevance, as exemplified in the work of Céline: “Und Céline krakeelt und polemisiert und wütet in seinem Argôt, bis seine Miseregeschichten, die sonst niemanden angingen, in diesem Sprachstrom die Misere aller Armen repräsentieren.” (*W* 4: 222)

Given the value Bachmann attributes to the “personally experienced” nature of the pain that needs to be transmitted via literature, we might deduce that her objection to journalism, and to the mass media in general, would be that much of the content conveyed in journalism and the mass media is not experienced directly, but at best, second-hand and at worst, many times removed from the original experience. As is amply evident from the analysis of Bachmann’s literary work later in this study, stories about pain and suffering abound in press and radio reports on murder, death, war, major accidents and natural catastrophes.³⁹ The problem is, however, that journalistic content is often written or rewritten by those who have not themselves had that experience, who have not met or spoken to people involved or affected by a given event, and may never have been in the same place, and who do not speak the same language. Such content would therefore fail Bachmann’s criterion of personal, direct—and thus authentic—experience.

The centrality of innovation

Authenticity in itself though, while a necessary condition, is not a sufficient condition for the transmission of the experience of truth in Bachmann’s eyes. Thus she insists that it is not enough for us to keep mining the same “Erfahrungen, die schon gemacht worden sind, von den großen Dichtern, vor

³⁸ This is clearly one of Bachmann’s favourite quotes. In her interview with Dieter Zilligen she says: “Ich zitiere nicht Flaubert [...] ich verwende nur Sätze, die ich gern selbst geschrieben hätte. [Zum Beispiel,] »Mit meiner verbrannten Hand schreibe ich über die Natur des Feuers.«” (*GuI* 71) This quote also occurs in *Malina* (*TP* 3.1: 390) in the Mühlbauer scene—a key passage for Bachmann’s critique of journalism (see Chapter 7 of this study).

³⁹ See my analysis of “Herbstmanöver” in Chapter 4.

uns” (*GuI* 139). Accordingly Bachmann warns, “daß man die alten Bilder, wie sie etwa Mörike verwendet hat oder Goethe, nicht mehr verwenden kann, nicht mehr verwenden darf, weil sie sich in unserem Mund unwahr ausnehmen würden” (*GuI* 18), and insists: “Bei der blinden Übernahme dieser seinerzeitigen Wirklichkeitsbestimmungen, dieser gestern neu gewesenen Denkformen, kann es nur zu einem Abklatsch und einer schwächeren Wiederholung der großen Werke kommen.” (*W* 4: 191) While true for their time, then, the works of writers from past generations cannot do justice to our own “Bewußtseinslage” and the very different world that we occupy (*GuI* 18f.).⁴⁰ As she explains it in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen: “Das Denken, der Zeit verhaftet, verfällt auch wieder der Zeit. Aber weil es verfällt, eben deshalb muß unser Denken neu sein, wenn es echt sein und etwas bewirken will.” (*W* 4: 195) It is therefore up to each new generation to explore new experiences that will lead to new ways of thinking, which will in turn lead to breakthroughs in literature.

Bachmann makes it clear, however, that she considers breakthroughs and advances in literature to be unrelated to technological innovation:

Es gibt in der Kunst keinen Fortschritt in der Horizontale, sondern nur das immer neue Aufreißen einer Vertikale. Nur die Mittel und Techniken in der Kunst machen den Eindruck, als handelte es sich um Fortschritt. Was aber in der Tat möglich ist, ist Veränderung. Und die verändernde Wirkung, die von neuen Werken ausgeht, erzieht uns zu neuer Wahrnehmung, neuem Gefühl, neuem Bewußtsein. (*W* 4: 195)

Similarly, new consciousness and new insights have nothing to do with linguistic experimentation and virtuosity: “Stilprobleme, Formales, das *Wie* kamen für Ingeborg Bachmann [...] immer erst in zweiter Linie” (Hamm “Der Künstler als Märtyrer” 205). Instead, meaningful advances in language and thinking can only result from a totally new way of looking at, and using, language—one that adheres to what should be the primary function of language, not “Schönheit” but “Veränderung”—“eine neue Gangart” and “neue Fassungskraft” (*W* 4: 193). Accordingly, “Revolution” and “Neulandgewinnung in der Literatur” can only be achieved “in der Folge eines neuen Denkens” (*W* 4: 212). Bachmann’s insistence on the importance of “das Neue” as a prerequisite for breakthroughs in literature and thought, and as precursors for the experience of “Wahrheit” therefore provides a theoretical context and framework for her attack on journalism’s preponderance for the tired, the old and the recycled in the form *inter alia* of “Phrasen” and “vorfabrizierten Sätzen”, as discussed in section 2.3.1. Here too then, we find another important criterion against which Bachmann would assess the journalistic media: to what extent do their products represent breakthroughs in language and thought?

The importance of moral foundations

According to Bachmann, innovation in literature and thought should not, however, take place in a moral vacuum; that is, they should not be undertaken as ends in themselves. Instead innovation must be firmly rooted in moral concerns:

⁴⁰ Cf. Bachmann’s statement in her 1971 interview with Dieter Zilligen: “[W]as meint man eigentlich damit, die ganze Gesellschaft beschreiben, die Bewußtseinslage in einer Zeit? Das heißt doch nicht, daß man die Sätze nachspricht, die diese Gesellschaft spricht, sondern sie muß sich anders zeigen. Und sie muß sich radikal anders zeigen, denn sonst wird man nie wissen, was unsere Zeit war” (*GuI* 71f.).

Mit einer neuen Sprache wird der Wirklichkeit immer dort begegnet, wo ein moralischer, erkenntnishafter Ruck geschieht, und nicht, wo man versucht, die Sprache an sich neu zu machen, als könnte die Sprache selber die Erkenntnis eintreiben und die Erfahrung kundtun, die man nie gehabt hat. (W 4: 192)⁴¹

That is why Bachmann insists that the greatest literary achievements have resulted not from stylistic or linguistic experiments, but where “*ein neues Denken wie ein Sprengstoff den Anstoß gab*” and where “*ein moralischer Trieb groß genug war, eine neue sittliche Möglichkeit zu begreifen und zu entwerfen*” (W 4: 191, m.e.). The centrality of moral concerns was highlighted by Bachmann in the second of her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” where she cites Karl Kraus in support of her stance:

[E]s gibt ein Wort, von dem Karl Kraus nie losgekommen ist und das zu unterstreichen man nicht müde werden möchte: »Alle Vorzüge einer Sprache wurzeln in der Moral.« Und damit ist nichts Landläufiges gemeint, nichts Liquidierbares, wie die bürgerliche oder die christliche Moral, nicht ein Kodex, sondern *jenes Vorfeld, in dem von jedem neuen Schriftsteller die Maßstäbe von Wahrheit und Lüge immer neu errichtet werden müssen.* (W 4: 206, m.e.)⁴²

Closely related to Bachmann’s stand on morality was her conviction that such moral breakthroughs could only be achieved where writers zealously and relentlessly challenged every given. Hence her insistence, “daß, wo diese immer neuen, keinem erspart bleibenden Wozu- und Warumfragen und alle die Fragen, die sich daran schließen [...], nicht erhoben werden, daß, wo kein Verdacht und somit keine wirkliche Problematik in dem Produzierenden selbst vorliegt, keine neue Dichtung entsteht.” (W 4: 190) It is hardly surprising then, that Bachmann considered suspicion to be the ultimate writer’s tool:

Ich weiß noch immer wenig über Gedichte, aber zu dem wenigen gehört der Verdacht. Verdächtige dich genug, verdächtige die Worte, die Sprache, das habe ich mir oft gesagt, vertiefe diesen Verdacht—damit eines Tages, vielleicht, etwas Neues entstehen kann—oder es soll nichts mehr entstehen. (Gul 25)

Here, too, Bachmann’s views on the centrality of morality provide a yardstick by which we might measure the journalistic media. Given the emphasis that Bachmann places on the role of “Verdacht” as a means of ensuring new ways of thinking and writing, we might consider to what extent Bachmann sees the journalistic media as deficient in their capacity to exercise suspicion—as a medium that all too often fails to probe and question sufficiently and all too often takes things at face value. And finally, given Bachmann’s reiteration of the importance of moral foundations and motivations, any analysis of Bachmann’s literary critique of the journalistic media must also consider the extent to which Bachmann portrays the journalistic media as morally deficient.

⁴¹ The importance of moral issues for Bachmann is apparent from her reiteration and elaboration of this position later in the same lecture: “Von einem notwendigen Antrieb, den ich vorläufig nicht anders als einen moralischen vor aller Moral zu identifizieren weiß, ist gesprochen worden, einer Stoßkraft für ein Denken, das zuerst noch nicht um Richtung besorgt ist, einem Denken, das Erkenntnis will und mit der Sprache und durch Sprache hindurch etwas erreichen will. Nennen wir es vorläufig: Realität. Ist diese Richtung einmal eingeschlagen, und es handelt sich nicht um eine philosophische, um keine literarische Richtung, so wird sie immer eine andere sein. Sie führte Hofmannsthal woanders hin als George. Dieses Richtungnehmen, dieses Geschleudertwerden in eine Bahn, in der gedeiht und verdirbt, in der von Worten und Dingen nichts Zufälliges mehr Zulaß hat. Wo dies zuträgt, meine ich, haben wir mehr Gewähr für die Authentizität einer dichterischen Erscheinung, als wenn wir ihre Werke absuchen nach glücklichen Merkmalen von Qualität.” (W 4: 192f.)

⁴² Clearly Fehl’s claim that Bachmann does not explicitly mention Kraus in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (83) is incorrect. Bachmann also refers to this quote from Kraus in a 1961 interview (Gul 25).

2.3.5 Literature as a cause for optimism

In her lectures, essays and speeches Bachmann makes it clear that the literary models she describes are very real—they are not presented as some unattainable ideal. Indeed, she names the writers who embody the ideals she expounds—Joyce, Proust, Kafka and Musil—and explains how their work represents literary rejuvenation, and how it is firmly rooted in new and personal experience. In her lectures, Bachmann also points to the wealth of new literary talent that is constantly emerging (*W 4*: 191f.), thereby indicating hope for the future of literature and thus hope for humanity. These statements by Bachmann, as well as her other pronouncements about the function of literature, constitute an essentially optimistic position.

The Frankfurt School view of the doomed individual, helpless in the face of the overwhelming might of the culture industry represents an essentially pessimistic position. While acknowledging the dangers posed by the mass media, Bachmann suggests that we are not helpless in the face of such dangers—thanks to the power of literature, which continues to give us “die Möglichkeit zu erfahren, wo wir stehen oder wo wir stehen sollten, wie es mit uns bestellt ist und wie es mit uns bestellt sein sollte” (*W 4*: 196). Implicit in Bachmann’s statements about literature and how it empower us, is a belief in personal control—a belief that represents the opposite of helplessness. The essential optimism of her position emerges clearly from the closing lines of the second “Frankfurter Vorlesung”:

Es ist dem möglich, der von sich sagt, daß er wirklichkeitswund und wirklichkeitsuchend mit seinem Dasein zur Sprache geht. Am Ende des großen Gedichtes »Engführung« tritt so ein Satz hervor, und mit ihm möchte ich schließen—und noch vorausschicken, damit Sie das Wort »Stern« auch recht verstehen, daß die Sterne für Paul Celan »Menschenwerke« sind, daß Menschenwerk gemeint ist.

.....Ein
Stern
hat wohl noch Licht.
Nichts,
nichts ist verloren. (*W 4*: 216)⁴³

Despite the alarm that she expresses about the depletion of experience in the wake of the increasing impact of the mass media on our lives, then, Bachmann’s statements about literature as a vehicle for “Erfahrung” and “Wahrheit” indicate that her position on the basic question, “Is there hope for humanity?” is a defiant “Yes”. Quoting René Char in the closing line of her lecture series, Bachmann declares: “»Auf den Zusammenbruch aller Beweise antwortet der Dichter mit einer Salve Zukunft.«” (*W 4*: 271)

In Chapters 4 to 8 of this dissertation I will demonstrate that Bachmann’s essentially optimistic perspective is not limited to her lectures, essays, speeches and interviews but also manifests itself in her literary work, particularly in connection with her critique of the journalistic media.

⁴³ Cf. Bachmann’s expression of faith in the abiding power of art in her poem “Lieder auf der Flucht”: “Doch das Lied überm Staub danach / wird uns übersteigen.” (*W 1*: 47)

Chapter 3. Journalistic intellectual affinities

3.1 Influence versus affinities

In addition to shedding light on a number of aspects of Bachmann's views on the journalistic and other mass media, the foregoing analysis of Bachmann's publicly expressed views also revealed affinities with two specific writers—Karl Kraus and Walter Benjamin—who were known for their critique of the press or mass media. I use the term “affinities” because Bachmann more often than not rejected the notion of “influence”, maintaining, for example, that it was not so much a matter of influence but of encountering, in other writers and thinkers, ideas that are already within oneself and that therefore invoke resonance. Thus in her 1971 interview with Ekkehart Rudolph, Bachmann insisted:

Der Zusammenhang, den Sie herstellen wollen zwischen dem, was ich schreibe oder damals auch schon geschrieben gehabt habe, und meinen Philosophiestudium, der besteht für mich doch nicht so sehr, oder nur insofern, als einige wenige Dinge, die sowieso schon in mir waren, dort auf eine ganz andere Weise gesagt worden sind. [...] Beeindruckt hat mich [Wittgensteins] Frage nach der Sprache—einer seiner Kernsätze etwa wie: »Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.«—Und sie haben mir einfach etwas bewußt gemacht, was wohl schon in mir gewesen sein muß. Aber ich habe nie beim Schreiben von Gedichten an Ludwig Wittgenstein gedacht, selbst nicht an Sätze dieser Art. (*Gul* 82f.)

While Bachmann shied away from the suggestion that philosophy might have had a direct influence on her writing, she conceded in a later interview that it influenced her in other ways, by, for example, teaching her “ungeheuer genaues Denken und einen klaren Ausdruck” (*Gul* 136). At other times, especially when she felt that the questioner's use of the word “influence” meant some kind of conscious incorporation of other people's themes or ideas, Bachmann denied being influenced by anyone at all, least of all other poets (*Gul* 47). As an alternative to “Einfluß” Bachmann suggested the term “Affinitäten” (*Gul* 125) to describe the connections between her own thinking and writing and that of others.¹ Such affinities were often reflected in intertextual references—both conscious and unconscious.

Es gibt für mich keine Zitate, sondern die wenigen Stellen in der Literatur, die mich immer aufgeregt haben, die sind für mich das Leben. Und es sind keine Sätze, die ich zitiere, weil sie mir gefallen haben, weil sie schön sind oder weil sie bedeutend sind, sondern weil sie mich wirklich erregt haben. Eben wie Leben. (*Gul* 69).

In this chapter I examine a number of writers and thinkers with whose views on the journalistic and other mass media Bachmann seems to have had an intellectual affinity: Karl Kraus, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Gustav René Hocke and Hans Magnus Enzensberger. My ultimate aim in examining such affinities is not to establish any form of “influence”, but to provide an intertextual perspective and background to my literary analyses, with a view to shedding light on specific aspects

¹ Bachmann's use of the term “affinity” in the Schiffner interview is similar to Weigel's use of the term “Dialog” when referring to the special relationship between the writing of Bachmann and the work of writers and thinkers like Benjamin and Adorno (*Hinterlassenschaften* 15). Weigel also uses the term “Affinitäten” later in her book when referring to Benjamin (100).

of Bachmann's portrayal of the press and her literary strategies. As Herrmann asserts: "Bachmanns intertextuelle Praxis dürfte ohnehin weniger als aktualisierte Variante der Einflußforschung interessant sein denn als poetisches Verfahren." ("*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*" 142)

3.2 Karl Kraus

The first affinity I explore is between Bachmann and Karl Kraus, to whom Bachmann specifically refers in her lectures and interview responses, even if not directly in association with her critical remarks about journalism.

"Phrasen", "Meinungen", "Geschwätz" and periodicity

It is difficult not to see in Bachmann's characterisation of the press as a medium dominated by "Phrasen" and "Ansichten" an echo of the "Zeitungskritik" of her compatriot, Karl Kraus, for whom the word "Phrase" was of "zentral[er] Bedeutung" from an early age (Arntzen *Karl Kraus und die Presse* 32), and who became famous for his tireless, lifelong campaign against "Phrase, Gemeinplatz und Geschwätz" (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 122). A major focus of Kraus's critique of the press was the intellectual (and moral) laziness behind the press's reliance on "Phrasen", which represented, as Benjamin puts it in his 1931 essay on Kraus, "[den] sprachliche[n] Ausdruck der Willkür [...], mit der die Aktualität im Journalismus sich zur Herrschaft über die Dinge aufwirft" (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 335).² Indeed, in the first edition of *Die Fackel* Kraus declares the central mission of his newspaper to be "eine Trockenlegung des weiten Phrasensumpfes" (*Fackel* 1 (April 1899): 2) as a means of challenging "ein[e] Öffentlichkeit [...], die zwischen Unentwegtheit und Apathie ihr *phrasenreiches* oder völlig gedankenloses Auskommen findet" (1, m.e.) and thus counteracting "dem dumpfen Ernst des *Phrasenthums*, wo immer er sein Zerstörungswerk verübe" (2, m.e.).³ As a relentless critic of the press and the impact of its misuse of language on society, Kraus blamed the press for the emergence of a generation of "Analphabeten [...], die nicht mehr imstande sein werden, Zeitungen zu lesen, sondern nur noch, für sie zu schreiben." (*Fackel* 811 (August 1929): 111)

One of the major factors behind the press's misuse of language was, according to Kraus, the periodicity of the press,⁴ "infolge derer sich der Zwang zum Schreiben über das unmittelbare

² Weigel sees in Benjamin's essay the "theoretische[...] Fortschreibung dieser Polemik" (*Hinterlassenschaften* 122). Benjamin's essay is, however, by no means a defence of Kraus and his attacks on the press: it contains numerous critical remarks about Kraus (for example, Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 334f., 345, 349), which were not at all well received by Kraus (see the May 1931 edition of *Die Fackel*). Benjamin was also critical of those he described as "apologists" for Kraus, who tried to depict him as an "»ethische Persönlichkeit«" without acknowledging the dark "Dämon" of his character (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 344).

³ For a discussion of Kraus's technique of satire via the "Zitat" and "Zitatmontage" of "Phrasen", see Riha (60ff.).

⁴ Brand and Schulze's *Medienkundliches Handbuch: Zeitung* defines "Periodizität" as "Veröffentlichung in gleichbleibenden oder annähernd regelmäßigen Zeitintervallen" (537). Kraus's *Die Fackel* was produced "[d]reimal im Monat" (*Fackel* 1: cover), at the beginning, middle and end of each month, but not on specific dates.

Wissenswerte hinaus, als äußerst begründetes Prinzip, verselbständigen könne” (Straßner 77). Under such pressure, the “Journaille”⁵—as he loved to call it—not only resorted to “Phrasen” but also to the invention of “sensational news”—the “immer gleichen Sensationen” (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 345)—and the chronic replication of “items from ancient issues over and over again” (Iggers 105). In committing to predetermined publication cycles, then, the press had created not only a rod for its own back but also an insatiable monster, whose needs could only be met by journalists constantly recycling language and content.

Der Zeitungsapparat verlangt, wie eine Fabrik, Arbeit und Absatzgebiete. Zu bestimmten Zeiten am Tage—zwei- bis dreimal in großen Zeitungen—muß für die Maschinen ein bestimmtes Quantum Arbeit beschafft und vorbereitet sein. Und nicht aus irgendwelchem Material: alles, was in der Zwischenzeit irgendwo und auf irgendeinem Gebiete des Lebens, der Politik, der Wirtschaft, der Kunst usw. geschah, muß inzwischen erreicht und journalistisch verarbeitet werden. (Kraus quoted in Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 336f.)⁶

Because technology had facilitated and accelerated this inexorable cycle of publication and its immutable deadlines, Kraus blamed technology for much of the sins of journalistic content. Thus Kraus saw “Phrasen” as the “Ausgeburt der Technik” (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 336).

Another aspect of the press that attracted his scorn was “Geschwätz”—the reporting of trivia in the form of “chatty details about the lives of contemporary actors” at the expense of significant news like the discovery of an important Raimund-manuscript (Iggers 103). Furthermore, Kraus maintained, such “Geschwätz” was often used as a means of distracting attention from the real news—issues that the press did not want the public to become too engaged in or aware of (105).

Kraus’s scorn for “Feuilleton” and “Meinungspresse”

In his bitter fight against the press, Kraus was particularly scathing of attempts to combine newspapers and literature, in the journalistic genre of the “Feuilleton”. As Benjamin points out, it was one of Kraus’s primary concerns, “Information und Kunstwerk auseinanderzuhalten” (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 336). In addressing this aspect of Kraus, Benjamin compares Kraus to Baudelaire, who also condemned writers for trying to make a living from journalism, suggesting: “Der Journalismus ist Verrat am Literatentum, am Geist, am Dämon. Das Geschwätz ist seine wahre Substanz und jedes Feuilleton stellt von neuem die unlösbare Frage nach dem Kräfteverhältnis von Dummheit und von Bosheit, deren Ausdruck es ist.” (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 352)

Another aspect of the Viennese press that attracted his most bitter attacks was the so-called “Meinungspresse”. The whole notion of “öffentliche Meinung” as epitomised in the “Meinungspresse”, was anathema to Kraus who expresses his scorn for it by quoting Wilhelm Liebknecht in one of the early editions of *Die Fackel*: “Die Presse ist die große Fabrik, welche die »öffentliche Meinung« anfertigt, und zugleich der Nürnberger Trichter, durch welchen die »öffentliche Meinung« in jeden

⁵ Kraus uses this term regularly in *Die Fackel* from 1902 onwards: for example, in Heft 99 (März, 1906) he uses it on three separate occasions (on pages 1, 6 and 15), and does the same again in the next edition. As Iggers points out, this term is a neologism formulated by Kraus—a “hybrid word made up of ‘Journalismus’ and the French word ‘canaille’, meaning something like rabble” (94).

⁶ It has not been possible to locate the original quote: it is not from *Die Fackel*.

einzelnen Schädel hineingeschüttet wird.” (*Fackel* 54 (September 1900): 16) As Benjamin explains in his essay on Kraus:

Meinungen sind Privatsache. Die Öffentlichkeit hat ein Interesse nur an Urteilen. Sie ist richtende oder überhaupt keine. Aber das ist ja gerade der Sinn der öffentlichen Meinung, die die Presse herstellt, die Öffentlichkeit unfähig zum Richten zu machen, die Haltung des Unverantwortlichen, Uninformierten ihr zu suggerieren. (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 335)

Thus Kraus’s aversion to the promotion of “Meinung” made him want to do away with the “Meinungspresse” and to have newspaper content limited to the communication of factual information, a position that Benjamin, however, decries as naïve and utopian:

Niemand, und Kraus am wenigsten, kann der Utopie einer »sachlichen« Zeitung, dem Hirngespinnst einer »unparteiischen Nachrichtenübermittlung« sich überlassen. *Die Zeitung ist Instrument der Macht. Sie kann ihren Wert nur von dem Charakter der Macht haben, die sie bedient*; nicht nur in dem, was sie vertritt, auch in dem, wie sie es tut, ist sie ihr Ausdruck. (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 344, m.e.)

The press as a mercenary, corrupt institution and corrupting influence

Although Benjamin saw Kraus’s ideal of a newspaper that limited itself to the communication of facts (as opposed to the expression of opinion) as naïve, it cannot be said that Kraus was naïve about those who were ‘pulling the strings’ behind the press. Indeed, Kraus was a vociferous critic of the corrosive influence represented by the press’s connection with commerce and politics, and deeply suspicious of what he saw as the “kapitalistische Einbindung des Zeitungswesens, die nach seiner Ansicht die Ideen der Pressefreiheit und journalistischen Verantwortung grundsätzlich als Illusion oder Heuchelei bestimmte” (Straßner 77). Particular targets of Kraus’s many scathing attacks on the press were the widely-read (and thus extremely influential) Viennese newspapers that were effectively under the control of industrialists and financiers (Iggers 94). Kraus saw such newspapers as “organs of political corruption” which not only misrepresented but glossed over “scandalous Austro-Hungarian financial transactions” (ibid.). He was particularly vociferous in his critique of the *Neue Freie Presse*, because of the way it purveyed personal opinion as if it were the voice of the majority (96) and because the newspaper’s pretensions to intellectuality endowed it with an imprimatur of authority. Kraus’s special concern was that the size and influence of the *Neue Freie Presse* gave it what Kraus perceived to be a virtual intellectual monopoly in Austria. Because Kraus believed that corruption undermined the representation of the truth in press content, he did not support the concept of freedom of the press, believing that the influence exerted by industry and politics needed to be curbed. He therefore saw censorship as a far lesser evil than the press: “Die Zensur schadet weder der Wahrheit noch dem Wort; die Zeitung beiden.” (*Beim Wort* 443)

For Kraus, the press was not only pernicious in its moral and social impact on society, but also in its physical impact on the natural environment: Benjamin points out that according to Kraus’s calculations the production of newspapers in his time required the felling of “50 000 Baumstämme für 60 Zeitungen” (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 341). As Kraus lamented: “Urwälder werden kahl geschlagen, damit der Geist der Menschheit zu Papier werde.” (qtd in Iggers 96) Kraus also attacked the press for the physical and human destruction that came with World War I, blaming the press for contributing to a socio-political climate in which war seemed both desirable and inevitable. According to Kraus the

press's pro-war attitude was motivated by mercenary considerations: by praising heroism, for example, the press indirectly promoted war, which represented "great business opportunities" for the press (Iggers 101). Moreover, Kraus believed that the press was more or less directly responsible for war because of the way in which it had contributed to the increasing commercialisation of values:

The First World War marked for Kraus the final victory of the profit principle of capitalism. Through the utilization of modern technology and the means of mass organization, especially those offered by militarism and the press, this profit principle had conquered the world and destroyed absolute values. (120)

The press was a prime example of an institution driven by the profit principle, which according to Kraus, destroyed moral values by perverting those values through the desire for economic gain (ibid.). Because of this driving economic principle, "[q]uality had been translated into quantity; human relationships, truth, beauty, and heroism had meaning only in terms of their monetary price" (121). The increasingly commercial nature of human values prompted Kraus to declare: "La bourse est la vie." (*Beim Wort* 422) According to Kraus, the press did not promote what was artistically or otherwise worthy but "only [...] what was profitable to the press" (Iggers 98). This usually meant reporting what was most sensational and would therefore sell more newspapers. It also meant, according to Kraus, suppressing what was not in the business interests of that particular newspapers by, for example, forbidding reporters from "comment[ing] favorably about a certain person whose economic interests were opposed to those of the paper" (103, 105). Most hypocritically, however, if the unfortunate persons involved in such stories did not have to be protected as one of their own business interests, the press had no qualms about printing invasive and gory details of suicides and murders, and reporting on murder trials (105). Iggers captures the essence of Kraus's critique in the following terms:

Writing had become a goal in itself, reporting more important than events, and the ultimate product was judged only by its commercial value. News could, therefore, be manipulated, censored, and changed as needed. Thus the press changed numbers, made dead persons live and claimed the opposite, ignoring the existence of inconvenient opponents although it did not mind plagiarizing from them. It had, as Kraus kept saying, no principles whatever. (102).

In the light of its socially and physically destructive impact, then, Kraus saw the press as a far greater evil than the crime of prostitution. As he expressed it in a particularly pithy and cutting aphorism: "Not kann jeden Mann zum Journalisten machen, aber nicht jede Frau zur Prostituierten." (*Fackel* 211 (13 November 1906): 21). In the light of such attacks on the press, Benjamin rightly draws attention to the "Haß, mit dem [Kraus] das unabsehbar wimmelnde Preßgeschlecht verfolgt" (*GS 2.1*: 334f.). Kraus himself summed up his attitude to the press as follows:

Meine Arbeit war es, die Presse als die ereignisschaffende, todbringende Organisation der moralischen und geistigen Unverantwortlichkeit erkennen zu lassen, als jenes größte Übel der menschlichen Gesellschaft, welches durch die Faszination, die vom gedruckten Wort ausgeht, von der Gefahr abzulenken weiß, die es bedeutet: als die selbstmörderische Waffe, von welcher sämtliche Kulturgüter dahingerafft werden, die sie zu hüten vorgibt. (*Fackel* 800-805 (Anfang Februar 1929): 23)

Kraus was relentless in his attacks on the failure of morality in a country that tolerated "Erpresser, Betrüger, Meineidige[...], Zeugnisfälscher und Verleumder" (*Fackel* 730–731 (Anfang Juli 1926): 23) and in a country where such tolerance was promoted by the press:

Nicht die Fakten der Korruption fesseln meine Aufmerksamkeit, sondern die Erscheinung, daß deren Vertreter heute ausschließlich berufen sind, Vermittler und Erzeuger kultureller Werte zu sein. An dem

schaudervollsten Beispiel, worin der *Betrug der öffentlichen Meinung* auf die Instinkte des *nackten Verbrechertums* zurückführbar war, mußte der Zustand bis zur tabula rasa offenbart werden. *Die simple Käuflichkeit des Journalisten* als solche würde mich so wenig bekümmern wie der vielfache Mißbrauch, den der Beruf des Politikers ermöglicht und wie der allgemeine Schmutz des Kapitals. (26, m.e.)

Kraus and Bachmann

Despite Bachmann's explicit references to Kraus in her lectures (as discussed in the previous chapter) and her obvious admiration for his strong stand on moral issues, very few scholars have even touched on the Bachmann-Kraus connection. Bachmann's private library contained books by Kraus as confirmed by Dr Robert Pichl, the curator of Bachmann's private collection of books ("Ingeborg Bachmanns Privatbibliothek" 383). Lensing specifically notes that Bachmann owned the two-volume DTV paperback edition of Kraus's *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* and a number of volumes from his collected works including *Literatur und Lüge* and *Beim Wort genommen* (76). Bachmann's familiarity with the contents of those books is evident not only from the explicit references to Kraus in her lectures and interviews but also in her paraphrasing of the Kraus aphorism "Je näher man ein Wort ansieht, desto ferner sieht es zurück"⁷ in her 1971 interview with Ekkehart Rudolph (*GuI* 84).⁸ Given Bachmann's familiarity with Kraus's work and the various references and allusions referred to above, I believe that a comprehensive and detailed study of the intellectual affinities between Bachmann and Kraus remains long overdue.⁹ In the context of the current study it will be of interest to examine the extent to which aspects of Kraus's "Pressekritik" is evident in Bachmann's literary portrayal of the journalistic media.

3.3 Benjamin and Adorno

Other intellectual affinities of great interest to a study of Bachmann's portrayal of the journalistic media are Walter Benjamin (with whose views on "Erfahrungsschwund" Bachmann explicitly identified in her 1971 interview with Rudolph) and Theodor Adorno, Benjamin's close friend and confidante. Although Max Horkheimer was the co-author of the seminal study *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, my focus in this discussion on intellectual affinities is Adorno rather than Horkheimer, because Adorno represents a common link between Bachmann and Benjamin (having been personally acquainted with both of them) and because of the established intellectual connections between Bachmann and Adorno, which are elaborated on below.

⁷ Given that Benjamin uses the same quote in his essay on Kraus (*GS 2.1*: 362), it is perhaps an open question whether this constitutes an intertextual allusion to Kraus, Benjamin or both.

⁸ Lensing is the first to draw attention to the intertextual reference to Kraus in this passage (76). Lensing also points out a number of other allusions, quotes and references to Kraus in *Malina* and "Drei Wege zum See" (66, 68), which are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 of this dissertation.

⁹ Those that have touched on the connection include Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 147ff.), Fehl (82), Lensing (66, 68, 76), Steiger (33f.) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 122, 125 et passim).

3.3.1 Walter Benjamin

Benjamin's relationship to Adorno and Horkheimer

The well-known intellectual and author of “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (*GS 2.1*: 431ff.), Walter Benjamin, was a close friend and intellectual confidante of Adorno for many years.¹⁰ While Adorno and his colleague, Horkheimer, were considered to be core members of the “Institut für Sozialforschung”,¹¹ and often referred to as ‘critical theorists’ or ‘the Frankfurt School’, Benjamin is generally seen as belonging to the ‘outer circle’ rather than the ‘inner circle’ of the Institute (Held 14, 32). Although Adorno and Benjamin shared an interest in aesthetic theory and cultural critique (Held 78), and while there is significant common ground in many of their observations and findings, particularly in relation to the mass media as an instance of mass culture, Benjamin’s views were not always aligned with those of other members of the Institute.¹² For example, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner mechanischen Reproduktion” suggests a more optimistic position than Adorno and Horkheimer’s with respect to certain developments in the mass media, for Benjamin saw in the increasingly mechanised reproduction of art, a revolutionary potential which could change “das Verhältnis der Masse zur Kunst” (*GS 1.2*: 496), and which could lead to a blurring of the distinction between ‘the original’ and ‘the copy’ (as exemplified in the cinematic and photographic arts). According to Benjamin such reproduction undermined the ‘aura’ that was traditionally the hallmark of ‘the original’ artwork, a development which in turn paved the way for “a new ethos of artistic production and consumption, in which awe and deference would give way to a posture of analysis and relaxed expertise, in which art, no longer steeped in ‘ritual’, would be opened to politics” (Seldon, Widdowson and Brooker 103). Thus while Adorno and Horkheimer were deeply pessimistic about all forms of cinema, which they saw as becoming increasingly dominated by the “Hollywood” model, Benjamin saw the potential revolutionary impact of cinema as mass medium that could help individuals to break out of the mental and spiritual enslavement of mass capitalist society.

¹⁰ Witte describes Adorno as Benjamin’s “Schüler und Vertrauten” (124). For more on the relationship between these two figures, see also Jay (13 et passim), Sherratt (5), Wiggershaus (15ff.) and Witte (105).

¹¹ Jay uses the term Western European Marxism (5) as well as “Western Marxism” (18) to refer to members of the Institut (and the Frankfurt School). Critical Theory has been characterised as the “dominant tradition within Western Marxism” (Payne 334). See also Held (13). For more on the history and membership of the Frankfurt School, see Agger, Wiggershaus and Witte.

¹² Benjamin was not the only one associated with the Institute to hold views that were not entirely consistent with those of other members; indeed, “the work of the Institute’s members did not always form a series of tightly woven, complementary projects” (Held 15). It is for this reason that Held reserves the term “Frankfurt School” for Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Löwenthal and Pollack, whose combined body of work can most appropriately be described in terms of a “school” (ibid.). Nevertheless, the approach of Institute members was essentially the same, as Held observes: “While there are differences in the way they formulate questions, the critical theorists believe that through an examination of contemporary social and political issues they could contribute to a critique of ideology and to the development of a non-authoritarian and non-bureaucratic politics.” (16) See also Agger (91), Benjamin (*GS 1.2*: 481) and Held (79, 108).

Benjamin on “Information” and “Erfahrungsschwund”

Of particular interest and significance to the present study, however, is the emphasis that Benjamin placed on the importance of genuine personal experience and his lament about the demise of genuine “Erfahrung” as a result of the increasingly pervasive influence of the mass media—a loss which was deplored in similar terms and for similar reasons by Adorno. For Benjamin, the concept of “Erfahrung” was of central importance (César ii, 3); hence his lament over its demise. In his essay “Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire”, for example, Benjamin deplored the proliferation of “Information” and “Sensation” in the press as a phenomenon that led to the “zunehmende Verkümmern der Erfahrung”, or more specifically, to the decline in “der ›wahren‹ Erfahrung” (*GS* 1.2: 611). For Benjamin, authentic experience was the opposite of the kind of isolated and externally generated experience, “welche sich im genormten, denaturierten Dasein der zivilisierten Massen niederschlägt” (*GS* 1.2: 608).¹³ The ‘true’ form of “Erfahrung”, according to Benjamin, was organic, integrated and steeped in tradition: “In der Tat ist die Erfahrung eine Sache der Tradition, im kollektiven wie im privaten Leben. Sie bildet sich weniger aus einzelnen in der Erinnerung streng fixierten Gegebenheiten denn aus gehäuften, oft nicht bewußten Daten, die im Gedächtnis zusammenfließen.” (*GS* 1.2: 608)

Like many others of his generation, Benjamin saw World War I as a turning point: “[M]it dem Ersten Weltkrieg [ist] das Ideal harmonischer Entfaltung der Persönlichkeit und, damit verbunden, Inhalt und Form des bürgerlich-humanistischen Erziehungsromans zutiefst in Frage gestellt worden.” (Höller *Das Werk* 82) The heretofore unknown destructive potential of technology unleashed during the war also had an impact on man’s perception of his place in the world, and consequently on his experience of the world, according to Benjamin in his essay “Erfahrung und Armut”:

Eine Generation, die noch mit der Pferdeisenbahn zur Schule gefahren war, stand unter freiem Himmel in einer Landschaft, in der nichts unverändert geblieben war als die Wolken, und in der Mitte, in einem Kraftfeld zerstörender Ströme und Explosionen, der winzige gebrechliche Menschenkörper. Eine ganz neue Armseligkeit ist mit dieser ungeheuren Entfaltung der Technik über die Menschen gekommen. (*Illuminationen* 314)¹⁴

The diminution of experience set in train by the increasing impact of technology was then exacerbated by the mass media, which bring about a further atrophy in experience. When describing this phenomenon in his essay, “Der Erzähler”, Benjamin uses the language of financial markets to highlight the commercial motives of the press:

[D]ie Erfahrung ist im Kurse gefallen. Und es sieht aus, als fiele sie weiter ins Bodenlose. Jeder Blick in die Zeitung erweist, daß sie einen neuen Tiefstand erreicht hat, daß nicht nur das Bild der äußern, sondern auch das Bild der sittlichen Welt über Nacht Veränderungen erlitten hat, die man niemals für möglich hielt. (Benjamin *GS* 2.2: 439)¹⁵

¹³ Cf. Jay (208).

¹⁴ Höller sees Benjamin’s views living on in Bachmann’s work (*Das Werk* 82). See also Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 105ff.).

¹⁵ Note here the way in which Benjamin makes conscious and ironic use of the language of financial markets to highlight the commercial motives behind this development.

In the same essay, Benjamin goes on to contend that the mass media—specifically, the information media of the press—are not only evidence of, but also the cause of, the demise in authentic experience. By usurping the place of storytelling in our culture, the information media undermine the art of storytelling and thus take from us, “das Vermögen, Erfahrungen auszutauschen” (ibid.):

Wenn die Kunst des Erzählens selten geworden ist, so hat die Verbreitung der Information einen entscheidenden Anteil an diesem Sachverhalt. Jeder Morgen unterrichtet uns über die Neuigkeiten des Erdkreises. Und doch sind wir an merkwürdigen Geschichten arm. Das kommt, weil uns keine Begebenheit mehr erreicht, *die nicht mit Erklärungen schon durchsetzt wäre*. Mit anderen Worten: beinah nichts mehr geschieht, was geschieht, kommt der Erzählung, beinah alles der Information zugute. (GS 2.2: 444f., m.e.)

The problem with the information media, then, is that they suffuse events with predetermined meaning. For Benjamin, the increasing dissemination of information therefore leads to a lamentable (and even dangerous) demise in opportunities to think for ourselves—a phenomenon that he describes elsewhere as the “Verfall der Intelligenz [...] und ihre wachsende und ökonomische Abhängigkeit” (qtd in Witte 76). By contrast, storytelling encourages opportunities for creative and independent thinking: “Es ist nämlich schon die halbe Kunst des Erzählens, eine Geschichte, indem man sie weitergibt, von Erklärungen freizuhalten.” (GS 2.2: 445) The problem is not that we are inundated with too much detail but that we are prevented from thinking for ourselves. The best storytellers can recount the most marvellous things in the minutest detail without foisting ready-made interpretations upon us:

Das Außerordentliche, das Wunderbare wird mit der größten Genauigkeit erzählt, der psychologische Zusammenhang des Geschehens aber wird dem Leser nicht aufgedrängt. Es ist ihm freigestellt, sich die Sache zurechtzulegen, wie er sie versteht, und damit erreicht das Erzählte eine Schwingungsbreite, die der Information fehlt. (ibid.)

For Benjamin, storytelling works as a catalyst for a deeply personal and authentic form of independent thought and insight that draws on our own, often unconscious, recollections and histories. This is how storytelling becomes an exchange of “Erfahrungen” that can expand our mental and emotional horizons. The mass media, on the other hand, represent an obstacle to new and personal understanding because of the way in which the information media in particular impose upon the reader externally produced, predetermined meanings that allow no scope for personal interpretation, engagement or response. In this way they deprive individuals of the opportunity to draw on their own resources and memories to form their own conclusions: the mass media’s pre-packaging of meaning and outcome therefore disempowers the individual.

3.3.2 Theodor Adorno

“Vorentschiedenheit”

Benjamin’s condemnation of the way in which the mass media try to saturate every reported or depicted event with pre-packaged meaning (and the consequent subversion of independent response and personal engagement) echoes Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of “Vorentschiedenheit”, a notion that was a key aspect of the Frankfurt School’s critique of mass culture because of its role in the suppression of conflict. For Adorno and Horkheimer, the most pernicious aspect of the culture industry was the way in which it actively works against the consciousness of conflict and imbued a sense of the

inevitable. Mass culture, they insisted, “verfällt der Vorentschiedenheit [...]. Sie verfährt konfliktlos und behandelt Konflikte: dadurch unterwirft sie diese dem Diktat des Konfliktlosen” (Adorno *GS 3*: 309). Their specific concern was that by glossing over the whole issue of conflict, or by presenting pseudo-conflicts and then resolving them harmoniously (in the same way that it fabricates pseudo-problems and then offers commercial solutions), the culture industry undermines the capacity of individuals to experience the painful consciousness of the most essential conflict at the heart of any individual, namely their current state of enslavement versus the future possibility of real freedom. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the culture industry substitutes conflict with shock and sensation, and this strategy of “Konfliktlosigkeit” ensures that audiences are not “zentral berührt” (Adorno *GS 3*: 311). As a result of this strategy, spectators are losing their capacity to feel, to confront suffering, and to think independently. In this way “Massenkunst” leads to chronic “Denk- und Gedächtnisschwäche” (312).

Es gibt keine eigentliche Konflikte mehr. Sie werden durchwegs surrogiert durch Schocks und Sensationen, die gleichsam von außen einbrechen, meist konsequenzlos bleiben, jedenfalls glatt sich in den streifenhaften Verlauf einfügen [...]. Ausgegangen wird von der Gedächtnisschwäche der Konsumenten: keinem wird zugetraut, daß er sich an etwas erinnere, auf etwas anderes konzentriere, als was ihm im Augenblick geboten wird. Er wird auf die abstrakte Gegenwart reduziert. Je bornierter aber der Augenblick für sich selber einzustehen hat, um so weniger darf er mit Unglück geladen sein. Der Zuschauer soll so unfähig sein, dem Leiden ins Auge zu sehen wie zu denken. (307)¹⁶

In *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that, before the advent of mass culture and its concomitant stupefaction of consumers, the vital experience of the difference between ‘what is’ and ‘what could be’, which enabled a consciousness of dichotomy and conflict, had traditionally been accessible to individuals in their encounter with works of art. Indeed, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, the most important role and achievement of the work of art (that is, ‘high art’,¹⁷ as opposed to the products of the “Kulturindustrie”) is that it embodies (and therefore facilitates) the consciousness of conflict, and the possibility of alternative outcomes. Because of this, Adorno and Horkheimer particularly admired modernist art, and held forth as exemplary the work of artists, musicians and writers like Schoenberg, Kraus, Baudelaire, Beckett, Proust and Joyce, whose work is characterised by unpredictability and the capacity to elude definitive interpretation.¹⁸ The culture industry on the other hand was characterised by very different aesthetic ends: “Kunst trachtet die lastende Schwere des Artefakts durch die Kraft der eigenen Konstruktion aufzuheben, während Massenkultur mit dem *Fluch der Vorentschiedenheit* sich identifiziert und ihn freudig vollstreckt.” (Adorno *GS 3*: 310, m.e.) Moreover the mechanical reproduction of artwork under late modern capitalism has the effect of further undermining the ability of art to serve a potentially liberating

¹⁶ Note here the similarity to Bachmann’s “epistemology of pain” and her reference to the public’s addiction to shock and sensation.

¹⁷ Here “high art” refers to one of the narrower definitions of culture that encompasses “objects of aesthetic excellence” (Storey *Cultural Studies and the Theory of Popular Culture 2*).

¹⁸ These names are mentioned in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Adorno *GS 3*: 157, 163) and *Das Schema der Massenkultur* (Adorno *GS 3*: 312f.). Note that these artists are also included by Bachmann in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” and in her interviews as examples of artists whose work she admired.

function:

Die Technik der mechanischen Reproduktion als solche hat, vermöge dessen, was dem Original angetan ward, bereits den Aspekt des Widerstandlosen. Gleichgültig welche Schwierigkeiten eines psychologischen Schicksals der Film vorführt, dadurch daß er alle Vorgänge auf dem weißen Band am Zuschauer vorüberschleift, ist *die Kraft der Gegensätze und die Möglichkeit von Freiheit in ihnen gebrochen* und auf das abstrakte Zeitverhältnis des Früheren und Späteren nivelliert. Das Auge der Kamera, das den Konflikt vorm Zuschauer gesehen und aufs widerstandlose ablaufende Band projiziert hat, trägt damit zugleich Sorge, daß die Konflikte keine sind. (Adorno *GS 3*: 310, m.e.)

Thus, while the work of art formerly had the inherent potential for subverting social structures, advances in technology (which led to the increasing commercialisation and commodification of art) were undermining or tainting the work of art so that it was becoming decreasingly a catalyst for social change and was therefore being rendered innocuous.

“Information” and “Erfahrung”

Like Benjamin, Adorno too was deeply concerned about “Erfahrungsschwund”, and in his joint work with Horkheimer attributed much of this demise to the ascent of “Information”:

Der universale Informationscharakter ist das Siegel der radikalen Entfremdung zwischen dem Konsumenten und dem unausweichlich nahen Produkt. Er sieht auf Information sich verwiesen, wo seine Erfahrung nicht hinreicht, und der Apparat trainiert ihn dazu, bei der Strafe von Prestigeverlust als informiert sich hervorzutun und der umständlichen Erfahrung sich zu entschlagen. (Adorno *GS 3*: 320)

The supremacy of information was making us feel like lost and helpless visitors at an enormous exhibition where we become increasingly dependent on the information that is foisted upon us and that we in turn accept only too gladly in the hope of disguising our own inadequacies. Life has become an endless “Informationsbüro, das dem ohnmächtigen Besucher sich aufdrängt, ihn mit Zetteln, Wegweisern und Radiorezepten versieht und jedem einzelnen die Blamage erspart, allen andern einzelnen als ebenso dumm zu erscheinen” (ibid.). The ascendancy of the information media has in turn, Adorno and Horkheimer contend, hijacked our response to the visual:

Der Verfall des ästhetischen Bildcharakters wird von der Information am nachdrücklichsten gefördert. Auch der Spielfilm wird zum news reel, zur Verlängerung der eigenen publicity: man lernt darin, wie Lana Turner im Sweater aussieht, wie das neue Aufnahmeverfahren von Orson Welles funktioniert, ob der Ton von FM wirklich von dem des alten Radios so verschieden sei. (321)

The culture industry, Adorno and Horkheimer insist, exploits our natural curiosity, turning the previously deplored quality of indiscretion into officially sanctioned behaviour: “Information rechnet mit Neugier als der Verhaltensweise, die der Zuschauer dem Gebilde entgegenbringt. Die Indiskretion, *die früher den armseligsten Zeitungsschreibern vorbehalten war*, ist zu einer Essenz der offiziellen Kultur geworden.” (ibid., m.e.) We are veritably bombarded with information, to give us the impression that we have universal access to the world—that nothing has been (or can be) kept from us:

Stets blinzeln die von der Massenkultur erteilten Auskünfte. Die Millionenaufgabe des Lieblingsmagazins breitet mit wichtiger Miene inside stories aus, und die Kamera konzentriert sich auf physische Details wie das Opernglas von dazumal. Beide wollen bloß mit illusionsloser Miene und schlechtem Gewissen dem Subjekt die Illusion bereiten, es sei auch hier noch dabei, nirgends ausgeschlossen. (ibid.)

This externally enforced compulsion “zum Antasten, Manipulieren, Hineinziehen, nichts draußen lassen können” (322) is, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, intended to distract us from the realisation that the system does not really tolerate “the new”, and this reflects the essentially fascist

nature of the culture industry:

Je weniger Neues das System duldet, um so mehr müssen die Ausgelieferten alle Neuigkeiten wissen, um sich überhaupt noch als Lebendige und nicht als von der Gesellschaft beiseite Geschleuderte zu fühlen. Diese gerade, die Reservarmee der Outsider, läßt Massenkultur mitreden: sie ist der organisierte Beziehungswahn und der Inbegriff der öffentlichen Geheimnisse. Alle Informierten haben am Geheimem Anteil, so wie im Nationalsozialismus allen das Privileg der esoterischen Blutgemeinschaft offeriert wird. Der Hang zur Erpressung aber, in dem Neugier und Indiskretion sich vollenden, ist ein Teil der Gewalt, die der Faschist Unprivilegierten gegenüber stets zu ergreifen bereit ist. (ibid.)

The endgame is, however, not purely for psychological ends but very much for material gain. The end purpose of information is to promote the consumption of those goods produced by the monopoly system: “Dafür sorgt schon die Beschränkung der Information auf das vom Monopol gelieferte, auf Waren oder solche Menschen, deren Funktion im öffentlichen Betrieb sie zu Waren macht.” (323) And here we find the connection with advertising:

Die Haltung des Informierten ist aus der des Einkaufenden entstanden. Soweit ist sie der Reklame verwandt. Aber Reklame wird Information, wenn es eigentlich nichts mehr zu wählen gibt, wenn das Wiedererkennen der Marke den Wahlvorgang substituiert und wenn zugleich die Totalität des Systems jeden, der sein Leben erhalten will, dazu zwingt, solche Leistungen aus Berechnung zu vollbringen. Das geschieht unter der monopolistischen Massenkultur. (ibid.)

It is only a short road from the advertisement to the command: “Drei Stufen in der Entfaltung der Herrschaft übers Bedürfnis lassen sich unterscheiden: Reklame, Information, Befehl. Als allgegenwärtige Bekanntmachung führt die Massenkultur diese Stufen ineinander über.” (323f.) The curiosity, that has been fostered by the culture industry is, however, a perversion of natural curiosity:

Die Neugier, die sie entfacht, reproduziert gewalttätig die des Kindes, die selber schon von Zwang, Betrug und Versagung herrührt. Neugierig wird das Kind, dem die Eltern die echte Auskunft verweigern. Sie ist nicht jene ursprüngliche Sorge ums Sehen, mit der alte und neue Ontologen sie trüb verkuppelt haben, sondern der schon verbogene und auf sich selbst zurückgeworfene Blick. (324)

In this way, the culture industry has turned knowledge and curiosity, like everything else it touches, into a commodity: “Die Neugier, die die Welt zu Sachen macht, ist unsachlich: ihr kommt es nicht aufs Gewußte an, sondern darauf, daß man es weiß, aufs Haben, die Erkenntnis als Besitz.” (ibid.)

The enslavement of the “Kulturindustrie”

For all its manipulation of individual consciousness, however, the culture industry was not itself the seat of power, according to Adorno and Horkheimer. Instead, the culture industry was just as much at the mercy of the reigning monopoly controlled by the company directors of the industrial sector, specifically the steel, petroleum, electricity, and chemical industries: the mass media (of which the press was but one branch alongside others such as the radio, television and the film industries) was merely the mechanism by means of which the wealthy and powerful elite enforced and expanded their control and domination. Big business used the mass media and mass culture to consolidate its power (and its profits), and was successful in manipulating individual consumers because of the way in which it had set about commodifying needs. In comparison to the giants of industrial capital, then, the culture industry itself was “schwach und abhängig” (Adorno *GS* 3: 43): “Die Abhängigkeit der mächtigsten Sendegesellschaft von der Elektroindustrie, oder die des Films von den Banken, charakterisiert die ganze Sphäre, deren einzelne Branchen wiederum untereinander ökonomisch verfilzt sind.” (144) Because of this, the players in the culture industry were all too eager to please their paymasters: “Sie

müssen sich sputen, es den wahren Machthabern recht zu machen.” (143f.) The culture industry was therefore, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, effectively both enslaver and enslaved¹⁹—an integral part of a system of “domination” (38) or part of “der totalen, alle Beziehungen und Regungen erfassenden Gesellschaft” (54), in which organisational efficiency and control were so firmly entrenched, the world was evolving into a form of totally administered existence, which constituted an “Übergang zur verwalteten Welt” (9).

3.3.3 Benjamin, Adorno and Bachmann

Even without Bachmann’s explicit reference to Benjamin in the Sauerland interview, there is much evidence of Bachmann’s familiarity with the writings of Benjamin, as numerous scholars have noted.²⁰ Although she does not refer to Adorno in her public statements, there is also ample evidence of an intellectual affinity there too.²¹ Indeed, many scholars have stressed the importance of both Benjamin and Adorno in relation to Bachmann’s oeuvre. Weigel, for example, refers to the “Dialog” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 15)²² between the writing of Bachmann and that of Benjamin and Adorno. Weigel not only speaks of Bachmann’s “Interesse an Schriften aus dem Feld der Kritischen Theorie” and of the “Affinität zu Benjamins Denken” (99), but goes so far as to maintain that Bachmann’s prose can be read as a “Fortschreibung einer ›kritischen Theorie‹ mit anderen, nämlich literarischen Mitteln” (27), and discusses the affinities with the writings of Adorno and Benjamin extensively in her work.²³

¹⁹ Bachmann alludes to such a vicious circle of enslavement in *Malina* in the scene where Ich is interviewed by the journalist, Herr Mühlbauer (*TP 3.1*: 399). This scene is discussed in Chapter 7 of this study.

²⁰ For example, Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 22, 81, 364ff., 472ff., 490 et passim; and *Body- and Image-space* 172f. et passim). Weigel’s extended discussion of the “verschwiegene Intertextualität” between Bachmann and Benjamin in her article, “Stadt ohne Gewähr” (261ff.), includes references to editions of Benjamin’s work in Bachmann’s private library (257, 261). Others who refer to the intertextuality with Benjamin include Bannasch, who discusses Benjamin’s views on “Erfahrungsschwund” as it applies to “Drei Wege zum See” (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 105ff., 110ff.) and Herrmann, who notes Bachmann indebtedness to Benjamin’s “Gedächtnistheorie” (“*Todesarten-Projekt: Das Buch Franza*” 150). For an overview of Bachmann’s affinities with Adorno, Benjamin and other critical theorists, see Schmaus (“Kritische Theorie und Soziologie”).

²¹ Weigel points out that the catalogue of Bachmann’s private library includes 20 books by Adorno (474). Numerous other scholars have referred to and stressed the importance of the many traces of Adorno’s thinking and writing in Bachmann’s work; see, for example Ahn-Lee (159ff.); Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 175); Borhau (152f.); Bürger (22); Dierick (76); Grimkowski (*Das zerstörte Ich* 155, 297f.); Gutjahr (*Fragmente* 97, 193ff.); Heidelberger-Leonard (“Ingeborg Bachmann und Jean Améry”); Höller (*Das Werk*); Kohn-Waechter (*Das Verschwinden in der Wand* 12, 21 et passim); Lennox (“Geschlecht, Rasse und Geschichte” 158); Mahrdt (“Society Is the Biggest Murder Scene of All” 175ff.; *Öffentlichkeit* 217, 220ff., 249 et passim); Schmaus (“Kritische Theorie und Soziologie” 216f.); Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 235f., 241f.); Töller (10); and Weigel (*Body- and Image-Space* 170, 173 et passim; *Hinterlassenschaften* 74ff., 76ff., 171ff. et passim).

²² Sharing Albrecht’s reservations about the use of the term “Dialog” in this context (*Die andere Seite* 33), I avoid its use in this dissertation.

²³ Weigel makes the same point in *Body- and Image-space* where she asserts: “Although some of [Bachmann’s] stories in [...] *The Thirtieth Year* deconstruct several philosophical theorems in Wittgensteinian manner, her literary involvement [...] centred on a stronger reference to Critical Theory, in particular to *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and Benjamin’s work, than to Wittgenstein” (*Body- and Image-Space* 173). (It has not been possible to locate a German version of *Body- and Image-space*. Weigel’s German publication *Leib- und Bildraum* (1992), whose title suggests that it is the German version of the same work, is a completely different book that contains a short essay by Weigel on Benjamin but does not refer to Bachmann at all.)

Indeed, Weigel not only insists that the traces of their work in Bachmann's literary oeuvre establishes Bachmann as a "Diskursanalytikerin *avant la lettre*" (27), but also contends that Bachmann's writing reveals much stronger affinities with "Adorno und anderen Philosophen aus dem Umfeld der ›Kritischen Theorie‹ [...] als zu den überstrapazierten Bezügen zu Wittgenstein und Heidegger" (6). In the light of these intellectual connections with both Benjamin and Adorno, then, it will be of interest to this study to discover the extent to which aspects of Bachmann's literary portrayal of the journalistic media echo Benjamin and Adorno's critique of the mass media.

3.4 Gustav René Hocke and Hans Magnus Enzensberger

As Lennox points out in her overview of Bachmann research, investigations of Bachmann's intertextual references to the works of other writers and philosophers "von Hölderlin und Novalis über Proust und Musil bis zu Paul Celan und Max Frisch" constituted one of the new directions that Bachmann scholarship pursued from the early 1990's onwards ("Rezeptionsgeschichte" 32). However, investigations of intertextual references and studies of intellectual affinities, such as Weigel's (*Hinterlassenschaften*), have to date paid scant attention to writers and others from Bachmann's circle of friends or acquaintances, who had direct or indirect connections with journalism. Thus, for example, I believe that it would be enlightening to investigate Bachmann's intellectual affinities with a writer like Alfred Andersch, who worked as a journalist during and after the war, and who, like Bachmann, portrayed journalists in his literary work.²⁴ Although Weigel touches on Bachmann's dealings and correspondence with Andersch who was one of her "intensivere Kontakte" in the Gruppe 47 in the early years (*Hinterlassenschaften* 312),²⁵ I believe that this relationship, and perhaps others like Heinrich Böll—another contemporary who portrayed journalism in his literary work²⁶—warrant closer and more detailed investigation in future Bachmann research. Other contemporaries and acquaintances who could be of interest for research into Bachmann's portrayal of journalism include the left-wing scholar, author and critic, Hans Mayer,²⁷ and the French journalist, Pierre Evrard,²⁸ whom she

²⁴ Most notably, the protagonist of Andersch's novel *Efraim* is a journalist.

²⁵ For more on the Bachmann-Andersch connection, see Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 335). While Weigel hesitates to use the word friendship in connection with Andersch, Hoell describes Andersch as one of a number of closer and more lasting friendships (65).

²⁶ For example, Böll's novel, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*, was a scathing indictment of the German tabloid press.

²⁷ Riha observes that in 1957 Mayer, "der bis dahin gewiß als kein Anhänger des Wiener Satirikers gelten konnte" (59f., m.e.) expressed the view that Kraus may not have been that far off the mark in his claim that the press and its "schwarze Magie" was responsible for events like World War I. Perhaps it is a coincidence that Mayer appears to have had a change of heart about Kraus in the same year that he organised a conference on literary criticism in Wuppertal—a conference attended by Bachmann, Celan, Enzensberger and Böll (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 445, 568)—but it would be interesting to research this intellectual affinity in relation to Bachmann's "Pressekritik" as well.

²⁸ Albrecht and Götsche refer to the "langjährige Freundschaft" between Bachmann and Evrard ("Leben und Werk" 7) and Weigel mentions Evrard in passing as one of Bachmann's "intim[e] Beziehungen" in connection with Paris (*Hinterlassenschaften* 370). Henze notes the presence of Evrard, a "Pariser Freund der Inge" at the clinic at the time of Bachmann's death (*Reiselieder mit böhmischen Quinten* 401).

befriended in Harvard in 1955 and visited in Paris later that year (Höller *Ingeborg Bachmann* 103f.).

Although it would be well beyond the scope of this study to pursue an investigation of Andersch, Böll, Mayer or Evrard in relation to Bachmann's "Pressekritik", I nevertheless believe that there are two figures that are worth singling out for a preliminary exploration of potential intellectual affinities in relation to Bachmann's literary portrayal of the journalistic media: Gustav René Hocke and Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Hocke and Enzensberger were not only friends of Bachmann who were living in Rome and actively engaged in journalism at the time that Bachmann was writing for Radio Bremen and the *WAZ*, but were also closely acquainted themselves (Hocke *Im Schatten des Leviathan* 434f.).²⁹

3.4.1 Bachmann and Gustav René Hocke

Although there is no explicit connection between Bachmann's critique of the press and mass media in her non-literary pronouncements, and the writings or views of Gustav René Hocke, I believe that Hocke represents an important and heretofore uninvestigated intellectual affinity in Bachmann's work. Given the current restricted access to much of the private and personal documents in the Bachmann archives in Vienna, it is not possible to discover whether Bachmann expressed strong personal views about journalism in those private documents. The unpublished material currently available in those archives does not reveal anything about Bachmann's personal views of journalism. It is, however, possible to access research material in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach that sheds light on the personal views about journalism held by Hocke, who recommended Bachmann to Radio Bremen's Hans-Herbert Westermann³⁰ in 1954, and who was described by Westermann as "der Nestor der römischen Korrespondenten" at the time (Radio Bremen *Lange Radio-Nacht*).

The nature and significance of Bachmann's relationship with Hocke is an area of academic research that has been effectively overlooked apart from brief references to the fact that he recommended Bachmann's journalistic services to Radio Bremen and the *WAZ*.³¹ One of the few studies to suggest any form of intellectual affinity is Kanz, who draws attention to the inclusion of Hocke's name in Bachmann's "Frankfurter Vorlesungen", and notes that Bachmann and Hocke had a common psychological interest in "Angst" ("Psychologie, Psychoanalyse und Psychiatrie" 224).³²

²⁹ Hocke describes Enzensberger as belonging "zu den »Enfants terribles« Europas, die die neue Brüchigkeit pseudo-abendländischer Scheinwerte witterte, entblößte und bekämpfte, wenn auch vielfach in einer Widersprüchlichkeit »zwischen eigenem poetischen Schaffen«, im »wertfreiem« Sinne, und einer sozialpolitischen Demolierungs-Sucht steckend" (*Im Schatten des Leviathan* 435). He goes to praise him as "nicht nur genialisch, sondern scharfsinnig; nicht nur reich an Visionen, sondern auch an historischen Vergleichsmöglichkeiten. Für seine Jugend hatte er eine verblüffend umfassende Bildung" (*ibid.*).

³⁰ Westermann was "Politikchef" at Radio Bremen at the time he employed Bachmann (Radio Bremen *Lange Radio-Nacht*).

³¹ One of the only two references that Bartsch makes to Hocke is to include him in a list of those who wrote "geschmacklos[e] Nachrufe" for Bachmann (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 3). Höller does not mention him at all in his 2001 monograph. Hoell, however, refers to him several times and quotes from the correspondence between Hocke and Bachmann (74, 84, 90).

³² For further references to Hocke, see Albrecht and Göttsche (*Bachmann-Handbuch* 7, 10, 224 and 288).

Hocke and his friendship with Bachmann

Despite the publication of several books and his long-held hopes of earning a full-time living as a writer, Hocke spent most of his life as a career journalist. Working as an Italian foreign correspondent before, during and after the Second World War, Hocke was captured by the Americans and taken to the USA as a prisoner of war, where he was transferred to a New York state POW camp in 1944. There he was commissioned (along with number of other German nationals with journalistic backgrounds) to start a newspaper for German prisoners of war—an initiative of senior staff in the US Army, who were hoping to use this POW publication as a form of “re-education” (or counter-propaganda) to instil democratic ideas in the German POWs and to help reconcile them to the end of the National-Socialist regime (Hocke *Im Schatten des Leviathan* 244–249). It was at this POW camp and as Chief Editor of the POW newspaper, called *Der Ruf*, that Hocke first worked with Alfred Andersch and Hans Werner Richter, who later co-founded the post-war German journal, *Der Ruf*, to which Hocke contributed articles.

Hocke’s diary entries describe how he recommended Bachmann to the WAZ and Radio Bremen because he wanted to embark on some extended travel and needed to find someone to fill in for him as the Roman correspondent while he was on leave. From other diary entries and the letters in his Nachlaß, it appears that he and Bachmann were more than just part of the same circle of acquaintances in Rome: they were close friends. In Bachmann’s letters to Hocke, the relaxed, informal way in which she addresses Hocke provides evidence of a close friendship; in each letter, for example, in letters dated 19 November 1958 and 7 February 1960 Bachmann pleads with Hocke not to “punish” her for her own delays in writing, by letting her wait too long for a reply (Bachmann [Briefe an Gustav René Hocke]). The closeness of their friendship also seems to be indicated by the insertion in his journal papers of a small cut-out from a postcard, on which is handwritten the date, time and place of Bachmann’s birth as well as the birthdays and birthplaces of her parents.³³ Given their close friendship and the journalistic connection between them, it would be surprising if Bachmann was not aware of Hocke’s views on journalists and journalism, which are only too clear from many of the documents in his Nachlaß.³⁴ In his published memoirs Hocke writes of their “damaligen Zwiegespräche, von kaum jemandem gestört” which lasted some two years before they broke off their friendship because it had

Weigel points out that Hocke and Bachmann belonged to the same circle of German intellectuals and writers that frequently met in Rome in 1954 (*Hinterlassenschaften* 465; see also Hocke *Im Schatten des Leviathan* 385ff. and Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 173) and notes that Bachmann includes him amongst the many literary names cited in her five “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (200). However, Weigel’s long list of writers and other intellectuals, who might form part of a never-ending research project into Bachmann’s intellectual affinities and friendships, omits Hocke (18).

³³ The text written on the back of part of a postcard featuring “CA’Giustinian – Venez” on the front, reads “25.6.1926 20”25 Freitags in Klagenfurt. Mutter geb. 14.1.1901 in Österreich. Vater geb. 25.4.1895 in Österreich”. When viewed in Marbach in October 1998, this insert was located just before a diary entry dated 23.3.1952 and not long after a diary entry dated 15.3.1952 in which Hocke expresses his hatred for the superficiality of journalism (Hocke *Tagebücher ab 1952*).

³⁴ The Hocke-Nachlaß also contains barely legible notes entitled “Literatur und Journalismus. Entwurf zur Preis-Rede 1967”. Due to time constraints I was unable to examine these notes in detail.

developed to the point of representing a potential threat to his marriage (*Im Schatten des Leviathan* 397).

Hocke's views on the press

While working on the POW newspaper in the USA, Hocke wrote a long, unpublished (and undated) treatise-like document called *Die Presse in Deutschland*, which was subtitled *Exposé ueber die Lage der Presse unter dem nationalsozialistischen Regime und Vorschlaege fuer ihre Gestaltung nach dem Kriege* (spelling a.p.o.).³⁵ Hocke's paper documents the National Socialist strategy of replacing the "Typ der objektiven Informationszeitung" with "propagandistisch[en] Massenzeitungen" and describes in detail "[d]ie Organisation der Pressediktatur" (*Die Presse in Deutschland* 1). In that document Hocke also refers to what he saw as the "Herabwuerdigung zu geistigen Prostituierten" in the journalistic profession during the Nazi period (10). According to Hocke, the journalists, publishers and editors that thrived during this era in German history were the lowest of the low. While some may have been political fanatics and ideologues, the great majority were scoundrels and fraudsters. Using words that echo Kraus's critique of the mercenary and immoral character of those in the press, Hocke observes:

Es gab wohl keinen Stand, der im Ansehn der Oeffentlichkeit tiefer gesunken war, als der journalistische. Da auf oeffentliche Veranstaltungen meist vorzugsweise Vertreter der Parteipresse eingeladen wurden, ergab sich nicht nur ein geistig unerfreuliches Bild. Die meisten "Journalisten" der Parteipresse waren gescheiterte Existenzen, verkrachte Studenten, Abenteurer, Scharlatane, ja Verbrecher und Betruenger. Ihr Zynismus war ebenso gross wie ihre Gewissenlosigkeit. Es gab gewiss auch viele darunter, die ueberzeugte Hitleranhaenger waren. Es waren die Fanatiker. Andere waren es nur teilweise oder ueberhaupt nicht. Diese betrachten ihren Beruf, als seien sie *Verkaeufer einer Meinungsware; sie waren nichts weiter als nihilistische Haendler, die heute braune und morgen Worte in irgendeiner anderen Farbe verkaufen wuerden.* (15, m.e.)

When Hocke returned to full-time journalism after the war because he could not support himself with his literary work alone, his attitude to journalism remained negative and cynical. In a diary entry dated 13 July 1947, for example, he writes: "Journalismus erscheint mir problematischer denn je. Sehnsucht nach echter schöpferischer Arbeit wieder da." (*Hocke Tagebücher 1946–1948*) And two years later, in a diary entry dated 30 September 1949, he bemoans the deleterious impact of his journalistic work on his literary creativity.

Ich träume jetzt von kleinen Übungen, von Etüden von einem neuen Anfang. Es ist als stünde ich in meiner zweiten Lebenshälfte zum ersten Mal bald wieder vor einem weissen Blatt Papier.

Doch müsste ich einen Monat lang zuerst nichts anderes tun, als wieder gute deutsche Prosa lesen, um mich innerlich vom Zeitungsdeutsch und von den Begriffen der Zeit zu reinigen, so wie einer der nach langer Wanderung ein schönes Ziel erreicht hat und sich von Staub und Schlamm der Wege, Dickichte und Abgründe reinigt. (*Hocke Tagebücher ab April 1949*)

By 1952, Hocke's despair about journalism had intensified to the point where he not only explicitly declares his intense hatred for his profession but describes it in terms of prostitution—an expression that he had used seven years earlier in his characterisation of the press under the National Socialist regime. In an entry dated 15 March 1952, Hocke writes:

³⁵ Quotes from documents in Hocke's Nachlaß retain their original spelling.

Wie ich den Journalismus hasse! Es wird immer oberflächlicher. Ich beherrsche ihn und „leiste“ das Nötige, um zu leben, aber Spengler hat recht: es handelt sich doch um *eine Form der universellen Prostitution*. Jedenfalls ist die dekadente Tagespresse von heute der beste Ausdruck für unser starres, böses, leeres, Massen Zeitalter. (Hocke *Tagebücher ab 1952*, spelling a.p.o., m.e.)

This description of the post-war press as a “Form der universellen Prostitution” is of particular interest to my study of Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media given that in *Malina*, Ich refers to “universelle Prostitution” in a passage that follows on from her description of her own experiences working in the press (*TP 3.1*: 595). In the light of both the friendship and the journalistic connection between Hocke and Bachmann, I believe it is possible that Bachmann’s negative view of journalists and journalism was not just a reflection of her own experience and observations, but perhaps also informed by the experience and views of her friend and journalistic colleague.

3.4.2 Bachmann and Hans Magnus Enzensberger

Like Hocke, Enzensberger is one of those figures whose relationship with Bachmann has only been touched on in Bachmann research. Albrecht, however, draws particular attention to him as an instance of a promising “weitere Konstellation ›poetischer Korrespondenz‹” (“Deutschsprachige Literatur nach 1945” 289). Given his participation in the ongoing “Zeitungsdebatte” in his writings on the mass media, I believe he also represents an important intellectual affinity in other ways.

Enzensberger’s friendship with Bachmann

Bachmann was well acquainted with Enzensberger: Weigel includes him as one of Bachmann’s “Freundschaften” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 312)³⁶ and points out that in October 1957 Enzensberger took part in a literary conference in Wuppertal that was also attended by Bachmann, Celan and Böll (445, 568),³⁷ and that Bachmann visited Enzensberger in Lannvia, Italy in June 1959 (563ff.).³⁸ A number of other scholars make scattered references to Enzensberger in their studies of Bachmann’s life—references that usually take the form of a simple statement about literary, political or social events that both attended.³⁹ Albrecht points out that Bachmann’s friendship with Enzensberger was such that it

³⁶ Cf. Hoell (65). For more on the friendship between Bachmann and Enzensberger, see Achberger (*Understanding* 58, 62), Albrecht and Göttsche (“Leben und Werk” 11–13, 16–18) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 335, 573).

³⁷ 1957 was also the year in which Enzensberger’s collection of poems *Verteidigung der Wölfe* was published, featuring not only the eponymous poem that Bachmann refers to in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, but also the well-known satirical piece about the tabloid press, “Bildzeitung” (83).

³⁸ It was in the following winter that Bachmann wrote her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, the second of which refers to Enzensberger’s poem “Verteidigung der Wölfe gegen die Lämmer” (*W 4*: 210).

³⁹ For example, Enzensberger accompanied Ingeborg Bachmann on her first trip to the DDR (Leipzig) in March 1961 at the invitation of Hans Mayer (Bareiss-Ohloff 174); from 1961 to 1963 both Enzensberger and Bachmann participated in the Gulliver project (Hoell 114); in March 1962, Johnson and Enzensberger visited Bachmann in Rome (Albrecht and Göttsche “Leben und Werk im Überblick” 13); in 1965 Bachmann and Enzensberger (along with others) signed an anti-Vietnam declaration, and in the autumn of that year she and Enzensberger were elected to the committee of COMES (Albrecht and Göttsche “Leben und Werk im Überblick” 16); in 1967 Bachmann participated in a London conference along with Enzensberger (Bareiss-Ohloff 176); and in correspondence to Andersch, Uwe Johnson (both Andersch and Johnson were mutual friends of Bachmann) mentions going to dinner at Günter Grass’s with Bachmann and Enzensberger in October 1964 (Frisch 11, fn.1).

was even a source of jealousy for Max Frisch (“Deutschsprachige Literatur nach 1945” 288). Of much greater interest to this study is of course the extent to which the attitude and views of Enzensberger may have informed, or been reflected in, Bachmann’s literary portrayal of the journalistic media. In her brief but, I believe, important exploration of the Enzensberger–Bachmann connection, Albrecht’s examples of the way in which Enzensberger did not hold back from chastising Bachmann on occasion, for example, in relation to one of her poems and her essay “Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden” (ibid.), shows that the friendship with Enzensberger was certainly a forthright one.

Enzensberger as an important commentator on the mass media

As Riha points out, Enzensberger was an important figure for the “Wiederbelebung der politischen Lyrik und [die] Politisierung der Literatur überhaupt”, as well as the “Wiederaufnahme der »Sprachkritik der Zeitung« und ihr[e] Weiterführung“ (63).⁴⁰ The articles in which Enzensberger expounds his views on the mass media include his 1962 essay, “Bewußtseins-Industrie” (*Einzelheiten* 7–15). In this essay Enzensberger points out that, with the increasing advances of technology, media critique hardly ever mentions newsprint and publishing anymore, even though observations about the press made more than a century ago before the advent of new technologies are still relevant today (“Bewußtseins-Industrie” 9). Meaningful discussion of the mass media as a whole had thus become diluted and ineffective because of the tendency to undertake separate analyses of each new emerging branch of the mass media, thus leaving “die Bewußtseins-Industrie im Ganzen außer Betracht” (ibid.) even though it had become a “Schlüsselinstanz der modernen Gesellschaft” (15).

According to Enzensberger, those who focus on the commercial exploitation perpetrated by the “Bewußtseins-Industrie” miss the point because the primary aim of the consciousness industry is not so much to sell products but to perpetuate “die existierende Herrschaftsverhältnisse” (12) by exploiting the consciousness that they induce and foster. The driving force behind this manipulation of consciousness is the determination of the wealthy few to sustain their accumulation of wealth by undermining in the work force “die Fähigkeit, zu urteilen und sich zu entscheiden” (13). By manipulating consciousness, the wealthy few are able to continue their “[m]aterielle Ausbeutung” of the masses, but this form of exploitation is now so well camouflaged “hinter der immateriellen Deckung”, that the *consciousness* of exploitation has been effectively suppressed and eradicated: “Abgeschafft wird nicht Ausbeutung, sondern deren Bewußtsein.” (ibid.) Enzensberger’s views on the mass media therefore show a great affinity with Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the culture industry.

⁴⁰ Heeding, and agreeing with, Weigel’s warning about misusing the concept of “Sprachkritik”, I have avoided using the term in this dissertation: “Nun kann man in der Philosophie allenthalben eine Klage über die Phrase, das Gerede oder Geschwätz finden, oft verbunden mit einer Kritik an Formen der öffentlichen Rede, ohne daß sich deren Autoren unter dem einheitlichen Titel einer Sprachkritik verbinden ließen.” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 122)

Enzensberger and hope for the individual

Unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, however, Enzensberger does not have an unremittingly bleak picture of helpless individuals at the mercy of the powerful few. Instead he is heartened by the contradictions inherent within the system, the most fundamental of which is its dialectical nature:

Ausbeuten lassen sich nur Kräfte, die vorhanden sind; um sie, im Dienste der Herrschaft, zu domestizieren, müssen sie erst erweckt werden. Daß es nicht möglich ist, sich dem Zugriff der Bewußtseins-Industrie zu entziehen, ist oft bemerkt und stets als Beweis für ihre bedrohliche Natur gedeutet worden; daß sie aber die Teilnahme aller einzelnen am Ganzen erwirkt, kann sehr wohl auf jene zurückschlagen, in deren Dienst das geschieht. (14)

Thus, unlike Adorno and Horkheimer, who foresaw a system of total domination and control, Enzensberger believes that there are, inherent in the system, opportunities for subversion, because, regardless of the most concerted attempts, the consciousness industry is “nie total kontrollierbar” (ibid.):

Zum geschlossenen System läßt sie sich nur um den Preis ihres Absterbens machen, das heißt dadurch, daß man sie selber gewaltsam bewußtlos macht und sich ihrer tieferen Wirkungen begibt. Auf diese Wirkungen aber kann heute schon keine Macht mehr verzichten. (ibid.)

Enzensberger therefore criticises the pessimistic view that speaks of the powerlessness of the many, in the face of daunting manipulative power as unnecessarily defeatist, or alternatively naïve, pointing out that “Kulturkritik” is itself “ein Teil dessen, was sie kritisiert, als könnte sie überhaupt äußern, ohne der Bewußtseinsindustrie sich zu bedienen, oder vielmehr: ohne daß diese sich ihrer bediente” (15, spelling a.p.o.). For Enzensberger it is therefore both precious and futile to try to opt out of the existing system: “Es handelt sich nicht darum, die Bewußtseins-Industrie ohnmächtig zu verwerfen, sondern darum, sich auf ihr gefährliches Spiel einzulassen. Dazu gehören *neue Kenntnisse, dazu gehört eine Wachsamkeit*, die auf jegliche Form der Pression gefaßt ist.” (15, m.e.)

Enzensberger’s essential optimism in the face of what he nevertheless considers a powerful and threatening danger therefore represents a very different stand to the positions of Kraus, Adorno and Hocke. Although at first glance, Enzensberger’s position would appear to have little resemblance to Bachmann’s views on the journalistic media as expressed in her public statements, the call to “Wachsamkeit” and the goal of “neue Erkenntnisse” are certainly points of commonality and so is, I would argue, an optimistic faith in the underlying resilience of the individual who may be threatened but not inevitably doomed. This is a line of argument that I will be examining more closely in my analyses of Bachmann’s literary portrayal of the journalistic media over the next five chapters.

3.5 Context and transition

The purpose of this and the previous chapter was to provide historical, autobiographical and intertextual contexts for Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media. My intention in these chapters was not to offer detailed coverage of these contexts, but rather to present evidence of the potential for further research in these areas and at the same time to provide background material that will be drawn

on from time to time in elucidating aspects of Bachmann's literary engagement with the press and related mass media.⁴¹ These historical, autobiographical and intertextual contexts therefore represent only a secondary focus of this study. The primary focus of this dissertation is a comprehensive and detailed analysis of Bachmann's portrayal of the journalistic media in her literary work, which begins in the following chapter.

⁴¹ While this study provides a preliminary investigation of intellectual affinities between Bachmann and a handful of writers and intellectuals whose views on the journalistic media Bachmann seems to have shared, there is scope for more detailed studies of intertextual and other connections between Bachmann and writers such as Hocke, Enzensberger and Evrard, as well as Böll and Andersch. Although a number of scholars have addressed the affinities between Bachmann and Benjamin (primarily Weigel), this too is an area that has not been exhausted, and there appears to be a particular need for more comprehensive and systematic research into the connections between Bachmann and Adorno. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, Bachmann's affinities with Kraus have received insufficient attention and would therefore also be a fruitful topic for further investigation.

Chapter 4. The poetry

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates Bachmann's references and allusions to the journalistic media in the poems "Herbstmanöver", "Holz und Späne" and "Reklame". Written between 1952 and 1957, these poems are a product of the period during which Bachmann was actively engaged in journalism, initially at Rot-Weiß-Rot and subsequently as a foreign correspondent for Radio Bremen and the WAZ. It was also during this period that the journalistic media brought Bachmann to the attention of the reading public as a literary celebrity. Although Bachmann wrote a number of poems after 1957 (for example, "Wahrlich", "Enigma" and "Keine Delikatessen") there are no direct references to the journalistic media in her later poetry.

4.2 "Herbstmanöver"

1 Ich sage nicht: das war gestern. Mit wertlosem
2 Sommergeld in den Taschen liegen wir wieder
3 auf der Spreu des Hohns, im Herbstmanöver der Zeit.
4 Und der Fluchtweg nach Süden kommt uns nicht,
5 wie den Vögeln, zustatten. Vorüber, am Abend,
6 ziehen Fischkutter und Gondeln, und manchmal
7 trifft mich ein Splitter traumsatten Marmors,
8 wo ich verwundbar bin, durch Schönheit, im Aug.

9 In den Zeitungen lese ich viel von der Kälte
10 und ihren Folgen, von Törichten und Toten,
11 von Vertriebenen, Mördern und Myriaden
12 von Eisschollen, aber wenig, was mir behagt.
13 Warum auch? Vor dem Bettler, der mittags kommt,
14 Schlag ich die Tür zu, denn es ist Frieden
15 und man kann sich den Anblick ersparen, aber nicht
16 im Regen das freudlose Sterben der Blätter.

17 Laßt uns eine Reise tun! Laßt uns unter Zypressen
18 oder auch unter Palmen oder in den Orangenhainen
19 zu verbilligten Preisen Sonnenuntergänge sehen,
20 die nicht ihresgleichen haben! Laßt uns die
21 unbeantworteten Briefe an das Gestern vergessen!
22 Die Zeit tut Wunder. Kommt sie uns aber unrecht,
23 mit dem Pochen der Schuld: wir sind nicht zu Hause.
24 Im Keller des Herzens, schlaflos, find ich mich wieder
25 auf der Spreu des Hohns, im Herbstmanöver der Zeit. (W I: 36)

"Herbstmanöver", the first of Bachmann's poems to feature an explicit reference to journalism, was read on Nordwest Deutscher Rundfunk (NWDR) in November 1952.¹ In an article devoted to the poem and written in 2000, Bartsch argues that, although "Herbstmanöver" appears at first glance to be

¹ Published in *Wort und Wahrheit* in January 1953, "Herbstmanöver" was subsequently included in Bachmann's first collection of lyric poetry, *Die gestundete Zeit*, later that year (W I: 644).

unremarkable, Bachmann's positioning of the poem between "Alle Tage" and "Früher Mittag" in the first radio broadcast, and its placement in close proximity to the title poem of *Die gestundete Zeit*, suggest that she saw it as a relatively important piece ("Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«" 90). This view does not, however, appear to be common in Bachmann scholarship, where, Bartsch observed at the time, there had been little in the way of significant commentary on the poem (89).² I share Bartsch's view that "Herbstmanöver" has been unjustly neglected and therefore provide a detailed analysis of this poem, which offers a literary critique of two closely-related branches of the culture industry: the press and the advertising industry.

Set in Cold War Germany, "Herbstmanöver" alludes in its title to the NATO military exercises, which took place in Germany every autumn (Achberger *Understanding* 15). The starting point of the poem is a consciousness of the undeniable connection between the past and the present ("Ich sage nicht: das war gestern") and a disheartened but sober acknowledgement of the moral and material bankruptcy of the times ("Mit wertlosem / Sommergeld in den Taschen liegen wir wieder / auf der Spreu des Hohns, im Herbstmanöver der Zeit"), which, the poem implies, is directly related to that "gestern". Despite the underlying suggestion that "we" have been duped and abandoned, the poem's opening lines concede that we share some responsibility for this state of affairs: "we" are the ones who have once more failed, because of our stupidity or laxity. The poetic voice also sees all too clearly, that although it would be tempting to escape our demoralising circumstances—by moving on like other creatures of nature when confronted with the imminent discomforts of a harsh winter—physical flight is not an option for us: "Und der Fluchtweg nach Süden kommt uns nicht, / wie den Vögeln, zustatten." Nor is it advisable to escape into the aestheticism of visual beauty, either natural or man-made:

[...] Vorüber, am Abend,
ziehen Fischkutter und Gondeln, und manchmal
trifft mich ein Splitter traumsatten Marmors,
wo ich verwundbar bin, durch Schönheit, im Aug."³

Having discounted the viability of escape as an option in the first stanza, the poetic persona is confronted in the following stanza with everyday reality as mediated by the press, which, according to the concatenation of negative imagery in the first four lines of the central stanza, offers a most depressing scenario of bad news: stories about bad weather and natural catastrophes ("In den Zeitungen lese ich viel von der Kälte / und ihren Folgen / [...] und Myriaden von Eisschollen"); and stories of human folly, death and violence, dislocation and suffering ("von Törchten und Toten, von

² As one of the few worthwhile studies of this poem, Bartsch cites Oelmann's 1980 analysis, which examined the "Herbstmanöver" in terms of the "»Verhältnis« des Dichters zur Schönheit" ("Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«" 89).

³ According to Bartsch, these lines allude to August Platen's poem, *Tristan*, and expose "die selbstgenügsame Kunst [als] Lüge" ("Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«" 91). While this interpretation addresses the critique of self-satisfaction, it does not address the "traum-" component of the key adjective "traumsatten", whose connotations of escape into fantasy and sleep feature prominently in Bachmann's critique of the journalistic media. Cf. my analysis of "Reklame" later in this chapter and my discussion of "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen" in Chapter 5.

Vertriebenen [und] Mördern”). Newspapers, it seems, are permeated with depressing and frightening stories. Media analysts point out why this is so: “Bad news is good news. It is generally unexpected [...], unambiguous [...], it happens quickly [...], it is consonant [...] with general expectations about the world, and hence its threshold [...] is lower than that for positive news.” (Hartley *Understanding News* 79) In “Herbstmanöver” the disproportionate amount of bad news compared to good news in the press is not only made explicit in the juxtaposition of “viel” and “wenig”, but also structurally represented by the use of only four words in “wenig was mir behagt”, in contrast to the preceding three and a half lines of bad news.

This exposure to the bad news content of the press has a noticeable impact on the outlook of the poetic persona. Thus, in the first stanza, the poetic persona expresses despondency when directly experiencing depressing external reality, but nevertheless accepts personal responsibility, and wistfully but honestly recognises the futility of flight (either physical through travel or metaphorical through aesthetic pursuits). In the second stanza of the poem, however—and thus at the heart of the poem, both literally and metaphorically—we find that the response to the “reality” reported in the press (as opposed to the reality of personal experience) is bitterness and heartlessness: “Vor dem Bettler, der mittags kommt, / Schlag ich die Tür zu, denn es ist Frieden / und man kann sich den Anblick ersparen [...].”⁴ Instead of creating empathy for fellow-sufferers, the bad news in the press generates and entrenches selfishness, and increases social isolation. The mediation of the press also leaves the poetic persona (who, in the first stanza, expressed an appreciation of both natural and man-made beauty) incapable of seeing beauty in nature anymore: all she⁵ can see is “das freudlose Sterben der Blätter [...] im Regen”.

Journalism and the commercial exploitation of pain

The third stanza, however, depicts a dramatic turnaround in mood. Whereas the poetic persona accepts (albeit begrudgingly) in the first stanza that flight from present discomfort is not a viable option for humans, this attitude changes in the third stanza: suddenly escape is not only a possibility but a very much desired course of action.⁶ And with this change of belief, the sense of alienation and world-weary (even bitter) resignation in the first two stanzas is instantly transformed into a euphoric and enthusiastic summons to travel. The wording of this summons (lines 17–20), however, makes it clear that the transformation is not the outcome of a personal epiphany but instead a continuation of “the

⁴ The imagery of this stanza might be an allusion to the way in which National Socialism lives on in post-war Germany, albeit in a less obvious fashion: for example, the beggar at the door might be an allusion to the winter charity collections that the Nazis ran (Stadler 164).

⁵ Although Bachmann pointed out that she often wrote from a male perspective (*Gul* 99f.), this study will assume that the voice is female unless it is clear from the context that the voice is male.

⁶ The difference in attitude in stanzas 1 and 3 compared to the central stanza also emerges from Bachmann’s use of personal pronouns. Here I see the predominance of the first person singular in the second stanza as underscoring the selfishness of the poetic persona’s outlook whereas the alternation between singular and plural in the first and last stanzas suggests the remnants of a sense of community. For an alternative interpretation, see Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 55).

press talking”—this time, not news content, but advertising content.

Newspapers may contain bad news, but they also contain in their advertisements the opposite in the form of promises of a better, happier life. Indeed it appears, from the logic of the poem, that reading the bad news in the press not only makes newspaper readers more depressed than they already are, but also renders them more susceptible to the seductions of that better, happier life conjured up in press advertisements. Writing from a left-wing perspective almost identical to that of the Frankfurt School, the Australian researcher, Clive Hamilton, draws attention to the importance of discontent as a core advertising strategy and its centrality to consumer capitalism:

[W]hile economic growth is said to be the process whereby people's wants are satisfied so that they become happier [...] in reality economic growth is sustained only as long as people remain discontented. Economic growth does not create happiness: unhappiness sustains economic growth. Thus discontent must be continually fomented if modern consumer capitalism is to survive. This explains the indispensable role of the advertising industry. (*Growth Fetish* 80)

Although written in 2003 Hamilton's words ring true for the increasingly “Americanised” post-war Austria and Germany that Bachmann portrays in her literary work.⁷ In “Herbstmanöver”, the media consumer is seduced by the notion that it is indeed possible to flee from the unpleasant realities of life in (the literally and metaphorically) cold, post-war, northern Europe to the exotic sensuality and warmth of the Mediterranean and its aesthetic pleasures—a land of sunshine instead of rain, and a land where trees do not lose their leaves in winter. Unlike the journey described in Bachmann's poem “Ausfahrt” (*W I*: 28f.), which involves a conscious break with a moribund past to make a fresh start,⁸ the travel mooted in the central stanza of “Herbstmanöver” represents the kind of easy option that Bachmann condemned in her theoretical work as the enemy of genuine insight. The call to travel in “Herbstmanöver” has nothing to do with broadening one's experience or expanding the mind and is instead about the culture industry's promotion of escape and indulgence, as well as the financial exploitation of natural resources.⁹ It is also about exploiting the emotional vulnerabilities of consumers by offering them an escape from discomfort and by appealing to their greed and their need to feel special, by offering them “a bargain” and the opportunity to experience something purportedly unique: “zu verbilligten Preisen Sonnenuntergänge sehen, / die nicht ihresgleichen haben.”¹⁰

In “Herbstmanöver” Bachmann uses tourism to illustrate the vicious (but profitable) circle that leads from press content to advertising content and back again. Thus the poem shows how bad news in

⁷ For discussions of the infiltration of American culture (including American advertising strategies) of post-war Austrian and German society, see Carter (94–99), Lennox (*Cemetery* 297ff.) and Wagnleitner (161, 279).

⁸ The journey in “Ausfahrt” is also characterised by difficulty, hard work and vigilance—the opposite of the denial and escape into sensual or aesthetic indulgence in “Herbstmanöver”. As we know from Bachmann's theoretical work, the concept of difficulty was inextricably connected to achieving insight and truth. For a discussion of the positive nature of the concept of “Aufbruch” in Bachmann's work, see Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 55).

⁹ In marketing and in exploiting nature in this way, the tourist industry can be seen to be prostituting nature. The theme of prostitution and “selling out” is one that recurs frequently in Bachmann's work in connection with the culture industry, as highlighted in the analysis of *Malina* in Chapter 7 and “Drei Wege zum See” in Chapter 8.

¹⁰ Bachmann satirises the language of advertising through mimicry in a similar way in “Reklame”, “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” and *Malina*.

the press subliminally creates a market for commercial operations like tourism, the income from which pays for press advertisements. The advertising income in turn enables the press to continue to purvey the bad news stories that exacerbate feelings of helplessness, fear, isolation and alienation in newspaper readers, who consequently become more susceptible to the lure of commercial solutions, such as escape through tourism. This in turn proves the success of advertising in the press as a revenue-generating strategy, generating more income for those industries and providing a financial incentive for them to advertise even more in the press. This funds the continued publication of bad news stories, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Excursus: The significance of advertising revenue for the press

The history of press advertising goes back to the 18th century “Intelligenzpresse”, which contained, for example, notices recommending “Heilmittel [...], Gelegenheitskäufe und neue Buchtitel” (Brand and Schulze 104). Since that time, the income from selling advertising space in newspapers has become an increasingly important source of revenue for the press: “In der Zeit des frühen Hochkapitalismus wird die Anzeige zur ›Königin der Werbemittel‹, einmal für die Inserierenden, wesentlich wichtiger aber für die Verleger, da sie einen Teil ihrer Gewinne aus der Werbung erwirtschaften.” (Straßner 28) As the importance of this source of income increased over time, so the division between advertising and editorial became increasingly blurred, so that by the end of the 19th century there was “eine so innige Verbindung [der Werbung] mit dem redaktionell-geistigen Teil der Zeitung” that the newspaper analyst Karl Bücher defined the press as “eine Unternehmung, welche Anzeigenraum als Ware produziert, die nur durch einen redaktionellen Teil absetzbar ist” (qtd in Straßner 28).

Brand and Schulze try to downplay the manipulative and commercial side of advertising by insisting that notices such as “Familienanzeigen” and “[a]mtliche Mitteilungen” show “Zeitungsanzeigen grundsätzlich in erster Linie als Mittel der Information”:

Die Angebote der werbenden Wirtschaft verfolgen weniger den Zweck, plakativ (oder suggestiv) zu beeinflussen als vielmehr Produkte und Dienstleistungen bekanntzumachen bzw. zu empfehlen und damit dem Leser Produkt- und Preisvergleichen an die Hand zu geben. (*Medienkundliches Handbuch: Die Zeitung* 106)

However, their own definition of “Anzeige” as “[v]om Auftraggeber bezahlte Mitteilung (Bekanntmachung) in einem Pressezeugnis, die sichtbar dem Interesse des Bekanntmachenden dient” (529), makes it clear exactly who the main beneficiary of advertising is. As Straßner observes:

[Anzeigenwerbung] dient dem Bemühen, Menschen so zu beeinflussen, daß sie im Interesse der Werbenden handeln. Sie will Aufmerksamkeit erwecken, dieses Interesse schließlich zum Wunsch verdichten, im Sinne der Werbenden zu agieren und schließlich den Wunsch aktiv zu realisieren. Die Anzeige bietet dafür die Möglichkeit, Leser gezielt zu erreichen, diesen die Werbebotschaft zur wiederholten Informationsaufnahme anzubieten, die Aufnahmemöglichkeiten individuell zu regulieren, das Gedruckte zu speichern, d.h. sich Markennamen einzuprägen. (28f.)¹¹

The importance of advertising revenue increased dramatically in the German post-war era,

¹¹ Cf. my excursus on the advertising industry in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

where, for example, advertising income represented less than half of a newspaper's income in 1954, but by 1976 (that is, over a period corresponding closely to that of Bachmann's literary activity),¹² advertising represented two-thirds of press revenue (Pürer and Raabe 132). Meyn underscores the significance of the subsidy in the following terms:

Zeitungen und Zeitschriften werden also weit unter ihrem Gestehungspreis verkauft. Ohne Anzeigen müßten „Die Zeit“ das Doppelte kosten, „Die Welt“ fast das Dreifache und der „stern“ das Dreeinhalbfache, um den Aufwand einzubringen. Solche Bezugspreis-Erhöhungen sind natürlich unrealistisch. (*Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* 67)

In fact, the dependency of the press on advertising revenue has developed to the point where the Berlin economist Helmut Arndt has estimated that a twenty-percent drop in advertising revenue would make the newspaper economically unviable and lead to its demise (Meyn *Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* 68). Despite the encroachments of radio and television since the 1950s, however, press advertisements remain “unangefochten Werbeträger Nummer eins” (Straßner 28).¹³ Because advertising revenue represents a major component of their income, the press in turn is highly dependent on those industries that seek to expand their business by advertising in the press. A number of media analysts have drawn attention to this mutual dependency and the way in which this relationship can affect editorial content, particularly in the local press.¹⁴

Tageszeitungen mit einem lokal begrenzten Verbreitungsgebiet, einem kleinen Anzeigenteil und geringen Auflagen (unter 10.000) sind darauf angewiesen, daß beispielsweise der Einzelhändler Schmidt bei ihnen inseriert; andererseits hat dieser außer dem lokalen Blatt kaum Möglichkeiten, Sonderangebote anzupreisen. In diesem Fall besteht also eine *gegenseitige Abhängigkeit*, was nicht ausschließt, daß sich der Geschäftsmann bemüht, im redaktionellen Teil der Zeitung lobend erwähnt und nicht kritisiert zu werden. (Meyn *Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* 68, emphasis a.p.o.)¹⁵

The lie of the mass media's pseudo-solutions

“Herbstmanöver” is, however, more than just an illustration of the way in which the journalistic media and advertising industries conspire to tempt us with their commercial solutions: indeed, at the core of this poem is the view that behind these escapist commercial solutions lies a patent fraud. Thus Bartsch sees in “Herbstmanöver” a critique of “die Trugbilder, die insbesondere durch die

¹² The period 1954 to 1976 was “die Phase der “Pressekonzentration” in Germany, when the number of newspapers and newspaper proprietors was dramatically reduced, purportedly in the pursuit of economies of scale (Pürer and Raabe 112–147). This rationalisation, however, led to a concentration of media power in the hands of a few large enterprises and an ensuing reduction in choice for media consumers.

¹³ As Straßner points out, it is only the relatively recent phenomenon of “Internet-Werbung” that represents a significant threat to the supremacy of the press advertisement (29).

¹⁴ A further manifestation of this mutual dependency can be seen in the tendency to create and foster sections within a newspaper that enhance the impact of advertisements: “Redaktionell gestaltete Seiten wie »Haus und Garten«, »Reise und Urlaub«, »Das Heim« oder »Auto und Motor« sorgen für *anzeigenfreundliche Umfeldler*” (Meyn *Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* 68, emphasis a.p.o.), so that, for example, travel agencies or airlines might be encouraged to advertise in the travel section of the press on the assumption that this context will increase interest in their services and products. In *Malina* the female protagonist denounces this system of mutual dependence as “universelle Sklaverei” (see Chapter 7 of this dissertation).

¹⁵ According to Meyn, advertising revenue comprised approximately 30% of revenue for regional newspapers in the 1950s (*Massenmedien in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* 67). By 1985, however, the “Anzeigengeschäft” of regional newspapers had grown to 70% of revenue and for “Publikumszeitschriften” it was “rund 80” (69). See also Brand and Schulze (104ff.).

Versprechungen der Fremdenverkehrsindustrie erzeugt werden” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 87). The lie of the solutions promoted by the advertising and tourist industries via the press is evident firstly from the disconnect between what is promised and the way in which it is promised: the travel advertisements speak of uniqueness (“Sonnenuntergänge, die nicht ihresgleichen haben”) but the images are tired stereotypes of the Mediterranean—orange groves, cypresses and sunsets.¹⁶ In these lines, Goethe’s apostrophised “Land, wo die Zitronen blühn, / Im dunklen Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn” (*Gedichte* 223)—which, in Goethe’s era really did offer a unique experience to the traveller—has degenerated into a landscape represented by a concoction of hyperbole, contrived familiarity and inflated enthusiasm fabricated by the advertising industry to promote mass tourism.¹⁷ Furthermore, clichés like “Die Zeit tut Wunder” reinforce the impression that the advertising and tourism industries have nothing unique to say (let alone to offer) the consumer.¹⁸ The lie of the advertising (and tourist) industry’s solutions is then confirmed once and for all in the poetic persona’s realisation that there is no real or lasting escape after all. We cannot escape time—either the present or the past—and we cannot escape responsibility:

Die Zeit tut Wunder. Kommt sie uns aber unrecht,
mit dem Pochen der Schuld: wir sind nicht zu Hause.
Im Keller des Herzens, schlaflos, find ich mich wieder
auf der Spreu des Hohns, im Herbstmanöver der Zeit.

Escape via tourism can therefore only ever be a temporary panacea: “Die Flucht in ein Sonderangebot der Paradiese verheißenden Ferienindustrie kann nur ein vorübergehendes Verdrängen, das Vergessen der »unbeantworteten Briefe an das Gestern« leisten.” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 57)¹⁹ Attempts at physical and emotional flight through tourism prove to be as futile as attempts to escape the present by closing the door or shutting one’s eyes to the unwelcome sights of contemporary life. Indeed, avoidance and escape leave us more poorly equipped than ever to deal with our problems:

¹⁶ For a discussion of Bachmann’s literary portrayal of Italy and intertextual allusions to Goethe, see Huml. Although the Mediterranean, and in particular, Italy, is generally presented in a positive light in Bachmann’s poetry (especially in her collection of poems *Anrufung des großen Bären*), the negative context of the allusion to Mediterranean landscapes in “Herbstmanöver” (which predates Bachmann’s work on *Anrufung* and her residence in Italy) represents an exception.

¹⁷ In his seminal essay, “Bewußtseins-Industrie”, Enzensberger draws attention to tourism as one of many “Sparten der Bewußtseins-Industrie” that are “noch kaum erkannt und erforscht” (9).

¹⁸ Bartsch insists that Bachmann’s often criticised use of “Genitivmetaphern” (for example, “Spreu des Hohns” and “Herbstmanöver der Zeit”) is not just a tribute to the poetry and style of Paul Celan, but should be seen as a deliberate ploy to differentiate her poetry from the language of advertising, which has appropriated the classical-romantic tradition of more familiar metaphors: “Gegen eine Metaphorik, die »natürlich« erscheinen will, wird eine gesetzt, die das Kalkül erkennen läßt, verfremdet und daher auch zu irritieren vermag.” (“Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 92) This assessment of Bachmann’s “Genitivmetaphern” represents a noticeable revision of his earlier, less generous comments on her use of this stylistic device (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 60).

¹⁹ Both Bartsch and Göttsche see the references to “Gestern” in this poem as an intertextual reference to Hofmannsthal’s early drama, *Gestern*, in which the protagonist declares: “Das Gestern lügt und nur das Heute ist wahr.” (Bartsch “Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 90; Göttsche “Klassische Moderne” 271) However, given the clear historical references to post-war Germany in the poem and the concerns expressed elsewhere in Bachmann’s work, I believe that the primary focus of this image is an allusion to the attempts by Germany and Austria in the 1950s to suppress the memories of their recent Nazi past. See also Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 103) and Höller (*Das Werk* 96).

we no longer even answer the door; instead we hide in the cellar and pretend that we are not at home. Thus “Herbstmanöver” depicts the failure of compassion: in the central stanza the persona slams the door in the face of beggars; in the final stanza, however, the persona does not even answer the door. Press content is shown to encourage morally weak behaviour in the form of flight from obligations instead of courage to face up to difficult times; and it promotes selfish indulgence instead of compassion for others. Although flight and denial enable us to avoid the depressing vision of beggars and nature in decline, we become more anxious, isolated and alienated than ever.²⁰ In the end we are thrown back on ourselves, on our own emotional resources and we have no option but to face our present situation, which is a product of our past. Thus “Herbstmanöver” unmasks “die touristischen Reisen [...] als illusionäre Fluchtwege aus den Forderungen der Gegenwart und der Vergangenheit” (Höller “*Die gestundete Zeit*” 63).²¹

Physical, social, moral and intellectual escape cannot change individual or socio-political circumstances: flight is a revolving door that brings us back to where we started from—just like the poem. The futility of such attempts at evasion and escape is reinforced by the structural circularity of the poem, with its repetition in the last stanza of words and phrases from the first stanza of the poem: thus we find the last stanza’s “unbeantworteten Briefe an das Gestern” echoing the reference to “gestern” in the poem’s opening lines, and the opening phrase “Herbstmanöver der Zeit” repeated at the end of the poem. This circularity also unmasks materialistic concerns and self-indulgent escapism as ultimately unsatisfactory and demoralising pursuits that fail to live up to their promise. “Herbstmanöver” thus reveals the solutions of the tourist industry (and by implication those of the culture industry as a whole) to be a form of “Scheinwirklichkeit” (Fehl 81)—the kind of solution that the culture industry offers us for the “Pseudoproblem[e]” (*Gul* 66f.) they generate.

The historical and ahistorical dimensions of “Herbstmanöver”

With its references to “Sommergeld” and “Herbstmanöver” the poem is clearly alluding to the failure of post-war currency and to the Cold War military tensions in Germany, and thus to a specific historical context. As Höller observes, unlike the more generalised “Ausdruck allgemeiner Entfremdung in der kapitalistischen Welt” in Brecht’s “Lesebuch für Städtebewohner”, poems like “Herbstmanöver” focus on the historical process of times becoming cold and dark, and thus express

²⁰ The counterproductive nature of attempts to immure ourselves to suffering has been described by the Buddhist philosopher, Pemma Chödrön in a way that captures the psychological and spiritual essence of “Herbstmanöver”: “We think that by protecting ourselves from suffering we are being kind to ourselves. The truth is, we only become more fearful, more hardened, and more alienated. We experience ourselves as being separate from the whole. This separateness becomes like a prison for us, a prison that restricts us to our personal hopes and fears and to caring only for the people nearest to us. Curiously enough, if we primarily try to shield ourselves from discomfort, we suffer.” (87)

²¹ Fehl highlights the way in which a passive mentality of consumption undermines insight and the individual’s autonomy: “In Wahrheit ist die Auseinandersetzung mit der Schuld der Vergangenheit nicht durch Vergessen möglich. Die Sprache der Werbung verstellt die Einsicht. Sie verhindert die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Vergangenen und verleitet zur Unwesentlichkeit, weil sie auf eine Rolle als Konsument festlegt und dem Einzelnen mit dem Verhaltensschema des Verbrauchens eine wirkliche Entscheidung abnimmt.” (81)

“zeitgeschichtliche Entfremdungserfahrung” (*Das Werk* 23). Bartsch, too, stresses the historical aspects of the poem, “dessen Naturbilder auf die geschichtliche Situation, auf das »Herbstmanöver der Zeit« verweisen” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 57). Thus the wintry imagery that opens the second stanza represents more than just a seasonal progression from the autumnal allusions in the preceding stanza, for the images of “Kälte” and “Törichten und Toten, [...] Vertriebenen, Mördern und Myriaden” are no doubt allusions to the historical and political context of Cold War Germany and the post-war revelations about (and judicial proceedings in connection with) the mass murders of the National-Socialist regime.²² The readiness of the poetic persona to succumb to the press’s solution of flight from the present (and the past) shows the fragility of the historical consciousness and acceptance of the opening stanza, and suggests that the press is responsible for interfering with the mourning process that should have taken place in Germany after World War II—a process that might have led “zu einer politischen und gesellschaftlichen Neugestaltung” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 103). This failure to confront responsibility for the past represented for Germany a lost opportunity for growth, and the alienation that ensues from such moral cowardice is directly related to this “versäumte »Trauerarbeit«” (*ibid.*).²³ Fehl sheets this failure home to the culture industry and consumer capitalism.

Die in der Reklamesprache vermittelte Scheinwirklichkeit spielt [...] im Gedicht “Herbstmanöver” [...] eine besondere Rolle: das Ausweichen und die Flucht vor der drückenden Last der Schuld, die die Vergangenheit, der Krieg und seine Folgen, nach sich zieht, wird darin bezeichnenderweise durch den Rückgriff auf die Sprache der Werbung dargestellt. (80)

This critique is, however, not just applicable to the specific historical situation explicitly alluded to in “Herbstmanöver”. Instead, I believe that Bachmann has in mind a broader critique of the culture industry *per se*. This is a view supported by Weigel, who sees the poem in terms of “einer allgemeinen Kulturkritik [...] am Scheinzusammenhang der »Kulturindustrie«”—a critique that emerges from the “Zusammenspiel einer industriellen Traumbilderproduktion mit der Kultur des Vergessens” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 260). Despite its quite specific historical context, then, the poem’s ahistorical dimension is just as (if not more) important in bearing witness to the folly and futility of taking the easy way out—which, as Bachmann constantly emphasised in her poetological writings, was not the path to insight and understanding. Similarly, the poem’s salutary warning, that one cannot ignore the past without consequences, is of universal and timeless relevance. As Bartsch observes, the poem represents “eine Absage an Flucht aus der Realität, Illusion und blendende, blind machende Schönheit” and “eine Absage an das Verdrängen des »Gestern«” (“Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 92).

The residual optimism of “Herbstmanöver”

Despite the vicious circle depicted in the poem’s progression and the note of fearful isolation on which the poem ends, it is important to note that the poem is not completely permeated with pessimism. In considering the final lines of the poem, in particular, we see that although the poetic

²² This allusion to war and crime echoes the contention elsewhere in Bachmann’s work (for example, “Alle Tage”), that war and crime did not miraculously cease with the official end of hostilities—one of the central concerns of Bachmann’s “*Todesarten-Projekt*”. See also Bartsch (“Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«” 92).

²³ Bachmann addresses this theme in greater detail in “Unter Mördern und Irren” (see Chapter 6 of this study).

persona was temporarily seduced by the temptations of the culture industry, she is not permanently duped: indeed, she is shown to see through the lie of the mass media's pseudo-solutions. It is also significant that, while the poetic voice finds herself once more "auf der Spreu des Hohns", she is alert and awake—"schlaflos". Although the adjectives "wertlos" and "freudlos" used earlier in the poem have negative connotations, the adjective "schlaflos" must be seen in a positive light, given Bachmann's association of sleep with the avoidance of insight in her Frankfurter Vorlesungen (Bartsch "Ingeborg Bachmanns »Herbstmanöver«" 94). A further sign of hope for the individual lies in the metaphor "Keller des Herzens"—an image that suggests coldness, isolation and an emotional pit bottom, but one that is not entirely negative, as it incorporates the positive image of "Herz". It is as if, in the depths of despair, the poetic voice has not only discovered painful insight, but this insight has also made her conscious of her physical and emotional core.

As a very early instance of Bachmann's disparaging portrayal of the press, then, "Herbstmanöver" testifies not only to the longevity of her literary focus on the impact of the journalistic media but also draws attention to the alienating effect of the culture industry as a whole—to the way in which it promotes escape and thus tempts us to avoid the painful process of insight and recognition of the truth that Bachmann described in "Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar". "Herbstmanöver" not only illustrates the consequences of failing to confront pain, responsibility and hence the truth about our past (and our present), but also unmasks the commercial solutions offered by culture industry as pseudo-solutions and as inimical to truth and insight—in other words, as "Betrug".

4.3 "Holz und Späne"

1 Von den Hornissen will ich schweigen,
 2 denn sie sind leicht zu erkennen.
 3 Auch die laufenden Revolutionen
 4 sind nicht gefährlich.
 5 Der Tod im Gefolge des Lärms
 6 ist beschlossen von jeher.

7 Doch vor den Eintagsfliegen und den Frauen
 8 nimm dich in acht, vor den Sonntagsjägern,
 9 den Kosmetikern, den Unentschiedenen, Wohlmeinenden,
 10 von keiner Verachtung getroffen.

11 Aus den Wäldern trugen wir Reisig und Stämme,
 12 und die Sonne ging uns lange nicht auf.
 13 Berauscht vom Papier am Fließband,
 14 erkenn ich die Zweige nicht wieder,
 15 noch das Moos, in dunkleren Tinten gegoren
 16 noch das Wort, in die Rinden geschnitten,
 17 wahr und gemessen.

18 Blätterschleiß, Spruchbänder,
 19 schwarze Plakate ... Bei Tag und Nacht
 20 bebt, unter diesen und jenen Sternen,
 21 die Maschine des Glaubens. Aber ins Holz,
 22 solange es noch grün ist, und mit der Galle,
 23 solange sie noch bitter ist, bin ich

24 zu schreiben gewillt, was im Anfang war!

25 Seht zu, daß ihr wachbleibt!

26 Der Spur der Späne, die flogen, folgt
 27 der Hornissenschwarm, und am Brunnen
 28 sträubt sich der Lockung,
 29 die uns einst schwächte,
 30 das Haar.

Bachmann's next poetic allusion to the press occurs in "Holz und Späne" (*W 1*: 40).²⁴ Like "Herbstmanöver", "Holz und Späne" has received only scant attention in Bachmann scholarship.²⁵ Fehl (82–85), Oelmann (57–61) and Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 57–61) and are the only scholars to devote more than a few lines to this poem, and Fehl is the only one who explicitly highlights its critique of "Druck- und Pressewesen" (83).

Mechanisation, alienation and the print media

As with "Herbstmanöver", the first reference to the press in "Holz und Späne" does not occur until midway through the poem (that is, at the heart of the poem), suggesting that this reference constitutes a central concern. Unlike "Herbstmanöver", however, "Holz und Späne" focusses not on press content but on the mechanics of producing press content—the "Technik der mechanischen Reproduktion" (Adorno *GS 3*: 310). This emphasis on the physical is captured in the third stanza, where the imagery of "Berauscht vom Papier am Fließband" describes the overwhelming visual impact of enormous rolls of paper moving at a bewildering and inexorable pace on the giant conveyor-driven production lines of the paper and printing industries. According to the poetic voice, this mechanical process is so far removed from the historical and natural origins of paper and writing—the harvesting of twigs and bark from trees to make paper on which we write with moss-based inks—that we can no longer see a connection between these two processes. In a natural environment, we have no difficulty identifying essential elements of our world such as the "Reisig und Stämme" of the forest,²⁶ but in the unnatural, mechanised world of industrial society, those same elements become unrecognisable. Industrialisation and mass production of the writing and communication process has an intoxicating—

²⁴ "Holz und Späne" was one of four poems read by Bachmann at the May 1953 meeting of the "Gruppe 47" in Niendorf, where she was awarded the group's prize (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 565). The poem was first read on Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt, in February 1953 (only a few months after "Herbstmanöver" was first broadcast) and was published later that year in *Die gestundete Zeit* (*W 1*: 645).

²⁵ Thus, for example, Hapkemeyer mentions the poem in passing in a discussion of Malina's "Legende" passage (*Sprachthematik* 16f.) and Achberger merely observes that the poem "attests to [Bachmann's] belief in the power of the poet's word to touch the essence of human existence just as she exclaims her intent to write of painful truths with bitter knowledge" (*Understanding* 13).

²⁶ These images and the subsequent description of how these natural products are transformed into bulk paper, which is then placed in the service of ideology, might be allusions to the way in which nature and the print media were perverted by the National Socialist regime. In his memoir on Bachmann, *Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt*, Uwe Johnson refers to press reports about Klagenfurt residents collecting "Tann und Fichtenreisig" from the forests (for making festive garlands) in preparation for Hitler's rumoured visit to the city after the Anschluss of Austria (33).

and thus numbing and distracting—effect that interferes with the memory, or recognition, of historical and causal connections between the present (represented by the rolls of mass-produced paper) and the past (the forest and the trees, which provide the raw materials from which we manufacture paper). The slow, painstaking and laborious process of gathering and carrying, which formerly enabled “Gewinn von Welt in der Sprache” (Fehl 82), has been transformed into a completely passive process, characterised by sensory excess and intoxication—states that Bachmann sees as inimical to truth and insight.

The poem’s depiction of the alienation that ensues from mass production brings to mind Benjamin’s observations about the impact of mechanisation on workers and the workplace. Like Marx, Benjamin believed that the machinery of the production line forced workers into unnatural, machine-like behaviour: “Im Umgang mit der Maschine lernen die Arbeiter, ihre »eigne Bewegung der gleichförmigen steten Bewegung eines Automaten« zu koordinieren.” (Benjamin *GS 1.2*: 631) For Benjamin the mechanisation of production represented a form of physical indoctrination that led to the deepest degradation, which isolated and alienated workers from “Erfahrung”: “Alle Arbeit an der Maschine erfordert frühzeitige Dressur des Arbeiters. [...] Der ungelernete Arbeiter ist der durch die Dressur der Maschine am tiefsten Entwürdigte. Seine Arbeit ist gegen Erfahrung abgedichtet.” (631f.) In hermetically sealing workers from experience, then, the machinery of production alienates them from personal and direct knowledge of their world. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, such deprivation of authentic experience undermines the formation of independent thinking and personal insight that might support their rebellion against the system of total domination enforced and promoted by the culture industry. “Holz und Späne” illustrates exactly this kind of alienation in its depiction of the way in which mass production and the mechanisation of the printed word interferes with our relationship to a more natural and authentic language symbolised by the ancient and organic “Wort, in die Rinden geschnitten, wahr und gemessen”. Here the imagery of carving into the bark of the tree is particularly significant in referring to a process that implies permanence, pain and an impact that extends beyond the surface level—qualities that Bachmann associated with the commitment to truth. In modern times, however, the “Holz” of a more personal, authentic mode of expression has been replaced with the insubstantial “Späne” of the impersonal, fabricated language of mass communication and ideology—products that are all surface and no depth: they are literally and metaphorically only skin deep (lines 18–21).

Thrown together without a verb (and thus suggesting randomness and lack of connectivity), the collage of images, “Blätterschleiß, Spruchbänder, schwarze Plakate”, connote, as Fehl observes, “Wortinflation” and “Aufdringlichkeit” (83). These images also point to the promotion of ideology—in particular, the ideology of fascism—via the machinery of political propaganda (“die Maschine des Glaubens”) which relentlessly (“Bei Tag und Nacht”) spreads its mechanical tentacles throughout our lives (“unter diesen und jenen Sternen”). Thus Stoll sees the image of the machinery of ideology as a reference to “[der] in den Medien abgenützten und der propagandistisch verfärbten Sprache, deren sich die „Maschine des Glaubens“ bedient”, which Bachmann contrasts to “reine Sprache” and “das um

Echtheit bemühte dichterische Wort” (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 56). For Fehl this image shows how language has become the “Medium einer fortwährenden Manipulation des Denkens” (83f.)—a process of manipulation from which the press benefits:²⁷

Aus der Formulierung „Maschine“ des Glaubens geht hervor, daß ein Glaube, der in der Maschine produziert wird, nur noch ein ungeprüftes Nachsprechen zahlloser in den verschiedensten Sprachgebräuchen (politischen, wirtschaftlichen, feuilletonistischen etc.) vorgefertigter und fixierter Meinungen sein kann. Darin bleibt nicht Raum für eine kritische Distanz gegenüber dem sich aufdrängenden Meinungsangebot des Pressewesens. (83f.)

The dangers of deceptive appearances

At the core of “Holz und Späne”, then, we find a critique of the alienating and manipulative nature of the paper, print and press industries, and the mechanisation and politicisation of communication. The overall context—and indeed introductory theme—of the poem is, however, a warning against the deceptiveness of appearances and an ensuing summons to stay alert to the dangers that reside in that which is apparently innocuous.²⁸ It is this warning that frames the references to the processes and products of the print media. Thus the first two stanzas of the poem point out that it is not only obvious dangers (as exemplified in “Hornissen”, “laufenden Revolutionen” and “[d]er Tod im Gefolge des Lärms”) to which we need to be alert, but also those things in everyday life that we would normally dismiss as harmless—encapsulated in the image of “Eintagsfliegen”. According to the poetic voice, these represent if anything a much greater threat, precisely because they are so easy to overlook or underestimate. The one-line warning in the fifth stanza, “Seht zu, daß ihr wachbleibt”, which immediately follows the references to the print media in stanzas three and four, thus suggests that the press is an instance of something apparently innocuous against which we need to exercise particular vigilance. If we then compare the press to the apparently minor dangers listed in the first two stanzas of the poem, we come up with the following list of negative qualities: transience and triviality (“Eintagsfliegen”); amateurism (“Sonntagsjägern”); superficiality (“Kosmetikern”); insipidness and mediocrity (“Unentschiedenen”, “Wohlmeinenden, von keiner Verachtung getroffen”). As Stoll observes, this collation of images articulates “die Verwerfung geistiger Mittelmäßigkeit” (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 57). The poem’s summons to stay awake,²⁹ which follows immediately after the references to the modern juggernaut of the print media, therefore not only represents a critique of mediocrity but also represents a call for allegiance to the values of insight and truth, and thus echoes Bachmann’s insistence in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” on the importance of wakefulness and

²⁷ Fehl also maintains that the poem’s imagery of “Blätterschleiß, Spruchbänder, schwarze Plakate” can be seen to echo the “Sprachkritik von Karl Kraus, der ebenfalls das Zeitungswesen für den Verfall der Sprache verantwortlich macht und den »Untergang der Welt durch schwarze Magie« prophezeit hat” (83). It should not, however, be overlooked that Kraus was also an arch critic of technology and so “Holz und Späne” can be seen to echo this aspect of his critique, as well as Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the mass media as a mass-manufactured ideological product representing and promoting the interests of specific power structures in society.

²⁸ In this way, “Holz und Späne” echoes the oxymoron inherent in Enzensberger’s poem, “Verteidigung der Wölfe gegen die Lämmer”.

²⁹ In the second of her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” Bachmann insists on the importance of “Wachbleiben” and refers to the poetic voice in one of Eich’s poems as “[e]in Wachender [...] ein schlaflos Ausgesetzter” (*W 4*: 203).

watchfulness in the pursuit of truth.

The triumph of determination and resistance

Like “Herbstmanöver”, “Holz und Späne” begins on a rather negative note that offers a sobering assessment of present reality and goes on to portray a dystopian vision of language and communication in industrialised society. Its tone and progression of mood is, however, very different to that of “Herbstmanöver”. Whereas the poetic voice in “Holz und Späne” allows herself to be depressed and daunted—and temporarily succumbs to the distractions of the culture industry—the poetic voice in “Holz und Späne” shows a steely determination to not only stay alert to the dangers that surround her, but also to warn and encourage others to do likewise. The poetic persona in “Holz und Späne” also reveals courage and integrity in dealing with these dangers not through self-indulgent, escapist flight into the industrialised, processed nature of tourism, but by re-establishing the connections with authentic nature, which the culture industry has successfully exploited for commercial and ideological purposes, and from which the culture industry is trying to distract and alienate us. She does this by identifying with, committing to and reviving the primeval values of naturalness and freshness encapsulated in the imagery of “Holz”, “grün”, and “im Anfang” (lines 21–24), which represent positive “Gegenbilder” to the negative, mechanical imagery of the mass media juggernaut. Unlike “Herbstmanöver”, then, “Holz und Späne” does not posit nature as “Fluchtmöglichkeit aus der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit, sondern als Potential von Bildern des Widerstands” (Oelmann 58).

At the core of this “Widerstand” is “das Wort [...] wahr und gemessen”—the very opposite of the “unbekümmerten Alltagssprachgebrauch” and the “Sprache der Ideologien, die durch »die Maschine des Glaubens« Verbreitung findet” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 59). The antidote for this kind of mass-manufactured “»Gauersprache« [...] Klischee und Phrase” (ibid.) is the natural bitterness that nature offers us “Galle / solange sie noch bitter ist”. As we know from Bachmann’s poetological statements, truth is associated with bitterness. It is this bitterness that helps to keep our senses sharp and that prevents us from lapsing into unconsciousness, torpor or sleep.

Seht zu, daß ihr wachbleibt!
 Der Spur der Späne, die flogen, folgt
 der Hornissenschwarm, und am Brunnen
 sträubt sich der Lockung,
 die uns einst schwächte,
 das Haar.³⁰

By returning at the end of the poem to the imagery of “Späne” and “Hornissen” from the title and opening line of the poem respectively, Bachmann uses a circular structure like the one she employs in “Herbstmanöver”, but to very different effect. Instead of depressing and despondent circularity, we find an energetic and defiant confrontation with the opening scenario, and a clear indication that

³⁰ Like “Herbstmanöver”, “Holz und Späne” alternates between the use of the first person singular and the first person plural pronoun. Thus, the use of “uns” at the end of “Holz und Späne”, suggests a sense of community in the poetic voice, and the recognition of the need for collective effort to stand up to the forces behind the industrialisation of communication.

resistance is working.

The voice of authentic, organic language therefore survives, despite the strategies of industrialised society and the pervasiveness of the modern mass media: the concluding lines of “Holz und Späne” show that our weaknesses have not been successfully exploited and that temptation has been resisted: “Die Lockung zur »Ruhe«, jede Art von pseudoromantischer Dichtung, »die uns einschwächte«, da sie zur Passivität, zur Flucht in eine schon damals illusionäre Harmonie rief, wird als Verführung erkannt, sie wird verwandelt zum Aufruf zum Widerstand” (Oelmann 60). Thus, unlike the disillusioned and bitter resignation of “Herbstmanöver”, “Holz und Späne” voices an energetic and defiant optimism that tacitly expresses belief in the possibility of victory against dangers—both obvious and subtle—that try to stand in the way of authentic experience and truth.

4.4 “Reklame”

1 Wohin aber gehen wir
 2 *ohne sorge sei ohne sorge*
 3 wenn es dunkel und wenn es kalt wird
 4 *sei ohne sorge*
 5 aber
 6 *mit musik*
 7 was sollen wir tun
 8 *heiter und mit musik*
 9 und denken
 10 *heiter*
 11 angesichts eines Endes
 12 *mit musik*
 13 und wohin tragen wir
 14 *am besten*
 15 unsere Fragen und den Schauer aller Jahre
 16 *in die Traumwäscherei ohne sorge sei ohne sorge*
 17 was aber geschieht
 18 *am besten*
 19 wenn Totenstille

20 eintritt.

(W I: 114)

The last of Bachmann’s poetic allusions to the journalistic media is to be found in “Reklame”.³¹ Achberger sees in this poem a warning about “the danger of consumerism [...] a concern already voiced in ‘Autumn Maneuver’ with its reference to ‘sunsets under cypresses [...] at reduced prices’ ” (*Understanding* 18). However, I believe the poem is more a critique of the ideology behind the messages that promote consumption, rather than a critique of consumerism as such: it attacks both the “konsumorientierte[n] sprachliche[n] Strategien” of the advertising industry (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 72) and the “Forderung falschen Bewußtseins durch Massenmedien und Kulturindustrie” (86).³² “Reklame” illustrates the way in which the messages of the culture industry try to distract us

³¹ “Reklame” first appeared in *Jahresring* in 1956/57, and was subsequently published in Bachmann’s second volume of poetry, *Anrufung des großen Bären* (W I: 651).

³² The critique of consumption as an activity is more apparent elsewhere in Bachmann’s work, for example, in

from the more painful aspects of our existence and demonstrates the lie of the solutions with which the mass media try to divert us. Like “Herbstmanöver”, “Reklame” can be seen as a warning against the dangers of succumbing to our desire for denial and escape—a desire that is exploited by the mass media as a means of increasing consumption. As “Herbstmanöver” demonstrated, feelings of discomfort and anxiety make us particularly susceptible to messages that promise escape and comfort, and, as we have also seen in “Herbstmanöver”, the mass media know only too well how to exploit this susceptibility by offering quick and easy commercial ‘fixes’ that encourage us to simply deny, suppress or escape from pain and suffering.

In “Reklame”, “diesem kleinen, nicht gerade guten, jedoch ziemlich deutlichen Gedicht” (Fehl 80), Bachmann seeks to unmask the “Betrug” of the language and content (or more accurately the *lack of meaningful content*) of the “Slogans der Radiowerbung” (Lennox “Hörspiele” 86) by juxtaposing their superficial assurances with the anguished questions of an individual—the voice of authenticity, which puts forward a series of questions of an existential nature that centre on a search for meaning and an attempt to come to terms with suffering. In fact the very structure of the poem is determined by this “Nebeneinander von entleerter Reklamesprache und wesentlicher Sprache” (Fehl 80).

In this juxtaposition, the voice of authenticity is characterised by uncertainty and anxiety: the questions asked variously reflect a sense of disorientation, homelessness and vulnerability (“Wohin aber gehen wir [...] wenn es dunkel und wenn es kalt wird”); of confusion and suffering (“und wohin tragen wir unsere Fragen und den Schauer aller Jahre”); and a realisation of our ultimate mortality (“angesichts eines Endes [. . .] wenn Totenstille eintritt”). This “Ausdruck eines existentiellen Bewußtseins” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 71) is, however, persistently interrupted by the fragmentary and facile reassurances of the voice of advertising, which speaks in a hypnotic, soporific, even “narcotizing” way (Achberger *Understanding* 18): “ohne sorge sei ohne sorge [...] sei ohne sorge [...] mit musik [...] heiter [...] mit musik [...] am besten [...] in die Traumwäscherei ohne sorge sei ohne sorge [...] am besten.”³³

This “advertising speak” is deaf to the voice of authenticity, regularly disrupting its line of questioning and making no effort to address the issues raised in those questions. Thus, although the interweaving of the two voices appears at first glance to represent a dialogue, the voices actually form two completely different discourses: they are monologues that do not intersect or overlap at any point. In fact, the irrelevance of the responses is flagged in the random and mechanical regurgitation of clichéd phrases in nonsensical concatenation (“ohne sorge”, “heiter”, “mit musik”, “am besten”) are like the “Bimbam von Worten” that Bachmann refers to in her poem “Wahrlich” (W I: 166). In this respect, “Reklame” adopts the same technique used in “Holz und Späne” where the simple listing of

Ein Ort für Zufälle and “Probleme, Probleme”, which are discussed in Chapter 8 of this study.

³³ It would have been interesting to speculate on the extent to which Bachmann’s mimicry of “advertising speak” here and elsewhere in her work was inspired by her translation of “eine Reihe von Werbetexten für die Firma Olivetti” (Pichl “Ingeborg Bachmanns Privatbibliothek” 209), but, according to Weigel, Bachmann worked on these texts much later—in the autumn of 1966 (*Hinterlassenschaften* 572).

words and phrases without any semantic connections underscores the meaninglessness and irrelevance of their content. There is, however, an intensification of the parody of the language of advertising in “Reklame”: while the excerpts from tourism advertisements in “Herbstmanöver” are clichés and represent false promises, they are at least complete and meaningful sentences. By contrast, the parody of advertising slogans replicated in “Reklame” consists of expressionless, disjointed and randomly replicated “Gesprächsfetzen”, offering *ersatz* reassurance: they are nothing more than a “leeres Geröll von Silben”, as Bachmann puts it in her later poem “Ihr Worte” (*W 1*: 162).³⁴

The lie of the mass media's pseudo-solutions

Were it not for the constant interruptions of the voice of advertising, the line of enquiry by the voice of authenticity would constitute a logical and coherent flow. The sole purpose of the fragmentary slogans is, it seems, to interrupt and distract the anxious enquirer with ready-made and trite solutions whose aim is to “paper over” the problem, the primary message being the desirability of escape by either denying the problem (“sei ohne sorge”), by feigning hope and cheerfulness (“am besten”, “heiter”), or by diversion through entertainment (“mit musik”). At the same time, the “Befehlscharakter der Werbesprache”, as exemplified in the use of imperatives like “sei ohne sorge”, and the fake optimism of “heiter und mit musik”, disempowers consumers, making them more susceptible to the power of suggestion (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 72). “Reklame” thus illustrates the “Problem der Manipulation des Denkens durch einen bestimmten Sprachgebrauch” (Fehl 80). Like “Herbstmanöver” and “Holz und Späne”, then, “Reklame” suggests that the culture industry (and quite specifically the advertising industry) tries to divert our attention from the reality of our present and thus the truth, or (as “Holz und Späne” puts it) from “das Wort [...] wahr und gemessen”.

In “Reklame” Bachmann visually highlights the contrast between the two separate strands of discourse by the use of italics for the slogans, and by the notable omission of initial capitals for all but one of the nouns in the slogans. The use of italics not only visually distinguishes the advertising platitudes from the interlaced questions, but also suggests the way that advertising language tries to “dress itself up” to catch attention without providing any substance.³⁵ The omission of initial capitals for all but one of the nouns suggests mediocrity and sameness, and at the same time draws attention to the only word that does bear an initial capital—the key word “Traumwäscherei”. This neologism represents a clever allusion to soap powder and washing machine advertisements, which appeal to our desire for cleanliness and order, as well as our desire to metaphorically sanitise or “wash away” those

³⁴ Fehl’s observations in relation to “Ihr Worte” apply equally to “Reklame”: “Es ist besonders der Apparat der Publikationsmittel und Massenmedien, der dazu beiträgt, daß gerade heute der Zeitraum zwischen originärer sprachlicher Prägung (‘Bild’) und redensartlicher Erstarrung dieser Prägung zusammengeschrumpft ist, das vormals lebendige Wort sich mithin in kürzester Frist zum toten, zum ‘Sterbenswort’ zu verfestigen droht. So verengen sich die Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten der Sprache zu Klischees, die Vorgänge oder Verhältnisse der Wirklichkeit unzulässig etikettieren. [...] In der Sprache der Klischees wird alles verfälscht, gibt es die gesuchte Entsprechung nicht mehr.” (76f.)

³⁵ For an interesting comparison of the use of italics here and in *Malina*, see Achberger (*Understanding* 18f.).

things that reflect badly on us.³⁶ “Traumwäscherei” might therefore be seen as an allusion to attempts in post-war Germany to suppress the national sense of guilt in relation to the National-Socialist past. In this respect, the image of “Traumwäscherei” is related to the metaphor of “die unbeantworteten Briefe an das Gestern” in “Herbstmanöver”. Achberger (*Understanding* 18) and Šlibar (112) astutely note the more sinister connotation of “brainwashing” that resides in Bachmann’s use of the term “Traumwäscherei” which suggests the way in which the advertising industry tries to alienate us from our previous values and allegiances in order to indoctrinate us with its own values.³⁷ Another important aspect of the term is its mimicry of the way in which advertising has overused (and thus devalued) the term “Traum” in particular, in its inflationary language. The “Traum” component of the compound noun also alludes to the unreal and fantasy aspects of escape into the consumption-driven pseudo-solutions of the advertising industry.

But, as the poem demonstrates in its concluding lines, regardless of the persistent and superficially attractive nature of their messages, the solutions of the culture industry are essentially impotent in the face of core, elemental issues that confront us: they have no answer to the ultimate existential question: “[W]as aber geschieht wenn Totenstille eintritt.” Like “Herbstmanöver”, “Reklame” shows that escape and denial do not work in the long term: the tempting messages of the culture industry might offer a temporary distraction and comfort, but ultimately they have no real solutions to offer us when we are confronted with the difficult and painful truths of our existence. Steiger claims that Bachmann’s use of “kontrastierende Montage” demonstrates “die Unfähigkeit von Werbesprache und Konsumideologie [...], sinnstiftende Instanzen sein zu können” (32). I believe, however, that the inadequacy of the trite offerings of the advertising industry is exposed more by their silence in the face of “Totenstille”: the “typische Beschwichtigungsfloskeln aus Werbetexten [...] mögen über alle Probleme hinwegtäuschen, auf das Bewußtseinwerden der Gestundetheit der Zeit jedoch wissen sie keine Antwort” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 71f.; see also Fehl 81). The poem’s conclusion therefore clearly demonstrates that escape and denial do not work in the long term. The language of advertising (and the rest of the culture industry) constitutes a form of “Gaunersprache” (*W* 2: 108)³⁸ that promotes selfish oblivion and indulgence while distracting us from the only real solution to our problems, namely, confrontation with the truth of our situation, no matter how difficult and painful that might be.

³⁶ As Hamilton points out: “Advertising long ago discarded the practice of selling a product on the merits of its useful features. [...] On the face of it, a kitchen-cleaning product is promoted for its ability to clean, but in reality it is sold because it provides the customer with the sense of being a devoted homemaker or because a single person is reminded of how it was at home. If this fails to generate enough sales, and advertisement can create anxiety in people by suggesting that their kitchen is seething with ‘hidden germs’ that could at any time infect their children.” (81)

³⁷ For Lennox the term “Traumwäscherei” brings to mind the American soap operas, which served as a model for *Die Radiofamilie*, the radio series that Bachmann worked on at Rot-Weiß-Rot. (“Hörspiele” 86).

³⁸ See Schmaus (“Anrufung des Großen Bären” 77) and Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 71).

The residual optimism of “Reklame”

Nevertheless, although “Reklame” ends on an essentially depressing note with its reference to “Totenstille”, and lacks the overtly defiant optimism of “Holz und Späne”, there is a positive aspect to its sober conclusion, which, like the conclusion of “Herbstmanöver”, shows that the advertising industry’s attempts to distract ultimately fail. In “Reklame” the anxious enquirer has the last say, not the advertising slogans, and so we see, here too, that the lies and illusions of the mass media do not always succeed in smothering the voice of painful awareness and, thus, the voice of truth.

4.5 In summation

The foregoing discussion reveals a consistent critique emerging from all three poems. The journalistic and advertising media, as instances of the culture industry, purvey two different kinds of messages: those that generate or exacerbate feelings of discomfort, fear or insecurity (in the form of bad, frightening or depressing news), and those that encourage escape through diversion, indulgence and consumption (the messages of “Werbung”). These messages encourage weakness and selfishness instead of courage to confront the pain and reality, which is a necessary precursor for insight and awareness. All three poems depict the “Betrug” of the culture industry, showing how the messages of journalism and advertising try to perpetuate and increase our dependency on their products and services by distracting and alienating us from real experience, which might disrupt that dependency. Thus all three poems unmask “Reklame, Alltagsklischee und Zeitungssphrase [...] als sprachliche Fassade der Erfahrungslosigkeit, die erst von der authentischen Erfahrung zu durchbrechen ist” (Höller *Das Werk* 310). All three poems also support the central thesis of this study in expressing an inherent optimism in the ability of individuals to see through this “Betrug” and to thereby retain or regain a connection with integrity, authenticity and thus the truth of their lives.

Chapter 5. The radio plays

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the portrayal of the journalistic media in the radio plays “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, “Die Zikaden” and “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, which, like the poems analysed in the previous chapter, were written in the period 1952 to 1957—a period that corresponds closely to the time when Bachmann was actively engaged in journalism. Little surprise then, that all three radio plays feature references to the journalistic media and that these references mirror the negative portrayal of the press and advertising industry in Bachmann’s poetry.

5.2 “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”

Premiering on Rot-Weiß-Rot in February 1952,¹ “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” is the first of Bachmann’s literary works to allude to the negative aspects of the journalistic media. Although few in number, the allusions are nevertheless significant in their own right as well as the way in which they reflect on the central theme of the play. They also prove to be remarkably representative of Bachmann’s critique elsewhere in her work. While “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” is therefore a work of interest for this study, it appears that Bachmann did not think highly of this piece herself, for, although she mentioned it in a 1953 radio interview, she subsequently stopped acknowledging it (Haider-Pregler 74), thus causing later critics like Hädecke to ponder, “warum Ingeborg Bachmann nur zwei Hörspiele geschrieben hat” (45). When the manuscript was discovered amongst Bachmann’s Nachlaß and included in the *Werke* edition, the initial response was rather negative (45f.). It was not until “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” was rebroadcast by Deutschlandfunk on the 10th anniversary of Bachmann’s death that the play received positive critical commentary (52).

An interesting aspect to “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” is the fact that Bachmann wrote a prose version of this radio play using the same title, but changing the ending. Although the prose version does not feature any significant references to the journalistic media, I discuss it towards the end of my analysis because of its close thematic relationship to the radio play and because the differences between the two pieces shed light on the genesis of the radio play.

Bad news and pseudoproblems

Early in the opening scene of the play, the character, Anna, who works as a secretary in an

¹ According to the *Werke* edition it was first broadcast on 28 February, 1952 (*W I*: 661). This date is used by Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 260, 565) and Lennox (“Hörspiele” 85) but Bartsch cites Haider-Pregler’s assertion that the radio play’s debut was on 15 February, 1952 (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 74). As Haider-Pregler does not explain the discrepancy between the date that she uses and the date given in the *Werke* edition, and as there are technical errors in her article (for example, the mismatch between footnote text and numbering after the duplication of footnote 58), I suspect that Haider-Pregler’s date is an oversight or typographical error.

unnamed and undefined business, refers to information that she has read in the press. Her colleague, Mandl, has been expressing concern about the damage that the strong neon light in their office might cause to their eye sight, and Anna responds: “Ja, ich habe es unlängst in der »Wochenpost« gelesen. Ich glaube, es war die »Wochenpost«. Man sollte dunkle Brillen bei diesem (Neon)Licht tragen.” (*W I*: 179) Soon afterwards in the same scene (but this time in conversation with her boss), Anna mentions another article using an almost identical sentence construction: “[M]an kann sich so leicht erkälten, es gibt Leute, die sich sogar im Sommer erkälten; ich habe erst unlängst etwas über diese Art von Erkältungen gelesen, sie sind gar nicht ungefährlich, ich glaube, ich habe es im »Blick in die Welt« gelesen.” (*W I*: 182) With these apparently innocuous references to journalistic content Bachmann not only replicates the repetitive, predictable nature of press language and content but also draws attention to the way in which press reports on health issues exploit natural anxieties about well-being in order to attract reader interest.² They also make us more susceptible to commercial solutions that might ease our fears and anxieties—as Bachmann showed in “Herbstmanöver”. Scare stories about health issues, like those mentioned by Anna, are therefore yet another instance of bad news being good news for the culture industry and for consumption, but not necessarily for us. According to Bachmann, such stories are the kinds of “Pseudoprobleme” that the culture industry uses to distract us and to frighten us into seeking an instant solution, which inevitably involves consumption.

The pervasiveness of the message to consume is illustrated in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” in the “outdoor scenes” of the radio play, set in the shopping district. These scenes are dominated by the calls of street vendors, touting their wares (*W I*: 190f.). The “stereotyp wiederholte[n] Warenanpreisungen” (Höller *Das Werk* 87) of the street vendor voices perform much the same function as the “voice of advertising” in “Reklame”. Thus, we have in one scene the Rasierklingenmann touting his “Klingefix” and an old woman selling balloons—both non-essential products, but products that people like Laurenz and Mandl can purchase thanks to their office jobs. The price that consumers pay for such products is, however, not only to be measured in monetary terms, but also in terms of a personal cost; for example, the office in which both Laurenz and Mandl work is a place of subjugation and devoid of meaning—a place, where their despotic Generaldirektor treats them like machines that he can switch on or off at whim.³ Effectively, their only freedom is to choose from a range of superfluous products on offer in the market—products that have nothing to do with their real problems, namely, the meaninglessness and lack of purpose in their daily lives. Instead these products support a “Scheinwelt des Vergessens [...], welche die Menschen um ihre eigenen Sorgen und Ängste bringt” (Höller *Das Werk* 87). The empty irrelevance of the commercial solutions on offer in this “Scheinwelt” is underscored in the chant of the Drehorgelmann:

Zwischen heute und morgen

² This is an early instance of Bachmann’s satirical commentary on the press’s exploitation of health fears, a later instance of which can be found in the Bulgare scene in *Malina*, discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

³ Bartsch sees in the Generaldirektor a “Karikatur eines Kapitalisten” (“Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachmann” 321) and describes his relationship with his employees as fascist (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 78).

liegt die Nacht und der Traum
 macht euch drum keine Sorgen
 macht euch drum keine Sorgen
 zwischen heute und morgen
 liegt die Nacht und der Traum ... (*W I*: 191)

The critique here is not targeted at the ephemeral nature of the Drehorgelmann's music—for music is by its very nature ephemeral. Instead it is aimed at the unoriginal, unstimulating and repetitive (grinding) quality of his instrument's music, which underscores the platitudinous nature of the organ-grinder's words. The similarity between this section of the play and Bachmann's poem "Reklame"—a poem whose very words "*ohne sorge sei ohne sorge*" are echoed in the organ-grinder's chant—has noted and discussed by a number of scholars.⁴

The press and the status quo

Anna's references to the content of popular "Illustrierten" are not only revealing about press content but also reflect on her character and the success of the press's strategies. In uncritically repeating things she has read in the press, Anna shows herself to be someone who naively accepts the press as an authority and whose knowledge of the world is heavily influenced (if not largely constructed and thus limited) by what she reads in the press: she looks for fulfilment "im Surrogat der illusionistischen Illustrierten- und Kinowelt [...], ohne zu bemerken, daß sie damit auf jeglichen Anspruch einer eigenständigen Persönlichkeits- und (Selbst-)Bewußtseinsentfaltung verzichtet" (Bartsch "Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachmann" 319). Anna is not one to challenge "the system" in any way. Throughout the play she shows herself to be practical, cheerful, friendly, helpful, unquestioning, and quick to defend not only her fellow worker Laurenz but also her boss, despite his overbearing and capricious behaviour. She is also a very sociable person, who seems to know all the people in the company she works for, and who is in touch with popular culture: thus Anna knows through her colleague, Fräulein Kleemann, about a recent film, "Gummi aus sieben Himmeln", while her colleague, Mandl, hasn't even heard of Fräulein Kleemann (*W I*: 180). Anna's enthusiasm for the popular media and her unquestioning acceptance of press content as truth suggests her social conformity and compliance with the status quo. Bartsch draws attention to this aspect of Anna when he remarks on "die Anfälligkeit der kleinen Angestellten Anna für die in den Medien angebotenen Surrogate" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 76).⁵

The price of truth and authenticity

While Anna is clearly an example of someone whose familiarity with the content of the popular press and popular cinema binds her closely to the status quo promoted in the mass media, a close association with the mass media does not appear to be a necessary condition for unquestioning acceptance of the existing social order, as we see in the character of Laurenz, who is the "loner" in the

⁴ For example, Bartsch ("Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachmann" 312), Lennox ("Hörspiele" 86) and Šlibar (113).

⁵ See also Höller (*Das Werk* 73).

play—someone who has no social life outside of work and who is not associated with the press or other forms of the culture industry in his day-to-day life.⁶ The only times when Laurenz is in any way associated with the mass media, for example, is not in real life, but the “unreal” world of the “Geschäft mit Träumen”. On first entering the shop, Laurenz mistakes the unusual music that he hears for the sound of a radio; and in the second of his dreams, where he plays the role of a megalomaniac super-boss “patriarchalisch[er] Übermensch[...]” (Höller *Das Werk* 88)—even more monstrous than his real boss—Laurenz calls for the “Nachrichtenapparat” and for “Stenogrammblocke” and “Übersetzer” (*W I*: 201) to record and translate his opening address to the 55th congress of his transglobal business.⁷

The allusions to journalistic media in this context must not, however, be seen in the same light as the references to the press and popular cinema in conjunction with Anna, for the eponymous “Geschäft mit Träumen” represents the very opposite of the very public face of the culture industry. Although its name suggests that it might be related to the “Traumwäscherei” of “Reklame”, the “Geschäft mit Träumen” is neither a “Geschäft” in the generally understood commercial sense, nor does it operate like a normal shop. For example, instead of the cheerful music associated with the world of media advertising (as in the “*heiter [...] mit musik*” of “Reklame”), the music that the stage instructions call for as the “Leitmotiv” in connection with the shop is “leise irritierende Musik”—a quality that calls to mind Bachmann’s insistence on discomfort as an essential portal for the experience of truth.⁸ There are many other factors that differentiate this shop from other commercial businesses: the shop’s trading hours (from 6.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m.) are the very opposite of normal shopping hours—this shop opens as other shops are closing. And unlike the main shopping area nearby, where the various street vendors tout their businesses loudly, there is no “hard sell” in this shop; indeed, business seems to be poor (*W I*: 194) and the shop-owner is “mißmutig” (Schuller 52). Differences are also apparent in the shop lighting: in contrast to the dazzling neon light of the opening office scene (*W I*: 179), the shop where dreams are sold is “unscheinbar” (ibid.) and (as Laurenz observes on two separate occasions) poorly lit (*W I*: 192, 194).⁹ These attributes of the shop draw attention to the shop’s “disparate Stellung in einer Gesellschaft [...], die vom Schein der Reklame erhellt und von verinnerlichter Herrschaft erhalten wird” (Höller *Das Werk* 76)—a disparity that establishes it to be the very opposite to the “äußere Schicht der Wirklichkeit im Rahmenteil, die sprachlich durch Reklameversprechen, Zeitungssphrasen und Alltagsklischees zitiert wird” (87).

In a non-commercial location such as this, it is not only the bright neon lights of advertising that

⁶ Anna and Laurenz can be seen as the mirror image of the Jan and Jennifer configuration in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, where Jan has more “social glue” than Jennifer and is associated more closely with the journalistic media, while Jennifer remains untouched by them (as discussed later in this chapter).

⁷ This dream scenario might be seen as an early precursor to the dream sequence in *Malina*, where Ich is mobbed by reporters with their “Notizblöcken” (*TP 3.I*: 518), as discussed in Chapter 7.

⁸ Höller, too, notes the contrast to the “heiteren Musik der Reklamewelt” when the music of the dream sequence becomes “gehetzt” (*Das Werk* 88). See also Hapkemeyer (*Frühste Prosa* 67).

⁹ Cf. Bartsch’s description of the shop as “ein im Kontrast zum üblichen grellen Erscheinungsbild der kapitalistischen Konsumwelt unscheinbarer, schlecht erleuchteter Laden” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 76).

do not belong—even the journalistic media have no place: as the owner of the shop is at pains to point out, he has no radio (*W I*: 194). The absence of radio in the shop helps to define this location as a non-public, indeed non-earthly place—a place where you can have any dream you desire, provided that you are prepared to pay the price. And it is here that we see the absolutely non-commercial nature of this operation: all the money in the world will not buy you one of these dreams; instead, as in life, the price we pay is time—a lesson that the culture industry tries to hide from us. As the shopkeeper points out to Laurenz, money cannot buy dreams—“Träume kosten Zeit” (*W I*: 213)—and the dream that Laurenz chooses will cost him “einen Monat” (*ibid.*).¹⁰ We find here some interesting dramatic ironies: first, Laurenz only stumbles across the “Traumladen” because he has been, for once, compelled to leave work early by a boss, who is normally happy to exploit his hard work but on this occasion has chosen to see Laurenz’s behaviour as offensively ingratiating (*W I*: 184); second, although he is in the midst of commercial activity and supposedly helping his colleague, Mandl, choose a present for his wife, Laurenz is not attracted to the commercial wares on offer and is instead intrigued by the non-commercial nature of the “Traumladen”.

Unlike the dreams sold to us by consumer capitalism¹¹ as exemplified in the commercial goods on offer in the other shops nearby—where, for example, Mandl can buy his wife a green silk scarf that Anna describes as “traumhaft” (*W I*: 216)—the dreams in the “Geschäft mit Träumen” represent an

¹⁰ It is in the expression of this theme—the non-equivalence of “Traum” and “Geld”, and of work and time—that Weigel sees the close relationship between this radio play and “Herbstmanöver” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 260). As Weigel goes on to observe, the fact that the dreams can only be purchased with “time” represents an implicit critique of money “als Scheinwert” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 262)—an aspect of the play that Weigel finds disappointing because of its stereotypical (and thus unoriginal) discourse about the things that money cannot buy (263). For Bartsch this aspect of the play is related to its critique of capitalism: “Träume, die Gesetze der kapitalistischen Ökonomie außer Kraft setzen [...], sind nicht mit Geld zu bezahlen.” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 80) Lennox sees the play as illustrating the saying that “time is money”: “Ganz buchstäblich geht das Hörspiel von einer Gleichung aus, die Benjamin Franklin, Max Weber und Karl Marx gleichermaßen schätzten und die impliziert, daß, wer immer dieser Logik folgt, bereits dem alles umfassenden Warencharakter des alltäglichen Lebens zum Opfer gefallen ist: »Zeit ist Geld.«.” (“Hörspiele” 86)

¹¹ Bachmann made it clear in an interview statement that she repudiated the values of capitalism: “Und ich glaube nicht an diesen Materialismus, an diese Konsumgesellschaft, an diesen Kapitalismus, an diese Ungeheuerlichkeit, die hier stattfindet, an diese Bereicherung der Leute, die kein Recht haben, sich an uns zu bereichern.” (*Gul* 145) Bachmann’s rejection of the “dekadente Konsumwelt” of Rome and Europe was also reported by Hans Marte (Bachmann’s host and guide when she visited Poland in 1973) in Hamm’s film “*Der ich unter Menschen nicht leben kann.*” *Auf der Suche nach Ingeborg Bachmann*. This rejection of capitalism and mass consumption goes hand in hand with her interest and theoretical support for Marxism, an area that has been neglected in Bachmann scholarship, apart from Lennox’s extended analysis of Bachmann and materialist Marxism and Bachmann’s affinities with Marcuse (*Cemetery* 329ff.; see also 242–256). In 1963 interview, for example, Bachmann described her current reading as a systematic engagement “mit dem historischen Materialismus, von Marx und Lenin über die diversesten Stationen bis zu Ernst Bloch und Kolakowski” (*Gul* 42)., and in a letter written to her close friend Henze, Bachmann explained her commitment to the principles of socialism and communism while retaining deep reservations about the realities of its implementation: “Alle meine Neigungen sind auf der Seite des Sozialismus, des Kommunismus, wenn man will, aber da ich seine Verirrungen, Verbrechen etc kenn, kann ich nicht votieren. Ich kann nur hoffen (hoffen, wie man hofft, wenn man weiss, verloren, verloren, für immer verloren), dass im Lauf der Zeit das Gesicht der einzigen Revolution dieser Zeit die menschlichen Züge annehmen wird, die nie ein System annehmen wird.” (Henze *Briefe* 267) In his autobiography Henze reveals that Bachmann had been seminal in awakening his political consciousness in the mid sixties, as a result of which he took an interest reading newspapers. In particular, Bachmann’s gift of a copy of Marcuse’s *Triebstruktur und Gesellschaft* had a dramatic impact on his socio-political consciousness (*Reiselieder mit böhmischen Quinten* 251).

insight into our innermost desires and hopes, in other words, the truth of our lives: “Im Traum werden verdrängte Inhalte entfesselt, Ängste, Phantasien, Wünsche, die im wachen Alltag einer auf Fortschritt, bloße Nützlichkeit und Gewinn ausgerichteten Gesellschaft nicht zugelassen sind.” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 78) Thus, the dreams that Laurenz is offered in the shop reveal the truth about three different aspects of his life: the first dream expresses his fears and anxieties in the face of the day-to-day hostility of his boss; the second dream, is perhaps an expression of his desire to compensate for the feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability that emerged from the first dream; and in the third dream, he confronts the truth of his life—his chronic exhaustion and his enslavement to his job:

Immer bin ich müde, wenn ich abends fortgehe, immer verlasse ich als letzter das Haus. Und wenn ich im Tor stehe, bleibt mir die getane Arbeit noch zu überdenken, ob alle Termine in die Kalender meiner Vorgesetzten eingetragen sind, ob alle Schriftstücke abgelegt sind, ob die Wasserleitungen am Gang nicht tropfen und die Schreibmaschinen zur Reparatur getragen sind. Immer bin ich müde, wenn ich heimgehe [...]. (*WI*: 208f.)

As Lennox observes: “Für [...] Laurenz [...] ist das Leben eine einzige Kränkung, und die Träume, die in dem Traumladen vor ihm entfaltet werden, enthüllen auf sehr konkrete Weise, wie und warum er leidet [...] und wonach er sich sehnt.” (“Hörspiele” 86) In his dreams, however, the inarticulate Laurenz miraculously overcomes “seine Unfähigkeit zur Kommunikation” and achieves “eine für seine Bestrebungen adequate Sprache [...], welche ihm in der Realität versagt bleibt” (Tunner 420). Most importantly, the dreams also reveal the depth of his passion for Anna as well as his despair that someone like her could ever care for a nobody like him—a man whom her dream persona describes as a small grey dot on the horizon, “der wie eine Träne im Sand zittert” (*WI*: 208). In his third (and last) dream, however, the shy, almost tongue-tied Laurenz becomes a lyrically passionate lover, determined to leave behind him the small, grey bourgeois world of restraint to achieve the heights of eternal, mystical and absolute romantic union with Anna (*WI*: 211f.).

The “Traumladen” therefore represents an “Ort[...] des Wunsches nach Grenzüberschreitung” (Schuller 50), or, as Lennox puts it, Laurenz’s “Begegnung mit dem Unmöglichen” (“Hörspiele” 86). Laurenz’s third dream in particular stands for rebellion against the mediocrity of everyday life: the dream constitutes “eine Schutzwehr gegen die Regelmäßigkeit und Gewöhnlichkeit des Lebens, eine freie Erholung der Phantasie, die freilich nur [...] einen kurzen Abend lang einem Laurenz zugänglich ist” (Tunner 421).¹² More importantly, however, unlike the Drehorgelmann’s chant, which aims to distract and to numb awareness through soporific assurances, the dreams that Laurenz experiences in the “Traumladen” dramatically heighten his awareness and thereby counteract the “Erfahrungsschwund” of his waking life. As Bartsch observes after quoting Bachmann’s speech, “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar”, in connection with this play:

Konkret auf das Hörspiel [...] bezogen heißt das, daß—vermittelt über die Träume der im wachen Zustand bewußtlosen, unter dem für die moderne Industriegesellschaft charakteristischen »Erfahrungsschwund«

¹² Lennox asserts that Laurenz chooses the third dream because it is so radically different to his working world (“Hörspiele” 88). She also maintains that while the first two dreams show that Laurenz is “ganz offenkundig eins mit den ihn verfolgenden Mächten”, the third dream shows “auf subtilere Art, daß selbst seine Vorstellung von unbedingter Liebe ein Produkt gerade jenes autoritären männlichen Systems ist, dessen Opfer er ist” (89).

[...] leidenden Figur des Laurenz—nicht nur nicht von realen Gegebenheiten abgelenkt wird, sondern durch »eine Steigerung der Wahrnehmungsleistung« [...] das Bewußtsein von diesen [realen Gegebenheiten] geschärft werden soll. (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 78)

In contrast to the “im Rahmenteil [des Hörspiels] repräsentierten gesellschaftlichen Realität” then, the dreams of the “Traumladen” represent, as Höller suggests, “eine andere, sonst verdrängte Wirklichkeit und einen anderen Erfahrungsmodus” (*Das Werk* 76). Thus these dreams transport Laurenz to a different state, beyond alienation, and help him to realise his deepest wishes: “Der Traum macht die Illusion eines Lebens in Liebe möglich, in dem alles Gewöhnliche abgestreift wird —[...] und alle Entfremdung für Laurenz [...] aufgehoben wird.” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 80) In unleashing “Ängste, Phantasien, Wünsche, die im wachen Alltag einer auf Fortschritt, bloße Nützlichkeit und Gewinn ausgerichteten Gesellschaft nicht zugelassen sind”, the play shows that the “Traumladen” (78) is not in fact “[e]in Geschäft mit Träumen”, as Schuller suggests (51). Instead, the term “Geschäft mit Träumen” (with all its commercial connotations) is, as Bartsch contends, one that applies to “die Unterhaltungs- und Werbeindustrie der Konsumgesellschaft, die dem angesprochenen Verdrängungsprozeß zuarbeitet” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 78). Thus the “Traumladen” dreams do not represent “Flucht” into “Innerlichkeit”, but a “besondere Erkenntnisform” (77).¹³ Weigel disputes such an interpretation, insisting instead that the very name “Geschäft mit Träumen” suggests “massenhaft[e] Fertigung von Traumbildern” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 262) and represents a source of conflict in the revelation that these dreams cannot be paid for with currency. These aspects of the “Traumladen” should, however, be seen as part of Bachmann’s irony and the play’s critique of the normal commercial undertakings of the culture industry, rather than a critique of the “Traumladen” itself.

Like Weigel, Schuller sees the dreams on display in the “Traumladen” in a negative light, describing them as clichés: “[A]uf Regalen herumliegende, dosiert und abrufbar, halten sie das Imaginäre als realitätsüberschreitenden Wunsch schon längst besetzt. In ihnen ist er einkassiert. Die Traumwelt entspringt der Schallplatte.” (52) While Schuller’s and Weigel’s arguments are persuasive, I do not find them conclusive, and instead prefer to interpret the light that Laurenz describes as “zuviel für meine Augen” when the shopkeeper starts his introduction to the dreams (*W I*: 195)¹⁴ as the light of “Erkenntnis” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 77).¹⁵ The major thrust of the dream sequences is therefore to set up a contrast between the offerings of normal commercial vendors and the ‘real’ dreams of the “Traumladen”—a point that Höller, too, stresses: “Die anderen Träume aber, die die Menschen wirklich betreffen und die Scheinwelt der Reklame versprechen zergehen lassen, sind nicht in den

¹³ Höller, too, emphasises the way in which the dreams in the “Traumladen” reveal the truth: “Die in die Innenseite des Subjekts verlagerten Ängste oder utopischen Wünsche sind als Protest gegen die herrschenden gesellschaftlichen Verdrängungsmechanismen zu begreifen, während die spannungsgeladenen Rollengegensätze [...] die bedrohlichen Widersprüche der Gesellschaft im vereinzelteten Ich aufbrechen lassen.” (*Das Werk* 85)

¹⁴ Note here the ironic reference to Mandl’s earlier comment about the bright neon light of the office.

¹⁵ In support of his argument Bartsch points out the similarity between the way in which dreams are used in this play and in *Malina*, namely, “durchaus im Sinne der Psychoanalyse als besondere Erkenntnisform, die es erlaubt, verdrängte Ängste, Wünsche etc. und damit Bedrohungen wahrzunehmen, die unter der Oberfläche einer scheinbar heilen Welt ihre Wirkung tun” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 77).

einladenden Geschäften zu haben.” (*Das Werk* 87) In the “Traumladen”, then, I believe that Bachmann has created a “Gegenbild” not just to the world of commerce portrayed in the shopping scenes, but also to the celluloid “dream factory” that is so familiar to Anna. As Adorno and Horkheimer explain in “Das Schema der Massenkultur”: “Die Traumfabrik fabriziert nicht sowohl die Träume der Kunden, als daß sie den Traum der Lieferanten unter die Leute bringt. Er ist das tausendjährige Reich eines industriellen Kastensystems endloser Dynastien.” (Adorno *GS* 3: 332) In contrast to the offerings of the culture industry’s dreams, the dreams that Laurenz previews in the “Traumladen” are very much his own dreams—dreams in which he is a direct participant and which reflect the truth of his own experience.

Alienation and the desire for escape

While Laurenz is prepared to sacrifice his life savings, he is not prepared to pay for his dream with time. So, even though he leads a life devoid of meaningful relationships—a life dominated by work and its concomitant oppression, humiliation and chronic exhaustion—Laurenz puts work (and thus his small foothold in mainstream society) first: “Arbeit geht meiner Zeit vor.” (*W 1*: 213) As Bartsch points out, Laurenz does not even hesitate for a moment “das freudlose Leben und die Arbeit unter entwürdigenden Bedingungen der Verwirklichung eines Wunschtraumes vorzuziehen”, a decision that testifies to the “nachhaltige Verinnerlichung der Normen- und Wertvorstellungen der Gesellschaft” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 80). This internalisation of external values is shown not only in his refusal to pay the necessary price for the dream, but also in his dog-like obedience to the Generaldirektor’s peremptory command in the concluding lines of the play (*W 1*: 216), which confirms his readmission (and total subordination) to the existing power structure.¹⁶ As Haider-Pregler observes about this scene: “[W]eder haben die Träume Laurenz in irgendeiner Weise verändert, noch haben sich Anna oder die Hierarchien im Büro über Nacht gewandelt.” (45)

“Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” is thus one of the many examples of Bachmann’s work that demonstrate, “daß es den Austritt aus der Gesellschaft nicht gibt” (*W 4*: 276). For Lennox, there is no possibility of a new future for Laurenz, “weil [er] sich diese nur unter den Vorzeichen der Vergangenheit vorstellen kann, d.h. im Sinne jenes kommerzialisierten männlichen Alltags in der Frühzeit des Kalten Krieges, dem Laurenz gerade zu entkommen versucht” (“Hörspiele” 89). Höller attributes the play’s pessimistic ending to the social structures that dominate Laurenz’s life “als undurchschaute Herrschaft und Subordination in der Welt der Arbeit, dem Büro, und als undurchschaute Herrschaft der Ware in der Öffentlichkeit der Straße akustisch durch Zitat-Montagen von Sprachfetzen der Reklame und der Zeitungspresse inszeniert” (Höller *Das Werk* 76). Like “Reklame”, then, “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” may be seen as a critique of the increasing commercialisation and materialism of everyday life—a life in which we are constantly distracted by the media and by commerce; a life in which we are encouraged to solve our problems and fulfil our dreams

¹⁶ Unlike most scholars, who see Laurenz as a victim, Domschke sees him as a sinister character (“zu jedem Verbrechen fähig”), who allows himself to be exploited by his boss, “um [seines] kleine[n] Vorteils willen” (79).

through our purchases, rather than through experiences that help us to develop our true natures and reflect our deepest desires.

The critique in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” is also targeted at the system of oppression that perpetuates this way of life and the alienation of the worker that is inextricably connected with that oppression. As Bartsch observes in relation to this play, Bachmann creates:

[...] mit wenigen Strichen ein Bild von den Bedingungen der Arbeitswelt für kleine Angestellte, in der diese zwecks Gewinnoptimierung funktionalisiert sind, in der sich ihnen jedoch keine Möglichkeiten zu einem erfüllten, unentfremdeten Leben eröffnen, ja in der ihnen nicht einmal eigene Träume gestattet sind. (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 76)

The only dreams that are officially sanctioned are the “Produkte der großen Traumfabriken” (*ibid.*). The system of oppression targeted in the play is exemplified in the depiction of the “Aufzehrung der Lebenszeit durch rigorose Teilung in Arbeits- und Freizeit [...], wobei die Arbeit natürlich den Löwenteil ausmacht” (Schuller 51). It is also epitomised in the callous, unappreciative, wilful and despotic figure of the Generaldirektor of the company for whom Anna, Laurenz and Mandl work—a man who cannot be pleased—who, in the one scene criticises Laurenz for being “aufdringlich” in working long hours and staying late soon after rebuking Mandl for leaving work punctually, and then accuses Anna for “clock-watching” when she defends Mandl for leaving work on time for once (*W I*: 182f.).

The subjugation of the work force is illustrated primarily in Laurenz’s submissive behaviour and total enslavement to the system of work: “Laurenz funktioniert quasi wie eine Maschine auf Knopfdruck.” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 76) Conscientious to a fault—Lennox describes him as “fast obsessiv bemüht, seine Arbeit einwandfrei zu erledigen” (“Hörspiele” 86)—Laurenz is always the first to arrive and the last to leave.¹⁷ “[E]ingeübt in die kleinbürgerliche Tugend des Stillhaltens und ins passive Erdulden bestehender Verhältnisse” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 76), he is “[e]in kleiner, unauffälliger Angestellter” (Schuller 51), “dessen Leben sich üblicherweise in Arbeit und Sparen erschöpft” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 262). Although shy and a man of few words—even the outgoing Anna feels as if she has barely exchanged ten sentences with him in the two years that they have worked together (*W I*: 183)—Laurenz is nevertheless friendly, considerate and conscientious with his work colleagues. Laurenz is also “klein” and “unauffällig” outside of the workplace, where he leads the life of a loner, whose only external social contact is the landlady who brings him breakfast, and whose only escape from work is his annual winter trip to the mountains. In the “„normalen“ Subordinationsverhältnisse des gesellschaftlichen Alltags” (Höller *Das Werk* 78) Laurenz is so cowed by the system and his fears, that he accepts “widerspruchslos, weil auch sprachlos, die Erniedrigung seiner beruflichen Stellung und die Willkür des Vorgesetzten auf sich” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann*

¹⁷ The only time Laurenz is late for work is after his discovery of the “Traumladen” (*W I*: 215). Ironically, the reason Laurenz happened upon the “Traumladen” in the first place was because he had left work earlier than usual that day, and therefore had “time on his hands”.

76).¹⁸

There is, however, no real hint of his dissatisfaction with life until he enters the shop of dreams, where his choice of dreams reveals the extent of his alienation and the depths of his desire for a different life. Here, the dream imagery of war and destruction makes it clear that, beneath his unprepossessing surface, Laurenz is a man riddled with fear and anxiety; a man who sees work as a battleground where he is subject to constant hostility, criticism and humiliation. Although there is only one example in the play's work scenes (*W I*: 183), Laurenz's first dream suggests that hostility and criticism from his boss is a daily ritual (*W I*: 196). As Lennox observes about this dream: "[Hier] zeigt sich [...], was der tyrannische Direktor seinen Untergebenen tatsächlich antut, und gleichzeitig werden Laurenz' geheimste Wünsche aufgedeckt, indem er sich im Traum in einen verlässlichen Führer verwandelt, auf den seine weniger mutigen Kollegen angewiesen sind." ("Hörspiele" 87) Similarly, in the role reversal of the second dream—when Laurenz takes on the role of the most powerful, brutal, erratic and despotic Generaldirektor of all—one suspects that Laurenz is only emulating (albeit in an exaggerated way) the behaviour of his real-life Generaldirektor.

Anna's ever-cheerful and sociable nature may suggest that she is not alienated to the same extent as Laurenz, but cultural critics like Adorno and Horkheimer would argue that she is even more alienated than Laurenz because she is not even conscious of her alienation.¹⁹ According to Bartsch, neither Anna nor Laurenz is aware of their oppression "unter den herrschenden sozialen Bedingungen" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 79).²⁰ While it is true that Laurenz is not consciously aware of his oppression, his dreams reveal a subconscious realisation of his subjugation and alienation. Anna, on the other hand, who shows herself to be an eager consumer of culture industry products, demonstrates the effectiveness of the culture industry's strategies—which, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, aim to provide just enough stimulation to distract workers from the exhausting and alienating nature of work, but not enough to incite a challenge to the system under which they work. This sociological aspect of Bachmann's critique in the play is brought out by Bartsch in his comparison of "Ein Geschäft mit

¹⁸ In her analysis of a recording of the radio play's original 1952 performance, Haider-Pregler notes the way in which the character of Laurenz constantly weaves "ein schüchternes »bitte«" into his dialogue: "Dies lässt ihn besonders devot, subaltern, beflissen und unsicher erscheinen." (44, spelling a.p.o.) In the 1977 production by Studio Bern, however, Laurenz is not portrayed as the hopelessly subordinate and "überanpassungswilligen Einzelgänger". Instead, his readiness to please is more a reflection of his inhibitions and shyness than an unconditional belief in social hierarchies: "Die Träume werden ihm als Auseinandersetzung mit dem eigenen Ich geradezu verordnet." (51)

¹⁹ Haider-Pregler notes, however, the radical differences in character that can emerge from different productions of the play. Thus in the original Rot-Weiß-Rot broadcast, Anna is portrayed as a "geschäftige, wichtiguerische, kichernd-kokette, ein wenig dümmliche Stenotypistin" (44), while in a 1977 production by Studio Bern she was played as "eine unaufdringlich kumpelhafte, resolute junge Angestellte, die im gut eingespielten Zusammenarbeiten mit ihrem Abteilungsleiter auch die eine oder andere nicht ganz dienstliche Bemerkung zu machen gewohnt ist" (51).

²⁰ Not surprisingly, Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 79) disputes Šlibar's contention that Anna's "schweifenden, vagabundierenden Reden" represent a subversive force in the play (117). Höller's view is similar to Bartsch's, seeing in Anna "die Negativ-Formen patriarchalischer Allgewalt, eine Kette von Gesten und Zeichen der Unterwerfung, des Ausgeliefertseins, der Verzweiflung" (*Das Werk* 89).

Träumen” with Günter Eich’s *Träume*, in which he notes that both plays illustrate the way in which a range of forces, including authoritarian power structures, are responsible for “die Bedrohung des Menschen” and the “innere[...] Aushöhlung des Menschen durch die Unterhaltungsindustrie” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 79).²¹ Höller, on the other hand, stresses Bachmann’s critique of the capitalistic ideology that helped to quash “Erinnerung und Geschichtsbewußtsein” in post-war Germany:²²

Politisch war es die Verdrängung und das Vergessen der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit, gesellschaftlich umfassender und effektiver noch war es die Durchsetzung der Herrschaft der Ware in einer Konsumgesellschaft, die Sinnlichkeit, Bedürfnisse und Wahrnehmung modelliert und in deren Zirkel von Kaufen und Verkaufen Erinnerung und Leiderfahrung nicht gekannt werden. (*Das Werk* 86)²³

Thus, Höller sees in the play’s “radikalen, der Geschichte ausgesetzten Wahrnehmung” an attempt by Bachmann to counter the phenomenon of “lethargische Geschichtslosigkeit” in post-war Germany by sharpening “das menschliche Wahrnehmungsvermögen mit dem aufs äußerste gereizten traumatischen Ausdruck der Geschichte” (*ibid.*). Weigel, however, insists on the play’s critique of the culture industry: “Im Sinne einer etablierten Kulturkritik wird in diesem Hörspiel das Zusammenspiel von Arbeitsmoral und der Warenform von Träumen in der ›Kulturindustrie‹ durch die Moral der Geschichte gestört, daß man Träume nicht kaufen kann.” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 262)

Potential ramifications of the critique of journalism in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”

From the foregoing analysis it emerges that the critique of journalism and the mass media is rather oblique and understated in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” compared to the poems analysed in the previous chapter, all of which post-date this radio play. Bachmann’s critique in this play shows itself to be more focussed more broadly, on phenomena such as the culture of amnesia and the ideology of consumerist capitalism that promotes this amnesia at the expense of individual fulfilment and insight. Despite the “low profile” and almost innocuous nature of Bachmann’s allusions to journalism and other aspects of the culture industry in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, I believe that they are nevertheless important because they represent the first instance of Bachmann’s literary critique of journalism and the mass media.²⁴

²¹ For discussions of the intertextuality of “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and *Träume*, which predated Bachmann’s piece, see Haider-Pregler (37), Höller (*Das Werk* 75ff.), Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 77), Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 261) and Lennox (“Hörspiele” 87). There is, of course, a personal connection between Eich and Bachmann, as Eich was the husband of Bachmann’s literary contemporary and close friend, Ilse Aichinger.

²² While it is important to acknowledge the political forces behind Germany’s and Austria’s post-war amnesia, I am not sure that the distinction Höller makes is entirely valid here given that these political forces have their origins in the ideology of Western (especially “American”) capitalist democracy that was promoted by the occupying forces. For a detailed discussion of this aspect of post-war Germany and Austria, see Carter, Lennox (“Hörspiele” 84f.; *Cemetery* 297ff.) and Wagnleitner.

²³ For a discussion of how this reflects Adorno’s views on “Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit”, see Höller (*Das Werk* 311).

²⁴ In a 1975 re-broadcast of the radio-play, Heinz von Cramer made substantial changes to the manuscript, including the deletion of all three references to the mass media (Haider-Pregler 46f.), even though they seem to have remained intact in the original Rot-Weiß-Rot broadcast, whose production Bachmann followed with great interest and to which she had presumably given tacit approval (42). Implicit in Haider-Pregler’s observation that Cramer’s deletions were made “[s]ehr resolut, manchmal ohne Rücksicht auf die Struktur des Textes” (46) is the view that these apparently unremarkable references were indeed significant to the play.

Any assessment of the significance of these references to journalism and other media must take into account the fact that Bachmann's story of the same name, which deals with the same central theme—namely, the social cost (“Zeit”) of dreams (W 2: 41ff.) and the conflict between public roles and private aspirations—not only has a radically different ending to the radio play, but also omits all reference to journalism and the mass media. This is a point of difference that has not yet been noted in the various analyses that compare the radio play and the story. In the prose version, the Laurenzian first-person narrator is so affected by his dream that he finds himself unable to return to quotidian reality. Instead of helping him to achieve a more authentic life free from the strictures of his previous working life, the experience in the “Traumladen” leaves him ill and alienated from life in a different way, with all the time in the world, but no purpose: “Zeit wofür?” (W 2: 417)

The *Werke* edition of Bachmann's works claims that, even though it was broadcast on German radio some nine months *after* the radio play premiered in Vienna, the prose version pre-dates the radio play (W 2: 604). Weigel contests this assertion, supporting her argument with a general reference to the “Umstände der Erzählung sowie die Texte” and the more sophisticated and complex reworking of the material in the story version: “Zwar gilt auch in der Erzählung, daß man Träume nicht kaufen kann, aber die dagegen gesetzte Äquivalenz von Zeit und Traum ist zugleich komplizierter geworden, denn daß Träume Zeit kosten, heißt noch lange nicht, daß man mit Hilfe von Zeit auch über Träume verfügen könne.” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 263f.) In support of her argument, Weigel points to the more nuanced treatment of the motif of dreams and their “Bedeutung als Sprache des Unbewußten” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 264).²⁵ While I agree with Weigel's analysis of the significant differences between the two versions, I do not agree with her conclusion and would counter that the less complex approach to the material in the radio play might have been a response to the different requirements of each genre, rather than evidence that the radio play preceded the story. As Reinert points out:

Gewiß hat jeder Hörspielautor zu beachten, daß, will er beim Publikum Wirkung erzielen, er diese bereits bei der ersten Sendung erreichen muß. Kein Autor darf die gattungs- bzw. medienspezifischen Rezeptionsbedingungen mißachten, und natürlich müssen sich diese auch objektiv irgendwie in der Anlage des Werkes niederschlagen. Wer als Autor nicht die Flüchtigkeit des akustischen Erlebnisses einkalkuliert, wer nicht den Zwang zu konzentriertem Zuhören berücksichtigt sowie die unablässig drohende Gefahr, abgelenkt zu werden, da das Hörspiel nicht sämtliche Sinne beschäftigt, zumal den alles okkupierenden optischen Sinn nicht, der beherrscht schlicht sein Handwerk nicht. (199)²⁶

When Bachmann wrote this play, she was employed as a script-writer at the Viennese radio station Rot-Weiß-Rot (RWR), adapting other people's work for radio—“eine Tätigkeit, die ihr genaue Einblicke in den Kulturbetrieb verschaffte” (Höller “Briefe einer Freundschaft. Nachwort” 405). We can therefore assume that she would have applied her recently gained practical knowledge of the

²⁵ Other scholars to compare the radio play and story include Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 49, 81ff.) and Lennox (“Hörspiele” 88).

²⁶ This requirement for less complexity was also emphasised by jury members of the “Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden” in their consideration of Bachmann's later radio play “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, where they questioned whether a work, “das schwer zugänglich und vielleicht erst beim dritten Abhören ganz verständlich sei, noch dem Namen ‘Hörspiel’ verdiene, denn Hörspiele müßten sich an alle wenden, nicht nur an einen kleinen Kreis von Eingeweihten” (Reinert 142).

requirements of that genre to her own work. McVeigh provides support for this contention in his detailed research on her work at RWR, in which he insists that Bachmann would have been “very much aware of” the broadcaster’s mandate “to integrate political and pedagogical elements without becoming too heavy-handed” (“Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer” 38) and the way in which this was related to the portrayal of “die optimistischen Gedanken der Nachkriegszeit” (Weiser qtd in McVeigh 39).²⁷ Bachmann would therefore have been conscious that the much bleaker ending of the story version would have been unsuitable for broadcasting on RWR.

As a further counterargument to Weigel’s conclusion, I suggest that the inclusion of a critique of journalism in the radio play (even if that critique is comparatively understated) supports the view that the story pre-dates the play. As the foregoing analyses in this chapter have shown, the first allusion to journalism in Bachmann’s poetry appeared in “Herbstmanöver” (which was first broadcast in November 1952), a critique that was followed not long afterwards in “Holz und Späne” (broadcast in February 1953). The vehemence of Bachmann’s attack on journalism in “Herbstmanöver” and “Holz und Späne” compared to the more subdued references to journalism in the radio play “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” (which was written earlier) is consistent with the argument that I pursue in this dissertation, that Bachmann’s critique of journalism became increasingly trenchant and frequent over the course of her literary production.

If my conclusions about the chronology of the prose and radio play versions are correct, it would appear that the theme of journalism began to become a special concern for Bachmann some time between the writing of the story version of “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and the conversion of that material into a radio play early in 1952. Moreover, I surmise that, some time between the writing of the radio play and the completion of “Herbstmanöver” (that is, between late 1951/early 1952²⁸ and November, 1952), journalism became a theme about which Bachmann started to feel so strongly that she started to incorporate it in her literary work, and a theme on which Bachmann would increasingly focus in conjunction with her “Problemkonstanten” of “Wahrheit” and “Erfahrung”. Furthermore, I suggest that it is no coincidence that this is broadly the same period as that of Bachmann’s employment, firstly “im Sekretariat der amerikanischen Besatzungsbehörde” (*W 4*: 419)²⁹ before moving on to the U.S.-sponsored RWR in the autumn of 1951 (*W 4*: 420), where she worked initially as a script-writer and then as “Redakteurin” (*W 4*: 419) until mid-1953.³⁰ In this period Bachmann

²⁷ McVeigh describes *Die Radiofamilie*, the radio series that Bachmann worked on with Peter Weiser and Jörg Mauthe, as a series that “spoke to the imagination and hopes of the post-war Austrian public, creating [...] the image of a socially and politically stabile (sic), ordered and optimistic world” (“Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer” 45).

²⁸ Here I assume the radio play was written about three months before its broadcast in February 1952.

²⁹ According to McVeigh, Bachmann was “[f]irst hired as a clerk/typist in September 1951 by the News Section of the Information Services Branch (ISB), which oversaw the operation of RWR” (“Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer” 38).

³⁰ The *Werke* edition states that Bachmann left RWR in the spring of 1953, before attending the Gruppe 47 meeting in Niendorf (*W 4*: 420). This is consistent with Weigel’s assertion that Bachmann left “[im] Frühsommer 1953” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 266), but as McVeigh points out, this appears to be contradicted by Bachmann’s use

became, as Lennox points out, “directly familiar with Western efforts to elicit voluntary consent and eliminate dissent by controlling consciousness”, as well as the U.S. efforts to induce “Austrians to embrace the American way of life” (*Cemetery* 244).³¹ In this period Bachmann would have therefore been only too aware of the way in which the culture industry in general, and the journalistic media of press and radio in particular, continued to be used for a more covert form of mass propaganda in the service of a capitalist, rather than National-Socialist, ideology in post-war Europe.

5.3 “Die Zikaden”

First broadcast on 25 March, 1955, “Die Zikaden” was written in 1954 during the period when Bachmann was working as a foreign correspondent for Radio Bremen and the *WAZ* on the recommendation of her friend, the journalist and writer, Gustav René Hocke.³²

The press as a reflection of society

Set on an unnamed Mediterranean island,³³ “Die Zikaden” depicts an isolated community of émigrés—“Schiffbrüchigen, die auf Inseln Zuflucht suchen” (*W I*: 222).³⁴ Although geographically isolated, this community is not isolated from the culture industry: it has its own newspaper, the *Inselbote*, an “Einmannblatt” (*W I*: 230) edited and published by the long-time resident, Benedikt. Like the press on the mainland, the *Inselbote* represents the status quo. It is an important social institution that is both a reflection of society in general, and its readership in particular. In reporting the day-to-

of the present tense to refer to her work at RWR during an interview with Joachim von Bernstorff on 25 June 1953 (“Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer” 46). McVeigh observes that this also contradicts Hapkemeyer’s claim that Bachmann moved to Ischia on 15 June that year. Although McVeigh’s listing of *Radiofamilie* scripts shows that Bachmann wrote the 11 September 1953 episode, he does not use this to support his contention that Bachmann left RWR later than other scholars have suggested (42).

³¹ Hapkemeyer, too, draws attention to the political awareness that was essential for Bachmann’s role at RWR (*Entwicklungslinien* 43). As Wagnleitner notes, RWR was such an important propaganda medium and so tightly controlled by the Americans until 1955, that it might as well have been called “Red-White-Blue” (110). Dericum also notes the importance of this institution in her account of Bachmann as “»Skript-Girl«—eine Nachkriegsneuerung im Rundfunk nach amerikanischen Muster—das Schreiben von Manuskripten. Bald wurde daraus eine regelrechte Redakteurstätigkeit mit eigenem Schreibtisch und Telefon und dem Austausch mit Autoren, die Hörspiele, Essays und Gedichte schickten. Ingeborg Bachmann geriet an eines der einflußreichsten Kulturinstrumente der Nachkriegsjahre, das Radio.” (51f.) For more on RWR and its role as “Propagandamedium der USA” in Austria during the Cold War, see also Lennox (“Hörspiele” 84f.).

³² Hocke’s Nachlaß contains an undated, three-and-a-half page article called “Porträt der Zikade”, which describes “den verzückten Gesang dieser versteckten, sensiblen, rätselhaften Tiere, denen die Griechen Würde und Tiefe des Mythos schenkten”, and goes on to explain the myth in very similar terms to those used by Bachmann in her play, suggesting that the insect makes a good “Gleichnis für die Dichter aller Zeiten” (3). Hocke’s article also refers to the local wisdom amongst the peasants on Ischia about cicadas. One therefore wonders whether his article was inspired by a visit to Bachmann who moved to Ischia in September 1953, and if so, to what extent they might have discussed or mutually inspired each other on this theme.

³³ The names of Antonio, and other native islanders like Franco, Maria and Lavinia suggest that the island in “Die Zikaden” is, like Ischia, located off the coast of Italy. Although the play’s location was most likely inspired by Bachmann’s 1953 move to Ischia, Bachmann had relocated to Rome by the time this play was completed in 1954. Hapkemeyer describes Ischia as a “Fluchtpunkt für Intellektuelle und Lebensgenießer” (*Entwicklungslinien* 65).

³⁴ For a discussion of the theme of shipwreck in “Die Zikaden”, see Tunner.

day activities of the islanders in stories like “Mrs Brown läuft Wasserski!” (*W I*: 231) or “Mr Brown auf Unterwasserjagd!” (*W I*: 233),³⁵ the newspaper is very much a mirror of society on the island. In turn, the constant repetition of the same kinds of headlines (and essentially the same kind of content) establishes an expectation about what is “normal” in a given society, and thus forms a cycle of social reinforcement.

In addition to reflecting the local community and its values, the island press works as a form of social glue: most islanders not only read the *Inselbote* but engage directly (albeit in stylised and rather esoteric dialogues) with Benedikt’s mellifluous assistant, Antonio, who distributes the news on his daily rounds (*W I*: 231), calling out the headlines in the best of town-crier traditions.³⁶ The only person on the island who shows no interest in the newspaper or in Antonio, is the ironically nicknamed “Robinson”,³⁷ who, unlike Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, has deliberately “marooned” himself on an island to achieve social isolation. The closest contact Robinson has with the press is listening to Antonio’s voice from a distance, in a purely aesthetic, quasi-mystical and primeval way: “Antonios herrliche Stimme [...] erfüllt ihm die Nachrichten und Meldungen mit dem barbarischen Zauber alter Jagdrufe.” (*W I*: 230) Robinson shuns newspapers because, like letters, they remind him of his past and the world of relationships and social connection that he wants to flee; they remind him, “daß er nicht der einzige ist” (*W I*: 230). While he cannot shun the other islanders completely, he can restrict his communication with them to “[d]as Notwendigste”, and when social contact gets too much for him, he lets the others talk without responding to them (*W I*: 241).

At the core of Robinson’s need to avoid social contact is the desire to avoid the pain and suffering that society has inflicted on him: he wants to escape “aus einer Gesellschaft, die sich fortgesetzt an [s]einem Leben vergriffen hat” (*W I*: 259).³⁸ To this extent, Robinson is no different to the other island residents, who are also essentially refugees, trying to leave behind their pasts and the pain associated with those pasts. Robinson and his fellow islanders exemplify “de[n] Austritt aus der Gesellschaft, der aber auch keine geglückte und stabile Utopie mit sich gebracht hat. Nur der Wunsch danach kann sich für die Zeit, in der er ausgesprochen wird, einlösen.” (Schuller 53) Thus, Robinson’s proclamation, “Hier ist eine Insel. Und ich habe das Vergessen versucht” (*W I*: 230), is one that the other islanders could identify with, even though their escape manifests itself differently, primarily in

³⁵ These headlines also satirise the press’s fixation with sport—something that Bachmann also alludes to in *Malina* (see Chapter 7).

³⁶ Antonio, whom Schuller describes as “eine Mischung aus Strichjunge und antikisch-mythischem Jüngling” (53), is more than just a “newspaper boy”, as Gözl calls him (“The Ruins of an Illusion” 44), as he is occasionally commissioned by Benedikt to *gather* news as well (*W I*: 265). Although Antonio is thus the voice of the news and more, he remains mysteriously untalkative: within the play he barely says more than “Ja” or “Nein” in conversation, except when speaking to Stefano (*W I*: 257).

³⁷ For discussions of this aspect of “Die Zikaden”, see Achberger (*Understanding* 48), Bartsch (“Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachmann” 329; *Ingeborg Bachmann* 86f.), Hädecke (39), Lennox (“Hörspiele” 91) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 185).

³⁸ Robinson’s reference to the depth of injury that can be sustained at the hands of others foreshadows Bachmann’s contention in her “*Todesarten-Projekt*” that we suffer (and eventually die) as a consequence of the way in which others in society treat us (*Gul* 110).

escape into sport, entertainment and aesthetics: indeed, the island residents seem to be “eternal tourists”, whose lives revolve around leisure activities like water-sports (*W I*: 231, 232), soirées or art exhibitions (*W I*: 236, 244) and cosmetic treatments (*W I*: 248).³⁹ The main difference between the other islanders and Robinson is that although they, too, are “gebrochene Existenzen” and occasionally also withdraw from social contact,⁴⁰ they manage to maintain “eine Art Scheinleben” (Hädecke 40). Robinson therefore merely represents the most extreme expression of escapism: his avoidance of the press and written communication in general, marks him as the most radical of social refugees on the island. And in this radicalism, Robinson has perhaps gone beyond acceptable bounds: Robinson is “nicht der einzige hier. Vielleicht nur der einzige, der ein wenig zu weit geht. Er liest nicht einmal die Zeitung [...]” (*W I*: 230)

Questioning the truth-value of press content

Given his rejection of newspapers, it is not surprising that Robinson is the only one on the island (and in the play) to question the truth-value of press content. When an escaped prisoner, known only as “Der Gefangene”, seeks refuge in Robinson’s house, the escapee mentions that he and his fellow inmates would have been glad to have newspapers to read while in prison (*W I*: 239).⁴¹ In response, Robinson suggests that the escapee has not been missing much at all, given the questionable value of their content: “Übrigens sagt man von den Zeitungen, daß in ihnen stehe, was schon nicht mehr wahr ist.” (*W I*: 240) The refugee, however, counters:

Ich möchte hingegen wetten, daß es noch eine alte Zeitung gibt, in der einiges über mich steht. Das ist noch immer wahr. Und morgen wird einiges über mich drin stehen. Der Bursche wird an Ihrem Haus vorbeigehen und es ausrufen. Ihr Verstand wird Ihnen einen Augenblick lang recht geben und sagen: das ist wahr. (*W I*: 240)

This contrast in attitude to the press can be seen as a metaphor for their contrasting attitude to society and history: while Robinson is running away from society and yearns for total isolation, the escaped prisoner, who has been forcibly separated from society and deprived of things that free people ordinarily take for granted, wants to return to the society from which Robinson is fleeing. The escapee’s role as a contrary figure to Robinson is also flagged in his very different attitude to letters: when Robinson lets a letter fall, the escapee protectively leaps to pick it up—even though he is trembling with fatigue (*W I*: 227)—and expresses concern that Robinson might set fire to the letter. Far from dreading letters, the escapee values them—as we see from the way he speaks about a letter he had hoped to receive before he escaped (*W I*: 258). By contrast, Robinson’s wish for escape from society is

³⁹ Here the references to art exhibitions and cosmetic treatments represent yet another aspect of Bachmann’s critique in this radio play, namely, the escape into aestheticism. As Oelmann points out, the particular danger for writers in succumbing to aestheticism is that it can make them, in Bachmann’s eyes, “zur Wahrnehmung der Welt unfähig” (7). See also Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 57 and 87f.).

⁴⁰ Thus, Mrs Brown confesses: “Wir haben Ali zu oft abgesagt.” (*W I*: 244) Unlike Robinson, however, the other islanders remain at least “quasi am Rande der Gesellschaft” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 86).

⁴¹ While certain kinds of escape are socially acceptable (and even encouraged by society and institutions like the press), other kinds are clearly not. Here both Robinson and the escapee represent transgressors, who are eventually punished for overstepping these social boundaries and forcibly returned “to the fold”. Cf. Jennifer’s punishment for “going too far” (as discussed in my analysis of “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”).

so extreme that he hopes one day to lose his capacity to comprehend any form of written communication: “Aber ich lese die Zeitung nicht. Ich hoffe, es weit zu bringen; so weit, nie mehr eine lesen zu müssen. Eines Tags wird in meinem Gehirn ein Teil verkümmern; der, mit dem ich Buchstaben aufgefaßt habe. Dann ist jede Nachricht und jeder Brief unschädlich.” (*W I*: 239)

For the escapee, newspapers represent something positive—a much desired re-connection with the outside world. This more positive attitude to the press is reflected in the escapee’s language when he describes the form of communication between prisoners through their cell walls as “dieses zärtliche Nachrichtenspiel, voll Mitleid, voll Grausamkeit, zwischen Mensch und Mensch” (*W I*: 243, m.e.). It is therefore not surprising that the escapee springs to the defence of the press, pointing out the potential hypocrisy in Robinson’s position on the value and veracity of press content, and conjecturing that Robinson will later try to deflect responsibility for his actions by claiming he was unaware that he was committing a crime in harbouring an escapee: “Dieses letzte Detail wird natürlich nicht in der Zeitung stehen; aber es wird auch nicht wahr sein.” (*W I*: 240) Lies, the escapee astutely observes, may not be the exclusive domain of the press. The escapee then reinforces his point by suggesting that Robinson’s own attitude to the press will change volte-face as a result of his encounter with the escapee. Instead of shunning the newspaper in his usual fashion, Robinson will, according to the escapee, impatiently seek out a copy of the *Inselbote*, to find out about the escapee’s past. The escapee speculates on Robinson’s future thought processes in the following terms:

Wieviel kostet die Zeitung? Gib schon her. Und unfreiwillig werden Sie das Blatt überfliegen und sich die Lippen feuchten. Dacht ich es doch! Eine furchtbare Geschichte. Ich bin froh, daß er sie mir nicht erzählte. Ich weiß nicht, ob ich fähig gewesen wäre, ihm zu helfen, auch nur seine Gegenwart zu ertragen. Er ist fort in das nächste Verderben, und ich muß diese Geschichte rasch vergessen. Es ist gut, nicht wahr? Weil Ihnen meine Geschichte also nicht erspart bleibt, können Sie ruhig die Ihre erzählen. (*W I*: 257)

Flight from the past

There is, however, more to this dialogue than a difference of opinion about which elements of press content may or may not be relevant or true, for the exchange between Robinson and the Gefangene (including the reply “daß es noch eine alte Zeitung gibt, in der einiges über mich steht. Das ist noch immer wahr”) turns on the pun “Das ist noch nicht mehr wahr”—a common idiom meaning, “That’s all over and done with”, or “I’ve left all that behind me”. This exchange is therefore not primarily a dialogue about truth in journalism but about the possibility of effective and radical isolation from culture and history, and about whether ties to that culture and history really are so external to the self that temporal or spatial remoteness can lead to their “withering away” altogether in the way that Robinson believes or hopes.⁴² The play demonstrates that such attempts at permanent isolation are futile: despite their opposing views on social engagement, as expressed in their differing attitude to the press, both Robinson and the fugitive convict share the same fate. Their attempted escapes (in opposite directions) are both destined for failure, as accurately foreseen by each in judging the other’s situation:

⁴² And thus, another, perhaps more substantial ironic element in the choice of name is that Defoe’s Robinson, for all his remote and initially solitary exile, never ceases to regard himself—and indeed behave, within the limits of physical possibility—like the “citizen of York” he proudly proclaims himself to be.

Robinson: Man kann sich der Strafe nicht entziehen.
 Der Gefangene: Man kann sich der Welt nicht entziehen. (*W I*: 230)

And so, the exchange between Robinson and the Gefangene about truth in “Zeitungen” is more closely tied in with the main theme of the play—the undesirability (indeed impossibility) of fleeing from one’s past and one’s social responsibilities. Self-realisation can only be achieved within, and not outside of, society.⁴³ This applies not only to Robinson and the Gefangene, but also to all the island residents, who have tried to escape by immersing themselves in a life of neverending leisure and tourism—a form of escape that “Herbstmanöver” un.masks as untenable in the long term.⁴⁴ The difference in attitude to the press expressed by Robinson and the Gefangene in this exchange therefore mirrors their difference in approach to the external world and to their pasts.

In considering the escapee’s defence of the press, however, we need to bear in mind his status as a convicted criminal—a status, that must to at least some extent undercut his moral stand on this issue. By his own admission he is guilty of heinous crimes for which he was serving a life-long sentence (*W I*: 230) and which would shock Robinson if he were to read about them in the press (*W I*: 257). Despite this, the escapee not only has the last word in the debate about the press but also appears to occupy the moral high ground of seeing and speaking the truth in his encounter with Robinson, for it is the escapee who correctly perceives that escape from society is not a solution, but merely a different form of imprisonment. It is also the escapee who accurately foretells the untenability of Robinson’s self-imposed exile—“Man kann sich der Welt nicht entziehen” (*W I*: 230)⁴⁵—while Robinson clings to his efforts to retreat into “das Vergessen” (*W I*: 230). Even when reality (in the form of Robinson’s wife and two policemen) catches up with him and knocks on his door, Robinson is reluctant to confront it, leaving it up to the fugitive to facilitate his own (as well as Robinson’s) recapture by opening the door (*W I*: 263). The escapee proves to be right on all counts, except in his assumption that Benedikt would report his recapture in the island press. Even though the story of the escapee’s recapture would rank highly in terms of mainland news values, because it involves crime and has the added appeal of being a local incident, Benedikt’s initial response is to ignore it: “Das gibt eine schöne Meldung. Die Carabinieri haben den armen Teufel gefaßt. [...] Das *gäbe* eine schöne Meldung. Denn wir werden sie nicht bringen. [...] Man muß auf die Träumer Rücksicht nehmen.” (*W I*: 264f., m.e.)

⁴³ This theme, too, is a constant in Bachmann’s work, and one that is encapsulated in “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar” in her insistence, “daß wir in der Ordnung bleiben müssen, daß es den Austritt aus der Gesellschaft nicht gibt und wir uns aneinander prüfen müssen” (*W 4*: 276).

⁴⁴ In an historical context, “Die Zikaden” (like “Herbstmanöver”) can be seen as a critique of Germany’s post-war amnesia about its brutal past, and about post-war Germany’s attempts to distract its citizens from past pain by focussing on the self-centred, consumerist indulgence of the “Wirtschaftswunder”. For a discussion of the historical aspects of “Flucht-Tourismus”, particularly “Flucht” in Restoration Germany, and Enzensberger’s critique of mass tourism, see Höller (*Das Werk* 96 and 101f.).

⁴⁵ Admittedly, Robinson’s prediction about the escapee “Man kann sich der Strafe nicht entziehen” also proves to be accurate, but it is the escapee who perceives the futility of their respective attempts to escape their fate: “Ich sprach von unserm Fall.” (*W I*: 230)

Excursus: The selectivity of press content

While the journalistic profession generally claims to provide a reflection of external reality, the compilation of news and other journalistic content is very much a “selective account of reality” (McNair 77): “Die Zeitung nimmt [die Umwelt] nur selektiv wahr, d.h. die in sich komplexe Umwelt muß auf ein mitteilbares Maß reduziert und verdichtet werden.” (Dovifat II: 144). Selection and prioritising are unavoidable: even if the scope of the news is restricted temporally to the relatively short period of one day, and geographically to the relatively small area of a province or region, news producers can never report everything that has happened. In deciding what will be reported, the journalistic profession uses criteria known in the industry as ‘news values’ (Hartley *Understanding News* 76).

Journalists and editors select, from the mass of potential news items, the events which constitute ‘news’ for any day. In part, this is done by implicit reference to some unstated and unstatable criteria of the significant. News selection thus rests on inferred knowledge about the audience, inferred assumptions about society, and a professional code or ideology. The news is not a set of unrelated items: news stories are coded and classified, referred to their relevant contexts, assigned to different (and differently graded) spaces in the media, and ranked in terms of presentation, status and meaning. (Hall 148f.)

News values represent perceptions and assessments of the level of potential reader interest, and thus of newspaper sales. An example of a dominant news value in Western culture is conflict, as we see particularly in tabloid journalism like Germany’s *Bild-Zeitung* or Austria’s *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, which dwell on stories involving sex, crime, celebrity gossip and political scandal. Another common news value is that stories relating to one’s own locality (or culture) rank more highly in terms of newsworthiness than those from abroad relating to different cultures, unless other factors are at play.⁴⁶ Thus, the news is not a matter of gathering and writing up information about events that are inherently “newsworthy *in themselves*” (Hall et al. 335). Instead, the production of news is “a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (ibid.). News is therefore a human construct and cultural product just like literature and art: it is “a staple of that system of ‘cultural production’ (to use Theodor Adorno’s phrase) we call the mass media” (Hall 148). Any air of ‘naturalness’ that might adhere to the news is deceptive because:

[T]he form and content of the categories through which we come to know the world are not natural, nor inevitable, but *socially determined*. [...] The sociologist declares that journalism in all its forms is, despite its claims to truthfulness, above all a *construction*: an intellectual product embodying the technological, economic, political and cultural histories of the societies within which it is produced, inexplicable without knowledge of those histories, and impossible to interpret correctly without the context which they provide. (McNair 12, emphasis a.p.o.)⁴⁷

Thus, although the raw material of journalism is predominantly factual information drawn from the real world, news reports and other journalistic products offer more than a mere listing of facts: they offer a selection of facts and an interpretation of those facts by the journalist who wrote the material or

⁴⁶ For extended discussions of the concept of news values, see Hartley (*Understanding News* 76f.) and McNair (*The Sociology of Journalism* 77ff.).

⁴⁷ See also Watson (4f.).

the editor who reworked that material. Given the selective, interpreted and constructed nature of news and other journalistic content, media critics have argued that, far from being an accurate depiction of reality, journalism is inferior to other forms of knowledge and can only offer, at best, versions of the truth or partial pictures of the truth, and at worst, distorted and misleading reflections of reality.

[T]he information relayed by the mass media is one-dimensional compared to the *multi-dimensional knowledge derived from direct experience*. The stereotype carried [...] by the media is a way of simplifying reality. This is neither a calculated distortion of the real world nor an accurate reflection of real events but rather a translation of reality into stereotypes. (Wilkins 18, m.e.)

The kind of information communicated by journalism and other branches of the mass media is considered by many critics (particularly, but not only, those, who, like Benjamin and Adorno, write from a Marxist perspective) to present a real concern, given the increasingly pervasive influence of the mass media, because “[t]he pictures in our heads are pictures for the most part put there by the media; and our attitudes towards those pictures, our definition of their meaning—our recognition of their reality—owes much to what the media have selected, omitted, shaped and interpreted” (Watson 4f.).

Selectivity in the Inselbote

For Benedikt, the primary news value is whatever meets his readers’ expectations: as the narrator of the play observes, the *Inselbote* is a newspaper, “das schon seit vielen Jahren bei Benedikt in guten Händen ist, der weiß, was seine Leser erwarten” (*W I*: 230). Like any successful newspaper proprietor, he is acutely sensitive to the reading preferences of his subscribers. For an enclave of émigrés, whose very presence on the island testifies to their desire for isolation and escape from mainstream society, this means “[k]eine Politik, keine Börsenberichte” (*W I*: 230). Thus the *Inselbote* is devoted to local information, such as the islanders’ comings and goings, and other “Belanglosigkeiten”, precisely because its readers do not really want to be “informiert”: “Eingestellt auf die Bedürfnisse von Nichtstuern, ist der Redakteur Benedikt bemüht, nichts zu bringen, über das man nachdenken müßte.” (Funke 28) The triviality and banality of the stories in the *Inselbote* illustrate the relativity of news values and the selectivity of press content. What constitutes news is not an absolute but a relative judgement. Thus, the islanders’ activities are of no interest to anyone on the mainland but they make the headlines in the *Inselbote*. Conversely, what is considered high-value news content on the mainland—the recapture of a prison escapee—goes unreported in the island press because it would cause Benedikt’s readers discomfort.

Benedikt’s criteria for news selection therefore highlight a major shortcoming of the *Inselbote* as an organ of truth. This shortcoming is flagged in Benedikt’s characterisation of his readers as “Träumer”—an image that conjures up the negative association of “Schlaf” as the enemy of insight and truth in Bachmann’s poetological writings, and one that draws on the metaphor that the escapee uses in an earlier scene in relation to Robinson’s refusal to face the truth: “Du hast dich schlafend gestellt.” (*W I*: 243f.) By choosing not to alarm his readers with news that might remind them of the world outside (or any news that does not pander to their self-absorption) Benedikt prevents his readers from waking out of their somnambulant reverie. Benedikt is therefore not only effectively censoring the truth but also perpetuating the islanders’ state of ignorance: in colluding with their desire to escape the pain and

complications of the real life that lies beyond their island refuge, Benedikt withholds information that may lead to painful but revelatory insight and may prompt his readers to reconsider the nature of their isolated existence and eventually leave the island. Thus Bartsch sees in Benedikt's behaviour an example of the culture industry's promotion of false consciousness:

Wenn [Benedikt] als entscheidendes Kriterium seiner redaktionellen Arbeit die Rücksichtnahme »auf die Träumer« [...] nennt, verweist er auf die von Bachmann auch andernorts (vgl. *Ein Geschäft mit Träumen, Reklame*, Frankfurter Vorlesungen) angeprangerte Forderung falschen Bewußtseins durch Massenmedien und Kulturindustrie. (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 86)

Benedikt may pretend that he is motivated by a desire to protect his readers—"Man muß auf die Träumer Rücksicht nehmen" (*W I*: 265)—but behind this apparent social altruism there are no doubt mercenary commercial considerations: if Benedikt allows his readers to "awaken" from their somnambulant state, and they leave the island, his circulation figures will suffer. This suspicion about his real motivation is highlighted, for example, when Benedikt considers alternative stories to reporting the escapee's recapture and toys with the idea of a "Hundefest" as a new tourist "Industrie" which would bring "mehr Trinkgelder" (*W I*: 265). Another indication of Benedikt's essentially mercenary nature might be Bachmann's very choice of name, which could be an ironic reference to the editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*, Moriz Benedikt, against whom Karl Kraus waged a long-standing war in *Die Fackel* and whom Kraus saw as single-mindedly motivated by financial gain (Iggers 109). The commercial motivations of the press are also stressed in the figure of Antonio, who is not just the mesmerisingly beautiful voice of the island press, but quite the business entrepreneur—he is someone, "[der] neben dem Zeitungsvertrieb noch viele Geschäfte macht" (*W I*: 231). As Brokoph-Mauch notes, Antonio is always at the disposal of the residents—for money ("Ingeborg Bachmann's Flight from Song" 130). Hädecke, too, highlights the mercenary aspect of Antonio in his description of him as "zu jedem Dienst bereit bis an den Rand der Korruption" (40).

Benedikt and the Robinson story

In the final scene of the play, however, Benedikt is transformed from someone, who is highly conscious of his readers' tastes and only too willing to collaborate with them in perpetuating their self-delusion, into someone who decides to report on a story that appears to counter his commercial interests—the story of Robinson's departure from the island (*W I*: 265f.). This closing scene begs a number of questions. For example, if Benedikt withheld the news about the escapee's recapture because he didn't want to remind his readers of the world beyond the island, why would he report Robinson's story, which would do exactly that? And, given that Benedikt's stories are usually about the activities of the islanders who read his newspaper, why would he write about someone who was, as Benedikt himself emphasises, "[k]ein Abonnent"; who is no longer even on the island; and whom hardly any of the islanders knew? Further, given that the circumstances of Robinson's return home were more like a 'recapture', why would Benedikt write "Robinson hat dem Schiff gewunken. Robinson kehrt heim" (*W I*: 265), thus suggesting that Robinson's departure represented a voluntary 'return-to-the-fold' and a happy ending?

One possible interpretation is that Benedikt's actions merely underscore the failure of truth in

reporting. After all, how could Benedikt write an accurate and truthful account of something and someone of whom he has no direct experience? In reporting on Robinson's story, Benedikt's knowledge is definitely "aus zweiter Hand" (*GuI* 140)—to use the phrase that Bachmann employed when talking about Benjamin's views on the mass media. Because his knowledge of Robinson is limited to a few superficial details, Benedikt needs to speculate in order to fill in the gaps: "Und wie hieß doch der Mann, der so resolut das kleine weiße Haus bewohnte [...]? [...] Tat alle Arbeit allein. Wusch sich vermutlich auch die Hemden selbst. Was soll man da sagen! Du [Antonio] wirst auf die Gemeinde gehen und dich erkundigen." (*W I*: 265) But even if Antonio investigates this stranger as directed by Benedikt, very little additional knowledge will emerge about Robinson, given that he had minimal contact with other island residents. The only one who appears to have had any form of meaningful contact with Robinson is the escapee, who is also no longer on the island. Seen in this light, Benedikt's actions lend support to the view that Bachmann is here depicting the press as a selective and manipulated version of reality that fails to deliver "the truth".

An alternative and more positive interpretation of Benedikt's decision to report the Robinson story emerges, however, when the timing and circumstances of his decision are taken into consideration. Benedikt had initially decided that the Robinson story was not worth reporting:

Benedikt: Aber es lohnt sich nicht. Es hat ihn kaum jemand gekannt.
 Antonio: Ja, Benedetto
 Benedikt: Mach die Fenster auf, Antonio. Das Mittagsschwarz schlüpfert ein, und ich möchte die Zikaden hören. Vielleicht lohnt es sich doch. (*W I*: 265)

It is after he opens the window (a highly symbolic action) and hears the cicadas, that Benedikt changes his mind. This reconsideration of his earlier decision is, most significantly, connected with Benedikt's decision to resist the urge to sleep, that is, to resist the urge to lapse into the state of soporific narcissism that characterises the other island residents. This decision therefore shows that, although Benedikt is himself an escapee from the mainland, living a life of voluntary exile on the island,⁴⁸ he has not completely retreated into a fantasy world like most of the other islanders. This difference between Benedikt and the more recent immigrants is evident from his interaction with Antonio, who humours the other islanders by saying "yes" to most of their fantasies, but eventually replies with a firm "No" to remind them of the boundaries that they cannot overstep: "Die Flucht in den Traum bleibt diesen Menschen versagt." (*Angst-Hürlimann* 18)⁴⁹ By contrast, Antonio does not need to say "no" to Benedikt's wishes and commands because Benedikt is "wunsch- und illusionslos" (*Bartsch Ingeborg Bachmann* 86).

The reference to the cicadas in this scene is also of great significance for Benedikt's decision:

⁴⁸ A former political refugee, Benedikt has been on the island so long that he thinks of himself as one of the native islanders, like Antonio (*W I*: 266). His quasi-native status is underscored by Antonio calling him Benedetto.

⁴⁹ For example, when Mrs Brown is carried away with fantasies of regaining her former singing voice, Antonio brings her back to earth with: "Nein, Mrs Brown! Nein, Mrs Brown!" (*W I*: 233) Because of his role in clarifying acceptable boundaries of behaviour and expectations, Bartsch sees Antonio as "eine Art Stellvertreter des Erzählers" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 86), whom Bartsch characterises as "Anwalt der Gesellschaft" (85).

according to local mythology, the singing of the cicadas was intended to encourage humans to engage in meaningful and enlightening social contact and communication, instead of succumbing to the urge to sleep during the day.⁵⁰ Benedikt refers to the myth of the cicadas twice: first in connection with his conscious decision to listen to the cicadas and continue his discussion with Antonio, and again shortly before he announces his decision to write about Robinson after all (*W I*: 266). This suggests that Benedikt's change of heart is connected to the lesson to be learnt from the cicadas, as spelt out by the narrator in the closing passage of the play:

Denn die Zikaden waren einmal Menschen. Sie hörten auf zu essen, zu trinken und zu lieben, um immerfort singen zu können. Auf der Flucht in den Gesang wurden sie dürrer und kleiner, und nun singen sie, an ihre Sehnsucht verloren—verzaubert, aber auch verdammt, weil ihre Stimmen unmenschlich geworden sind. (*W I*: 268)

The cicadas therefore serve as a salutary warning of the dangers of forgetting or ignoring one's human (that is, physical) origins and needs. Hence the narrator's entreaty to his⁵¹ audience: "Such nicht zu vergessen! Erinne dich! Und der dürre Gesang deiner Sehnsucht wird Fleisch." (*W I*: 267)⁵² Certainly it appears as if the cicadas have served as a warning to Benedikt, for his decision to report the Robinson story after all, seems to be a direct consequence of his reflection on the fate of the cicadas: conscious of the dehumanisingly indulgent and unbalanced nature of island existence, Benedikt perhaps realises the dangers of continuing to collude with the islanders in their desire for escape.

Although it seems to represent a transformation of sorts, and one that appears to be related to being true to himself, Benedikt's change of heart about telling the Robinson story falls a long way short of Bachmann's vision of the truth hitting us like a "Faustschlag auf den Schädel" or the "Axt [...] für das gefrorene Meer in uns" (*W 4*: 210). Indeed, many scholars see Benedikt as someone, who avoids telling the truth in order to keep the island immigrants trapped in their solipsistic world. For example, Achberger describes Benedikt as "Antonio's accomplice in the art of deceiving and quite literally captivating the shipwrecked refugees from the mainland" because of the way in which he "distracts [the islanders] from their past lives [keeping] their attention diverted to the minutiae of their island existence" (*Understanding* 37). Achberger goes on to argue that Benedikt's final dialogue with Antonio "calls attention to the process of artistic interpretation of the world, which—itself a retreat from the world—serves to enable others to live in a state of withdrawal from reality" (*ibid.*). For Achberger, the press is therefore essentially a negative, addictive force on the island:

In the context of the return of one man to the mainland, the focus nevertheless remains on those who continue their island lives of addictive dependence on Antonio, narcotized by the sound of his voice and

⁵⁰ It is significant that in the play, the cicada myth is only alluded to by Benedikt and the two characters, who are forced to return to reality—Robinson and the escapee, who observe at separate points of the play: "Wir sollen mittags nicht schlafen, auch wenn wir sehr müde sind." (*W I*: 260) Here the escapee reiterates Robinson's earlier observation: "Hier sagt man sogar, man solle nicht schlafen um diese Zeit." (*W I*: 241)

⁵¹ The narrator is explicitly referred to as a male in "Die Zikaden" (*W I*: 219).

⁵² This is an allusion to Plato's *Phaedrus* in which Socrates used the story of the cicadas "to justify pursuing the art of philosophical discourse (instead of napping) over the noon hour" (Achberger *Understanding* 34). For a more detailed explanation of the *Phaedrus* allusion, see Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 178ff.).

by the stories of their lives on the island that Benedikt creates to distract them from their past. (ibid.)⁵³ Weigel, too, focusses on the negative, distracting qualities of Antonio and Benedikt, who collude with the islanders in their desire to forget. Thus, Weigel points out that Antonio may not be a dreamer himself, but he is certainly guilty of pandering to the “Vergessenswünsche und Sehnsüchte der anderen” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 184). Weigel therefore sees his tactics as identical to those of the mass media: “Die Antonio-Szenen sind [...] als Serie von Wunschbildern lesbar, deren Imaginäres sich alter Mythen und der Trivialmythen der Massenmedien bedient.” (ibid.) Weigel also judges Benedikt in negative terms when she describes how he begins to recall the “Zikadenmythos” but then breaks off from this recollection, “da seine Profession ihm dessen Lehre, die von den Kosten des Vergessens handelt, verbietet” (178).

While it is true that most of Benedikt’s stories up until his final scene in “Die Zikaden” do reflect (and therefore support and entrench) the islanders in their solipsistically self-obsessed lives, the same is not necessarily true of his proposed Robinson story. Neither Achberger’s nor Weigel’s analysis of the concluding scene takes into account the fact that Benedikt’s change of heart appears to have been prompted by his conscious calling to mind of the cicada legend. They also fail to acknowledge that the Robinson story—as a reminder of life beyond the island and a story about the return to the mainland of a ‘fellow escapee’—is completely out of character with Benedikt’s earlier stories that reflected the self-absorbed and narcissistic lives of the *Inselbote*’s readership, and therefore appears to represent a laudable exception to Benedikt’s usual editorial policy. Benedikt’s proposed report cannot help but remind the other social refugees on the island, even if only indirectly, that they too have homes to go to, and that escape of the kind they are indulging in can be neither a meaningful nor a long-term solution: sooner or later, they must face up to social reality or else undergo the dehumanising transformation into a cicada-like state. And, although Benedikt’s interpretation of the circumstances of Robinson’s return home will not be a completely accurate reflection of what happened, it is by no means a complete fabrication either: Robinson did in fact return home. There is also no evidence in the play that, once the door was opened, Robinson put up much of a struggle about going back with his wife. One might even surmise that despite his reluctance to open the door to his wife and the policemen, he was on the verge of returning of his own accord after his lengthy discussion with the escapee about the impossibility of total escape from society. This contention finds support in Achberger’s argument that the escapee is in fact Robinson’s “Doppelgänger”—the incarnation of his unconscious desire to return to life—“a longing-made-flesh” (*Understanding* 36). Benedikt’s interpretation of events may therefore not even be that far from the truth. On this occasion, then, Benedikt and his newspaper could be seen to be very close to ‘the voice of truth’, and the advocate of social responsibility—a view that is supported by Bartsch in his description of Benedikt as a

⁵³ Achberger correctly points out that Antonio is “in essence tone, as his name suggests”, and that the islanders’ addiction to the music of his voice, can be seen as a parallel to the addiction to music that turned the humans into cicadas. I believe, however, that she overstates her case in contending that “the shipwrecked refugees from the mainland develop an addictive dependence on the narcotic effect of his mellifluous voice to the point where they eventually degenerate into screaming cicadas themselves” (*Understanding* 38).

“Sprachrohr der Gesellschaft” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 86) and thus a mouthpiece of the ultimate “Anwalt der Gesellschaft” (85), the play’s narrator, who promotes the message that self-realisation can only be achieved within, not outside, society.⁵⁴ In reporting Robinson’s departure, then, the *Inselbote* manages to transcend (at least to some extent) its characterisation by Hädecke as “ein beschönigendes Blättchen, das wichtige Informationen, etwa das Einfangen des Ausgebrochenen, verschweigt und Belanglosigkeiten bevorzugt” (39).

Furthermore, any predominantly negative interpretation of Benedikt must take into consideration Bachmann’s own positive conception of him (in the play’s character description) as someone who is “[n]icht mehr jung, ein bißchen fröhlich, ein bißchen traurig, also *weise und sehr menschlich*” (*W I*: 220, m.e.), and as someone who, unlike the other islanders, is capable of balanced relationships: “Er braucht auch Antonio nicht so sehr als Partner wie die anderen—hat eine durchaus normale freundschaftliche Beziehung zu ihm.” (*W I*: 220) A more positive interpretation of Benedikt and his actions is supported by Bartsch who sees Benedikt’s role in the play as “das gesellschaftlich zugelassene, weil die bestehende Ordnung nicht (jedenfalls grundsätzlich) in Frage stellende illusionäre Denken als defizitär zu entlarven” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 86).⁵⁵

In defence of Benedikt and his newspaper it could also be said that, while the stories reported in the *Inselbote* are on the whole rather banal, Bachmann’s portrayal of the *Inselbote* in “Die Zikaden” represents quite a mild satirical critique, rather like Elisabeth’s observations about the provinciality of the local press in “Drei Wege zum See”—a gentle dig that is counterbalanced by her acknowledgement of positive aspects of local content (see Chapter 8 of this study). The stories in the local press may indeed be provincial, but they are at least relevant to its readers and are written by a local who has direct knowledge and experience of the subjects of his stories, unlike the press “dort drüben” (*W I*: 325) on the mainland, whose content is often irrelevant to its readers and focusses on stories and people of which neither the journalists themselves nor their readers have direct knowledge or experience—a critique that emerges very strongly in *Malina* and “Drei Wege zum See” (see Chapters 7 and 8 of this study). Another way in which the *Inselbote* distinguishes itself from the mainland press is in its almost exclusive focus on “good news” instead of the depressing “bad news” referred to in “Herbstmanöver”. While a preponderance of “good news” is just as untruthful a picture of reality as a preponderance of “bad news”, one might give the island press credit for at least not scaring or depressing its readers with an unremittingly bleak picture of the world.

⁵⁴ Because he promotes the same realistic views about the long-term untenability of social isolation as the narrator, the escaped prisoner can also be seen to represent the voice of society (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 87). Given his status as a social outcast, it is ironic that he should play this role. It is also ironic and symbolic that it is the others on the island, who, like Robinson, think they are successful escapees from their pasts, but have instead become victims of their own “stolze Gefangenschaft” (*W I*: 267), as reflected symbolically in the proximity of the penal colony on the smaller island nearby.

⁵⁵ Funke also sees Benedikt positively as “der einzige, der aus freiem Willen bereit ist, sich seinem Leben zu stellen” (30), but in support of this assertion, he quotes the narrator’s description of Benedikt: “Er spürte wohl Lust, den täglichen Kampf wieder aufzunehmen”—a description that applied to Benedikt a long time ago but not now (*W I*: 264).

Those who see Benedikt in totally negative terms seem to suggest that his role is like that of a puppeteer who pulls the strings, when in fact the play makes it clear that he is, to a great extent, effectively enslaved to his reading public. If he wants them to keep reading his paper, he has to pander to their wants and needs. His need to cater to consumer demand is highlighted, for example, in the final scene when it emerges that the name “Robinson” is a nickname chosen by Benedikt, to pique the curiosity and interest of his subscribers, who would not otherwise want to read about someone they barely know (*W I*: 265). Benedikt’s lack of total control over story selection is also revealed in his admission that there are many funny, dramatic or tragic stories that he would have liked to report over the years but could not: “Nach meinem Geschmack wäre es, über andre Dinge zu schreiben” (*W I*: 266)—stories like the one about bungled public works, the trapped shark, and the desperately tragic story of infanticide on the island. If press content is distorted and selective, then, it is not due purely to the manipulations of press proprietors and editors, it seems, but is the result of collusion with the reading public, or perhaps even just resigned acquiescence to the perceived demands of consumers.

Where does the truth lie in this play?

As the central theme of “Die Zikaden” is the importance of remaining engaged with the world—“weil trotz aller Zwänge, Einengungen und Verletzungen im gesellschaftlichen Alltag, Selbstverwirklichung nicht in der totalen Isolation, sondern nur in der sozialen Auseinandersetzung zu finden sei” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 87)—the central question regarding Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media in that play must be: to what extent does journalism support or undermine such engagement? “Die Zikaden” suggests that, on the whole, the press does indeed encourage escape from pain, reality and the truth (and this may be motivated to a great extent by commercial considerations). However, in Benedikt’s change of heart about the Robinson story, the play also shows that the press can at times play a positive social role in confronting readers with a story that may be unpalatable, but that is directly applicable to their lives. Taken as a whole, then, the play seems to adopt a rather agnostic attitude to journalism: it can be both good and bad—or alternatively, the court is still out on whether the press is a completely negative force in society. The conclusion to be drawn from Bachmann’s ambivalent portrayal of the press in “Die Zikaden” is, I believe, that it represents more of an exploration of a dangerous possibility to which the journalistic media are liable, rather than, at this stage, a comprehensive critique of the press. It certainly presents a more complex and less negative portrayal of the press than “Herbstmanöver”, “Reklame” and Ich’s summary assessment of the press as “ein unglaublicher Betrug” in *Malina*.

Even if it is not portrayed as “ein unglaublicher Betrug”, however, the press is certainly not portrayed as the pure voice of truth in “Die Zikaden”. Although both Benedikt and Antonio are shown to be capable of insight and, on occasion, of telling the truth, on most occasions, they choose to collude with the island residents in their denial and flight, and only intervene when the islanders overstep the mark. Thus, when the escapee is recaptured, Benedikt decides not to unsettle the islanders with the alarming news of an escaped convict in their midst, but he does report the news of Robinson’s return to

the mainland as a reminder that escape is not permanent. It must be noted, however, that Benedikt's decision, and the insight that prompted it, was quite belated. Thus, Benedikt cannot be seen as a consistent or reliable communicator of the truth.

The escaped prisoner, too, is shown to be capable of insight and speaking the truth: Funke sees him as a "Realist" (45) while Bartsch goes so far as to call him a "Sprachrohr der Gesellschaft" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 87). Certainly, the prisoner defends society and its institutions, and thus accurately diagnoses the untenability of Robinson's situation, but he fails to see that his own escape is much like Robinson's—a flight from society, not in the physical sense of Robinson's but in the metaphorical sense of evasion of responsibility for his past transgressions against society. Nevertheless Bachmann seems to be at pains to show him in a positive light as a voice of the truth. For example, in his conversations with Robinson, the prisoner makes it clear that he speaks from direct personal experience; the escapee also makes it clear that he is not one for escaping into sleep, when he declines Robinson's suggestion that he try to sleep, preferring instead a cup of coffee to help keep him awake: "Ja, ich glaube, wir sollen nicht schlafen, damit wir die Zikaden hören können." (*W 1*: 241) This expressed preference for wakefulness suggests that he is more open to "Wahrheit". In this respect, Robinson, too, seems to have some qualities that make him more insightful and truthful than others on the island. His questioning of the value of newspapers, for example, suggests the kind of mental alertness and "Verdacht" (*Gul* 25) that Bachmann admired. And despite his self-imposed isolation, Robinson demonstrates in his interaction with the escapee, a greater degree of compassion and more meaningful engagement with his fellow man than the other island residents who, unlike Robinson, have succumbed to a somnambulant addiction to Antonio. While Bartsch sees the other residents in a more positive light because of their greater social engagement, the quality of their social engagement makes it clear they have only superficial relationships with the others on the island.

If we bear in mind, however, Bachmann's insistence that truth lies in the communication of personal experience and painful insights, then the narrator is the ultimate voice of truth in the play. The narrator represents the voice of reality and of society—as Bartsch points out, he speaks "aufgrund eigener Erfahrung" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 85)—and, like the escapee, he explicitly espouses the message that flight from the past and from society is untenable in the long run. The play also makes it clear, in the stage instructions at the beginning and in the epilogue, that the narrator has a special status as someone who speaks from personal experience and (unlike the screaming headlines of the island press) with subtlety: "Er erzählt wirklich, ganz einfach [...]; wo er persönlich wird (sich auf seine eigene Person oder seine Erfahrungen bezieht, tut er es mit viel Understatement." (*W 1*: 219) The narrator also *knows* (in the sense of "understands") the people that he speaks about: even though they are strangers, he can read their faces, "in die viele Grenzübertritte gestempelt sind. Sie kommen aus der ganzen Welt. Und ich kenne sie alle." (*W 1*: 222) Thus, although the people he has been portraying are not "real" people in an objective sense, they are based on real personal experience: "Die Insel und die Personen, von denen ich erzählte, gibt es nicht. Aber es gibt andere Inseln und viele Menschen, die versuchen, auf Inseln zu leben. Ich selbst war einer von ihnen." (*W 1*: 267) In particular, the experience

that he is conveying via the play is that of his own epiphany, when one day he found himself on a beach with another man; both men were ignoring each other, lost in their own self-absorption, until they were shocked out of their isolation by the sound of the cicadas (*W I*: 268). The play thus represents the narrator's own experience come to life in art, and of course, "behind" the play's narrator is Bachmann, the real narrator, who drew on her experience of self-imposed isolation on Ischia.⁵⁶ The play itself therefore becomes not only a model for the transmission of genuine experience via art, but also establishes itself as a "Gegenbild" to the superficial and unreliable transmission of knowledge via the journalistic mass media. As Bartsch points out, the play is very much an "Aufforderung zur Aktivität" ("Die Hörspiele von Ingeborg Bachmann" 330) in its concluding summons: "Willst du nicht aufstehen und sehen, ob diese Hände zu gebrauchen sind" (*W I*: 267).⁵⁷

With its self-reference in the epilogue of the play, "Die Zikaden" reveals itself to be a self-reflexive work of art.⁵⁸ In drawing attention to its own fictitious nature, it unmask itself as a lie of sorts—like all fiction. And yet, according to Bachmann, this piece would meet the criteria of "Wahrheit" because it reflects direct personal experience and reveals painful truths. In "Die Zikaden", then, as in Bachmann's theoretical statements, the voice of the truth is shown to be in art, or more specifically, in literature. The ambiguities and apparent contradictions in the play also show that "Die Zikaden" represents the kind of literature that Benjamin as well as Adorno and Horkheimer, praised in contrast to the mass media, who undermine experience and truth by trying to explain everything and to resolve all conflicts.

5.4 "Der gute Gott von Manhattan"

Bachmann's third and final radio play, "Der gute Gott von Manhattan", was written in 1957 and first broadcast on 28 May 1958 (*W I*: 661). The critique of journalism in this work, which emerges both from the way in which representatives of the press are depicted, and from the impact that press content has on its readers, is an aspect of the play that has received very little attention in Bachmann scholarship to date. As Weigel points out, the love story at the heart of the radio play has received much attention at the expense of other aspects (*Hinterlassenschaften* 224).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Achberger, who also sees in this play a reflection of Bachmann's own experience of the post-war flight of German intellectuals to Italy (*Understanding* 34f.), argues that the play represents Bachmann's critique of *l'art pour l'art* and other attempts to forget the past (36).

⁵⁷ This imagery recalls Bachmann's celebration of physical exertion in her poem, "Ausfahrt" (*W I*: 28f.).

⁵⁸ For an interesting discussion of the self-reflexivity of "Die Zikaden", focussing on the way in which the radio play itself represents a "Zufluchtsort", see Schuller (52f.).

⁵⁹ Many scholars engaged in the extended debate that followed the publication of an article by Wolf Wondratschek, in which he used "Der gute Gott von Manhattan" as an example of the allegedly reactionary nature of the German radio play in the 1950s. Examples are Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 75f.), Becker (49ff.), Hädecke (45f.), Höller (*Das Werk* 111ff.) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 224).

The press as an agent of conformity and representative of the status quo

Structured around a series of flashbacks, the play centres on the court proceedings in which the eponymous “gute Gott” stands accused of the wanton and brutal murder of an innocent young woman, Jennifer, who had formed a passionate relationship with Jan, a young man from Europe on holiday in New York. Over the course of the trial it is gradually revealed that the “Good God”⁶⁰ is not a murderous psychopath, but instead the “Personifizierung eines allmächtigen Prinzips gesellschaftlicher Herrschaft” (Lennox “Hörspiele” 92). As such, his role is to champion social order by rigorously (and, if necessary, violently) enforcing conformity to the “codifizierten Normalitätsschranken der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung” (Schuller 54). Specifically, he runs “ein Büro zur Ausfahndung und Verfolgung von Liebespaaren”: “[M]it Unterstützung seiner Agenten, der Eichhörnchen, [betreibt er] deren Vernichtung [...], um die alltägliche Ordnung aufrechtzuerhalten.” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 215)⁶¹ The Good God is both the embodiment and defender of the status quo. An important instrument of the status quo that he represents and defends, is the press. This connection between the two is made explicit by the Good God himself, when he describes the hundreds of squirrels who carry out his fatal orders, as his “Nachrichtendienst”—his “Briefträger, Melder, Kundschafter, Agenten” (*W I*: 274). As Weigel notes, the squirrels therefore represent “Medien im eigentlichen Sinne” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 215).

Lennox draws attention to the puzzling nature of Bachmann’s choice of agents of destruction in this play, “da sie eine an Walt Disneys Zeichentrickfilme erinnernde Verrücktheit in eine Sphäre einführen, die sonst einzig von Rationalität beherrscht wird” (“Hörspiele” 93). She suggests that Bachmann may have intended an allusion to “Squirrel Cage”, the code name used during the Cold War period for the American plan to keep supply lines to Vienna open in the event of a Berlin-like blockade by the Russians (*ibid.*)⁶² Although this represents an interesting interpretation, there may have been less esoteric reasons behind Bachmann’s choice of squirrels for this role—reasons that I believe are closely related to her portrayal of the journalistic media elsewhere in her work, in particular in “Holz und Späne”, where the poetic voice warns of the dangers that reside in the superficially harmless. Squirrels represent exactly this kind of duality: for some people, squirrels are small, unthreatening creatures that are fed nuts by tourists in New York’s Central Park. For others, however, these creatures are less innocent and harmless, as the judge in the play points out: “Es soll Länder geben, in denen diese Nagetiere scheu und unschuldig sind; aber sie sehen gemein und verdorben aus bei uns, und es

⁶⁰ English publications that refer to this character capitalise the adjective “Good” (Achberger *Understanding* 39; Lennox *Cemetery* 242).

⁶¹ Kohn-Waechter points out that the squirrels are an intertextual reference to René Schickele’s last novel, *Die Flaschenpost*, in which the psychiatrists who bring mail to the asylum inmates are called “Eichhörnchen”. The “Herr” of this asylum runs a totalitarian regime, who, when someone escapes, cries out “In die Hölle mit ihm!” (“Dichtung als »Flaschenpost«” 227)—a phrase almost identical to the cry of Bachmann’s Eichhörnchen: “Zur Hölle mit ihnen! Zur Hölle!” (*W I*: 294).

⁶² Less convincingly, Achberger suggests that the role of the two squirrels is reminiscent of the role of the cicadas as agents in Plato’s *Phaedrus* (*Understanding* 40).

heißt, sie seien mit dem Bösen im Bund.” (*W I*: 273)⁶³ Bachmann’s choice of a sciurine “Nachrichtenagentur” may therefore have been intended to suggest the dangerous and destructive nature of the press’s role in society beneath a façade of harmlessness—a duality that is underscored in the comical choice of names, Frankie and Billy (*W I*: 274),⁶⁴ as well as in the behaviour of these “teuflische[n] Sekundanten” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 221), who, on the one hand cite Rumpelstiltskin—“Ach wie gut, daß niemand weiß!” (*W I*: 304)—and call each other names like characters in a slapstick comedy (*W I*: 304), but on the other hand are “terroristisch” in their glee over the “mörderische Gewalt” (Höller *Das Werk* 106) about to be inflicted on their victims (*W I*: 312).

Although the Good God is only too aware of the rabid nature of his “blutrünstigen Hauptleute” (*W I*: 293) and finds their behaviour personally abhorrent, he is happy to use their natural depravity as a means to an end: “Die ausschweifende Phantasie meiner Handlanger habe ich nur gelenkt und benutzt; meiner Nüchternheit war sie zuwider. Mit solchen Auswüchsen hat man es nur bei niedrigen Naturen zu tun. Mordlust ist mir fremd.” (*W I*: 305f.) In this apparently unremarkable admission by the Good God, Bachmann not only suggests that the press is a lower form of life (along the lines of the English expression “the reptiles of the press”) but also alludes to an aspect of journalism that becomes more explicit in her later work, namely, the press’s morbid fascination with death and violence as a means of attracting reader attention. Intriguingly, the Eichhörnchen even show elements of *paparazzi* behaviour.⁶⁵ As Seim notes:

Diese Eichhörnchen beobachten jeden Schritt des Paares, sie stimulieren sogar ihre Liebe mit Briefen, in denen immer der Satz steht: »Sag es niemand« — damit werden die Liebenden von der Umwelt isoliert und sollen zuletzt in den Tod getrieben werden. (397)

In sending these letters “Massenweise” (*W I*: 304) to Jan and Jennifer, the squirrels admit that their intention is to apply pressure with a view to precipitating action (*W I*: 312). Here the squirrels are shown to intervene in events for their own purposes in the same way that they intervene and accelerate proceedings by scaring off the occupant on the 57th floor so that they can arrange for Jan and Jennifer to move up to the highest level, as far removed from the earth as possible (*W I*: 312). Their manipulative role in society (and their ghoulish nature) is also symbolised in the “play within the play” of the squirrels’ street theatre: “Die Sprecher, die die Puppen an den Drähten zogen, waren Billy und Frankie, die beiden Eichhörnchen. Denn [sie] liebten in ihrer freien Zeit nichts so sehr, wie den Leuten *grausige Spektakel* in den schönen Worten, die unsere Dichter dafür gefunden haben, vorzuführen.” (*W*

⁶³ Weigel describes them as “die für Europäer merkwürdig graue und wenig grazile Spezies der amerikanischen Eichhörnchen” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 221).

⁶⁴ Bachmann’s choice of names for the squirrels may represent an amusing and ironic allusion to the song “Frankie and Johnny”, which was popular in the U.S.A in the 1950s and told the story of a passionate love affair that had a violent, deadly outcome for the female of the couple, just like the love story in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”.

⁶⁵ The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines a paparazzo as a “news photographer or reporter who seeks sensational but essentially trivial material with great persistence”. The definition also points out that the term derives “from the surname of such a photographer in Federico Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita* (1959)”. While not suggesting that Bachmann’s portrayal was influenced by Fellini’s film, I would observe that Bachmann was resident in Rome in the mid-1950s when Fellini was making this film. She was also working as a journalist at the time and so would have been well aware of the type of journalistic behaviour depicted by Fellini.

I: 294, m.e.)⁶⁶ The squirrels also take almost psychopathic delight in the prospect of assisting in the violent death by explosion⁶⁷ and “[das] lang[e] schmerzhaft[e] Sterben” (W I: 294).

The price of rebellion against the status quo

Jan and Jennifer’s crime is not their passionate love affair, but the fact that they allowed their relationship to develop into “[eine] jegliche Spielregel außer Kraft setzend[e] Ekstase” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 81), which gradually but inexorably isolates them from mainstream society. In the early stages of their relationship, they are still literally and metaphorically close to the earth on the ground floor of a seedy “Stundenhotel” and they still venture out into the streets, but as their relationship strives towards the “Phantasma einer gottähnlichen Liebesmysteriums” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 217), they progress from the seventh, to the 30th and then ultimately to the 57th level⁶⁸ of the Atlantic Hotel—their “heaven on earth”⁶⁹ hideaway. The lovers isolate themselves both spatially and emotionally, for example, by laughing in ways that only they understand—in a way that completely excludes others and thus constitutes, as the Good God observes with alarm, “ein Fragezeichen [...] ein sehr rücksichtsloses” (W I: 291). For the Good God, Jan and Jennifer have lost “den gesunden Menschenverstand” (W I: 303). Of even greater concern is the fact that they hardly go out anymore (W I: 304), and when they do venture out into public, they do not take the offerings of capitalism (read: the culture industry) seriously, preferring to *play* “vor den Kinopalästen im Strahlenregen künstlicher Sonnen und Kometen”: “Es erging ihnen beim Spiel wie beim Lachen. Sie verstießen gegen jeden vernünftigen Brauch, den man davon machen kann.” (W I: 292)

Instead of staying in a mindless rut (like other couples in society), going to galleries, taking cooking lessons, going to the cinema—“Man starrt auf die Leinwand und entspannt sich”—and distracting himself with “Kinder [...], Sorgen und schlechte[m] Wetter” (W I: 310), Jan feels the urge to tear everything down and start anew: “Ich möchte nur ausbrechen aus allen Jahren und allen Gedanken aus allen Jahren, und ich möchte in mir den Bau niederreißen, der Ich bin, und der andere sein, der ich nie war.” (W I: 310) Thus, once on the 57th floor, Jan proclaims that he rejects the old language in favour of a new one and no longer wants to be part of society: “Ich weiß nichts weiter, nur daß ich hier leben und sterben will mit dir und [...], daß ich keinen Beruf mehr haben und keinem Geschäft nachgehen kann, *nie mehr nützlich sein und brechen werde mit allem, und daß ich geschieden sein will von allen andern.*” (W I: 321, m.e.) As Lennox puts it: “Von Leidenschaft überwältigt,

⁶⁶ Höller believes that this puppet play shows not just the “terroristische Herrschaft” of the current age, but of all ages. This theatre scene thus provides a “kriminalistische[n] Blick auf die Geschichte” (*Das Werk* 108).

⁶⁷ Weigel points out that this aspect of the play may have been inspired by the series of murders committed by the “mad bomber von Manhattan” in the 1950s (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 221).

⁶⁸ Achberger provides a detailed and convincing analysis of the symbolism behind Bachmann’s use of numbers here (*Understanding* 39), and observes that “[a]s Jan and Jennifer soar higher and higher into the heavens and are not only physically but also emotionally and spiritually less ‘down to earth’, so too does their language become increasingly poetic and mystical” (*ibid.*). Tunner argues that the hotel rooms in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” are identical in symbolism to the dreams in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and the islands in “Die Zikaden” (417f.).

⁶⁹ As the play points out “Ma-na Hat-ta” is American Indian for “himmlische Erde” (W I: 279).

verkündet Jan plötzlich die Ankunft einer neuen Welt, die auf dem Verzicht auf Zweckmäßigkeit basiert.” (Lennox “Hörspiele” 94) The Good God therefore feels compelled to annihilate them because the intensity and absoluteness of their love “threatens the fabric of consumer-society” (Achberger *Understanding* 39).⁷⁰

Press content and the enforcement of conformity

Although both lovers are targeted for destruction by the Good God, only Jennifer is in the apartment when the Good God delivers the bomb, because Jan has stepped out to cash in his return ticket to Europe before returning to Jennifer for good. Instead of going straight to the ticket office, however, Jan stopped in a bar, thereby allowing himself to be seduced back into social reality. Although clearly ill at ease, he orders a drink and inquires about the time, noting that it has been days since he last wound his watch (*W I*: 324). This apparently innocuous everyday social gesture is extremely revealing because it shows that Jan has not completely abandoned his ties to “real” earthly time, even though he had purportedly already committed himself to “Gegenzeit” with Jennifer (*W I*: 317). Jan’s wavering commitment to Jennifer is, however, apparent much earlier, in leaving Jennifer alone in the Atlantic Hotel, even temporarily: a man consumed by passion would not have concerned himself with a practical matter like cashing in a return fare—certainly, Jennifer would not.⁷¹

For the present study, however, it is of greater interest that Jan’s return to society is at this point flagged by two references to the journalistic media. When Jan asks what time it is, the barman responds by switching on the radio, trying to tune in to a baseball broadcast, which is, however—most significantly—interrupted by a commercial. Temporarily distracted, Jan orders a second drink. At this point he notices a newspaper lying in the bar: “Ist das eine Zeitung – von heute? [...] Seit Tagen habe ich nämlich keine Zeitung mehr gelesen.” (*W I*: 325) Jan is quickly engrossed in the press content and remarks on how remote he has become from what was going on in the world: “Bei uns, ich meine, dort drüben, hat die Regierung gewechselt. Ich hatte keine Ahnung.” (*W I*: 325) As Bartsch observes: “Jan hebt die »Gegenzeit« wieder auf, indem er nach der realen Zeit und nach der Zeitung fragt.” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 83f.) At this point, voices on the radio once again draw Jan’s attention to the time—earthly time. The barman once more scans the radio stations for Jan, but within seconds the explosion that kills Jennifer is heard in the background, as music bursts forth from the radio (*W I*: 326). Jan’s escape into the bar (and into the news content of radio and the press) has enabled him to escape death.

Jan’s life-saving decision to stop off in the bar and to immerse himself back into normal social activity represents a second turning point in his relationship with Jennifer—one that is the reverse of the first turning point in their relationship, which was also associated with the press. The first turning

⁷⁰ Hapkemeyer points out the similarity between “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”: “[I]n der Liebe brechen die Figuren aus der gegebenen Ordnung aus und erreichen vorübergehend eine ekstatische Seins- und Sprachverfassung.” (*Früheste Prosa* 69)

⁷¹ Jan’s attitude to the very earthly concern of money is very different to Jennifer’s. See, for example, the way in which Jennifer willingly gives what she has to the beggar early in the play (*W I*: 281).

point occurs when Jan decides to leave Jennifer and head back to Europe after their first few days together: after Jennifer has already gone on her way without him, he changes his mind after learning that a room has become vacant on the 30th storey. When he runs after her, the first person he encounters is a “Zeitungsverkäufer”, who, when asked if he has seen Jennifer, is not at all helpful, and indeed very cynical: “[S]o sind sie alle, mir ist das auch einmal passiert. Die sehen Sie nicht wieder.” (*W I*: 300) At that moment, Jan’s inclination towards withdrawal from society and into the extremes of an all-consuming passion with Jennifer is indicated by his disregard of the newspaper vendor’s discouraging words, his lack of interest in the newspapers on offer, and his determination to find Jennifer. Whereas Jan had no interest at all in the news at the first turning point in their relationship, we note that at the second turning point, he actively and hungrily seeks out news.

The ease and speed with which Jan is drawn back into the world of everyday social reality – despite having gone almost to the very limits of social escape with Jennifer—not only proves that he lacks Jennifer’s capacity for absolute commitment but can also be seen as an indicator of the irresistible (even addictive) nature of the media in general, and the news in particular. Within minutes of opening the newspaper Jan is drawn back into the everyday world, and in returning to that world, he reneges on his commitment to Jennifer. His return to “das Gesetz der Welt” (*W I*: 311) also enables him to evade the violent death that the Good God had originally intended for both of them.⁷² The role of the press in Jan’s “conversion” back to social reality, and consequently to life, is highlighted in the trial judge’s description of Jan as a man who was “*normal, gesund und rechtschaffen* [...] ein Mann, dessen Augen sich wieder beleben bei Druckerschwärze und dessen Hände sich schmutzig machen müssen an einer Theke” (*W I*: 327, m.e.).⁷³ Jan survives, “weil er in eine Bar geht, etwas trinkt und eine Zeitung verlangt” (Hädecke 42).

Jennifer, on the other hand, displays no attachment to the mass media at all. Although she offers to turn on the radio at one point, and talks about how she used to love listening to music on the radio before falling asleep at home (*W I*: 284), it is significant that this interest in radio is only expressed in

⁷² In Jan’s action, Höller sees parallels with “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, noting that in both plays, it is “der Mann, der [...] jenen anderen Zustand der Liebe, jene eigentümlichen Seins- und Zeitverhältnisse verrät: Laurenz lehnt mit seinem wieder erwachten gesellschaftlichen Tages-Bewußtsein die Anschaffung des dritten Traumes ab. Auf ganz ähnliche Weise wird der Mann, Jan, in *Der gute Gott von Manhattan* rückfällig, indem er sich ebenfalls dem gesellschaftlich herrschenden Zeitbegriff unterwirft und so die utopische „Gegenzeit“ preisgibt.” (*Das Werk* 91f.) While Höller’s description of Jan’s decision is accurate, the parallels with “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” are not entirely valid, given that in Bachmann’s first radio play it is the male who catches a glimpse of other possibilities even if he eventually rejects them, while the female stays firmly planted in social reality. For a further discussion of the significance of gender in Jennifer’s fate in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, see Achberger (*Understanding* 41).

⁷³ Interestingly, in a 1913 edition of *Die Fackel* Karl Kraus uses the expression “Druckerschwärze” in a context that suggests, “not yet as tainted as the worst of journalists”: “In der Provinz, wo der Charakter noch nicht auf den Journalismus draufgegangen ist, wo Druckerschwärze noch nicht auf das Wesen abgefärbt hat und nichts weiter als das vorhandene Mittel bedeutet, ein ordentliches Gefühl des Privatmannes mitzuteilen, erscheinen vor und nach jeder Vorlesung grössere Aufsätze ... fast immer ... auf einem höheren Niveau ... als alles ... (in Grosstädte(n) [...])” (qtd in Iggers 101, spelling a.p.o.) If Bachmann’s use of the word in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” is an intertextual allusion to Kraus, it suggests someone who is totally immersed in the worst of journalistic excess and dishonesty.

the very first stage of their relationship when they are still on the ground floor of the seedy hotel that they first occupy—well before their love had escalated to what the Good God would consider to be a dangerous extreme. Jennifer is subsequently never associated with the media, and, unlike Jan, is never mentioned in connection with newspapers. This shows how different she is from Jan and the average “person in the street”—a difference that is also apparent in her spontaneous, passionate nature and her preparedness to push the boundaries of conventional romantic attachment. This makes her a target for the Good God, who has no problem with:

Menschen [...], die nach einem anfänglichen Seitensprung in die Freiheit ohnehin Instinkt bewiesen haben. Die das bißchen anfängliche Glut zähmten, in die Hand nahmen und ein Heilmittelunternehmen gegen die Einsamkeit draus machten, eine Kameradschaft und *wirtschaftliche Interessengemeinschaft*. (*W I*: 319, m.e.)

Relationships like these—or light-hearted romantic escapades by the bored and lonely (*W I*: 286)—are tolerated not just because they are, as the Good God points out, economically beneficial, but also because they leave “[a]lles im Gleichgewicht und in der Ordnung” (*W I*: 319). Jennifer’s capacity for pushing to the outer limits, however, and her talent for rising above the ordinary threatens the Good God’s much-prized balance and order.⁷⁴

[I]m Alltag der Ordnung, welcher der unsere ist, ist Mittelmaß Trumpf. Geduldet, ja gefördert werden Gehirne, die sich auf »mittlere Temperaturen« verstehen [...]. Da diese Gehirne unleugbar in der Überzahl sind, ist ihre Position unerschütterlich. Über kurz oder lang werden sie jeden zu Fall bringen, dessen Phantasie ausschweift. (Tunner 420)

Commerce, the culture industry and the status quo

In “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” Bachmann also portrays the commercial aspects of the mass media, and the way in which they form a constant background noise that infiltrates our lives. In the same way that Bachmann uses references to the press and radio to reflect the degree to which Jan and Jennifer have removed themselves from society, so too Bachmann uses the more commercial aspects of the mass media to mirror the degree of their social isolation. Thus, for example, in the early stages of their relationship, Jan and Jennifer still operate within normal, commerce-driven society when they meet “auf dem Broadway unter dem Wasserfall aus Pepsi Cola neben dem großen Rauchring von Lucky Strike” (*W I*: 292), but as their relationship develops, they increasingly isolate themselves from the commerce of daily life—and hence from society—in their skyscraper hotel room.⁷⁵ A further indication of their detachment from society is found in their relationship to the chorus-like “›Stimmen‹ der Massenkultur, die endlos [...] banal[e], aber vage bedrohend[e] Schlagwörter wiederholen” (Lennox “Hörspiele” 93). These voices, which replicate “die suggestiven Einflüsterungen der Werbung” (Hapkemeyer *Sprachthematik* 43) and the “Sprachformeln medialer Öffentlichkeit” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 222) are structured as a montage of advertising slogans, clichéd sayings, news

⁷⁴ Cf. Reinert’s description: “Die Welt des guten Gottes ist eine Welt des Tages, das heißt eine Welt ohne Illusionen, ohne phantastische Träume oder unrealistische Wunschvorstellungen. Es ist die Welt, wie sie sich die Menschen ihren materiellen Bedürfnissen entsprechend selbst geschaffen haben.” (65)

⁷⁵ According to Bartsch, Bachmann chose New York as the setting for her play because it represented “für die bürgerliche kapitalistische Gesellschaft der fünfziger Jahre den Maßstab der westlichen Zivilisation und den Inbegriff des Fortschritts” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 82).

headlines and news excerpts (press or radio) repeated mindlessly “in anakolutischer Verstümmelung” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 83).

DU KANNST ES NICHT MIT DIR NEHMEN
WEITERGEHEN SCHNELLER SCHLAFEN
SCHNELLER TRÄUMEN MIT UNS
WOLKENBRÜCHE NIEDERSCHLÄGE SCHNELLER
ERDBEBEN LEICHTER SICHERER
BEI GRÜNEM LICHT DENK DARAN (*W I*: 276)

These “Satzfetzen und Redensarten der öffentlichen Sprache [...] aus den technischen Medien wie Radio, Reklame” are, as Weigel puts it, “Rudimente von Aussagen, die der vom guten Gott erkämpften leidenschaftslosen Welt angehören” and thus constitute for Jan und Jennifer “eine Art Zeichenwelt [...], die eine Umwelt repräsentiert, der [das Paar] sich immer mehr entzieht” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 215).⁷⁶ According to Achberger, the “Stimmen” testify to Bachmann’s “shock at the constant bombardment of indoctrinating slogans through the mass media”—an “experience [that] gave her second thoughts about European society, which she saw developing in the same direction” (*ibid.*). This rather ugly (and indeed, corrupting) side of capitalism is encapsulated in the Good God’s comparison of this “Stadt der Städte” (*W I*: 288) to Biblical cities steeped in depravity and other forms of sin:

In allen Senkrechten und Geraden der Stadt war Leben, und der wütende Hymnus begann wieder, auf die Arbeit, auf den Lohn und größten Gewinn. Die Schornsteine rührten und standen da wie Kolonnen eines wiedererstandenen Ninive und Babylon, und die stumpfen und spitzen Schädel der Gigantenhäuser rührten an den grauen Tropenhimmel, der von Feuchtigkeit troff und wie ein unförmiger ekliger Schwamm die Dächer näßte. (*ibid.*)

Significantly, this repulsive image is immediately followed with a description of printing press machinery, reminiscent of the imagery in “Holz und Späne”: “Die Rhapsoden in den großen Druckereien griffen in die Setzmaschinen, kündeten die Geschehnisse und annoncierten Künftiges.” (*W I*: 287)⁷⁷ The “Stimmen” in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” can be seen to constitute an aural equivalent to the machinery of the printing press. Like the voices of advertising and the mass media, these voices form an everpresent background noise, infiltrating our consciousness daily with trite and hackneyed sayings like “DU KANNST ES NICHT MIT DIR NEHMEN” (note here the implied encouragement to spend), trivial and irrelevant information about the weather (“WOLKENBRÜCHE NIEDERSCHLÄGE”), or frightening information about major disasters (“ERDBEBEN”) and meaningless commands like “SCHNELLER TRÄUMEN”.⁷⁸ It is no accident that “SCHNELLER” is repeated three times in three consecutive lines in this montage. As Adorno and Horkheimer argued, it is the aim of the culture industry to stop us from thinking too much about the unsatisfactory aspects of

⁷⁶ Achberger believes these voices reflect Bachmann’s response to her “first encounter with a technologically advanced capitalist society” on arriving in New York in July 1955 to take part in a summer seminar at Harvard University (*Understanding* 43). See also Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 220).

⁷⁷ These quotes form part of an extended passage that focusses on the city as commerce, on cosmeticised death, on the mechanisation of humanity (another echo of “Holz und Späne”) and pollution: “Über die Fließbänder zogen die Pakete, und die Rolltreppen brachten Mensentrauben hinauf und hinunter durch Schwaden von Ruß, Giftluft und Abgasen” (*W I*: 287)—a description that also echoes the ugliness of the cityscape depicted in Bachmann’s *Ort für Zufälle*.

⁷⁸ Note also the recurrence of “dream” in “TRAUMSTOFF” (*W I*: 285), and the way in which both occurrences echo the dream imagery in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and “Reklame”.

our lives. In encouraging us to rush, the culture industry not only tries to ensure that we have no time to think, but also seeks to promote in workers the type of behaviour that benefits employers. Just like the voice of advertising in “Reklame”, these voices therefore represent the “herrschende Ordnung der Entfremdung” (Hans Mayer 135).⁷⁹ As Seim observes:

Das Leben, aus dem Jan herausgetreten war in seinem »Grenzübertritt« und in das er am Ende zurückkehrt, wird im Hörspiel von den »Stimmen« zur Sprache gebracht, in drängenden und zugleich oberflächlichen Sätzen und Satzstücken, die den öden Alltag, die Reklame, die Phrasen, die Vertröstungen aussprechen [...]. (399)⁸⁰

Characterised in the play’s stage instructions as “monoton und geschlechtslos” (*W I*: 270) and “ohne Timbre, ohne Betonung” (*W I*: 276), the mediocrity and colourlessness that these voices represent is reflected in the lack of punctuation and the use of all-capitals, suggesting a narcotised and controlled, mass-produced existence. The “Stimmen” therefore represent the extreme opposite to the overblown emotional and ecstatic language that characterises Jan und Jennifer’s passion: “[D]as Unpersönliche und Gleichmäßige der warnenden Stimmen stehen im Kontrast zum Gefühlsüberschuß der Liebenden und verweisen dadurch auf das kommende Unglück.” (Summerfield “Sprachverständnis” 125)⁸¹ And, if Jan und Jennifer’s overblown language of ecstasy represents the heights of emotional extremity in language, then the “Stimmen” represent the lowest common denominator:

Wird im Gespräch der Liebenden die Sprache *an ihre obere Grenze geführt*, wo sie in Stammeln und Sprachlosigkeit übergeht, weil für das Äußerste die Worte fehlen, so bewegen sich die Stimmen *an der unteren Grenze der Sprache*, wo die Worte sich einstellen, ohne daß sie Wirklichkeit mitbrächten; selbst die Lockungen und Drohungen beziehen sich nicht auf die Wirklichkeit. (Seim 399, m.e.)

The structure of the play itself also highlights the close association between the “Stimmen” and the status quo of the social order championed by the Good God—that is, the way in which these voices are essentially “Stimmen der Gesellschaft” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 83). The fact that we first hear these Stimmen at the end of first scene, which features the judge and the Good God (*W I*: 276), clearly links them to the social order. The next three instances of the voices (*W I*: 285, 298, 299) are in scenes featuring Jan and Jennifer, indicating that, although this couple may have started a passionate relationship, they are still very much attached to, and resident in, society. However, after the first crucial turning point in the play (when Jan changes his mind about their separation and decides to run after Jennifer to resume their all-consuming relationship, isolated from society), the “Stimmen” no longer appear in the same scene as Jan and Jennifer. They only feature at the conclusion of scenes with the judge and the Good God (*W I*: 306, 320). They are then finally briefly heard on the radio just before the muffled sound of the bomb explosion that signals Jennifer’s murder (*W I*: 326). Weigel stresses the significance of the way in which these voices, which were previously only heard as a “Chor

⁷⁹ The connection between these voices and Bachmann’s poem “Reklame” is discussed by a number of scholars including Hädecke (44) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 221).

⁸⁰ The voices’ lack of real relevance to humanity is also suggested, as Weigel notes, by the fact that whereas all the other scenes in the play consist of dialog, “die nicht-personalen Stimmen der Medien” are depicted as a monolog (*Hinterlassenschaften* 223).

⁸¹ Lennox points out how the language used by Jennifer and Jan in their increasingly ecstatic love is reminiscent not only of the language used by Laurenz in his third dream in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, but also that used in the “Geheimnisse der Prinzession von Kagran” in *Malina* (“Hörspiele” 87).

zwischen den Dialogszenen”, suddenly burst forth from the mass medium of radio:

Wenn die modernen Chorstimmen nicht mehr ungleichzeitig zum Liebes- und Gerichtsdialog zu hören sind, sondern aus einem massenmedialen Unterhaltungsapparat, ist damit der dramaturgische Fluchtpunkt angezeigt, in dem die verschiedenen Handlungsstränge zusammenlaufen, alltägliche Ordnung und Überleben. (*Hinterlassenschaften* 223)

Where does the guilt lie?

According to Achberger, “[t]his criminal love story indicts the efficient, profit-oriented mass society, as epitomised by New York City and personified by the Good God of Manhattan, for the criminal destruction of the individual longing for real personal fulfilment” (*Understanding* 40).⁸² She also characterises the Good God as “the patriarchal principle that destroys women” (103).⁸³ Bartsch, too, sees the play in similar terms when he describes it as a lament about “das männliche, funktionalisierte, nützlichkeits- und profitorientierte Lebensmuster, in dem die weiblich konnotierten, emotionalen Ansprüche, die Ansprüche der Kunst unterdrückt, ja abgetötet werden” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 84). It is also true that the murder takes place in a world “in [der] privates Glück im Kampf mit einer vollständig verwalteten Gesellschaft liegt und von ihr zunichte gemacht wird” (Lennox “Hörspiele” 92), and that the play can therefore be interpreted as a critique of U.S. capitalism and the culture industry, as well as in terms of the dichotomy that Bachmann put forward in the first of her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”: “Hie Innerlichkeit und Sinnbezüge, Gewissen und Traum—da *Nützlichkeitsfunktion, Sinnlosigkeit, Phrase und sprachlose Gewalt.*” (*W 4*: 198, m.e.). Nevertheless, neither Achberger’s nor Bartsch’s assessment takes sufficient account of the fact that (like “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and “Die Zikaden”) “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” also represents a critique of attempts to escape from practical and social engagement with society.⁸⁴ Thus, although Jennifer can be seen as a courageous adventurer whose sights are set “auf das Vollkommene, das Unmögliche, Unerreichbare, sei es der Liebe, der Freiheit oder jeder reinen Größe” (*W 4*: 276), she is also someone who transgresses the immutable law, “daß wir in der Ordnung bleiben müssen, daß es den Austritt aus der Gesellschaft nicht gibt und wir uns aneinander prüfen müssen” (*W 4*: 276)—a law that Bachmann drew attention to in “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar”, her award-acceptance speech for this radio play.⁸⁵

It would therefore be simplistic to see Jennifer purely as an innocent victim. As Weigel insists, this radio play is not just about a battle between “Ordnung” and “Liebe” in which “Ordnung” triumphs: “Der Modus ihrer Liebe ist nämlich nicht nur von außen bedroht, durch den Geheimdienst der

⁸² See also Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 214).

⁸³ While it is true that in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, the female is murdered and the male survives, Achberger’s argument glosses over the fact that, in the squirrels’ puppet play, it is not just the female half of the couples who dies (*W I*: 294f.).

⁸⁴ While Höller stresses the critique of society and its murderous institutions, and so sees “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” as an early example of the “Todesarten-Thematik” (*Das Werk* 107; *Ingeborg Bachmann* 115), he also sees in the play “die umfassende Widerlegung des Austritts aus der Gesellschaft” (*Höller Werk* 106).

⁸⁵ Bachmann was awarded the “Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden” on 17 March, 1959.

Liebesvernichtung, dem der gute Gott bevorsteht, sondern entwickelt auch aus einer inneren Dynamik heraus seine eigene Destruktivität.” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 215f.) The Good God himself points out that there is more to Jennifer’s murder than meets the eye: “Sagt man nicht, es seien nicht immer die Mörder, sondern manchmal die Ermordeten schuldig?” (*W I*: 318)⁸⁶ Lennox also offers a more complex (and, I believe, highly persuasive) interpretation of the play in her investigation of two interpretative possibilities (one Marcusian and the other Foucauldian), coming to the conclusion:

Bachmanns eigener Standpunkt liegt dazwischen: Der Wunsch oder auch Versuch, aus der Ordnung auszutreten, wird als Kritik an der Ordnung aufgefaßt, die zur Veränderung der Gesellschaft führen kann, aber trotz allem werden die Menschen letztendlich »in der Ordnung bleiben müssen«. (“Hörspiele” 83)

Although “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” testifies to Bachmann’s conviction that every type of “Ordnung” is shown to be “totalitär” and portrays resistance as a real possibility, Lennox contends that all three of Bachmann’s radio plays also show, “daß dieser Widerstand zugleich ein von der Ordnung ›kontaminierter‹ ist” (*ibid.*),⁸⁷ and that those who try to place themselves beyond this order are therefore doomed to failure, while others who come to terms with it (like Jan), survive.

By the same token, it would also be simplistic to pass judgement on the Good God as merely the brutal opponent of passionate love. He may indeed be a “strenger Meister” but he stands for “Ruhe und Sicherheit” and the “Gang aller Dinge” (*W I*: 319). As “Anwalt der Gesellschaft” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 82) he defends the interests of society as a whole. Unlike his squad of venal squirrels, the Good God’s actions are not motivated by the wanton desire for destruction but the very opposite: “[E]r hat das Ziel, die Welt im Gleichmaß gehen zu lassen.” (Seim 396) The Good God had to pass judgement on Jan und Jennifer because they tried to transcend “die Grenzen der vom guten Gott als ewig und natürlich angesehenen Ordnung” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 82). Jan and Jennifer strove (and stood) for the impossible: they wanted “was noch niemals war: kein Ende” (*W I*: 317); they wanted a life of contradictions—a life bordered by icebergs at one end and fire at the other (*ibid.*). Accordingly the Good God saw their love as being akin to “jene Wahnsinnsstoffe, mit Strahl- und Brandkraft, die alles zersetzen und die Welt in Frage stellen. Noch die Erinnerung, die von ihnen bleibe, verseucht die Orte, die sie berührt haben.” (*W I*: 322) The big difference between his behaviour, and Jan and Jennifer’s, was (as the Good God points out), “daß die beiden an nichts mehr glaubten und ich in gutem Glauben handelte” (*W I*: 318): “Es geschah nur Recht.” (*W I*: 306) As he goes on to observe, if he had been condemned and sentenced, it would have been “zur Beunruhigung aller” (*W I*: 322). Because the Good God represents “eine Ordnung des zweckmäßigen Durchschnitts”, he does not represent a threat to “[jene], die sich anpassen” (Hädecke 42)—only to “solche, die sich dieser Ordnung verweigern” (Tunner 422).⁸⁸

⁸⁶ This view echoes the assertion of the narrator in Bachmann’s “Todesarten” fragment *Der Fall Franza*, that there is a “Denken [...] das zum Sterben führt” as well as a “Denken, das zum Verbrechen führt” (*TP 2*: 78).

⁸⁷ As Lennox points out, from a Foucauldian perspective, Jennifer is contaminated because she is not “völlig außerhalb der Ordnung, der sie zum Opfer fällt” (“Hörspiele” 94).

⁸⁸ Haider-Pregler explains why society needs to take much more brutal revenge on the transgressors in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” than in “Die Zikaden”: “Jan und Jennifer gefährden [...] das vom guten Gott

Bachmann clearly had ironic intentions in calling her main character “the Good God”: Seim even sees “Hohn” in Bachmann’s nomenclature (400). Nevertheless, the Good God stands for an absolute and overarching authority—for “geschichtliche Ordnung schlechthin” (Höller *Das Werk* 120), representing “ein oberstes Prinzip [...], ein göttliches [...], dem das weltliche entspricht oder dem das weltliche zumindest nicht widerspricht” (Tunner 420). Certainly on earth, the play makes clear, there is only one order: “Es gibt nicht zwei Richter—wie es nicht zwei Ordnungen gibt.” (*W I*: 319) That this is so, is confirmed later in the court proceedings when the Good God explains the need to eliminate dangerous aberrations (like Jan and Jennifer’s) for the protection of society as a whole, and challenges the judge to agree: “[E]s kommt doch darauf an, auszuweichen, sich anzupassen! Antworten Sie—bei allem, was Ihnen Recht ist. Antworten Sie!” (*W I*: 322) The judge’s simple affirmative reply proves that both systems of justice—the Good God’s and the official legal system represented by the judge—are on the same side, a point that is driven home by the Good God in his triumphant response: “Auf dieses Ja folgt nichts mehr. Darauf ginge ich noch einmal hin und täte es noch einmal.” (ibid.) As Bannasch observes: “Richter und Angeklagter verschmelzen [...] zu einer Figur, zu der ordnenden Macht der Norm, die den Ausnahmefall Liebe, die asoziale Ekstase, nicht dulden darf.” (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 58)

The question of ultimate guilt in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” (and thus the primary focus of the critique) is therefore not clear cut. As Lennox notes: “Bachmann war [...] weder bereit, sich mit der bestehenden Ordnung zu versöhnen, noch auf das Visionäre zu verzichten.” (“Hörspiele” 84) The play’s ending highlights this ambivalent, and almost paradoxical, situation: the Good God is released, but the “Anklage” remains “aufrechterhalten” (*W I*: 327). The Good God is therefore “weder freigesprochen noch verurteilt” (Seim 398), and, instead of judgement, there is only “Schweigen—bis zuletzt” (*W I*: 327).⁸⁹ The judge’s “Vorbehalte gegen das zerstörerische Prinzip verstummen vor den Ansprüchen der Gesellschaft” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 84). Nevertheless: “Trotz der Einsicht in die Unauflösbarkeit des Widerspruchs bleibt die Anklage Bachmanns gegen dieses gesellschaftliche Prinzip bestehen. Denn auch die Anklage des guten Gott »bleibt aufrechterhalten.«” (85) In the face of the official legal system’s silence, the only voice that remains is, according to Bartsch, that of mass culture:

Diese fortgeschrittene Gesellschaft läßt nur die Alternative zu, den »Stimmen« der Gesellschaft, die ihre Ideologie transportieren, zu folgen, wie Jan, oder, so man das Spiel des Lebens nicht nach den Regeln der gegebenen gesellschaftlichen Ordnung mitzuspielen gedenkt, zerstört zu werden. (ibid.)

The press remains accused

The depiction of “der gute Gott” (and the principle for which he stands) therefore remains rather Janus-like—pointing in two different directions. There is, however, no ambivalence about the portrayal

kontrollierte Gesellschaftsgefüge um vieles drastischer. Nicht auf irgendeiner Insel, sondern mitten im Alltagsgetriebe der Großstadt negieren sie alle gesellschaftlichen Bedingtheiten.” (71)

⁸⁹ Note the irony that while the formal legal system is not successful in passing judgement, the Good God as the *de facto* judge of the world has successfully passed sentence and executed it.

of the mass media in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”. Although the press (and its commercial brother-in-arms, the advertising industry) is represented in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” as an agent of this “Ordnung des Durchschnitts” (in the same way that the press is depicted as an institution that both reflects and helps to enforce social cohesion and constraints in “Die Zikaden”), Bachmann’s last radio play is much more trenchant in its critique of the press as an intrusive and alienating force in society, and as a brutal enforcer of social conformity—a society in which the press demonstrates not only an alarming and unhealthy fascination with violence and death, but also a blood-chilling delight in its active role in the death sentences it helps to carry out.

5.5 In summation

The foregoing analysis of Bachmann’s radio plays shows that there is a gradual but clear intensification of focus on the journalistic and advertising media, portraying them as the hand-maidens of the status quo—working to both enforce and perpetuate that status quo. Like the poems analysed in the previous chapter, all three of Bachmann’s radio plays depict the alienation of those who submit to this status quo, and demonstrate the way in which these arms of the culture industry help to perpetuate this alienating status quo by encouraging indulgent escapism and social conformity. All three radio plays also reveal, each in different ways, that attempts to escape from the social structures that are underpinned by the journalistic and advertising media, are either successfully discouraged, prove to be futile or are severely punished. As Bartsch points out, all three radio plays depict “die geweckte Ahnung von den Möglichkeiten eines anderen Lebens und von einer relativen Ich-Autonomie sowie die Unmöglichkeit des konsequenten Austritts aus der Gesellschaft”—a theme that Bachmann also takes up in the stories of *Das dreißigste Jahr* (Ingeborg Bachmann 49).

At the same time, however, each radio play demonstrates Enzensberger’s thesis that the status quo’s control is not absolute: there are pockets of resistance. Thus, although Laurenz ultimately returns to his repressive, alienating working world in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, he was able to achieve, even if only briefly and in the parallel universe of dream fantasy, a taste of the freedom that he subconsciously desires—a taste that may or may not infiltrate and taint his attitude to work and to life in future.⁹⁰ Similarly, in “Die Zikaden”, while Robinson and the escapee also “return to the fold” like Laurenz, Robinson proves to be someone who, for a limited time at least, successfully avoids and resists the indoctrination of the journalistic media. And in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, Jennifer represents a most dramatic illustration of success in resisting the lures of the culture industry. Ultimately Jennifer’s resistance and her passionate commitment to the absolute value of romantic love over social responsibility prove to be fatal. Nevertheless, it was her absolute commitment and passion

⁹⁰ Haider-Pregler, for example, notes the possibility of a more open interpretation of the last scene through subtle changes in the production. Thus in a version of the play produced in 1977 by Klaus W. Leonhard at Studio Bern, Anna rebukes Laurenz for his tardiness with a touch of “Besorgnis”, and Laurenz repeats Anna’s use of the word “traumhaft” in a contemplative way before he responds to the Generaldirektor’s summons, thus suggesting the possibility that Laurenz may not necessarily return to the role of “musterhafte[n] Untertan[s]” (51).

that enabled Jan to see through and resist the lures of the status quo, even if only briefly, and to show him a life beyond the mundaneness and conformity perpetuated and enforced by the journalistic media.

Chapter 6. *Das dreißigste Jahr* and other pre-*Todesarten* prose

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses Bachmann's portrayal of the journalistic media in the short prose of her pre-*Todesarten* period, starting with her 1952 story, "Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt", and concluding with the stories in her 1961 collection of short prose, *Das dreißigste Jahr*.

6.2 "Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt"

Written around the time that Bachmann was working at Rot-Weiß-Rot, "Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt" first appeared in a Viennese academic monthly in April 1952 (*W* 2: 603). This extremely short work is significant for my study as it represents the first example of Bachmann's published prose to refer to the press. In essence the story deals with "Verlust der Heimat und die Sehnsucht nach ihrem Wiedergewinn" (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 47), portraying the dilemma of the narrator, who has successfully established himself in an industrialised, modern "Weltstadt" (*W* 2: 38) but still longs for his¹ pastoral homeland.² Because his homeland was so economically backward and isolated, there was no exchange rate between the two countries,³ and so the narrator had arrived penniless in the "new world". Despite this inauspicious start, however, he managed to succeed beyond all expectation in whatever he turned his hand to: "[A]lles, was ich tat—ob ich nun an der Börse spielte, Maschinen baute oder den Ertrag von Plantagen zu steigern versuchte—war so merkbar von Erfolg begleitet, daß es alle meine Erwartungen übertraf." (*W* 2: 39) A brief reference to the press comes immediately after his description of his unanticipated professional success: "Als mein Name zum erstenmal in der Zeitung genannt wurde, war ich glücklicher als je zuvor in meinem Leben, und ich beschloß zu bleiben." (*W* 2: 39) In the narrator's new world, then, the press not only performs the role of publicly *confirming* status and success, but also acts as a further *indicator* of success—one so powerful that it prompts the narrator to abandon plans to return to his homeland.

Because it is rooted in materialism and egotism, however, the narrator's decision is morally

¹ Given the references to the narrator's stock trading activities, the involvement in engineering projects, the era in which the story was written, and Bachmann's tendency to portray males and females in "traditional" gender-based roles, I have assumed that the voice in this story is male.

² As Weigel observes, the narrator's homeland is no idyllic "paradise lost" but a landscape of autumnal decline and bucolic decay (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 252). Weigel thus sees in this story a more authentic variation on the *Et in Arcadia ego* tradition with its portrayal of death and decay as omnipresent elements in both the old arcadia of the narrator's homeland and the new arcadia of his adopted city (256). While Weigel sees the story and its title in terms of the "Goethe-Tradition" (*ibid.*), Hapkemeyer focusses on the title's allusion to Schiller's poem and the Hellenistic literary tradition associated with Arcadia (*Früheste Prosa* 50).

³ For analyses of Bachmann's "Währungsmetaphorik", see Hapkemeyer (*Früheste Prosa* 57, 70) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 250ff.).

dubious and proves to be spiritually debilitating. These aspects of his decision to stay are highlighted in an allusion to the sinister history of the city he has chosen to make his home. Although aware of claims that the city was built on the foundations of ancient Babylon—a description that echoes the comparison of New York to Babylon in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan” (*W 1*: 287)—the narrator ignores history in favour of the dazzling present: “[I]hre beglaubigte Geschichte schien mir blaß und nichtig vor ihrer Gegenwart.” (*W 2*: 38) Hapkemeyer correctly emphasises the symbolic nature of the landscapes depicted in this story in which “die Orte der Außenwelt gleichzeitig im Inneren des Erzählers gelegene Ort sind und für bestimmte Bewußtseinslagen und Lebensformen stehen” (*Früheste Prosa* 48), noting the “Polarität von Natur und Stadt[, die] durch die jeweilige mythologische Beziehung auf Arkadien und Babylon unterstrichen [wird]” (58), and drawing out the metaphorical ramifications of the reference to Babylon:

Aus dem Land der Reinheit kommt der Sprecher in die Stadt, die, “auf den Ruinen des alten Babylon” [...] erbaut sein soll, womit unzweideutig ihr Sündencharakter impliziert ist. [...] Babylon ist zudem für Ingeborg Bachmann der symbolträchtige Ort der Sprachenverwirrung bzw. –deformation und der damit unweigerlich verbundenen Persönlichkeitsentstellung, die sich in den Redensarten ausspricht. (ibid.)

It does not take long for the narrator to realise that his decision to stay has led him into a trap: “Die Stadt ließ mich nicht mehr los.” (*W 2*: 38) Although he is theoretically free to do what he wants, he finds that his choice to pursue material and professional success prevents him from exercising that theoretical freedom: “Ich hätte jetzt jederzeit ans Meer fahren können, doch dazu kam es nicht mehr, denn ich hatte immer neue Versprechen einzulösen, die ich gegeben hatte, immer neue Aufgaben zu erfüllen, die ich übernommen hatte, mich immer neu zu bestätigen, da man nun einmal mich bestätigt hatte.” (*W 2*: 39)

For all of its material satisfactions, however, the narrator’s new way of life leaves other needs unmet, and this deficit results in a “Zustand der Entfremdung [...] mit der Ahnung von und mit der Sehnsucht nach einem anderen Leben” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 48)—a longing that is associated with his lost arcadian homeland and symbolised in the “Ton einer Flöte, eine vom Wind zerrissene Melodie” that drifts into his consciousness “in Augenblicken, in denen ich keine Zeit habe, ihm Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken” (*W 2*: 39). While his arcadian homeland may not have been materially prosperous, it would have been a place where there was time to listen to a flute melody drifting on the wind—a place where there was time to connect with, and enjoy, nature. The narrator tries to recapture these aspects of his former life by driving to the “Ausfallstraße, die ans Meer führt” (*W 2*: 39). Significantly, the narrator goes no further than this: instead of going all the way to the water, he satisfies himself with merely imagining the now estranged ocean.⁴ Clearly, his life is now so demanding that he has no time to drive all the way to the ocean, but perhaps he also fears that, once he makes direct contact with all that the ocean represents for him, he may not want to return to the city.

⁴ As Cirlot notes in *A Dictionary of Symbols*, “the two most essential aspects of the ocean are its ceaseless movement and the formlessness of its waters” (241). In “Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt”, as in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, the ocean also represents primeval, natural forces and the world of emotion, as opposed to the civilised, rational world of business and the metropolis.

Like the narrator's homeland and the flute music, the ocean is clearly a "Gegenbild" to the narrator's current way of life. Hapkemeyer elucidates the metaphorical dimensions of this opposition:

Meer und Himmel wie auch die anderen Naturbegriffe verweisen auf einen, das hochzivilisierte und verstädterte Leben transzendierenden Bereich. Es geht dabei weniger um den Antagonismus von technischer und natürlicher Landschaft an sich als um das Gegeneinander der von ihnen repräsentierten Lebensformen, um den Gegensatz von "ganzem Leben" und auf bestimmte Funktionen reduziertem Menschsein. (*Früheste Prosa* 52)

Theoretically, the narrator could return to his homeland at any time. In effect, though, he is entrapped because he is now addicted to materialistic values: "[F]ühre ich zurück, so käme ich nicht reicher heim, als ich fortzog, nur ein wenig älter und müder, und ich hätte vielleicht nicht mehr das Herz mich zu bescheiden." (*W* 2: 40) And, as we see from his concomitant admission that ultimate success would be the ability to have his material success comprehended and acknowledged back in his homeland (*ibid.*), it is not just material success that drives him but an addiction to social prestige as well. In his analysis of this melancholy story, Bartsch notes "die durch die kapitalistische Gesellschaftsordnung bedingte Entfremdung des Ich-Erzählers" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 163) and describes "Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt" as an instance of Bachmann's "Kritik an der in den fünfziger Jahren restaurierten kapitalistischen Wettbewerbsgesellschaft" (48). An important but heretofore unremarked element of this critique in "Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt" is the role that the press played in providing the narrator with his first taste of public recognition and social prestige, which resulted in the decision to opt for a materially successful but spiritually alienating way of life.

Although the story suggests that the protagonist is trapped in a state of permanent alienation—a prisoner of his new world—the story remains open-ended: it remains unclear, "ob der Sprecher dem Anruf folgen wird oder wie es überhaupt möglich wäre, diesem Ruf zu folgen, da er ja letztlich von einer absoluten, ungreifbaren Größe herrührt" (Hapkemeyer *Früheste Prosa* 60). What emerges very clearly and significantly in this story, however, is the persistence of the "Gegenbilder" in the protagonist's life—the irrepressible reminders of a life beyond the values of capitalism:

Das entscheidende Moment ist, daß der Abstumpfung, dem Nutzen-, Profit- und Leistungsdenken ein anderes, immaterielles Wertesystem entgegengehalten wird, an dem gemessen jenes als eitel erscheint. Arkadien, Meer und Himmel stellen Richtgrößen und Orientierungspunkte dar. Worauf es ankommt, ist die Wirkung, die diese Größen zeitigen. (*ibid.*)⁵

Thus, as in a number of Bachmann's works discussed so far, we find that the culture industry—for all its temptations and its superficial success in encouraging materialism and conformance to the status quo—does not entirely succeed in suppressing the consciousness of values beyond materialism and the desire for escape from conformity.

⁵ Like Hapkemeyer and most other scholars who have discussed this story, Schneider sees the narrator's arcadia "als eine statische Sphäre des Elementaren, Klaren, Ewigen und Schönen beschrieben, an dem das Getriebe der mobilen städtischen Gegenwartsgesellschaft spurlos vorbeigeht" ("Frühe Erzählprosa" 110). This contrasts to Weigel's less positive assessment of the lost arcadia (*Hinterlassenschaften* 255). While Weigel is right to insist on the less-than-idyllic aspects of the narrator's arcadian origins, which call for a more nuanced interpretation than a blanket assessment of an unequivocally golden past, set in stark contrast to soul-destroying modernity, her interpretation underrates the role of that arcadia as a positive counterpoint to the city, and the city's negative associations with the immorality of Babylon.

6.3 “Der Schweißer”

Not published in her lifetime, but estimated to have been written some time after January 1959 (*W 2*: 604),⁶ “Der Schweißer” recounts the story of Reiter, a welder, who serendipitously finds a copy of Nietzsche’s *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* while sitting alone in his local “Kaffeehaus” (*W 2*: 59)—an encounter that leads to an excruciatingly painful consciousness of the “bisher nur dumpf verspürte Entfremdungssituation seines Lebens” and the “Konflikt zwischen Wahrheit und Lebenswelt im gewöhnlichen Alltag” (Beicken 163).

The significance of Bachmann’s allusion to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* lies in the fact that this book not only constituted a scathing critique of “die Weltanschauung des bürgerlichen Zeitalters” but also unmasked “[den] Gottesglaube[n], die Werteordnung und das Kulturideal der Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts [...] als Illusionen und Ideologien” (Schneider “*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 123).⁷ As a result of his encounter with this radical and iconoclastic work—something entirely beyond his former experience—Reiter finds himself no longer able to conform to the demands of his “kleinbürgerlichen Umwelt” (*ibid.*): formerly “ein fleißiger, braver Mensch [...], [e]in Abstinenzler” (*W 2*: 65), Reiter now starts smoking and drinking, and becomes obsessed with reading and thinking about philosophy, to the detriment of his family obligations. Not long after the onset of his obsession with reading and thinking, Reiter’s ailing wife dies, largely as a result of his physical and emotional neglect. In a state of mental torment and despair, not dissimilar to that of Büchner’s Lenz (*Werke* 82ff.),⁸ Reiter takes his own life the day after his wife passes away.

“Der Schweißer” contains two fleeting references to the journalistic media. The first occurs at a critical point in the story when Reiter turns over a few pages in the book that he finds in the deserted coffee house and starts reading a few words at random. This initial reading of the book is described as “weder aufmerksam, noch verständnislos” (*W 2*: 61) and very much in terms of a mechanical and mindless process: “[E]r las einfach die Worte ab, wie er immer Worte abgelesen hatte, von einem Formular, von einer Sportzeitung, so wie er es in der Schule gelernt hatte, ein Wort nach dem andern.” (*ibid.*, m.e.) Initially, it appears as if Reiter’s encounter with this “Fundgegenstand” (*ibid.*) has had no

⁶ While Weigel tentatively asserts that “Der Schweißer” is “vermutlich aus der Entstehungszeit des Prosabandes »Das dreißigste Jahr«” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 264), Höller unequivocally insists on their temporal and thematic proximity (*Das Werk* 130).

⁷ First published in 1882, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* was the last of a number of works considered to be a product of Nietzsche at his most nihilistic, just before a turning point in January 1883, when his “despair gave way to euphoria and ‘inspiration’ and he began to work furiously on *Thus spake Zarathustra*” (Hollingdale 45). The Bachmann literary archives in Vienna contain a philosophy paper dated 1946, which includes several pages on Nietzsche’s socio-political critique of western culture (“Referat” N5331ff.). In this paper Bachmann argues that the literary aphorisms of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* laid the groundwork for the radically new approach of *Also sprach Zarathustra* (N5333). The only allusion to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in “Der Schweißer” is not the only reference to Nietzsche in Bachmann’s work: *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* is mentioned three pages later in “Der Schweißer”, and *Ecce Homo* is mentioned in *Malina* (*TP 3.1*: 512). For more on Bachmann and Nietzsche, see Eberhardt (“Bachmann und Nietzsche”), Faye, Götz (*The Split Scene of Reading*), Morris (25f.) and Schmaus (“Deutschsprachige Literatur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts” 260).

⁸ Bachmann quotes from Büchner’s *Lenz* at the start of *Ein Ort für Zufälle* (*TP 1*: 205).

more effect on him than anything else he has read to date, for he shuts the book after reading some ten lines. Reiter's curiosity, however, proves to be sufficiently aroused to re-open the book and find out exactly what kind of book this is. At this point Reiter clearly makes a significant connection with the book: he laughs out loud on reading the title, and decides to take the book home with him. The casual allusion to journalism in this context is significant because the reference to "Sportzeitung" is made in the same breath as the reference to "Formular" (with its allusion to the bureaucracy and constraints of adult life) as well as to "Schule" (with its explicit allusion to the rigidly structured processes of learning to read as a child). This association of the sporting press with rigid social structures is reinforced by the observation that, when Reiter reads a "Sportzeitung", his response is not qualitatively different to his response in looking over an official form or document. This is not because Reiter is inherently incapable of a different emotional and intellectual response: the vehemence of his unexpected response to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* proves this is not the case. After his encounter with Nietzsche, reading becomes for Reiter not only intellectually stimulating, but intensely physical—moving him between the extremes of ecstatic pleasure and pain.⁹

Der Mann las und las, indem er die Lippen bewegte; manchmal geriet er heftig in Bewegung, und dann fuhren die Worte in ihn wie Geister, fingen an, ihr Wesen in ihm zu treiben. Er stöhnte wollüstig, sein Kopf schmerzte, seine Augen brannten, obwohl er abgehärtete Augen hatte, an das blaue sternhelle Licht gewöhnte Augen. (W 2: 64)

Paradoxically, the vehemence of Reiter's response suggests that there was a gap in Reiter's life, which has now been made apparent to him, and which has been filled by his discovery of philosophy, but it is the filling of this gap that creates (ironically) a major crack in his life, alienating him from his family and social connections.¹⁰ Now a rebel and misfit in his community, Reiter is, like Jennifer in "Der gute Gott von Manhattan", guilty of a "Grenzübertritt" (W 1: 317). By loosening "die natürlichen Klammern", Reiter finds that he, too, like Jennifer, has "keinen Halt mehr in der Welt" (W 1: 318).

The second reference to the journalistic media occurs soon after Reiter's discovery of the book, when the doctor pays a house call to tend to Reiter's sick wife. When the doctor queries Reiter's request for a medical certificate, Reiter tells him about the book that has had such an impact on his life: "Er ging zu der Kiste, auf der das Radio stand. Auf dem Radio lag das Buch." (W 2: 63) The symbolism here suggests that the mass medium of radio (like the popular press in the earlier reference to the "Sportzeitung") now takes second place to his books, which have opened his eyes to a new world. Reiter describes this radical change brought about by his discovery of philosophy in terms of tearing and cracking: "Es ist etwas gerissen in mir. Zersprungen." (W 2: 67)¹¹ In trying to express the

⁹ In a 1963 interview Bachmann admits to an incurable addiction to reading: "Lesen ist sicher, außer Musikhören, etwas, ohne das ich nicht sein kann. Wenn ich nicht schreibe, bin ich nach Büchern, nach jedem Fetzen bedruckten Papiers so süchtig, daß ich mir manchmal wünsche, es gäbe Entziehungskuren für Süchtige dieser Art." (*Gul* 42) For a discussion of Bachmann's "Lesewut" and its similarities to Reiter's in "Der Schweißer" and Ich's in *Malina* (W 4: 93), see Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 265, 292f.).

¹⁰ According to Weigel, this aspect of the story illustrates Benjamin's views on the subversive potential inherent in all forms of reading (*Hinterlassenschaften* 266).

¹¹ This description is highly reminiscent of Büchner's Lenz and his experience of the "Kluft unrettbaren Wahnsinns", which Bachmann quotes in her Büchner-Prize speech, the lead-in to which (as published in the

devastating impact of this change, Reiter resorts to an analogy drawn from his work as a welder: “Wir haben Schutzbrillen. Aber was ist, wenn die Schutzbrille eines Tages vergessen ist. Wenn sie zerspringt [...]. Da ist mir die Brille zersprungen und nun springt das Licht herein, wie ein Wolf und frißt meine Augen, reißt meine Augen und mein Hirn auf.” (W 2: 69) Nietzsche’s book, we infer, has acted on Reiter like the “Faustschlag auf den Schädel” that Bachmann refers to in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (W 4: 210 f.), making him desperately unhappy in the wake of the painful experience of “Erkenntnis”: “Die Begegnung mit dem Absoluten hat ihn die Erbärmlichkeit und Mittelmäßigkeit seines bisherigen Lebens und seiner Umgebung sehen lassen.” (Hapkemeyer *Früheste Prosa* 77)¹²

In “Der Schweißer”, then, Bachmann sets up an opposition between the safe, apparently whole, and uneventful routine of Reiter’s previous life—of which the journalistic media are an integral part—and the world of radical thought (epitomised by Nietzsche’s *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*), which challenges that way of life. Before his discovery of Nietzsche, Reiter appears to have unquestioningly accepted his role as a cog in industrialised society, where individuals are assessed in terms of material benefits and aspirations (W 2: 69). Reiter’s discovery of “Philosophie” (W 2: 63), however, alienates him from that materialistic treadmill, leading to the “Zusammenbruch aller seiner bürgerlichen Lebensumstände” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 166), and taking him, as Bartsch puts it, “aus den gewohnten sozialen Zusammenhängen, aus dem Produktions- und Konsumtionskreislauf der Gesellschaft” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 110).

Reiter’s encounter with Nietzsche in particular, and philosophy in general, therefore illustrates the kind of effect that Adorno and Horkheimer believed literature and high art could have in awakening the individual to the reality of their enslavement in an alienating system—the kind of experience that was unfortunately becoming more difficult to access because of the insidiously pervasive influence of the culture industry. In “Der Schweißer”, however, Bachmann shows (albeit in an understated way) that the journalistic media, as exemplified in the “Sportzeitung” and radio, have not succeeded in keeping Reiter blind and enslaved to the treadmill of production and productivity, and that even the briefest encounter with philosophical literature is enough to irrevocably open Reiter’s eyes to a different world and different way of thinking. Admittedly, the price that Reiter pays for his enlightenment and release from enslavement is high—the same as that paid by Jennifer for her commitment to the absolute. To that extent, Reiter, remains (like Jennifer) a highly ambivalent character. Schneider draws attention to the negative aspects of this ambivalence:

[E]inerseits ist sein Erkenntnisschock, der ihn zu eigenständigem Nachdenken und zur Aufgabe seiner bürgerlichen, kranken- unfall- und lebensversicherten Durchschnittsexistenz bringt [...], ein Moment der inneren Befreiung und Verselbständigung. Andererseits gelangt er jedoch [...], nicht zu einer Neubegründung von Sozialität und Moralität [...]. Reiter löst sich vom Vergangenen, findet jedoch nicht ins Gegenwärtige, sondern treibt in ein Abseits. (“*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem

Werke edition) also refers to the “Riss[...], der für Lenz durch die Welt ging” (W 4: 278).

¹² As Weigel and Hapkemeyer point out, Reiter can be seen as a “Nachfolger” of the protagonist in the prose version of “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 264): after being exposed to a radically different reality, both figures retreat from their “alltägliche Welt” (*Früheste Prosa* 74) and become “untauglich für die Wirklichkeit” (77).

Umfeld” 123f.)¹³

Schmidt, however, highlights the more positive aspects, observing that “Der Schweißer” posits “noch emphatisch die positive Möglichkeit der Teilnahme”: “»Ich weiß jetzt, daß ich nicht verworfen bin, daß ich teilnehmen muß!« [...] sie eröffnet sich dem Schweißer—freilich auf Kosten der Ordnung—mit der Entdeckung des Studiums, in der Perspektive der Aneignung durch Erkenntnis.” (481) The ambivalence of Reiter’s character does therefore not extend to the story’s implicit commentary on the role and impact of the mass media in society: escape from the influence of the mass media is indeed possible, and the mass media (certainly the journalistic media of the press and radio) are not as absolutely enslaving as posited in Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the culture industry.

6.4 *Das dreißigste Jahr*. “Alles” and “Undine geht”

As Bartsch observes, *Das dreißigste Jahr* is more than just a collection of short prose: it is a cycle of seven closely interrelated stories, depicting existential crises unleashed by the conflicting demands of the individual for self-fulfilment and self-realisation on the one hand, and social pressures and objective circumstances on the other (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 95). While by no means dominant in the cycle, allusions to the journalistic media underpin the main themes in most of the stories. The only story not to mention the mass media at all is “Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha”. “Alles” and “Undine geht” contain only a few references that are of minor interest to this dissertation, as discussed briefly below.

In “Alles” the narrator alludes to the journalistic media when describing his relationship with Betty, the woman to whom he turns when he fails to protect his son from the “Babel” of language (*W* 2: 143): “Ich ging ziemlich oft zu ihr, während eines Jahres, legte mich neben sie auf das Bett in ihrem möblierten Zimmer, wo sie, während ich ein Glas Wein trank, Illustrierte las und dann auf meine Zumutungen ohne Befremden einging.” (*W* 2: 151) Here, Betty’s reading of glossy magazines can be seen as a reflection of the superficial, commercial and materialistic nature of her relationship with the narrator: for the narrator, Betty is simply “eine Verkäuferin von der Maria Hilferstraße, der ich Strümpfe, Kinokarten oder was zum Essen mitbrachte” (*W* 2: 151). The materialistic and morally dubious nature of this relationship is made even more apparent when the narrator subsequently breaks off the relationship but continues to send Betty money (*W* 2: 152), and describes this action in terms of blackmail, even though his wife is aware of the relationship, and even though the relationship with Betty is not even sexual, let alone physically passionate. In “Alles”, then, the significance of the brief

¹³ While Schneider sees in Reiter’s fate “eine implizite Nietzschekritik” (“*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 123f.), I would argue that the role of Nietzsche’s work in this story remains as ambivalent as the character of Reiter himself, given that *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* was the source of Reiter’s intellectual awakening or “Erkenntnisschock”—an experience that Bachmann clearly sees in positive terms in her theoretical writings as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Schneider subsequently concedes this ambivalence: “Die differenzierte Darstellung des Erweckungserlebnisses ihres Protagonisten macht es unmöglich, Bachmanns Stellung zu Nietzsche auf eine extreme Position festzulegen. Sie gehört weder zu den Nietzsche-Anhängern [...], noch zu den Nietzsche-Gegnern [...]. Sie nähert sich damit zu der ambivalenten Position von Horkheimer und Adorno an, die in ihrer »Dialektik der Aufklärung« den Vernunftkritiker Nietzsche gegen den Antidemokraten Nietzsche verteidigten.” (“*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 124)

reference to the journalist media lies in the association of the press with mercenary, materialistic concerns—associations that we have already seen elsewhere in Bachmann’s more extended commentary on the press.

In “Undine geht”, the journalistic media of the press and radio are depicted as part of the mundane, practical sphere of men like Hans, in contrast to Undine’s realm of “die Kunst, ach die Kunst” (*Gul* 46). According to Undine, a typical evening at home for Hans (and other men like him) consists of opening the newspaper, going over bills or turning up the volume of the radio (*W* 2: 255). The journalistic media also feature in Undine’s characterisation of the public sphere beyond the privacy of hearth and home as “Grenzen und Politik und Zeitungen und Banken und Börse und Handel” (*W* 2: 257). In “Undine geht”, then, the significance of the brief references to press and radio lies in the association of the mass media with quotidian routine, conformity and commerce—associations that we are made elsewhere in Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media. While Bachmann sets up an interesting opposition between Undine’s “otherness” (representing, as Bachmann maintains, art and artistic endeavour) and the world of domesticity and commerce (with which the press and radio are associated), these references are so brief they do not warrant further commentary.

Far more extensive references to the journalistic media are found in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, “Das dreißigste Jahr”, “Unter Mördern und Irren” and “Ein Wildermuth”. I examine these stories in the remainder of this chapter.

6.5 “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”

The references to the journalistic media in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”¹⁴ have remained largely ignored by Bachmann scholars to date. Although few in number and, at first glance, rather unremarkable, these references are significant in their commentary on the role of the journalistic media in society and their impact on individuals.

Described by Albrecht and Goettsche as “eine autobiographische Auseinandersetzung mit der österreichischen Kindheit in Klagenfurt im Zeichen von Nationalsozialismus, die zugleich eine an Walter Benjamin geschulte Gedächtnispoetik entwirft” (“Leben und Werk im Überblick” 10),¹⁵ “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” is structured as a framed series of vignettes, comprising recollections from what emerges to be the narrator’s own childhood in provincial Austria in the years

¹⁴ “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” was first published in *Botteghe Oscure* in 1959 (*W* 2: 605).

¹⁵ Other scholars who have analysed the story in terms of Benjamin’s “Gedächtnispoetik” include Götsche (“Erinnerung und Zeitkritik” 80) and Schneider (“*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 113). Folkvord (*Sich ein Haus schreiben* 46–50) and Weigel (“»Stadt ohne Gewähr«” 262; *Hinterlassenschaften* 45f.) elaborate on the similarities between “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” and Benjamin’s *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*. Töller, on the other hand, discusses the story in terms of Benjamin’s concept of “Allegorie” (23) and sees the image of the flaming tree in terms of Benjamin’s “historischen Augenblick” (28ff.); she later refers to connections with Benjamin’s essay “Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen” (33f.; 35; 37).

before and during World War II.¹⁶ This childhood is characterised by “miserablen sozialen, ökonomischen und politischen Bedingungen” (Bartsch “Dunkelhaft” 37), for the children are “Nachkommen jener sozialen Schicht, die während der fortschreitenden Industrialisierung vom Land in die Städte geflohen sind, um dort in den Elendsvierteln unter unmenschlichen Verhältnissen ihr Dasein zu fristen” (ibid.). While the narrator’s move to the city in “Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt” resulted in gratifying prosperity, the narrator of this story experiences no improvement in economic circumstances—only alienation and existential homelessness: “Es fehlt dem Ich das Gefühl der Geborgenheit, das ein Leben am Heimatort bieten könnte, und damit die „Erdung“ [...] für den Lebenskampf [...]. [E]s ist in seiner Heimatstadt nicht verwurzelt, es ist ihr entfremdet.” (38)

In its reflections on the deprived socio-economic, historical, physical and domestic circumstances of a group of children, the story depicts the deep and lasting impact these circumstances have on individuals in their formative years—an impact that is epitomised in the repression they experience at home: they mustn’t make too much noise when playing, for fear of disturbing the landlord who lives below them: “Sie dürfen nur flüstern und werden sich das Flüstern nicht mehr abgewöhnen in diesem Leben.” (W 2: 85)¹⁷ Conformance to parental discipline at home, however, brings trouble at school. “Schlagen sollte man euch, bis ihr den Mund auftut. Schlagen” (W 2: 85), cries their teacher in frustration over their verbal reticence in the classroom. Threats like these, along with the “imperatives, rhetorical questions, [and] repetition of phrases which clearly do not require a response” are evidence of the “authoritarian posture of parents, teachers and other adults” which not only hinders “meaningful communication between adults and children” (Bahrawy 60) but also blames and punishes the victims:

Das familiär bedingte Sprachdefizit der Kinder [...] wird durch die schulische Ausbildung nicht kompensiert, ja nicht einmal verbessert. Die für die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung so wichtige sprachliche Artikulationsfähigkeit wird nicht gepflegt, sondern vorausgesetzt, und, sofern nicht vorhanden, dem Kind als Fehlverhalten vorgeworfen, das durch körperliche Züchtigungen korrigierbar sei [...]. (Bartsch “Dunkelhaft” 41)

Understandably, the children respond to these conflicting demands with even greater submissiveness and further silence: “Zwischen dem Vorwurf, zu laut zu sein, und dem Vorwurf, zu leise zu sein, richten sie sich schweigend ein.” (W 2: 85) This in turn cripples the children’s

¹⁶ Writers like Pausch in his Bachmann monograph and Johnson in *Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt* quote extensively from “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”. Bachmann herself, however, saw the story as “das Gegenstück zu einer autobiographischen Skizze” and was at pains to distinguish the necessarily autobiographical elements from the main thrust of this story (*Gul* 26). Bartsch has therefore criticised Pausch’s efforts, “das Manko an gesicherten Lebenszeugnissen so wettmachen und aus der Erzählung bloß Daten und Fakten herauslesen zu wollen” (“Dunkelhaft” 34, 40). Bahrawy, too, takes Pausch to task for drawing conclusions about Bachmann’s own childhood from incidents depicted in the story but then goes on to commit the same offence on several occasions (59 et passim).

¹⁷ Quoting Brückner, Bartsch draws attention to the way in which this repressive home environment was fostered by (and beneficial to) the National Socialist regime: “Für den faschistischen Staat hatte die Familie eine zweifache Funktion, eine bevölkerungspolitische und die der Verinnerlichung autoritärer Unterwürfigkeit. Ein Ort des Schutzes allerdings sollte sie unter den Nationalsozialisten nicht sein, denen vielmehr an der »Zerstörung auch des Mikrokosmos der bürgerlichen Familie« lag, um »Kinder wie Erwachsene unmittelbar der Partei, der Ideologie, den Normen des Staats subsumieren« zu können.” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 101)

development: “Während Anpassung an die Realität ein zur Findung sozialer Identität durchaus notwendiges Erziehungsziel darstellt, hemmen Repressionen, wie sie die Kinder in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” erfahren müssen, die Entfaltung einer eigenständigen Persönlichkeit.” (Bartsch “Dunkelhaft” 40)¹⁸

The press

For these children then, as a result of their interactions with adults at home and at school, language becomes negatively associated with reprimands and threats of violence, that is, with verbal repression and fear. These threats and the fear that the children experience extend beyond the home and classroom, as we see from their response to the wider world portrayed in the daily newspaper.

Sie lesen Zeitungen, aus denen der Lustmörder entspringt. Er wird zum Schatten, den die Bäume in der Dämmerung werfen, wenn man von der Religionsstunde heimkommt, und er ruft das Geräusch des bewegten Flieders längs der Vorgärten hervor; die Schneeballbüsche und der Phlox teilen sich und geben einen Augenblick lang seine Gestalt preis. Sie fühlen den Griff des Würgers, das Geheimnis, das sich im Wort Lust verbirgt und das mehr zu fürchten ist als der Mörder. (W 2: 88)

With the prominence it gives to murder, violence and sex,¹⁹ the press is shown to inculcate in the children a fear of the outside world. It affects their confidence and security in everyday activities like coming home from school. Instead of providing the children with an enlightening glimpse into a broader world beyond their small town, newspapers become yet another source of fear and repression. No doubt the local press offers content other than sensational accounts of a local “Lustmörder”, but it is this story that has the greatest impact on the children, affecting their daily lives by making them fearful even of the most innocuous everyday noises such as rustling bushes. And, just as significantly, the press simultaneously imparts to them the social taboos that taint the word “Lust”, making it a more highly charged term and greater source of fear than the act of murder or the murderer himself. In the same way that the children will never be able to overcome their “verkrüppelte[n] Stimmen” (W 2: 87) from years of speaking only in whispers at home, they will learn this further lesson in anxiety and inhibition (as mediated by the local newspaper) equally well—that is, for life. In this way, the press is shown to exacerbate the children’s already distorted relationship to physical pleasure, which manifests itself at the most basic and innocent level because of the numerous mundane, but clearly felt, privations of daily life, which make them as “zahn und engherzig” as their neighbourhood (W 2: 87).

Another significant aspect of the portrayal of the media in “Jugend in einer österreichischen

¹⁸ For a discussion of Bachmann’s pointed attack on the educational system, see Bahrawy, who notes Bachmann’s critique of an institution “whose primary goal appears to be the perpetuation of mental sluggishness and submission” (61), a system whose primary focus is obedience and where “[i]ndoctrination and rote memorization designed to inhibit any form of independent thought and critical reflexion become the the yardsticks for measuring knowledge” (60).

¹⁹ As media analysts have pointed out (referring to Galtung and Ruge’s seminal research into news values in 1973), any event that deviates from the norm is considered newsworthy, that is, “events which can be reported as disruption or breakdowns of normality (natural disasters); deviations from social or cultural norms of behaviour and morality (particularly sexual). There are, of course, many categories of deviance, some of which are more newsworthy than others—anything involving sex is immensely newsworthy, as is crime, and the combination of the two in a particular event is doubly newsworthy (sex crimes, crimes of passion).” (McNair 77f.) See also, Hartley (*Understanding News* 76).

Stadt” emerges from the narrator’s observations about the newspaper’s subsequent report on the capture of the “Lustmörder”, which includes a photograph of the captured murderer. The photo is not very clear: “Der Lustmörder wird aber bald in einem Dorf gefunden, im Rosental, in einem Schuppen, mit Heufransen *und dem grauen Fotonebel im Gesicht, der ihn für immer unerkennbar macht, nicht nur in der Morgenzeitung.*” (W 2: 88, m.e.) Because the murderer thus remains as shadowy as he was in the initial reports that were published before his identity was known, the implication of this passage is that information in newspapers does not reveal anything recognisable, enlightening or lasting about present (or future) reality. So, if press reports about murder and violence are intended to forewarn (and therefore) forearm the reading public, they are demonstrable failures: all they do is generate fear and heighten the sense of vulnerability amongst readers, particularly young ones. For the children then, the press reinforces their daily experience of “Schrecken ohne Ende” (W 2: 86) and contributes to their chronic and all-pervading fear: “Sie fürchten sich vor der ganzen Welt.” (W 2: 86)

Once the murderer is captured, however, we find quite a discrepancy between the press’s representation of a violent, dangerous “Lustmörder” and the pathetically comical reality of the man who was found “in einem Schuppen, mit Heufransen ... im Gesicht” (W 2: 88). The danger represented by this man appears to have been grossly exaggerated and the children have thus been needlessly terrified. In fact, this local murder case proves to be relatively innocuous in comparison to the much more extensive and pernicious, politically-instigated murders that follow in the wake of the “Anschluss” of Austria and the subsequent war. Here we note that, while the press has no hesitation in reporting on murder, sex and violence when it occurs at the personal and individual level (as with the hapless sex murderer), it is silent about the broad scale deportation and execution of fellow countrymen, which even the locals only refer to in “Andeutungen” (W 2: 91) until well into the war years. We might infer, then, that the press is either in conscious collusion with the political regime, or is itself the slave and victim of socio-political forces in the same way that the children were effectively silenced in their early years by the combination of family and socio-economic forces.

Radio

Within a few lines of the second reference to the press in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, the narrator refers to the journalistic medium of radio. This reference constitutes an allusion to the exploitation of this mass medium by the National Socialist regime, who distributed cheap radios, known as “Volksempfänger”, to ensure the effective dissemination of Nazi propaganda.²⁰ Just like the news in the local press, the radio news is associated with fear—this time, politically-based fear. This fear is portrayed metaphorically as a violent storm via a metonymical reference to a cooking pot lid

²⁰ Ironically, these radios eventually assumed an equally important role in the re-establishment of Germany as a democracy after the war, when “der Hörfunk das einzige Medium [war], das nach den kriegsbedingten Zerstörungen des literarischen Distributionsapparates einen relativ großen Rezipientenkreis erreichen konnte” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 75). Commenting on this National Socialist strategy, the American journalist, William Shirer, observed that Goebbels was right about radio being “the regime’s most effective means of propaganda, doing more than any other single instrument of communication to shape the German people to Hitler’s ends” (308). See also Thomson (730).

jumping in fright—imagery that captures the way in which both politics and fear are infiltrating family life.

Bei Tisch sitzen die Kinder still da, kauen lang an einem Bissen, während es im Radio gewittert und die Stimme des Nachrichtensprechers wie ein Kugelblitz in der Küche herumfährt und verendet, wo der Kochdeckel sich erschrocken über den zerplatzten Kartoffeln hebt. Die Lichtleitung wird unterbrochen. Auf den Straßen ziehen Kolonnen von Marschierenden. Die Fahnen schlagen über die Köpfe zusammen. (W 2: 88f.)

The subsequent mention of marching men and flags confirms the association of the alarming news on the radio with the political events of the time; the short circuit that cuts out the light while the family listens to the radio news symbolises the coming era of dark times under National Socialism and the ensuing war period.²¹ This reference in turn is closely related to one in the passage immediately before it, which suggests a close association between economic deprivation and national betrayal during that period in Austrian history: “Es ist kein Geld im Haus. Keine Münze fällt mehr ins Sparschwein. Vor Kindern spricht man nur in Andeutungen. Sie können nicht erraten, daß das Land im Begriff ist sich zu verkaufen und den Himmel dazu, an dem alle ziehen, bis er zerreißt und ein schwarzes Loch freigibt.” (W 2: 88)²² Economic circumstances, it is suggested, play a crucial determining role not only in forming character and spirit at an individual and personal level (as in the case of the children on whom the story centres), but also at the level of national political character.²³

The survival of hope

On the surface then, “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” appears to present a particularly bleak, pessimistic account of a socio-economically deprived and repressed group of children, growing up largely in the absence of joy, amidst a myriad of unmet needs and desires in regional Austria in times of economic difficulties, political violence and national moral deficiency (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 98f.). The situation of the children is, the narrator attests, not only “hoffnungslos” at the time but also doomed in the future: “Die Kinder haben keine Zukunft” (W 2: 86)—Bachmann went so far as to characterise the story in terms of “die Vernichtung dieser kleinen Person Kind” (*Gul* 26).

At the same time, however, “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” counterbalances the inner

²¹ Bahrawy refers to this passage but limits her commentary to a cursory observation about the “strident tone of the radio announcer” (63). Folkvord, too, discusses the “Stromausfall” passage, drawing attention *inter alia* to Bachmann’s symbolism and her play on words in associating Austria’s “Anschluß” with a domestic “Kurzschluß” (*Haus* 72), but does not touch on the significance of the medium of radio (*Haus* 71ff.).

²² Here the term “sich verkaufen” in the paragraph immediately before the reference to the radio news is particularly interesting, because it foreshadows the concepts of mass “Prostitution” (*TP 3.1*: 368) and “Sklaverei” (*TP 3.1*: 399) which feature strongly in connection with the news media in *Malina* (see Chapter 7).

²³ For a discussion of Austria’s failure to adequately acknowledge its complicity in the spread of National Socialism and in the subsequent war, see Botz (196ff.) and Thamer (215ff.). Making a similar point, Bahrawy draws attention to the enthusiasm with which German troops were greeted when they invaded Austria after the “Anschluss” (63). Thamer extends his critique to Bachmann, claiming, “daß in der Geschichtserinnerung der Dichterin der Nationalsozialismus ausschließlich als eine exogene Macht, als Produkt eines deutschen Überfalls erscheint, nicht aber auch von seiner endogenen österreichischen Seite her erfahren wird.” (217). Thamer’s claim is, however, undermined, I believe, by Bachmann’s explicit references to “selling out” in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” and “Drei Wege zum See”, as well as in her damning portraits of Austrian collaborators in “Unter Mördern und Irren”.

core of loosely-connected and rather dispiriting vignettes with a more optimistic framing perspective based in the narrative present. This optimism resides in the narrator's opening and closing observations, which focus on the utopian image of a tree whose autumn foliage burns like "eine Fackel, die ein Engel fallen gelassen hat" (W 2: 84) in contrast to the surrounding manifestations of the onset of winter—"Blätterfall und [...] weiße[r] Tod" (ibid.)—and in apparent defiance of "das Gesetz der Welt" (ibid.).²⁴ The key elements of this image of the flaming tree are its association with creative aesthetic experience, and its utopian dimensions:

In diesem lyrischen Bild und in der strukturellen Geschlossenheit der Erzählung, die in scharfem Kontrast zur Erfahrung der verwirrenden, unstrukturierten Komplexität der geschichtlichen und gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit steht, hat die einleitende Erzählung des *Dreißigsten Jahrs* ihre utopische Dimension. (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 103)

While the tree remains undeniably part of the tangible physical world, it is nevertheless clearly intended as a "Kunstmetapher" (Folkvord *Sich ein Haus schreiben* 44), given its alignment with aesthetic values: the tree is located in a group of trees "neben dem Stadttheater" at the front of a cluster of cherry trees, "die keine Früchte tragen" (W 2: 84). While these trees may not be literally fruitful, the whole scene—particularly the flaming tree—is aesthetically fertile, demonstrating the "Fähigkeit der Kunst [...], Vergangenes wieder zu beleuchten" (Folkvord *Sich ein Haus schreiben* 44), by facilitating a flood of memories in the narrator, reminiscent of the way in which the experience of tasting the madeleine and tea brought a flood of memories to the narrator in Proust's "À la Recherche du Temps perdu".²⁵ Unlike the press, then, whose words (in the instance of the murder reports) generate only fear and inhibition, and whose images (as exemplified in the photo of the murderer) provide no enlightenment or personally meaningful information, the visual brilliance of the "burning tree" proves to be not only aesthetically but also emotionally fruitful, even if it constitutes only a transient and fragile experience. The utopian image of the "burning tree" can therefore be seen as a "Gegenbild" to the negative associations of the mass media in "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt". It not only forms a lead-in to the recalled memories of the central passages, but also frames the whole story when the narrator recalls the same image in the closing passage, while musing on the miraculous impact of the torch-like tree in contrast to the impotence of the conscious act of recollection for the purpose of constructing meaning from the past:

Im bewegungslosen Erinnern, vor der Abreise, vor allen Abreisen, was soll uns aufgehen? Das Wenigste ist da, um uns einzuleuchten, und die Jugend gehört nicht dazu, auch die Stadt nicht, in der sie stattgehabt hat. Nur wenn der Baum vor dem Theater sein Wunder tut, wenn die Fackel brennt, gelingt es mir, wie im

²⁴ It is tempting to speculate on the extent to which Bachmann's reference to "Fackel" in this context is an allusion to Karl Kraus's famous newspaper, which so roundly condemned the linguistic and moral shortcomings of other newspapers, their journalists and their publishers. Weigel, however, sees it in terms of Benjamin's "Engel der Geschichte" ("»Stadt ohne Gewähr«" 260). Other scholars have seen it as an allusion to the image of the burning bush in the Book of Moses (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 47; Folkvord *Sich ein Haus schreiben* 43f.). Töller too draws on the biblical imagery of the burning bush but sees the image of the angel with the "Fackel" as Lucifer (23f.). See also Schneider ("Das dreißigste Jahr und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld" 114).

²⁵ Cf. Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 207). See also Bachmann's radio essay on Proust (W 4: 156ff.) and her many references to Proust in her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen" (W 4: 191, 194, 230–235, 254). For more on the Proustian aspects of "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt", see also Folkvord (*Sich ein Haus schreiben* 52f., 70f.).

Meer die Wasser, alles sich mischen zu sehen: die frühe Dunkelhaft mit den Flügen über Wolken in Weißglut; den Neuen Platz und seine tönernen Denkmäler mit einem Blick auf Utopia. (W 2: 93)

Although the narrator fails to construct meaning from a conscious attempt to examine the past, the serendipitous sighting of a tree in full blossom in dazzling sunlight becomes the catalyst for a mystical experience of unity and a brief but genuine sense of meaning:

[Die] rationale Analyse läßt den Sinn des Lebens nicht transparent werden. Dieser wird bloß für einen Augenblick in der mystischen Entrückung von der Rationalität durch das optisch-ästhetische Erlebnis—sprachlich indiziert durch lyrische Bildhaftigkeit (84)—für das Ich sichtbar, die »frühe Dunkelhaft« [...] wird nur einen Moment lang erhellt. (Bartsch "Die frühe Dunkelhaft" 42)

The story therefore ends on an affirmative and hopeful note in contrast to the bleak hopelessness that characterises the recalled past and the references to the journalistic media.²⁶ Moreover, because the story concludes with the miracle of insight, as experienced by the narrator (who turns out to be one of the children whose repression and deprivation is recalled in the story), we can infer that, while the privations may have had a deep impact, they did not completely stifle aesthetic potential and the capacity for joy and enlightenment—at least not in the narrator. This realisation in turn echoes and affirms the brief moments of magic, joy and escape interwoven with the bleaker strands of the story—moments where, for example, we see that, while reading may have been associated with stultifying and meaningless boredom at school or with fear and inhibition generated by frightening press content, the children nevertheless have the capacity to respond passionately to reading and learning, almost to the point of addiction or obsession—in a way that is reminiscent of Reiter's response to Nietzsche in "Der Schweiß": "Die Kinder lesen sich die Augen wund. Sie sind übernünftig, weil sie abends zu lang im wilden Kurdistan waren oder bei den Goldgräbern in Alaska." (W 2: 88) Here we note that their reading material is characterised by adventure and exotic landscapes, in contrast to the banality of the hometown crime reported in the local press. And unlike the local newspaper, the children's preferred reading material does indeed expand their horizons intellectually and spiritually. In "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt" then, as in "Der Schweiß", Bachmann contrasts the response of the protagonist to newspapers and school reading with the children's response to reading material that offers a glimpse of another world and that offers adventure and excitement instead of terror. Here, as in "Der Schweiß", Bachmann posits the communicative and generative capacity of literature as a "Gegenbild" to the communicative sterility of the press.

Soon after the reference to the children's love of adventure stories, Bachmann provides another instance of almost transcendent but nevertheless very physical joy and exuberance: "Sie lachen bei jeder Gelegenheit, sie können sich kaum halten und fallen von der Bank vor Lachen, stehen auf und

²⁶ This optimistic interpretation of the story is supported by Schneider, who compares "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt" to "Drei Wege zum See", describing the former as a text "der [...] in Thematik und Motivik viele Ähnlichkeiten aufweist, der aber auf der optimistischeren Prämisse basiert, daß der Leser durch plötzliche gedankliche Einsichten (dort: in die ideologische Funktion des Heimatgedankens) beeinflusst werden kann" ("Simultan und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld" 168). Töller, on the other hand sees the ending of "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt" in negative terms, contending that the conclusion of the story disappoints the expectation set up earlier in the story, "daß sich etwas Neues im Sinne einer Offenbarung ereignet" with its "Bildern einer Zukunft, die Unwesentliches festhalten" (31). For an effective counterargument to this interpretation, see Folkvord (*Sich ein Haus schreiben* 82ff.).

lachen weiter, bis sie Krämpfe bekommen.” (W 2: 88) Here, I disagree with Folkvord, who sees this passage in less positive terms (*Sich ein Haus schreiben* 53f.), and instead support Töller’s emphasis on the children’s “lustvollen Umgang mit den Worten” and on Bachmann’s portrayal of “Kindheit [...] als Zustand, der die Erfahrung einer „neue(n) Sprache“ [...] erlaubt” (42). Because the narrative interlude depicting childhood joy is framed by the two passages about the murder report in the local press, the reference to the newspaper (with its associated negative impact) has the potential to dominate and quash the moments of joy. And yet the moments of passion and rapture are recaptured by the children in the passage immediately after the next reference to the mass media (the passage relating to the radio news and the colonnades of marching soldiers) where, in contrast to the frightening noise of a radio, broadcasting the brainwashing non-language of propaganda, the children resort to their own private, silent language:

Das Zeitzeichen ertönt und die Kinder gehen dazu über, *sich mit geübten Fingern stumme Nachrichten zu geben*. Die Kinder sind verliebt, und wissen nicht in wen. Sie kauderwelschen, spintisieren sich in eine unbestimmbare Blässe, und wenn sie nicht mehr weiterwissen, erfinden sie eine Sprache, die sie toll macht. Mein Fisch. Meine Angel. Mein Fuchs. Meine Falle. Mein Feuer. Du mein Wasser. Du meine Welle. Meine Erdung. Du mein Wenn. Und du mein Aber. Entweder. Oder. Mein Alles... mein Alles... Sie stoßen einander, gehen mit Fäusten aufeinander los und balgen sich um ein Gegenwort, das es nicht gibt. Es ist nichts. Diese Kinder! (W 2: 89, m.e.)

This passage shows that the children’s ability to communicate is not permanently impaired as Bartsch’s findings about the “Sprachohnmacht und Sprachnot der Kinder” (“Die frühe Dunkelhaft” 41f.) would suggest. Instead, I support Töller’s assessment of the children’s “Umgang mit Worten” in this passage “als Ausdruck kindlicher Unbefangenheit” (36). In particular, Töller argues, the way they claim words for themselves by prefacing them with the first person possessive pronoun is evidence of “Ich-Bewußtsein und hervorgehobener Unvergleichbarkeit” that contrasts to the “Mangel an Ich-Gewißheit, [die] den Grundton der erinnerten Episoden bestimmen” (ibid.). The children’s inhibitions may manifest themselves in the external, adult world, but in their own private world they are free to let their imaginations loose and drive themselves to the very limits of language itself and even beyond, to a language that does not yet exist—an endeavour as utopian and generative as the image of the burning tree. The inclusion of such life-affirming episodes in the generally bleak account of the past therefore reinforces the more optimistic and affirmative nature of the opening and closing passages of “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, making the image of the burning tree more than just a completely irrational hope for something better amidst despair and hopelessness.

It is the interplay between the two forces of hope and despair that also makes “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” such an appropriate lead-in to the remaining stories of the collection in *Das dreißigste Jahr*. This understated story portrays the socio-historical background not only for the narrator of “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, but also for the other post-war generation of thirty-year olds depicted in the remaining stories of the collection, which show “die Ursachen von Selbst-Mißtrauen und Identitätsdefizit, von Krisenerfahrung, Heimatverlust, schutzlosem Ausgeliefertsein, Sprachverwirrung, Sprachnot und Sprachohnmacht” (Höller *Das Werk* 124). And yet, these negative experiences are not what we take away from reading “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”:

Der Text endet aber nicht in einer Feststellung der ausgebliebenen Kraft. Die Ich-Figur wendet sich

wieder der Kunstmetapher aus dem ersten Rahmenteil zu und hebt diese als ein Gegenstück zu den Enttäuschungen der Jugend und der Heimatstadt hervor. [...] Auf die Einsicht, daß weder Stadt noch Jugend dazu geeignet sind, dem Ich oder dem Leser »einzuleuchten«, folgt hier das Bestehen auf der Kraft der Kunst, *doch* Wunder hervorzubringen. (Folkvord *Sich ein Haus schreiben* 82)

Indeed, the life-affirming optimism of the opening and closing passages of “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, and the fact that the whole story performs a prologue-like function for the remainder of the collection, appear to suggest that the relationship between “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” and the remaining stories of the collection should be seen as broadly equivalent to the relationship between the utopian image of the opening passage in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” and the remainder of the story—that is, as an ensign of hope amidst stories, which, read in isolation, appear to provide more cause for despair than hope. Although not widespread, this view of the essentially affirmative nature of Bachmann’s writing finds support amongst critics such as Bahrawy (68) and Bartsch, who sees in Bachmann’s work “nichts Resignatives”, and who challenges Bothner’s view that Bachmann’s poetry in particular is marked by “»Todessehnsucht« und »geschichtspessimistischer Untergangssüchtigkeit«” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 57). The more optimistic interpretation of Bachmann’s work finds further support in the remaining analyses of my study, where it will be shown that “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” and “Der Schweißer” are not the only works in which Bachmann counterbalances the negative portrayal of the mass media with a “Gegenbild” taken from the aesthetic realm. More often than not, it is a work of literature that endeavours to break through the rigid walls of existing intellectual limitations—that is, something which, like the flaming tree of “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, forms an example of “Annäherung an »Unaussprechliches«” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 47).

6.6 “Das dreißigste Jahr”

According to Bartsch, the title story of *Das dreißigste Jahr* not only touches on “alle bedeutsamen Themen [...], die in den übrigen Erzählungen ausgefächert erschienen” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 94), but also says much about an historical era and a particular generation.²⁷ It depicts the existential crisis experienced by the story’s protagonist, who finds himself at an awkward juncture, between early and mature adulthood, in the year leading up to his 30th birthday. After living a carefree, unquestioned existence, governed by a large measure of self-confidence and a sense of endless opportunities and time, the narrator wakes up on the morning of his 29th birthday, overcome with a painful awareness of the finite nature of his existence. This Gregor Samsa-like “Verwandlung”²⁸ is

²⁷ As Bartsch points out, the exemplary nature of the story is underscored by the choice of an unnamed protagonist and the proliferation of “Molls” (who represent a kind of unsavoury “Everyman” in the protagonist’s life), as well as the frequent deployment of grammatical constructions such as “einer” and “man”, which make the story “[g]eradezu modellhaft verallgemeinernd” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 95). Cf. Pichl (“Probleme und Aufgaben” 381) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 43).

²⁸ While Bartsch is rightly sceptical about superficial comparisons with historical or literary figures such as Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, Rimbaud, Wittgenstein and Kafka’s Josef K. (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 95f.), there is something rather Kafkaesque about the protagonist waking up suddenly transformed in his 30th year. Given Bachmann’s admiration for Kafka, this scenario in “Das dreißigste Jahr” could be an literary allusion to his work.

initially characterised by a deep sense of “Ohnmacht” (W 2: 94), but followed soon after by an overwhelming compulsion to make sense of his life by consciously casting his mind back to his past to find out, “wer er war und wer er geworden ist” (W 2: 94). However, just as the conscious act of recollection does not provide meaningful insight in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, so too, no revelation emerges from the same process in “Das dreißigste Jahr”.

The memories of his early adulthood include recollections of the different types of “Gelegenheitsarbeit” he had taken on, “weil er noch so viel Zeit zu haben schien” (W 2: 95). These casual jobs are marked by a dilettantish lack of direction, commitment or stability, and here we note that the press is referred to twice in the list of transient employment activities.

Er gab Schülern Nachhilfestunden für ein warmes Essen, *verkaufte Zeitungen*, schaufelte Schnee für fünf Schilling die Stunde und studierte daneben die Vorsokratiker. Er konnte nicht wählerisch sein und ging darum zu einer Firma als Werkstudent, kündigte wieder, als er *bei einer Zeitung unterkam; man ließ ihn Reportagen schreiben über neue Zahnbohrer, über Zwillingforschung, über die Restaurationsarbeiten am Stephansdom*. Dann machte er sich eines Tages ohne Geld auf die Reise, hielt Autos an, [...] blieb da und dort und zog weiter. (W 2: 95f., m.e.)

Working in the news industry, this passage suggests, constitutes neither a substantial career nor a meaningful form of employment. Even when the protagonist progresses from the mundane work of selling newspapers to producing press content, the subjects on which he reports (note the use of the passive to underscore his lack of personal choice and commitment to his subjects) are dilettantishly varied and pedestrian, and so of no great note.

At the time, however, saying “yes” to any and every job opportunity—and any and every opportunity for friendship and love (W 2: 96)—seemed to be the logical expression of his desire for freedom from commitment to anything or anyone: everything was “immer auf Probe, auf Abruf” (W 2: 96). By the time of his crisis, however, the protagonist realises that these apparent manifestations of freedom have led him into a trap: “Nie hat er gedacht, daß von tausendundeiner Möglichkeit vielleicht schon tausend Möglichkeiten vertan und versäumt waren—oder daß er sie hatte versäumen müssen, weil nur eine für ihn galt. [...] Jetzt weiß er, daß auch er in der Falle ist.” (W 2: 96) His response is a desperate desire to escape this trap: “[N]icht nur verreisen, sondern weggehen. Er muß frei sein in diesem Jahr, alles aufgeben, den Ort, die vier Wände und die Menschen wechseln.” (W 2: 96f.)²⁹ The mere act of physical escape from Vienna to Rome—or indeed, to anywhere else—does not, however, bring any real change in the protagonist’s circumstances or feelings, in the same way that escape to

²⁹ While Seidel argues that the protagonist’s life in “Das dreißigste Jahr” provides clear biographical analogies with the life of Wittgenstein (268ff.), Töller correctly assesses such analysis as “plausibel jedoch für eine inhaltliche Interpretation wenig nützlich” (43). Other scholars to discuss the Wittgensteinian aspects of this story include Angst-Hürlimann (13), Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 21, 109f.) and Pilipp (“The Desperate Desire for Transcendence” 23ff.). Weigel, however, rightly insists that the relationship between “Das dreißigste Jahr” and Wittgenstein’s work is much more complex and ambivalent than many scholars would have us believe (*Hinterlassenschaften* 43), and contends that this story should instead be seen as a continuation of a dialogue with critical theory and the writings of Benjamin (“Stadt ohne Gewähr” 255ff. et passim; *Hinterlassenschaften* 22f, 39, 120f, and 489). Further, as Weigel correctly points out, Seidel’s attempts to investigate “Übereinstimmungen mit philosophischen Problemen des Werks von Ludwig Wittgenstein und biographischen Elementen seines Lebens” lead to Bachmann’s stories being treated as philosophical discourses (“wie argumentierende Texte”) instead of literature (*Hinterlassenschaften* 115). See also Schmaus (“Kritische Theorie” 216ff.) and Töller (43).

tourist destinations provided no antidote to the alienation experienced by the poetic persona in “Herbstmanöver”. Indeed, escape ironically seems to heighten his sense of entrapment—in his past as well as in social and interpersonal expectations. In Rome, his attempts to make a fresh start are continually thwarted by people from his past, all named “Moll”, who effectively trap him in his former persona: “[D]ie Gestalt, die er den anderen damals zurückgelassen hat [...] wird ihm aufgezwungen wie eine Zwangsjacke.” (W 2: 98) As Angst-Hürlimann observes:

Moll ist ein Symbol der Masse mit allen Möglichkeiten, wie der »Polyp Mensch« dem Individuum entgegentreten kann, und manchmal gleichzeitig Spiegelung der Hauptgestalt. In dieser Figur, die laufend das Gesicht, beziehungsweise die Maske wechselt, ist das ganze Netz von vorgefassten Meinungen dargestellt, das sich immer dann um den Menschen wirft, wenn er verzweifelt nach einem Neuanfang strebt. Moll verkörpert die Vergangenheit, von der nicht loszukommen ist. (12)

Repeated encounters with the many “Moll” from his past, strengthen the protagonist’s conviction, “daß jeder gekränkt wird bis in den Tod von den anderen. Und daß sich alle vor dem Tod fürchten, in den allein sie sich retten können vor der ungeheuerlichen Kränkung, die das Leben ist.” (W 2: 101) At the same time, he is fully aware of his own guilt and complicity:

Hat nicht vor Jahren schon die Unterdrückung, die Bevormundung durch die Netzwerke der Feindschaften und Freundschaften eingesetzt, bald nachdem er sich in die Händel der Gesellschaft hatte verstricken lassen. Hat er nicht, in seiner Mutlosigkeit, seither ein Doppelleben ausgebildet, ein Vielfachleben, um überhaupt noch leben zu können. Beträgt er nicht schon alle und jeden und vielfach sich selber? (W 2: 100)

Towards the end of the story, however, after his return to Vienna, the protagonist experiences an instance of being identified and pre-judged as his old self in a highly positive encounter, which verges on a moment of grace. On entering the small, old coffee house he used to frequent as a regular, the narrator finds himself instantly recognised by the head waiter—a moment that brings joy and relief instead of the alienation that characterises his encounters with the various manifestations of “Moll”:

Und diesmal muß er nicht reden, nicht Hände schütteln, sich anstrengen; *die Phrase bleibt ihm erspart*, ein Lächeln genügt, sie lächeln einander töricht zu, zwei Männer, die vieles an sich haben vorbeigehen sehen [...] und alles, was der alte Mann ausdrücken will—*Freude, Erinnerung*—, *zeigt er ihm damit, daß er ihm genau die Zeitungen hinlegt, die er hier einst verlangt und gelesen hat*. Er muß nach dem Stapel von Zeitungen greifen, das ist er dem Alten schuldig; er ist es ihm gerne schuldig. Endlich ist er hier etwas freudig und ohne Widerstand schuldig. (W 2: 121, m.e.)

Here, surprisingly, newspapers are associated positively with the pure joy of the moment, but not for long, as the protagonist’s casual browsing through the pile of papers brings to his consciousness the sterile rigidity of the press, where almost every element is formulaic and predictable:

Absichtslos beginnt er zu lesen, die Schlagzeilen, Lokales, Kulturelles, Vermischtes, den Sportbericht. Das Datum spielt keine Rolle, *er hätte die Zeitung auch mit einer von vor fünf Jahren vertauschen können*, er liest nur den Tonfall, die unverkennbare Schrift, die Anordnung, das Satzbild. Er weiß, wie nirgends, was links oben und rechts unten abgehandelt wird, was man hier in den Zeitungen für gut und was für schlecht hält. Nur hier und da hat sich unbeholfen eine neue Vokabel eingeschlichen. (W 2: 121, m.e.)³⁰

In intruding into his brief interlude of happiness, the tired predictability of press content and language serves as a reminder of the rigid and stale “world order” he has been unsuccessfully trying to escape. The transience of the joyful moment in the coffee house is flagged by the arrival of yet another Moll, with whom he is forced to go through the clichéd social gestures of cordiality, even though the

³⁰ The interchangeability of press content is depicted in almost identical terms in *Malina* (see Chapter 7).

protagonist barely remembers him. Ironically, when the protagonist entered the coffee house, he had only just come away from an encounter with a previous instance of Moll. It is significant here that the “pre-coffee house Moll” as well as the “coffee house Moll” are characterised in terms of their inauthenticity and their radical change from the person they used to be. The “pre-coffee house” Moll, who was once pure soul and young genius, who acted out of altruism, is now a cynical and manipulative powerbroker (*W 2*: 120), and the “coffee house Moll”—“der einst tastende, suchende”—is now a rigid and ruthless arbiter: “Molls Unfehlbarkeit. Moll als Kunstrichter. Moll, der Unerbittliche [...]. Moll, der Romane nicht mehr lesen kann, Moll, für den das Gedicht keine Zukunft hat, Moll, der für die Kastration der Musik eintritt und der die Malerei der Leinwand entfremden will.” (*W 2*: 122) Both instances of Moll, the protagonist notes, display a rigidity of opinion and deep contempt for others. Most significantly, they both also misuse and abuse language: the “pre-coffee house Moll” is described as “aalglat, meinungslos Meinungen vertretend” and as having perfected the art of “Gauersprache” (*W 2*: 108, 121); the “coffee house Moll” is portrayed in similar terms: “Moll, der die Sprache verloren hat und dafür mit zweitausend Pfauenfedern aus anderen Sprachen paradiert.” (*W 2*: 122)

The concept of “Gauersprache” is an important one for Bachmann and closely associated with her critique of “Phrasen” and “Meinungen”, that is, the empty, inauthentic, unthinking use of language (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis). The term “Gauersprache” is, however, particularly significant in “Das dreißigste Jahr”, featuring on two other occasions in the story, where the protagonist uses the term to encapsulate the rigid superficiality and inauthenticity of the existing order of the world that he had attempted to escape (*W 2*: 108, 112). It is therefore not surprising that the concept of “Gauersprache” and the reference to rigid world order feature immediately before (as well as in) the coffee house passage, which highlights not only the intrusiveness of the press into a moment of happiness, but also the rigidity and superficiality of press content and format. For the protagonist of “Das dreißigste Jahr”, then, the written and spoken word, as epitomised in the language of the journalistic media, represents a fatal limitation on the possibility of change and regeneration: “Wäre ich nicht in die Bücher getaucht, in Geschichten und Legenden, in die Zeitungen, die Nachrichten, wäre nicht alles Mitteilbare aufgewachsen in mir, wäre ich ein Nichts, eine Versammlung unverständener Vorkommnisse. (Und das wäre vielleicht gut, dann fiel mir etwas Neues ein!)” (*W 2*: 103, m.e.) The limitations of language and the constraints of our opinions and personal beliefs also convince the protagonist that transcendence is not possible this side of death:

Gebt zu, daß ihr nur ein von den Alten möbliertes Land bewohnt, daß eure Ansichten nur gemietet sind, gepachtet die Bilder eurer Welt. Gebt zu, daß ihr, wo ihr wirklich bezahlt, mit eurem Leben, es nur jenseits der Sperre tut, wenn ihr Abschied genommen habt von allem, was euch so teuer ist [...]. (*W 2*: 103f., m.e.).

As in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, however, Bachmann balances the pessimism of this pessimistic world view with the optimistic glimpse of a different reality, and demonstrates that transcendence is indeed possible in this world, but it comes as unexpectedly as a state of grace. In “Das dreißigste Jahr”, the moment of transcendence is achieved in the experience of love—a love that is as

all-consuming and absolute as the passion experienced by Jennifer in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”. It is a passion beyond words and pre-existing concepts. Despite the overwhelming nature of this experience, the protagonist of “Das dreißigste Jahr”, like Jan in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, can see the danger in this state. He understands, “daß auch die erste Stunde Liebe schon zuviel gewesen war” (W 2: 116), and so chooses to survive this side of the transcendent world by escaping back into the “vorgefunden[e] Ordnung” and the “gesellschaftlichen Zwäng[e]” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 94) of the world from which he had been trying to escape. This decision to choose life with all its limitations and frustrations prefigures his subsequent survival of a car crash that kills his alter ego: the man who stopped to give him a ride (W 2: 134).

Like much of Bachmann’s work, then, “Das dreißigste Jahr” is characterised by ambivalence (Töller 49). Töller focusses on the positive side of the coin: “[Die Schlußpassage] kann als stilisierter Appell der Erzählerin gegen die ausweglose Dynamik des narrativen Verlaufs der Erzählung gelten. Dem Ich wird trotz aller Anzeichen der Vernichtung Bestand gegeben.” (64) Bartsch, on the other hand, stresses the more sobering and depressing side of the duality: “Der positiven Einsicht, daß die individual-anarchistische, existentialistische Revolte unzulänglich, daß die totale Verneinung unlebbar ist, steht die Trauer über die Zurücknahme absoluter utopischer Ansprüche gegenüber [...]” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 114) As with the other stories discussed in this chapter so far, however, the sense of ambivalence that Bachmann infuses in an individual work or its ending does not extend to her portrayal of the press, which remains consistently negative.

6.7 “Unter Mördern und Irren”

In “Unter Mördern und Irren” the references to the journalistic media do not centre so much on press content but on four men—Haderer, Bertoni, Ranitzky and Hutter—who all work in the mass media or another branch of the culture industry, and who are all morally reprehensible characters. These four men form a dominant sub-group within a “Herrenrunde” (W 2: 89), which meets every Friday evening in a Viennese wine cellar. Decker highlights the significance of the “Stammtisch” as a setting in which the fascist mentality survived after the war:

The fictional Stammtisch in Bachmann’s text functions as a site for exploring the political and cultural continuities uniting pre- and postwar Austrian society. The narrative thus gives literary—and indeed literal—expression to Peter Turrini’s 1983 observation that, ‘die offizielle Beendigung des Faschismus bedeute zwar sein öffentliches Ende, aber weniger offiziell, in Wirtshausrunden und Kameradschaftsbünden, und weniger öffentlich, in Köpfen und privaten Handlungen und Haltungen, lebt er fort.’ (46)

Set in the 1955 and narrated from the perspective of one of the other “Stammtischler”, “Unter Mördern und Irren” presents a methodical and incisive analysis of Haderer, Bertoni, Ranitzky and Hutter as examples of “Ehemalige und Sympathisanten des NS-Regimes, darunter Professoren, Mediziner, Juristen und Wirtschaftslenker”, who managed to resume their former positions in society, “während Exilierte und Verfolgte oftmals mit Integrationsschwierigkeiten zu kämpfen hatten”

(Schneider “*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 117).³¹

In its portrayal of these men, “Unter Mördern und Irren” alludes to the lost opportunity for socio-political renewal and to the fascist potential inherent in this restored “Gesellschaftsstruktur” (Bartsch “Geschichtliche Erfahrungen” 440). It also draws attention to the consequent “Orientierungslosigkeit” (ibid.) of young intellectuals, such as the narrator of the story and his friend, Friedl. Drafted as foot soldiers in the dying days of the war, and thus too young to be caught up in war guilt, both are keen to get on in their careers, but find themselves at the mercy of those who had actively supported fascism in the past and now had “das Sagen [...] in Presse (Bertoni), Rundfunk (Haderer), Universität (Ranitzky) und in der Kulturförderung (Hutter)” (ibid.). Like many other former sympathisers and collaborators, Bertoni, Haderer, Ranitzky and Hutter had accepted “die neue demokratische Denkweise und Gesellschaftsordnung *aus Opportunismus und zum Schein* [...], damit sie ihre ehemalige Kooperation mit dem Faschismus seit dem Anschluß Österreichs im Jahre 1938 verdecken” (Beicken 174, m.e.), and as a consequence, positions of power and influence had become dominated by “Gestalten des Gestrigen, Überholten und politisch Unaufrichtigen” (ibid.). For all the upheaval that the war caused and the subsequent aspirations for something better, 10 years on, nothing had changed: it is, “[a]ls wär kein Tag vergangen” (W 2: 185).

Haderer

A prime example of the survival of the “old guard” can be seen in the character of Haderer. It is no coincidence that he is the first to be described in detail, for he is the *de facto* alpha male of the group, who “reigns like a stern pater familias by setting the tone of the discussion and censoring comments he deems inappropriate” (Bahrawy 91). Haderer has successfully combined the roles of cultural bureaucrat and artist: “Haderer war Abteilungsleiter am Radio und schrieb überlange Dramen, die alle großen Theater regelmäßig und mit Defizit aufführten und die den uneingeschränkten Beifall der ganzen Kritik fanden.” (W 2: 163) Given his proclivity for writing overly long works that are costly to produce, one wonders whether Haderer’s plays would have been performed so frequently (and to such critical acclaim) if he weren’t in such a powerful position in the culture industry. Haderer also seems to owe his success in no small part to his facility for impressing others with his learning and his ability to regurgitate fashionable platitudes: “[D]a knäuel er in seinem Mund Humanität, bietet Zitate aus den Klassikern auf, bietet Kirchenväter auf und die neuesten metaphysischen Platitüden.“ (W 2: 178) As a result, he has become a man of power, wealth and high public standing:

[E]r bezog [...] das höchste mögliche Gehalt und er erhielt in gemessenen Abständen sämtliche Ehrungen, Preise und sogar Medaillen, die Land und Stadt zu vergeben hatten; er hielt die Reden zu den großen Anlässen, wurde als ein Mann betrachtet, der zur Repräsentation geeignet war, und galt trotzdem als einer der freimütigsten und unabhängigen Männer. (W 2: 164).

Despite his obvious influence and status, which seems to have played no small role in his own

³¹ As Schneider points out, the restoration of former Nazis to positions of power and influence was due at least in part to the premature cessation of denazification measures by the Allied Forces in Austria in 1957 (“*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 117).

artistic success, Haderer has been unsuccessful in getting the manuscripts of his young “protegés” (the narrator and Friedl) accepted for broadcasting or production.

Es lag freilich nicht an ihm, daß er uns verträsten und zugleich mit Komplimenten befeuern mußte, sondern an dieser »Bagage« [...], an dieser »Bande von Tagedieben« überall, den Hofräten und anderen hinderlichen vergreisten Elementen in den Ministerien, den Kulturämtern und im Rundfunk. (W 2: 164)

Haderer, we suspect, is a hypocritical liar, who pretends to be a benefactor (W 2: 163) but in reality makes no real effort to assist his young friends. His mendacious hypocrisy is, however, not selective but extends to his dealings with the world at large: Haderer maligns anyone and everyone—in their absence. He is the ultimate “Gaulner”, and as such, a variation of Moll in “Das dreißigste Jahr”:

Er schimpfte auf alles, das heißt, er schimpfte immer auf die andere Seite, so daß die eine Seite erfreut war und ein andermal die andere, weil nun die eine die andere war. Er nannte, um es genauer zu sagen, einfach die Dinge beim Namen, zum Glück aber selten die Leute, so daß sich nie jemand im besondern betroffen fühlte. (W 2: 164)

Haderer’s behaviour is determined by political expediency (Bahrawy 91)—he is not only “ein Mensch, der überhaupt keiner Kühnheit fähig war” (W 2: 171) but also the ultimate chameleon, “who has unscrupulously navigated the choppy waters of Austrian politics, making the transition from conservative to National Socialist to democrat with remarkable ease while shamelessly exploiting antagonistic political ideologies for personal gain” (Bahrawy 92). As such he symbolises:

[...] bourgeois society’s pact with the powers of National Socialism which, laudibly enough promised a new national self-image at a time of great uncertainty and devitalization but reached instead into the deepest archaic layers of the self, mobilized man’s most irrational fears and destructive propensities, and revealed that part of human nature which is capable of the most damnable acts. (ibid.)

Bertoni

Although a handsome, tanned and athletic man, Bertoni, the journalist, lacks Haderer’s cool and egocentric confidence. He is cautious, always on the alert—“[E]r tat, als hörte immer die Geheime Staatspolizei mit” (W 2: 165)—and seems to have his hand permanently guarding his mouth. Noone knows what he is really like because he never takes off his “Tarnkappe” (ibid.), and noone knows what he really thinks because he employs:

eine leichte, flüchtige, witzige Sprache, die zu seinem Aussehen und seinem Gehaben nicht recht paßte, eine Sprache der Andeutung, die ihm jetzt doppelt lag. Er deutete nicht, wie Steckel, etwas an, um einen Sachverhalt klarzumachen, sondern deutete, über die Sache hinweg, verzweifelt ins Ungefähre. (W 2: 166)

As Decker notes, Bachmann’s portrayal of this journalist, whose speech “consists entirely of innuendo and results only in obfuscation” represents “a bleak commentary on the prospects for free and open public exchange under the Grand Coalition” (49). Bahrawy is even more critical, referring to Bertoni’s “judicious ambiguity and cultivated subservience” (92) and condemning him as someone who “makes a travesty of human suffering and demonstrates bourgeois society’s depth of immorality” (93).

Bertoni constantly makes excuses for his behaviour and his weakness. Although only too aware of the deficiencies of the newspaper he works on, and even “beschämt über den ständigen Niedergang des Niveaus in seinem Feuilleton” (W 2: 165), Bertoni insists he is powerless to do anything about the “Unrichtigkeiten, den Mangel an guten Beiträgen oder richtiger Information” (W 2: 165). His moral weakness is reflected in the weak platitudes he employs when responding to criticism—“Was wollen

Sie—in diesen Zeiten!” (W 2: 165)—and in his escapist preference for dwelling in the past, where he has confabulated for himself a role of “inner emigration”:

[D]arum redete er am liebsten von den alten Zeitungen, von den großen Zeiten der Wiener Presse und wie er unter deren legendären Königen damals gearbeitet und von ihnen gelernt hatte. Er wußte alle Geschichten, alle Affairen von vor zwanzig Jahren, er war nur in jener Zeit zu Hause und konnte diese Zeit lebendig machen, von ihr ohne Unterlaß erzählen. Gern sprach er auch von der düsteren Zeit danach, wie er und ein paar andere Journalisten sich durchgebracht hatten in den ersten Jahren nach 1938, was sie heimlich gedacht und geredet und angedeutet hatten, in welchen Gefahren sie geschwehbt hatten, ehe sie auch die Uniform angezogen hatten. (W 2: 165)

Ranitzky

Bertoni’s lack of moral fibre is, however, arguably innocuous compared to Ranitzky, who is “the oldest and least vocal of the group [and] [...] also the most odious because of his prominent rank within the field of higher education. A thoughtless opportunist much like Haderer, Ranitzky embodies an educational system long corrupted by patronage and protectionism.” (Bahrawy 93) As an academic, Ranitzky is part of the culture industry—a university professor of history, who has made his mark by literally rewriting history: “Ranitzky [...] hat seine Geschichte Österreichs den neuen Zeitumständen angepaßt und Anstößiges aus der faschistischen Zeit vorsorglich entfernt.” (Beicken 175) Given his widely acknowledged disingenuousness and opportunism, we can be sure that Ranitzky’s rewriting of history was motivated by the desire for self-advancement or self-protection: “Ranitzky hat sein historisches Hauptwerk umgeschrieben, aus Opportunismus und nicht aus Überzeugung, denn von ihm wird angenommen, daß er »sein Reich noch einmal kommen sehen« [...] möchte.” (Bartsch “Geschichtliche Erfahrung” 442) Ranitzky is therefore yet another “Gaulner” from the culture industry. Like Bertoni, Ranitzky never reveals his true self or his honest opinions: he is essentially a hypocrite and a born “collaborator”.

Mit einem eilfertigen Gesicht, dem Schöntuergesicht, das schon nicken wollte, ehe jemand Zustimmung erwartete. Selbst seine Ohren und seine Augenlider nickten auf der Zeichnung. Ranitzky, dessen konnte man sicher sein, hatte immer zugestimmt. Alle schwiegen, wenn Ranitzky mit einem Wort die Vergangenheit berührte, denn es hatte keinen Sinn, Ranitzky gegenüber offen zu sein. (W 2: 166)

Unlike Haderer, however, who has also achieved career success through selfish opportunism but has high moral pretensions, Ranitzky is at least not in denial about his opportunism: “Jeder weiß, daß er es aus Opportunismus getan hat und unbelehrbar ist, aber er weiß es auch selber. Darum sagt es ihm keiner.” (W2: 167)

Hutter

Neither apologetic nor fearful, Hutter, is very much at ease in company: he is a “hedonist [and] an impulsive but affable fellow” (Bahrawy 94) whose self-confidence makes him more like Haderer than Ranitzky or Bertoni. Hutter is very much a spontaneous man, and an enthusiastic “murderer”, when it came to taking part in the character assassination that was a regular feature of the “Herrenrunde”: “Hutter lachte laut, wenn jemand ermordet wurde” (W 2: 168). Unlike Haderer, however, Hutter is not consistently malicious and duplicitous: while Haderer does not hesitate to verbally attack—or figuratively “murder”—anyone and everyone, Hutter is prepared to defend certain

people (ibid.). This does not, however, stop him from enthusiastically joining in the attack on the next person.

Like Haderer, Hutter frequents the top cultural, business and government circles; he is also materially and socially successful, and actively involved in the culture industry: “Er war Geldgeber und finanzierte alles mögliche, eine Filmgesellschaft, Zeitungen, Illustrierte und neuerdings ein Komitee [...] das sich ›Kultur und Freiheit‹ nannte.” (W 2: 167) As Decker notes, the name of this committee “underscores the close link between the politics of culture and the culture of politics in the Second Republic” (48). Unlike the other three in the dominant sub-group, however, Hutter is neither an intellectual nor an artist, but instead first and foremost a businessman.³² Very much like the three others, however, Hutter is an opportunist, motivated by material concerns rather than intellectual stimulation or idealism: he has never yet read any of the books that he has published, nor seen any of the films that he financed (W 2: 168).

Adorno on the authoritarian character

Bartsch was the first of a number of scholars to draw attention to the way in which these four members of the culture industry reflect the characteristics of the fascist personality as defined in Adorno’s *Studien zum autoritären Charakter*, with Ranitzky and Bertoni representing the “autoritär unterwürfigen Charakter[e]” while Haderer and Hutter constituted examples of “titanisch[e] Typen” (Ingeborg Bachmann 104).³³ All four are wily survivors who have adapted to the new political and social conditions, but remain essentially unchanged. Instead of honestly confronting the past, each one has adopted a different approach, according to their basic character type, by either denying, reinterpreting or glorifying it (ibid.). As Bartsch goes on to observe, the purported traditional and humanitarian “Ideen und Werte” of the sub-group of four take on “›in Wirklichkeit eine völlig andere, inhumane Bedeutung« [...] durch ihren Mißbrauch zur Denunziation Abwesender und als ideologischer Deckmantel der Glorifizierung von Kriegserfahrungen” (ibid.). This conflict between ideological claims to humanitarian ideals and “tatsächlicher aggressiver Destruktivität im Denken” is symptomatic of what Adorno terms “typisch faschistischer Pseudokonservatismus” (ibid.). Bartsch therefore concludes that, to varying degrees, all four members of the sub-group have authoritarian-fascist characteristics, the most prominent of which is “eine latent aggressive Verhaltensdisposition” which each of the four manages to disguise with varying degrees of success (105). The sub-group of four thus represents but a latent version of the more open aggression of the rowdy and murderous war veterans who share the same premises on this evening (106).

The overall picture of the sub-group of four—all “Träger der kulturellen öffentlichen

³² As a businessman who is a leading player in the film industry without any artistic pretensions himself, Hutter seems to be an early incarnation of the culture industry Mafioso, Claude Marchand, in “Drei Wege zum See” (see Chapter 8).

³³ Other scholars to discuss the latent fascism/authoritarianism of the four in the sub-group include Mahrdt (*Öffentlichkeit* 197), Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 180), Thamer (222) and Töller (42).

Meinungsbildung” (Mahrdr *Öffentlichkeit* 197)— is therefore a damning one of duplicity, self-seeking opportunism and treachery (at a wider, social level and an individual, personal level) as well as moral and ideological hypocrisy and unconfessed fascist proclivities. If all of the characters in “Unter Mördern und Irren” were of this breed, the reader would be left with a sense of overwhelming pessimism like that expressed by the narrator when he is in the washroom with Friedl:

Wir schlagen uns hier herum und sind nicht einmal fähig, diese kleine trübe Situation für uns aufzuklären, und vorher haben sich andere herumgeschlagen, haben nichts aufklären können und sind ins Verderben gerannt, sie waren Opfer oder Henker, und je tiefer man hinuntersteigt in die Zeit, desto unwegsamer wird es, ich kenne mich manchmal nicht mehr aus in der Geschichte, ich weiß nicht, wohin ich mein Herz hängen kann, an welche Parteien, Gruppen, Kräfte, denn ein Schandgesetz erkennt man, nach dem alles angerichtet ist. (W 2: 176f.)

Gegenbilder: the “Bettelzeichner” and the “Mörder”

As we find in so many of her literary works, however, Bachmann includes “Gegenbilder”, whose presence counterbalances the impression of hopelessness and despair that would otherwise emerge from the core situation she portrays. In “Unter Mördern und Irren”, Bachmann includes two very different characters as “Gegenbilder” to the “Gauler” who dominate the culture industry: one is the figure of the “Bettelzeichner” and the other is the man who claims to be a born “Mörder”.

The figure of the mendicant artist who approaches the group in the wine cellar, offering to sketch each man in the group represents a most pointed “Gegenbild” to the core group of “Gauler”, and in particular to the evil, malicious, but materially and socially successful Haderer. Unlike Haderer, the artist is not at all motivated by financial gain: “[E]r beachtete das Geld nicht.” (W 2: 163) Instead, he is totally absorbed in his artistic pursuit. Rather than flattering individuals with his art, the artist shows honesty and integrity in not shrinking from accurately portraying the evil in Haderer’s face “wie ein maliziöser Tod oder wie eine jener Masken, wie Schauspieler sie sich noch manchmal für den Mephisto oder den Jago zurecht machen” (W 2: 164). The artist proves to be perspicacious and accurate in his dissection and visual representation of character. He also manages to elicit, via his sketches, responses that confirm the insincerity and hypocrisy of characters like Haderer, who, on seeing his portrait, responds with apparent equanimity but inadvertently reveals his disingenuousness:

Er schien nicht einen Augenblick betroffen oder beleidigt, zeigte sich überlegen, er klatschte in die Hände, *vielleicht dreimal zu oft*—aber er klatschte, lobte immer zu oft—und rief mehrmals »Bravo«. Mit diesem »Bravo« drückte er auch aus, daß er allein hier der große Mann war, der Belobigungen zu vergeben hatte. (W 2: 164, m.e.).

Here too, the artist shows himself to be very different to Haderer: he is not after praise or recognition, and is instead deeply immersed in his art—“[D]er Alte neigte [...] ehrerbietig den Kopf, sah aber kaum auf, weil er es eilig hatte, mit Bertonis Kopf zu Ende zu kommen.” (ibid.) The inclusion of the “Bettelzeichner” in “Unter Mördern und Irren” suggests that, while insight, truth and moral rectitude may be absent from the culture industry, it still exists at an individual level outside the culture industry, and is marked by a lack of concern with public recognition and material gain.

The anonymous artist figure is, however, not the only representative of truth, moral courage and integrity in “Unter Mördern und Irren”. An even more striking “Gegenbild” to the moribund morality

of the culture industry can be found in the unnamed man who joins the group after the artist leaves. Most startlingly, the man, who claims he is a murderer—and a born murderer at that—has in fact not actually murdered anyone, but unlike others in the group, is acutely aware of, and honest about, the violent and destructive tendencies with which he was born.³⁴ His detailed account of his urge to kill, and the circumstances in which he had been tempted to express this urge, contrasts starkly to the way in which Haderer, Bertoni, Ranitzky and Hutter gloss over the murders and betrayals they have committed in the past—and continue to commit at a metaphorical level in their deeds and speech in post-war society.³⁵ As Beicken notes, unlike the “gewöhnlich[e] Tötend[e] [...], die das Morden des Krieges als alltägliches Geschäft mit der Zuverlässigkeit von Tötungsmaschinen betrieben haben”, the stranger has “eine mystische Beziehung zum Anderen, zum Gegner im Akt des Tötens” (176). This “Mörder” thus “embodies the individual conviction and principled behavior lacking in the *Stammtisch* members and the citizenry at large”, and his presence in the Weinkeller on this night “creates an opposition that serves to underscore the common bond of collectively sanctioned killing uniting the members of the *Stammtisch* with the SS-veterans” (Decker 53). The stranger’s forthright language and behaviour therefore represents:

a real threat to the consensus mentality that at best allows for the muted dissent of Friedl. Thus, when the stranger openly challenges the complacent *Stammtischler* and confronts the proud *SS-ler*, he meets with a brutal death at the hands of the SS-veterans while the good, democratic *Stammtischler* prevaricate. (ibid.)

The violent drama and tragedy of this event is, however, ameliorated in a rather utopian moment when the narrator describes his reaction to finding the victim’s blood on his hand after returning home that night. In a realisation verging on an epiphany, the narrator sees the blood as a form of protective shield—not a protection against outside forces of violence but a protection from the expression of his own feelings of anger and revenge (*W 2*: 186).³⁶ What remains open, however, at the conclusion of the story, is the extent to which the narrator and the others outside the sub-group of four will continue to participate in the »jämmerliche Einträchtigkeit« (*W 2*: 173) with the “Henker” of yesterday, and thus continue to taint themselves by association with the moral bankruptcy and latent violence of those who have reassumed positions of power and influence in the media and culture industry.

The foregoing analysis shows that, although “Unter Mördern und Irren” does not specifically

³⁴ Schneider is, however, at pains to point out that the stranger is “kein friedliebender Kriegsgegner und auch kein ‘Mensch in der Revolte’, der sich im Namen von Humanität oder Gerechtigkeit gegen die Ansprüche eines faschistischen Unrechtsregimes empört, sondern die halb allegorische Verkörperung einer rigiden und kompromißlosen Geisteshaltung, einer Haltung, von der er auch nach der Aufgabe seiner ursprünglichen Mordabsichten nicht abläßt: vom perfektionistischen Täter verwandelt er sich in das vollkommene Opfer, indem er mit selbstmörderischer Konsequenz und Kühnheit ganz alleine in die Versammlung der Frontkämpfer eindringt.” (*Kompositionsmethode* 214)

³⁵ The difference between the stranger and the so-called “men of culture” is highlighted not only in their different attitude to language but also in the stranger’s behemoth-like size and appearance (Töller 103). The stranger’s forthright and principled approach both in war and peace time—as “Verweigerer in Uniform wie als Provokateur in Zivil”—also contrasts dramatically with the moral flabbiness of the narrator who gets hopelessly entangled in “endlose und ergebnislose Reflexionen über Kriegsschuldfragen” only to resume his place at the table with those who were responsible for robbing him of his youth (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 214f.).

³⁶ Cf. Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 106f.) and Schneider (*Kompositionsmethode* 215).

target press content like other works examined so far in this study, it does provide a mordant critique of the socio-political circumstances that enabled morally dubious characters to re-enter and dominate the culture industry in post-war Austria, despite their past complicity with a murderous regime. It also shows how this development not only generates moral confusion and the mentality of collaboration in the younger generation but also threatens to perpetuate hypocrisy and moral laxity from generation to generation. Bachmann's focus on the hypocrisy, ruthlessness and moral dubiousness of those in the cultural industry is one that reemerges in later works, particularly in *Malina* and "Drei Wege zum See".

6.8 "Ein Wildermuth"

"Ein Wildermuth" is primarily concerned with the elusive and problematical nature of truth, and its relationship to language, reality and morality.³⁷ In exploring the nature of truth in this way, the story makes several references to the journalistic media. The first of these references occurs early in the story in the description of Judge Anton Wildermuth shortly after his spectacular "Nervenzusammenbruch" (*W 2*: 214) in court while presiding over an apparently straightforward case of patricide. This is the first of three references to the press that occur within the first four pages of the story, and the first of a number of subsequent references, which have been all but ignored by scholars to date.

The most comprehensive and enlightening analyses can be found in Angst-Hürlimann (35–44), Pilipp ("The Truth about Language" and *Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 99–111), Schneider (*Kompositionsmethode* 238–251) and Töller (120–131). Of the many scholars to discuss "Ein Wildermuth", Schneider is the only one to mention any reference to the press, and even he does so only in passing: "Die Einleitung endet mit einem bemerkenswerten, doppelsinnig-selbstreflexiven Hinweis auf Wildermuths Auffassung von den Zeitungsberichten, die sich mit seinem Fall beschäftigen." (*Kompositionsmethode* 246) The focus of Schneider's attention in this reference is not the press reports themselves but the fact that they set off Wildermuth's attempts "die Geschichte in sich zu erzeugen und dann in sich zu zerschlagen, die man für die Öffentlichkeit aus dem Vorfall gemacht hatte" (*W 2*: 215)—attempts that are, Schneider argues, replicated in the structure and thematic content of the story itself.³⁸ Although Schneider does not expand on Bachmann's portrayal of journalism in "Ein Wildermuth", his argument about the inextricable connection of structure and theme in this story, is one that is relevant to this dissertation. I therefore begin my interpretation with a brief description of the story's structure to provide a structural context for the following thematic analysis and my later application of Schneider's argument to my own study.

³⁷ According to Pilipp, the story's examination of the concept of truth from a number of different epistemological perspectives, offers "[eine] systematische Dekonstruktion eines—sprachlich zentrierten—Wahrheitsbegriffes" (*Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 99).

³⁸ In a similar vein, Stoll argues that this passage can be seen "als chiffriertes poetologisches Bekenntnis" (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 176).

Structure

The formality and complexity of narrative structure, compared to the other stories in the collection, is one of the most obvious distinguishing features of “Ein Wildermuth”.³⁹ The story consists of three distinct narrative components:

A brief, untitled introductory section (barely one and a half pages long)—hereinafter referred to as “the prologue”—written from the perspective of a third-person narrator and set in the period immediately following Anton Wildermuth’s breakdown.

A longer section (11 pages)—numbered “1”—also written in the third person,⁴⁰ but covering a longer time frame, starting from the period immediately preceding the court proceedings and finishing at the point where the prologue starts.

An even longer section (27 pages)—numbered “2”—this time written from the first person perspective of Wildermuth himself, covering a much expanded chronological period starting with Wildermuth’s childhood and continuing through to the narrative present.

The story is therefore structured, almost cinematically, as a set of “flashbacks”: the prologue sets the scene with a brief exposition of the after-effects of a “watershed” experience in the life of Judge Anton Wildermuth; section 1 then examines the events that led up to this experience; and section 2, projects even further back into the past to reveal how the protagonist’s experiences from his early childhood onwards have inexorably drawn him to the point of professional and personal breakdown in court, and then goes on to portray the consequences of that breakdown over a period that finishes in the narrative present.

The prologue

As mentioned earlier, the first reference to the press is found very early in “Ein Wildermuth”. It occurs in the narrator’s account of the judge reading the newspaper reports about his breakdown.

Er las die Berichte und Stellungnahmen, kannte sie bald auswendig, versuchte, wie ein Unbeteiligter, die Geschichte in sich zu erzeugen und dann in sich zu zerschlagen, die man für die Öffentlichkeit aus dem Vorfall gemacht hatte. Er allein wußte ja, daß keine Geschichte sich aus den Elementen fügen und kein Sinnzusammenhang sich vorzeigen ließ, sondern daß nur einmal ein sichtbarer Unfall verursacht worden

³⁹ Several scholars have noted the highly structured nature of “Ein Wildermuth” in comparison to the other stories in the collection, as well as the story’s changing narrative perspective, for example, Angst-Hürlimann (35f.), Stoll (Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie 169f.) and Töller (120f., 127f.). Schneider, however, is the only one to point out the inextricable connection between the story’s structure and content, demonstrating the way in which the “kompositorische Grundstruktur [...] auf formaler Ebene die explizit erörterte Hauptthematik [widerspiegelt]” (*Kompositionsmethode* 238–251).

⁴⁰ The narrator of the prologue appears to be omniscient because he has access to Wildermuth’s internal thought processes, but the brevity of the prologue makes it hard to make a definitive judgement on this. As the narrator does not enter the internal thought processes of the other characters briefly mentioned in that section, it could also be argued that the narrator of the prologue is as selectively omniscient as the narrator of section “1”, who, as Schneider observes, fails to correct “subjektive Irrtümer des Richters” or to divulge “die ganze und alleinige Wahrheit über die Tat des Angeklagten und den Zusammenbruch Wildermuths” (*Kompositionsmethode* 244f.). Here I support Schneider’s contention that the narrator of the prologue and the narrator of section 1 are not necessarily identical (246).

war durch den Einschlag des Geistes in seinen Geist, der nicht taugte, mehr anzurichten in der Welt als eine kurze kopflose Verwirrung. (W 2: 215)

What emerges from this account is the discrepancy between Anton Wildermuth's reflections on his own direct experience of the case as the ruling judge, and what has been reported in the press. For Wildermuth, the events and circumstances leading up to his "Unfall" cannot be explained in any rational coherent way, and yet the press has attempted to construct meaning where there is none. In this passage, then, Bachmann provides a literary illustration of Benjamin's lament in "Der Erzähler", that the press cannot simply describe an event or let a story exist in its own right and thus allow us to come to our own conclusions (GS 2.2: 444f.). Instead it "saturates everything with meaning", and in so doing, preempts attempts on our part to make sense of events. It thus deprives us of important intellectual, emotional and spiritual stimuli that allow us to draw on and extend our own "Erfahrung". What also emerges from this passage is a critique of the truth value of press content. Of what value is the press's account of an event, when the primary participant and key eye-witness in the event does not in any way agree with its representation and cannot relate that account to his own experience?

Section 1

The second reference to the journalistic media occurs early in section 1, within two pages of the first reference. This time the narrator's commentary (and critique) targets the way in which news stories are selected. As mentioned in earlier analyses, acts of violence, like murder, generally feature prominently in the journalistic media because they rank highly in terms of news value. This does not mean that all murders are reported. Unless there is something unusual about the murder (for example, if it involves high profile individuals or features the additional news value of a sex crime or perhaps even political scandal), the crime may not be covered in detail in the news media or may not be reported at all. In the case of the Wildermuth murder, the crime initially received little media attention, "weil er zu unerheblich und gewöhnlich war, um Interesse zu wecken" (W 2: 216). By chance, however, a reporter noticed that the judge had the same name as the defendant. This gave the case the added news value of novelty—important for the tabloid press:

[D]er Prozeß wurde dann nur zur Kenntnis genommen, weil ein Journalist von einem Boulevardblatt sich zu der Zeit *zufällig* mit dem Chef der Polizeikorrespondenz des längeren unterhalten und herausgefunden hatte, daß der Prozeß Wildermuth in den Händen des Oberlandgerichtsrates Wildermuth lag—Richter und Angeklagter also den gleichen Namen trugen. Dieser Namensgleichheit wegen, die den Mann *belustigte* und *neugierig* machte, berichtete er in einem *reißerischen, wichtiguerischen* Ton in seiner Zeitung von dem Fall, und *andere Zeitungen zögerten dann auch nicht, ihre Berichterstatter zu schicken.* (ibid., m.e.)

In this passage we find a three-pronged attack on the journalistic media: first, there is a clear critique of the journalist himself in the description of his pompous and sensationalising style of reporting; secondly, there is an implicit commentary on the arbitrary nature of what makes the headlines—it was pure happenstance that a reporter discovered the identity of surname and that the discovery aroused his curiosity; thirdly, the passage targets the imitative, unoriginal nature of press content in its observation that, having received so much attention in one newspaper, other newspapers took up the story as well—a further illustration of the relative and arbitrary nature of news selection: although the selection of news is often determined by a common understanding of news values, the

final decision about what constitutes a newsworthy story is largely subjective and at the whim of those who produce the news at a given point. Once someone in the news industry decides that something is newsworthy, the imitative and unoriginal nature of news process ensures that it becomes newsworthy on a broader scale.

Another element of the critique of press content that can be read into the quoted passage relates, I believe, to the way in which the press presents an incomplete (and thus inaccurate) account of reality by focussing on one particular and coincidental element (in this case, the identity of surname between the judge and the accused) at the expense of other aspects of the story. In fact, because the news story is not presented with a view to enlightening the public, but with a view to entertaining them, and because it represents a distorted account in its focus on the amusing aspect of the case, the press's relationship to the truth seems to be rather like that of Wildermuth's wife, Gerda, who constantly embroiders the facts. She has a gift, "aus der geringfügigsten Begebenheit, aus dem nebensächlichsten Erlebnis eine Geschichte machen [zu können]" (W 2: 235). As Anton Wildermuth so bluntly puts it:

Sie unterhält sich und die anderen ununterbrochen auf Kosten der Wahrheit. Ich habe sie noch nie dabei ertappt, daß sie einen Vorfall genau berichtet hätte. Sie verwandelt alles sofort [...]. *Sie lügt, und ich weiß nicht einmal, ob sie, von wenigen Ausnahmen abgesehen, sich darüber im klaren ist.* (W 2: 235, m.e.)⁴¹

Gerda's loose dealings with the truth reveal parallels to the way in which the press deals with the truth in "Ein Wildermuth". While it might increase sales by arousing the curiosity of the reading public—and is therefore a pertinent (ultimately financial) consideration for the press—the fact that the accused and presiding judge share a surname is (or should be), objectively speaking, immaterial to the case at hand. Ironically, however, the coincidence of surname proves to be one of the factors in a chain of events that increasingly unsettles Anton Wildermuth during the proceedings, to the point where he suffers a very public and vocal nervous breakdown. This breakdown in turn becomes real fodder for the press, as described in the prologue (W 2: 215). But even here, the press gets it wrong:

Nicht wie die Zeitungen berichteten, am Ende der Auseinandersetzung oder während des Streites über den Knopf, sondern in diesem Augenblick [that is, just after the Staatsanwalt boldly cries out for "Wahrheit"] geschah es, daß der Oberlandesgerichtsrat Anton Wildermuth [...] schrie. Dieser Schrei bestürzte das ganze Landesgericht, wurde für Tage zum Stadtgespräch und erstarrte in allen Zeitungen zur Schlagzeile. (W 2: 225, m.e.)

According to the narrator, then, the various press reports provide conflicting and inaccurate accounts of what prompted Wildermuth's outbursts. They only get the obvious and sensational aspect of what happened right: "Fest steht der Schrei." (ibid.) It is this aspect of the event that attracts public attention over the following days and becomes an immutable fact, permanently frozen in history as a headline. The press is not, however, the only one to get this wrong: Achberger, for example, claims that "[t]he judge's world is shaken when he is confronted with, and asked to rule on, that other, repressed part of himself, whose actions defy ordering into his previously understood world" (*Understanding*

⁴¹ While Bartsch sees Gerda's "Blumensprache" (W 2: 245) as an instance of "Gaunersprache" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 112), I see Gerda as symbolising the failure of Anton Wildermuth to live up to his father's motto: "Ein Wildermuth wählt immer die Wahrheit". By choosing "eine gute glückliche Verbindung" devoid of "Leidenschaft" and staying in a marriage that is little more than a "System von Zärtlichkeiten" (W 2: 241), Wildermuth chooses a beautiful lie—or an embroidery of the truth, just like Gerda—instead of absolute honesty.

76). Töller implies that it is Josef Wildermuth's retraction of his confession (123), while both Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 171) and Pilipp (*Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 102) maintain that Wildermuth's breakdown is precipitated by the detailed testimony of the button expert, which proves that language is incapable of providing a meaningful explanation of the crime. However, as the lines before the quoted passage make clear, it was the state prosecutor's powerful intervention and his "[Schrei] nach der Wahrheit" (W 2: 225), that immediately preceded Wildermuth's scream and subsequent breakdown: Wildermuth does not scream out at the point where there is conflict in the court, but instead, when the accused and the defence attorney both nod in agreement as the prosecuting attorney cries out for "Wahrheit". I therefore agree with Schneider's contention that Wildermuth's scream is an expression of protest "gegen die Vorspiegelung einer eindeutigen Wahrheit [...], wie es sie [...] niemals geben kann" (*Kompositionsmethode* 248).

Interestingly and importantly, the real reason for Wildermuth's very public nervous breakdown is completely overlooked by the journalistic media. Here too, I concur with Schneider that Wildermuth's scream is not an expression of frustration over the inability of the court process to come to an irrefutable determination on this murder case, but instead a manifestation of his realisation that there can never be "eine solche perfekte Wahrheit" and, "daß dort, wo sie vorzuliegen scheint, nur ein Mantel der Eindeutigkeit um eine im Kern uneindeutige Wirklichkeit gehüllt wurde" (ibid.). This explains why Wildermuth collapsed at the point of where there was agreement between the participants in the court proceedings, rather than during the points of disagreement..

The foregoing analysis reveals a bleak and cynical view of the journalistic media. This is a view that seems to be shared by Wildermuth, as we see from a passage early in section 1, where the narrator reports that Wildermuth saw the Josef Wildermuth case as rather old-fashioned in its simplicity and devoid of political impact or any of the other potential complications and potential career minefields that many recent cases had presented him with, because they involved persons of high social or political status. In being assigned a case that appeared to promise "Klarlinigkeit und Einfachheit" (W 2: 217), the judge therefore finds himself looking forward to respite from the nastier and darker aspects of his profession: for once, Wildermuth thinks, "mußte nicht *unter dem heuchlerischen Geschrei der Presse* die schmutzige Wäsche einer ganzen Gesellschaftsschicht gewaschen werden" (W 2: 217, m.e.). For Wildermuth, then, the press are hypocritical hyenas, metaphorically thirsty for blood and victims to feed the public's addiction to sensation so they can sell more papers. As the story reveals, it is ironic that this apparently innocuous case, almost wholesome in its simplicity, eventually leads to his professional undoing, and is consequently taken up and aired with great sensationalistic gusto by the very press he had been so confident of avoiding in relation to this case.

Section 2

Even as a child, newspapers had an impact on Wildermuth, albeit an indirect one, but one that, I would argue, is closely related to his obsessive fixation with "Wahrheit", which started off as a childhood mission to speak the truth in the form of the most detailed possible account of events—

“»genau« sagen, was geschehen war” (W 2: 227f.). This was the form of truth that was actively fostered by his father, who spent more time engaged in “Zeitungslesen oder [...] Heftekorrigieren” (W 2: 227) than in interacting with his children. In Anton Wildermuth’s account of his childhood years, the father is depicted as displaying little interest in his children’s upbringing and as generally remaining engrossed in his own activities, unless the opportunity arose to act as an arbiter of the truth when the children recounted a story, or when his wife took the children to task about some incident of misbehaviour: “[D]ann fragte er unweigerlich: Ist das wahr?” (W 2: 227) For Anton Wildermuth, telling the truth became a way of attracting his father’s attention away from newspapers. The symbolism here suggests that when the father—whose personal motto was “Ein Wildermuth wählt immer die Wahrheit” (W 2: 214)—turns to listen to his son, he is choosing truth over newspaper content. Although Wildermuth senior thereby manages to instill in his son the same obsession with “truth”, which develops into a veritable “Wahrheitsrausch” (W 2: 229), Anton Wildermuth eventually comes to question the significance and adequacy of the kind of truth promoted by his father:

Erst viel später fiel mir auf, daß ich nach vielem natürlich nicht befragt worden war, über vieles nie hatte Rechenschaft ablegen müssen—daß von mir nicht über alles die Wahrheit gesagt worden war. Nie hatte mich jemand gefragt, was ich über die nicht beichtwürdige Dinge dachte, was ich meinte, was ich glaubte. (W 2: 230f.)

From this point on, Anton’s struggle with truth assumes a pattern: constantly searching for truth, discovering a newer and more satisfactory or valid form of truth, which is then abandoned when it proves to be inadequate, and the search goes on until the next form of truth is encountered. Indeed, the whole of section 2 is devoted to a detailed account of Wildermuth’s lifelong obsession with truth. The only lasting conclusion that Wildermuth comes to, however, is the conviction that language gets in the way of truth: “In keiner anderen Erzählung wird dem Leser so wortreich die ganze Unzuverlässigkeit und Unzulänglichkeit von Worten der Sprache überhaupt, eingehämmert.” (Angst-Hürlimann 39) Instead, truth is more likely to be attained through physicality and direct experience: hence the very physical and tactile approach that Wildermuth adopts in the concluding lines of the story (W 2: 252).

Wildermuth’s loss of faith in the ability of language as a medium for truth derives from his experience of what he perceived to be absolute “Wahrheit” in his brief but overwhelmingly intense and sensual pre-marital encounter with a woman called Wanda:⁴² “Er erblickt das Licht der Wahrheit in der gesellschaftlich tabuisierten fleischlichen Ekstase.” (Pilipp *Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 107f.) Unlike his other experiences of “the truth” until that point, the experience with Wanda avoids language and takes place “unter dem Zeichen eines grossen Schweigens”: “Die Sprache hat sich als unwahr erwiesen, also sucht er im Fleisch die Wahrheit.” (Angst-Hürlimann 37) As with other instances of absolute experiences depicted in Bachmann’s work, the encounter with absolute truth

⁴² For discussions of the way in which the women in this story—primarily Wanda, but also Wildermuth’s wife, Gerda, and his mother, who remains “ausgeschlossen [von der Wahrheit]” (W 2: 232)—are depicted as primeval, emotional beings to whom the kind of truth that Anton Wildermuth and his father pursue is completely foreign, see Angst-Hürlimann (36), Beicken (181), Höller (*Das Werk* 136f.), Pilipp (*Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 106), Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 174), Töller (127) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 131f.).

in the form of Wanda proves to be not only at odds with social expectations and constraints, but untenable in the long run because of its very intensity.⁴³

[A]bsolute, gesellschaftlich desintegrierende, anarchistische Liebe läßt sich konsequent nicht auf Dauer leben, wie Bachmann in der Preisrede vor den Kriegsblinden erklärt hat. Wildermuth muß erkennen, daß er in einer Ehe mit Wanda »die Wahrheit nicht hätte ertragen können«, die sein Körper in der Beziehung zu ihr für Augenblicke erlebt hat. Erträglich scheint ihm nur eine »normale« konventionelle Ehe. (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 113)

Although he rejects this manifestation of truth as “unlivable”, admitting, “daß ich die Wahrheit nicht hätte ertragen können, die damals mein Fleisch überfallen und verheert hat” (*W* 2: 244), Wildermuth retains a taste for the experience: “Was von dem Erlebnis zurückbleibt, ist nicht das Geheimnis selbst, sondern nur ein stummes Wissen um dessen Vorhandensein.” (Angst-Hürlimann 38) Unable to return to his former way of living—much like Reiter in “Der Schweißer”⁴⁴—Wildermuth continues to search for a similar silent fusion of external, physical reality and his own being (*W* 2: 252). And this is how “Ein Wildermuth” ends—with the frustrated acceptance of the elusive and complex nature of truth, which nevertheless does not deter him from his furiously primeval drive to continue to seek it in whatever forms it might reveal itself.⁴⁵

Where the truth lies and where it does not lie

Although Section 2 is essentially a personal account that features no further mention of the press after the passages referring to Wildermuth’s early childhood,⁴⁶ the way in which this section ruminates on the nature of truth is important for this study because of its implications for the nature of the “truth” as purveyed by the journalistic media. In this regard an important observation about the kind of truth that emerges in a public forum, such as a court trial, is made by the accused, Josef Wildermuth:

Mit einer kleinen bescheidenen Geste erhob sich der Angeklagte und sagte: »Aber die Wahrheit ist es nicht.« Und er fügte noch, in der großen Stille, leiser hinzu: »Weil es eigentlich ganz anders war. Alles war doch ganz anders.« Zur Rede gestellt, antwortete dieser Josef Wildermuth, seinen Vater habe er wohl erschlagen, aber da man ihn schon so genau befrage, meine er, daß er auch genauer antworten müsse und zugeben müsse, daß alles ganz anders gewesen sei. (*W* 2: 219, m.e.)⁴⁷

In insisting on the discrepancy between the official or public account of what happened and his own

⁴³ Cf. Stoll (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 177). One is reminded here of the social untenability of Jennifer’s absolute love in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”.

⁴⁴ Cf. Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 264f.). There are also similarities between the conclusion of “Ein Wildermuth” and “Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt” (Höller *Das Werk* 134).

⁴⁵ Here, I agree with Schneider’s rejection of those analyses that interpret the story “von ihrem Ende her”. Opposing the view that section 2 contains “the moral of the story” as it were, Schneider insists, “daß es sich nicht um eine fortlaufende Entwicklungsgeschichte handelt und daß der ganz zuletzt beschriebene Bewußtseinszustand Wildermuths nicht die ‘Lösung’ darstellt, die das Werk zur Beantwortung der Wahrheitsfrage anbietet” (*Kompositionsmethode* 247).

⁴⁶ As Stoll observes, this section represents the polar opposite to the narrative approach in section 1: “Die auftauchende Bilderflut entzieht sich den Forderungen willentlich gesteuerter Zusammenhänge. Sie beweist ihre subversive Kraft gerade darin, daß sie sich nicht mehr “zu einem nützlichen Ganzen” formen läßt.” (*Erinnerung als ästhetische Kategorie* 175)

⁴⁷ Interestingly, the words used by Josef Wildermuth appear to foreshadow the words of Franz Josef Trotta in “Drei Wege zum See” (note the shared christian name) when he criticises the deficiencies of the press in portraying reality: “Denn es ist natürlich anders in Wirklichkeit.” (*TP* 4: 387)

experience, Josef Wildermuth, the accused, shows himself to be a kindred spirit or *alter ego* (Pilipp Ingeborg Bachmanns *Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 99)⁴⁸ of Anton Wildermuth, the judge, whose lifelong fascination and obsession with “Wahrheit” in its various guises, constantly brings him to the same conclusion: “Aber die Wahrheit ist es nicht.”⁴⁹ Like Anton Wildermuth, Josef Wildermuth finds it easier to say what the truth is *not* rather than what it *is*: when Josef tries to elaborate and explain what really happened, the court and the judge find themselves no closer to understanding the motives and circumstances of the crime than before. Even others involved in the court proceedings, initially sure of themselves and their testimony, gradually find their certainty undermined: “Die Worte stürzten wie tote Falter aus ihren Mündern. Sie konnten sich selber nicht mehr glauben.” (W 2: 225)

In Josef Wildermuth’s simple statement “Aber die Wahrheit ist es nicht”, we find a synopsis of the whole story, which, through the eyes of Anton Wildermuth, investigates a wide range of different forms of (or understandings of) the truth, only to discover, to his deep chagrin, “daß [er] die Wahrheit, dort wo sie aufkommt, nicht brauchen kann” (W 2: 244).⁵⁰ The main focus of “Ein Wildermuth”, then, is an account of where the truth *does not* lie. From the critical and uniformly disparaging references to the journalistic media it is obvious that the truth is not to be found in the journalistic media. The truth is also not to be found in the excruciatingly exact investigations of the judicial system, nor in the painstaking forensic analyses of technical subject matter experts like the button expert with 30 years of dedicated study to his field but whose evidence only serves to create greater uncertainty in the Josef Wildermuth case (W 2: 222ff.):⁵¹

Wildermuth, der sein Leben der Wahrheit verschrieben hat, muss in diesem Knopfexperten ein verzerrtes, lächerliches Spiegelbild seiner selbst erblicken. Die ad absurdum geführte Suche nach der Wahrheit in einer an sich fast belanglosen Detailfrage schafft dann jene allgemeine Atmosphäre der Unsicherheit, die weitere erfolgreiche Verhandlungen unmöglich macht. (Angst-Hürlimann 39, spelling a.p.o.)

Just like Wildermuth’s increasingly frantic attempts in his youth “die noch wahrere Wahrheit zu sagen” (W 2: 228), such endeavours to reveal something both true and meaningful are doomed to failure. Schneider provides an excellent explanation for this failure: the kind of truth that Wildermuth was seeking “existiert nicht an und für sich, sondern ist stets etwas Erzeugtes und künstlich Hergestelltes, dem bestimmte Absichten und Interessen zugrundeliegen und dessen Anerkennung auf

⁴⁸ Angst-Hürlimann is far too tentative in her contention that giving the judge and the accused the same name suggests “[e]ine mögliche Identifizierung zwischen Richter und Angeklagtem” (38). A number of scholars have asserted this more boldly and have extended the identification to point out that the identity of surname is most appropriate, given that both Wildermuths commit patricide—the one metaphorically, the other literally (Bartsch Ingeborg Bachmann 116; Schneider (“*Das dreißigste Jahr* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 121).

⁴⁹ Cf. Angst-Hürlimann (38), Höller (*Das Werk* 136f.) and Pilipp (*Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband »Das dreißigste Jahr«* 99).

⁵⁰ Cf. Töller (123)

⁵¹ A number of scholars have referred to Wittgenstein in connection with this story too; for example, Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 112) and Seidel, who draws some interesting parallels between the life and works of Wittgenstein and aspects of “Ein Wildermuth”, but takes her interpretation too far, I believe, in claiming, for example, that section 1 of “Ein Wildermuth” is all about Wittgenstein’s “Abbildtheorie” (277). As Weigel points out, Seidel’s attempts to investigate “Übereinstimmungen mit philosophischen Problemen des Werks von Ludwig Wittgenstein und biographischen Elementen seines Lebens” lead to Bachmann’s stories being treated as philosophical discourses (“wie argumentierende Texte”) instead of literature (*Hinterlassenschaften* 115).

Täuschung und sachlich unbegründeter Autorität beruhen kann” (*Kompositionsmethode* 249). The other kinds of truth that he has experienced, for example, in his encounter with Wanda, or in the sudden and violent realisation that precipitated his breakdown in court, are not only the consequence of life’s “accidents”, but are also unliveable in the long term. Thus the “truth” remains for Wildermuth forever an elusive prey: “[J]e weiter ich ihr nachgehe, desto weiter ist sie schon wieder, irrlichternd zu jeder Zeit, an jedem Ort, über jedem Gegenstand. Als wäre sie nur greifbar, als hätte sie nur Festigkeit, wenn man sich nicht rührt, nicht viel fragt, sich gut sein läßt mit dem Größten.” (*W 2*: 251)⁵² Despite his awareness of the ultimate futility of his desire, Wildermuth remains determined to continue his search for truth—as is evident from his concluding lines:

Ich will [...] mich hinbocken an jede Stelle der Welt, mich hinlegen auf Gras und Asphalt und die Welt abhören, abtasten, abklopfen, aufwühlen, mich in sie verbeissen und mit ihr übereinstimmen dann, unendlich lang und ganz—Bis mir die Wahrheit wird über das Gras und den Regen und über uns. (*W 2*: 252)

I therefore do not agree with Seidel that “Ein Wildermuth” wants us to conclude that the solution to the search for truth lies in giving up the search (280).⁵³ Instead it is about having developed, as Töller puts it, “ein[en] modifizierte[n] Wahrheitsbegriff” (123).

At a broader narrative level, the same point about the inadequacy of one-sided approaches to the truth is embodied in the structure of the story as well as the content: the full truth about Wildermuth—his breakdown and his lifelong obsession with the truth—is not to be found in the methodical, logical and apparently objective approach of the third-person narrator in section 1. As Töller notes, the account of the court case in this section does not adequately explain why Wildermuth gives up his search for absolute truth: “Erst die Erweiterung des erinnerten Zeitraums auf die gesamte Lebenszeit eröffnet einen Raum, der zeigt, daß die Suche nach der Wahrheit das gesamte Leben durchzieht.” (121) Nor is the search for truth satisfied by the completely subjective, deeply emotional and chaotic perspective of the first-person account in section 2. To use the words of Charlotte in “Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha”, “Ein Wildermuth” proposes: “Nicht dies, nicht jenes.” (*W 2*: 212) Schneider agrees:

Weder die allzu glatte Version von Kapitel 1 noch die inkonsistente Version von Kapitel 2 liefert ‘die Wahrheit über die Wahrheit’. Bachmanns Erzählung wirbt nicht für diese oder jene Wahrheitstheorie, sondern demonstriert auf einer sprachlich-gedanklichen Metaebene den Prozeß der Wahrheits(er)findung,

⁵² Ironically, it is only in giving up his father’s rigid and absolute language-based version of seeking and telling the truth, that Wildermuth “paradoxerweise erst dem Namen seiner Ahnen wirklich gerecht [wird]” (Höller *Das Werk* 136). In rejecting the absolute command of his father, Wildermuth seems to embrace an acknowledgement of the transience of life and therefore of truth, an acknowledgement that is more in line with his grandfather’s motto, “WIR HABEN HIER KEINE BLEIBENDE STATT” (*W 2*: 226). Töller points out the further irony that, in rejecting his father’s motto, Anton Wildermuth is nevertheless following in the footsteps of his father whose absolute attitude to truth and to life constituted a rejection of his own father’s motto (125)—a rejection symbolised in his painting over the grandfather’s motto on the house wall after the grandfather died (*W 2*: 227).

⁵³ Here, as in the rest of her article, Seidel tries to extrapolate (unsuccessfully, I believe) from Wittgenstein’s views to Bachmann’s authorial intention in writing “Ein Wildermuth” when she claims that the conclusion of the story is a reflection of Wittgenstein’s own views on the aim of philosophy being to bring about its own end (281). Töller offers a much more convincing, contrary position: “In der körperlichen Geste der Schlußpassage deutet sich eine Komplexität von Körper und Geist an. Nicht der Begriff der Wahrheit wird aufgegeben und insofern auch nicht das Prinzip des Logos hinterfragt, sondern die Bedingungen, die zur Erkenntnis führen, werden erweitert.” (122)

indem sie ihren Protagonisten vorführen läßt, wie man eine 'wahre Geschichte' hervorbringt und wie man sie umgekehrt wieder zerstören und als unwahr erweisen kann. (*Kompositionsmethode* 247)

Instead, what "Ein Wildermuth" proposes is a combination of the two approaches, or better yet, an approach that moves entirely beyond these binary opposites. As Bachmann urges her listeners in the first of her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen": "Aber lassen Sie uns die Parteilichkeit wie die Neutralität verwerfen und ein Drittes versuchen: eine hindernisvolle Herausführung aus der babylonischen Sprachverwirrung." (*W 4*: 186)⁵⁴

6.9 In summation

The foregoing analysis of Bachmann's short prose from her pre-"Todesarten" period therefore reveals an iteration and variation on the themes and motifs that emerge in her portrayal of the journalistic media in her poetry and radio plays. The press as an institution represents and reinforces conformity to the status quo. It exploits our fears, anxieties and misfortunes; fails to show us anything new or enlightening about the world; and provides an inaccurate and misleading picture of the world it purports to enlighten us about. Its content is stultifyingly monotonous and predictable—full of subjective opinions and tired clichés. The most significant variation on Bachmann's portrayal of journalism in her short prose is the heightened critique of journalism as a profession. Thus we have the implied critique of journalism as a career stream for dilettantes in "Das dreißigste Jahr"; the lying, hypocritical journalist, Bertoni, and his fellow "Gauener" from the nepotistic culture industry in "Unter Mördern und Irren"; and finally, the pompous arrogance of the journalist in "Ein Wildermuth", portrayed as a hypocritical hyena, all-too keen to exploit the misfortunes of others.

As in the works previously discussed, however, Bachmann provides a counterpoint to her pessimistic portrayal of a world in which "Gauener", and the inauthenticity that journalism represents, thrive. Thus we have in "Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt" music and nature acting as irrepressible reminders of a world beyond the capitalistic materialism promoted by the press. In "Der Schweißer", philosophy and literature emerge as "Gegenbilder" that continue to provide insight into a world beyond the drudgery of bourgeois conformity. "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt", too, shows that despite the deep impact of social repression—of which the press is an integral part—happiness and excitement is still achievable through books that stimulate the imagination. It also illustrates the survival of creativity and inspiration, thanks to art and nature. In "Das dreißigste Jahr" and "Ein Wildermuth" we find that authentic experience and insight can be achieved, even if only transiently, via the senses and the passion of absolute love. And in "Unter Mördern und Irren", two men embodying honesty and authenticity are shown to unmask the evil and hypocrisy of the culture industry "Gauener".

⁵⁴ Schneider's interpretation goes even further, suggesting that this third option must extend beyond the written page and to the real world of the reader (*Kompositionsmethode* 243).

Chapter 7. *Malina* and the *Todesarten* fragments

7.1 About this chapter

This chapter examines Bachmann's portrayal of the press in the longer prose works of her "*Todesarten*-Projekt".¹ The cycle of novels in this project was intended to become "einzige große Studie aller möglichen Todesarten" (*Gul* 66): a "Kompendium der Verbrechen, die in dieser Zeit begangen werden" (*TP* 2: 361)—crimes that were "so sublim, daß wir sie kaum wahrnehmen und begreifen können, obwohl sie täglich in unserer Umgebung, in unsrer Nachbarschaft begangen werden" (*TP* 2: 78). This "einzige große Studie aller möglichen Todesarten" (*Gul* 66) was intended to show, "daß noch heute sehr viele Menschen nicht sterben, sondern ermordet werden" (*TP* 2: 78). Many of these crimes, however, go undetected because they are executed at an emotional level—there is no physical evidence, no bloodshed:

Die Verbrechen, die Geist verlangen, an unseren Geist rühren und weniger an unsre Sinne, also die uns am tiefsten berührten—dort fließt kein Blut, und das Gemetzel findet innerhalb des Erlaubten und der Sitten«, auf »inwendigen« als den »wirklichen Schauplätzen« statt [...]. (*TP* 2: 78)

In the light of this covert violence, one of the draft prefaces to *Das Buch Franza*² maintains that society is "der allergrößte Mordschauplatz" in which "die Keime zu den unglaublichsten Verbrechen gelegt worden [sind], die den Gerichten dieser Welt für immer unbekannt bleiben" (*TP* 3.1: 617). This preface is of particular interest to the present study because of its implicit distinction between *de jure* crimes, which are publicly recognised and reported in the press (like the case of the hapless sex murderer in "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt"), and the *de facto* violence against others that is ignored by the judicial system and the press (like the political crimes alluded to in "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt"). According to Bachmann it is only literature that can open our eyes to such crime and shed light on its provenance: "Die Existenz dieser Mörder ist uns allen bewußt gemacht worden, nicht durch mehr oder minder verschämte Berichterstattung, sondern [...] durch die Literatur." (*TP* 2: 77)

This chapter begins with a brief survey of two fragmentary works from Bachmann's *Todesarten* cycle before undertaking a comprehensive and detailed analysis of *Malina*, the first and only novel of the cycle to be completed and published before Bachmann died in 1973. Although many of the characters and themes in Bachmann's *Simultan* collection are drawn from the same period as the longer *Todesarten* prose works (and are included in Göttsche and Albrecht's »*Todesarten*«-Projekt), *Simultan*

¹ According to the Göttsche and Albrecht, Bachmann started work on this project in the summer of 1962 (*TP* 1: 489)—the year after *Das dreißigste Jahr* was published.

² While the *Werke* edition called this incomplete work *Der Fall Franza*, the editors of »*Todesarten*«-Projekt published the fragments under the title *Das Buch Franza* because this was the title Bachmann used in correspondence with Piper Verlag in 1967 (*TP* 2: 398).

is not discussed in this chapter because the references to the journalistic media in those stories are so extensive that they warrant their own chapter.

7.2 The *Todesarten* fragments

This section examines Bachmann's references to the journalism in *Das Buch Franza*, "[den] am weitesten ausgearbeiteten und am breitesten rezipierten der unvollendeten *Todesarten*-Texte" (Albrecht and Göttsche "*Todesarten*-Projekt: Andere unvollendete *Todesarten* Texte" 152),³ and *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*. Fragments that have been identified in the »*Todesarten*«-Projekt edition as early stages of *Malina* are discussed in my analysis of *Malina*. While the *Werke* and the »*Todesarten*«-Projekt editions constitute valuable contributions to Bachmann scholarship (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 128), their reconstructions of fragmentary material are just that: constructs. Given the assumptions and opinions at the heart of such constructs—and indeed the “work in progress” status (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 510) of all *Todesarten* works, other than *Malina*—any conclusions drawn from the analysis of the unfinished components must necessarily be more tentative and speculative than those based on published works. The following analyses of *Das Buch Franza* and *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* are therefore indicative rather than conclusive.

7.2.1 *Das Buch Franza*

While Bachmann's poetological works make it clear that her overall aim as a writer was to open people's eyes to the truth, her draft prefaces to *Das Buch Franza* show that, by the time she started work on the *Todesarten* cycle, her mission had become much more specific: to restore the “schreckliche Poesie” to the “Verbrechen dieser Zivilisation[, die] gewißlich viel schrecklicher als die der gemeinsten Barbarei durch ihr Raffinement, durch die Korruption, die sie voraussetzen, und durch ihren überlegenen Grad von Intelligenz [sind]” (*TP* 2: 72). At this very early stage of her project, there are only a few examples of Bachmann's critical focus on the journalistic media and their culpability in the murderous hidden crimes that Bachmann wanted to expose in her work.

The first example occurs in a passage describing the archeologist, Martin Ranner, “rescuing” his ailing sister, Franziska (Franza) from her destructive husband (the psychiatrist, Leo Jordan), who has inflicted deep and lasting damage, both physically and psychologically: “Ihr Zustand kommt dem völligen Zusammenbruch und der totalen Erschöpfung eines bis auf den letzten Rest ausgelaugten Menschen gleich, und ihre körperlichen Symptome wie Zittern, Krämpfe und Erstickungsanfälle sind eine Folge von Jordans psychischem Terror.” (Thau 30) Martin is taking Franza to Egypt with him, and on leaving their provincial hometown, they buy newspapers at the station. At this point, the narrator interrupts the narrative progress to describe what Martin reads in those newspapers.

³ Bartsch believes Bachmann abandoned work on this book because *Malina* drew so heavily on its structure and themes, that *Das Buch Franza* would have required major rewriting (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 129). Grimkowski, however, maintains it remained unfinished because of Bachmann's problems with narrative perspective (27ff.).

Auf dem Bahnhof kauften sie Zeitungen und lasen im Stehen Nachrichten, als käme es jetzt darauf an, noch zu wissen, was der Gewerkschaftsbund in Wien und der amerikanische Präsident und der Gesangsverein von Federaun und der Straßenbahnerstreik und der Molkereiverband und der neue Sommerfahrplan für Omnibusse und die Filmindustrie und das Theater in der Josefstadt und noch ein Start auf Cape Kennedy und ein Flugzeugabsturz in Beirut. Martin wäre es lieber gewesen, wenn nur in seiner Zeitung und nicht in der, die Franza las, von dem Flugzeugabsturz und da, oh Gott, auch noch von einem Schiffsuntergang, wenn auch in der Nordsee, berichtet worden wäre. (TP 2: 203)

This listing of typical press content, ranging from local and international politics to provincial concerns, from cultural interests to advances in technology and travel disaster, not only reflects the broad-ranging and incoherent nature of press content but also suggests randomness and lack of central purpose. News content is shown as rich in information but poor in meaning, and largely irrelevant to the immediate concerns of Martin and Franza—except for the story about the plane crash in Lebanon, which Martin fears will exacerbate his sister’s existing anxieties. Luckily, however, Franza is too immersed in content that has no bearing at all on their travel plans—the financial pages.

[A]ls der Zug einfuhr, bemerkte er, während sie ihr Blatt zufaltete, das Wort Wirtschaftsteil oben auf der Seite, in die sie die ganze Zeit vertieft war, und Franza las also einen Wirtschaftsteil, darauf wäre er nie gekommen, und er mußte auflachen, der ganze Druck in ihm löste sich wegen dieses Wirtschaftsteils. (TP 2: 203)

Not long after this passage, however, the narrator muses on the way in which press content can be dangerously relevant, when it interferes with the intuitive responses we have developed as a result of hard-won and painful personal experience: when the press paints people in a positive light, we are inclined to take on that favourable opinion, against our own better judgment:

[D]as Signal wird nur einmal gegeben, wenn du mit dem anderen zum erstenmal in einem Raum bist und es dir befiehlt, hab acht, hab acht, das nächste Mal hat dich ein Titel, eine Vorlesung, nach der gescharrt wird, ein paar hundert Halbnarren, die den Namen aussprechen mit fetter Bewunderung oder stichelnder Kritik, hat dich eine Adresse, hat dich *ein Name auf einem Zeitschriftenblättchen darum gebracht, noch einmal das »Hab doch acht« zu hören, das dir die Haut, die Muskeln, das Gehör, alle deine Empfangsgeräte zugerufen haben*. Eine halb wahre Geschichte tust du hoheitsvoll unter Klatsch ab, eine andre willst du gar nicht erst hören, es ist böswillig, dir jetzt mit Geschichten zu kommen, über jeden gibt es Geschichten, auch über dich, *und du verlernst aus dem Unrat das Korn Wahrheit herauszufinden* [...]. (TP 2: 227, m.e.)

This is clearly referring to people like Franza’s husband—a public identity, lauded in the press, but someone about whom Franza may well have had initial reservations (as implied in this passage), which she then ignored to her own great cost.

In other passages of *Das Buch Franza*, Bachmann’s critique of press content is much milder than elsewhere. Thus, for example, when Martin despairs about the repulsive American tourists in Egypt (TP 1: 268), he finds solace in reading and cutting out articles from newspapers: “Er las lieber die Zeitungen, aus denen Assuan und immer wieder Assuan und der Hochdamm hervorbrachen, von ein paar Verwünschungen der Weltbank und dem Lob auf die Sowjetischen Ingenieuren unterbrochen.” (TP 1: 267) Two other passages refer to newspapers in a context whose symbolism could almost be seen as positive, when a newspaper is used to protect Franza from the burning Egyptian sun (TP 2: 251, 257). A closer consideration of this imagery, however, brings out the implicit critique that this is all that newspapers are good for—make-shift sunshades. However, a much stronger critique can be read into these two passages if we consider the symbolism of the sun and of light: newspapers, it is suggested, are often used to shield ourselves from the harsh truths of our lives, which

are often too much for us to bear. This certainly proves to be the case for Franza.

What does, however, emerge from these allusions to the press is the way in which they reflect Martin's and Franza's own unquestioning, uncritical attitude to the journalistic media, and, indeed, their close identification with all forms of Western culture. As Herrmann notes, both Franza and Martin are part of the "kritisierten kulturimperialen Weltsicht [...] und dies nicht nur aufgrund ihres Coca-Cola-Bedarfs in der Wüste" ("Das Buch Franza" 148).⁴ This argument finds support in the description of Martin's gift for keeping Franza informed and entertained:

Martins Begabung, seine Umgebung rasch festzustellen und aus Gesprächsfetzen Personenumrisse zu erhalten [...] genügte, um jedesmal, wenn er sich von ihr entfernt hatte, zu Franza mit ein paar Informationen zurückzukehren. Er versorgte sie *wie eine Nachrichtenagentur* und ein Märchenerzähler. (TP 1: 262, m.e.)⁵

On the one hand, the reference to "Nachrichtenagentur" here suggests that Martin is offering an important and much appreciated personal service to the emotionally and physically devastated Franza. At the same time, however, it is difficult for those familiar with Bachmann's work not to associate this term with her scathing portrayal of a "Nachrichtenagentur" as the murderous representatives of a patriarchal status quo in "Der gute Gott von Manhattan". Bachmann's use of the term "Märchenerzähler" in this passage is also ambivalent: on the one hand "Märchen" are not reality and (as we saw in "Die Zikaden") attempts to escape from reality are ultimately futile; on the other hand, to the extent that "Märchenerzähler" tell us stories that are not imbued with predetermined meaning, they would represent in Benjamin's eyes, the very opposite of what a "Nachrichtenagentur" stands for. In considering Bachmann's choice of terminology in this passage, we should also bear in mind Benjamin's views on the way in which the mass media use "Informationen" to saturate everything with meaning and thus interfere with the process of gaining personal insight. It is personal insight that Franza so desperately lacks. In fact, her current state of devastation stems from a longstanding failure to confront the truth of her relationship with her murderously exploitative husband: while Jordan may be a classic case of "Denken, das zum Verbrechen führt", Franza is a prime example of "Denken, [...] das zum Sterben führt" (TP 2: 78). One could therefore argue that Martin's attempts to divert and protect Franza (with the press quite literally used as an accessory) are futile and counter-productive: he can only protect her while she is in his presence. Alone, she is still vulnerable, and dies as a result of injuries sustained when assaulted by a stranger at the pyramids (TP 2: 125, 129).

While the examples discussed so far show the journalistic media in a clearly negative light, what is notable about *Das Buch Franza* is that at this early stage of the *Todesarten*, journalists are not the target of such biting critique as they are in "Unter Mördern und Irren" and "Der gute Gott von Manhattan". Instead, *Das Buch Franza* includes a journalistic character—rather ironically, the brother of the villainous Leo Jordan—whose role in the story is that of "Opfer" rather than "Täter". A

⁴ See also Lennox ("»White Ladies« und »Dark Continents«" 20f.).

⁵ This account of Martin's natural reporting talents and his gift for quickly assessing situations is remarkably similar to the description of Elisabeth Matrei's journalistic skills in "Drei Wege zum See" (see Chapter 8).

communist and founder of one of the first newspapers in Vienna after the war, Leo's brother vanishes under mysterious circumstances (*TP* 2: 63). Although his fate is only mentioned in passing, he is interesting as an early manifestation of the “journalist as victim” characters in *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* and related fragments (discussed below) as well as in “Drei Wege zum See” (see Chapter 8).

7.2.2 *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*

Written in parallel to *Das Buch Franza*, the unfinished *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* centres on the actress, Fanny Goldmann, who appeared in the earliest phase of Bachmann's *Todesarten*⁶ and was subsequently incorporated into what became known as the *Goldmann/Rottwitz-Roman* (Albrecht and Göttsche “*Todesarten-Projekt: Andere unvollendete Todesarten Texte*” 154). Although Bachmann's work on *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* includes several examples of journalistic critique, her primary target in this work is the culture industry. As Hamm points out, *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* represents a “schneidend scharfe Abrechnung mit dem Literaturbetrieb, verkörpert in einem skrupellos sich hochboxenden Wiener Literaten” (“Der Künstler als Märtyrer” 208), Anton Marek,⁷ who ruthlessly exploits Fanny's knowledge and social connections to make a name for himself. He then betrays her by revealing intimate details about her in his novel, and subsequently compounds his humiliation by abandoning Fanny for the young German photographer, Karin Krause.⁸ Fanny's realization (like Franza's) that she has allowed herself to be exploited and humiliated is too much for her to bear: “ausgeschlachtet” and “ausgeweidet” (*TP* 1: 118)⁹, Fanny eventually dies as a result of rapidly declining health. Although not a ‘reptile of the press’, Marek is clearly a ‘reptile of the culture industry’—“ein[...] kleine[r] Verbrecher, ein[...] Neureiche[r], [...] <der> Gesehnes und Gelesenes ohne Umweg in Nutzen umsetzt” (*TP* 1: 287).¹⁰ In using Fanny's private life as raw material for his book

⁶ The editors of »*Todesarten*«-Projekt call this the *Todesarten (Eugen-Roman II)* phase, which spanned the period 1962/63 to 1965 (Albrecht and Göttsche “*Todesarten-Projekt: Überblick*” 130).

⁷ Bachmann's choice of name may have been inspired by a villain from Austrian history between the wars. Marek was the name of an officer in the Social Democrat party who was bribed by opposition Christian Socialists to betray information about the his party's arms arsenal in the months preceding the “Brand des Justizpalasts” (Kitchen 122). Marek was described by the war minister, to whom he betrayed the information, as “the greatest scoundrel that I know” (ibid.). The “Brand des Justizpalasts” is highly significant in Bachmann's portrayal of journalism in *Malina*, as discussed later in this chapter.

⁸ Given her profession, Krause, could be seen as an early incarnation of Elisabeth Matrei, the celebrated press photographer and protagonist of “Drei Wege zum See”, or as a literary relative of Klaus Jonas (also known as Matejka or Jörg Maleta), the young Styrian photographic “Genie” (*TP* 1: 396).

⁹ Bachmann uses abattoir imagery elsewhere in connection with the literary industry: for example in a later passage of the *Goldmann/Rottwitz Roman* (*TP* 1: 353), and in a passage on “Literaturbetrieb und Verbrechen” in a fragment that the *Werke* edition attributed to *Entwürfe zur Figur Malina* (*W* 3: 548). According to the editors of »*Todesarten*«-Projekt, these *Entwürfe* belong to the *Goldmann/Rottwitz Roman*, but I have been unable to locate the *Werke* passage in the »*Todesarten*«-Projekt edition.

¹⁰ Marek re-emerges as the former lover of Elisabeth Mihailovics in “Probleme, Probleme” and “Gier”. In “Gier” Marek brutally assassinates Elisabeth's character by portraying her as a strange, ambitious creature who had made a nuisance of herself, and by suggesting she was a fortune-hunter, who got her just desserts (*TP* 4: 503). Even the self-obsessed Beatrix from “Probleme, Probleme” can see what Elisabeth and Fanny tragically fail to observe, “daß dieser Marek sich aus nichts und niemand etwas machte, außer sich selbst” (*TP* 4: 177).

and exposing it for public consumption, Marek destroys Fanny in the same way that Leo Jordan destroyed Franza, and yet such crimes are, as Bachmann stresses in her *Todesarten*, not covered by statutory law. At the same time, Bachmann uses the character of Marek to launch a broadside against unconscionable behaviour in the literary industry: Marek behaviour exemplifies the “literarischen Ausbeutungsmethoden der Gesellschaft” (Beicken 194) and the cynical immorality of writers, “die vor nichts zurückschrecken, wenn es um einen Vertrag mit einem Verleger geht” (Mahrdt *Öffentlichkeit* 226). Bachmann’s target is not, however, the broad profession of “Buchhandel”, which could still be pursued as an “ehrenwerten Beruf” (*TP I*: 367), but rather the venal branches of the literary industry in which “Buchhandel zum Menschenhandel ausgeartet ist” (*ibid.*).

Although Karin Krause is portrayed initially in unflattering terms as “ein Tausendjähriges Reichskind, Durchhaltekind, Volk-ohne-Raum-Kind. Lang und hübsch, unterm Hitlerbild gezeugt” (*TP I*: 312),¹¹ she proves to be somewhat ambivalent as a representative of the journalistic profession, given that her character eventually evolved into the German political journalist, Eka Kottwitz (later renamed Aga Rottwitz) (Albrecht and Göttische “Leben und Werk im Überblick” 17), who also becomes an “Opfer der Literatur” (*TP I*: 135; 353)—the victim of another literary exploiter (Kuhn, also known as Buhr or Jung). Karin thereby becomes, by association with Eka/Aga, both a “Parallel- und Konstrastfigur, zumal sie sich als Deutsche in Wien ausgegrenzt und auch von Eugen ›verraten‹ sieht” (Albrecht and Göttische “*Todesarten*-Projekt: Andere unvollendete *Todesarten*-Texte” 154). Eka Kottwitz’s response to betrayal is, however, more dramatic than Fanny’s: she attempts suicide by leaping out of a window and ends up paralysed in a wheelchair. In the figures of Karin and Eka/Aga, then, we have journalistic figures who, like Jordan’s brother in *Das Buch Franza* are portrayed as “Opfer” rather than “Täter”, and thus not obvious aspects of Bachmann’s critique of journalism—unless we see them as people who fail to face the truth in their own lives, and then consider what ramifications this might have on their ability to discover the truth in their professional capacities.

Although few in number, there are, however, some passages in the Goldmann/Rottwitz material that are explicitly critical of journalism, accusing it, for example, of misrepresenting reality. In a passage similar to one in *Das Buch Franza* discussed earlier, a fragment of the *Goldmann/Rottwitz-Roman* refers to a celebrated author (the character Kuhn/Buhr/Jung), who had been awarded the “Friedenspreis des Buchhandels”, and whose “vielbeachtete[n] Rede” had been reported in leading German newspapers in such glowing terms, “[daß] jeder [...] sich einbilden [konnte], es nicht nur mit einem großen Schriftsteller, sondern mit einer der moralischen Instanzen zu tun [zu] haben” (*TP I*: 367). What we do not learn from the press is the dark side of this supposed paragon of virtue and morality: “Zu der gleichen Zeit aber hat sich ein Drama abgespielt [...] ein Gemetzel, das eben um das

¹¹ For a discussion of the antagonism towards Germans in association with “Literaturbetrieb” and with Karin Krause, see Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 350f.). Antagonism towards Germans is also expressed in an *Eugen-Roman II* fragment, where the protagonist says: “[I]ch hasse die Deutschen, nicht weil sie schlecht sind, denn wie sollten sie schlechter sein als andere, aber weil sie uns wieder das Fürchten lehren, und ich hasse sie, weil sie nicht begreifen, daß sie es tun.” (*TP I*: 166) Bachmann revisits the same theme in “Drei Wege zum See” via Elisabeth and Herr Matri’s resentment of German tourists and investors (see Chapter 8).

Buch dieser moralischen Instanz ging und aus dem die Schreie der Gefolterten, für jeden, der hören will, zu hören waren.” (ibid.). In another passage (subsumed under *Entwürfe zur Figur Malina* in the *Werke* edition but attributed to the *Goldmann/Rottwitz-Roman* phase in the »*Todesarten*«-Projekt) the murderous side of unscrupulous commercial exploitation by the press is revealed in the story of a writer, who had been accused of plagiarism, and was effectively hounded to his death after the accusations were propagated in the press (*TP I*: 351). Even though no thinking person took the accusations seriously, they were cynically taken up by the press in the hope of “livening up” the newspaper for those readers who would have been bored with “Buchbesprechungen und Kurzgeschichten, die doch niemand zum Frühstück liest” (ibid.).¹²

In addition to these two pointed critiques of the press, there are a number of minor pejorative though not very explicit references. For example, in Fanny Goldmann’s observation that many of the writers who approach her turn out to be a “Sportredakteur” (*TP I*: 291), there is an implicit association between the journalists and “Betrug”—a connection that is made much more explicit in *Malina*. A suggested connection between journalism and “Betrug” emerges elsewhere briefly in *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann* in the narrator’s gibe at the inflationary way in which the press refers to celebrities: “[Fanny] erschien einige Jahre lang auf Theaterzetteln, Plakaten und in Zeitungen als die bezaubernde, hinreißend schöne und was dergleichen Ausdrücke mehr sind.” (*TP I*:290)¹³ Once more, the press only tells us half the story: it is literature that tells us the full story of Fanny—the exploited victim beneath the charming and attractive exterior.

7.3 *Malina*

Bachmann had been engaged in her “*Todesarten*-Projekt” for four years before she started work on *Malina* towards the end of 1966. By mid-1967, however, *Malina* had moved “ins Zentrum ihres Schreibens” (Albrecht and Göttsche “*Todesarten*-Projekt: Überblick” 128). While the references to the journalistic media are relatively few and far between in the earlier *Todesarten* fragments, there is a noticeable change in *Malina*, which features a dramatic increase in the number and intensity of critical references to journalists and journalism. This can be attributed in part at least to the fact that *Malina* is a novel written from the perspective of a character, who worked in the news industry, is a self-avowed newspaper addict, and who is the subject of press interviews in her capacity as a writer of note.

¹² Note here the similarity with the cynical exploitation of journalist in “Ein Wildermuth”, who decided to report the Wildermuth murder case because the commonality of name in the judge and the accused amused him, and would presumably amuse his readers too.

¹³ Other minor pejorative references to journalism include an allusion to the viciousness of book reviews in the literary press, where the invasiveness and the concomitant loss of innocence resulting from such press exposure is described in terms of sexual deflowering (*TP I*: 153); and the mockery of the press and the literary industry in the observation: “[E]s wird heute sehr viel Vergangenheit bewältigt, von Romanciers, Gedichteschreibern, Journalisten [...]” (*TP 2*: 16) The fragments revolving around Fanny Goldmann also contain references to the journalistic medium of radio that are either neutral or only indirectly critical, in observations, for example, that Fanny knows a number of “Rundfunkleute” (*W 3*: 499), and that Marek knows how to progress himself in the literary industry by wheeling and dealing in the corridors of “Rundfunkhäusern” (*TP I*: 350).

7.3.1 The portrayal of journalists in *Malina*

The journalistic profession and character is examined from a different angle in each of *Malina* chapters. In the first chapter, we are introduced to “Herr Mühlbauer”, the individual journalist as interviewer. In the second, Ich encounters a pack of reporters in one of her dreams. And in the final chapter, Ich reveals what really goes on “behind the scenes” in a news bureau.

Herr Mühlbauer

Perhaps the most memorable portrayal of journalism in *Malina*—certainly the one that has attracted the most scholarly discussion—is the sequence of passages in which the novel’s female protagonist, Ich, is interviewed by the Viennese journalist, Herr Mühlbauer.¹⁴ The length of this sequence reflects, I believe, the importance of its role in the novel. Whereas most of the passages in *Malina* range in length from one sentence—“Wien schweigt” (*TP 3.1*: 500)—to one or two pages at the most, the Mühlbauer sequence extends for almost 14 pages, representing the longest, thematically-related, temporally-continuous sequence in *Malina*. This sequence (hereinafter referred to as “the Mühlbauer scene”) has been widely recognised as “ein Paradebeispiel der satirischen Medienbehandlung” (Beicken 195). Thus Herrmann comments on Bachmann’s “Komik” and “ironische[...] Absicht” in this scene (“*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*” 139), while Weigel describes it as “die Parodie eines Interviews, das den Jargon der öffentlichen Rede über Schriftsteller nachahmt” and as “eine derjenigen Szenen, an denen sich die viel zuwenig beachtete satirische Qualität von Bachmanns Schreiben sehr gut studieren läßt” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 189).¹⁵

The journalist as “Trottel”

On the surface, Mühlbauer is the picture of urbanity and old-school Viennese manners that suggest a certain level of cultural sophistication. Not only are his telephone calls peppered with “Küss die Hand”, but he manages a departing (albeit perfunctory) “Küss die Hand” (*TP 3.1*: 400), even though he is “in der größten Verlegenheit” and clearly peeved by the failure of the interview: “Herr Mühlbauer hat einen ganzen Nachmittag verloren, er läßt es mich merken, packt mißgelaunt das Gerät ein.” (*TP 3.1*: 400) Mühlbauer’s apparent sophistication thus turns out to be a façade that barely

¹⁴ Achberger maintains that Bachmann’s choice of name was intended to suggest the “Müll [...], den er produziert” (*Understanding* 234), but I believe Bachmann was also making a literary allusion to Hofmannsthal’s *Der Schwierige*. When Ich mistakenly calls him “Mühlhofer” instead of “Mühlbauer” (*TP 3.1*: 383), it is reminiscent of the similar humorous confusion between the names Neuhoff/Neugebauer and Brückner/Brücke in Hofmannsthal’s *Der Schwierige*. This interpretation is supported by Bachmann’s more obvious allusion to *Der Schwierige* with the character and social circle of Antoinette Altenwyl later in the novel (*TP 3.1*: 307, 412, 463f., 471ff.) as well as the importance of the theme of “discretion” (or in Mühlbauer’s case the lack of it) in this scene (and in *Malina* as a whole) and in *Der Schwierige*. For more on intertextuality between Bachmann and Hofmannsthal, see Albrecht and Göttsche’s *Bachmann Handbuch* (64, 97, 197, 121, 133, 139, 142, 214f., 270, 276), Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 142ff.; 159ff.), Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik* 45) and Thau (38-48).

¹⁵ It would appear that Achberger’s 1998 article, “»Bösartig liebevoll« den Menschen zugetan. Humor in Ingeborg Bachmanns Todesarten-Projekt”, which focusses on these very aspects of Bachmann would not have been available to Weigel at the time she wrote this. See also Frieden (“Bachmann’s *Malina* and *Todesarten*” 67), Kohn-Wächter (*Das Verschwinden in der Wand* 129) and Mahrdrdt (*Öffentlichkeit* 233).

disguises his lack of culture, intelligence, sensitivity and competence—or as Schneider puts it, his “dumpfe Kleingeistigkeit” (*Kompositionsmethode* 286).

Throughout the interview, Mühlbauer demonstrates that he only understands the language of platitude. The very questions that he poses are clichés, typical of a celebrity interview: enquiries about favourite pastimes, books, pets, Ich’s views on the younger generation, the role of authors, and so on. The accuracy of the Mühlbauer interview is borne out by some of the interview questions that were directed to Bachmann in life, when for example, Kuno Raeber asks her: “Was sind Ihre Lieblingsschriftsteller in der schönen Literatur?” (*GuI* 46) and when Ekkehardt Rudolph persists in trying to extract from Bachmann a summation of her “Haltung zu der Gesellschaft” (*GuI* 91). Bachmann herself drew attention to such inane questions in her acceptance speech for the Anton Wildganspreis, where she lamented that writers were often called on (by the media) to express their opinion on clichéd topics such as “[...] was denken Sie über den Schriftsteller in dieser Zeit, und der Schriftsteller und die Gesellschaft, er und die Verhältnisse, und er und die Massenmedien [...]” (*W 4*: 296). As Weigel observes:

Dabei können die gesammelten »Gespräche und Interviews« [...], denen die Autorin sich tatsächlich hat stellen müssen, es an Komik streckenweise durchaus mit dem fiktiven Interview im Roman aufnehmen. Zugleich sind diese Interviews aber auch das Zeugnis einer unermüdlichen rhetorischen Anstrengung, mit der die Autorin die an sie gerichteten Fragen kritisch bis ironisch kommentiert und sie zu unterlaufen oder zu verwerfen trachtet. (*Hinterlassenschaften* 295f.)

At the other extreme, interviews with Bachmann resulted in reports that focussed on irrelevant, superficial detail rather than the issue purportedly at hand. Thus Thau notes that a *Spiegel* article, supposedly dealing with Bachmann’s 1960 “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, barely mentions the content of those lectures, but goes into great detail on Bachmann’s physical appearance (9).¹⁶ Like the interview questions that were posed to Bachmann in real life, Mühlbauer’s follow “[einem] stereotypen Fragemuster, das den Wunsch nach der schlüssigen Erklärung eines Werks aus der Herkunft, der geistigen Bildungsgeschichte und den—philosophischen bzw. literarischen—Einflüssen eines Schriftstellers zum Ausdruck bringt” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 295). As Weigel points out, Bachmann’s omission of the questions in the Mühlbauer scene underscores their formulaic nature:

Der Clou dieser »Malina« Szene [...] besteht darin, daß seine Fragen ausgespart bleiben, sich aber aus den irritierten wie den Fragesteller irritierenden Antworten mühelos erschließen lassen. Indem die Fragen durch Punkte ersetzt sind, wird deren Formelhaftigkeit um so krasser herausgestellt. (*Hinterlassenschaften* 189)

While Mühlbauer serves up trite and predictable questions, Ich responds completely unpredictably with eccentric replies that take the journalist’s questions *ad absurdum*. When Mühlbauer asks about her “Lieblingstiere”, Ich draws attention to the narrow-minded assumptions behind this clichéd question—why don’t reporters ask about “Lieblingsmoskitos, Lieblingskäfer [und] Lieblingswürmer”? (*TP 3.1*: 386) Similarly, Mühlbauer’s question about today’s younger generation elicits the observation that it is impossible to answer such a question without also considering “die heutigen Alten und ... die Leute, die heute nicht mehr jung sind, aber auch noch nicht alt sind” (*TP 3.1*:

¹⁶ For a further example of the press’s fixation with Bachmann’s external appearance, see Hotz (46).

385). As Thau observes:

Die Komik des Interviews entsteht allein dadurch, daß die Ichfigur die Fragen wörtlich nimmt, und sie beantwortet, ohne sich hinter allgemeinen Begriffen zu verstecken. Die Absurdität des Gesprächs liegt nicht in den Aussagen der Ichfigur, sondern in der Sinnlosigkeit eines Austausches von Fragen und Antworten, der vorgibt, sich für die Persönlichkeit eines Menschen zu interessieren, in Wirklichkeit aber die Aufrechterhaltung eines Scheins erwartet. Die Ichfigur vollzieht einen radikalen Rückzug von solchen Anforderungen an sie und weigert sich, sich so zu verhalten, wie es von ihr erwartet wird. (91)

Not only are Mühlbauer's questions formulaic, but so are his expectations of her responses: "Ihm geht es um vorgefertigte Schemata." (Mahrdrdt *Öffentlichkeit* 233) The interview is "ein Ritual mit festen Regeln" (Hans Mayer 134), and so, when Ich's reply does not conform to these rules, Mühlbauer is non-plussed at best—"Betroffenheit von seiten des Herrn Mühlbauer" (*TP 3.1*: 385)—and thoroughly alarmed at worst—"Zunehmendes Erschrecken von Herrn Mühlbauer" (*TP 3.1*: 392). In taking Mühlbauer's questions literally and responding with a barrage of detail (but not the kind he is after), Ich successfully subverts the interview. Beneath her verbal deluge, there is more honesty and self-revelation than in a normal interview, where interviewees "toe the line" with clichéd, predictable responses, or responses that represent what interviewees might themselves want interviewers to use (for example, for publicity or similar purposes). However, because Ich's responses do not fit into his preconceived notions, they become unusable for him: "Die Ichfigur versucht, Herrn Mühlbauer einen Teil ihrer Ansichten und ihrer Welt zu vermitteln, was jedoch völlig an ihm und seinen Absichten vorbeigeht." (Thau 91)

The only points at which Mühlbauer appears to be at ease and fully engaged in the interview are when Ich momentarily (but most self-consciously and ironically) incorporates clichés and platitudes in her musings: "Zu der großen Zeit, den großen Zeiten fällt mir doch etwas ein, aber damit sage ich Ihnen nichts Neues: die Geschichte lehrt, aber sie hat keine Schüler. (Freundliches Nicken des Herrn Mühlbauer.)" (*TP 3.1*: 383)¹⁷ Paradoxically, we find in these platitudes, as Steiger points out, an intertextual allusion to the arch enemy of "Phrasen" and "Gemeinplätze", Karl Kraus (33f.): "In dieser großen Zeit, die ich noch gekannt habe, wie sie so klein war; die wieder klein werden wird, wenn ihr dazu noch Zeit bleibt [...]." (*Fackel* 404 (5 Dezember 1914): 1)¹⁸ The reference to "große Zeit" in the Mühlbauer scene is also of interest to the present study as this phrase was also used in an early draft of *Malina* that was pointedly scathing of the press and the kind of "Umfragen" that Ich refers to at the beginning of the Mühlbauer scene in the final version of *Malina*:

[...] es sind keine Kopfschmerzen, es ist eine Entzündung, die eben damit zusammenhängt, eine Reibung, etwas Verletzliches, weil alles über den Cortex und das Zwischenhirn und sf. [sic] läuft, und weil der Weltablauf, das Verschmierte, alle Nachrichten, das Undurchsichtige und Zusammenanalyzierte mir einen Schmerz verursachen, der nun überhaupt mit Kopfschmerzen nichts zu tun hat. Selbst eine Statistik, eine Umfrage kann der Erreger sein [...]. Wir leben in einer großen Zeit. Wir leben in einer sehr ereignisvollen Zeit. Sagt das heute jemand. Hat das einmal jemand gesagt. Ich drehe die Nachrichten ab. Ich werde keine Zeitung mehr lesen. Ich habe es Malina versprochen. Du verwüdest dich mit diesem Zeitunglesen, laß das, sagt Malina, laß mich die Zeitungen lesen. (*TP 3.1*: 80, m.e.)

¹⁷ According Göttsche and Albrecht, Ich's statement about "die Geschichte lehrt [...]" is an allusion to Hegel: "Was die Erfahrung aber und die Geschichte lehren, ist dies, daß Völker und Regierungen niemals aus der Geschichte gelernt und nach Lehren, die zu derselben zu ziehen gewesen wären, gehandelt haben." (*TP 3.2*: 945)

¹⁸ As Benjamin also uses this quote in his Kraus essay (*GS 2.1*: 337), it could be an allusion to Benjamin too.

Mühlbauer may frequent literary circles in his professional capacity as a journalist, but he is nevertheless a literary and linguistic dilettante, as we see from his puzzled response when Ich mentions “To The Onlie Begetter” (*TP 3.1*: 390): “Herr Mühlbauer will es sich überlegen, er sei nicht ganz mitgekommen, Italienisch und Französisch könne er auch nicht, aber er war schon zweimal in Amerika und das Wort ›begetter‹ ist ihm auf seiner Reise nicht untergekommen.” (*TP 3.1*: 391)¹⁹ Mühlbauer is, as Kaiser suggests, “ganz hübsch ahnungslos” (289). His intellectual shortcomings are further revealed in his perplexity at Ich’s lament over “dieses tägliche Brennen des Justizpalastes” (*TP 3.1*: 384), a reference to the burning down of the Justizpalast in Vienna on 15th July 1927 by a workers group demonstrating against the acquittal of three right-wing paramilitary members who had killed a war veteran and a worker’s son. For Weigel the significance of this aspect of the scene lies in Mühlbauer stopping the tape and erasing Ich’s words about “der tägliche Brand”:

Mit dem Löschen der materiellen Spur der aufgezeichneten Stimme wird auch jene flammende Rede und erregte Stimme gelöscht, die in den Antworten des Ich hörbar ist. Bachmann nutzt hier also die satirische Schreibweise als Möglichkeit, zu artikulieren, was sich für sie auf andre Weise—im Diskurs der massenmedial verfaßten Öffentlichkeit und als Repräsentantin der Gegenwartsliteratur im Literaturbetrieb—nicht sagen läßt. (*Hinterlassenschaften* 190)

Mahrdt, on the other hand, sees this part of the interview in terms of Bachmann’s “radikalen Kritik an Justiz und Staat, an einem archivarischen Geschichtsbewußtsein und einer abhängigen Presse” (*Öffentlichkeit* 233). For Thau, also, it represents a critique of the modern justice system:

Mit der Erwähnung dieses Ereignisses macht die Ichfigur deutlich, daß sie die moderne Rechtsprechung nicht für einsichtiger hält als die damalige, und daß die Justiz weitherhin ein politisches Instrument ist, wobei die Unglaublichkeit ihrer Arbeitsweise zur Tagesordnung geworden ist, und Reaktionen wie 1927 nicht mehr hervorruft. (15)

While not disputing these interpretations, I am more inclined to agree with those who see the allusion to this event primarily in terms of Ich’s belief in “the contemporaneity (Gegenwärtigkeit) of the past” (Weigel *Body- and Image-Space* 173) and Bachmann’s “Beschäftigung mit der geschichtlichen Dimension” (Steiger 34), as well as a sign of her “kritische[n] Interesse an der Sphäre des Öffentlichen” (*ibid.*). The importance of 15th July, 1927 as a turning point in Austria’s political history has been stressed in the following terms:

Der 15. Juli 1927 ist in der Reihe politischer Gewalttätigkeiten, die von 1918 bis 1934 die Republik Österreich erschüttern sollten, die am meisten entlarvende. An diesem Tag entlud sich das Klima des latenten Bürgerkriegs, noch ohne in den Bürgerkrieg selbst zu münden. Trotzdem ist das Datum von kapitaler Bedeutung: von da ab geht es mit der Substanz der Ersten Republik bergab. [...] Zwar kann man nicht sagen, daß der 15. Juli 1927 die Ursache der Katastrophe von 1938 war, aber an diesem Tag ist die Gebrechlichkeit der österreichischen Demokratie offenkundig geworden. (Stieg 27f.)²⁰

¹⁹ “To the onlie begetter” refers to the dedication at the beginning of the first edition of the full collection of Shakespeare’s Sonnets—a dedication, which refers to the “onlie begetter” of these sonnets as a certain “W.H.” whose identity has been the subject of much speculation and disagreement in Shakespeare scholarship. Koschel asserts that this reference reflects Bachmann’s belief in “[d]ie dichterische Befruchtung durch den Eros” (“*Malina* ist eine einzige Anspielung auf Gedichte«” 21). Lennox, however, suggests that the “onlie begetter” is a reference to Ivan, as he is the father of two children and the mother is never mentioned in *Malina* (106). For further commentary on this citation, see Göttische (“Europäische Literatur vor 1900” 265) and Höller (*Das Werk* 101).

²⁰ A foreign correspondent, who served in Germany between 1926 and 1941, compared this incident to the 1933 Reichstag fire in Germany which was crucial in enabling the Nazis’ rise to power in 1933 (Shirer 240ff.). For Shirer the event prefigured the subversion of the German judicial system by the Nazis, as flagged in Goering’s speech on 3 March 1933 (244). See also Botz (213) and Stadler (129).

In addition to the historical and political aspects of this reference to the “Brand des Justizpalastes” there may also be an intertextual allusion to Karl Kraus, that has not yet been canvassed in Bachmann studies: it is possible that in bringing this event to the attention of a journalist, Ich may be thinking of the role that the press played in inciting the mob violence that led to the Palace of Justice being burnt to the ground. Kraus, for example, blamed the editor-in-chief of the *Neue Freie Presse* (one of his most frequent targets for attacking the Viennese press) for this tragic event in which “ninety Viennese [were] shot down by the police during a workers’ uprising” (Iggers 109).²¹ Kraus particularly condemned the editor, Lippowitz, for his unflinching support of Johannes Schober, the chief of police at the time, who later became Chancellor of Austria (ibid.).²²

Another important aspect of this passage is the way in which Mühlbauer’s attitude to the “Brand des Justizpalastes” demonstrates that it is not only his time and his “Spalte in der Zeitung” that are “begrenzt” (*TP 3.1*: 394): although Mühlbauer is aware of the event (as indicated by his frantic whispers, reminding Ich that the event took place in 1927), he fails to see how an historical event might be related to contemporary developments. The passage therefore also wryly illustrates Ich’s earlier observation: “[D]ie Geschichte lehrt, aber sie hat keine Schüler.” Some media analysts claim that the lack of connection to the past and to politics is a typical of a depoliticised popular media:

[T]he structure of the “popular” in modern journalism is [...] one which is massively and systematically “depoliticised”, presumably because the communicator’s image of audience in this case is of readers uninterested in, and turned off by politics. Of course, ‘depoliticised’ certainly does not mean ideology-free. On the contrary [...] there is a ‘conception of politics which concentrates on the everyday at the expense of the historical’ and avoids generating ‘a picture of the world in which social classes are capable of transforming the fundamental structures of social life through their own self-activity’. (Watson 158, m.e.)

By contrast, Ich sees the continuation of the past into the present, and so frequently brings the past (especially the political past) into the present of her interview responses, not only by referring to the “Brennen des Justizpalastes” but also by alluding to World Wars I and II, particularly towards the end of the interview when she refers to “Schandtaten” (*TP 3.1*: 392); “das Ultimatum an Serbien” (*TP 3.1*: 393); and to a time “nach den beiden letzten Kriegen” (*TP 3.1*: 397). Ich’s attitude to history therefore reflects Bachmann’s own stance as expressed in an interview statement: “Für den Schriftsteller ist Geschichte etwas Unerläßliches. Man kann nicht schreiben, wenn man die ganzen sozial-historischen Zusammenhänge nicht sieht, die zu unserem Heute geführt haben.” (*Gul* 133)

Mühlbauer is not only a “hack” but also an incompetent one: during the interview he accidentally erases some of his recording: “Herr Mühlbauer hat versehentlich das Band gelöscht. Entschuldigungen von seiten des Herrn Mühlbauer. Ich bräuchte nur einige wenige Sätze zu wiederholen.” (*TP 3.1*: 389) In the end he leaves without enough material for a report. Mühlbauer will have to return for a second attempt in the future. Although he was able to badger Ich into granting an initial interview, Mühlbauer’s initial success proves to be a pyrrhic victory: Ich is already planning her

²¹ The historian, Brook-Shepherd, too blames the press, suggesting that it was the leading article in the *Arbeiterzeitung* the day after the acquittal of the three right-wing paramilitarists, that incited the violence (260f.).

²² For more on Kraus’s vendetta in *Die Fackel* (and elsewhere) against Schober, see Zohn (82ff.).

excuses to circumvent any future dealings with Mühlbauer (*TP 3.1*: 399f.). In the light of the reporter's bumbling ineptitude, the literary critic, Joachim Kaiser, once asked Bachmann, "warum denn dieser Mühlbauer ein derartiger Volltrottel habe sein müssen". Her response was both amusing and telling, in her insistence that, compared to some of the journalists who had interviewed her, she considered Mühlbauer to be "eigentlich ganz nett" (289).

The journalist as intrusive, manipulative mercenary

While Mühlbauer may be depicted as obtuse and incompetent in *Malina*, Ich certainly does not see him as a harmless "Trottel". Instead, she is appalled by his impertinence: "Wenn Umfragen und ihre Fragen sich auch allesamt ähneln, so kommt diesem Mühlbauer doch das Verdienst zu, mir gegenüber die Indiskretion an eine äußerste Grenze getrieben zu haben." (*TP 3.1*: 382) Although Ich does not elaborate on this, it is clear to the reader, if not to Mühlbauer, that his questions cause discomfort and even alarm: for example, when he expresses an interest in her cats (*TP 3.1*: 387)—a topic that touches on her most private sphere, as the cats belong to Ivan's children (*TP 3.1*: 422); or when he wants to know exactly where "die Gorja"—her favourite location for summer walks as a child—is located (*TP 3.1*: 383). Similarly, because Mühlbauer is so obtuse, he fails to notice the obvious signs of her deep embarrassment when she inadvertently lets slip her favourite literary quotes, thus revealing something she considers to be extremely private and intimate: "(Winken und Erröten von meiner Seite, Herr Mühlbauer muß das sofort löschen, das geht niemand was an, ich war unbedacht, habe mich hinreißen lassen [...])." (*TP 3.1*: 390) Clearly, it is most important for Ich to draw the line between public and private—a line that is all but invisible to (or indeed a challenge to break through for) journalists like Mühlbauer, whose intrusiveness and insensitivity is merely an extension of his ability to relentlessly hound Ich for an interview: "Herr Mühlbauer, mit seiner Beharrlichkeit, seinen Küß-die-Hand-Anrufen, kommt doch ans Ziel." (*TP 3.1*: 381f.) This description of Mühlbauer captures the essence of his nature, which embodies "politisch opportunen, aufdringlich indiskreten und nichts weniger als investigativen Journalismus" as well as "überkommene gesellschaftliche Verhaltensweisen" (Herrmann "*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*" 139).

Given the way in which Mühlbauer hounded Ich for the interview, it is hardly surprising that his interview style is invasive and manipulative. As mentioned earlier, Mühlbauer has set expectations of Ich's responses to his questions: thus, on the few occasions when Ich appears to be conforming to those expectations by incorporating clichés or platitudes in her responses, Mühlbauer nods encouragingly to indicate his approval. When, however, he finds her responses unacceptable, he intervenes physically, using hand signals to indicate that things have gone awry (*TP 3.1*: 386)—in the way that an orchestral conductor might stop a rehearsal midflow on hearing a false note. Mühlbauer also tries to control the interview by putting words into Ich's mouth: "Sie hätten so nett über Ihre Katzen sprechen können, sagt Herr Mühlbauer vorwurfsvoll, mit den Katzen hätte es eine persönliche Note gegeben!" (*TP 3.1*: 387) When all else fails, Mühlbauer autocratically employs technology to literally erase the material traces of Ich's response: "Herr Mühlbauer stoppt und fragt, ob er das letzte Stück löschen dürfte, er

sagt ›löschen‹ und er löscht schon.” (TP 3.1: 384) We note here that the tape recorder is closely identified with Mühlbauer’s own “listening” capacity and his openness to the interviewee: the interview does not start until the tape recorder is on; when the interviewee does not oblige him, he rewinds the tape and erases what was said; when he has heard enough and decides to end the interview, he switches off the machine and packs it up, ready for a prompt exit. Mühlbauer is not at all interested in what Ich thinks or feels: his questions are merely part of a specific journalistic agenda directed at “Identitätsicherung und die Fixierung einer Biographie” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 189).

Thus, although widely recognised for its comedy and satire, the Mühlbauer scene also features many deeper and darker elements that have not received as much scholarly attention. One of the few to comment on these elements is the critic, Joachim Kaiser, who sees in this scene “ein zugleich tiefsinniges und ironisches Virtuosenstück” (289). Nowhere is this deep and ironic level of the interview scene more apparent than in Ich’s attack on the integrity of Mühlbauer and the journalistic profession. Early in the scene, Ich intimates a degree of moral laxity (if not downright unethical and mercenary behaviour) on Mühlbauer’s part when she comments on his lack of scruples in switching from the *Wiener Tagblatt* “zur politischen Konkurrenz, zur Wiener Nachtausgabe” (TP 3.1: 381).²³ Mühlbauer therefore appears to be a classic example of the mercenary nature that Kraus saw in the Viennese press (as discussed in “The press as a mercenary, corrupt institution and corrupting influence” on page 37). In selling out to the opposition in this way, Mühlbauer might also be seen to have prostituted himself professionally. The concept of “prostitution” may seem a bit strong in this context, but it is a concept that Ich brings up specifically in connection with her first-hand experience of journalism—an experience that opened her eyes to the reality of the news process (see “The workers at the news bureau: the darker aspects of the journalistic profession” on page 165).

The journalists in Ich’s dream: the journalist as pack animal

Although the Mühlbauer scene does not overtly generalise about all journalists, the portrayal of journalists elsewhere in the novel supports the contention that he is rather typical of his profession. We see evidence of this in the brief but revealing allusion to journalists in one of the dreams of the middle chapter, the “Traumkapitel”, which Bachmann maintained was the most critical chapter in *Malina*.²⁴ Given that this chapter depicts, in symbolic form, the traumatic experiences that are at the root of the “Störung” (TP 3.1: 598) in Ich’s memory and are thus associated with (if not responsible for) her

²³ An early draft of *Malina* contains a further suggestion of fickleness in Ich’s observation that, although Mühlbauer was wearing a blazer that day, he would no doubt be wearing a “Maokragen” the next (TP 3.1: 188).

²⁴ “Das Traumkapitel ist für mich wichtig; denn wir erfahren ja nichts über den Lebenslauf dieses Ich oder über das, was ihm zugestoßen ist—all das ist in den Träumen, teils versteckt, teils auch ausgesprochen. Jede erdenkliche Art von Folter, von Verderben, von Bedrängtwerten [...]” (Gul 97) Bartsch highlights the parallels between the dream chapter of *Malina* and “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” where dreams are used “[...] als Erkenntnisform [...], um Bedrohungen und Zerstörungen unter der Oberfläche einer scheinbar heilen Welt aufzudecken und »die Arbeit der Ausgrabung« einer »stummgemachte[n]« Frau zu leisten [...]” (Ingeborg Bachmann 147) For an excellent analysis of the dream sequences and their significance, see Kanz (“Psychologie, Psychoanalyse und Psychiatrie” 227ff.). See also Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik* 42).

hypersensitivity and difficulty in coping on a day-to-day level, one can infer from the presence of reporters in her dream, that Ich considers the press (or the societal structure that they represent) to be a source of trauma—an inference that is examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

In the press-related dream, Ich describes how she is set upon by a pack of journalists, who harangue her with questions she cannot answer. We know that the press does not hesitate to parrot those who are associated with the father (who represents power and the status quo): “In der großen Oper meines Vaters soll ich die Hauptrolle übernehmen, es ist angeblich der Wunsch des Intendanten, der es bereits angekündigt hat, weil dann das Publikum scharenweise käme, sagt der Intendant, *und die Journalisten sagen es auch.*” (TP 3.1: 516f., m.e.) The responses of those without power, however—like Ich—are simply ignored:

[D]ie Journalisten [...] warten mit Notizblöcken in der Hand, ich soll mich äußern über meinen Vater, auch über die Rolle, die ich nicht kenne. [...] Zu den Journalisten sage ich: Ich weiß gar nichts, bitte wenden Sie sich an meinen Vater [...] Aber die Journalisten schreiben etwas ganz anderes auf, und ich habe keine Zeit mehr, zu schreien und ihnen die Zettel zu zerreißen [...] (TP 3.1: 518)

With their aggressive and invasive questioning as well as their disregard for the truth, the reporters in Ich’s dream show themselves to be no different to Mühlbauer.: they have no interest in what Ich has to say, and are instead determined to impose their own meaning.²⁵ They thereby silence Ich in the same way as the father figure, who suppresses Ich’s voice in a myriad of ways in the dream sequences. In an interview, Bachmann described the father figure in the dream chapter as a collective phenomenon of patriarchal society: “Ein Realist würde wahrscheinlich viele Furchtbarkeiten erzählen, die einer bestimmten Person oder Personen zustoßen. Hier wird, zusammengenommen in diese große Person, die das ausübt, was die Gesellschaft ausübt [...]” (GuI 97) Like the Good God in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, the dream father symbolises not only “den bestehenden Zustand in der zivilisierten Welt” (Hapkemeyer *Sprachthematik* 43) but a murderous “gesellschaftliches Prinzip” (Höller *Das Werk* 230f.). He can thus be seen “[als] Synonym für Vernichtung, Zerstörung, Entfremdung, Gewalt, für bedrohliche Macht und als Textverwalter, der die Tochter zum Verstummen bringt” (Herrmann “Poetik der Kritik” 56). The association between the dream journalists and the father is therefore particularly significant in *Malina* as it suggests that the press is like all the other “Vertreter der Macht und Ordnung [, die] Frauen verstummen machen wollen” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 148). As Hapkemeyer puts it: “Die Vaterfigur umfaßt tödlichen Sprachverlust und Erfahrungsschwund, welche von Massenmedien und Massenproduktion vorangetrieben werden [...]” (*Entwicklungslinien* 141)

The workers at the news bureau: the darker aspects of the journalistic profession

Bachmann provides a further characterisation of those in the journalistic profession in the final chapter of *Malina* where Ich refers to her former employment at a news bureau for two years in post-

²⁵ The only difference appears to be in the tools that they use: unlike Mühlbauer who uses electronic technology, the reporters in Ich’s dream use “Notizblöck[e]” (TP 3.1: 518).

war Vienna. In this passage (hereinafter referred to as “the Nachrichtendienst scene”),²⁶ Ich depicts her male colleagues as mindless automatons who desultorily and arbitrarily patch together news bulletins (*TP 3.1*: 592). Like Mühlbauer, Ich’s colleagues in the news industry are primarily concerned with making the information that they produce conform to predetermined formulae (see “News as construct” on page 169). It is no coincidence that it is the male workers, who put together the news bulletins while Ich, the only female, types up what they give her (*ibid.*).²⁷ This work structure parallels Ich’s symbolic silencing by the reporters and her father in her dreams: in her patriarchally-structured workplace, Ich has no “say” in the news-creation process and merely reproduces what her male colleagues construct.

Ich’s experience at the “Nachrichtendienst”, however, gives her first-hand knowledge of the darker side of the journalistic process and work in general. Thus, while working at the bureau she came to the conclusion that all forms of work were a global system of prostitution in which all workers were complicit—everyone was hiring out their body and soul for monetary gain:²⁸ “Jeder, der arbeitete, war ohne es zu wissen, ein Prostituiertes [...]. Es war der Anfang einer universellen Prostitution.” (*TP 3.1*: 599)²⁹ This turns out to apply to Ich herself, for soon after her elaboration on the notion of universal prostitution, Malina challenges Ich’s claim that she had been *involuntarily* transferred to the night desk to fill a vacancy arising from someone’s illness. There is a discrepancy, Malina observes, between this claim and her previous assertion that she transferred to the night desk of the news bureau *because the pay was better* (*TP 3.1*: 597). Ich’s embarrassment at being caught out by Malina, as someone who had also prostituted herself for money, is clear from her inability to continue telling her story.³⁰

Bachmann’s use of the phrase “universelle Prostitution” in the “Nachrichtendienst” is rather interesting, given that others, with whose work or ideas Bachmann would have been familiar, also used

²⁶ “Nachrichtendienst”, “Presseagentur” and “Nachrichtenagentur” all refer to the same type of organisation: an “Unternehmen, das Nachrichten sammelt, sichtet, sortiert, formuliert und regelmäßig an feste Bezieher gegen Entgelt (Zeitungen, Zeitschriften, Rundfunkanstalten) liefert” (Brand und Schulze 187). Examples are *Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa)* and *Austria Presse Agentur (apa)*. The news bureau here might indeed be *apa*, which is referred to elsewhere in *Malina* in connection with radio news (*TP 3.1*: 299).

²⁷ As Mahrdrdt points out, the “gender-spezifische Berufshierarchie” depicted in this passage is a hierarchy “die den tatsächlichen geschlechtsspezifischen Unterschieden, wie sie selbst noch in den 80er Jahren von Medienfrauen geschildert werden, entspricht” (*Öffentlichkeit* 236).

²⁸ This passage echoes an earlier reference to “universal prostitution”, not associated with the press but with the culture industry, when Ich describes her attendance at a lecture in the “Institut Français” where she constantly hears the phrase “la prostitution universelle” spoken by a “Mann aus Paris, mit einem asketischen blassen Gesicht [...] mit der Stimme eines Chorknaben” discussing de Sade’s “120 Tage von Sodom” (*TP 3.1*: 368).

²⁹ Weigel sees in this reference parallels with Proust’s depiction of post-World War I society (*Hinterlassenschaften* 210). For Lennox the term “universal prostitution” in this passage is *inter alia* an allusion to Marx: “On the one hand, it is the phrase Marx used in the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts to describe wage labor under capitalism [...]. The “I” ponders, “Everyone who worked was a prostitute without knowing it, where have I heard that before?” [...] 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 [...]. And finally, “universal prostitution” describes the sexual chaos of the postwar period [...]” (*Cemetery* 329) See also Frieden (67), Lennox (*Cemetery* 347f.) and Thau (15).

³⁰ This is one of numerous instances where the reader is warned about the unreliability of Ich as a narrator. Even the ever-reliable Malina, to whom Ich bequeaths her stories at the end of *Malina*, is described as the author of an “Apokryph” (*TP 3.1*: 275), that is, the author of a work of unknown or dubious origins. For a more detailed discussion of this aspect of *Malina*, see the conclusion of this chapter.

the phrase in connection with the press. Her literary colleague, Böll, for example, included the following rather Krausian aphoristic observation in *Ansichten eines Clowns*, in a passage referring to a journalist: “Es gibt merkwürdige unerkannte Formen der Prostitution, mit denen verglichen die eigentliche Prostitution ein redliches Gewerbe ist: da ist wenigstens für’s Geld was geboten.” (265) As mentioned in Chapter 3, it was not only Kraus who was fond of associating the press with prostitution, but also Bachmann’s friend, Hocke, who used this term in a journal entry lamenting the corrupt and deplorable state of the press in the post-war period. Hocke’s recollection of Spengler’s use of the term is close but not exact: in describing “abendländischer Journalismus”, Spengler uses the terms “intellektuelle männliche Prostitution” and “geistige Prostitution” (463)—not “universelle Prostitution”—but the context of Spengler’s use of this term is almost identical in both Hocke’s writings and in *Malina*, namely in describing the press’s mediocrity in appealing to the masses, and its relationship to commerce and financial success at all costs: “Sie wendet sich an die Meisten, nicht an die Besten. Sie wertet ihre Mittel nach der Zahl der Erfolge. Sie setzt an Stelle des Denkertums früher Zeiten die intellektuelle männliche Prostitution in Rede und Schrift, wie sie alle Säle und Plätze der Weltstädte füllt und beherrscht.” (ibid.)³¹

Closely related to Ich’s denouncement of the “universelle Prostitution” in the “Nachrichtendienst” passage is the notion of “universeller schwarzer Markt (TP 3.1: 598) and Ich’s proposition that any market (that is, any form of trade) is inevitably a “black market”:³² “Der Markt überhaupt ist schwarz, so schwarz kann er damals gar nicht gewesen sein, weil ihm eine universelle Dichte gefehlt hat.” (TP 3.1: 599)³³ Here, it appears that Ich’s views coincide very closely with those of the author herself, as revealed in an interview in which Bachmann explained that her aim in *Malina* was not merely “die Zeit [zu] dokumentieren” (*Gul* 99); instead she wanted to describe the origins of the black market that developed after the war:³⁴

³¹ The comparison of journalism to prostitution dates back to well before Spengler and Kraus. In 1863, for example, Lassalle claimed that the lucrative advertising business enabled the press to retain “»ein geistiges Proletariat, ein stehendes Heer von Zeitungsschreibern [...], durch welches sie konkurrierend ihren Betrieb zu vergrößern und ihre Annoncen-Einnahmen zu vermehren streben«. Die mitmachenden Journalisten leisteten »Prostitution des Geistes.«” (qtd in Straßner 75)

³² For an excellent analysis of Bachmann’s concept of “der schwarze Markt” (as opposed to “der Schwarzmarkt”), and its relationship to Marx’s views and to Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, see Mahrtdt (“Society Is the Biggest Murder Scene of All” 178). See also Thau on (13f.).

³³ Ich’s account of the black market and universal prostitution seems to explain a rather puzzling reference in the Mühlbauer interview to Ich’s fear of masses of things or people. The link between the black market and the prostitution of individuals at every level, resulted in the commodification and consequent exploitation of individuals and human activity, a development that became all the more pervasive because of its sheer size and spread. It is the sheer number of things that Ich finds overwhelming—the piles of consumer commodities that arrived in the shops after the initial black market subsided that set off her fear of large numbers (TP 3.1: 599). See also Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik* 43) and Mahrtdt (*Öffentlichkeit* 234).

³⁴ The situation in post-war Austria was succinctly described by Peter Weiser (one of Bachmann’s fellow script writers at RWR) in his reference to “die vier Allierten, den Kalten Krieg, die Entnazifizierung, den beginnenden Wiederaufbau, den zu Ende gehenden Schleichhandel, den beginnenden Postenschacher, die sichtbar werdende Korruption und—die Festigung der wiedergewonnenen österreichischen Identität” (qtd in McVeigh “Ingeborg Bachmann as Radio Script Writer” 39) and “[d]ie Schwierigkeit, in einem Land, das noch immer von Kriegsgewinnlern und Korruptionisten und Schiebern durchsetzt ist, anständig zu bleiben” (41).

Für mich wäre es wichtiger, daß beschrieben wird, wie aus dem Schwarzen Markt der Nachkriegsjahre der wirkliche Schwarze Markt geworden ist—der damals gar nicht so schwarz war wie der heutige. Das hat natürlich nichts mit einer Analyse der Wirtschaftsstrukturen zu tun, müßte sie aber auf eine andere Weise treffen. Denn auf diese andere Weise trifft man die universelle Prostitution, die Prostituierung des Menschen in allen Zusammenhängen und in der Arbeit. (ibid.)

The two concepts of “universelle Prostitution” and the black market are in turn directly related to the enslavement of modern man, a social phenomenon in which the press plays a key role, as Ich observes in the closing lines of the Mühlbauer scene when she calls his newspaper “[ein] sklavisch abhängiges Blatt für Tausende von Sklaven” (*TP 3.1*: 399) and points out the mutual enslavement that is inherent to journalism: “Sie sind jetzt mein Sklave und Sie haben mich zu Ihrer Sklavin gemacht, Sie, ein Sklave Ihres Blatts.” (ibid.) This “extreme und etwas sibyllinische Bild” (Steiger 30) echoes Adorno and Horkheimer’s concept of a full-circle of enslavement in which the culture industry plays a key role (as discussed in Chapter 3 of this study). Thus, Ich observes that Mühlbauer is effectively her slave, as he is dependent on her to provide content for his report.³⁵ His newspaper is, however (as Kraus emphasised in his critique of the press—see “‘Phrasen’, ‘Meinungen’, ‘Geschwätz’” on page 35 of this study), also enslaved—to daily production deadlines, the demands of the reading public, and a range of other external and internal pressures.³⁶ Newspaper readers, too, are enslaved, as they have no say in newspaper content, and are, furthermore, subject to influence by that content. As a self-confessed newspaper addict (as discussed later in this chapter), Ich is even more enslaved than other readers, and as Mühlbauer’s interviewee she is further enslaved during the interview by being subject to his questioning, and by temporarily having her freedom, to spend her time in other ways, curtailed.

In positing this closed circuit of mutual enslavement, Ich takes the notions of the universal black market and universal prostitution to a pessimistic extreme. Whereas prostitution and black markets still retain the theoretical possibility of choice and therefore individual freedom, a system of mass slavery, by definition, excludes freedom. According to Ich, our only respite from our state of enslavement comes at night, when we can escape work, our fellow slaves and slave masters: “[I]n der Nacht und allein entstehen die erratischen Monologe, die bleiben, denn der Mensch ist ein dunkles Wesen, er ist nur Herr über sich in der Finsternis und am Tag kehrt er zurück in die Sklaverei.” (*TP 3.1*: 399)³⁷ This is why she believes that “Nachtausgabe” is not a suitable name for Mühlbauer’s enslaved and enslaving newspaper (*TP 3.1*: 399). Mahrtdt points out further ironies in this name:

³⁵ Cf. Watson (112f.).

³⁶ Media analysts note that journalists often have to make sense out of stories that are often incomplete, and do this under the constraints of deadlines and other daily pressures. This kind of pressure makes itself apparent at both the individual level and the general editorial level, where pressures to obtain sufficient ‘newsworthy’ material by specific, often tight, publishing deadlines can result not only in a dependency on the products of ‘news management’ but also in their unchecked and unedited replication: “In reality, news professionals are almost totally dependent on press releases and the public statements of sanctioned ‘experts’ and officials.” (Koch qtd in Watson 112f.) See also Cohen and Young (“The process of selection” 19), McNair (12), Meyn (*Massenmedien in Deutschland* 131) and Watson (156, 160ff., 168).

³⁷ In one of her interview statements Bachmann explained that she intended *Malina* to be exactly like one of these “erratischen Monologe in der Nacht, in denen der Mensch, der am Tag dieses und jenes tut, zu sich kommt und wirklich denkt. Wenn wir wahr sind, dann sind wir es in der Nacht, sobald wir ganz allein sind.” (*Gul* 73)

Nacht verbirgt, bedeutet Dunkelheit. [...] Eine Zeitung hingegen hat gerade zur Aufgabe, Verborgenes ans Licht zu ziehen, eine Aufgabe, der Herr Mühlbauer, der vorgibt, sich für authentische Erfahrungen zu interessieren, nicht nachkommt. Ihm geht es um vorgefertigte Schemata. (*Öffentlichkeit* 233)

7.3.2 *Malina* on press content

News as construct

It is not only journalists who come under Ich's critical gaze in *Malina* but also the content produced by those journalists and their media colleagues. Thus Ich extends her tirade against the vicious circle of enslavement with a vehement denouncement of the contrived nature of press stories, which are produced as part of the daily pressure to deliver content, even when nothing of significance has happened—one of Kraus's criticisms. The concept of news as an artificial construct that is subject to the demands of artificial deadlines is illustrated in a passage from the collection of drafts known as *Eugen-Roman I, Stadtpark*, where the narrator describes Eugen (an early version of the character, Malina (*TP 1: 617I*)), buying and reading a newspaper against the backdrop of the global news-generating process:

[S]o ging Eugen, [...] und kaufte seine Zigaretten und den Wiener Morgen. Die erste Zeitung wird ja anders gelesen als die Mittagszeitungen oder die Abendzeitungen, denn der zeitungslisende Mensch weiß noch von Mitternacht her alle Geschehnisse, die sich um nichts vermehrt haben können, und trotzdem erscheint es ihm wunderbar, daß er doch eigentlich nur in den Morgenblättern das Neue findet, und es ließe sich auch damit nicht ganz erklären, daß rechts und links des Greenwich zu verschiedenen Zeiten Tag und Nacht ist und die Nachrichtendienste sich daher ihre eigenen Zeiten schaffen, die Fernschreiber nimmermüd Abstimmungsergebnisse, Ansprachentexte und Meldungen aufzeichnen, als gäbe die Welt immerfort und an allen ihren lebenden Punkten Meldungen her, wie sie vulkanische Hitzen und kalten Schweiß ausatmet. (*TP 1: 46*)

Commercial exigency thus demands the invention of news, which is, as Ich notes, often irrelevant to us:

[...] noch seltsamere Probleme werden anvisiert, an jedem Tag für den kommenden Tag bestellt, die Probleme werden erfunden und in Umlauf gebracht, es gibt die Probleme nicht, reden hört man von ihnen und redet deswegen darüber. Ich habe ja auch nur von den Problemen gehört, ich hätte sonst keine [...]. (*TP 3.1: 399*)

As Steiger points out, what is described here constitutes, “extrem formuliert, eine Umkehrung der natürlichen Informationsrichtung [...]: nicht mehr das Geschehen und dann der Bericht darüber, sondern ‘bestellte’, ‘erfundene’ Probleme (contradictio in adjecto!), welche [...] als Wirklichkeit ausgegeben werden.” (30ff.) Ich's view of news and other press content as artificial constructs is one to which she feels entitled, given her first-hand experience at the “Nachrichtendienst”:³⁸ “Ich bin damals [...], völlig ins Bild gekommen darüber, was am nächsten Morgen die Menschen als Nachricht aufweckt.” (*TP 3.1: 592f.*) Thus her experience at the news bureau revealed the arbitrary nature of news: “das wahllose Zusammensetzen der aus den Fernschreibern herausquellenden Sätze” (*TP 3.1: 592*). It also showed her how remote news content is from any first-hand experience of events or people, and opened her eyes to the way in which news, like other mass media content, is a product “der mechanischen Reproduktion” (Adorno *GS 3: 310*): the raw material is fed in at one end, before being

³⁸ For Hapkemeyer, this passage reflects Bachmann's experience, working in the secretariat of the American occupational forces, where her duties included “Nachrichten für die von den Amerikanern herausgegebene Zeitung *Neues Österreich* ins reine zu tippen” (*Entwicklungslinien* 43). See also Lennox (*Cemetery* 302).

processed by humans and passed on to the next stage of the production line—a virtual conveyor belt:

Die Männer lasen in den Bögen, die die Fernschreiber ausspuckten, sie schnitten aus, sie klebten und stellten zusammen. [...] sie warfen mir die Nachrichten auf meinen kleinen Tisch mit der Schreibmaschine herüber, von einer zufälligen Laune ausgewählte Nachrichten, und ich schrieb sie ins reine. (*TP 3.1*: 592)

In this passage, the imagery of a production line, generating a mass-manufactured and pre-digested commodity, produced in a grimy, dangerous, and exhausting environment in contrast to the freshness of the world outside (see “Journalism as an unhealthy and debilitating work environment” on page 177) brings to mind the imagery and juxtapositions in “Holz und Späne”, where Bachmann sets the quiet, organic beauty of a natural forest against the mind-numbing, noisy and unstoppable machinery of the “Papier am Fließband” (*W I*: 40) that produces only chaff and ideology. Like “Holz und Späne”, the “Nachrichtendienst” scene also draws on the critique of technology expressed by both Benjamin and Kraus (see Chapter 3 of this study). The products of the journalistic media, Bachmann suggests in the “Nachrichtendienst” passage, are not so much human creations as products of automation and mechanisation. And as news content is passed down the production line, it becomes increasingly stale and remote from whatever human connections it might have had in the first place, when the originating journalist placed it in the system: news is clearly an instance of what Bachmann referred to in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” as “Wissen, das durch so viele Hände geht, gebraucht und mißbraucht oft, das sich oft verbraucht und leer läuft, von keiner Erfahrung erfrischt” (*W 4*: 184). News content not only fails Bachmann’s criteria for “Wahrheit” because it is so remote from experience, but also fails to meet other criteria that Bachmann stipulated in her extra-literary statements: as Bachmann demonstrates in the “Nachrichtendienst” scene, news is put together randomly and thoughtlessly—it represents “das Leichte” (*Gul 91*), and accordingly, it cannot say anything of value to us as it is not the product of the effort, struggle and pain that is inextricably associated with truth and insight.

News and magazine content as predictable and irrelevant

As the foregoing discussion shows, Bachmann portrays news as first and foremost a consumer commodity and a construct. While the news gathering process might appear to be an arbitrary collation, the production output is subject to rigid journalistic formulae: “Am Ende schlossen die Männer immer mit einem kurzen Absatz, der ein Baseballspiel oder einen Boxkampf betraf, von jenseits des Atlantik.” (*TP 3.1*: 593) Because news output needs to conform to pre-determined structures, it inevitably becomes as predictable as Mühlbauer’s interview questions. The predictability of news content and formats has been discussed by numerous media analysts who lament the clichéd nature of news content with its stereotypical selection and compartmentalisation of information into rigid categories such as international politics, local politics, crime, and the various “lightweight” categories such as sport, humour, crosswords, puzzles, horoscopes and so on.

Journalistic content, it has been observed, is becoming increasingly formulaic because, in a commercial environment, journalism is not so much a public service but a vehicle for the sale of advertising. It is therefore a commodity that must shape its content in a way that attracts large numbers

of end-consumers, who in turn attract advertising revenue.³⁹ “In capitalist societies journalism is a commodity which must be sold to sophisticated and demanding consumers in an increasingly competitive market-place. This economic fact has a major impact on the form, content and style of journalism.” (McNair 15) And so, in striving to increase their market appeal and hence their circulation numbers (to sell more newspapers and to provide an ever expanding audience for their advertisers), the privately owned press often “put[s] entertainment rather than information on top of the daily agenda” and resorts to “sensationalism which so often obliterates the truth” (Watson 153). Ich’s reference to the obligatory closing article dealing with sport is therefore an allusion to one such stereotypical classification that belongs more to the entertainment category than important editorial information—a category that has become increasingly popularised, commercialised and that has therefore become an increasingly dominant feature of news products.⁴⁰ The “Sportifizierung der Produkte” (and of life in general) that is perpetrated by the culture industry is seen by Adorno and Horkheimer as yet another way of suppressing conflict and competition and thus undermining potential rebellion:

In seiner scheinlosen Buchstäblichkeit, dem tierischen Ernst, der jede Geste des Spiels zum Reflex erstarren läßt, wird Sport zum farblosen Abglanz des verhärteten, kalten Lebens. Die Lust der Bewegung, den Gedanken an die Befreiung des Leibes, die Suspension der Zwecke bewahrt er nur in äußerster Entstellung. Weil aber doch vielleicht die Gewalt, die er den Menschen antut, mit dazu hilft, diese fähig zu machen, der Gewalt einmal das Ende zu bereiten, nimmt Massenkultur den Sport in ihre Obhut. (Adorno *GS* 3: 329)

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, active participation in sport had to be restricted in favour of passive spectating to ensure that the potential power of sport is constrained and controlled by the culture industry for its purposes.⁴¹

Der Sportsmann selber mag noch Tugenden wie Solidarität, Hilfsbereitschaft, selbst Enthusiasmus entwickeln, die sich im entscheidenden politischen Augenblick bewähren können. Beim Sportzuschauer ist nichts davon geblieben; roh kontemplative Neugier zersetzt die letzte Spontaneität. Massenkultur aber möchte ihre Konsumenten nicht in Sportsleute sondern in johlende Tribünenbesucher verwandeln. Indem sie das ganze Leben als ein System offener oder verdeckter sportlicher Wettkämpfe abbildet, inthronisiert sie den Sport als Leben selber und tilgt noch die Spannung zwischen dem sportlichen Sonntag und der erbärmlichen Woche, in der das bessere Teil des realen Sports bestand. (ibid.)

Another example of a stereotypical newspaper category that *Malina* targets is the daily horoscope. In a satirical passage Ich describes looking up Malina’s horoscope, which warns of possible bronchial trouble and stormy affairs of the heart at the workplace (*TP* 3.1: 603f.).⁴² When Ich queries Malina about this astrological prediction, Malina is completely mystified: clearly he cannot relate this

³⁹ Cf. Watson (236).

⁴⁰ Cf. Brand and Schulze (*Medienkundliches Handbuch: Die Zeitung* 94), Hartley (*Understanding News* 82) and McNair (77f.).

⁴¹ Another dimension of Bachmann’s reference to sport in journalism might be the association that sport had in National Socialist Germany where the dominant ideology emphasised the importance of fitness and athletic prowess over morality, mercy and racial, religious and social tolerance. For a discussion of the connection between sport and the mass spectacle of fascism, see Craig (45f., 56f.).

⁴² The motif of the newspaper horoscope dates back to the very early stages of Bachmann’s “Todesarten-Projekt”, where in a passage called *In Ledas Kreis*, the eponymous character reads out to Eugen, his horoscope from the newspaper (*TP* 1: 39) and is subsequently described as being quite obsessed with horoscopes and other forms of superstition (*TP* 1: 42). For a discussion of the passage in *In Leda’s Kreis*, see Albrecht (*Die andere Seite* 49). For a discussion of the *Malina* horoscope passage, see Albrecht and Götsche (*TP* 1: 513).

prediction to his life in any way. This reference to astrological predictions in the journalistic media might be an allusion to Adorno, who believed astrology (as well as television and light music) to be an insidious element of mass culture, which “conditioned” audiences, setting up subliminal patterns of reaction. As Adorno insisted in his essay, “Résumé über Kulturindustrie”: “Man wisse ja, was es mit Illustriertenromanen, Filmen von der Stange, mit zu Serien ausgewalzten Familien-Fernsehspielen und Schlagerparaden, mit Seelenberatungs- und Horoskopspalten.” (*GS 10.1*: 341). While astrology appears to promote the importance of individuals and their actions, it instead works to reinforce the status quo, and to reconcile individuals to their existing lives (and their role in the social structure): “Ermahnt ein Astrologe seine Leser, sie sollten an einen bestimmten Tag vorsichtig Auto fahren, so wird das gewiß niemandem schaden; wohl aber die Verdummung, die in dem Anspruch liegt, der jeden Tag gültige und daher blödsinnige Rat hätte des Winks der Sterne bedurft.” (345)

Ich’s unmasking of the irrelevance of press content in this “Horoskop” passage echoes her earlier attack on press content when she berated Mühlbauer for the irrelevance of the various problems that are “bestellt”, “erfunden” and imposed on us by the press: “Ich habe ja auch nur von den Problemen gehört, ich hätte sonst keine, wir könnten die Hände in den Schoß legen und trinken, wäre das nicht fein, Herr Mühlbauer?” (*TP 3.1*: 399) The irrelevance of press content is very much a constant and consistent theme in *Malina*. In one passage, for example, Ich expresses to Malina her frustration over the press’s fixation with ‘persons of note’, especially when they die: “Willst du mir erklären, warum ich darüber informiert sein muß, daß Herr Haderer oder eine andere Berühmtheit, ein Dirigent oder ein Politiker, ein Bankier oder ein Philosoph, seit gestern oder seit heute plötzlich tot sind. Es interessiert mich nicht.” (*TP 3.1*: 629)

The irrelevance of press content is also underscored in a passage that describes Ich’s habit of going through old piles of newspapers to see what had been considered significant on a given date. This activity invariably produces outrage at finding: “Nachrichten, [...] Meinungen zu Nachrichten, [...] Erdbeben, Flugzeugabstürzen, innenpolitischen Skandalen, außenpolitischen Fehlritten” (*TP 3.1*: 586)—a list of news stories remarkably similar to the characterisation of news content in *Das Buch Franza*, discussed earlier in this chapter. *Malina* goes on to make the same point about the irrelevance of press content as *Das Buch Franza*, when Ich then compares these “events of the day according to the news” with her personal life by looking up her diary and finds that there are no entries at all for the day in question (3rd July, 1958)⁴³; she concludes that this day must have been much like any other day—a day when she had gone to a café to read (ironically) the latest newspaper (*ibid.*). The discrepancy between the press’s account of what mattered on a given day and Ich’s personal account of the same day highlights the gap between the plethora of “Informationen” we find in newspapers and our own “Erfahrung”. This applies not only to newspaper content, but to other forms of journalistic content:

⁴³ Göttsche and Albrecht note that this is when Bachmann first met Max Frisch in Paris (*TP 3.2*: 958)—one of a number of intertextual references to Frisch in Bachmann’s work, which have been investigated by scholars like Albrecht, Probst and Jabilkowska. Weigel, however, criticises attempts to interpret the date too biographically as representing an interpretive “Sackgasse” that ignores the literary text itself (*Hinterlassenschaften* 412f.).

having found no real enlightenment about that particular day from the day's newspaper, Ich picks up an "Illustrierte" and a "Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik" from the same period. Here, too, she finds bemusement, mystification and even confusion, but no enlightenment. The following extract, which illustrates this confusion so graphically, is one of a number of media "collages" in *Malina*, which throw together "Werbeslogans, aneinander und kompiliert vulgärpsychologische Tests, Leserbriefe und Sensationsmeldungen, wie sie in den Medien begegnen" (Hapkemeyer *Sprachthematik* 38).

Von einem 3. Juli finde ich auch noch eine Illustrierte und in Malinas Regalen die Julinummer einer Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik, und ich fange kreuz und quer zu lesen an, weil ich etwas über diesen Tag herausfinden möchte. Bücher sind angekündigt worden, die ich nie gesehen habe. WOHIN MIT ALLEDDEM GELD? ist einer der unverständlichsten Titel; nicht einmal Malina wird ihn mir erklären können. Wo ist denn das Geld, und mit welchem Geld wollte man wohin? das fängt ja gut an, solche Titel können mich zum Vibrieren, zum Erzittern bringen. Wie inszeniert man einen Staatsstreich? Mit souveräner Sachkenntnis und trockenem, beiläufig sarkastischem Witz geschrieben [...] Lesetips für Leser, die politisch denken wollen, die aufgeklärt werden wollen [...] Brauchen wir das, Malina? (TP 3.1: 589)

To add insult to injury, the information in the press is not only irrelevant on the day that it is produced but proves to be even more superfluous when considered retrospectively: "Es sind aber schon Jahre her, und nun wird es wieder aufgetischt, Autozusammenstöße, einige Verbrechen, Ankündigungen von Gipfeltreffen, Vermutungen über das Wetter. Kein Mensch weiß heute mehr, warum das einmal hat berichtet werden müssen." (TP 3.1: 591)

Press content as "Betrug"

If press content were only irrelevant and thus superfluous, we could perhaps ignore it as an irritating but inconsequential aspect of modern life, but it is in fact something about which we should be deeply concerned. Thus Ich initially suggests: "*Wahrscheinlich* aber ist es ein unglaublicher Betrug" (TP 3.1: 591, m.e.), but soon after revises her position, using much stronger terms: "Es *ist* ein unglaublicher Betrug, ich habe einmal im Nachrichtendienst gearbeitet, ich habe den Betrug aus der Nähe gesehen, die Entstehung der Bulletins [...]" (TP 3.1: 591f., m.e.)⁴⁴ Arguably the truthfulness or otherwise of journalistic and other mass media products would not be the subject of much contention, were it not for their pervasiveness and the perception that they exert a significant influence over their

⁴⁴ Bachmann's characterisation of news content as "Betrug" can be traced back to a fragmentary piece "Der Tod wird kommen" in which one of the characters insists that everything we read in the press these days is "gelogen [...] Lug und Trug" (W 2: 272). The moral credentials of the character making this assertion, however, undermine the critique of the press as he is an unreconstructed Nazi, who refuses to accept as true the post-war revelations about the horrific crimes perpetrated by the National Socialist regime before and during the Second World War. While the *Werke* edition asserts that "Der Tod wird kommen" was written around 1965 (W 2: 606) and Weigel describes it as a "Prosatext, der während der Arbeit an den »Todesarten« entstanden ist" (*Hinterlassenschaften* 507), Albrecht advises that it dates back to 1959/60. According to one of Bachmann's letters to Piper Verlag during this period, "Der Tod wird kommen" was intended to be part of Bachmann's first collection of stories. Because of this, the fragment was not included in the »Todesarten«-Projekt edition (email dated 2 September 2003 from Albrecht to the author of this study). There therefore appears to be no direct link between this fragment and Bachmann's press critique in her *Todesarten* period. There is, however, an indirect link in Bachmann's self-referential inter-textual allusion to the title "Der Tod wird kommen" in *Malina* (TP 3.1: 369), which suggests that Bachmann may have intended to resuscitate elements of this story (if only the title) in her "Todesarten-Projekt". Göttsche and Albrecht ascribe *Malina*'s reference to "Der Tod wird kommen" as an intertextual allusion to a posthumous publication by the Italian poet, Cesare Pavese, who committed suicide in 1950 (TP 3.2: 942), without mentioning that the title also alludes to one of Bachmann's fragments.

audience: “[C]ommunication is power and that power is obtained and held through control. Who controls the means of mass communication has the potential power to influence the ways in which society works.” (Watson 216) Accordingly, the mass media “affect our everyday lives as individuals within communities, as members of groups, as consumers, voters and citizens” (207), and “on an ever-greater scale [and ...] to an ever-increasing extent, globalised media products are received, interpreted and incorporated into the daily lives of individuals” (246). Press content is therefore like the “Eintagsfliegen” in “Holz und Späne”—not something harmless but something about which we should be extremely wary: it is not just innocuous irrelevance but an inherently flawed process that often misleads us or distorts the facts.⁴⁵

Examples of such attempts at deception were cited earlier in this chapter when referring to Mühlbauer’s attempts to manipulate and control Ich’s interview responses and the way in which the reporters in Ich’s dream completely distort her words. A further example of the press’s deliberate misrepresentation of the facts is offered early in the novel in Ich’s recollection of the press obituary for Malina’s sister, a famous singer.⁴⁶ In that obituary, Malina’s fame and achievements were overstated by the press for the sake of congruence with the celebrity of his sister and the status of other funeral attendees. Malina thus becomes in the press:

[...] der hochbegabte, junge, bekannte Schriftsteller, der nicht bekannt war und dem von den Journalisten rasch zu einem eintägigen Ruhm verholfen wurde, denn die Maria Malina konnte in den Stunden als Minister und Hausmeister, Kritiker und stehplatzbesuchende Gymnasiasten in einem langen Zug zum Zentralfriedhof zogen, nicht einen Bruder brauchen, der ein Buch geschrieben hatte, das niemand kannte, und der überhaupt ›niemand‹ war. (*TP 3.1*: 287f.)

Far from being a *young* writer, Malina is a 40-year-old historian and employee of the Austrian public service. And, while it is true that he has written a book, it is a gross overstatement to call him well-known, given that he is the “Verfasser eines ›Apokryph‹, das im Buchhandel nicht mehr erhältlich ist” (*TP 3.1*: 275)—a book that made no impact at all on the literary scene (*ibid.*).

Although it remains undisclosed in the final published version of *Malina*, earlier *Todesarten* drafts reveal another dubious aspect of the reports on Maria Malina’s death. In those drafts, the diva’s misadventure is discussed at one of Leo Jordan’s dinner parties by those who know her, and who suggest that the press reports leave many questions unanswered. According to the press reports, for example, Maria Malina had been “mit jemand” on a boat in Greece, and had at one point leapt into the water for a swim, “denn sie schwamm sehr gut, so stand es in den Zeitungen”, when she was taken by a shark *while noone was watching*—all that remained was “eine Blutwasserlache” (*TP 1*: 347). The reliability of this account is questioned by Jordan, who casually asks: “[W]ar eigentlich ein Dritter dabei, der das bezeugen kann [...]?” (*TP 1*: 348) Jordan’s question casts doubt not only on the reliability of Maria Malina’s boating companion as the only surviving witness to the event, but also on the reliability of the press reports, which have apparently merely replicated the account of the only

⁴⁵ For a discussion of press content as fraud and deceit, see Mooney (68ff.).

⁴⁶ Cf. earlier versions of this passage (*TP 3.1*: 118; *TP 1*: 342f.) and a similar passage that refers to the “Schauergeschichten” about Maria Malina’s death (*TP 3.1*: 150).

other person there at the time, and who, according to his own account of events, had not actually seen what happened because he had his back turned at the time (*TP 1*: 347).⁴⁷ The narrator's description of the way in which a former admirer of Maria Malina reads the press reports of her death, "wie beim Kennedymord" (*ibid.*), adds further weight to the suggestion in this passage, that this was murder, not misadventure, and that there is much more to Maria Malina's death than was reported in the newspapers. Maria Malina's "ungeklärter Tod, für den es keine Zeugen gibt und der keine Leiche präsentiert" therefore not only exemplifies the fate of the other female victims in Bachmann's *Todesarten*, but also the way in which the press purveys a falsified and misleading account of their death (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 116).

A further illustration of the unreliability of press content is provided by a passage that was excised from the final version of *Malina*.⁴⁸ In this passage, Ich reflects on the many "Umfragen" in Vienna these days, and the way in which the opinions of people she knows have been canvassed and reported in the press. Thus, a tram conductor, a local council official and a neighbour had all been asked what they think of the "Vorbereitungen auf Cap Kennedy [und] dem Unternehmen Apollo VII" (*TP 3.2*: 710). Like the Mühlbauer scene, this passage highlights the disparity between the discourse of the press and the lives of those who not only read the content but are also on this occasion asked to make meaningful pronouncements about matters of which they cannot possibly have any knowledge other than what they might have read in newspapers. In the same way that the Mühlbauer scene unmasks the triteness and irrelevance of standard press interview questions, so, too, this passage portrays the issues raised in journalistic "Umfragen" as clichéd and meaningless. They also fail to tell us anything authentic about the people interviewed. By contrast, Ich reveals that she has been paying very close attention to these people, their views and behaviour. As Achberger points out:

Was sie [Ich] nicht ausdrücklich sagt, ist, daß dies alles nichtiges Zeug ist, daß die Fragen dumm sind und die Antworten dieser ungebildeten Leute voller Klischees und Gemeinplätze; sie berichtet sie einfach und läßt sie für sich selber sprechen. Was sie hingegen zum Ausdruck bringt, ist ihr eigenes Interesse an den Ansichten ihrer Bekannten. ("Bösartig liebevoll" 238)

What also emerges from this passage, is the great disparity between what is reported in the press and Ich's own knowledge of the people whose views are supposedly reflected in those reports, according to which, for example, Frau Breitner's response was on one occasion "verschmitzt". Based on her own "Erfahrung", Ich is dubious about such a claim:

Ich habe Frau Breitner noch nie etwas verschmitzt sagen hören, sondern immer alles verbittert und mit

⁴⁷ Given the culpability of Leo Jordan, the "bekannte Erzschorke" (Schneider "Simultan und Erzählfragmente" 165), in relation to the emotional and physical destruction of his wife, Franza (*TP 2*: 131)—a culpability, which was, however, well concealed from public view—it is highly ironic that he should be the one to suggest the possibility that all is concealed not as it seems in the story of Maria Malina's misadventure.

⁴⁸ This is one of a handful of passages that Bachmann was persuaded to leave out of the final version of *Malina* (*TP 3.2*: 872). As Lennox observes: "The political project of *Malina* might have been better grasped if [...] Martin Walser, at the behest of the Suhrkamp Verlag, had not succeeded in convincing Bachmann to remove three critical sections from the novel that situate its story of love and death in the private arena of the Ungargasse within the larger political context of the late sixties/early seventies in Vienna." (*Cemetery* 319) See also Albrecht and Göttsche on the final editorial stages in which these excisions took place ("Leben und Werk im Überblick" 19).

verzogenem Mund und in ihrer Küche habe ich einmal ein Heft liegen gesehen HANNELORES WEG INS GLÜCK, daneben eine Nummer von einer zerlesenen Zeitschrift DAS GRÜNE BLATT. (TP 3.2: 710)

Similarly, Ich's secretary Fräulein Jellinek is reported to have spoken "abfällig über die Regierung" but Ich is again sceptical, as this would be completely out of character (*ibid.*). Ich then gives a third example of a discrepancy, this time between the press report and her own knowledge of her mechanic, Herr Lampl (TP 3.2: 711). In this instance, Ich feigns to accept the press's version as the more accurate one—"Ich muß mich gründlich in Herrn Lampl getäuscht haben" (*ibid.*)—but readers see through this mock disappointment and draw their own conclusions about whose account is more authentic.

Another way in which journalistic content is shown to be "Betrug" is in its failure to deliver on promises. This aspect of press "Betrug" emerges from a passage (hereinafter referred to as the "Werbeslogans" passage) in which Ich turns the spotlight on the advertising and marketing material in newspapers. In an attempt to see relief from her chronic nervous exhaustion, Ich has gone to a café to divert herself with some light reading. In her tired and distracted state, her eye is drawn to the plethora of advertisements in the newspapers and magazines, promoting a wide range of consumer products: from tourism to coffee; from dishwashers and financial services to pharmaceuticals.

[E]s gibt jetzt zweimal in der Woche einen Direktflug nach Kanada, mit der Quantas [sic] geht es bequem nach Australien, die Großwildjagden werden billiger, Doro-Kaffee aus den sonnigen mittelamerikanischen Hochebenen mit seinem einzigartigen Aroma müssten wir auch schon in Wien haben, Kenia inseriert, Henkell Rosée erlaubt den Flirt mit einer neuen Welt, für Hitachi-Aufzüge ist kein Haus zu hoch, Männer-Bücher, die auch Frauen begeistern, sind erschienen. Damit Ihnen Ihre Welt nie zu eng wird, gibt es PRESTIGE, eine Brise von Weite und Meer. Alle sprechen vom Pfandbrief. Bei uns in guter Hut, erklärt eine Hypothekenbank, In diesen Schuhen können Sie weit gehen, TARRACOS, Damit Sie flexaluminium-Rolläden nie wieder lackieren müssen, lackieren wir sie zweimal, Ein RUF-Computer ist nie allein! Und dann die Antillen, le bon voyage. Deswegen ist der Bosch EXQUISIT einer der besten Geschirrspüler der Welt. Der Augenblick der Wahrheit kommt, wenn Kunden unserem Fachmann Fragen stellen, wenn Verfahrenstechnik, Kalkulation, Rendite, Verpackungsmaschinen, Lieferzeiten zur Debatte stehen, VIVIOPTAL für den Kann-mich-an-nichts-erinnern-Typ. Nehmen Sie morgens [...] und der Tag gehört Ihnen. (TP 3.1: 585)⁴⁹

The effect of reading these advertisements is like that of a drug: initially her spirits are lifted as she experiences a rush of renewed energy and optimism: "Es kommt wieder Hoffnung in mir auf, ich bin angeregt, aufgeregt." (TP 3.1: 584f.) After working her way through the numerous temptations and solutions offered in the advertisements, however, she is disheartened to find that the solution being offered in the journalistic media is a vitamin product: "Ich brauche also nur Vivioptal." (TP 3.1: 585)⁵⁰ Clearly, she is neither enthused or convinced.

In this parody of the superficial solutions and language of the advertising industry, Bachmann takes the "Glücksversprechungen der Produktreklame ad absurdum" (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode*

⁴⁹ Lennox points out how this passage highlights the "availability of consumer goods from across the world, [emphasising] that capitalism is a global system dependent on a world market", anticipating "today's concerns about globalization" (*Cemetery* 333)—concerns that are also reflected in "Simultan" and "Drei Wege zum See".

⁵⁰ Note the similarity of more recent advertisements for this product (dated 15 August 2008):

Are You Tired During The Day? and Have Lack of Concentration? Vivioptal Vitamins Helps Eliminate Tiredness During The Day and Lack of Concentration. It Also Helps Against Disturbed Sexual Activity. (http://www.allnaturaldynamics.com/english/vivioptal_vitamins.asp)

286), mimicking the language and techniques of advertising as she did in “Reklame” and “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, cleverly unmasking the “Sprüche und Einflüsterungen der Marktwerbung [...] in ihrer erschreckenden Schalheit, Phrasenhaftigkeit und Nichtigkeit” through “eine sprachliche Mimikry, die, indem sie sich dem Verhassten anzupassen vorgibt, es nur umso schärfer ablehnt” (Steiger 30ff.). The slogans of the advertising industry, Bachmann suggests, play on our hopes, dreams, needs and frustrations. They purport to provide us with something we need or want, but are in fact trying to sell the products of those who pay for the advertisements. Such attempts to convince us that happiness, satisfaction and success can be attained by purchasing the right product or service promote an ideology of consumption, reinforcing material values at the expense of spiritual or ethical values.⁵¹ The materialistic ideology of the advertising industry’s “dream factories” cannot, however, provide lasting comfort for consumers, as Bachmann demonstrates in the “Werbeslogans” passage. In fact it can set them up for even greater disappointment.⁵²

7.3.3 *Malina* and the impact of the press on the individual and on society

Another aspect of the critique of journalism in *Malina* is the negative impact of the press on those who work in the industry as well as those who consume its products.

Journalism as an unhealthy and debilitating work environment

In describing her experience at the “Nachrichtendienst”, Ich characterises her work environment as abnormal, exhausting, unhealthy and even dangerous. The imagery she uses conjures up an atmosphere of darkness, desolation, clandestine dealings and lurking threats: the limousine that brings

⁵¹ Cf. Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik* 43). As Wagnleitner points out “the development of a consumption-oriented social order within capitalist societies— the pursuit of happiness as the pursuit of consumption” was part of the overall “Americanization” strategy of the American occupation authorities in post-war Austria (*Coca-Colonization* 6f.). For an excellent précis of how “the German and Austrian fascination with American consumer goods [...] served Cold War needs” and how the “freedom to consume” was pushed as part of a concerted political strategy to promote Western democracy in Germany and Austria to counteract the threat of communist encroachment, see Lennox (*Cemetery* 304f.).

⁵² In addition to being a significant passage in terms of Bachmann’s critique of the journalistic media, the “Werbeslogans” passage also represents one of many instances of Bachmann’s critique of modern consumer society, as marketed both explicitly and subliminally by the mass media. This is an area that has received little, if any, attention in Bachmann scholarship, even though her work, especially in her *Todesarten* period, is saturated with references to mass consumption and mass culture in the form of allusions to overindulgence in food (*Malina*, *Ein Ort für Zufälle* and “Drei Wege zum See”), the dictates of fashion (in *Malina*, “Simultan” and “Drei Wege zum See”) and the cosmetics and beauty industries (*Malina* and “Probleme, Probleme”), pharmaceuticals (*Malina*), consumer household products (*Malina*) as well as numerous references to popular places of consumption or shopping (*Malina*, “Probleme, Probleme”, “Drei Wege zum See”), the travel and tourism industries (“Herbstmanöver”, “Simultan”, *Malina*, “Drei Wege zum See”), and other branches of the culture industry, in particular the book industry (“Unter Mördern und Irren”, *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*) as well as the film and entertainment industries (*Malina*, “Probleme, Probleme”, “Drei Wege zum See”). The commercialisation of everyday life is illustrated in Bachmann’s frequent mentioning of specific brand names, not just in *Malina*’s “Werbeslogans” passage but elsewhere in the *Todesarten* works. For example: “Belvedere” cigarettes (*TP 3.1*: 382), “My Sin” perfume (*TP 3.1*: 412) “Kitkat” cat food (*TP 3.1*: 421), “Coca-Cola” (*TP 3.1*: 462, ; *TP 2*: 257, 276, 280f., 328); “Vogue” (*TP 4*: 114, 183); “Mumm”, “Moet Chandon”, “Dom Perignon” (*TP 4*: 120); “Dunhillpfeifen” (*TP 4*: 364). Bachmann also makes specific references to pop culture: for example, to “Micky Maus von Walt Disney” (*TP 3.1*: 586) and the popular song “Strangers in the Night” (*TP 4*: 111).

her to her workplace (and takes her home again the following morning) is black (*TP 3.1*: 592);⁵³ she arrives in darkness; the rooms she walks past to get to her office are dark and empty (as is her own work place); and the corridor she has to traverse is in a state of dangerous disrepair. The sense of covert danger is enhanced by Ich's reference to going "zu den hintersten Räumen" (*ibid.*)—a phrase reminiscent of Bluebeard's "last room", where his murders took place.⁵⁴ The sense of danger conveyed in this passage also seems to draw on the atmosphere of the 1949 Carol Reed film, *The Third Man*, which was set in post-war Vienna and whose title Bachmann used for the second chapter of *Malina*. Bartsch captures the significance of this cinematic allusion in the following terms:

Der dritte Mann ist [...] ein durch Medikamentenschmuggel Leben und Gesundheit von Kindern gefährdender Verbrecher in der Schwarzmarktszene des Nachkriegs-Wiens, aus der heraus sich, so die Ich-Erzählerin, »ein universeller schwarzer Markt« [...] und die »universelle Prostitution« [...] entwickelt haben. In diese ist auch der gesamte Kulturbetrieb mit einbezogen: der Vater, großer Macher bei Film, Oper und im Showbusiness, inszeniert die Vernichtung der Tochter als großes kulturelles Ereignis. (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 147)⁵⁵

This association with imminent danger and murder is further underscored by Ich's description of the building where she works as having the "Unheimlichkeit eines Mordschauplatzes" (*TP 3.1*: 594). Höller notes Bachmann's use of the term "Mordschauplatz" here which echoes Ich's later assertion later about society being "der allergrößte Mordschauplatz" (*TP 3.1*: 617). For Höller, the use of this image in the news bureau scene therefore suggests the "Ermordung der Bedeutungsmöglichkeiten der Menschen und Dinge im »Betrug« der Massenkommunikation" (*Das Werk* 265).

Given the gruesome atmosphere of her workplace, it is hardly surprising that Ich is on high alert, hearing phantom steps, and comparing the starting and stopping of teleprinters to the sound of sporadic machine-gun fire (*TP 3.1*: 594). The repeated imagery associated with night⁵⁶ and darkness is also highly significant on another level in relation to Ich's critique of the press in *Malina*: on the one hand such imagery is expected here because Ich is working on the night shift; at the same time, the imagery constitutes an important extension of Ich's attack on the press in the Mühlbauer scene, where she

⁵³ Götsche points out that in the fragment *Ein seltsamer Klub* (*TP 1*: 90-96) Bachmann also uses the image of the black car: »Ein ominöses schwarzes Auto bringt Eugen in den verrufenen zweiten Bezirk Wiens«. ("Malina und die nachgelassenen *Todesarten*-Fragmenten" 191). Götsche brings out the connection between this passage and the media-critique in *Malina* when he points out that "Ein seltsamer Klub" portrays "Eugens Initiation in einen Geheimbund [...], dessen Anliegen »ein letzter Versuch« mit dem alten Österreich, und seinem »Austritt aus der Geschichte« ist", which is, in turn, an important part of "[d]ie von Musil inspirierte satirische Österreich-Kritik des Mühlbauer-Interviews in *Malina*" and of the "*Todesarten*-Projekt" as a whole (*ibid.*).

⁵⁴ In the allusion to Bluebeard in *Das Buch Franza*, Herrmann sees Bachmann demonstrating "die alltägliche Gewalt als zeitunabhängig und universal" ("*Todesarten*-Projekt: *Das Buch Franza*" 145).

⁵⁵ As Lennox observes, Bachmann's use of the film title, with its "explicit reference to the politics and social history of the postwar period" has received surprisingly little attention in Bachmann scholarship. Lennox provides an extended examination of its implications and its connections to Ich's references to the universal black market and universal prostitution (*Cemetery* 328). See also Achberger (*Understanding* 102f.) and Dericum (33).

⁵⁶ In his essay on Kraus, Benjamin's elaborated on the significance of night for Kraus, who worked by night as well as by day. According to Benjamin, night is for Kraus "das Schaltwerk, wo bloßer Geist in bloße Sexualität, bloße Sexualität in bloßen Geist umschlägt und diese beiden lebenswidrigen Abstrakta, indem sie einander erkennen, zur Ruhe kommen. [...] Seine Nacht aber ist nicht die mütterliche noch auch die monderhellte romantische; es ist die Stunde zwischen Schlaf und Wachen, die Nacht-Wache, das Mittelstück seiner dreifach gestaffelten Einsamkeit: der des Caféhauses, wo er mit seinem Feind, der des nächtlichen Zimmers, wo er mit seinem Dämon, der des Vortragssaales, wo er mit seinem Werk allein ist." (Benjamin *GS 2.1*: 354)

sermonises on the universal system of mutual enslavement and observes that the only retreat and respite from this slavery is available to us at night when we are alone and away from our enslavers and the scene of our slavery. The suggestion, then, is that in accepting work on the night desk of a news bureau, Ich has given up her last vestige of freedom, and has entered a form of bondage.⁵⁷ At a time when others are out relaxing and socialising (*TP 3.1: 594*), Ich is engaged in drudgery and well on her way to exhaustion: “Gegen drei Uhr früh wurde mein Gesicht immer grauer.” (*TP 3.1: 593*)⁵⁸ The unhealthiness of Ich’s work environment is further underscored in the image of industrial grime that permeates the workplace, which does not even provide clean towels for its employees (*TP 3.1: 594*). When the workers are driven home in the early morning, they bear the stigmata of their dirty work: black fingernails⁵⁹ and a “bitteren bräunlichen Mund” (*TP 3.1: 595*) from the many hours they have spent in the “Ausdünstung” and the “Qualm vom Zigarettenrauch” (*TP 3.1: 594*)—a stark contrast to the world outside that is just starting a new day with “frische Milch und frische Semmeln”, or with the energy (and moist freshness) of “aufgestellte Mantelkragen und ein kleine morgenfrühe Wolke vor dem Mund” (*TP 3.1: 595*).

The disruptive impact of working at night when most of the world is enjoying themselves or sleeping is exacerbated by Ich’s inability to catch up on her sleep during the day because of quotidian noise levels (*TP 3.1: 595*). Over time, this unnatural routine resulted in the slow decline of her health. It also ruined her handwriting, which suggests the loss of individuality and impaired personal expression: “[L]angsam bin ich verfallen. [...] ich habe einen sehr wichtigen Rhythmus verloren [...] und später habe ich meine Handschrift ganz verdorben.” (*TP 3.1: 593*) The significance of Ich’s loss can be surmised from the positive association of handwriting with nature and authenticity in “Holz und Späne” (see Chapter 4 of this dissertation)—a loss, which also echoes Ich’s silencing in the “dream reporters” scene. The period when Ich was working at the news desk was, all in all, a grim time: a time when she was so wrung out by her work, that she lost the capacity for laughter (*TP 3.1: 592*), and was unable to read newspapers for two years (*TP 3.1: 595*).

⁵⁷ The suggestion of slavery is reinforced in the way in which Ich does not go to, or leave, work as a free agent, but is collected (and returned home) in a car service that has been organised by her employer (*TP 3.1: 592, 594*).

⁵⁸ The image of “Nacht” in connection with journalism is ambivalent in *Malina*: at the news desk, it is associated with danger, but elsewhere night is positively depicted as a time for becoming conscious of deeper realities and the truth of our existence (*TP 3.1: 399*). Folkvord’s observations on the significance of night and dream in “Drei Wege zum See” apply to this passage in *Malina*: “Die Nacht wird hervorgehoben als Zeit der Erinnerung. In der Nacht wird die Vergangenheit präsent.” (*Drei Wege zum See 35*); “Der geteilte Mensch der Psychoanalyse wird nachts konfrontiert mit seiner dunklen Hälfte, die Träume sprechen von dem, was er sonst verdrängt” (82). See also Folkvord (*Drei Wege zum See 118ff.*).

⁵⁹ Cf. Bachmann’s reference to Eich’s poem “Betrachtet die Fingerspitzen” and its closing lines “Betrachtet die Fingerspitzen. Wenn sie sich schwarz färben, / ist es zu spät” in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (*W 4: 202*). In that lecture, Bachmann describes the poet’s voice as speaking from “eine[r] fatale[n] Einsamkeit [...] von einer Gesellschaft inmitten der Gesellschaft, ein Ort, an dem es nicht geheuer ist, und das Wachbleiben erschwert wird, dem, der wachen muß, kann, will. Ein Wachender spricht, ein schlaflos Ausgesetzter, inmitten von uns wohnend [...]” (*W 4: 203*). See also the dream in the “Traumkapitel” where Ich’s toes turn black (*TP 3.1: 504*).

Newspapers as obstacles to human contact

The press not only had a debilitating impact on Ich's health while she was working in the industry, but also had a negative impact on her personal life, thwarting her early encounters with Malina. Thus Ich points the finger of blame at the press for interfering with, or tainting, the three "near" encounters that she had with Malina before they actually met. These missed opportunities constituted a period that Ich refers to as "[die] verloren[e] Zeit, als wir einander nicht einmal die Namen abfragen konnten" (*TP 3.1*: 288)—a time in which she had no option but to fabricate stories about Malina (and even make up a name for him) in the absence of knowledge that might have come from direct "Erfahrung".

In the first close encounter—in a passage that I will subsequently refer to as the "tram stop scene"—Ich and Malina were each reading the newspaper (or rather, Ich was *pretending* to read a newspaper and Malina *appeared* to be engrossed in his) while waiting at a tram stop. Malina, however, mysteriously disappears with the arrival of the E2 tram before Ich can ascertain whether he was aware of her or not.⁶⁰ The negativity of this anecdote has several aspects: firstly, in the suggestion that newspapers have the potential to bring us closer to the rest of the world by informing us of events; the mechanics of reading a newspaper can, however, cut us off from those in our immediate environment (as we saw in the case of Anton Wildermuth's father). Newspapers can also be deliberately used as a means of escape or a means of avoiding contact with others. Straßner notes this as a common phenomenon:

Vermutlich ist die Zeitung auch ein Mittel, sich zurückzuziehen, sich in die Lektüre zu vertiefen, um abzuschalten. Man versteckt sich hinter der Zeitung, um sozialen Ansprüchen zu entgehen. Man schafft sich ein Privatheit, in die andere möglichst nicht eindringen sollen. (*Zeitung* 26)

While there is no *explicit* reference to the press in Ich's second encounter with Malina, there is an *implicit* reference in Ich's description of the third encounter as "diese dritte unappetitliche Berührung durch eine Zeitung" (*TP 3.1*: 288). On this third occasion, Ich finds herself confronted with a false representation of Malina in the press's reports on the funeral of his famous sister, Maria (*TP 3.1*: 287f.), as discussed earlier. With the second encounter, however, which took place at a public lecture, we are left to speculate on the nature of the association with the press—one of Bachmann's many lacunae in *Malina*. For Weigel, the connection with the mass media is the way in which Malina responds to Ich's apology after she deliberately bumps into him at the end of the lecture to attract his attention: "[D]amals hörte ich zum erstenmal seine Stimme, ruhig, korrekt, auf einem Ton:

⁶⁰ For an analysis of the narratological aspects of this passage, see Albrecht ("Die Suche nach *Malina*" 49f.). Göttische points out that this passage has a predecessor in the *Stadtspark* fragment, "in dem Eugen—ähnlich wie später das Ich in *Malina*—den Heumarkt von der Beatrixgasse aus in Richtung Stadtspark zu überqueren sucht, dort einen blühenden Magnolienbau bewundert [...] und dann auf der Straßenbahnhaltestelle eine Zeitung liest" ("Malina und die nachgelassenen *Todesarten*-Fragmente" 198). For Lennox, Malina's newspaper in this scene indicates that "he has the access to the language of social communication (here somewhat debased) [...] which is lacking in this female 'I.'" (*Cemetery* 103) This interpretation, however, overlooks the fact that Ich is not only also holding a newspaper at the time but is, as we know, an avid reader of newspapers and magazines, as well as literature.

Verzeihung.” (TP 3.1: 287) Weigel sees in Malina’s “monotone[r], modulationsfreie[r] Stimme” a “damit verbunden[e] Medientechnik” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 544). This association might be appropriate for the monotone voices of the media “Stimmen” in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, but I do not support Weigel’s analogy here, as the character of Malina is shown throughout the novel to represent the very opposite of what the media stand for. Instead, I believe that the connection with newspapers in the second close encounter is more likely to lie in the topic of the lecture on that occasion: “Die Kunst im Zeitalter der Technik”—a topic that is not only typical of the kind of “öffentlich abgehandelten Zusammenhänge, Themen, Probleme” (TP 3.1: 286) that one might find canvassed in the cultural pages of a newspaper, but one that is also highly reminiscent of the title of Benjamin’s essayistic critique of mass culture, “Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit” (GS 1.2: 431–508).⁶¹

Journalistic content as pervasive, invasive and addictive

The alienation and isolation that the press can engender is exacerbated by their pervasiveness in modern life: the news is everywhere in its various forms. The ubiquitous nature of newspapers and other news media, and our constant exposure to them can impact our daily lives, forming an influential role in structuring our experience and concept of the world and reality, so much so, that many people find themselves dependent on a daily dose of news. Ich is clearly one such person: she loves news so much that Ivan suggests she buy a radio (TP 3.1: 620).⁶² Ich’s love of news is indeed quite obsessive:

[...] und verstört und fliehend *Zeitungen und Zeitungen und Zeitungen gelesen, und Zeitungen* schon als Kind gelesen, vor dem Ofen, beim Feuermachen, *und Zeitungen und Zeitschriften* und Taschenbücher überall, auf allen Bahnhöfen, in allen Zügen, in Straßenbahnen, in Omnibussen, Flugzeugen, und alles über alles gelesen [...]. (TP 3.1: 373, m.e.)

By her own admission, Ich’s fixation with news and newspapers is a veritable addiction that she cannot break: “Aber immer kann ich die *Abstinenz* von Zeitungen nicht durchhalten, obwohl es immer größere Zeiträume gibt, in denen ich keine mehr lese oder mir nur aus dem Abstellkabinett, wo [...] ein Packen von alten Zeitschriften und Zeitungen liegt, eine herausgreife.” (TP 3.1: 588) The action of selecting an old newspaper at random from this pile, however, makes Ich even more conscious of the extent of her addiction, and the fact that it is not just a personal failing on her part but the outcome of the mass media’s strategy to foster dependence on the news and other media content. Ich thus scathingly observes, “auch an diesem Tag, der längst vergangen ist, haben sie uns *überflüssigerweise drogiert* mit

⁶¹ Götsche and Albrecht note this connection and also point out that it could be an allusion to Heidegger’s lecture, “Die Frage nach der Technik” (TP 3.1: 929f.), while Weigel points out additional possibilities: a 1953/54 lecture series by the *Bayrische Akademie der Künste* in Munich; the title of a book in Bachmann’s private library called *Die Technik und die Kehre*; and a lecture that Bachmann delivered in 1961 as part of a series called “Literatur im technischen Zeitalter”, which was organised by Walter Höllerer (*Hinterlassenschaften* 544: fn. 37).

⁶² This is one of the few references to this mass medium in *Malina*: while Ich is obsessed with print news, she has no radio: “Unter einem Vorwand bin ich zu Ivan gegangen. Ich drehe so gern an seinem Transistor herum. Ich bin seit Tagen wieder ohne Nachricht. Ivan rät mir, doch endlich ein Radio zu kaufen, wenn ich schon so gerne Nachrichten oder Musik höre.” (TP 3.1: 620) The absence of radio in Ich’s life is even highlighted in the “Traumkapitel”: “Nebenan spielt es aus dem Radio: dadim, dadam. Mein Vater brüllt: Das Radio aus! Es ist nicht das Radio, du weißt es genau, sage ich bestimmt, denn ich habe nie eines gehabt.” (TP 3.1: 527).

Nachrichten, mit Meinungen zu Nachrichten” (*TP 3.1*: 588, m.e.).

As well as being an addictive and alienating product that isolates us physically and socially, news is, according to Ich, “eine Anmaßung” (*TP 3.1*: 588)—a presumptuous intrusion into our private lives. Press and radio broadcasts are a means by which the major players on the news scene insinuate themselves into our consciousness. Early in *Malina*, Ich successfully keeps such intrusions at bay in her private domain, which encompasses her home and Ivan’s in the Ungargasse of Vienna’s 3rd district:

Wir bringen Kurznachrichten: Washington ... Aber Washington und Moskau und Berlin sind bloß vorlaute Orte, die versuchen, sich wichtig zu machen. In meinem Ungargassenland nimmt niemand sie ernst oder man lächelt über solche *Aufdringlichkeiten* wie über die Kundgebungen *ehrgeiziger Emporkömmlinge*, sie können nie mehr hineinwirken in mein Leben. (*TP 3.1*: 299, m.e.)

However, it is only the ecstasy of being in love with Ivan that temporarily provides her with immunity to this kind of intrusive influence (*TP 3.1*: 300). As her relationship with Ivan starts to fray, her dismay and anger about the intrusions of journalism increase proportionately, culminating in her condemnation of the press as “unglaublicher Betrug” in the last chapter of *Malina*. The novel thereby seems to suggest that when all is going well in our lives, we can remain blissfully oblivious to the negative influence of press content. When things are not right in our life, however, we are more conscious of, and exposed (and thus vulnerable) to, the messages of journalism. Ich highlights the ensuing unhappiness promoted by the press when she refers to “dieses Gemetzel in der Stadt” and to the “unerträgliche Bemerkungen, Kommentare und Gerüchtfetzen [...] bei den Jordans, den Altenwyls, den Wantschuras” and to the gossip that is spread amongst “allen Ärmeren [...] durch die Illustrierten, die Zeitungen, im Kino und durch die Bücher” (*TP 3.1*: 307).⁶³ Such gossip is part of the press’s appalling fixation with total exposure:

[U]nd bei uns ist es nicht nur der Übermut der Ämter, der uns um einen letzten Rest von Scham bringt, sondern vor der Datenverarbeitung und den Fragebögen wirkte ja ein vorausseilender, verwandter Geist, der sich siegessicher auf diese Aufklärung beruft, die schon die größten Verheerungen unter den verwirrten Unmündigen anrichtet. Die Menschheit wird noch zur totalen Unmündigkeit erniedrigt werden, nach ihrer endgültigen Befreiung von allen Tabus. (*TP 3.1*: 408f.)

Or, as she expresses it elsewhere: “[N]ackt will jeder dastehen, die anderen bis auf die Haut ausziehen, verschwinden soll jedes Geheimnis, erbrochen werden wie eine verschlossene Lade” (*TP 3.1*: 307).⁶⁴ Paradoxically, however, the more things we expose, the less we know: “[W]o kein Geheimnis war, wird nie etwas zu finden sein, und die Ratlosigkeit nach den Einbrüchen, den Entkleidungen, den Perlustrierungen und Visitationen nimmt zu [...]” (*TP 3.1*: 307)⁶⁵ Here Ich’s alarm about the invasion of privacy and the decline of discretion mirrors the views of Adorno, who points out the ideology

⁶³ Here Bachmann echoes Kraus’s derision for the press’s fixation with meaningless “Geschwätz” (see “Phrasen”, “Meinungen”, “Geschwätz” on page 35 of this study). For a discussion of the relationship between society gossip, published gossip and its appeal to the less attractive side of our nature, see Stephens (97).

⁶⁴ Malina and Ich’s fastidious attitude to discretion and privacy is emphasised in an early draft of *Malina*: “[U]nd Malina sagte einfach: wenn die Leute doch eine Weile wenigstens, aus hygienischen Gründen aufhören würden, sich mit ihren Privatgeschichten zu beschäftigen. und ich sage scharf zurück, nun, ich habe jedenfalls das meistens geheimgehalten, wie es sich gehört, und ich erzählte nicht von anderen und mir [...]” (*TP 3.1*: 85)

⁶⁵ The lethal impact of society’s (and by association, the media’s) fixation with total exposure is illustrated in the anecdote about Marcel, who is rounded up in Paris as part of a campaign to clean the streets of homeless alcoholics. When stripped of his clothes and placed under a shower, Marcel dies of shock (*TP 3.1*: 625f.).

underlying this social development:

Hinter dem pseudodemokratischen Abbau vom Formelwesen, altmodischer Höflichkeit, nutzloser und nicht einmal zu Unrecht als Geschwätz verdächtiger Konversation, hinter der anscheinenden Erhellung und Durchsichtigkeit der menschlichen Beziehungen, die nichts Undefiniertes mehr zuläßt, meldet die nackte Rohheit sich an [...] die Sachlichkeit zwischen den Menschen, die mit dem ideologischen Zierrat zwischen ihnen aufräumt, ist selber bereits zur Ideologie geworden dafür, die Menschen als Sache zu behandeln. (Adorno *GS 4*: 45)

News as distressing and an obstacle to understanding

Just as the fixation with nakedness and revelation fails to provide enlightenment, so too does the wealth of information available in the press. The “Werbeslogans” passage (discussed in “Press content as “Betrug”” on page 173) serves as an illustration of this in an explicitly commercial context, in which Ich replicates the plethora of unrelated issues that vie for our attention in press advertisements for consumer products ranging from tourism to coffee, dishwashers, financial services and pharmaceuticals. In that passage, the quick transition from one slogan to the next and the accumulation of marketing phrases and product names replicating the overwhelming avalanche of information resulted in confusion, irritation and distress. As Steiger notes, Bachmann’s use of “kontrastierende Montage” here demonstrates “die Unfähigkeit von Werbesprache und Konsumideologie [...], sinnstiftende Instanzen sein zu können” (32). The same technique is used to identical effect in the previously discussed passage where Ich selects newspapers at random to see what was making the news on a given day in the past and finds that instead of enlightenment and answers, the press creates confusion and irritation: “[D]as fängt ja gut an, solche Titel können mich zum Vibrieren, zum Erzittern bringen.” (*TP 3.1*: 589)⁶⁶ Book reviews and financial and political discussion as well as reports on catastrophic accidents are dealt with side by side with pop questionnaires and advice to the lovelorn:

Ich zähle seufzend die Kreuze. Am Ende hat Ivan 26 Punkte, Malina auch 26 Punkte, obwohl ich für jeden in ganz verschiedene Kästchen Kreuze machen mußte. Ich addiere noch einmal. Es bleibt bei 26 Punkten für jeden. »Ich bin 17 Jahre alt und habe das Gefühl, nicht lieben zu können. Ich interessiere mich ein paar Tage lang für einen Mann, aber dann gleich wieder für einen anderen. Bin ich ein Ungeheuer? Mein derzeitiger Freund ist 19 Jahre alt und verzweifelt, denn er will mich heiraten.« Blauer Blitz rast in Roten Blitz, 107 Tote und 80 Verletzte. (*TP 3.1*: 590)

The agglomeration of disparate issues in turn leads to misunderstandings when the same term is used in different contexts:

Gehen Sie regelmäßig zum Friseur, wöchentlich, einmal im Monat oder nur, wenn die Not am höchsten ist? Welche Not ist gemeint? Welcher Staatsstreik? Meine Haare hängen über dem Staatsstreik und sind in der größten Not, weil ich nicht weiß, ob ich sie schneiden lassen soll oder nicht. (*TP 3.1*: 590)

Ich’s account of typical journalistic content is a case study in the “Verwirrung” resulting from the artificially constructed problems that are “bestellt [...] erfunden und in Umlauf gebracht” by the media as highlighted by Ich in the Mühlbauer scene in support of her contention: “Vermehren können wir die Verwirrung gar nicht mehr” (*TP 3.1*: 399). As Steiger observes: “[Die] Sprache der Massenmedien

⁶⁶ In an early fragment from the *Eugen-Roman II* phase, the narrator expresses disdain for news content in even stronger terms when describing the intense hatred that newspaper content incites: “Ich habe Angst, zu schreiben, weil ich hasse, weil ich nicht die Menschen, aber doch, was sie zuweg bringen, seit einiger Zeit zu sehr hasse, weil mich die Lektüre von unsren Zeitungen jeden Tag in einen Zustand bringt, von dem kein Nervenarzt, kein Fatalist, kein Gläubiger einen je heilen könnten [...]” (*TP 1*: 166)

zerstört die innerste Leistung von Sprache überhaupt. Anstatt im Besprechen der Dinge Klarheit über sie zu schaffen, im Schreibenden sowohl wie im Lesenden, vernebelt, verfälscht und ‘vernichtet’ die Zeitungssprache Wirklichkeit.” (30f.)

The press and its fixation with violence and murder

Instead of enlightenment and understanding, then, the press and other branches of the journalistic media bring us, according to Ich, only confusion and distress. The resulting distress is further exacerbated by depressing, threatening and frightening news content—“all diese Drohungen aus dem Radio, all die Schlagzeilen der Zeitungen, aus denen die Pest kommt” (*TP 3.1*: 303). No doubt, Ich is here deploring the relentless flow of stories about physical disasters, major accidents and scandals, mentioned earlier (*TP 3.1*: 588). Even at the local level, the press has a decided focus on death:⁶⁷ as Ich laconically observes, newspapers are constantly telling us who has died but never that a given person is still alive (*TP 3.1*: 629). This fixation with death extends to a veritable obsession with brutal assaults and violent death: “In den Zeitungen stehen oft diese gräßlichen Nachrichten. In Pötzleinsdorf, in den Praterauen, im Wienerwald, an jeder Peripherie ist eine Frau ermordet worden, stranguliert.” (*TP 3.1*: 619) In particular, there is a fascination with incidents of sexual violence, such as “Lustmörde[r] und ander[e] Männer[...], die auch in die Zeitung kommen, bezeichnet als Triebverbrecher” (*TP 3.1*: 614)—a fascination that Bachmann already alluded to in “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”. Newspaper reports like these encourage the imaginations of readers to run riot: “Jeden Tag grübeln Malina und ich [...] nach, was heute noch an Furchtbarem in Wien geschehen könnte. Denn wenn man sich hat hinreißen lassen, eine Zeitung zu lesen, wenn man ein paar Nachrichten gläubig aufgenommen hat, kommt ja die Vorstellungskraft auf Hochtouren.” (*TP 3.1*: 587) It is therefore hardly surprising that readers like Ich begin to believe that they too could easily become the victims of such violence: “[I]ch denke mir dann immer: das könntest du sein, das wirst du sein. Unbekannte von unbekanntem Täter ermordet.” (*TP 3.1*: 619)

In a passage that was excised from the final version of *Malina*, Ich declares that she has finally had enough of headlines like “Großmutter in der Jauchengrube ertränkt, Mutter mit zwei Kindern aus dem Fenster gestürzt” (*TP 3.1*: 51f.), and decides to do away with newspapers altogether: “[D]ie werden nie mehr zu lesen sein und uns mit bleichen Gesichtern dasitzen lassen [...]” (ibid.)⁶⁸ Instead Ich proposes a radically new emphasis in journalistic content: edifyingly good news instead of bad.

[K]ein aufgedrehter Gashahn mehr, sondern ich werde eine Zeitung herausgeben, in der steht, gestern um 17:30 verliebte sich die neunzehnjährige Anita Pollak sterblich in den 20jährigen Medizinstudenten

⁶⁷ Cf. the focus on murder and violence in the press as portrayed in “Herbstmanöver”, “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt” and “Ein Wildermuth”, as well as the gruesome fixation with death and destruction in the plays performed by the journalistic squirrels Frankie and Johnny in “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”.

⁶⁸ Like the “Umfragen” passage and a number of others that are particularly critical of the press, this passage too was excised from the final version. As Achberger observes: “Indem sie sich vorstellt, alle Zeitungen abzuschaffen und sie durch eine eigene zu ersetzen, hat die Erzählerin die Möglichkeit, einen Überblick über einige der grausamen Schlagzeilen zu geben, die angeblich das Alltagsleben widerspiegeln.” (“Bösartig liebevoll” 238)

Rüdiger Drimmler, er kletterte in Rodaun über einen Gartenzaun und stahl für sie eine wilde Rose und verletzte sich dabei, während sie (ihn) mit einem Hansaplast verband und ihm den Mittelfinger küßte, und APA um 20 Uhr fiel einem <>0-jährigen längst vergessenen Schriftsteller Friedel Kümmel ein Gedicht ein, dessen Schlußzeile zu den verspäteten Hoffnungen unserer Literatur gehören dürfte, könnte, sollte. (TP 3.1: 50f.)

The press's proclivity for violent and sensationalist content is underscored by Ich's humorous parapraxes—"Wenn irgendwo stand ›Sommermoden‹, habe ich gelesen ›Sommermorde‹." (TP 3.1: 537) and "Die neuen Wintermorde sind angekommen, sie werden schon in den wichtigsten Mordhäusern vorgeführt." (TP 3.1: 538). They also highlight, as Lennox notes, "the destructive quality of women's apparently 'natural' attention to such traditionally female concerns as fashion and cosmetics and the ways they are advertised" (*Cemetery* 324) and demonstrate the extent to which our consciousness has been "brainwashed" by the pervasiveness of death and violence in press content, so that we see references to death and violence in completely different contexts. At the same time, these parapraxes satirise the way in which we find deeply disturbing and frightening information in the press side by side with lighter topics like fashion, sport or society gossip—an association, which can trivialise or take the edge off the horror we might experience in reading about violent crime in the press. This trivialisation, in conjunction with the saturation of news content with sensationalised and graphic accounts of violence, must inevitably numb our response and make us cynical. Thus Ich gets to the point where she no longer takes press reports of sexual violence seriously, expressing her disdain for them with deep sarcasm.

Als ich nach Wien kam, hatten die Russen überhaupt keine Lust mehr, die Wienerinnen zu vergewaltigen, und auch die betrunkenen Amerikaner wurden immer weniger, die aber sowieso niemand recht schätzte als Vergewaltiger, weswegen auch soviel weniger von ihren Taten die Rede war als von denen der Russen, denn ein geheiligter frommer Schrecken, der hat natürlich seine Gründe. Von den fünfzehnjährigen Mädchen bis zu den Greisinnen, hieß es. Manchmal las man noch in den Zeitungen von zwei Negern in Uniform, aber ich bitte dich. Zwei Neger im Salzburgerischen, das ist doch reichlich wenig für soviel Frauen in einem Land. (TP 3.1: 613)

The press and exploitation

The press's sensationalist fixation with murder and violence is further illustrated in a passage that was also excised from the final publication. In this passage, known as the Michael Frank episode, Ich asks Malina to pick up a copy of that day's *Wiener Nachtausgabe* so that she can see if her interview with Mühlbauer has been published. Although Ich does not find any trace of the interview in that newspaper, she does find a headline that grabs her attention:

Auf dem Titelblatt gibt es eine dicke Überschrift, hier wird sonst aus einer ermordeten alten Rentnerin oder einer unergiebigem Salt-Konferenz⁶⁹ ein Drama gemacht, diesmal scheint es sich jedoch um etwas anderes zu handeln. Wien hat endlich wieder einen altmodischen, daher ungewöhnlichen Mordfall, von dem die Zeitungen acht Tage leben werden können. Es ist ein besonderer Fall, ich muß noch andere Zeitungen kaufen. (TP 3.2: 713)

Ich's reaction to reading the reports on this murder case highlights the way in which the press exploits our fascination with, and addiction to, stories that feature violence and death. This is just one of a number of instances in *Malina* where the press is cast in the role of exploiter. Other examples include

⁶⁹ Given that the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were a response to the arms race between the USA and the USSR, this reference to SALT is an indirect allusion to cold war tensions, and to ongoing war and violence.

the “Werbeslogans” passage, where press advertisements are shown to commercially exploit our insecurities or our desires for something better; and the Mühlbauer scene where Mühlbauer asks Ich for more precise information about the location of “die Gorja”, the location of her favourite summer walks back in her home region. Aware of the way in which commercial exploitation inevitably results from the mention of a person or place in the press, Ich declines to reveal more: “Nein, ich möchte lieber nicht sagen, wo die Gorja ist, sie wird sonst auch noch verkauft und verbaut.” (*TP 3.1*: 383) For Ich, tourism and the invasion of privacy go hand in hand—a connection that she makes elsewhere when describing the way her private mail box is inundated with promotional brochures, including countless “Werbeprospekte” from travel agencies, “die nach Istanbul, auf die Kanarischen Inseln und nach Marokko rufen.” (*TP 3.1*: 567) In this passage then, Ich draws a direct connection between the press and the commercial exploitation of mass tourism, the kind of tourism that is associated with “Festspielen, Festwochen, Musikwochen, Gedenkjahren, Kulturtagen” (*TP 3.1*: 395) and is in turn part of a huge bureaucracy that Ich deplores: “Ich bin natürlich gegen jede Verwaltung, gegen diese weltweite Bürokratie” (*ibid.*).⁷⁰

The invasive nature of the press and its association with exploitation is also illustrated in the “Bulgare” scene (*TP 3.1*: 414ff.). In this scene, Ich describes how she agreed to meet with a stranger in the Café Landtmann, under the impression he was bringing news from friends of hers in Israel. To her horror, Ich learns that the stranger has approached her because he has a nasty exotic illness that requires amputation of his leg, and wants money from her to pay for this treatment. In complete dismay, Ich scrambles to get away from him. At first glance, it appears that the sole purpose of this passage is to portray Ich’s vulnerability and extreme sensitivity, and to demonstrate how an individual like Ich can be harmed without any physical contact taking place: “In den Kopf schießt mir die Erregung, ein wahnsinniger Schmerz, mir träumt nicht, der Schlag ist diesmal dem Bulgaren gelungen.” (*TP 3.1*: 416) It also shows the way in which complete strangers try to financially exploit Ich, and so this passage also seems to be an elaboration of the preceding passage in the novel in which Ich reveals how she is frequently the hapless victim of innumerable requests from unknown supplicants (*TP 3.1*: 410–413).

A closer examination of the Bulgare scene and the preceding passage, however, reveals a link between the many instances of Ich’s exploitation and the press. For example, we can assume from the Mühlbauer interview that Ich is a celebrity of sorts. Ich has become a public figure through media exposure, and the novel suggests that this public exposure through the journalistic media is in some way responsible for (or at least closely associated with) the many attempts to exploit her. This suggestion of a close association in the Bulgare passage between the exploitation of an individual and

⁷⁰ Ich’s reference to “weltweit” also echoes her references in the “unglaublicher Betrug” sequence to the “schwarzer Markt” and the “universelle Prostitution” that characterised post-war Vienna, while the reference to “Verwaltung” and “Bürokratie” can be seen as allusions to Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique “der totalen, alle Beziehungen und Regungen erfassenden Gesellschaft” (Adorno *GS 3*: 54), in which organisational efficiency and control were so firmly entrenched they had effected the “Übergang zur verwalteten Welt” (Adorno *GS 3*: 9).

the press is supported by its context and by several key references to the press. For example, the Bulgare claims to have chosen Ich's name from the telephone book, but by prefacing this scene with a description of the way in which Ich's celebrity is frequently exploited, Bachmann suggests that the Bulgare episode is yet another instance of someone targeting Ich because she is a media celebrity. Furthermore, the association of the news media with personal exploitation and manipulation is underscored by the fact that the Bulgare uses press items as props in his mission to obtain money from Ich: when Ich arrives in the café, she notes that the Bulgare has "in der Hand, auffällig ausgestreckt, mit dem Titelblatt zu den Eintretenden gerichtet" a copy of *Der Spiegel* (TP 3.1: 416);⁷¹ the Bulgare then uses press clippings "alle aus deutschen Blättern, ein großes Blatt aus dem SPIEGEL" in conjunction with gestures towards his leg to intimate to Ich that he has the exotic disease "Morbus Buerger" (ibid.) that requires urgent medical treatment.⁷²

7.4 Assessing the critique in *Malina* and the *Todesarten* fragments

The preceding analysis of *Malina* shows that the journalistic media and those associated with it are portrayed in consistently disparaging terms. Those who work in the journalistic profession are incompetent, insensitive fools or unthinking process workers. Journalistic content is produced in unhealthy factory-like conditions that have a debilitating and corrosive effect on the health of those who work in them. The content produced by the journalistic media industry is an artificial construct that has no relevance to people's lives but pretends to be otherwise, and therefore represents a giant fraud on the reading public. Journalism is a pervasive, addictive and invasive medium that entices us with promises of greater knowledge of the world around us and solutions to our immediate problems, but in fact isolates us from our fellow man, and instead of enlightening us, exacerbates our anxieties and confusion.

There are, however, some important points that need to be taken into consideration when evaluating the critique of the press in *Malina*: first, the perspective from which the critique is written; secondly, aspects of the novel suggesting that the journalistic media's attempts to manipulate our consciousness do not always succeed; and thirdly, the existence of positive images demonstrating that truth and authenticity can survive regardless of the pervasive, invasive and destructive impact of the journalistic media.

The novel's perspective

In evaluating the critique of the press in *Malina* it is crucial to consider that the press is depicted solely from Ich's perspective and that Ich is a character that could be described as an 'unreliable witness'. As Lennox points out: "We are warned not to believe anything she maintains about herself."

⁷¹ Perhaps this represents a playful allusion to the way in which Bachmann became a media celebrity when her photograph was featured on the cover of 18 August, 1954 edition of *Der Spiegel*.

⁷² Cf. Bachmann's depiction of the press's fixation with disease and ill health in "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen".

(*Cemetery* 108) By her own admission, Ich is a deeply damaged individual and hypersensitive—an aspect of her character that is captured in Ivan’s description of her as “[eine] Prinzessin auf der Erbse” (*TP 3.1*: 326). Her experience of the press, including her time spent working at the news bureau, may therefore not be typical, and her damning assessment of press content and its impact would no doubt be coloured by her unhappy experiences there. It is possible, then, that Bachmann’s intention in presenting the press so negatively through Ich’s perspective was, as scholars like Steiger have suggested, to illustrate Ich’s neuroticism and the extent of damage to her personality (28). Such an interpretation of the novel is, however, only possible if one pays little attention to the clear socio-political critique of many passages in *Malina* (a number of which were unfortunately excised from the final publication, as mentioned earlier) and if one overlooks the fact that *Malina* is not the only work in which the press are portrayed in scathing terms. Instead, it is clear from the foregoing analysis of *Malina* that her depiction of the journalistic media is extraordinarily consistent with Bachmann’s portrayal of journalism in her earlier work. Furthermore, I will be demonstrating in the following chapter, that the critique of journalism in Bachmann’s work post-*Malina* not only continues along the same lines but intensifies.

Successful subversion and evasion

The second and more significant point that needs to be made in relation to Ich’s critique of the press in *Malina* is that its impact does not appear to be as universal and corrosive as might be suggested by the litany of complaints about the press in the novel. For example, the intrusiveness and invasiveness of the press, so deeply deplored by Ich, is shown to have limited success and penetration: while the press might represent an assault on privacy and good taste in its prying and prurience, *Malina* shows that there are still havens of discretion and modesty. In Ich’s case, she finds this safe world with Malina. When, for example, she tries to tell Malina about the men in her life, he exclaims: “Bitte aber keine Geschichten oder nur einige Stellen aus ihnen, wenn sie komisch genug sind. Sag, was sich ohne Indiskretion sagen läßt.” (*TP 3.1*: 606) In Malina Ich finds the polar opposite to the gossip mongering of the press and society in general: she describes him as “Malina, der nie etwas Gutes und nie etwas Schlechtes über jemand sagt” (*TP 3.1*: 437). His supreme discretion extends to not looking into her room and to remaining oblivious to any of her visitors (*TP 3.1*: 305, 380). And even though Ich’s early encounters with Malina had been spoiled by journalistic interventions, she has managed to overcome that now, and in her vision of the future, all other subjects of rumours will have their true natures revealed as well: “Aus den Gerüchtfiguren werden die wahren Figuren, befreit und groß, hervortreten, wie Malina heute für mich, der nicht mehr das Ergebnis von Gerüchten ist, sondern gelöst neben mir sitzt oder mit mir durch die Stadt geht.“ (*TP 3.1*: 290) Ich also manages to avoid the offensive intrusions of the journalistic world and to preserve “das Recht auf das Private, das Geheimnis” (*W 4*: 358)—as Bachmann puts it in her draft article on Sylvia Plath—in her relationship with Ivan:

[B]ald gibt es nichts mehr, was mich in meiner Erinnerung stört. Nur Ivans Geschichte mit mir, da wir keine haben, die wird nie zu erzählen sein, es wird darum nicht 99mal Liebe geben und keine

sensationellen Enthüllungen aus den österreichisch-ungarischen Schlafzimmern. (*TP 3.1*: 670)⁷³

Furthermore, for all its allegedly brainwashing and addictive impact and its baffling and invasive nature, we have seen from Ich's responses to the journalistic media, that intellectual distance and resistance are still possible. In the "Werbeslogans" scene, for example, Ich portrays press advertisements as deluging us with manufactured solutions to fake problems as part of a strategy to commercially exploit our anxieties and dreams. If we take her concluding words ("Ich brauche also nur Vivioptal" (*TP 3.1*: 585) at face value, then it appears this type of exploitative strategy works. But not long after this passage, when Ich replicates the mishmash of typical news content and advertising material in one of the old newspapers that she picks up at random, Ich not only sees through the presumption and irrelevance of commercial solutions but is so incensed that she turns into a passive resister if not an active anti-consumer:

Was geblieben ist, dürfte ein Haarspray sein, und darauf bezieht sich vielleicht alles, denn ich weiß noch immer nicht, wohin mit alldem Geld und wie man einen Staatsstreich inszeniert, jedenfalls wird zuviel Geld hinausgeschmissen. Jetzt haben sie es erreicht. Wenn meine Spraydose leer ist, wird diesmal keine mehr gekauft. (*TP 3.1*: 591)

Ich's response here, like that of Jan and Jennifer, who at the heights of their self-imposed exile from broader society, reject the commercial offerings of capitalism, is rather anarchic. She signals at this point that she has seen through the advertising media's attempts to deceive us into "believing that the way to a contented life is material acquisition" (Hamilton 80). At the same time, Ich's response indicates, that like Jennifer in "Der gute Gott von Manhattan", Ich has perhaps gone too far, for the refusal to purchase constitutes the gravest of threats to capitalism (Hamilton 80). And indeed, like Jennifer, Ich is ultimately destined for destruction.

A counter-argument to the foregoing example might be that the immediate impact of news content and press advertisements is indeed effective in brainwashing the reading public, and it was only in selecting a newspaper from the past that Ich's attention was drawn to the irrelevance, confusion and presumption of its content. Ich's alienation and consternation after pulling out an old newspaper at random and going over the news of the day, is an experience noted by Horkheimer and documented by Hamacher in "Journals, Politics" when he referred to a TV interview in which Horkheimer suggested that viewers try an experiment which involved reading newspapers a few weeks or months after their publication.⁷⁴

The reader of these old papers will notice that the imperatives, attractions and threats heralded in them reveal themselves as such only to the degree that they no longer directly affect him. The judgments that

⁷³ See also Ich's earlier description of the sanctity of her bedroom within her private life: "Auch Lina räumt hier nicht auf, denn niemand hat dieses Zimmer zu betreten, nichts ereignet sich und eignet sich dazu, preisgegeben, seziert und analysiert zu werden, denn Ivan und ich schleifen, rädern, foltern und ermorden einander nicht, und so stellen wir uns einer vor den anderen und schützen, was uns gehört und nicht zu greifen ist." (*TP 3.1*: 305)

⁷⁴ Although Hamacher could not recall the exact comment that Horkheimer made in relation to this experiment, he suggested that the effect was supposed to be "both philosophical and political. Indeed, the effect of this small postponement on the reader, on his perception of time and on his attitude to news and published opinion, should be considerable." (Hamacher qtd in Esch 61) Given the connections between Bachmann and members of the Frankfurt School as elaborated in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, it would be surprising if Bachmann were not familiar with Horkheimer's experiment.

the newspapers imposed on him at another time can now be dismissed as hectic presumptions. In the future he will no longer so easily obey the regulations of the newspapers and their time.[...] Horkheimer's is a piece of political advice that looks forward to the suspension of coercion and to its transformation for another way of life. (Hamacher qtd in Esch, 6)

However, it is clear from the many examples discussed in this chapter that Ich does not need this kind of distance to see through the mass media. As Steiger points out: "Weder die durch Zeitungen vermittelte, noch die in der Werbung verheissene Welt wird von der Ichfigur akzeptiert; wie die Sprache der Reklame ist ihr die Zeitungssprache tief suspekt." (32) The Mühlbauer scene provides further proof that Ich is neither a dupe nor as much of a victim of the journalistic industry as she professes. She may give the impression that she has been railroaded into the interview and that she is at the mercy of the journalist's impudent questioning, but over the course of the interview it becomes increasingly obvious that the gormless Mühlbauer is the one who falls victim to her successful verbal parries. Thus Ich manages to undermine Mühlbauer's clichéd approach and his expectations of formulaic responses by turning his own clichés back on him to reveal their absurdity and meaninglessness, when, for example, she extrapolates his question about "Lieblingstiere" to encompass reflections on "Lieblingsmoskitos, Lieblingskäfer, Lieblingswürmer" (*TP 3.1*: 386), or when she takes his question about "die heutige Jugend" *ad absurdum*. Kaiser describes the exchange as "[s]ieben Fragen, auf welche die Autorin im Roman poetisch kühne Antworten gibt. Antworten, die aber gar nicht Mühlbauers banalen Erwartungen entsprechen [...]" (289). Ich's game-plan here proves to be like one of her "somnambulen Schachpartien. Keine Antwort, wobei sie ganz aufrichtig sein möchte, kommt so, daß man journalistisch damit etwas anfangen könnte." (Hans Mayer 134)⁷⁵ The Mühlbauer scene therefore represents a subversive and anarchic response to the journalistic media.

Ironically, however, while Mühlbauer becomes increasingly agitated and frustrated about not getting what he wants, Ich's idiosyncratic and prolix answers provide him with much more personal and revelatory information than any "made to order" celebrity interview—he is just too obtuse to notice and to know how to take advantage of this situation:

Ihre leidenschaftlich-komischen, zunächst verrückt wirkenden Erwidern im Interview mit »Herrn Mühlbauer« [...] ließen sich als sehr präzise widersprechende Antworten auf gängige Klischees vom Schriftsteller und seiner »geistigen Mission« entziffern. Herr Mühlbauer hält diese Antworten für tauben Lärm einer Verrückten: er »löscht« sie immer wieder auf seinem Tonband. Die Ich-Erzählerin aber thematisiert schließlich selbst ihre Genauigkeit: »Antwort: Ich glaube, es ist ein Mißverständnis, ich könnte noch einmal anfangen und Ihnen genauer antworten, wenn Sie Geduld mit mir haben, und gäbe es doch noch ein Mißverständnis, so wäre es wenigstens neu.« (Kohn-Waechter *Das Verschwinden in der Wand* 129)

While Ich may be conscientious and voluble, however, her responses stay within the boundaries of the privacy and discretion that are so important for her (*TP 3.1*: 305) and are framed in such a way that none of the information divulged is of any use or interest to the journalistic industry. According to Mahrtdt, Mühlbauer would not have been able to translate Ich's responses into a formal article because

⁷⁵ Mayer was one of the few critics whose views Bachmann valued. As Lennox observes, only a few "weitsichtige Kritiker wie Reinhard Baumgart und Hans Mayer (dessen Rezension Bachmann sehr schätzte)" recognised, "daß der Roman sich gerade mit den sozialen Bedingungen auseinandersetzt, die das Subjekt einengen" ("Rezeptionsgeschichte" 24).

of his limited understanding, which is unable to deal with concepts that are foreign to it:

Ingeborg Bachmann gestaltet mit diesem Interview anschaulich, was Theodor W. Adorno in dem knappen Satz zusammenfaßte: »Was anders ist, wird gar nicht mehr verstanden.« Diffus erscheinen die Antworten der Ich-Erzählerin nur Herrn Mühlbauer, dem Leser aber wird deutlich, daß der Interviewten an einer differenzierenden Beobachtung liegt. [...] Sie bemüht sich leidenschaftlich statt einer schnellen Subsumtion unter vorgefertigte Begriffe um eine Annäherung an den Gegenstand. (*Öffentlichkeit* 234)

As Mahrtdt notes: “Der Leser wird nicht im Zweifel darüber gelassen, daß dieses Interview keine Chance hat, gedruckt zu werden.” (*Öffentlichkeit* 233f.) This is clear from Mühlbauer’s own assertion that he will need to come back again.

Although “redlich bemüht [...] und ganz bei der Sache” (Hans Mayer 134), Ich’s unconventional answers must also be seen in terms of a deliberate ploy of “gespielte Naivetät” (Guntermann 223)⁷⁶ along the lines of the traditional fool:⁷⁷ Ich uses her apparent guilelessness to not only get the better of Mühlbauer but also to expose the shortcomings of her adversary and the institution of the press that he represents. As Bannasch notes:

Das leidende Ich in “Malina” kann sich in dem mehr und mehr aus den Fugen geratenden Interview der Sympathie der Lesenden gewiß sein, und der Journalist Mühlbauer mit seinem keineswegs ungewöhnlichen Fragen wird als lächerliche Figur verstanden. Die ‘Normalität’, die er verkörpert, erscheint auf einmal fragwürdig. (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 29)

Given the obvious insight and satirical bent that Ich reveals throughout the novel, Ich’s deliberately toying with Mühlbauer is clear evidence that she is much more in control than she would have us believe: she is by no means the helpless victim of the journalistic media. Instead it is Mühlbauer, “[d]er gequälte Journalist” (Kaiser 289), who is the victim in this scene.

Gegenbilder

Regardless of whether Mühlbauer would have come away with enough interview material to write up a press article or whether Ich is consciously playing the fool in the Mühlbauer scene, the end result is an outstanding parody that not only successfully exposes journalistic clichés and journalistic behaviour, but also brings to our attention issues that are never addressed in the public domain of press content. As Weigel notes:

Hier gelingt eine *parôdia* im ursprünglichen Sinne, indem sie ein realexistierendes Genre vorführt und gleichzeitig mit der Gegenstimme ihrer *persona*, der Maske einer Schriftstellerin, die erwartete Rollenrede durchkreuzt, um auf diese Weise jene Antworten in die Öffentlichkeit zu schmuggeln, die jedes reale Interview ebenso stören würden wie das Mühlbauersche in »Malina«. (*Hinterlassenschaften* 189f.)

The Mühlbauer scene also delivers the irony of a scenario in which a reporter endeavours to erase his interviewee’s responses by means of technology, but it is the interviewee’s voice and response that survives via the medium of literature, which preserves a complete and authentic account

⁷⁶ Guntermann uses this term in relation to Arno Schmidt’s “Zeitkritik” but I believe it applies to Bachmann’s technique in the Mühlbauer scene: “Polemischer Gehalt und rhetorische Form sind aufeinander angewiesen. Das gilt für die Streitschrift ebenso wie für Erzählung oder Roman. Gespielte Naivetät befördert das allzu Vertraute in absurd erscheinende Sinnlosigkeit und Fremdheit, gewolltes Mißverstehen konfrontiert polemisch den übergroßen metaphysischen Anspruch des Ganzen mit dem ›realistisch-<alltäglichen Gehalt im Kleinen.“ (223)

⁷⁷ Cf. Folkvord’s observation about Ich in the Mühlbauer scene: “Der Narr ist aber auch eine ernste Figur, jemand, der die Wahrheit sagt, ohne in *einer* Rolle stecken zu bleiben.” (*Sich ein Haus schreiben* 136)

of the Ich's experience of the interview. As Weigel observes: "Während Mühlbauer löscht, was sein Konzept sprengt—»(Herr Mühlbauer stoppt und fragt, ob er löschen dürfe, er sagt ›löschen‹ und er löscht schon.)«—bleibt das Gelöschte für die Leser des Romans entzifferbar." (*Hinterlassenschaften* 189f.) This irony is intensified by the erasure of the journalist's voice in Ich's account of the interview. Ich still includes Mühlbauer's voice, but only indirectly. In the same way that journalists mediate the responses of their interviewees, Ich mediates Mühlbauer's responses as, for example, in her commentary on Mühlbauer's startled and frustrated reactions during the course of the interview, particularly at the end when she notes:

Herr Mühlbauer drückt auf eine Taste und stellt das Bandgerät ab. Ich habe ihn nicht sagen gehört: ich danke Ihnen für das Gespräch. Herr Mühlbauer ist in der größten Verlegenheit, zu einer Wiederholung bereit, schon morgen. [...] Herr Mühlbauer hat einen ganzen Nachmittag verloren, er läßt es mich merken, packt mißgelaunt das Gerät ein und empfiehlt sich, er sagt: Küß die Hand. (*TP 3.1*: 400)

In doing so, Bachmann positions literature as a "Gegenbild" to journalistic content in the same way that she sets up the contrast between literature and the press in her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen".

The Mühlbauer scene is not the only instance of a "Gegenbild" in *Malina*. As a writer, Ich takes on two very different projects: one supremely optimistic (and essentially unrealistic) and one brutally bleak. Ich's optimistic writing project is "Ein Tag wird kommen", a work whose utopian visions and blissful imagery constitute dramatic counterimages to the "Schlagzeilen der Zeitungen, aus denen die Pest kommt" (*TP 3.1*: 303).⁷⁸ On the bleak side, Ich is engaged in writing the *Todesarten*—a work that, like the journalistic media, is concerned with violence and death, but unlike the journalistic media, does not focus on sensationalistic headlines like "Großmutter in der Jauche"—the cannon fodder of the press—but instead will expose crimes that are misrepresented in the journalistic media,⁷⁹ and will reveal the "Verwüstung auf dem inneren Schauplatz" (Höller *Das Werk* 126)—that is, the much darker, more insidious and sophisticated level of violence and murder that goes undetected in society and unreported by the journalistic media. In a fragment from what is now known as the "Goldmann/Rottwitz Roman", the narrator (a precursor of the Ich/Malina configuration) describes the stories to be covered in the *Todesarten* as:

Geschichten, die nicht bekannt werden, und nur Geschichten mit letalem Ausgang. Mit der Zeit kommt man drauf, daß alle geheime Geschichten haben, sonst wären sie nicht so geheim, und in der Literatur gibt es nun nicht allzuviele von diesen oder jedenfalls keine schöneren, aber trotzdem gibt es Literatur und Verbrechen, und da uns die fremden Geschichten nie so liegen und in ihren Nuancen nie zu begreifen sind, nur in der Analogie, so brauchen Sie ja nicht so weit zu gehen." (*TP 1*: 388)

At a metanarrative level, then, *Malina* itself is a "Gegenbild" to the journalistic media. Within the novel the journalistic media are portrayed as producing recycled and thus predictable content, using regurgitated, predictable language within a rigid, predictable structure: content that often constitutes an

⁷⁸ As Thau notes, "das schöne Buch [...], das einem utopischen Entwurf gleichkommt, das die Botschaft zur Befreiung der Menschheit enthalten soll, ist nicht das Ergebnis eines intellektuellen Prozesses", but rather a product of ecstasy, representing "auf der einen Seite Fähigkeit zu intensivem Erleben, zu tiefer Freude, zu Gefühlen und Gedanken, die das Gewöhnliche und das Mittelmaß überschreiten und deshalb Sprengkraft haben; auf der anderen Seite sind es aber auch Augenblicke, die eine bestimmte Wahrheit vermitteln." (84)

⁷⁹ A good example of such a crime is the murder-suicide case that is incompetently reported in the press in "Drei Wege zum See" but investigated by Bachmann in "Gier", as discussed in Chapter 8 of this study.

offensive invasion of privacy; content that creates confusion or anxiety instead of understanding and enlightenment; and content that has no relevance to our lives. In *Malina*, however, we find the opposite: there is nothing at all straightforward or predictable about this novel:⁸⁰ indeed, Bachmann deliberately and consciously employs a range of “Verwirrstrategien” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 136) throughout the novel to throw readers “off the scent”. For example, at the most basic narrative level, we are not permitted certainty about the three main characters in the novel: from the opening pages we are led to believe that Ich, Malina and Ivan are separate characters in the novel. At a later stage in the novel, however, Ich reveals that she and Malina are one and the same person (*TP 3.1*: 433), thus opening up the possibility that Ivan, too, is part of Ich:⁸¹ “Der Roman ermöglicht so stets zwei Lesarten, ohne aber in einer völlig aufzugehen: die einer konventionellen Dreiecksgeschichte und die eines intrapsychischen Konfliktes.” (Herrmann “*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*” 132)⁸²

Similar ambiguities and paradoxes surround the ending of *Malina*, which has been variously interpreted in optimistic/positive terms as “Heilung” or else in a pessimistic/negative light or as essentially ambivalent.⁸³ The figure of Malina, too, has been assessed very differently, with some scholars seeing him as a negative character—as Ich’s murderer—while others disagree, noting that Malina is part of Ich, and pointing out Ich’s insistence “Es war nicht Malina” (*TP 3.1*: 692).⁸⁴ Even *Malina*’s reception was marked by the same kinds of widely differing opinions, with some critics seeing the novel as pure “Innerlichkeit” (or as thinly disguised autobiography) while a select few praised its social relevance and “Gesellschaftskritik”. As Albrecht and Göttsche observe: “Ein verkürztes Verständnis gesellschaftlicher Relevanz verkannte die subtile Zeit-, Bewußtseins- und Diskurskritik dieses komplexen Texts, so daß erst im Durchgang durch die feministische Rezeption der

⁸⁰ As many scholars have pointed out, *Malina* represents a cocktail of genres and narrative strategies. For example, Herrmann has noted that, although a narrative, *Malina* makes extensive references to music and uses the techniques of musical composition; the novel also dissolves the boundaries between novel, drama, music and fairytale, and gives differing indications about whether it is in essence a “Krimi” or “love story”. Further, it offers a multi-layered polyphonic narrative approach consisting of phone conversations, monologue like duets, interviews, psychotherapeutic dream analyses and legend (“*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*” 131). See also Albrecht and Kallhoff (92), and Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 136).

⁸¹ In her ground-breaking study, *Ingeborg Bachmann. Die Auflösung der Figur in ihrem Roman »Malina«*, Summerfield argues that it is not only Malina who can be seen as part of a composite figure, for Ivan, too, can be seen as a component of Ich, as “Verkörperung ihrer Anlage zur Liebe und Hingabe” (59).

⁸² Even Bachmann was uncertain about the nature and status of her characters. In one of her interviews, Bachmann admitted the possibility that Ivan was not a single, straightforward character: “Wie ich beim Korrigieren das alles hab’ lesen müssen, habe ich auch gemerkt, daß es mit Ivan gar nicht so einfach ist [...]. Ich hab’ also den Verdacht, daß er auch eine Doppelfigur ist.” (*Gul* 88)

⁸³ Optimistic interpretations include Bail (54), Höller (*Das Werk*), O’Regan and Venske. Those who see the work in pessimistic terms include Eifler (380), Endres (95), and Schmidt-Bortenschlager (“Spiegelszenen bei Bachmann” 45), while a more ambivalent view is held by Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 151), Borhau (31ff.) and Kohn-Waechter (23f.).

⁸⁴ For example, Thau sees Malina as a rather cold-blooded character representing “Rationalität, Objektivität und Empfindungsarmut” (19). Lennox, on the other hand, sees him as “a sympathetic figure” but a “creature of [hegemonic] ideologies, and he will thus be able to tell only those parts of the stories for which there are words in the discourse of which he is part” (*Cemetery* 335). For an overview of *Malina* interpretations, see Atzler, Borhau (103-105; 110ff.), Herrmann (“*Todesarten-Projekt: Malina*” 130ff.) and Lennox (“Rezeptionsgeschichte” 24, 26–34).

achtziger Jahre ein angemessenes Verständnis gelang.” (“Leben und Werk im Überblick” 19)⁸⁵

Replete with numerous other ambiguities, contradictions, paradoxes and lacunae, *Malina*’s “Mehrdeutigkeit” forces us to constantly revise our understanding. As examples of lacunae, Borhau cites the omission of Ich’s name; the mystery surrounding her “dunkle Geschichte”; the fact that “Malina ist weder als Person noch als Prinzip zu verstehen, seine diffuse Existenz ist rational nicht faßbar”; the sentence fragments, whose incompleteness allows for many varied interpretations of what is said, who is saying it, and how the rest of the sentence might have read; and the final sentence “Es war Mord” which constitutes the “stärkste Verunsicherungskomponente des Textes” (32). Thus, while the predictability of journalistic content ensures that it only requires minimal effort on the part of the consumer of journalistic content, *Malina* demands “aktive Leserleistung“ (Borhau 33).⁸⁶ “Der Unbestimmtheitsgrad des Buches »Malina« und damit sein Auslegungsspielraum sind als sehr hoch anzusetzen” (32), and so, just when we think we can draw conclusions or understand what is going on, we are confronted with a passage that completely undermines our assumptions. Bachmann conceded that this was part of her conscious narrative strategy in writing *Malina*: she did not want us to be able to interpret the novel the same way each time:

Es ist für mich nicht notwendig, daß ein Leser sofort versteht, was Malina und Ich sind, daß sie im Grunde genommen eins sind. Selbst wenn der Leser es anders sieht oder lange nicht dahinterkommt oder erst am Ende dahinterkommt—das würde mir nichts ausmachen. *Man muß überhaupt ein Buch auf verschiedene Arten lesen können und es heute anders lesen als morgen.* (Gul 94, m.e.)⁸⁷

As scholars have observed, it is “gerade diese individuelle Adaptierbarkeit der gehaltlichen Aussage anstelle fixierter Lösungsformeln” that underlies *Malina*’s “überzeitliche Aktualität” (Pichl “Flucht, Grenzüberschreitung und Landnahme” 230). Accordingly, any attempt to resolve the contradictions and paradoxes in the novel would detract from the novel’s inherent fascinating qualities (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 153).

Malina not only constitutes a “Gegenbild” to the journalistic media because of its “Bedeutungsvielfalt” (Atzler 166), unpredictability and unconventionality, but also distinguishes itself by reflecting genuine and personal “Erfahrung”: *Malina* provides us with a real “inside story”—the kind that the press purports to bring us but inevitably fails to deliver—and it portrays the many

⁸⁵ In his review of *Malina*, Hans Mayer chided those who failed to see its social relevance: “In Rezensionen hat man dieser »Heldin« und ihrer Autorin vorgeworfen, da strebe einer, mitten in der bürgerlichen Wohlstandswelt, bloß nach dem Einzelglück. Das Elend der Welt schein ihm nicht zu bekümmern. Wer so liest, hat den Roman mißverstanden. Alle Verwirklichung des Ich scheidert gerade an den Verhältnissen, die solche erfüllten Augenblicke verhindern müssen.” (136). According to Bartsch, early critics who had seen the novel in such terms had failed to take account of Bachmann’s rejection of an ahistorical approach to literature in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (*W* 4: 196, 230). Bartsch also suggests that early critics failed to recognise Bachmann’s social critique because of its subtlety, given Bachmann’s explicit rejection of “vordergründige Gesellschaftskritik und agitatorische Literatur” and the kind of “Dokumentarismus” that Améry argued against in *Die Tortur* (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 130).

⁸⁶ As Borhau points out, in its unconventionality, ambiguity, multivalency as well as the demands that it places on the reader, *Malina* is not unique, but exemplary of modern literary narrative (31).

⁸⁷ In referring to this interview statement, Bartsch warns Bachmann’s readers: “Man sollte daraus nicht die Berechtigung zu einem rezeptionsästhetischen Relativismus ableiten, wohl aber die Warnung, irgendeine Deutung als allein- und endgültige begreifen zu wollen.” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 133)

different “Todesarten” that can lie beneath the destruction of an individual, thus exposing the kind of reality that does not emerge from the press’s superficial and sensationalist stories of crime and murder. *Malina* thus reflects Bachmann’s poetological intentions for the *Todesarten* cycle, namely to portray not the ordinary kind of “Mord [...] an einigen Stellen in der Welt, von denen man mit Abscheu in der Zeitung liest” (TP 2: 72) but rather those “Verbrechen” that where no blood is shed and where the “das Massaker” takes place “innerhalb des Erlaubten <und> der Sitten” (TP 2: 73).

Malina also distinguishes itself from the journalistic media in its honesty. While the press claim to bring us the facts but encourage blind belief, Bachmann consciously employs a range of devices in *Malina* to ensure that we do not take what we read at face value—to ensure that we maintain the “Verdacht” (W 1: 191) whose importance she insisted upon in her Frankfurter Vorlesungen and in her interviews.⁸⁸ An important pointer to Bachmann’s intentions in this regard, and one that has been largely overlooked in Bachmann scholarship, is Ich’s description of *Malina* on the opening page of her novel as the “Verfasser eines ›Apokryph‹, das im Buchhandel nicht mehr erhältlich ist und von dem in den späten fünfziger Jahren einige Exemplare verkauft wurden.” (TP 3.1: 275, m.e.). The few scholars to refer to this aspect of *Malina* (while not discussing it in detail) include Herrmann (“Poetik der Kritik” 59f.) and Göttsche, who refers to *Malina* as the “Historiker im Heeresgeschichtlichen Museum [der] sich auf die Erkenntnis und Archivierung der Gewalterfahrung beschränkt und sie allenfalls in ‘apokrypher’ Form [...] veröffentlicht” (“Erinnerung und Zeitkritik” 85). Göttsche and Albrecht note that Bachmann’s library included a copy of *Leo Lipski’s Piotrus. Ein Apokryph*, for which she had written the draft essay entitled “Ein Maximum an Exil” (TP 3.1: 920), but they do not elaborate on its significance. Bachmann’s draft essay on Lipski’s novel does, however, appear to provide support for the contention that the reference to “Apokryph” in *Malina* constitutes an intertextual allusion to this book, when she refers to it in glowing terms as “ein Buch, das herausfällt aus den Zusammenhängen, an die man sich zu glauben angewöhnt hat, und verrät [sic!] somit zum ersten Mal das Gefühl, das ist wahr, so ist es wahr.” (W 4: 354f.) As we know from Bachmann’s lectures and speeches, there can be no higher praise from Bachmann than to have her describe one’s work as “wahr”. Bachmann reiterates her views on the book’s honesty, highlighting its extraordinary ordinariness: “Nein, es ist kein gelungenes Buch, es ist ein erleuchtetes, wahres, an vielen Stellen, das Abreißen von Klischees <...> es ist ein Untergangsbuch, nicht weil dort etwas untergeht, sondern weil in Einzelnen etwas untergeht, was die andren noch eine Weile betreiben, Leben, Politik, Lieben, Essen, Schlafen.” (W 4: 354f.)—all descriptions that could be applied to Bachmann’s own novel. I believe, however, that Bachmann had more in mind than a simple intertextual allusion to Lipski’s novel in her use of the term “Apokryph”. An examination of an early draft of *Malina* reveals that Bachmann was also playing on the dictionary definitions of the term:

Er [Malina] hat, sozusagen, alle Versuche nicht gemacht, die andre und ich gemacht haben, ich habe mir

⁸⁸ “Ich weiß noch immer wenig über Gedichte, aber zu dem wenigen gehört der Verdacht. Verdächtige dich genug, verdächtige die Worte, die Sprache, das habe ich mir oft gesagt, vertiefe diesen Verdacht—damit eines Tages, vielleicht, etwas Neues entstehen kann—oder es soll nichts mehr entstehen.” (Gul 25)

sein Buch angesehen, und so vergangen der Einband aussieht, darin ist noch nichts vergangen, aber ich weiß nicht, warum. *Ein Apokryph, steht unter dem Titel, also ein unechtes Werk und eines der nicht anerkannten*, und insofern träfe das zu, da sein Werk nie etwas anderes sein kann, und daher rührt auch seine Besonderheit, seine Zusammengehörigkeit mit *Malina*, die viel größer ist, als eine autobiographische es je erreichen könnte oder ein Tonfall zwischen Autor und Buch, nein, *Malina* und dieses Buch scheinen wie miteinander und gleichzeitig entstanden, und da man nicht weiß, ob dieser Mensch vor seinem Buch da war, um es schreiben zu können, und ob er sein Copyright geben konnte, muß es mit Recht als Apograph bezeichnet werden. (*TP 3.1: 28f., m.e.*)

These references to *Malina* as the author of an apocryphal work raise more questions than they answer. For example, how are we to make sense of the pointer that “Apokryph” refers to a work that is “unecht”?⁸⁹ Is it saying that the content of *Malina*’s book is untrue? Or is it suggesting that *Malina*’s book is not his own work? And if not, who is the real author? Is it Ich? And if so, could the reference to “Apokryph” also be a self-reflexive allusion to the future status of the novel *Malina* itself—will it become yet another “Apokryph” of *Malina*’s? After all, the novel is written entirely from Ich’s perspective, who (we also know) bequeaths the legacy of her “Passionsgeschichte” to *Malina* before her final murder in the closing pages of the novel: she therefore does not survive as the narrator/author of *Malina* and so only *Malina* could have brought this book to the reading public. And what are we to make of the suggestion that his book is not one of the “anerkannten”? Not recognised by whom, and in what context? For example, is this another suggestion that *Malina*’s book is not recognised by the reading public as one of his, or is it suggesting that it is a work that has not been recognised by the literary or academic establishment, that is, as not part of the canon?

Within two lines of this apparently guileless aside to *Malina*’s authorship we find yet another cryptic statement in connection with *Malina*, who is:

[a]us Gründen der Tarnung Staatsbeamter der Klasse A, angestellt im Österreichischen Heeresmuseum, wo es ihm ein abgeschlossenes Studium der Geschichte (Hauptfach) und Kunstgeschichte (Nebenfach) ermöglichte, unterzukommen und einen günstigen Platz einzunehmen, auf dem er vorrückt, ohne sich zu bewegen [...]. (*TP 3.1: 275*).

Once more Bachmann raises a question without attempting to satisfy our frustrated curiosity: why does *Malina* need “Tarnung”? If *Malina* is not who he appears to be according to this description, who is he really? The questions that these cryptic references to “Apokryph” and “Tarnung” raise are no doubt part of the arsenal of “Verwirrstrategien” that Bachmann adopted but, more importantly, they constitute a form of warning that in this book all is not as it seems. Their purpose is, I believe, to instill in us what Adorno referred to as the “Bewußtsein der Unwahrheit des Wahren” (Adorno *GS 7: 472*). In undermining our readiness to suspend our disbelief, these references also serve to constantly remind us to stay alert (along the lines of Brecht’s “Verfremdungseffekt”), to constantly question what is going on and not allow ourselves to be lulled into the kind of intellectual torpor that Bachmann saw the entertainment-focused products of the journalistic media and popular culture as inducing (*W 4: 198*).

⁸⁹ Ironically, the term “Apokryph” would be quite appropriate for the products of the journalistic media given that much of their content is, as Bachmann’s literary portrayal suggests, often of dubious authenticity.

7.5 In summation

Unlike the earlier *Todesarten* works, *Malina* provides a comprehensive, consistent and trenchant critique of all aspects of the press: journalists themselves, their work environment, the content that they produce, and the impact that journalistic content has on individuals and broader society. While Bachmann's critique of the press in *Malina* appears to support the stand of media critics like Adorno and Horkheimer, in illustrating the way in which the press tries to manipulate our consciousness, *Malina* ultimately does not convey the bleak pessimism of their position. Instead, *Malina* provides evidence that resistance to the machinations of the journalistic mass media is possible and even successful.

At the same time the portrayal of the press and the use of "Gegenbilder" in *Malina* supports both the view expressed in the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer that literature can be a vehicle for such resistance, and Bachmann's contention in her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen", that wisdom and enlightenment—or "Wahrheit"—can still be manifest in, and transmitted via, literature. I therefore agree with Höller's contention that *Malina* constitutes an attempt to come to terms with:

[...] eine[r] der entscheidensten Fragen der Literatur nach 1945: wie man einerseits das menschliche Erfahrungsvermögen öffnet für die äußersten, traumatischen Bezirke der Gewalt und sich trotzdem Perspektiven des Widerstands und des Weiterlebens—als Weiterschreiben—zu bewahren vermag. (*Das Werk* 144)

As such, I believe it represents a counterargument to Adorno's bleak observation in "Standort des Erzählers im zeitgenössischen Roman" about the impossibility of "erzählen" in the modern novel: "Es läßt sich nicht mehr erzählen, während die Form des Romans Erzählung verlangt. [...] Etwas erzählen heißt ja: etwas *Besonderes* zu sagen haben, und gerade das wird von der verwalteten Welt, von Standardisierung und Immergleichheit verhindert." (*GS II*: 41f.)

Chapter 8. The short prose of Bachmann's *Todesarten* period

8.1 About this chapter

This chapter examines Bachmann's portrayal of the journalistic media in her later short prose, in particular, that of her 1972 collection, *Simultan*—the only work that Bachmann completed after *Malina*.¹ Drawing on “die von Balzac und Flaubert begründete Tradition des realistisch-naturalistischen Gesellschaftsromans” and presenting “eine Art Mentalitätsgeschichte des pluralistischen Zeitalters am Beispiel Wiens” (Schneider “*Simultan* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 160), Bachmann's self-avowed intention for this collection of stories was to describe “das simultane Denken und Fühlen der Personen, die zusammenhängen” (*TP 4*: 7). Although they were “Nebenarbeiten der »*Todesarten*«” (*TP 4*: 547)—and as such “kein Bestandteil des geplanten engeren *Todesarten*-Zyklus” (Albrecht and Göttische “*Todesarten*-Projekt: Überblick” 128)—the *Simultan* stories were included in the »*Todesarten*«-*Projekt* edition because of their genetic and thematic connections to the longer prose works of Bachmann's “*Todesarten*-Projekt” (*TP 1*: 622).²

While the primary focus of this chapter is *Simultan*, I also look at *Ein Ort für Zufälle*, which was considered to be the first public indication of a significantly different phase in Bachmann's work (*TP 1*: 615).³ Bachmann's “*Todesarten*-Projekt” also covers a number of other short and incomplete prose works but there are few if any significant references to the journalistic media in these pieces. Where appropriate, I refer to them in passing in my analysis of the *Simultan* stories. Thus, the fragment “Gier”, which was written in the same period as the *Simultan* stories, is discussed in my analysis of “Drei Wege zum See”.

8.2 *Ein Ort für Zufälle*

Originally cast as part of Bachmann's acceptance speech for the 1964 Georg Büchner prize, *Ein Ort für Zufälle* was published in an extended version in 1965 with illustrations by Günter Grass. Although it has its origins in a speech, it is not only very literary piece of prose but also a highly

¹ Two of the stories (“*Simultan*” and “*Ihr glücklichen Augen*”) were broadcast on radio before *Malina* was published in 1971 (*W 2*: 607f.), but the others in the collection were not finalised for publication until 1972.

² While Lennox agrees that the *Simultan* stories belong to Bachmann's greater *Todesarten* project (*Cemetery* 334), Weigel challenges the inclusion of *Ein Ort für Zufälle* and the *Simultan* collection in the »*Todesarten*«-*Projekt* edition, insisting, “[daß] deren Subsumierung unter ein einziges Projekt mit dem Titel »*Todesarten*« [...] sich durch nichts rechtfertigen [läßt]” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 511ff.). Weigel's view, however, seems to be unnecessarily dogmatic and to discount the many clear thematic connections, and similarities of narrative strategy in the *Simultan* stories and Bachmann's *Todesarten* works (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 294). See also Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 155) and Dusar (7, 11 et passim).

³ For an account of the editors' reasons for including *Ein Ort für Zufälle* in »*Todesarten*«-*Projekt*, see *TP 1*: 625.

experimental piece (Bannasch “Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa” 176),⁴ which includes a significant reference to the press and thus warrants inclusion in my study.

This reference occurs in a passage towards the end of *Ein Ort für Zufälle* and provides symbolic commentary on the relevance of newspaper content: “Der Holzstoß ist errichtet am Kurfürstendamm, Ecke Joachimsthalerstraße. Es ist Zeitungsstille. Keine der Zeitungen, mit denen das Feuer angefacht werden kann, ist erschienen. Der Kiosk ist leer, nicht einmal die Verkäuferin ist da [...]” (*TP I*: 224f.) In the absence of newspapers, the world has temporarily come to a standstill—not because people are interested in their content, but because the paper is needed to start a bonfire. This scenario therefore echoes the suggestion in *Das Buch Franza*, where newspapers are used to shield Franza from the burning sun, that newspapers *do* serve a useful purpose, but this usefulness is related to its physical characteristics, not its content.

While waiting for the newspapers, people start to dismantle the wood pile, some secreting bits of wood to take home, while others use their pen-knives to make wood carvings of whatever comes into their heads: “Sonnenzeichen, Lebenszeichen” (ibid.). In the absence of printed mass media, then, people rediscover their resourcefulness and creativity, returning to more ancient ways of expressing themselves that were used before the mass manufacture of paper. This passage therefore recalls the contrast between “das Wort, in die Rinden geschnitten, wahr und gemessen” and the “Papier am Fließband” (*W I*: 40) of “Holz und Späne”.⁵ When the newspapers finally arrive, they are no longer of use as the firewood has all gone. Their absence has not only highlighted their irrelevance (and, in this case, their unreliability) but has also given people the distance to see them from an alienated perspective, in physically repulsive terms, as either disgusting excess or wrung-out insubstantiality:

Mit einemmal erscheinen die Zeitungen doch, erst die ganz kleinen Zeitungen mit schwarz verfetteten Buchstaben, mit schwartigen Balken, überschüssigem kalten Fett, das an den Rändern herunterläuft. Dann die ganz großen Zeitungen, die mageren, ganz ausgekochten, mit dünner Brühe überlaufenen, die mit den Handschuhen in die Hand genommen werden. (*TP I*: 224f.)

This passage constitutes *inter alia* a literary reflection on the superficial nature of news content: in the same way that newspapers only deal with the superficial world of outward appearances, so too Bachmann pays attention only to the surface—to the visual aspects of news—to the size of the papers themselves and the typeface used. The content of the newspapers, it seems, is not even worth mentioning. In the graphic and repulsive imagery of this passage, Bachmann employs, as a form of “Verfremdungseffekt”, the techniques of exaggeration and sensationalism associated with the tabloid press to both attract the reader’s attention and to manipulate emotions for a particular effect—in *Ein Ort für Zufälle* Bachmann thereby makes us look at newspapers differently, so that we see them for what they are: not oracles or sources of important information, but merely sheets of paper with letters

⁴ As Bannasch observes: “Mit seiner experimentellen Form und seiner Poetik des Leidens weist *Ein Ort für Zufälle* so auf die *Todesarten* voraus.” (“Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa” 179) Its experimental nature made it difficult to assign to a given genre (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 133; “Ein Ort für Zufälle” 135). For a discussion of the controversy that *Ein Ort für Zufälle* aroused, see Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 376: fn. 49).

⁵ Admittedly, the comparison is not completely valid as the image in *Ein Ort für Zufälle* is deprecated by the degraded cityscape of *Ein Ort für Zufälle* compared to the pristine forest of “Holz und Späne”.

on them.

Another significant aspect of this passage is the extended food metaphor of “verfetteten Buchstaben, mit schwartigen Balken, überschüssigem kalten Fett” in which Bachmann draws on the same imagery of greasy excess that she associated with the stultifying effects of the popular media when she equated “Schlagsahne” with “Illustrierten” in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” (as discussed in Chapter 2 of this study).⁶ Immediately afterwards, however, the image is reversed to suggest the insubstantial nature of press content, by using words that suggest nutritional deprivation—“die mageren, ganz ausgekochten, mit dünner Brühe überlaufenen”—perhaps alluding to the popular press’s promotion of slimness and dieting, while contributing to the “katastrophale Gewalt des gegenwärtigen [...] Konsumwahns” (Höller *Das Werk* 126). What is missing from the press, we might infer from Bachmann’s “Frankfurter Vorlesungen”, is the substantial and sustaining bread of truth and insight (*W* 4: 198).

A surprising aspect of Bachmann’s brief but biting reference to the press in *Ein Ort für Zufälle* is the fact that it is there at all in such a short piece: one almost has the impression that Bachmann did not want to miss any opportunity to express her distaste for journalistic products. Moreover, although the pejorative nature of this reference to the press generally accords with Bachmann’s portrayal of the press elsewhere, the critique in *Ein Ort für Zufälle* takes on a more extreme quality because it is situated in the surreal and grotesque context of 21 “Krankheitsbilder” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 374). Its “»verrückte« Durchdringung von Geschichtsreflexion, Zeitgeschichte und Krankheitsdarstellung” (Göttsche “Erinnerung und Zeitkritik” 80) depicts Berlin as an “aus den Fugen geratenen Schauplatz[...].” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 375)—a city that is simultaneously attempting to deal with the Cold War present while vainly trying to ignore its National Socialist past, and a society so dysfunctional it could be the modern day equivalent of the “world gone mad” as seen through the eyes of Büchner’s character, Lenz. The ugly and superfluous nature of the press, Bachmann suggests by this context, is one of many symptoms of a dysfunctional world gone mad.

8.3 “Simultan”

The central character of “Simultan”, the introductory and eponymous story of the collection, is the hard-working and professionally successful Nadja, a simultaneous interpreter, who decides to go on short driving holiday through southern Italy as a break from her current assignment in Rome. On this journey, she is accompanied by a man she recently met at a conference in Rome: Ludwig Frankel, a fellow Viennese and senior official of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Greber captures the essence of the plot and key themes when she says: “»Simultan« handelt vom

⁶ See also the earlier image depicting the population of Berlin as wrapped in “Fettpapier” (*TP I*: 206) and the motif of excessive consumption and greasy excess in a later passage about old women gorging themselves on cake (*TP I*: 219)—a passage in which Bachmann uses the “Schlagsahne” image from her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” when describing the waitress whose high heels get stuck in the whipped cream as she is serving her voracious customers. (*ibid.*).

prekären Versuch einer Flucht in die Liebe als Heilmittel gegen Selbstentfremdung, von utopischem Traum einer Rückkehr in die eine Muttersprache als Garant eines fixen Fundaments und Gegengewicht zur disparaten Vielsprachigkeit der Berufswelt." (178)

Newspapers play an important role for Nadja. For a top-level simultaneous interpreter like Nadja, they represent more than just a means of keeping uptodate with what is going on in the world—they are an essential tool of trade: "[E]s ist wichtig, daß ich regelmäßig alle großen Zeitungen lese, ich muß den Wendungen auf der Spur bleiben, den neuen Ausdrücken, aber die Terminologien, das gerade war das wenigste, da gab es die Berichte, die Listen [...]" (TP 4: 108) Nadja's compulsory reading of newspapers is, however, associated with stress and alienation because she is forced to read about subjects in which she has not the slightest interest and, at times, subjects to which she even has an aversion: "Chemie mochte sie nicht, Landwirtschaft sehr, Flüchtlingsprobleme, das ging, wenn sie für die Vereinten Nationen arbeitete, aber Unions de Postes Universelles und International Unions of Marine Insurance, das waren ihre letzten Alpträume gewesen" (TP 4: 108). This aversion is, however, only one symptom of deeper seated unhappiness and alienation. Outwardly a supremely confident, unflappable and sophisticated woman of the world, Nadja suffers from neurotic levels of anxiety.

While the story hints at incidents in her past—for example, her references to "damals [als] es mir sehr schlecht gegangen [ist]" (TP 4: 108f., 113)⁷ when explaining some of her more neurotic behaviour—some of Nadja's problems can be attributed to her working life.

Was für ein seltsamer Mechanismus war sie doch, ohne einen einzigen Gedanken im Kopf zu haben, lebte sie, eingetaucht in die Sätze anderer, und mußte nachtwandlerisch mit gleichen, aber anderslautenden Sätzen sofort nachkommen, ... jedes Wort konnte sie so auf einer Rolle sechsmal herumdrehen, sie durfte nur nicht denken, daß machen, faire faire, fare fare, delat' delat' bedeutete, das konnte ihren Kopf unbrauchbar machen, und sie mußte schon aufpassen, daß sie eines Tages nicht von den Wortmassen verschüttet wurde. (TP 4: 115)⁸

Because of its demanding nature, simultaneous interpreting is ideally only done in 20-minute shifts but Nadja is often required to put in longer hours and needs a thermos of warm water with honey to get her through the day. By evening, she is so exhausted she can barely hold a newspaper, let alone read it. As Nadja explains: "[J]eder hat seine eigene Methode, sich durch den Tag zu bringen, aber am Abend kann ich kaum noch die Zeitung in der Hand halten" (TP 4: 108). While newspapers might represent for some people a much-needed diversion and respite from their working day, it is an extension of a draining work day for Nadja, for whom staying abreast of current events and terminology is

⁷ Although it is not made explicit, we know that this alludes to the physical violence of her former lover, Jean Pierre, who used to beat her, "nie im Zorn, sondern weil er es für das Natürlichste hielt, sie hie und da zu schlagen" (TP 4: 127). Characteristically for a *Simultan* protagonist, Nadja underplays the incident, even though she describes it on another occasion as a deep "Schock" (TP 4: 110, 113) that required hospitalisation and resulted in Nadja not being able to sleep in the same room as someone else (TP 4: 110).

⁸ Nadja's work-related alienation resembles Ich's response to working at the night news desk. While not making this direct comparison, the similarity of experience is brought out by others. Achberger, for example, notes that Nadja's choice of profession represents "a striking metaphor for woman's role in patriarchal society. Nadja has no voice of her own but merely serves to mediate the voices of others" (*Understanding* 147). In a similar vein, Schneider refers to Nadja's "déformation professionnelle", which results in "Verlust der eigenen Kommunikationsfähigkeit [...], indem es die Wörter ihrer Geltungshaftigkeit beraubt" (*Kompositionsmethode* 305).

compulsory, but an aspect of her work that she can only face with the help of something much stronger than honey water: “[I]ch komme ins Hotel, trinke einen Whisky, kann nichts mehr hören, nichts sehen und sitze ausgewrungen da, mit meinen Mappen und Zeitungen” (TP 4: 109). In fact she depends on a range of substances to help her face the world: “Nadja erleichtert sich mit Hilfe von Suchtmitteln—Rauchen, Alkohol und Tabletten—das Leben, um sich nicht einer Sicht auf die Welt stellen zu müssen, die eine von fürchterlichen »Erschütterungen, Verstörungen« [...] ist.” (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 60f.) Like other women in the *Simultan* stories, however, Nadja hides her pain behind a façade of “Fröhlichkeit, Sinnlichkeit und Gesprächigkeit” (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 297).⁹

While there are no further explicit references to the press, “Simultan” does mention the journalistic medium of television¹⁰ in the closing scene describing Frankel waiting for Nadja in the bar of the hotel where they are staying. When Nadja comes to join him, Frankel fails to notice her because he is so engrossed in a televised cycling race (TP 4: 143). The race is coming to a climax as Nadja enters, and in an extended image that mirrors the intensity of Nadja’s own desperate attempts to keep up her concentration in her interpretation sessions (TP 4: 108), the broadcast commentator is described as stumbling over his words in his attempts to keep up with what is happening on the screen: “Der Sprecher redete in höchster Erregung, er versprach sich, korrigierte sich, stolperte wieder über ein Wort, es galt noch drei Kilometer, er redete immer schneller, als hätte er die Pedale zu treten, als wäre er nicht mehr imstande durchzuhalten [...]” (TP 4: 143) For O’Regan, this passage “underlines the chasm between this type of language and reality” (39). It could, however, be argued that this description shows great synchronicity between the excitement of the event and the commentary. Thus Greber insists that it illustrates “erstmals integriert (und gerade deshalb unelegant wirkende) Kommunikationsweisen” (188) and so represents the positive and effective use of language, in contrast to Nadja’s professional communication:

Der Kommentator des Radrennens praktiziert gewissermaßen eine andere Form von Simultandolmetschen, die Übersetzung des visuellen in einen verbalen Code. Im Fernsehen gelingt die Abstimmung beider Zeichensysteme und die mediale Mimesis des Realen so perfekt, daß es zu ihrem punktuellen Zusammenfall kommt, zu einem Übersprung der medialen in die reale Welt. (188f.)

An aspect of the scene that is potentially negative, however, is the way it mirrors the “tram stop” scene in *Malina* where Malina is so absorbed in his newspaper that he doesn’t notice Ich. The bar scene in “Simultan” echoes this scenario in depicting the capacity of a mass medium to absorb so much of attention that it makes individuals oblivious to others and to their physical environment, separating them from their immediate reality and hindering personal contact and communication. Certainly, for

⁹ As Schneider notes, Nadja’s mask initially makes it difficult for the reader to even see her as a victim—as someone who might attract our sympathy (*Kompositionsmethode* 297). This is true of all the *Simultan* protagonists, whose protective façades make them “unsympathische[...] Opfer” (306, 312). These façades and Bachmann’s subtle narrative strategies require readers to read carefully between the lines to detect the signs of psychological and emotional damage and the source of that damage. For an analysis of the ways in which the *Simultan* protagonists delude themselves and also contribute to their own suffering, see Dippel (124ff.).

¹⁰ Although television was becoming an increasingly popular medium in the course of the 1960s, it did not have the penetration and social significance as a news and entertainment medium that it was to assume over later decades. It is therefore not surprising that the focus of Bachmann’s critique is the press rather than television.

those watching the broadcast, the experience is “aus zweiter Hand”, and thus the kind of “Ersatz” experience that Bachmann deplored in her observations about the demise of real “Erfahrung” because of the increasing encroachment of the mass media, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. The difference between this passage and the *Malina* passage, however, is that the medium only forms a temporary barrier to contact in “Simultan”: as soon as the race is over, Nadja quickly establishes effective though silent intimacy and communication with Frankel by pointing to his pullover, which is slung over her shoulder (*TP 4*: 144). A further difference between the scenes is the positive way in which Nadja in the end actively “connects” with the young boy at the bar in calling out “Auguri!” (*TP 4*: 145), communicating not only her happiness and goodwill but also perhaps forgiveness for the way in which he initially ignored her because he, too, was engrossed in the race broadcast.

I therefore disagree with those who see only pessimism in “Simultan”,¹¹ and instead support the more optimistic interpretations of this story. O’Regan, for example, perceptively traces the way in which Nadja’s consciousness is changed over the course of the second half of the story (36ff.), noting the way in which she and Frankel establish an effective but silent form of communication when they go underwater (*TP 4*: 121);¹² the way in which Nadja is deeply moved and even transformed by her encounter with the statue of Christ at Maratea (*TP 4*: 140f.); and the way in which she re-learns her ability to cry in the wake of her frustrating experience trying to translate the Bible (*TP 4*: 142). And while the bar scene suggests a “return to a world of limited language”, it is nevertheless, as O’Regan points out, “suffused with the afterglow and effects of [Nadja’s] utopian experience” (ibid.). Thus O’Regan argues that while “[t]he facts around her might not have changed” (ibid.) Nadja herself has been transformed, and this transformation is flagged in her expression of goodwill to the boy behind the bar as she leaves.¹³ Greber, too, emphasises the radical change in Nadja as a result of her emotional and physical crisis at Maratea: “Am Ende des kathartischen Prozesses steht die Entdeckung der eigenen Kräfte, die Rückgewinnung von Selbstvertrauen und Lebenswillen, die Aufhebung der Entfremdung.” (187) This change has flow-on effects to other parts of her life, including her feelings for Frankel, as shown in the way Nadja presses her face into his pullover and kisses it (*TP 4*: 141), and the way she silently takes his hand as they leave in the closing scene (*TP 4*: 145). The story therefore leaves open the possibility that Nadja’s personal transformation may translate to her relationship with Frankel “in

¹¹ Schneider, for example, sees Frankel as an “unsensibler Tölpel, der alle Anzeichen ihrer seelischen Bedrängnis ignoriert oder mißverstehet” (*Kompositionsmethode* 295) and warns that, while Nadja may not have been finally destroyed in the course of the narrative, she is nevertheless at high risk and in need of intensive help, “wenn eine Katastrophe vermieden werden soll” (ibid.).

¹² Greber makes the same point about the underwater sign language and draws attention to the “Spiel der Zungen” episode as a further example of silent but authentic communication between Nadja and Frankel, noting: “In der Körpersprache also bekommt das Wiener Paar, das nicht wienerisch miteinander reden kann, die momentan-utopische »Chance, den Zauber wiederherzustellen.«” (186) See also Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik* 82f.).

¹³ Beicken is another scholar, who sees in the story’s conclusion “einen Hoffnungsakzent” (203f.). On the basis of its ending, Achberger, too, sees this story “as an uncharacteristically encouraging one” (*Understanding* 150).

einer jenseits des Textes und des offenen Schlusses liegenden Zukunft" (Greber 186).¹⁴ Schneider, however, rejects optimistic interpretations of this story as a desire "in der Erzählung selbst eine *inhaltliche* Lösung der seelischen Konflikte und der Lebensprobleme Nadjas ausfindig zu machen". Instead, he insists that Nadja's transformation from despair to euphoria in the preceding scenes constitutes further evidence of her "physische Labilität [...], die sich ohne fremde Unterstützung nicht überwinden läßt" (*Kompositionsmethode* 309). In the bar scene, then, Schneider merely sees corroboration for his view that such assistance can never be forthcoming from Frankel, who is so immersed in the sports broadcast that he does not even notice her arrival. In support of this pessimistic interpretation Schneider cites Nadja and Frankel's clearly differing attitudes to the television broadcast, noting how "Nadjas innere Distanz gegenüber dem Kampfinstinkte freilegenden Massenspektakel" contrasts sharply to Frankel's complete immersion in the telecast (*ibid.*). Schneider's argument, however, fails to address the more positive images of this scene (the contact with the young boy, the pullover gesture and the handholding) and appears to argue for a definitive interpretation of the ending, which remains much more open than Schneider would allow us to believe. As Schneider himself says in relation to Bachmann's approach in "Probleme, Probleme": "Die narrative Analyse soll in dieser Hinsicht keine Eindeutigkeit erzwingen, sondern die irreduzible Vieldeutigkeit des Textes in ihrer Funktion enthüllen" (*Kompositionsmethode* 324f.).

While refusing any form of "happy ending", and while remaining open-ended, "Simultan" nevertheless presents an alternative vision, indicating a direction that shows greater promise than past attitudes and behaviours. Specifically in relation to the journalistic media, "Simultan" provides optimistic "Gegenbilder" that contrast to the deadly, draining and isolating effects of journalistic content and that prove meaningful communication and personal transformation is indeed possible. As the examples of the silent, underwater language developed by Nadja and Frankel as well as Nadja's epiphanous experience at Maratea, the "bible translation", and the bar scene demonstrate, insight and transformation can develop from first-hand experience and direct emotional engagement with others, especially where that experience and engagement involves confronting one's deepest pain and worst fears.

8.4 "Probleme, Probleme"

It is ironic that the protagonist of this story is named Beatrix, given how elusive she finds happiness to be in a world full of "Probleme, Probleme" that make life so "grauenvoll" (*TP* 4: 161, 162). Like all the other *Simultan* women, Beatrix is a flawed victim, whose damage is only hinted at in idiosyncratic symptoms that have manifested themselves in response to that damage. In Beatrix's case,

¹⁴ For Bahrawy, Nadja's gesture of putting her hand in Frankel's, indicates hope for their relationship (162). Beicken, on the other hand, although optimistic about Nadja's personal transformation, is less hopeful about her relationship with Frankel, seeing in the bar scene, confirmation of the "Aneinandervorbeireden der Figuren" (203). According to Beicken, the physical intimacy that Nadja and Frankel develop, in no way alleviates their alienation or compensates for the absence of meaningful verbal communication (203).

the damage and symptoms are closely associated with the press and other forms of the mass media.

Unlike Nadja, the dedicated career woman, whose work takes her all over the world, the 20-year-old Viennese Beatrix lives a small life, “zurückgezogen in ihre Matratzengruft und in die Scheinwelt der Schönheitsindustrie” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 158). Because she cannot deal with reality without the protection of a cosmetic façade, Beatrix’s “wirkliches Zuhause” (*TP 4*: 178) is her favourite hairdressing-cum-beauty salon, *René*’s—a place she visits religiously every week (if not more frequently) so that she can be transformed “im Nu” into a radiant angelic being (*ibid.*). In contrast to her “Musterkind” cousin, Elisabeth,¹⁵ “die studiert und doktoriert hatte und sich abrackerte” (*TP 4*: 176), Beatrix leads a life of complete idleness, indulging as much as possible in the “Perversion” (*TP 4*: 171) of her self-confessed fetish for sleeping. For Beatrix, the busy lives and the constant activity of women like her cousin, make them objects of pity not admiration, who firm her resolve to evade the “Rollenzwäng[e] der Leistungsgesellschaft” (Beicken 204)¹⁶ and thus avoid the kind of “wahnwitzige Geschäftigkeit” (*TP 3.1*: 386) so much deplored by *Malina*’s Ich.¹⁷

While newspapers are essential tools of trade for Nadja, and expensive fashion magazines help her to maintain a glamorous professional presence (*TP 4*: 114), glossy magazines represent for Beatrix total escape—escape into a world of beauty, glamour and happiness that is the polar opposite of the ugliness, inconvenience and mundaneness of her own life, “ein Leben, in dem Strümpfe zerrissen, in dem es ungelüftete schäbige Wohnungen gab, [...] in dem Kleider schmutzig wurden, in dem es regnete, wenn man einmal zum Friseur ging, [...] in dem die Haare bald wieder fettig wurden” (*TP 4*: 201). Beatrix’s values are reflected in (as well as a reflection of) the values inherent in and promoted by glossy women’s magazines like *Vogue* and *Glamour*: although subsisting on a small stipend and therefore a woman of few means, Beatrix always ensures that there is enough for what she considers to be the most important things in life, namely, “für den Friseur und für ihre Kosmetika” (*TP 4*: 175). For Beatrix, appearance is all. She is therefore the mistress of illusion: even if she has been lying in bed all morning, she can give Erich the impression that she has been awake for hours when he rings her (*TP 4*: 160). Beatrix is also expert at feigning interest in Erich’s domestic dramas while thinking of something completely different (*TP 4*: 168). And, although she normally leaves her bedroom in disarray (much to the chagrin of her aunt), Beatrix is adept at quickly establishing the appearance of order:

¹⁵ As Beatrix lives with her “sorgenvolle verständnislose Tante Mihailovics” (*TP 4*: 175f.), we can infer that this cousin is Elisabeth Mihailovics, who features in “Drei Wege zum See” and “Gier”.

¹⁶ Beicken succinctly captures the ambivalence of Beatrix’s character, probably the least sympathetic of all the *Simultan* protagonists, but whose idiosyncracies and observations about the world unmask many questionable aspects of modern Viennese life: “Wie eine komisch wirkende dumm-schlaue Aussteigerin am Rande der unattraktiven Normenwelt heutiger Verhältnisse mimt sie die Rolle einer Pikarin, eines unterhalb der akzeptierten Werte existierenden kleinen Luders, das dem unglücklich mit einer selbstmörderischen Frau verheirateten Erich [...] zu Willen ist, ihm dabei aber doch überlegen ist [...]” (204) Bannasch, too, sees Beatrix as a surprisingly perspicacious (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 31: fn. 43).

¹⁷ Although she does not use Ich’s term of “universelle Prostitution”, Beatrix sees work as a form of exploitation (*TP 4*: 174). For a discussion of Beatrix’s “modellhafte Verweigerung gesellschaftliche[r] Anforderungen und Deformierungen”, see Thau (3; 106–114).

[E]in sehr seltener Besuch von Erich ließ sie im Handumdrehen eine oberflächliche Ordnung herstellen, damit wieder einmal der Schein gewahrt wurde, aber sonst hätte nichts sie dazu gebracht, einen Raum sauber zu machen und aufzuräumen, und ihr Geheimnis blieb es, wie sie es trotzdem fertig brachte, auf der Straße oder bei RENÉ auszusehen, als käme sie aus einer dieser herrschaftlichen, gelüfteten, von alten legendären Hausmädchen besorgten Wohnungen [...] und nur sie war fähig, in ihrem Chaos ihre paar wenigen Kleider und ein paar Stück Wäsche tadellos zu halten, denn für diesen Schein und ihr Aussehen wusch und bügelte sie sogar, unter Stöhnen und Ohnmachten, aber das mußte eben sein, einmal in der Woche. (TP 4: 182)¹⁸

While Beatrix finds lying “anstrengend” (TP 4: 168) she nevertheless accepts it as one of the many “Belastungen” in her life. At one level, then, Beatrix is all too conscious of the lies that she perpetrates. At another level, however, she remains unconscious of the way in which she lies to herself—Beicken refers to her “gleichzeitige nestroyhafte Selbsttäuschung und Lügenhaftigkeit” (205)—and the way in which she uses the journalistic media to support and promote this self-delusion. The glossy magazines that Beatrix reads while being physically pampered at René’s, for example, enable her to escape psychologically and emotionally into a fantasy world in which she can emulate the lifestyles of the rich and famous celebrated in those periodicals.¹⁹ And so, when reading a story about Aristotle Onassis aboard his yacht in the Mediterranean, for example, Beatrix easily inserts herself into the reported scenario:

Die Jacht Christina. Auf eine griechische Insel zusteuern. Ari auf Deck, so ähnlich hatte der jemand ausgesehen, nur jünger. Es gab noch eine grausige Reportage über Afrika, und sie dirigierte lieber doch die Jacht auf Inseln zu, sie stand auf Deck und ihre Haare wehten im Wind, aber sie stand allein ohne Gäste an Bord und ohne einen Ari, der völlig überflüssig war. (TP 4: 192)

There are a number of important aspects to this passage. First, it illustrates the anti-social and egocentric nature of her escapist fantasies in which she mentally edits Ari and all the other guests out of the picture to achieve her ideal of narcissistic solitariness. In providing this scenario for her self-indulgent fantasies, the journalistic media reinforce the egocentric aspects of her personality, further encouraging her isolation from mainstream society in secluded locations where she can lose herself in her own image in the mirror and can fully indulge (and feel justified) in focussing purely on her appearance and comfort. Journalistic content therefore undermines Beatrix’s prospects for personal growth and insight. As Bartsch observes: “Die narzißistische Persönlichkeitsstruktur von Beatrix, die mühsam durch ein künstliches äußeres Erscheinungsbild ihren seelischen Haushalt im Gleichgewicht hält, verhindert den Gewinn einer gesicherten Identität.” (Ingeborg Bachmann 158)

Beatrix’s self-absorption culminates in the ultimate narcissistic fate of falling in love with her

¹⁸ Beatrix is thus a gifted amateur actress in her own life—a talent and an aspect of her personality that is underscored in the way that Beatrix prides herself on being one of the very few women in Vienna, outside of those in film and television, who go to a beauty salon to have their make-up applied (TP 4: 188).

¹⁹ While Beatrix is attracted to the idle elegance of life on a yacht, highly glamorous and fashionable wintersports like skiing that are also promoted in the glossy magazines, are anathema to her: “[Z]um Wintersport fuhr sie nicht, einmal weil kein Geld dafür da war, dann weil man zu einem Sport, auch wenn man keinen betrieb, im Wintersport immerhin zu einer gewissen Zeit aufstehen mußte [...]” (TP 4: 184) This passage constitutes not only a critique of Beatrix’s indolence and sleep addiction, but also a satirical commentary on the snobbishness and commercialisation of sports promoted in the journalistic media: “Das Paradoxon, zu dem hier das Wort Wintersport wird, weist deutlich auf den Kontext, in den dieser Begriff von einer versnobten und kommerzialisierten Gesellschaft gestellt wurde; seine Widersprüchlichkeit liegt darin, daß nicht mehr die Motivation zur körperlichen Aktivität, sondern Geschäft und Prestige das maßgebende sind.” (Holeschofsky 477)

own reflection: she finds herself “zum erstmal verliebt [...] wie in den Filmen” (TP 4: 201, m.e.). What she falls in love with, however, is not flesh and blood but, just like in the movies, a façade: “ein ganz ausdrucksloses maskenhaftes Gesicht [...], [s]chmal, puppenhaft” (TP 4: 200). The “Jacht Christina” passage also highlights Beatrix’s aversion to any form of discomfort and suffering, as exemplified in her reaction to the “grausige Reportage über Afrika”—no doubt a story about famine or bloodshed or some other major human crisis or calamity (and most likely either a direct allusion to Elisabeth Matrei’s work as discussed in my analysis of “Drei Wege zum See” or, at the very least, an allusion to the kind of journalism she was engaged in). While Beatrix cannot avoid many tedious and unattractive aspects of her own life—such as her quotidian quandaries about her clothing and appearance, having to decide whether the current day called for good underwear or old and so on (TP 4: 163)—the journalistic media make it easy to turn a blind eye to unpleasantness elsewhere. When confronted and appalled by stories like “Doppelmord bei Stuttgart” (TP 4: 183), Beatrix can simply turn the page to a story about celebrity fashion accessories: “Jacqueline Kennedy, jetzt Frau Onassis, hatte mehrere Dutzend Perücken, für jede Gelegenheit. Das war immerhin schon interessanter, diskutabler.” (TP 4: 183)

Ironically, however, the same passage also shows that for all her attempts to escape from unpleasant truths, reading glossy magazines brings up the memory of an incident in her past that was not so pleasant—an incident that is flagged in the brief and seemingly innocuous allusion to “so ähnlich hatte der jemand ausgesehen, nur jünger” (TP 4: 192); an incident that may have involved emotional and/or physical trauma at the hands of a man who looked like a younger version of Aristotle Onassis. This suspicion finds support in another passage where Beatrix reveals her reluctance to go to the cinema, “denn im Kino gab es sicher wieder einen dieser anstrengenden Filme, mit Mord und Totschlag und manchmal sogar Krieg, und wenn auch alles *gestellt und erfunden* war, dann nahm es sie doch zu sehr mit, gerade weil es in der Wirklichkeit anders zuing.” (TP 4: 194, m.e.) This passage not only attacks the predictable uniformity of mass media content, whether cinematic or journalistic, but in questioning the fidelity of its representation of the world (even the self-deluded Beatrix knows that reality is different to what we see portrayed in films) this passage confirms Beatrix’s first-hand experience of violence. Knowing this, the reader begins to suspect that Beatrix stays with Erich (a married man who shows no intention of leaving his wife, and for whom Beatrix feels contempt while feigning care and attention) precisely *because* he is both currently unavailable and entirely preoccupied with his wife’s repeated suicide attempts.²⁰ In this way Beatrix gives the appearance of being in a “normal” (though scandalous because illicit) relationship, but avoids getting close enough to another male to be hurt.

This veiled allusion to violence in Beatrix’s past might also explain her ambivalent attitude to

²⁰ Similarly, O’Regan maintains that Beatrix “tolerates the relationship” with Erich because he “constitutes no threat to her”. Moreover, she has “little difficulty controlling him and she is in no danger of feeling any real emotion for him.” (43)

sex.²¹ Delighting in the epithet “demi-vierge” (TP 4: 173), Beatrix oscillates between “Triebverlangen und Triebhemmung” (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 314), showing on the one hand “eine unbezähmbare Lust zu aufreizenden Spielen” (TP 4: 172), while finding actual intercourse “peinlich” (TP 4: 171) and “zu strapaziös” (TP 4: 167). Beatrix’s sexual coyness is also apparent from her embarrassment about Jeanne’s insistence on meeting Viennese “Burschen” (TP 4: 166) and her observations about the realities of the “casting couch” for Katti, the aspiring actress, being “grauenvoll” (TP 4: 188f.). As Schneider notes: “Es bedarf keiner psychologischen Spezialkenntnisse, um zu bemerken, daß sexuelle Probleme hier eine gewichtige Rolle spielen.” (“*Simultan* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 163)²² Beatrix’s ambivalent attitude (if not downright aversion) towards sex is also flagged in her reflections on standard journalistic content, for it is not just stories of murder that she abhors, but also stories about sex:

Beatrix griff nach einer Illustrierten. Immer lagen hier deutsche Illustrierte herum, aber Vogue war kaum je zu finden, und wen interessierten schon deutsche Illustrierte? Doppelmord bei Stuttgart. Sicher eine gräßliche Gegend, es klang ja auch nach Doppelmord. Sex in Deutschland. Das war sicher noch ärger. (TP 4: 183)

If a past sexual trauma explains why Beatrix became “ein hochlabiles, in die Betäubung des Schlafes und in die Scheinwelt der Schönheitsindustrie flüchtendes Wesen” (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 313), this is perhaps also the reason why she feels the need to escape into magazine-induced fantasies and why Beatrix feels that life without her regular excursions to *René’s* would be completely unbearable—the equivalent of being diagnosed with a dreadful disease or even total paralysis (TP 4: 181). The need to protect herself from painful memories or further psychological damage might also explain Beatrix’s apparently reprehensible selfishness, her alarming *sang-froid* of her hopes that Erich’s wife, Guggi, has finally managed to kill herself today (TP 4: 207) and her thoughts of helping Guggi by giving her the tablets or razor blades herself (TP 4: 195). If so, Beatrix exemplifies Bachmann’s metaphorical observation in the first of her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” about the way in which we are all “Schläfer, aus Furcht, uns und unsere Welt wahrnehmen zu müssen” (W 4: 198): for Beatrix, “Schlaf” is not just “Erfüllung” and “wert, dafür zu leben” (TP 4: 172), but an overriding priority: “Was [...] wirklich wichtig war, das war ihr das Weiterschlafen” (TP 4: 161) and so

²¹ Her distaste for matters sexual is also flagged in her attitude to her own body—in her reluctance to mature physically. Because she does not consider food a priority, Beatrix often goes without regular meals (TP 4: 175). In fact, she appears to have an eating disorder, priding herself on being wafer thin, “zart [...] zum Umblasen [...] kaum 46 Kilo” (TP 4: 175) and delighting in her image as a “Mädchenfrau ... Fraumädchen” (TP 4: 195) or an eternal child—as she proclaims on another occasion: “[I]ch bin doch noch ein Kind und werde nie erwachsen werden.” (TP 4: 170) Beatrix’s visits to the salon appear to reflect a desire to return to the safety of the womb, given the soft, quiet pink of the salon rooms (TP 4: 180). Folkvord’s observation about Elisabeth Matrie’s problematical relationship to food applies equally to Beatrix: “Durch Verzicht auf Nahrung, Verzicht auf Genuß wird ein Dasein etabliert, in dem Emotionen und Bedürfnisse unterdrückt werden.” (*Drei Wege* 46)

²² Schneider is the only scholar to emphasise the importance of the “Sexualthematik [...] auf verschiedenen Motiv- und Symbolebenen” and the subtle way in which it is threaded through the story, “ohne daß sie jemals direkt zur Sprache gebracht würde” (*Kompositionsmethode* 313). He sees signs of sexual dysfunction Beatrix’s preference for an older man and her avoidance of contact with men her own age (*Kompositionsmethode* 313). He also sees in the story indications of an “exogene Reifungsstörung der Protagonistin”, possibly linked to Anton Marek, the man who destroyed Fanny Goldmann (314f.). Beatrix’s image of herself as a young girl and “demi-vierge” suggests for Schneider “eine künstliche, wahrscheinlich erzwungene Entwicklungsbeschleunigung”, representing possibly a case of child abuse or “Verführung einer Minderjährigen” (324).

she spends her life asleep—both literally and metaphorically—because of her deep need to escape from the pain and truth of her life.

To a great extent, journalistic content supports her life of escape and illusion in its promotion of the superficial values of fashion and celebrity, but as we see in the Aristotle Onassis fantasy (as well as in the reflections on film violence), the distractions of the mass media cannot entirely suppress reality and past. They also cannot help her deal with “the new” in the form of a break in her routine and expectations, and so, when a new employee at the usually trustworthy *René's* does her makeup differently, Beatrix's equanimity disintegrates: her image of herself as “demi-vierge” is shattered by the new look, which Beatrix perceives as being “hurenhaft” (*TP 4: 205*).²³ An incident that should rank no higher than “disappointment” or “annoyance” becomes for Beatrix “eine Katastrophe” (*TP 4: 207*) and “an affront to her very ‘self’” (O'Regan 48).²⁴ It is ironic, as Bartsch points out, that this so-called ‘catastrophe’ takes place “gerade in ihrem selbstgewählten, als außergesellschaftlich verstandenen Refugium” (*Ingeborg Bachmann 159*). It is, however, only a “Katastrophe” for Beatrix because her identity is determined by values, which are supported and actively encouraged in the journalistic media.

Most characteristically, Beatrix's response to “disaster” is flight. On this occasion it takes the form of physical flight into the ladies' room instead of her usual metaphorical flight into sleep and cosmetic indulgence. Although distraught and severely “enttäuscht” by this incident, Beatrix cannot live “ohne Täuschung”, to use Bachmann's terminology in “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar” (*W 4: 277*), for Beatrix remains stuck in continued denial: ever the supreme actress, she quickly recovers her composure when the “alte Toilettenfrau” offers sympathy, under the misapprehension that Beatrix's distress was related to being let down by a man. Although initially confused by this assumption, Beatrix quickly steps into the familiar mode of cliché and deception with her reply: “Ja, die Männer!” (*TP 4: 208*) These concluding lines of the story underscore Beatrix's use of language as a “weapon to ensure that her relationships remain uncomplicated, i.e., that no human involvement can possibly ensue” (O'Regan 46).²⁵ Her remark to the old woman is simply a way of

²³ Ironically the “demi-vierge” Beatrix, who rejects sex (and thus procreation), has her makeup ruined because her usual cosmetician, Frau Hilde, is away having a baby (*TP 4: 178*).

²⁴ As Schneider notes: “Die Unangemeßenheit dieser Reaktion legt den Gedanken nahe, daß dem banalen Oberflächengeschehen auch in dieser Erzählung [...] seelische Tiefenprozesse zugrundeliegen, die wesentlich ernsterer Natur sind.” (*Kompositionsmethode 313*) Achberger, too, sees the deeper implications of this scene: “[Beatrix's] superficial state of ruin symbolizes the deeper destruction that has been taking place in the rituals of her beauty parlour. After she leaves it is not insignificant that [...] while looking at herself in the mirror, she first wishes and then is »certain that Guggi had committed suicide« [...]. Guggi [...] is a reflection of Beatrix as she continues her own self-destruction on a metaphorical level.” (*Understanding 152*)

²⁵ Schneider draws attention to the much deeper significance in this line, noting that Beatrix only concurs with the old woman, “um sich der Kränkung ihres unbewußt bleibenden narzißtischen Begehrens nicht eingestehen zu müssen, und gleichzeitig enthüllt die perspektivische Eindeutigkeit der letzten Textzeile, die auch als Kommentar des Erzählers interpretiert werden könnte, daß in dieser Männerschelte doch auch insofern ein Körnchen Wahrheit liegt, als dieser Narzißmus aus Beatrix' frühen sexuellen Negativerfahrungen mit Männern resultiert oder resultieren könnte” (*Kompositionsmethode 324*).

fobbing her off without causing offence. This constitutes yet a further example of Beatrix's "perverted and dishonest" (O'Regan 45) use of language, not using it:

[...] to express herself or to establish rapport but to deceive and manipulate others: »Beatrix mochte besonders gern Worte wie Gewissen, Schuld, Verantwortung und Rücksicht, weil sie ihr gut klangen und nichts sagten. Man sollte überhaupt nur Worte mit anderen verwenden, die einem gar nichts sagten, weil man sonst unmöglich zurechtkam mit den anderen [...]«. (45f.)

This constitutes, as O'Regan notes, not only a "travesty of the role of language" (46) but is also part of the vicious circle in which Beatrix is caught: "As a corollary of Beatrix's paucity of experience, her language is impoverished; experience does not correspond with words. She has effectively blocked out experiences at a moral level and so her language is both shallow and her conscious use of ethical terms is cynical." (46) In keeping real people at arms' length and in preferring instead the virtual company of the journalistic media who support her narcissistic and delusional fantasies, Beatrix may therefore be seen as a graphic illustration of the impact and consequences of the "Erfahrungsschwund" that Bachmann associated with the mass media.

And thus, whereas Nadja in "Simultan" managed to gain some personal (albeit perhaps only temporary and limited) insight into her emotional difficulties and to make some progress towards meaningful communication by confronting her fears, Beatrix remains stuck in her delusion and narcissistic self-absorption: her "awareness remains locked at the most superficial level possible; she gains no real insight into herself" (O'Regan 47). Beatrix's failure to see beyond her own "ganz ausdrucksloses maskenhaftes Gesicht" (*TP 4*: 200) may be more than a reflection of her physical laziness in wanting to sleep all the time and to shirk any form of gainful employment. It may also be a consequence of her mental laxity. As Hapkemeyer observes: "Sie verharrt im Denken in der gleichen Lethargie wie im Handeln. Die konturlose Verwendung der Schlüsselwörter spiegelt die Unschärfe ihres Denkens." (*Sprachthematik* 86) Similarly, Schneider sees Beatrix as "geistig paralysiert" (*Kompositionsmethode* 325) and argues that because of the intellectual vacuum in Beatrix's head, Bachmann could not use "erlebte Rede" or "innerer Monolog", and instead used "represented consciousness" to (re)-produce "die virtuellen Inhalte eines aktuell untätigen Bewußtseins" (*Kompositionsmethode* 317f.). O'Regan, too, stresses Beatrix's intellectual laziness in her frequent repetition of the words "grauenvoll", "kompliziert" and "Belastung", noting how this laziness limits her possibilities for change:

Her language reflects her psyche and also reinforces the prevailing order. She likes to use these words because they both describe her experience and circumscribe it to the parameters, which she has drawn up. The monotonous nature of her vocabulary reflects the static nature of her existence. (44)

As O'Regan notes, these words have become clichés in Beatrix's vocabulary because she uses them "so often, that they have lost any original significance they may have had" and by using them "in the context of fairly trivial situations"—for example, when Beatrix laments the total misery of life because she is forced to deal with missing, old or tired underwear (*TP 4*: 163)—"their meaning is devalued and lost" (O'Regan 45). Beatrix's clichés exemplify "oberflächliche, banale Sprache, die Mißverständnissen, Verstellungen und Unmenschlichkeiten dient" (Summerfield "Sprachverständnis" 125) and the "Phrasen" and "Meinungen" that Bachmann deplored and identified so closely with the

press.²⁶ Given that Beatrix seeks refuge in glossy women's magazines, it is little wonder that her language and thinking is shaped by them or that she feels so comfortable with the language found there. It is, however, these very "Phrasen" and her complete lack of personal insight that help to keep her isolated and imprisoned in an inauthentic way of life. Beatrix's closing remark, "Ja, die Männer!" is, however, more than just an instance of cliché—it exemplifies the way in which Beatrix uses the easy (and deceitful) option when communicating with others. It also contrasts sharply with Nadja's closing words in "Simultan", suggesting that unlike Nadja, there is little or no hope for transformation in the "queen of the magazines".

8.5 "Ihr glücklichen Augen"

Like Beatrix, the protagonist of "Ihr glücklichen Augen", Miranda,²⁷ lives a small life in the superficial world of appearances, valuing "Schönheit" above all else (*TP 4*: 267). But while Beatrix escapes into sleep and fantasy—"aus Furcht [ihre] Welt wahrnehmen zu müssen" (*W 4*: 198)—Miranda takes refuge in severe myopia and astigmatism, which, like King Lear's blindness, symbolise her self-delusion.²⁸ Thus Miranda uses her poor eyesight as a means of shielding herself from any ugliness and pain that life might bring her way. For Bachmann then, Miranda's case is a perfect example of Georg Groddeck's claim: "[E]s gibt keine Krankheit, die nicht vom Kranken produziert wird" (*W 4*: 351).²⁹ Unfortunately for Miranda objective reality proves to be more powerful than her attempts at self-delusion: "Ihre Fast-Blindheit kann sie nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, daß ihr Geliebter im »Reigen« [...] der Wiener Gesellschaft zur nächsten Frau weiterwandert" (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 159f.). What makes Josef's betrayal particularly painful is the fact that the "other woman"

²⁶ Hapkemeyer notes, for example, that Beatrix uses "grauenvoll" ten times and "Belastung" at least 30 times (*Sprachthematik* 85). Beicken, too, highlights Beatrix's formulaic use of the word "'grauenhaft', mit der sie auch alle anderen ihr zuwiderlaufenden Phänomene und Belastungen plakatiert" (204), but the term that Beatrix constantly uses is "grauenvoll" (*TP 4*: 161, 162), not "grauenhaft". It is Mr Frankel who uses the term "grauenhaft" in "Simultan" (*TP 4*: 103).

²⁷ Like Bachmann's choice of name for Beatrix, Miranda's name, "derived from the latin verb 'mirari' (to be amazed/to wonder) also has ironic significance" (O'Regan 48).

²⁸ Lennox emphasises the humorous rather than the tragic aspects of "Ihr glücklichen Augen" when she observes: "Miranda drives female inattention to the public realm to a comic pitch by refusing to wear glasses so she sees nothing of it at all" (*Cemetery* 336). Schneider, on the other hand, sees Miranda's situation "ganz offen und direkt als Ausdruck eines Leidens an der Gesellschaft", pointing out that her problem is that she actually sees only too clearly the nastiness in society to which others are oblivious, for example, the "nackte Haß" of the tram driver and the "Tollwut" and "Mordlust" of passengers trying to get on or off the tram (*Kompositionsmethode* 336), a point that emerges more clearly from an earlier draft of the story in which Bachmann noted, "daß Miranda »die Welt besser [sieht]« als ihre Mitmenschen, d.h. daß sie die Realitäten des permanenten Krieges besonders sensibel registriert" (340).

²⁹ Hsu points out that Groddeck saw nearsightedness as "proof that a serious conflict had arisen between an individual's personal moral views and those of her social milieu. When such an individual tries to submit to given social mores, she is forced to repress her own. This repression in turn affects her vision, since she unconsciously desires to be blind to those aspects of her society which she finds intolerable" (80f.). For discussions of Bachmann's dedication of "Ihr glücklichen Augen" to Groddeck and the intertextual references to him in this story, see Achberger (*Understanding* 152), Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 75ff.; "Literaturkritische Essays" 200f.), Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 159f.), Duser (78ff.), Hsu (78ff.), O'Regan (49), and Schneider (*Kompositionsmethode* 328ff.). See also Bachmann's draft essay on Groddeck (*W 4*: 346–353).

is one of Miranda's closest friends, the soon-to-be-divorced Stasi.

There are few references to the journalistic media in "Ihr glücklichen Augen", possibly because Miranda cannot bear the "globale Emanation von Häßlichkeit" (TP 4: 246) that lies on the edges of her short-sightedness, for example, "ein verkrüppeltes Kind oder einen Zwerg oder eine Frau mit einem amputierten Arm [...] inmitten einer Anhäufung von unglücklichen, hämischen, verdammten, von Demütigungen oder Verbrechen beschriebenen Gesichtern" (TP 4: 246). Given the press's fixation with death and violence, and Miranda's aversion to ugliness and suffering of any kind, Miranda would probably avoid reading newspapers even if she had better vision or wore her glasses. Unfortunately, however, Miranda's shortsightedness cannot protect her from unpleasant sounds, including those emanating from other forms of the journalistic media—radios and television sets: "Es gibt neuerdings in dieser Stadt nur noch Geräusche, Radios, Fernseher, junge kläffende Hunde und diese kleinen Lieferwagen, daran stößt Miranda sich, sie kann sich doch nicht wünschen, auch noch schlecht zu hören!" (TP 4: 267) Here it is significant that radio and television are not portrayed as information or entertainment media but as irritating, intrusive noise. It is also significant, that these noisy media make a particularly brutal intrusion into Miranda's life at a moment of deepest devastation: just when Josef announces he is leaving Miranda, that is, when she is confronted with the reality of Josef's betrayal, Miranda hears "Gejohle [...] Besoffene [...] und] den musikalischen Auftakt zu einer Radiosendung" (TP 4: 271)—sounds that she cannot edit out of her consciousness in the same way that she has been able to edit out the visual evidence of her betrayal. Had Miranda not been so skilled at editing out sources of potential distress, she might have noticed (or paid more attention to) Josef's response at a critical point in their conversation when Miranda should have been beginning to wonder why Josef was so 'au fait' with Stasi's circumstances and divorce, for it is at this point that Josef suddenly buries his head in a newspaper (TP 4: 248)—his body language clearly indicating that things were getting too close for comfort for him and symbolising his intentions of cutting off the relationship with Miranda permanently.

While Miranda manages for the most part to successfully "turn a blind eye" to the explicit ugliness and suffering of life and the journalistic media, there are numerous pointers to the fact that this evasion can only be temporary, for Miranda lives in a brutal world and it is only a matter of time before she will need to confront that brutality. In conjunction with Miranda's relationship with Josef, for example, there are repeated references to the fact that Miranda's apartment in the "Blutgasse" looks over a "Hinrichtungsstätte aus der guten alten Zeit" (TP 4: 248, 271). As Bartsch notes, such "Bilder des Todes und der Zerstörung" point to the "Hinrichtungen [...], die sich hier immer noch, aber zivilisiert, auf »inwendigen« Schauplätzen [ereignen]" (Ingeborg Bachmann 157). The evidence for this is only too clear in the vicious verbal attacks on Miranda carried out by Stasi, who is supposedly Miranda's best friend: "Josefs heilige Miranda, die Fürsprecherin aller Grenzgänger, wird von Stasi geröstet, zerteilt, aufgespießt und verbrannt, und Miranda fühlt es körperlich, wenn sie darüber auch nie ein Wort erfahren wird" (TP 4: 266). The inherent violence of the society in which Miranda moves is also emphasised elsewhere in the story in the narrator's observation, that, given her poor eyesight,

Miranda is lucky not to end up the victim of one of the grisly murderers of that period, “der Schläger Novak oder der Frauenmörder, der noch immer den ersten Bezirk unsicher macht” (TP 4: 254)—a passage that implicitly implicates the journalistic media and its fixation with murder stories, in the violence that pervades society.

Given such an environment brimming with life-threatening violence, it is hardly surprising that Miranda sees her poor eyesight as a blessing rather than a handicap. Little wonder that she only ever wore her glasses for a whole day on one occasion, and only has enough strength to confront the world within the boundaries of her poor eyesight (TP 4: 247), for beyond that there is “die Hölle” (TP 4: 252)—a world where she is exposed to the “nackte[n] Haß” of the “Kondukteur” on the tram, the “Tollwut” of passengers trying to get on and the “Mordlust” of those trying to get off (TP 4: 253). The cruellest blow of all is her betrayal at the hands of Josef, the perception and pain of which she cannot avoid despite her poor eyesight:

Es tut ihr einfach in den Augen weh, was er ihr vorspielt, nicht wie anderen im Herzen, im Magen oder im Kopf, und ihre Augen müssen den ganzen Schmerz aushalten, weil Josef-Sehen für sie das Wichtigste auf der Welt war. Und jeden Tag findet statt: Josef-Weniger-Sehen. Weniger-von-Josef-Sehen. (TP 4: 266)

Her powers of denial, however, are such that even when unavoidably confronted with the reality of Josef and Stasi at a social gathering at the climax of the story, Miranda does not face up to the pain but forces herself to feign goodwill and delight in congratulating Josef and Stasi as a couple. Reality, however, takes its revenge, as it has done on previous occasions—“Da Miranda die Wirklichkeit nicht toleriert [...], unternimmt die Wirklichkeit von Zeit zu Zeit kleine Rachezüge gegen sie” (TP 4: 363). Because of her poor eyesight, Miranda does not notice that the door she has pushed forward is not a revolving door but a swinging door which, instead of moving ahead of her, swings back, smashing into her face with bloody consequences. As Schneider notes, this ending is characteristic of the *Simultan* stories and the “Katastrophen [...], die der inneren Zerstörung und Vernichtung ihrer Protagonistinnen noch einmal deutlich und sinnfällig Ausdruck verleihen” (*Kompositionsmethode* 327).

It is this ending that provides the most significant allusion to the mass media in “Ihr glücklichen Augen” when we learn that Miranda’s last thoughts as she is thrown to the floor amidst a pile of broken glass, with blood flowing from her mouth and nose, is “Immer das Gute im Auge behalten” (TP 4: 274)—the advertising slogan of an expensive German brand of contact lenses. As Holeschofsky notes, when Miranda earlier in the story takes the slogan “Immer das Gute im Auge behalten” quite literally, making it a guiding principle in her life, she completely reverses the meaning of the advertising slogan: “Das Gute im Auge behalten kann in ihrem Sinn nur, wer die Dinge nicht in aller Deutlichkeit sieht, sondern sein eigenes, verklärtes Bild an die Stelle der Wirklichkeit setzt.” (477) The conclusion is ironic at another level too, given that this is the slogan for the brand of contact lenses she had originally bought for Josef’s sake, but could not bring herself to wear because they enabled her to see the world far too clearly (Bannasch “Künstlerische und journalistische Prosa” 176; Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 160). Like Beatrix, then, Miranda remains oblivious to the lessons that life tries to teach her and remains stuck in her denial, even though such denial has clearly not served her well. As Lennox

observes, the irony in the closing image “underline[s] the pathological costs of Miranda’s cheery feminine inability to engage with reality” (*Cemetery* 40). In her chronic refusal to see the world as it is and in her constant efforts “den Schmerz zu leugnen” (*W 4*: 54), Miranda represents (like Beatrix) the contrary to Bachmann’s ideal as expounded in “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar”, where she insists on the need to accept the pain of reality, “damit wir sehen können [...]. Denn wir wollen alle sehend werden” (*W 4*: 275). The story’s ending also clearly demonstrates that the trite clichés of advertising slogans, and the products they promote, offer no meaningful solutions for the emotionally or psychologically damaged who cannot face the truth of their lives.

8.6 “Das Gebell”

Although she represents a much older generation than the protagonists of the other stories in the *Simultan* collection, old Frau Jordan of “Das Gebell” has something in common with all of them, particularly with Beatrix and Miranda, who, like old Frau Jordan, live in Vienna “im Rückzug in völlige Privatheit” (Schmidt “Beraubung des Eigenen” 494) and have developed various strategies for avoiding painful confrontation with reality. Old Frau Jordan is not, however, the only woman in “Das Gebell” in denial, as her daughter-in-law, Franziska (the Franza of *Das Buch Franza*), who visits regularly and attends to Frau Jordan senior’s needs, shares the same flaw:³⁰ both of them turn a blind eye to the true nature of Leo Jordan³¹ (Frau Jordan’s son and Franziska’s husband) who, although a highly regarded psychiatrist, is also deceitful, heartless, manipulative and ruthless—characteristics that have been (or at least should have been) evident since he was a young boy.

Of all the “Simultan” stories, “Das Gebell” is the one with the fewest references to the press or the mass media. In fact there are only two very brief allusions to the journalistic media: one to radio and one to the press. The reference to radio occurs in a passage that describes Franziska’s purchase of a radio for Frau Jordan senior (*TP 4*: 288) to help compensate for her mother-in-law’s isolation and the loss of her canine companion.³² The purchase of the radio, however, proves to be futile exercise, as it does not help to alleviate old Frau Jordan’s fear or help her deal with the reality of her heartless son.

³⁰ Achberger suggests that two “Frau Jordans” might be seen “as two versions of the same woman”, noting that the suicide of the young Frau Jordan “reflects on the story of her mother-in-law” (*Understanding* 154f.). Schneider, too, insists that Franziska is more than just a “Nebenfigur”: “Zusammen mit der Mutter ihres Mannes bildet sie jene Bewußtseinsinstanz, die vom Erzähler erkundet und [...] einer kritischen Beurteilung unterzogen wird.” According to Schneider the two figures demonstrate, “daß sich die weibliche Opferrolle von Generation zu Generation vererbt und wiederholt” (*Kompositionsmethode* 342).

³¹ Leo Jordan is not only the villain of *Das Buch Franza* but is also an acquaintance of Elisabeth Matriei in “Drei Wege zum See”. For more on the numerous connections and reappearance of characters in the *Simultan* stories and the *Todesarten* novels, see Achberger (*Understanding* 146f. and 156f.).

³² In rejecting radio as a form of contact with the outside world, Frau Jordan senior shows herself to be even more isolated than the women in “Unter Mördern und Irren” whose social isolation is symbolised in their role as passive listeners to radio while their men participate in group discussions in the semi-public forum of the “Weinkeller” (*W 2*: 160). As Mahrtdt notes: “The women’s access to the public sphere is a mediated one. It turns them, via the radio, into listeners who are isolated in their homes.” (“Society Is the Biggest Murder Scene of All” 169)

Indeed, Frau Jordan senior finds the radio boring (*TP* 4: 306). On the other hand, she likes to read the newspapers, but only for the satisfaction of finding out whom she has outlived (*ibid.*), and so here too the association with the mass media is a negative one of death. In “Das Gebell”, then, the journalistic media are shown to have no answer for the pain of isolation, fear and a loveless mother-son relationship.

8.7 “Drei Wege zum See”

“Drei Wege zum See”, the final and longest story³³ in the *Simultan* collection, is of particular interest to the present study for the intensity of its focus on the journalistic media and the continuation of the critique that emerges from *Malina*. The portrayal and critique of the journalistic media, particularly the news industry, is even more sustained, overt and trenchant in “Drei Wege zum See” than in *Malina*. This concentration of focus on the news media derives primarily from the fact that the protagonist, Elisabeth Matrei,³⁴ is an award-winning photojournalist³⁵—a “Starphotographin auf den kleineren und größeren Kriegsschauplätzen der Welt” (Höller *Das Werk* 230), who has worked in the news industry since she was a young adult, and whose key relationships have been with men who were either involved in some aspect of the mass media or who were influential in forming her views on journalism.

The story begins with, and centres on, Elisabeth’s return to her hometown of Klagenfurt to visit her father, a visit that inspires numerous reflections on her career as well as her personal relationships, and how these two aspects of her life have intersected, often unhappily: “[I]mmer wieder schneiden und überlagern sich in Elisabeths Leben die privaten und die beruflichen Entwicklungslinien, so daß das eine und das andere sich wechselseitig zu bedingen und zu beeinflussen scheint.” (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 354)³⁶ Thus “Drei Wege zum See” is a story in which “Topographie, Biographie

³³ Bachmann herself remarked on the special status of this story as an exception in her normal writing approach: whereas she usually had a clear concept of the structure (and length) before beginning work on a story, “Drei Wege zum See” extended far beyond what she had originally envisaged: “Ich habe gedacht, sie würde nur so und so lang werden, zwanzig bis dreißig Seiten, aber dann sind es über einhundert Seiten geworden, weil immer mehr dazugekommen ist. Und heute würde man das schon Roman nennen.” (*Gul* 126f.)

³⁴ For discussions of the historical and literary associations of Elisabeth’s name (with, for example, the Austrian empress, Elisabeth, and Franz Joseph Trotta’s mother in Roth’s novel), see Brokoph-Mauch (“Österreich als Fiktion und Geschichte” 194), Dippel (75ff.), Omelaniuk (250), Lensing (74) and Thau (63).

³⁵ In “Probleme, Probleme” and “Drei Wege zum See” Bachmann draws an interesting contrast between Elisabeth and Miranda: while Elisabeth’s profession requires her to constantly photograph those around her and to assess them as photographic material, Miranda’s retreat from reality is described in terms of rejecting photographic accuracy in favour of a more creative approach, completely divorced from reality: “[Miranda] mustert niemand, fotografiert Menschen nicht mit einem Brillenblick, sondern malt sie in ihrer eignen, von andren Eindrücken bestimmten Manier” (*TP* 4: 245). Each attitude represents an unsatisfactory extreme.

³⁶ According to Lennox, Elisabeth’s reflections on her life and career end up documenting “not just the bloody struggles that accompany movements for national liberation and decolonization but also, unknown to her, the story of her ‘way of death’.” (*Cemetery* 294) Although Lennox does not make the point explicitly, Elisabeth’s career as an official “Kriegsberichterstatter” draws attention by implication, I believe, to an interesting analogy with the role of unofficial “Kriegsberichterstatter” that Bachmann foresaw for the character of Malina as narrator of the *Todesarten* cycle—an analogy that reveals more contrasts than similarities. Given her emotional and

und Literatur [...] zusammen[arbeiten], um die Grundlagen für das Fehlgehen von Elisabeth, die trotz einer steilen Karriere und vieler erotischer Verbindungen ein unglückliches und sinnloses Leben geführt hat, bloßzulegen" (Brokoph "Österreich in der Prosa" 194). At a more general level, the story also examines the nature of journalistic content and the kind of person that is attracted to the profession of journalism:

Drei Wege zum See beschäftigt sich [...] mit den individual- und sozialpsychologischen Ursachen und Motiven, die einen Menschen zum 'Kundschafter' oder 'Kriegsberichterstatter' werden lassen, wobei die Erzählung dieses Problem bis zu der zugespitzten Frage vorantreibt, ob es nicht auch oder sogar überwiegend individuelle seelische 'Mängel' oder 'Schwächen', mithin also keineswegs nur moralisch-politische Ansprüche und Prinzipien sind, die ein Individuum diese Laufbahn wählen lassen. (Schneider *Kompositionsmethode* 354)

8.7.1 The critique of journalism

In "Drei Wege zum See" Bachmann revives and expands on all the themes that emerged in connection with her portrayal of the journalistic media in *Malina*. While these themes were significant in *Malina*, they were not as central there as in "Drei Wege zum See". Most importantly, unlike the monophonic narrative perspective that Bachmann presents in *Malina*, the critique of the press in "Drei Wege zum See" emerges from a polyphonic confluence of voices: most explicitly that of Franz Joseph Eugen Trotta,³⁷ and to a lesser (and more subtle) degree that of the narrator,³⁸ but also through Elisabeth's own reflections and responses, and occasionally also through the voice of her father.

The ubiquity and pervasiveness of the news

Even more so than in *Malina*, the ubiquity and pervasiveness of the news media is suggested in the way in which newspapers, magazines or radio broadcasts form a constant background to the narrative in "Drei Wege zum See", where we find daily events and routines depicted in terms of taking place before, during or after news broadcasts, or before, during or after the delivery (or purchase) of newspapers or magazines. For Elisabeth, news is an integral part of her routine even when on holiday, and thus on several occasions, incidents are framed with reference to broadcast or newspaper

psychological damage, Elisabeth has more in common with *Malina*'s Ich, who lacks the equanimity and capacity for compassionate yet dispassionate assessment that Bachmann envisaged for the narrator of the real but hidden crimes that remained unacknowledged in society and unreported in the press. Schneider makes a similar point about the metaphor of "Kriegsberichterstatter" when he characterises texts like "Drei Wege zum See" as "in gewissem Sinne Kriegsreportagen, d.h. Momentaufnahmen von Sterbenden und Moribunden, die im permanenten Alltagskrieg vernichtet werden" (*Kompositionsmethode* 354).

³⁷ The significance of Bachmann's Trotta as a continuation of the Trotta lineage in Roth's novels "Radetzky marsch" and "Die Kapuzinergruft", and the numerous intertextual allusions to Roth's work have been addressed by many scholars, primarily Dippel, but also Achberger (*Understanding* 159f.), Améry ("Trotta kehrt zurück"), Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 150ff.), Lensing, Mahrtdt ("Zu den Sitten der Zeit"), Omelaniuk, Nutting, Thau (48–64) and Weigel (*Hinterlassenschaften* 400–403).

³⁸ Schneider notes the general reticence of the narrator to divulge what extends beyond Elisabeth's knowledge and consciousness: "Durch erzähl- und perspektivierungstechnische Mittel von nicht geringer Subtilität macht Bachmann jedoch kenntlich, daß besagte Rückblenden nur die Gedanken und Erinnerungen der Hauptfigur selbst wiedergeben und daß der Erzähler den raumzeitlichen Bewußtseinshorizont der Protagonistin im allgemeinen nicht überschreitet." (*Kompositionsmethode* 356) For an extensive and detailed analysis of the narrative perspective and strategies adopted by Bachmann in "Drei Wege zum See" (and the other *Simultan* stories, as well as *Malina* and *Das dreißigste Jahr*), see Schneider (*Kompositionsmethode*). See also Dippel (114 ff.).

publication schedules: when she receives a phone call from her current lover, Philippe, the call is noted as being “nach den Abendnachrichten” (TP 4: 424); and when Elisabeth and Herr Matrei read the newspapers in the morning, the narrator points out that this takes place before the news (TP 4: 397). On yet another occasion, the absence or late arrival of the morning newspaper is significant enough to warrant a special mention: “Am nächsten Morgen regnete es, und Elisabeth und Herr Matrei saßen beim Frühstück beisammen, die Zeitung war noch nicht da, und sie sagte: Ich weiß nicht, dieser Sommer, das wird kein Sommer mehr” (TP 4: 465). And here, too, it is interesting to observe that in the absence of a newspaper, Elisabeth resorts to the clichéd and impersonal conversation topic of the weather, a topic that is a “set piece” of news in both the broadcast and print media.

The news is an important part of Herr Matrei's daily routine, which he does not like to have interrupted. Twice he complains about “Anruf[e], die sogar kamen, wenn er gerade die Nachrichten hören wollte” (TP 4: 376). In fact, getting his daily dose of news was, at one stage of his life, so important that he resented their phone calls when they interrupted his routine, an important element of which was radio news.³⁹

Er mochte diesen Apparat zuerst nicht, weil er störte, klingelte, wenn er sich nachmittags ausruhte oder im Garten war *oder die Nachrichten kamen*. Und immer zu diesen unmöglichen Zeiten riefen die Kinder an, aus einem Ausland. Zuerst war er nur verärgert und sagte jedesmal kurz: Schreib lieber, schreib mir einen Brief, du hast nun schon drei Wochen nicht geschrieben, *und jetzt sind Nachrichten*. (TP 4: 443, m.e.)

News as addiction and escape

The daily routine of listening to (or reading) the news is, it seems, more than just a habit. As we saw in *Malina*, news can be a veritable addiction. This certainly seems to be the case for Elisabeth, who, in addition to listening to the news on the radio and reading the newspapers delivered to her father's home, buys newspapers and magazines from kiosks whenever the opportunity arises. After visiting the lake with her father, for example, Elisabeth buys newspapers to read on the return bus journey (TP 4: 449), and at the end of her stay in Klagenfurt she goes to the station kiosk as a matter of course to buy “Zeitungen, Zeitschriften und Zigaretten” (TP 4: 456). Indeed, the habit of cigarettes and the journalistic media seem to go hand in hand, as we see during Elisabeth's trip to London for her brother's wedding, where she bought newspapers and cigarettes when she was at a loose end (TP 4: 374). This context and the close association between newspapers and cigarettes suggest both the addictive and escapist qualities of the journalistic media.

The same aspects of Elisabeth's use of the journalistic media are revealed in the passage describing her purchase of newspapers for the bus journey home with her father, after what was for her a disappointing trip to the lake. It was this trip that made her even more conscious of her alienation from the past, and her sense of no longer belonging in her hometown. One therefore suspects that newspapers help Elisabeth escape from those feelings of discomfort and alienation. Even on the eve of her departure, Elisabeth and her father listen to (and read) the news instead of talking: “Den Abend vor

³⁹ For an analysis of the motif of “Telefon” in “Drei Wege zum See”, see Folkvord (*Drei Wege* 80ff.).

der Abreise verbrachten sie still miteinander, hörten wieder die Abendnachrichten, lasen abwechselnd Blätter aus der abonnierten Zeitung." (TP 4: 455) Here one ponders whether this is just a comfortable family routine or a way of masking the breakdown (or absence) of interpersonal communication.

News content as gossip and betrayal

The theme of the press as an invasive, destructive gossip mill, as suggested in *Malina* (TP 3.1: 307), also recurs in "Drei Wege zum See". Herr Matri, for example, describes the nephew of an acquaintance, Frau Jonas, in terms of what he has heard about him on the radio rather than what he has heard directly from his acquaintances: "[M]an spricht im Radio sogar über ihn, ein Dichter, der lauter unverständliches Zeug schreibt" TP 4: 436).⁴⁰ In this aside, Herr Matri illustrates the way in which consumers of news often give greater value to what they read in the press or hear on the radio than what they hear from people they know or experience directly.

Like Ich in *Malina*, the narrator of "Drei Wege zum See" draws an analogy between gossip at an interpersonal level and the public gossip in the press, making it clear that while the "gehässige Frau Direktor Hauser, die für die Verbreitung des Klatsches in der Nachbarschaft gesorgt hatte" (TP 4: 369) is a person to be scorned and avoided, it is the upper levels of society who are the consummate experts in personal betrayal through gossip. Antoinette Altenwyl, for example, "beredete die Besuche Elisabeths mit einem Dutzend Leuten unter dem Siegel strengster Verschwiegenheit, und das hieß soviel, daß die Geheimnisse besser gewahrt worden wären, wenn sie in der Zeitung gekommen wären, weil man sie dann vielleicht übersehen hätte" (TP 4: 418). In this acerbic observation, the critique of the press is paradoxically both blunted and sharpened: blunted in the observation that newspapers are not as efficient or effective as an Antoinette Altenwyl in disseminating personal information, but sharpened in the drawing of an analogy between the personal betrayals of an Antoinette Altenwyl and those that take place in the press. The parallel between the private gossip network of the elite and the more public betrayals of the press is further underscored in the narrator's observation about the way in which the press content is used by the elite to exclude from their social network "Leut[e] [...], deren Privatleben in Illustrierten abgehandelt wurde" (TP 4: 419).

Journalism's preoccupation with bad news

When glossy magazines feature revelations about someone's private life, it is generally because the individuals involved in some scandal or misfortune do not have the money or power to shield their private lives from the prying eyes of the press. This point is illustrated by the fact that Elisabeth's father has never heard of Bertold Rapatz, the most commercially and politically powerful man in the region, until his fatal involvement in a dramatic murder-suicide case and is no longer personally capable of exerting influence or shielding his private life from the journalistic media (TP 4: 450).

⁴⁰ This appears to be a reference to the character Klaus Jonas (sometimes known as Maleta) from an earlier *Todesarten* fragment in which he is described as "der junge steirische Genie Klaus Jonas [...] dessen Fotos jetzt in vielen Zeitungen und auf den Bildschirmen zu sehen waren" (TP 2: 395).

Damaging revelations about the private lives of those, who do not have the money, power or influence to keep out of the media spotlight are just one aspect of the journalistic media's fixation with bad news. Because of the journalistic media's morbid preoccupation with death and murder, Elisabeth learns of the death of two people she knows from the newspapers that she buys after her visit to the lake: one of the stories involved a friend who died in Italy, in mysterious circumstances, where it was unclear whether the fall from a cliff was the result of an accident, murder or suicide (*TP 4*: 449); the other story reported that Elisabeth Mihailovics (a woman whose family was known to Herr Matrei and someone with whom Elisabeth Matrei had become acquainted in Vienna) had died a violent death in the so-called "Eifersuchtsdrama auf Millionärsvilla" (*TP 4*: 467) involving Rapatz.

The impact of journalism's fixation with bad news

In "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt" Bachmann portrays the way in which bad news can frighten the emotionally vulnerable and exacerbate fearfulness and timidity. "Drei Wege zum See" provides a similar illustration of the emotional upset that can result from bad news in its description of Elisabeth's reaction to reading about the violent deaths of her two acquaintances. After reading the press reports, Elisabeth becomes extremely agitated, particularly about the way in which the "Eifersuchtsdrama" is reported in the local press. Even before reading the press reports of this case Elisabeth had shown signs of emotional discomfort that seemed to stem from too close an identification with Elisabeth Mihailovics, whom she seemed to resent for sharing her name: on encountering Mihailovics while shopping in Klagenfurt, Elisabeth Matrei had felt, "daß es etwas viel war, jetzt noch eine Elisabeth zu treffen, sie war schon verstört gewesen als Liz auf dem Registry Office mit vollem Namen genannt wurde, Elizabeth Anne Catherine" (*TP 4*: 393). Elisabeth Matrei was so uncomfortable about her encounter with the Mihailovics woman that she asked her father to pretend that she was not at home, if she were to call—one of a number of instances where the narrator points out Elisabeth's emotional cowardice manifesting itself in dissimulation.

The news of Mihailovics's murder in the bold headlines of the newspaper, however, not only foils Elisabeth Matrei's attempts to forget the other Elisabeth, but also appears to prompt her sudden departure from Klagenfurt. And here the reader suspects that it is not just the identity of their christian names that disturbs Elisabeth Matrei, but something much deeper—probably an identification with the experience of life-threatening violence within a relationship (perhaps along the lines of Beatrix's reaction to the subjects of violence and murder in "Probleme, Probleme"). The press reports on the violent death of Elisabeth Mihailovics seem to act as a kind of emotional catalyst, unleashing fear and confusion in the emotionally fragile Elisabeth, who is so damaged and in such a state of denial that she is unable to recognise on a conscious level that it is these deeper levels that disturb her about the murder reports. Her initial response to dealing with this emotional disturbance shows clear evidence of her denial: she channels her alarm and discomfort into an attack on the

inadequacies of the local press.⁴¹

The inadequacy of journalistic content

When she first arrived in Klagenfurt, Elisabeth was well aware of the inadequacies of the provincial press but had found them rather endearing: “Elisabeth war auf einmal neugierig, was hier geschrieben wurde für die Leute, und sie las es nicht mit Herablassung, sondern mit Rührung, diese dilettantischen Berichte und das schlechtgeschriebene Feuilleton.” (TP 4: 397) She even gives the regional press credit for a certain level of competence in reporting local events:⁴²

Die Lokalnachrichten gefielen ihr am besten, denn über einen Kirchtag im Rosental und über die anwesenden Honoratioren zu schreiben, das trafen sie besser, wenn es auch unfreiwillig komisch ausfiel, und die Eröffnung einer »Internationalen Holzmesse«, die man hier für international hielt, war gar nicht uninteressant, ein paar missionarische Töne fehlten auch nicht. Missionarisches also doch auch hier. Nur mit der Welt kamen sie nicht zurecht. (TP 4: 397)

In reporting something of which they have direct experience, the provincial press come close to achieving authentic and meaningful communication, but when they move beyond their limited area of expertise to report international stories, the locals are soon out of their depth, inadvertently revealing their “liebenswerte Unfähigkeit, über Ungewohntes, etwa ein ihr nicht bekanntes Milieu zu schreiben” (TP 4: 449). The incompetence of regional press reports on events and people beyond their experience is also evident from their handling of the Rapatz murder case, where the reports verge on the ludicrous. Thus Elisabeth reacts to the first of the headlines with a mixture of bemusement and disdain: “Eifersuchtsdrama auf Millionärsvilla. »Auf« war gut. Das interessierte sie kaum.” (TP 4: 449) A second newspaper’s use of the hyperbolic and sensationalistic headline “Blutbad in Millionärsjagdhaus” (TP 4: 449) proves to be more effective bait: even though Elisabeth’s journalistic experience enables her to see through this media cliché, she finds herself reading the report “wider Willen” (TP 4: 449). Her curiosity piqued by this second headline, Elisabeth then finds herself frustrated by the “ungeschickten langatmigen Berichte” and the “Wust der Sätze” (TP 4: 450):

Aus dem Bericht war sie nicht ganz klug geworden, der zweiundsechzigjährige Diplomingenieur Bertold Rapatz hatte seine dreiunddreißigjährige Frau Dr. Elisabeth Rapatz erschossen, aus Eifersucht vermutlich, zuerst ihren Liebhaber, vor den sie sich zu werfen versucht hatte, einen gewissen Jaslo soundso [...] Elisabeth nahm ihrem Vater jetzt seine Zeitung weg, denn das war ja zum Nervöswerden. (ibid.)

The incompetence of the journalists reporting on this case is echoed in Bachmann’s fragment “Gier”, in which she elaborates on the character of Rapatz as “Typus unserer Zeit” (TP 4: 505), and on the “Abgründen der Gewalt” (Göttsche “Ein Bild der letzten zwanzig Jahren” 182) “im Milieu der

⁴¹ Elisabeth Matrei’s identification with Elisabeth Mihailovics is probably intensified by their physical and other similarities: Elisabeth Matrei describes the other Elisabeth as “eher eine Intellektuelle” (TP 4: 393), and sees in her something “Ärmliches und Trauriges” (TP 4: 393)—descriptions that could apply to Elisabeth Matrei, who is described by one of her former school friends as “die dürre lange Latte” (TP 4: 438). In Elisabeth’s disturbance about someone who bears the same name as her, we also find an echo of the emotional turmoil experienced by Anton Wildermuth, when confronted with a case in which the defendant shared his surname.

⁴² It is interesting to note a parallel with Kraus, who was less scathing of the regional press, because unlike the Viennese press, the local press focussed more on the simple transmission of news instead of feeling compelled to influence readers and guide public opinion (Iggers 101).

»wirklich ›Reichen‹ «” (*TP 4*: 606).⁴³ Bachmann's aim in writing “Gier” was (as she herself described it) to reveal the “real story” behind the newspaper reports referred to in “Drei Wege zum See” (*TP 4*: 505).⁴⁴ Although the primary focus of “Gier” is the actual background of the murder case, and not the press reports themselves, the story contains two allusions to the inadequacy and incompetence of the press coverage, similar to those in “Drei Wege zum See”. In one passage, for example, the narrator notes the way in which the local press jumps to false conclusions, claiming that it was sexual jealousy stemming from a tawdry love triangle that prompted Bertold Rapatz to kill his wife and her alleged lover before committing suicide. As the narrator pointedly observes, however, not only could no one else corroborate that hypothesis, but Rapatz's maid vehemently denied the possibility of her mistress being involved in such a scenario (*TP 4*: 502).⁴⁵ The credibility of the press's research and reporting is subsequently further undermined by one newspaper's claim that a photograph of Rapatz's daughter, showing her “mit herüberfallendem Haar” (*TP 4*: 503), indicated the extent to which she was “vom Schmerz gebrochen” (*ibid.*), when in fact she always wore her hair like that. Clearly the reporters either did not check with anyone before interpreting the photo in this way or else decided that it made a much better “story” than the truth.

In “Drei Wege zum See” the incompetence of the provincial press that is alluded to only briefly in “Gier” is fully exposed in Elisabeth's response to their reports: “In Paris oder New York hätte jeder kleine Journalist der Boulevardpresse gewußt, wie man so etwas machte, aber die wußten es hier eben nicht.” (*TP 4*: 450) Thus, while the local press, in their amateurish haste and desire for attention-grabbing headlines like “Eifersuchtsdrama”, had melodramatically and preemptively categorised the Rapatz case as a crime of passion, the much more experienced Elisabeth sees only too clearly, “daß diese armen kleinen Journalisten, die so gut über Holzmessen zu berichten wußten, leider keine Ahnung hatten, was ihrer Gendarmerie da in die Hände gefallen war” (*TP 4*: 451). As amateurs the local press made much of the history and pedigree of the Rapatz family, but failed to give sufficient weight to the enormous wealth, power and business interests of Rapatz, who owned “ein Drittel der

⁴³ Göttsche and Albrecht date Bachmann's work on this story back to the late summer period in 1970 when Bachmann first read press reports in Roman newspapers about a double-murder and suicide case involving the well-to-do and influential Marchese Casati, his wife and her alleged lover (*TP 4*: 606ff.). In “Gier” Bachmann transposes the murder case from Italy to the regional setting of Klagenfurt to expose, as she put it, “eine Doppellüge, die die Armen über die Reichen und die Reichen über sich selbst verbreiten” (*TP 4*: 505). In February 1973 Bachmann consented to Suhrkamp announcing the publication of a long story, called “Gier” (*TP 4*: 614). Despite the impression in this approved “Verlagsanzeige” that publication was imminent at the time, “Gier” was never completed, and indeed, very little work had been done on the story since Bachmann first started writing it (*ibid.*).

⁴⁴ According to Bannasch “Gier” illustrates the connection between alienating capitalism and sexual violence: “›Gier‹ beschreibt Sexualität als äußerste Form des Einbruchs einer entfremdeten, kapitalistischen Gesellschaft in den Bereich des Privaten—der bis in die Träume hinein besetzt ist und damit gar nicht mehr als Privates oder Eigenes gedacht werden kann.” (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 21) As Albrecht and Göttsche note, “Gier” differs from most of the other “*Todesarten*-Texten” in dealing with a clearly demonstrable case of murder rather than one of the many “Verbrechen” that are so “sublim” (*TP 2*: 78) that the perpetrator goes both undetected and unpunished. Although Rapatz's crime does not go undetected, he evades legal retribution, albeit by committing suicide (“*Todesarten*-Projekt: Andere unvollendete *Todesarten*-Texte” 159).

⁴⁵ The circumstances here mirror those of Maria Malina's death in the *Goldmann/Rottwitz-Roman* fragments, where no one else could corroborate the press's claims about the actual circumstances.

Holzindustrie und Jagden Kärntens”,⁴⁶ and who was not just a millionaire, “sondern eine Macht, das Geld schlechthin” (TP 4: 451). Clueless, the local press remains stuck in its initial assessment about the case over the succeeding days, reporting in the same terms “von dem blutigen Eifersuchtsdrama »in auf und um« Millionärsjagdhaus berichtete, ohne ein einziges neues Detail” (TP 4: 472).

Journalism and the protection of vested interests

Unlike, the local press, however, Elisabeth is able to combine her appreciation of Rapatz's power with her direct knowledge of Elisabeth Mihailovics (whom she did not believe to be a fortune hunter as suggested by the local press) to come to the conclusion that the case at hand was something much more sinister than a simple “Eifersuchtsdrama” smacking of “Heuboden und Taschenfeiteln” (TP 4: 450)—most likely something related to Rapatz's extensive business interests.⁴⁷ As a highly experienced journalist (and one who also has the benefit of local knowledge), Elisabeth is able to speculate on possibilities other than those canvassed in the local press. Locals like her father are, however, limited in their understanding of the case, not only by the incompetence of the local press but also by the fact that the local press has failed to provide information about this powerful man in the past. Because of this selectivity in the local press, Elisabeth finds it difficult to convince her father that Rapatz was even important.

Herr Matrei war nun doch erstaunt, denn für ihn waren die wichtigen Leute ganz andere, die, die sonst in den Zeitungen vorkamen, Abgeordnete, der Bürgermeister, der Landeshauptmann vor allem, das waren für ihn und wohl die meisten anderen auf dem Land die Leute »da droben«, und daß es Leute gab wie Rapatz, die diese so wichtigen Persönlichkeiten des öffentlichen Lebens nicht einmal in ihr Haus hineingelassen hätten, das paßte gar nicht in seine Vorstellung von Hierarchien, auch nicht, daß ein Rapatz, falls er wirklich ein bekannter Mann war, wie Elisabeth es sich einbildete, es abgelehnt hätte, sich fotografieren zu lassen oder im Radio zu sprechen, das wollte ihm noch weniger einleuchten. Ich glaube, du überschätzt diesen Mann sehr, sagte Herr Matrei bestimmt. Man hat nie etwas von ihm gehört. (TP 4: 453)

Unlike her father, Elisabeth is only too aware of the reasons why Rapatz has had such a low public profile to date: he was able to successfully elude media interest in the same way that the wealthy

⁴⁶ Bachmann's pre-publicity material for “Gier” explains that the central character, Rapatz, is “Gier” personified: “Seine Gier ist Gier nach Geld, nach Macht, nach dem Besitz von Frauen, von Leben” (TP 4: 505). “Gier” therefore represents yet another example of Bachmann's “Todesarten” because the story shows how the central character's rapaciousness destroys “die Menschen, die in seiner Gewalt sind, und sie zerstört letztlich auch ihn” (ibid.). In “Gier” Rapatz is a brewing magnate but in “Drei Wege zum See”, he is a timber industry mogul—an interesting evolution, given the forest industry's connections with the paper industry—a major supplier to the press.

⁴⁷ As mentioned in footnote 43, this fictional press report was inspired by a case reported in the Roman press on 1 September 1970, which was ostensibly a *crime passionel* involving a man with extensive business interests and political influence—a case that, like the Rapatz case, was also inadequately reported in the press (TP 4: 606ff). It is also interesting to note similarities to a story Bachmann covered extensively as the Roman foreign correspondent for Radio Bremen in the fifties, namely the murder of Wilma Montesi, under mysterious circumstances, which led to allegations of political cover-up and corruption at the highest levels (see *Römische Reportagen* 14–30, 45–48, and 60–62). In his memoirs, Hocke notes Enzensberger's particular interest in this case, which resulted in “einen vorzüglichen Essay für den *Merkur*” (*Im Schatten des Leviathan* 434f.): “Der Essay von Enzensberger ist für die Zeitkritik am damaligen Europa an der Schwelle zwischen zwei neuen Epochen zu einem klassischen Lehrstück geworden.” (ibid.)

and socially powerful Altenwyls,⁴⁸ who thrive as primary players in the “Dschungel des Wiener Klatsches” (TP 4: 418), and have the power to escape the attention of the press, while excluding from their circle anyone who has the misfortune or poor judgement to allow themselves to be the subject of press reports (TP 4: 419). Rapatz's wealth and influence enabled him to draw “eine Mauer um sein Leben” (TP 4: 454), and if he had not killed himself and two others, no one would have ever heard of him: “Nicht hier in Klagenfurt jedenfalls.” (TP 4: 453) Even though the murder case brought him press exposure, Rapatz's power to preserve most of the wall of privacy around his life extends even beyond his death: “Aus den ersten Aussagen der Haushälterin und der anderen Angestellten ging auch so wenig hervor, das war eher auszulegen als ein beharrliches Schweigen und Verschweigen.” (TP 4: 454).⁴⁹

Given the extent of Rapatz's business interests and connections, one is also tempted to speculate on the degree to which the lack of information in the local press is the result of press incompetence or inappropriate influence and external pressure. Although there are a number of reasons why Elisabeth might have left Klagenfurt soon after the Rapatz murder case was reported (and these reasons are canvassed later in this chapter), it is noteworthy that, even though Elisabeth could see a more sinister angle to the case, she chooses not to pursue the matter either with the local police or to tackle it as a journalist. Given Elisabeth's many dangerous and difficult assignments in the past, we might wonder how much more personally dangerous she considered involvement in the Rapatz case to be than any previous assignment. The conclusion to be drawn from the way in which both the local press and the experienced journalist, Elisabeth, respond to the Rapatz case is that, whether through incompetence or cowardice, the journalistic media are impotent in pursuing the truth, especially in cases involving powerful vested interests.

The irrelevance of journalistic content

At a provincial level then, the press's amateurish incompetence results in inadequate reporting and the inadvertent misrepresentation of reality, especially when writing about international news and other matters beyond their narrow area of experience. The impact of these limitations in local press content is, however, mitigated to some extent by the irrelevance of international press content, such as reports on natural catastrophes and plane crashes, for readers who have never been affected by “Unwetter und der Hitze” and have never boarded an aeroplane (TP 4: 398). And so, Elisabeth concludes that it probably does not matter:

[...], daß die Leute hier, in diesem Winkel, Nachrichten entstellt zu lesen bekamen oder nicht, und ob es sie etwas geändert hätte, wenn sie je eine weniger verdrehte Vorstellung von den Vorgängen außerhalb des Landes bekommen hätten, wahrscheinlich nicht. Schon Wien war ein höchst verdächtiger und dunkler Schauplatz für sie. (TP 4: 397)

While the more sophisticated and highly-skilled journalists of the metropolitan press may

⁴⁸ Antoinette Altenwyl and Rapatz are close friends in “Gier” (TP 4: 477, 480).

⁴⁹ Rapatz had been astute enough to employ mainly “Slowenen” and some “Kroaten” (TP 4: 454), whose different language and loyalties provided “einen weiteren Schutzwall gegen Neugierige” (ibid.).

demonstrate greater competence reporting a story like the Rapatz case (*TP 4*: 450ff.), they are, however, just as guilty of foisting irrelevant content on their readers, as Elisabeth observes when she mentally compares the regional press to its metropolitan counterpart: “[W]enn auch der Vergleich nicht ganz standhielt, erinnerte es sie an die vielen Zeitschriften in Paris, die sich mit der Dritten Welt beschäftigten, die über Bolivien weitaus mehr zu sagen hatten als über alles, was den Parisern erreichbar war.” (*TP 4*: 398) Reports on the misery of mankind elsewhere in the world, are, as Elisabeth points out, of no relevance and no comfort to Parisians:

[...], die sich zwischen Trabantenstädten oder der banlieue und der Stadt hin und her schleppten, immer erschöpfter, denn erschöpft waren die meisten nicht von den Ungeheuerlichkeiten, die in südamerikanischen oder asiatischen Ländern geschahen, sondern von ihrer eigenen Misere, der Teuerung, Übermüdungen und Depressionen, die sich natürlich neben den großen Verbrechen erbärmlich ausnahmen. (ibid.)

One of the reasons that journalism is so irrelevant, Bachmann suggests in this story, is its preoccupation with the continuous present of “today”—with “Tagesereignissen” (*TP 4*: 386). Regardless of how important the issues may seem at the time, journalistic content—even Elisabeth’s award-winning report on abortion—is quickly forgotten “und in Papierkörben versunken” (*TP 4*: 421). Like the news she produces, Elisabeth, has no place in the future. As Elisabeth has not established her own family, she will not live on through her children. She does not even have a home in the future, as it is Robert, who is married and likely to start his own family, and who will inherit the family home (*TP 4*: 432). Elisabeth only has a small and tentative claim to accommodation in the family home, hoping that her brother will allow her “das Recht auf ein Zimmer” (ibid.). Admittedly, it is Elisabeth’s choice to forego the family home but this is a reflection of her ambivalent attitude to the future: while she has little difficulty engrossing herself in thoughts about “Roberts Pläne [und] Roberts Zukunft” (*TP 4*: 414), she has little energy and enthusiasm to think about her own future: “[G]elegentlich dachte sie ermüdet an ihre eigenen Pläne [...]” (*TP 4*: 414) Although the narrator subsequently notes Elisabeth’s suspicion that Robert and Liz have no future and only their youth, this could well reflect Elisabeth’s own unhealthy and jaundiced attitude to the future, and is not necessarily a view shared by the narrator.

Journalistic content as inauthentic

While the more highly skilled cosmopolitan press is less likely to inadvertently distort and misrepresent the facts like the regional press, this does not necessarily translate into an authentic representation of reality. This was, however, Elisabeth mission early in her career when she still was still rather naïve and evangelical about journalism and her role as a photographer, “denn sie hielt das für das einzig Richtige, alles, was sie taten zu der Zeit, die Leute mußten erfahren, genau, was dort vor sich ging, und sie mußten diese Bilder sehen, um »wach gerüttelt« zu werden” (*TP 4*: 385).⁵⁰ At the time, the naiveté of her position was challenged by her lover, Trotta, who dismissed journalistic reports of even the most worthy subjects as “Abklatsch”, describing news content as “diese in die

⁵⁰ The similarity of Trotta’s critique of journalism to the views expressed by Roth in newspaper articles and essays has been noted and discussed by Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 109f.) and Dippel (93, 102–114).

ungeheuerlichste Unwirklichkeit verkehrte Realität" (TP 4: 386). For Trotta, the journalism could never offer authentic representations of reality, "(d)enn es ist natürlich anders in Wirklichkeit" (TP 4: 387).⁵¹ For Trotta, journalistic reports and photos inevitably fall short, "weil sie nichts über das subjektive Empfinden auszusagen vermögen" (Dippel 135). Omelaniuk elaborates on Trotta's criticism:

The journalists' rhetoric of persuasion is a lie inasmuch as it plucks the 'events' of the day from the stream of life and seeks to give coherent reference to reality by them; a reality that has firstly been denuded of the emotive matrix out of which the events are born, and secondly been distorted to the ideological needs of the time. In other words, journalism serves to underpin the division between reality and truth while on the face of it providing a patchwork semblance of unity and sense. (258f.)

Despite her vehement counterarguments at the time, Elisabeth found herself gradually "poisoned" (TP 4: 384) by Trotta's views, which caused her to reflect critically on her profession and its products, and begin to acknowledge that journalistic photographs are "keine Dokumente der Wirklichkeit [...], sondern Konstruktionen" (Kanz "Viel couragierter als unsere Herren" 210f.). As Kanz notes, this new-found critical distance is apparent even in Elisabeth's "distanziert-spielerischen Umgang mit den Hochzeitsbildern" ("Viel couragierter als unsere Herren" 210) that she brought back from London for her father (TP 4: 365). Elisabeth finds the line between authentic and inauthentic starting to blur. And so, when examining the horrific, but unfaked and typical, "disaster scene photos" used in newspapers and magazines, Elisabeth becomes conscious of how easily these photos could have been faked:

[W]as unterschied so sehr die Fotos von Fensterstürzen, Zugunglücken, weinenden Müttern und grauenvollen Slums von den Bildern, die von allen Kriegsschauplätzen geschickt wurden, und hätten nicht so viele Fotografen das wirklich fotografiert, dann hätte man diese Aufnahmen genau so geschickt herstellen können, wie ein geschickter Bilderfälscher ein Original eben fälschen kann, ohne sich der Gefahr des Mißlingens auszusetzen und ohne einen anderen Einfall zu haben, als gut zu fälschen. (TP 4: 386f., m.e.)

Elisabeth defends the authenticity of the great majority of photos, insisting: "Die Fotoserien, die erschienen, waren *fast nie* gefälscht" (TP 4: 387, m.e.). This observation, however, incriminates journalism in its implication that sometimes photos are indeed faked. This revelation undermines the credibility of all news content: given Elisabeth's earlier reflections on how difficult it is for a professional like her to tell the genuine from the fake, how can the average reader know which photographs are authentic? And how can the average reader discern which elements of the written content are authentic and which are not? This point is illustrated from Elisabeth's own experience when researching the issue of abortion. Despite the eminence of the experts she consults, and the "empörenden Geschichten" of the women involved, the end result does not ring true: "[S]ie wußte ja, daß es wieder einmal ein sehr wichtiges Thema war, aber was herauskam, hatte nichts damit zu tun, sondern war nur eine fürchterliche Anhäufung von fertigen Sätzen, die sie sich auch am Schreibtisch

⁵¹ Note here the parallels with the Beatrix's observations about the cinematic depiction of violence not being convincing, "gerade weil es in der Wirklichkeit anders zugeht" (TP 4: 194). Trotta's cynical scepticism about the ability of the mass media to authentically depict reality also echoes Nadja's jaundiced views in "Simultan" on the value of public inquiries into past events, which proved to be futile as the truth was usually lost, either because someone has inadvertently or deliberately obliterated its tracks or because the pronouncements of the people involved were only ever "Halbwahrheit(en)" (TP 4: 130).

hätte erfinden können.” (TP 4: 420)

Journalistic content as invasive and offensive

According to Trotta, journalism is not only inauthentic but also offensive and presumptuous. When Elisabeth insists on the importance of her profession in alerting the public to what was really going on in the world, Trotta points out the offensive and patronising nature of this belief: “Glaubst du, daß du mir die zerstörten Dörfer und Leichen abfotografieren mußt, damit ich mir den Krieg vorstelle, oder diese indischen Kinder, damit ich weiß, was Hunger ist? Was ist denn das für eine dumme Anmaßung?” (TP 4: 385) For Trotta, there are only two kinds of readers: those who are already aware of the atrocities in the world and so do not need to see photographic evidence; and those, who are unaware and can therefore only respond with repulsion, or else aesthetic admiration for the skilfully produced photographs:

Und jemand, der es nicht weiß, der blättert in euren gelungenen Bilderfolgen herum, als Ästhet oder bloß angeekelt, aber das dürfte wohl von der Qualität der Aufnahmen abhängen, du sprichst doch so oft davon, wie wichtig die Qualität ist, wirst du denn nicht überall hingeschickt, weil deine Aufnahmen Qualität haben? fragte er mit leisem Hohn. (TP 4: 417)

Trotta's view (which is not challenged within the narrative of “Drei Wege zum See” and therefore appears to be presented as more valid than Elisabeth's) is that it is not only an affront to newspaper and magazine readers to dish up grisly photographs for their edification over breakfast, but the whole news reporting process is both humiliating and invasive, especially in non-white cultures where signs have been erected to warn off members of the rapacious western press (and tourists) from taking photographs of other human beings: “Einmal, es war im Sudan, dort ist mir weiter nichts aufgefallen, nur eine Aufschrift überall, für alle diese Weißen, weil ja nur die kein Schamgefühl kennen, es sei verboten, bei hoher Strafe, »human beings« zu fotografieren” (TP 4: 386). For Trotta, the pictorial representation of human suffering is so offensive it almost constitutes a crime against humanity: “[E]s ist eine Zumutung, es ist eine Erniedrigung, eine Niedertracht, einem Menschen auch noch zu zeigen, wie andere leiden.” (TP 4: 387) Trotta's attack on Elisabeth's profession thus represents “eine erstaunlich frühe kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Dokumentationswahn” (Weigel *Hinterlassenschaften* 405f.). In particular, it constitutes “[eine] Kritik an einer Bildpraxis, die im Abbild des Leidens aufgeht“ as well as “die Gewalt, die ›Aktualität‹ und »Tagesereignisse« über das Denken ausüben” (ibid.).⁵²

8.7.2 The critique of journalists

Like *Malina*, “Drei Wege zum See” not only portrays press content in a negative light but also considers the shortcomings of those who work in the journalistic and related professions. In doing so

⁵² Weigel also points out the similarity of these views to those expressed by Bachmann: “Daß Bachmann hier ihre eigene Kritik an einem Aufklärungs- und Sensationsjournalismus, der die moralische Empörung über die Kriege mit einem heroischen Berufsbild des Photographeneinsatzes im Krisengebiet verbindet, ihrer literarischen Figur in den Mund legt, läßt sich leicht durch Vergleiche mit ihren Interviews belegen, wo sie beispielsweise von einer ›Korruption durch Aktualität‹ spricht.” (*Hinterlassenschaften* 405f.)

the story covers a broad spectrum of journalistic characters ranging from blundering oafs and brave idealists to exploitative cynics, vicious professionals and alienated hypocrites.

The journalist as "Trottel"

The bumbling, importunate and obtuse journalist, who interviewed Ich in *Malina*, makes a return appearance in "Drei Wege zum See", proving himself to be as inept and insensitive in his dealings with Elisabeth as he was with Ich. In "Drei Wege zum See" Elisabeth recalls her encounter with the Viennese journalist, Herr Mühlbauer, who on a stopover in Paris, had telephoned Elisabeth to invite her out to a café. At the time, Elisabeth could not remember exactly why she had agreed to meet him—"vermutlich hatte sie zufällig ja am Telefon gesagt" (TP 4: 404)—and wasn't even sure anymore if his name was Mühlhofer or Mühlbauer (TP 4: 404).⁵³ It is possible, however, that she agreed to the interview, worn down by the same kind of relentless persistence that Mühlbauer demonstrated in *Malina*. Certainly Mühlbauer's behaviour with Elisabeth proves just how "zudringlich" he can be (TP 4: 405). What is also apparent from his behaviour is his deviousness: Mühlbauer has no qualms about the use of deception (just like the Bulgare in *Malina*) to meet with Elisabeth, intimating that they have mutual acquaintances. Once with Elisabeth, however, there is no mention of any mutual acquaintances except for her former lover, Trotta. However, Mühlbauer cannot have known Trotta that well (if at all) for he mistakenly describes him as "den Grafen Trotta", conjecturing that he may have been the "Urenkel des Helden von Solferino" (TP 4: 404).⁵⁴ Mühlbauer, it seems, is on a journalistic fishing expedition, to unearth information about Trotta, Elisabeth or both. His meeting with Elisabeth therefore unmask not only his duplicity but also his failure to adequately research his subject matter, and thus undermines his credibility as a journalist.

One piece of information that Mühlbauer's research did correctly identify was the fact that Elisabeth had known Trotta. It is not clear from the narrative whether Mühlbauer knows exactly how close the relationship had been between Elisabeth and Trotta, but what does emerge all too clearly is Mühlbauer's obtuseness in failing to notice the dismay that mentioning Trotta causes Elisabeth, who (like Ich in the Bulgare passage in *Malina*) cannot get away from the scene quickly enough. To her chagrin, however, Elisabeth is thwarted in her efforts to escape by Mühlbauer's clumsy intervention that results in an awkward haggling over the bill, in the middle of which Mühlbauer detonates the ultimate emotional explosive for Elisabeth by telling her of Trotta's suicide a few months earlier in Vienna—news, "deren Ausmaß dieser Wiener gar nicht verstehen konnte" (TP 4: 405). The encounter with Mühlbauer proves to be of such emotional impact for Elisabeth that she cannot erase the memory

⁵³ Note the playful intertextual allusion to the scene in *Malina* where Ich mixes up his name in exactly the same way: "Sehen Sie, lieber Herr Mühlhofer, Verzeihung, Herr Mühlbauer" (TP 3.1: 383).

⁵⁴ Dippel points out the parallels between Mühlbauer's confusion of the two different family lines here and a scene in Roth's *Kapuzinergruft* in which "der windige Herr von Stettenheim" makes the same mistake "[weil er] nur oberflächliche Kenntnisse über die Familie Trotta beschafft". Dippel argues that this allusion proves Mühlbauer to be "der Prototyp des ungenau lesenden Journalisten" (101). See also Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 154).

of it from her daily life (TP 4: 403). Mühlbauer could not, however, have possibly known how deeply this news would affect Elisabeth, given the fraught nature of her relationship with Trotta, the extent of which not even her closest friends had been privy. In fact Elisabeth herself only fully realised that Trotta had been “ihre einzige und große Liebe” (TP 4: 405) much too late, after his death.⁵⁵ Elisabeth's response was therefore magnified by this realisation, and perhaps also by a sense of guilt that Trotta might still be alive if she had persevered with their relationship despite the “Mißverständnissen, Streiten, Aneinandervorbeisprechen, Mißtrauen” (TP 4: 383). Nevertheless, it must have been painfully ironic for Elisabeth that the news of Trotta's death should be brought to her in such an intrusive and insensitive way by an unknown journalist, when it was Trotta who had impressed upon her the offensive and invasive nature of journalism.

The journalist as opportunistic dilettante

Although Elisabeth is a prize-winning photographer (TP 4: 420), highly valued by her employers for her dedication and courage, the narrator of “Drei Wege zum See” regularly undermines Elisabeth's journalistic credentials, pointing out, for example, Elisabeth's humble beginnings in journalism as a telephonist and typist, who worked “für eine dieser rasch gegründeten Illustrierten nach dem Krieg, die bald wieder eingingen” (TP 4: 380). Elisabeth is thereby revealed to be a journalist by accident rather than by vocation, and one whose advancement was due to raw energy rather than talent: “Ihr strahlender Eifer [...] war so überzeugend, daß man sie begabt fand.” (TP 4: 412) Thanks to this energy and a personable nature, Elisabeth was soon given the opportunity to write “kleine Reportagen” (TP 4: 412) and to try her hand at other aspects of journalism: “[S]ie lernte deswegen eine Menge Leute kennen, rannte mit Fotografen herum, laborierte an einer »story« herum oder an Bildtexten, lernte immer mehr Leute kennen und war beliebt.” (TP 4: 380) Elisabeth is just a dilettante with a superficial but agile intellect easily mistaken for intelligence.

Sie hatte nichts Richtiges gelernt und dachte hie und da verzweifelt, doch auf die Universität gehen zu müssen, aber es war schon zu spät für sie und ihr Wunderglauben so stark, daß sie mit großer Geschwindigkeit alles auffaßte und daher als intelligent galt, obwohl sie höchst oberflächliche Kenntnisse hatte von Hunderterlei, eben auffing, was gerade aktuell war und worüber einige ihrer Freunde wirklich etwas wußten. (TP 4: 412)

In a pointed attack on the abilities and judgment of her fellow workers in the media, though, the narrator observes that no one noticed Elisabeth's lack of particular talent for writing, “da die anderen auch nicht mehr konnten” (TP 4: 412), and so Elisabeth is given opportunities that further advance her journalistic career and skills. Here, too, serendipity plays a big role:

⁵⁵ The uniqueness and depth of her relationship with Trotta is underscored by her sexual and emotional response to him. At the same time it was more than just a physical relationship: “[S]chon in der ersten Stunde wollte sie Franz Joseph Trotta gefallen und fürchtete und ängstigte sich wie eine Frau. Sie fing an, alles ins Spiel zu bringen, um ihn zu gewinnen und zu halten [...] Die ersten Tage, in denen sie Trotta suchte und floh und er sie suchte und floh, waren das Ende ihrer Mädchenzeit, der Anfang ihrer großen Liebe, und wenn sie später auch [...] meinte, eine andere große Liebe sei ihre große Liebe gewesen, dann war doch Trotta, nach mehr als zwei Jahrzehnten [...] noch einmal die große Liebe, die unfaßlichste, schwierigste zugleich. [...] [Er] hatte [...] sie gezeichnet, nicht in dem üblichen Sinn, nicht weil er sie zur Frau gemacht hatte [...], sondern weil er sie zum Bewußtsein vieler Dinge brachte.” (TP 4: 383)

Dann reiste sie zufällig zum erstenmal mit einem Fotografen, der unterwegs krank wurde, und sie, besorgt um diese so wichtige »story«, fing zu fotografieren an und begriff wieder so rasch. Damals wurden zufällig die Weichen gestellt für ihr Leben, denn sie fotografierte besser als sie schrieb, und das hatte sie nicht wissen oder auch nur vermuten können, daß sie damit weiterkommen würde und sogar noch sehr hoch. (TP 4: 380)⁵⁶

Through further good fortune she is spotted by the famous German photographer Willy Flecker, who mentors her and introduces her to Duvalier, a leading photographer, to whom Elisabeth soon becomes an indispensable assistant. The narrator highlights the surprisingly quick and unexpected nature of Elisabeth's success in the pointed observation: "Elisabeth, die aus dem Nichts gekommen war, aus einer dilettantischen Wiener Redaktion, begann kurze Zeit später mit dem alten Mann [Duvalier] auf Reisen zu gehen" (TP 4: 380f.).

In documenting her rapid career rise beyond her first employer, the narrator's account of Elisabeth's success constitutes a critique not only of Elisabeth's fellow workers and employers but of the media in general, by pointing out that talent is not necessary in an industry that values energy, enthusiasm, speed and superficial knowledge of "Hunderterlei" over and above a deep and substantial understanding of issues. The superficiality of Elisabeth's skills and intellect is further illustrated in her interactions with Trotta: despite working for the best French photo-journal and thus reaching a pinnacle in her professional career, thanks to her personal drive and the good fortune, Elisabeth is intellectually impotent in the face of Trotta's attack on her profession. Although professionally successful and self-assured, the naïve, superficial nature of her intellect makes Elisabeth no match for the relentless Trotta and his deeper, radical views: "Elisabeth argumentierte, eifervoll, gescheit noch in der ersten Ratlosigkeit, aber zum erstenmal hatte ihr jemand den Boden unter den Füßen weggezogen" (TP 4: 385).

The journalist as scoundrel, exploiter, cynic and traitor

In "Drei Wege zum See" then, Elisabeth is depicted as someone who fell into and progressed in the news industry more through good fortune than through any inherent journalistic talent, while Mühlbauer is depicted as an irritating, offensive "Trottel". For all their faults, however, these two journalists seem to be primarily guilty of relative dilettantism (in the case of Elisabeth) or ineptitude (in the case of Mühlbauer) rather than intentional malevolence. Other representatives of the journalistic profession and the mass media in "Drei Wege zum See" are portrayed in much more scathing terms as either exploitative and cynical scoundrels or treacherous colleagues. Elisabeth's employer, André, for example, is by his own admission a scoundrel who mercilessly takes advantage of his employees, justifying his behaviour as a means to an end—as his way of achieving excellence in his publication: "[I]ch habe dich ein bißchen zu sehr beansprucht du weißt, ich bin eine Canaille und nutze euch aus, wie ich kann, aber ich weiß es auch, und wäre ich keine, wie sähe dann unsre famose Illustrierte aus."

⁵⁶ Here we find parallels with *Malina's* Ich: in the same way that Ich was transferred to the nightshift of the news service because of a vacancy created by the illness of another person on the staff, so too Elisabeth's career in photojournalism begins in the same circumstances. Similarly, it is the illness of another journalist that prompts André to offer Elisabeth the Saigon assignment at the conclusion of the story.

(TP 4: 390) André at least has the saving grace of recognising that he is a hard taskmaster, and apologetically offers to make amends (ibid.). Exploitative, demanding behaviour, however, seems to typify all of Elisabeth's bosses: the famous Duvalier, for example, was "der rücksichtsloseste Arbeiter [...], den sie je kennenlernte, rücksichtslos auch sie ausnutzend" (TP 4: 381).

Although exploitative scoundrels, André and Duvalier, are at least not as treacherous as Willy Flecker who took Elisabeth under his wing early in her career. Willy, too, proved to be an exploiter, running around acting important, while Elisabeth did all the work (TP 4: 395). Willy's character is reflected in the very language he uses: as Trotta points out, Willy's conversation is saturated with "Phrasen" like "Halt die Ohren steif, Mädchen, dann liegst Du richtig. Über den Daumen gepeilt. Acht Uhr plus minus", which Trotta sums up as "unerträgliche[s] Gewäsch" and "Jargon" (TP 4: 395). As long as his career was going well, Willy played the role of encouraging mentor but when Elisabeth's celebrity began to grow and his own declined, he turned on her viciously, humiliating her in front of her friends for no apparent reason:

[W]as aus ihm herausbrach, war nicht, wie manche meinten, eine maßlose Eifersucht, ein Deliriumsanzug, weil sie sich hielt und er unterging, sondern für Elisabeth wurde es die Stunde der Wahrheit zwischen ihnen beiden, sie war nur nicht fähig, sich zu erklären, womit sie sich diesen Haß zugezogen hatte. (TP 4: 400)

Although Willy lacks André's contrition, it is difficult to find him totally reprehensible, given that his vindictiveness seem to be a character weakness, exacerbated by alcoholism and depression about the demise of his career. And for all their flaws, André, Duvalier and Willy are not unrequited "Gauner", unlike Elisabeth's erstwhile lover Claude Marchand, the gangster (TP 4: 422), who has moved into the film industry, where he conducts business in a nefarious manner, destroying one competitor after another (TP 4: 422). Marchand is primitive, dangerous, cynical and "verderbt bis in die Knochen" (ibid.). Although he is not involved in the journalistic media, Marchand's character is of interest to this study because of his involvement in the culture industry. It is also significant within the context of this study that Elisabeth was attracted to Marchand's boundless energy, which she found contagious and which made him a much more exciting and interesting character than the more decent men in her life (ibid.). In preferring Marchand to more decent men, Elisabeth's character seems to be tainted by the cynicism and iniquity of Marchand: her attraction to Marchand could reflect not only on her own moral values as a person but also on her professional judgement in becoming involved with a criminal.

Another "Gauner" in Elisabeth's life is Philippe, her young lover at the time of her return to Klagenfurt. Like Marchand, Philippe is involved in the culture industry, and is even working on a film project with Marchand. Philippe is another morally suspect character: on the surface a solicitous lover, but in reality using Elisabeth for her connections and emotional support (TP 4: 425)—in much the same way that Marek exploited Fanny in *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*—while sexually betraying her with Marchand's daughter. Admittedly, Elisabeth has no illusions about their relationship: she is only too aware that it is "eine deutlich funktionalisierte" (Kanz "Viel couragierter als unsere Herren" 207) and that Philippe only contacts her, "wenn er etwas brauchte oder zufällig auf den Gedanken kam, ihr

ein paar freundliche Worte zu sagen" (TP 4: 367). She is therefore neither surprised nor disappointed when he rings, professing deep concern about her but soon revealing his real motivation:

Philippe sagte, er wäre stundenlang nicht durchgekommen und schon ganz beunruhigt, und dann redeten sie kreuz und quer, er vermisse sie gerade heute sehr, denn heute morgen hatte er sich entschieden, er werde jetzt Assistent bei Luc, der schon anfangs mit den Vorarbeiten zu seinem neuen Film, und was sie nun dazu sage? (TP 4: 450)

Although conscious that Philippe is exploiting her for his own career advancement, Elisabeth still underestimates the extent of his self-serving nature, and his amoral, strategic ruthlessness. She thinks of him as one of the "gescheiterte[n] Existenzen" (TP 4: 367) she seems to attract (the prime example, being Trotta),⁵⁷ when in fact Philippe knows only too well how to look after his own interests. As a former student activist during the May Revolution, Philippe vehemently opposed both capitalism and the state, and despised Elisabeth as "eines dieser verabscheuenswerten Luxusgeschöpfe, nicht gerade eine Kapitalistin, aber doch eine Kapitalistenhure" (TP 4: 464). Now, only two years later, he is preparing for the final sell-out of his former principles by working in the film industry—an industry, which cultural theorists like Adorno saw as the acme of Western capitalism—and the same industry in which the unscrupulous criminal, Marchand, is making his mark.

Philippe proves to be not only hypocritical in his career, but duplicitous as a lover, kissing Elisabeth with "Gier" (TP 4: 461) and repulsive invasiveness (ibid.) shortly before telling her of his affair and plans to marry Marchand's daughter, Lou, who is now pregnant to him. In this way, Philippe demonstrates that he is no lost soul but a wiley survivor, who has no qualms about abandoning Elisabeth in favour of a more promising relationship. His sexual betrayal of Elisabeth with Marchand's daughter is driven neither by love nor lust but the prospect of advancing himself professionally and financially by marrying into the wealthy and influential Marchand family. While not revealing any bitterness, Elisabeth's reflections on his actions highlight not only Philippe's personal "happy ending" but the moral hypocrisy behind it: "Er hatte also seinen Abgang und einen sehr guten obendrein, verbunden mit dem Eintritt in eine Welt, die er aufrichtig gehaßt hatte, auch noch lange nach seinem Mairausch." (TP 4: 464) Elisabeth's relationship with Philippe, however, also reveals defects in her own character, in particular, her chronic lack of commitment to relationships. Even before hearing Philippe's news about Lou, Elisabeth had already decided that the relationship could not last much longer (TP 4: 423). Her apparent happiness for Philippe's forthcoming match also suggests a certain moral laxity or emotional cowardice in condoning his duplicity, hypocrisy and material greed.

The journalist as impotent and misguided idealist

There is yet another journalistic type depicted in "Drei Wege zum See": the brave, idealistic and dedicated reporters and photographers who risk their lives (and even make the ultimate sacrifice) in undertaking dangerous assignments. Elisabeth has lost many such colleagues, for example, a friend, "[der] in Budapest bei den Straßenkämpfen getötet wurde, während er fotografierte und mit seiner

⁵⁷ In the early stages of their relationship, Elisabeth had rescued him "aus seinen Depressionen, aus dem Trinken, den immer sinnloser werdenden Diskussionen und Wutausbrüchen" (TP 4: 464).

Kamera in der Hand verblutete" (TP 4: 384), and the photographer, Pedrizzi, who, along with a number of others, was killed in a bomb blast in Algeria (TP 4: 387). Elisabeth herself falls within this journalist type, given her bravery in taking on the dangerous assignment in Algeria (in the full knowledge that many others in her profession have lost their lives there) and in her decision at the end of the story to go to Vietnam—another assignment fraught with risk. This journalistic type is driven by an unquestioned belief in the importance of informing the public and a belief in the value of supporting worthy causes. As Elisabeth declares: "[I]ch bewundere alle, alle Franzosen, die zusammen mit ihnen für die Freiheit und die Unabhängigkeit . . . ich meine, es gibt für Algerien nichts Wichtigeres als die Freiheit." (TP 4: 388) The idealism of journalists like Elisabeth is, however, misguided.

Elisabeth hat ihre Selbstverwirklichung in einer internationalen Karriere als Fotoreporterin gesucht, mit der idealistischen Vorstellung, der Wahrheit dienen zu können, hat sich damit allerdings den mörderischen Gesetzen des Konkurrenzkampfes in diesem männlich dominierten Metier ausgesetzt, in dem es um nichts weniger als die Wahrheit und edle Ziele, als vielmehr um Gewinn und Absicherung von Marktanteilen durch sensationelle Berichterstattung geht. (Bartsch Ingeborg Bachmann 161)

The futility of Elisabeth's belief in the power of the press to awaken readers to the truth was made clear in "Probleme, Probleme" where Beatrix chose to ignore the content of hard news like "eine grausige Reportage über Afrika" in favour of the story about Onassis and his yacht (TP 4: 192). Beatrix's selective reading of magazines in "Probleme, Probleme" shows that rather than awakening readers to some external truth and inciting them to action that lead to social or political change, journalistic content primarily reinforces the existing values and prejudices of their audience—a phenomenon that is known as the "reinforcement" effect, whereby "[o]pinions, attitudes, beliefs, prejudices are deemed more likely to be reinforced than changed by media coverage" (Watson 255).

Nevertheless, for Elisabeth this kind of evangelical journalism is unquestionably admirable and morally superior: "Später verloren sie und die Redaktion und das bessere, das gewissenhaftere Frankreich vor allem drei Fotografen und einen Reporter in Algerien und zwei Journalisten in Suez." (TP 4: 384f.) Trotta, however, challenges Elisabeth's views on journalists who sacrifice their lives for a cause.

Der Krieg, den ihr fotografiert für die anderen zum Frühstück, der verschont euch also auch nicht. Ich weiß nicht, aber ich kann deinen Freunden keine einzige Träne nachweinen. Wenn einer mitten ins Feuer springt, um ein paar gute Fotografien nachhause zu bringen vom Sterben der anderen, dann kann er, bei diesem sportlichen Ehrgeiz, auch umkommen, daran ist doch nichts Besonderes, das ist ein Berufsrisiko, nichts weiter! (TP 4: 385)

Not only does Trotta not share Elisabeth's admiration for such journalists, but he also criticises Elisabeth's response as naïve and misguided: "Du und deine Freunde, ihr werdet diesen Krieg damit nicht beenden, es wird anders kommen, ihr werdet nichts ausrichten." (TP 4: 386) Any horror that readers may experience is only fleeting and will make no difference: "Also so etwas zu tun, bloß damit einer seinen Kaffee einen Moment stehen läßt und murmelt, ach, wie schrecklich! und ein paar werden sogar einer anderen Partei die Stimme geben bei den Wahlen, aber das würden sie ohnehin tun." (TP 4: 388) Trotta also points out the untenability and risibility of Elisabeth's position (and others) in seeing the Algerian War as a moral cause and in believing that press coverage was vital in supporting the cause of freedom and independence:

Vergiß nicht, daß ich ein Franzose bin, und ich finde daran nichts zum Bewundern, du Kind, ich ginge ja sofort, denn ich werde mit diesen verdammten Franzosen, die in deiner Bewunderung existieren, mir mit Vergnügen die Hände weiß waschen, die sich schmutzig gemacht haben, aber bewundert will ich dafür bestimmt nicht werden. Und die Freiheit, die Freiheit, die dauert, wenn sie kommt, kaum einen Tag und ist ein Mißverständnis. (ibid.)

Because Elisabeth is rendered speechless “vor Wut und Ohnmacht” (ibid.) in the wake of Trotta’s tirade, it is Trotta’s perspective that triumphs on the day, and in the longer term Elisabeth reluctantly realizes that he was right:⁵⁸

Ehe der Algerienkrieg zuende war, hatten sich Elisabeth und Trotta getrennt, und Elisabeth sah, während alle anderen längst zur »Tagesordnung« übergangen, noch bedrückt, was aus der Freiheit schon zu werden drohte, und aus dem netten Algerien kam sie niedergeschlagen zurück. (TP 4: 389)

The journalist as alienated, dishonest, inauthentic and moral coward

Although Elisabeth is not a victim of her career in the same sense as her colleagues who lose their lives, she nevertheless emerges as “a victim of the system that has made her a professional success” (Lennox *Cemetery* 294). Thus “Drei Wege zum See” portrays the various debilitating stresses associated with Elisabeth’s high-profile journalistic career, a life that is characterised by “Kollegen und Intrigen in einem wirren und anstrengenden Alltag, mit Arbeit und Terminen, mit zuviel Kaffee und einem hinuntergewürgten Sandwich, mit Besprechungen, Koffern, die kaum ausgepackt, schon wieder gepackt werden mußten, Ärgerlichkeiten aller Art” (TP 4: 377). Like Nadja in “Simultan”, Elisabeth is a professional and sophisticated woman of the world, who has completely immersed herself “in eine bewußtloses Arbeiten forderende Karriere” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 157). In fact, Elisabeth and Nadja seems to be the kind of emancipated “pseudomoderne Frau mit ihrer quälenden Tüchtigkeit und Energie” that Bachmann found “höchst seltsam und unverständlich” (*Gul* 97). Like Nadja, too, Elisabeth literally lives a life of exile—at home in many countries and different languages but no longer at home in her own country and language—a fact that is reinforced in her visit home to Klagenfurt.⁵⁹

Alienation

Although Elisabeth’s hometown visit is motivated by filial duty and concern for her father, it is also driven by a desire to escape from the stress and alienation of a profession. While exotic locations and world cities like Paris may once have been associated with pleasure and excitement, the novelty has long since faded and these places have lost their attraction as we see from Elisabeth’s reflection, “daß vor fünfundzwanzig Jahren auch Paris herrlich gewesen war, als es noch keine Macht hatte, ihre verschiedenen Leben und so viele Menschen zu verschütten. Es gab überhaupt keine Orte mehr für

⁵⁸ It is ironic that Bachmann chose as the primary voice for her critique of journalism in *Drei Wege zum See*, a character created by Joseph Roth, a writer who had been a practising journalist (Thau 52).

⁵⁹ As the narrator points out, her exile is part of a long, slow process that started with Trotta, “ein wirklich Exiliierter und Verlorener”. Elisabeth was initially “eine Abenteurerin, die sich weiß Gott was für ihr Leben von der Welt erhoffte” but was transformed “in eine Exilierte [...], weil er sie, erst nach seinem Tod, langsam mit sich zog in den Untergang, sie den Wundern entfremdete und ihr die Fremde als Bestimmung erkennen ließ” (TP 4: 383f.).

Elisabeth, die ihr nicht wehtaten." (TP 4: 373)⁶⁰ Even places that were formerly emotional havens are no longer the same: "[E]inmal ließ sie sich rasch zur Westminster Bridge fahren und war eine Weile ruhig auf der Brücke und ging weiter und ein wenig auf der anderen Seite der Themse auf und ab, die sie alles sehen ließ wie früher einmal, und es war doch anders." (TP 4: 375) After the alienation and stress of London, Elisabeth longs for home: "Sie mußte nicht London sehen, es war ihr gleichgültig, sie war müde, sie wollte weg und nachhause, sie wollte in den Wald und zum See". (ibid.) After the strain of London and the difficulties with flights and connections, Elisabeth is close to collapsing with nervous exhaustion by the time she arrives at Vienna's "Südbahnhof" (ibid.). Her poor state of health is immediately noted by her father who is so concerned, that he goes out to his garden to pick fresh fruit for her:

[D]as Kind hatte doch das ganze Jahr nichts wirklich Vernünftiges zu essen, und Obst aus dem eigenen Garten war eben etwas gesünder als dieses ausländische Zeug auf den Märkten, aber er würde schon dafür sorgen, daß sie in ein paar Tagen besser aussähe. Denn sie sah diesmal nicht gut aus. Dieses Teetrinken in England gab ihm auch zu denken, sicher das reine Gift, Tee mochte ja gut sein, wenn man krank war und erkältet, aber den ganzen Tag Tee! (TP 4:377)

Instead of enjoying the comfortable familiarity and serenity of home, however, Elisabeth finds that her harried, rootless existence as an international photojournalist has alienated her from the rustic simplicity of her father's provincial lifestyle, which is symbolised in the image of "frischen Semmeln und heißem Milchkaffee" (TP 4: 371) that Elisabeth prepares for her father as his typical breakfast—the same imagery that was used in *Malina* to depict the freshness of the awakening world beyond the grubby environment of the night-shift at the news desk. The all-too obvious contrast between the two different ways of life only serves to highlight the emptiness and artificiality of her life as a high-profile photojournalist. Thus, when she tries to make conversation with her father, Elisabeth finds it difficult to repeat the scintillating stories about events and people in Paris or New York that normally come so easily to her in conversations with her Viennese friends.

[Z]uhause, bei ihrem Vater, fielen alle diese Erzählungen ins Nichts, nicht nur, weil Herr Matrei das überhaupt nicht interessierte, sondern weil sie merkte, daß sie das alles zwar wirklich erlebt hatte, aber doch auch nicht, denn in all diesen Geschichten war etwas trübe und leer, und das trübste daran war, daß sie alles wirklich mitangesehen hatte, *aber ihr Leben daneben anders verlaufen war, ihr darüber oft vergangen war wie einem Zuschauer, der Tag für Tag ins Kino geht und sich narkotisieren läßt von einer Gegenwelt.* Von dem, was sie wirklich aufregte, erzählte sie nichts, weil es ungeeignet war für jedes Erzählen. (TP 4: 419f., m.e.)

Elisabeth feels that she has been more of a spectator in her own life, than a participant. The perceptive Trotta commented on this aspect of Elisabeth many years earlier before she was receptive to the truth. At the time Trotta had diagnosed her whole life as a lie as it gave the impression of being full, while Elisabeth in reality spent her energy on frantic and ultimately futile activity: "Du siehst nur aus wie das Leben, weil du dich herumtreibst und abhetzt für alles, wovon man in ein paar Jahren kaum mehr

⁶⁰ In this last quote, the term "verschütten" represents an important motif in Bachmann's work, a term that is associated with personal destruction, both literally and metaphorically. In *Malina* for example, one of Ich's early physical traumas involved being "verschüttet" (TP 3.1: 659), a clue perhaps to Ich's strong aversion to masses of any kind. Interestingly, Elisabeth shares the same aversion to size and masses, especially in relation to a big world city like London: "Es verstörte sie die Karikatur der Großstadt in der Großstadt, sie ärgerte sich auf der Oxford Street, wenn sie durch diese Menschenmassen trieb." (TP 4: 375)

wissen wird, wozu es nötig war.” (TP 4: 389) As Folkvord observes: “[D]ie Elisabeth-Figur, die sich krampfhaft darum bemüht, auf der Höhe ihres sozialen und beruflichen Lebens zu bleiben, tätige Menschen und wichtige Länder aufzusuchen, [wird] als eine Person dargestellt, die nur sehr begrenzt leben und schreiben kann.” (*Drei Wege* 71) Instead of being authentic or genuinely experienced, Elisabeth’s life has been a form of “Ersatz” experience: Elisabeth’s life exemplifies “Erfahrungsschwund”.

In the “Zuschauer” passage referred to above, it is also interesting to note the recurrence of the imagery associated with addiction in connection with Elisabeth’s life and the way in which addictive behaviour was used to avoid discomfort. From Elisabeth’s reflections on her alienation, it seems that she has for once realised the full extent to which she has used other forms of addiction, in this case, the excitement and energy associated with her hectic and high-profile career, as a narcotic to numb herself to the real world—in much the same way that Beatrix used journalistic content to numb and blind herself to the truth and pain of her life. A significant component of the pain in Elisabeth’s life (albeit a largely unacknowledged part) is her many failed and unhealthy relationships, which appear to be both a symptom and a cause of her alienation. Ironically, as with Nadja, a woman whose career is built on professional communication fails when it comes to interpersonal communication: it is, however, as Bahrawy observes, an “inability to reconcile thought, feeling and speech, the key elements in cogent communication, rather than language per se, which stands in the way of sharing herself with another and establishing an emotionally rewarding relationship” (151). Thus Elisabeth’s relationships are generally cool, dispassionate and businesslike—even when it comes to sex.

[...] wie man sich in einen Operationssaal begibt, um sich den Blinddarm herausnehmen zu lassen, nicht gerade beunruhigt, aber auch ohne Enthusiasmus, im Vertrauen darauf, daß ein erfahrener Chirurg, oder, in ihrem Fall, ein erfahrener Mann, mit einer solchen Kleinigkeit schon fertig würde. (TP 4: 382)

As Schmidt points out, “es waren gleichsam klinische, auf Beliebigkeit, Konsum und Tausch beruhende Beziehungen, von denen »am Tag nichts mehr für sie existierte«” (“Beraubung des Eigenen” 489). This cool and clinical approach to relationships changed with Trotta with whom she experienced the depths of physical and emotional passion and most frighteningly for her, vulnerability (TP 4: 383). Elisabeth finds a similar passion for Manes but her relationship with Manes is based on a misunderstanding about his origins, as well as a complete misreading of his character, mistakenly attributing the humane qualities of Trotta to him and ignoring his cynical and exploitative traits because he mentions Zlotogrod in Galicia, the town where Trotta comes from.⁶¹ After Manes discards her, Elisabeth returns to passionless relationships (TP 4: 421), resigning herself to the inevitability of disappointment—a reflection perhaps of her adaptation to a male-dominated profession firmly embedded in patriarchal capitalism (Gürtler 256).

⁶¹ As Achberger observes: “In ‘reviving through Manes the memory of her dead lover’, Elisabeth is able to bury her grief and delude herself into a relationship based not on reality [...]” (*Understanding* 159). I do not, however, agree that this is because “language has misled Elisabeth” (ibid.), given that Elisabeth’s love for Manes was clearly a case of psychological transference. Although Elisabeth claims that Manes was her “ganz groß[e] Liebe” (TP 4: 408), he was really a Trotta-substitute to whom she turned after learning of Trotta’s suicide. This view is supported by Mahrtdt (*Öffentlichkeit* 267) and Schmidt (“Beraubung des Eigenen” 492).

Elisabeth is only too aware that she has never made healthy choices in her relationships, most of them superficial, uncommitted and with younger men—lost souls for whom she is more of a mother figure than an equal and passionately committed partner. For Elisabeth the cause lies in the unusually close relationship she had with her brother: “[B]ei ihr sei alles verkehrt gegangen, sie hatte nämlich zuerst ein Kind geliebt und erst sehr viel später einen Mann. Und wenn bei einer Frau das eine vor dem anderen kam, dann könne man wohl kaum erwarten, daß sie ganz normal sei.” (TP 4: 442) She is usually drawn to unsuccessful men, who needed her (TP 4: 367)—perhaps an indication of her own lack of self-esteem or desire to be in control of the relationship. At the other extreme, Elisabeth chooses a criminal like Marchand, or men who use her and then abandon her, like Philippe and Manes.⁶² As Folkvord observes, Elisabeth’s life is exposed as “ein Leben nach dem Prinzip des Vergessens und des Verdrängens. Das Schein-Leben, die fehlende Authentizität, der fehlende Zusammenhang zwischen innerem Leben und äußerer Lebensgestaltung wird offenbar.” (*Drei Wege* 110) Little wonder that Elisabeth is so pessimistic about male-female relationships: “[E]s sollten die Frauen und die Männer am besten Abstand halten, nichts zu tun haben miteinander, bis beide herausgefunden hatten aus einer Verwirrung und der Verstörung, der Unstimmigkeiten aller Beziehungen.” (TP 4: 424)

Materialism, commodification and exploitation

While at home with her father, Elisabeth purports to be satisfied with the simplest of pleasures—“mit den »Kleinigkeiten«” (TP 4: 376)—“ein Paar Würstel [...] und etwas Käs” (TP 4: 377) and the simple breakfast of fresh bread rolls and coffee (TP 4: 371). By contrast, her life away from home is associated with materialism, commercialism, consumerism, consumption and overindulgence. As a high-profile international journalist, Elisabeth’s life consists of “raffinierten Mittagessen und Abendessen, Champagner und Kaviar”, and “wunderbaren Restaurants [...] und berühmte[n] und interessante[n] Leute” (TP 4: 376f.), and shopping for expensive gifts for the men in her life in the major cities of the world (TP 4: 364). Elisabeth therefore lives, as Bartsch puts it, using the explicitly leftist terminology that Bachmann herself used in her interview statement (*GuI* 145), in “[einer] von Fortschrittswahn und Gewinnsucht korrumpierte[n] kapitalistische[n] Welt” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 165).

As Schmid-Bortenschlager observes: “Immer wieder fließen in die globale Gesellschaftskritik von Bachmann konkrete Aussagen ein, die die Konsumwelt direkt betreffen, den Kapitalismus, verstanden als Gesellschaftsordnung, die den Tauschwert verabsolutiert hat.” (“Frauen als Opfer” 87) Thus Elisabeth’s relationships are also characterised by consumption, indulgence and materialism: her former husband, Hugh, for example, regularly bestowed Elisabeth with extravagant gifts, such as a whole apartment full of flowers and an enormous bottle of expensive perfume (TP 4: 440). Such gifts were, however, not inspired by generosity or love but by guilt over yet another of his many deceptions

⁶² Her marriage to the homosexual, Hugh, who spent her money and betrayed her with another man, is another example of her many unsatisfactory and failed relationships.

(usually, another young boyfriend). Furthermore, these gifts caused problems because Hugh purchased them with funds needed to pay outstanding bills. Consumption and materialism also contribute to the distress and alienation that makes itself increasingly apparent in Elisabeth's life. On her last trip to London, for example, she became decidedly ill while shopping in the large department stores with her brother's bride (TP 4: 371). In an experience remarkably similar to Ich's in *Malina*, Elisabeth feels nauseous, overwhelmed by mass of commodities in the labyrinthine department stores:

Warum nur war ihr schlecht geworden, als sie die Rolltreppen hinauf- und hinunterfahren, an hunderttausend Waren vorbei, und im Coffee Shop, wo sie sich in eine lange Reihe stellten, um Tee und Eier mit Schinken zu bekommen, geriet sie in eine Panik, und Liz fand glücklich noch zwei Plätze nebeneinander, zwischen fürchterlichen alten Frauen, die ihre Teller voller Kuchen und Sandwiches hatten und genußvoll alles verschlangen, was ungenießbar war, und schwätzten und plauderten, als wäre es der gemütlichste Ort von der Welt. (TP 4: 371)⁶³

Elisabeth's response to the shopping centre is perhaps related to a growing consciousness of the increasing commodification of modern life, especially in her professional life. We sense this from her relief, when back home in Klagenfurt, that she is finally in an environment where she is not a means to an end: where she can escape "Telegrammen und Zumutungen aller Art" and where she can go somewhere without having to exploit people or places by having to find out "etwas Brauchbares" (TP 4: 379) about them. It appears, however, that such professional pressures have resulted in an ingrained but not fully conscious attitude towards even those in her family circle. Thus, when describing her brother's bride, Liz, Elisabeth assesses her in terms of a press consumable and a stereotypical personality category: "Liz hätte für keine Reportage getaugt, denn sie war überhaupt kein Typ, der jetzt verlangt wurde, sie stellte weder »swinging London« dar, noch irgend etwas, was man erwartete von einer Zwanzigjährigen" (TP 4: 370).⁶⁴ Elisabeth's professional life as a journalist has, it seems, affected her ability to see people in purely personal and human terms, and this passage reveals the extent to which Elisabeth has adopted the values of the "kapitalistischen, zugleich patriarchalischen Gesellschaft [...], in der alles nach seinem Nutzwert gemessen [wird]"—a society "in der—nach dem Prinzip der Dialektik der Aufklärung—jeder Fortschritt in Unterdrückung, Ausbeutung, Verdinglichung, Bürokratisierung etc. umzuschlagen droht" (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 157).

Dishonesty and moral cowardice

Elisabeth's alienation also manifests itself in her refusal to acknowledge the depth of hurt that she has experienced in her many failed relationships (especially in the loss of Trotta) and the way in which she has sublimated this hurt in her professional career. This mental and emotional block is symptomatic of her general dishonesty with herself and with others. Elisabeth's tendency to dissemble is seen, for example, in the way she cannot bring herself to reveal to her father that there is another side to her glamorous life as a high-flying journalist—a life in which there is "kein Champagner und kein

⁶³ This passage echoes the imagery associated with greasy excess in connection with newspapers in *Ein Ort für Zufälle* (TP 1: 224f.), discussed earlier in this chapter. The references to the gluttonous old women are also reminiscent of the scene in *Ein Ort für Zufälle* in which the old women gorge themselves on extra cake.

⁶⁴ As Schneider notes, Elisabeth's attitude to her brother's bride shows evidence of condescension and suppressed jealousy (*Kompositionsmethode* 363).

berühmter Mann" but all manner of stress (*TP 4*: 377). As Bannasch observes, it is indicative of Elisabeth's "selbstentfremdetes Dasein" that she remains silent about "alles, was nicht in das Bild von einem glücklichen und erfolgreichen Leben passen würde, von alltäglichen Unerfreulichkeiten bis hin zu privaten Mitteilungen" (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 45). Here Elisabeth's distortion of the truth by consciously hiding important aspects, mirrors the way in which journalism distorts reality by either highlighting "bad news" to attract reader attention or only showing the glamorous side of life in "good news" stories. Elisabeth tries to justify her lie with the rationalisation that she is protecting her father: the full story would be "unvorstellbar für Herrn Matrei, dessen Alltag ruhig verlief im Laubenweg und der nur manchmal Erschütterungen erfuhr durch die Telegramme und Briefe der Kinder, Ansichtskarten aus fremden Ländern mit Grüßen" (*TP 4*: 377).⁶⁵

Her rationalisation, however, typifies her lack of candour with her father: thus when she decides to leave Klagenfurt earlier than she originally planned, she surreptitiously arranges for Philippe to send her a telegram calling her back to Paris for an urgent work assignment so that she can avoid telling her father the real reasons for her precipitous departure.⁶⁶ This incident tinges Elisabeth's attitude towards her father, as Schneider notes, with a "Beiklang der Unaufrichtigkeit" (*Kompositionsmethode* 363). Elisabeth's dishonesty with her father even extends to feigning disappointment at having to cut short her visit (*TP 4*: 471) and then hiding her feelings behind her professional mask, waving to her father when she leaves Klagenfurt, "als wäre sie nicht verzweifelt, eine strahlende Frau" (*TP 4*: 456). In the light of her constant prevarication and dissemblance, it does indeed seem that Elisabeth is "incapable of saying a single true word about her life" (Lennox *Cemetery* 295) to herself or to others.

The reader never learns the real reason for Elisabeth's precipitous departure from Klagenfurt. Although it appears that Elisabeth leaves because she has by now been thoroughly disheartened by her failed attempts to follow the three paths to the lake,⁶⁷ it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that her reasons for wanting to leave are not linked to the Rapatz story for it is not long after reading the stories in the local press that Elisabeth decides to end her visit (*TP 4*: 454). Elisabeth's response to the Rapatz

⁶⁵ Elisabeth's inability to be emotionally honest with her father is also evident when she is swimming with her father in the lake and spontaneously calls out "Daddy, I love you" (*TP 4*: 445)—a telling incident, given that her father cannot understand English. When he asks her to repeat what she said, Elisabeth retracts the emotion by replying: "Nichts. Mir ist kalt." (*ibid*) I therefore do not see this passage in terms as positively as Nutting who claims the water image "signals full release from everyday suffering and fear" (84), and O'Regan (64) who sees Elisabeth's enjoyment of swimming with her father and her attempt to express her love for him as "an important step forward" for Elisabeth (63).

⁶⁶ Note here the similarity to the passage in *Malina* where Ich secretly rings Malina, begging him to send a telegram, calling her back to Vienna from the Altenwyl's country residence. Elisabeth's dissimulation here is also reminiscent of the passage where she asks her father to pretend that she is not at home if Elisabeth Mihailovics calls.

⁶⁷ Like Weigel, I see these failed attempts as symbolizing "die Erfahrung einer blockierten Rückkehr" (*Hinterlassenschaften* 399). Similarly, Bartsch maintains that the three blocked paths symbolise the impossibility of going back into an idealised past (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 163) and Achberger argues that they show "there is no path back to the pre-1914 'House of Austria' that Elisabeth longs for" (*Understanding* 157). The scholars Brokoph-Mauch ("Österreich als Fiktion und Geschichte" 194f.), Lensing (58) and Omelaniuk (257), on the other hand, argue that the three paths represent the three Trottas in Elisabeth's life (Franz Josef Trotta, Manes—whom Elisabeth mistakes for a Trotta—and Branco).

story appears to be linked to issues associated with courage and honesty, and also seems to be related to her discomfort about her encounter with Elisabeth Mihailovics as well as the violent and suspicious circumstances of her murder. Here the reader is inclined to ponder why Elisabeth runs away from what could be an opportunity for investigative journalism. Instead of seeing the Rapatz case as a journalistic opportunity to unearth the real story behind the melodramatic headlines, Elisabeth responds firstly in an impotent way by focussing her attention and uneasiness on the inadequacies of the provincial press, and then in a cowardly way by leaving Klagenfurt. Because Elisabeth has proven that she is an energetic and tenacious journalist, unafraid of dangerous professional assignments, the reader suspects that Elisabeth's fear must be resonating at a deeply sub-conscious level.⁶⁸ Here, as in the other *Simultan* stories, the implication might be that the protagonist has encountered a situation that reminds her of a time and circumstance in which she was in extreme personal danger or underwent severe emotional trauma. Perhaps Mihailovics's murder makes Elisabeth conscious of her own mortality, and how she too was physically at risk while on assignment in Algeria, or perhaps she recognises in Mihailovics, a "double" whose fate she might have easily shared, given her relationship with dubious characters like the gangster Marchand. Folkvord's observations about Elisabeth's aversion to Mihailovics lend support to the latter interpretation.

Durch die Ermordung werden die Eindrücke aus der ersten Begegnung in Klagenfurt bestätigt, Elisabeth Mihailovics wird in der Handlung zu einem Bild des weiblichen Opfers, und mit dieser Opferexistenz möchte Elisabeth Matrei sich keineswegs identifizieren [...]. [M]an kann die Figur von Elisabeth Mihailovics als eine Reflexionsfigur verstehen, durch die Elisabeth Matrei mit sich selbst konfrontiert wird. Ihre Ablehnung dieser Elisabeth ist eine Ablehnung ihrer eigenen Person, die Flucht von ihr repräsentiert gewissermaßen eine Flucht vor der eigenen verdrängten Geschichte. (*Drei Wege* 109)

As Elisabeth does not stay to investigate the Rapatz case, and does not have the insight or courage to work out why she is so unsettled about the case, it is left to the reader to do the detective work (*ibid.*).⁶⁹ As Folkvord goes on to note, Elisabeth's sudden departure represents her return to the life of the professional photojournalist: she reverts to being "ein Mensch, der abfuhr, und immer weiter reiste" (*TP 4*: 456), and the unresolved detective work (and incomplete writing project) that Elisabeth shies away from at this point is subsequently undertaken by Bachmann in "Gier" (*ibid.*). In her precipitous departure from Klagenfurt, then, and in her inability to be frank with her father (and herself) Elisabeth shows that her professional courage and her proclaimed commitment to presenting the truth in her

⁶⁸ For me this exemplifies what Schneider refers to as instances, "wo private und berufliche Absichten und Entscheidungen Elisabeths ineinanderfließen, so daß zwischen honnettem Berufsethos und fragwürdiger privat-psychischer Sekundärmotivation nicht mehr zu unterscheiden ist" (*Kompositionsmethode* 364). In this regard Schneider argues that Elisabeth was prompted to go to Algeria less out of concern for the political situation than out of a reaction to her heated discussions with Trotta about journalism, and maintains that her decision to accept the Saigon assignment was similarly motivated by "schwankenden Gemütsstimmungen" (364f.). Schneider sees in her decision not just "ein[en] Verzweiflungsakt" but yet another example of the "moralischen Fragwürdigkeit des beruflichen Handelns dieser Kriegsberichterstatlerin [...], die nicht (nur) um der Sache willen nach Saigon und Algerien geht, sondern dort (auch) Ablenkung und Befreiung von ihren persönlichen Schwierigkeiten sucht" (*Kompositionsmethode* 365).

⁶⁹ As Folkvord goes on to note, Elisabeth's sudden departure represents her return to the life of the professional photojournalist: she reverts to being "ein Mensch, der abfuhr, und immer weiter reiste" (*TP 4*: 456), and the unresolved detective work (and incomplete writing project) that Elisabeth shies away from at this point is subsequently undertaken by Bachmann in "Gier" (*Drei Wege* 109).

work, do not translate into her personal life.

This failure of courage is, however, not limited to her personal life as we see in her response to the investigative report that she wrote on abortion. Although this report instilled in her a deep rage about what she perceived to be the collective fraud of her interviewees—a rage that echoes the intensity and outrage of Wildermuth as well as his frustration over the elusiveness of “truth”—but does not change her behaviour.

Elisabeth, die keinem mehr glaubte, mußte daraus eine Reportage mit furchterregenden Fotos und Texten machen, während sie merkte, daß das alles sie gar nichts anging, schon gar nicht diese Frauen und diese Ärzte, und es packte sie plötzlich eine sinnlose Wut, als sie sich mit einem eleganten, feinsinnigen Gynäkologen unterhielt, sie wollte plötzlich aufspringen, ihn anschreien, daß ihr sein ganzes Verständnis und seine vorsichtigen Formulierungen gestohlen bleiben konnten. Was gingen sie diese ganzen Frauen an mit ihren Schwierigkeiten und ihren Männern und ihrer Unfähigkeit, auch nur ein einziges wahres Wort über ihr Leben zu sagen, und sie wollte diesen Arzt plötzlich fragen: Wer fragt einmal mich, wer fragt einmal jemand, der selber denkt und zu leben wagt, und was habt ihr aus mir gemacht und aus so vielen anderen, mit diesem irrsinnigen Verständnis für jedes Problem, und ist es denn überhaupt noch nie jemand in den Sinn gekommen, daß man die Menschen umbringt, wenn man ihnen das Sprechen abnimmt und damit das Erleben und Denken. (TP 4: 421)

The last part of this passage is important, not only in the story, but also in the context of Bachmann's work, particularly in relation to the mass media, as it highlights why language and language usage feature so prominently in Bachmann's writing. Although the narrative perspective is at this point that of Elisabeth's, it is important to remember that Bachmann herself expressed a similar view in her non-literary work (for example, in her “Frankfurter Vorlesungen” and her speech “Die Wahrheit ist dem Menschen zumutbar”). At the heart of this view is the notion that, because an individual's thoughts and experiences are inextricably connected with language, it becomes a matter of life and death when an individual is somehow deprived or robbed of their own language or speech—a process which occurs when one “puts words into another's mouth” or when one endeavours to do their thinking and speaking for them.

Although the women Elisabeth interviewed for her report speak from personal experience, this does not translate into an authentic communication of that experience:

Die Gespräche mit den befragten Frauen lassen Elisabeth erkennen, daß ihnen der Zugang zur eigenen Erfahrung verstellt ist, daß sie sich nur in vorgegebenen Formulierungen artikulieren können. Die Arbeit bringt Elisabeth zu der Einsicht in die Distanz, die alle an der Reportage Beteiligten zu dem Beschriebenen haben. (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 91)

Unlike Wildermuth, Elisabeth successfully suppresses and even sublimates her rage to complete the story in her usual professional manner, even carrying off a prize for her efforts: “Natürlich hatte sie nicht geschrien, sondern sich höflich bedankt und einen hervorragenden Bericht abgeliefert, der sie anekelte, und der Bericht war schon vergessen und in Papierkörben versunken, als sie dafür einen Preis bekam.” (TP 4: 421)⁷⁰ Folkvord sums up the problem as follows:

[Elisabeth] steht als Journalistin den Themen fern, sie schreibt mit großer Distanz, läßt sich nicht

⁷⁰ In this passage it is telling that she scornfully refers to this prize as her “Goldenen Löwen”, thus using a metaphor that not only draws a parallel between the information medium of news in which she works and the entertainment and largely fictional medium of cinema but also echoes the metaphor that she used when reflecting on how she had been a spectator rather than an actor in the film of her life (TP 4: 420).

berühren, bezieht sich nicht selber ein. Der darauffolgende Emotionsausbruch bestätigt, daß es in diesem Fall nicht darum geht, daß sie das Thema nicht angeht. Eine Betroffenheit ist vorhanden, sie findet nur im Geschriebenen keinen Ausdruck. Man kann sich hier fragen, ob das von Elisabeth Geschriebene letztendlich verwandt ist mit den von ihr kritisierten Äußerungen des männlichen Experten. Die Reportage [...] ist für Elisabeth eine "Anhäufung von fertigen Sätzen", also eine *Reproduktion*. Diese Reportage wird bezeichnenderweise mit einem Preis belohnt. [...] Ihr beruflicher Erfolg hat einen hohen Preis. Dieser Preis ist "neutral" bleiben, Distanz halten, reproduzieren. (*Drei Wege* 74)

Although it does not change her outward behaviour, the personal and professional crisis associated with her prize-winning report sets in train an imperceptible but undeniable change in her attitude to her work, which undermines her former certainty, forcing her to question and to think deeply about the moral issues associated with her work and to concede the truth of Trotta's observation about the essentially offensive nature of her work as a journalist: "[U]nmerklich [begann sie] ihre Arbeit anders zu sehen, denn sie hatte, weil sie den Kopf immer voll hatte von den Tagesereignissen, nie über heiklere Formen von Recht und Unrecht nachgedacht, wie Trotta, und der Verdacht blieb in ihr, daß etwas Beleidigendes in ihrer Arbeit war." (*TP 4*: 386) But even when she starts to admit to herself that Trotta had been right about the Algerian War and she had been both naïve and wrong, she maintains the outward lie, telling everyone that her experience in Algeria had been "hochinteressant" and going on to write in her report "mit vorsichtigen Einschränkungen allerlei Positives" (*TP 4*: 389). Inwardly, though, she can no longer overlook her professional lies: "[S]ie überlas ihre Bildtexte, stundenlang, ehe sie sie abholen ließ, ihren Grenzübertritt in die erste Lüge, die ihr klar war." (*TP 4*: 389) The implication is very clear: as a reporter, Elisabeth has been producing lies. The difference now is her awareness of this fact.

For the first time, Elisabeth feels the betrayal of experience by words: a Hofmannsthalian scepticism concerning the ability of a devalued language to convey or formulate the truth of an experience. But, more significantly, what this sudden loss of faith in her own medium signals is an awakening to the ineffable, mystical core of experience which cannot, indeed must not, be reduced to the formulations and persuasions of historians and journalists. It is a lesson in the defence of the inherent value of life, rather than of the officially endorsed descriptions of it. (Omelaniuk 259)

But in the same way that the revelation of the truth in the journalistic media does not change people's attitudes or behaviour, so too, Elisabeth's new insight remains impotent: the truth remains hidden below the surface and does not translate into any action: she neither changes her approach to journalism nor gives up her career. Even after Elisabeth's epiphanous reading of the essay "Über die Tortur"⁷¹ (which I discuss later), the only outcome is that Elisabeth declines some professional assignments.

Elisabeth ist ansprechbar für diesen Text, er erreicht sie, und sie zeigt dadurch eine Kapazität, die weit über das hinausgeht, was sie selber täglich schreibend produziert. Sie folgt aber nicht der ersten Regung, antworten zu wollen, schreibt selber weder eine Antwort, noch einen anderen "Text", der von dem Essay beeinflusst wäre. Durch diese Gegenüberstellung der zwei Annäherungsweisen an die eigene Geschichte wird Elisabeth noch einmal sichtbar als eine, die verdrängen muß, sich nicht einbeziehen kann, als eine [...] die in der Täuschung lebt, die nicht enttäuscht weiterleben kann. (Folkvord *Drei Wege* 88).

Like Nadja in the opening story of the collection, Elisabeth may well have "succeeded brilliantly in the public, male, arena" but "in the private realm [both women] are entirely unable to articulate why

⁷¹ Although Bachmann refers to the essay as "Über die Tortur", the name of the essay, as published in Améry's *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* is "Die Tortur".

or even *that* they are unhappy” (Lennox *Cemetery* 336). Perhaps the reason for their lack of insight—and their alienation from themselves—is closely connected to their professions as mediators of information (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 44). Both work “in the female realm of reproduction: one a translator, the other a photographer” and therefore “both function as media through which the activities of others pass” (Lennox *Cemetery* 41). Because of their total immersion in the words, thoughts and feelings of others, both Nadja and Elisabeth have lost the capacity to tap into, explore and come to terms with their own emotions. Lennox explains this loss in terms of the price that Elisabeth pays for her success at photojournalism, which is in essence “success at taking on the power of the male gaze” (*Cemetery* 288): while it enables her to “assume the stance of the universal, disembodied (i.e. male) Enlightenment subject [...] Elisabeth’s very assumption of universal subject status means precisely that she will be unable to attend to or even articulate her own female concerns” (ibid.) given that the universalistic approach is based on a denial of the differences between male and female.

Folkvord, too, sees the ending in negative terms because Elisabeth’s decision to replace a sick colleague in Saigon, who has fallen ill, is not the result of a move that she has initiated but a passive agreement to fill a vacancy left by a male, which is how her career in journalism started. Elisabeth has therefore made no progress: she is not working on her own project, and in replacing a sick man (Folkvord *Drei Wege* 120), ends up writing “his-story” (75). As Folkvord points out, Elisabeth’s “erhöhte Reflexionsstufe in bezug auf die eigene berufliche Tätigkeit” does not translate into any change in her journalistic practice: “Ihr Schreiben ist nach wie vor situiert auf der Seite der Lüge.” (75) Nevertheless, Folkvord concedes that “Drei Wege zum See” is not completely pessimistic because, in questioning Elisabeth’s inauthentic communication, it draws attention to other more authentic forms of writing:

Trotz der resignativen Entwicklung [...] liegt in der Erzählung dadurch, daß dieses Schreiben hinterfragt und mit einer anderen Schreibweise konfrontiert wird, die Vision einer eigentlicheren Schreibweise vor. Die Erzählung liefert einen Vergleich zwischen verschiedenen Arten des Schreibens, und Elisabeths Schreiben repräsentiert ein *Gegenbild* zu einem Schreiben, das das schreibende Subjekt einbezieht. (75f., m.e.)

8.7.3 Positive “Gegenbilder”

As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, “Drei Wege zum See” is replete with negative depictions of the journalist media and its representatives. At the same time, the story also abounds with characters who represent positive alternatives, that is, “Gegenbilder” representing values that are the opposite to those of the journalist media: Herr Matrei, Trotta, and Trotta’s cousin Branco. Another very important “Gegenbild” can be found in the author of the essay “Die Tortur”. It is my contention that Bachmann’s use of these figures, especially the latter, sharpens the critique of the journalistic and other mass media in providing counterexamples that represent a more constructive form of criticism than a purely iconoclastic attack on journalism.

Herr Matrei

As mentioned earlier, Herr Matrei is so fond of his daily dose of news that he is irritated when

his children ring during the evening radio news broadcast. The values that he stands for, however, are shown to be the opposite of those that are associated with journalism in Bachmann's work. Thus, while he appears to be as addicted to newspapers as his daughter, he is by no means an uncritical consumer of journalistic media as we see in his bemused and patronising observations about word usage in the press: "[E]r las gern, herumkittelnd, aus der Zeitung ein paar Sätze vor, mit Nachbemerken wie: Wo haben sie denn das wieder her? »Verunsicherung«, also so was." (TP 4: 427)⁷² Admittedly, Herr Matrei's view that Rapatz cannot have been an important person because his name had not previously been mentioned in the press (TP 4: 453) appears to demonstrate a certain naiveté but this is not necessarily, I believe, evidence of an unbroken relationship with the press or an unquestioning belief, "daß die Zeitung Wirklichkeit vermittelt" (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 108). Indeed, in standing up to the "gehässige Frau Direktor Hauser, die für die Verbreitung des Klatsches in der Nachbarschaft gesorgt hatte" (TP 4: 369) and in his scorn for the new supermarket (TP 4: 436) and local tourist developments, Herr Matrei shows himself to be not only a generally forthright and sceptical person who is unlikely to believe everything that he reads or hears, but also reveals himself to be an opponent of the commercial values promoted in the press.

In fact, this "geradezu idealer Typus des altösterreichischen Beamten" (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 164) is almost luddite-like in his disapproval of modern technology like the telephone⁷³ and his refusal to fly—even to attend the wedding of his only son (TP 4: 369). Further, his quiet, wholesome, rustic life represents an older and more authentic way of living, in contrast to the urban materialism and the commercial pressures of Elisabeth's professional life abroad, which revolves around the mass media, mass culture and mass consumption. As Schneider puts it: "Als rechtschaffener und biedersinniger, aber zugleich etwas rückständiger und schlichter Alt-Österreicher steht Herr Matrei dem Kosmopolitanismus seiner Tochter [...], mit hilflosem Unverständnis gegenüber." ("*Simultan* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld" 167). Unlike most of the other men in her life (apart from Trotta), Elisabeth's father is characterised by "Bedürfnislosigkeit" and therefore Elisabeth cannot give him any pleasure with expensive, brandname gifts:

[M]an konnte [ihrem Vater] keine Dunhillpfeifen, keine goldenen Feuerzeuge, teure Zigarren, keine Krawatten, keine Luxusgegenstände aus Luxusgeschäften schenken, auch Nützliches nicht, weil er alles ablehnte und das Nützliche schon hatte und hütete, von den Baumscheren bis zum Spaten, und den Hausrat, den ein alter Mensch noch brauchte. Alkohol trank er keinen, er rauchte nicht, er brauchte keine Anzüge, Seidenschals, Kaschmirpullover, Gesichtswasser, und Elisabeth, die im Lauf der Jahre einen Einfallsreichtum sondergleichen entwickelt hatte für Geschenke, die allen noch so verschiedenen Arten von Männern entsprachen, fiel nichts ein, wenn sie an ihren Vater dachte. (TP 4: 364)

⁷² Dippel suggests that Herr Matrei's "Abneigung gegen das Zeitungsdeutsch" is a veiled allusion to the views expressed in Roth's article "Eine halbe Stunde Kauderwelsch" (95). As Roth is, however, not the first or only critic of "Zeitungsdeutsch", Herr Matrei's scorn for the misuse of language in the press could also be seen to reflect the views of Karl Kraus or even Bachmann herself.

⁷³ Herr Matrei refers to "dieses Telefonieren" as "die reinste Krankheit [...] zwischen den jungen Leuten heute" (TP 4: 424). Here too, Dippel points out a parallel with Joseph Roth (95) as part of a number of commonalities that would appear to be more coincidence than of great significance for "Drei Wege zum See". Bannasch on the other hand sees similarities between Herr Matrei and the character of Kari Bühl in Hofmannsthal's *Der Schwierige* who also hated the telephone (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 146).

Herr Matrei's home and his way of life provide the potential for physical and emotional refuge from these professional pressures for Elisabeth in the same way that she now finds refuge in "die großen Wanderungen [...] zum See" (TP 4: 376)—an activity that in her younger days she had shunned "als etwas Lästiges, Überflüssiges, Unbequemes" but now felt differently about "seit alle Städte, die so »super« waren, ihr diesen Wald anders erscheinen ließen, als den einzigen Flecken Welt, der still war" (TP 4: 379).

Elisabeth's father not only represents a different way of life, but also a different era—one that is largely untouched by the negative impacts of industrialisation, technology and commercialisation (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 164). As Folkvord observes: "Es wird im Text das Bild einer "alten Welt", zu der die Österreicher Trotta und Herr Matrei gehören, kontrastiert mit dem Bild der modernen Welt, einer Welt, die oft mit Deutschland und mit Personen der Medienwelt verbunden wird." (*Drei Wege* 105) This difference is highlighted in Elisabeth's choice of present for her father—an old book called *Die Straße nach Sarajewo* and her reason for buying it: "[D]as ging ihn etwas an." (TP 4: 367). Unlike Elisabeth (and journalism in general), Herr Matrei has retained and fostered his connections with the past, and although Elisabeth now enjoys listening to his stories from days gone by, it was not always so: "Für sie hatte es nur die Zukunft gegeben." (TP 4: 430) Despite his identification with the past era of the Habsburg monarchy, however, Herr Matrei is not an unquestioning supporter of that era: "Er sprach gerne mit Achtung und Kritik, von der Zeit vorher, er hatte jeden Fehler im Blick, übersah keinen [...]." (TP 4: 430) Herr Matrei's firm connections to the past are also reflected in his relationship to language, where, in contrast to Elisabeth's frequent misuse of language to deceive others and hide her real feelings, Herr Matrei maintains an "authentic relationship with his native language" (O'Regan 62), speaking "das gute ärarische Deutsch, immer seiner Person und seinem Ausdruck und seiner Stimmung entsprechend" (TP 4: 427). It is not a coincidence, then, as O'Regan points out, that Herr Matrei "plays a role in making [Elisabeth] aware of the poverty of her own language" (63) when Elisabeth finds herself unable to tell her father those stories of the dazzling world she inhabited and usually entertained friends and acquaintances with. It was not only because her father was uninterested in them but because his presence made her conscious of the fact that all these stories were "trübe und leer" (TP 4: 420).

As well as representing a close relationship with the past, Elisabeth's father represents an almost iconic Austrianness as well as a belief in the importance of national integrity. Hence his attack on the encroachments of the tourist industry and the cultural invasion of Austria by the Germans. Although Elisabeth is also unhappy about these developments, Herr Matrei is much more trenchant in his criticism with his "bissige Bemerkungen" about the cramped accommodation at the new camping place (TP 4: 445) and about the way in which Austrians have sold out to the Germans. For Herr Matrei, the growth of tourist developments and the concomitant influx of Germans represent a commercial and cultural invasion.

Herr Matrei sinnierte: Es sind überhaupt nur noch Deutsche da, jetzt haben sie es endlich fertiggebracht, jetzt haben sie uns gekauft, und die haben denen keinen Riegel vorgeschoben, unsere Regierungstrottel, die das hätten kommen sehen müssen. Und nun mußte er noch auf seine alten Tage erleben, daß Kärnten

den Deutschen gehörte. Die Bauern hätten praktisch fast alle Grundstücke an sie verkauft, die neuen Besitzer spielten sich schon auf wie die Herren, nicht wie Gäste. Einen Österreicher schaute man während der Saison gar nicht an, und die Speisekarten waren voll von irrsinnigen Ausdrücken, die kein Österreicher verstand, für Topfenkuchen habe er »Käsesahnetorte« gelesen, und danach sei er aufgestanden beim RONACHER und habe das Lokal nie mehr betreten. (TP 4: 445f.)

In directing his anger at his fellow Austrians, Elisabeth's father derides the ready acceptance of the capitalistic notion that foreign investment is good for the Austrian economy, when in fact this so-called tourist trade represented in effect an occupation (TP 4: 446). He therefore sees his fellow Austrians in terms reminiscent of the key passage in *Malina* about the universal prostitution and universal black market (TP 3.1: 598) that characterised post-war Austria.

Herr Matrei wiederholte sich, während sie stadteinwärts fuhren: die Deutschen hätten jetzt alles, und das habe er nicht mehr erleben wollen. Den Krieg hatten sie verloren, aber nur scheinbar, jetzt eroberten sie Österreich wirklich, jetzt konnten sie es sich kaufen, und das war schlimmer, für ihn war ein käufliches Land schlimmer als ein verirrtes und zerschlagenes. Man durfte sich nicht kaufen lassen. (TP 4: 447)

To add insult to injury, this foreign invasion and commercial exploitation is accompanied by a degradation of the region. As Herr Matrei observes, the Germans who are buying out Carinthia are not even rich, but "Proleten mit ihren stinkenden großen Autos, [die] das Land kaputt machten [...] und [...] von neun Uhr morgens an grölten und Bier tranken, ihre Autos immerzu wuschen und dann nach »Fenedig« rasten" (TP 4: 446).

Trotta

Like Herr Matrei, Elisabeth's former lover, Franz Joseph Eugen Trotta,⁷⁴ represents an older and more authentic era. Both have retained a connection to a past era, the era of "das Haus Österreich", "das für Bachmann ihrer eigenen Aussage nach gleichbedeutend ist mit Österreich [...]. Beide der Vater und Trotta, sind Anachronisten, Relikte einer Welt, die nicht erst mit dem Anschluß zu Ende ging, sondern schon mit Sarajewo" (Brokoph-Mauch "Österreich als Fiktion und Geschichte" 193). The characteristics of this era include, as Schmid-Bortenschlager points out:

[...] gekonnte und verantwortliche Verwendung der Sprache, die menschliche Zuneigung, die auf Dezenz beruht, Offenheit gegenüber anderen Kulturen und Völkern, Respekt, das Fehlen von Ehrgeiz, sinnloser Ansammlung von Gütern etc, Wissen um Bereiche, die sich nicht rational erfassen lassen. ("Frauen als Opfer" 92f.)

Thus, when Elisabeth refers to the "Stimmen" of her Trottas in the final pages of the story (TP 4: 470), she is referring to voices whose values are the opposite, not only to those of the modern era, but also the opposite to the world of journalism. It is these voices of history—representing "das Bewußtsein von Vergangenheit" (Dippel 145) and how it shapes us—that have been suppressed from the world of the mass media that Elisabeth has embraced:

Man kümmert sich um die sogenannten aktuellen Probleme, Vergangenheitsbewältigung ist hier kein Thema, man beschreibt und dokumentiert die neuen Kriege, die neuen Katastrophen, die viele Menschenleben fordern. Der Weg geht zielstrebig nach vorne, ohne Bewußtsein von der Präsenz der Vergangenheit im Jetztigen. (Folkvord *Drei Wege* 77)

⁷⁴ As Dippel points out in relation to Trotta, "[...] so vereinigen sich in seinem Namen beide Vornamen des Kaisers, mit Eugen noch erweitert um den Namen des bekanntesten, die Idee der Staatsräson vertretenden Feldherrn Österreichs" (70).

And, as Folkvord goes on to observe, it is this world of “Oberflächenaufnahmen”, that contributes to the “Erfahrungsschwund” Bachmann refers to in connection with the impact of the mass media: “In »Drei Wege zum See« wird die Welt der Oberflächenaufnahmen vorgeführt als eine “Gegenwelt”, von der der Mensch sich narkotisieren läßt [...]. Statt Wahrnehmung und Erkenntnis zu fördern, funktionieren die Medien betäubend.” (ibid.)

While Herr Matrei's criticism of journalism restricts itself to its misuse of language and the impact of the journalistic lifestyle on his daughter's health, Trotta's critique of journalism is more trenchant and extensive, subjecting Elisabeth to “eine[r] grundlegende[n] Überprüfung ihrer journalistischen Tätigkeit” (Beicken 209), questioning the “Möglichkeit eines unzynischen, die Schamgrenze nicht überschreitenden journalistischen Erzählens” (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 103).⁷⁵ As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the narrator of “Drei Wege zum See” does not hold back from an occasional but pointed critique of Elisabeth, as is evident, for example, from the observation that she achieved journalistic success despite not being particularly talented. Elisabeth's most vocal and overt critic is, however, Trotta.⁷⁶ It is Trotta who challenges Elisabeth's distress over her murdered journalistic colleagues, ridiculing them as ambitious athletes, who knowingly expose themselves to professional risk (*TP* 4: 385). Trotta is also the one who derides Elisabeth's moral justification for the Algerian War and her belief in the need for press coverage to reveal the “truth” of what was happening as childish, laughable and untenable (ibid.). In questioning journalism's pretensions to bringing about moral transformation in its readers and corrective action in the real world, Trotta refutes the aesthetic claims of the journalistic profession and instead points to the hypocrisy, lies and offensive assumptions that underpin the journalistic fixation with human suffering (ibid.). According to Trotta, photos like those produced by Elisabeth for her reports, are, regardless of their aesthetic values and technical accuracy, “keine zuverlässig[en] Aussagen [...], weil sie nichts über die individuelle Leiderfahrung auszusagen vermögen” (Dippel 69).

Furthermore, this “Diskrepanz zwischen offizieller Geschichtsschreibung und individueller Geschichtserfahrung” makes journalistic content a form of “Wirklichkeitsverfälschung” (ibid.). Far

⁷⁵ Bannasch is right to refute Eigler's interpretation of Trotta's conflict with Elisabeth as “geschlechtspezifisch” and to argue that such an interpretation devalues Trotta's critique of her journalistic work (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 101: fn. 12). To this refutation I would add that Eigler's claim overlooks the fact that Trotta is equally scathing of Elisabeth's male colleagues, Willy Flecker and André. Nevertheless, Bannasch misses the mark when she insists “Elisabeths überdurchschnittliche Qualifikation wird in »Drei Wege zum See« von keiner Figur angezweifelt, ihr Geschlecht spielt für die Ausübung ihres Berufs ausdrücklich keine Rolle” (ibid.), given the many references to the superficiality of Elisabeth's skills and the emphasis on the role of luck in her rapid rise within the journalistic profession, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

⁷⁶ According to Schneider, this narrative strategy avoids the situation of the narrator “exploiting” an “Opfer”—that is, committing the same sin of which Elisabeth is guilty in her own “Kriegsberichte” when she compounds the suffering of victims by putting them through the misery of having their suffering exposed for public consumption: “Wenn Trotta's Argumente hinsichtlich der »Niedertracht« jeglicher Kriegsberichterstattung stichhaltig sind—und im weiteren Gesprächs- und Handlungsverlauf erfahren diese Argumente keine Widerlegung oder Relativierung—so ist es nur konsequent, wenn der Erzähler von »Drei Wege zum See« jedem Verdacht auszuweichen versuche, daß er seine Hauptopferfigur bewußt oder unbewußt zur Schau stelle oder als Instrument »zur Stimulierung für Gesinnung« ausbeute.” (*Kompositionsmethode* 361)

from providing opportunities for waking readers up to the truth or giving them cause to reflect, the much vaunted documentary accuracy of journalists like Elisabeth ends up exploiting suffering, leading either to “eine Vermarktung des Leidens als ästhetisch gestalteter Abschreckung” (Thau 58) or to the “Instrumentalisierung der Opfer für politische Zwecke, für Ideologien” (Dippel 69). “[M]an schaut sich doch Tote nicht zur Stimulierung für Gesinnung an” (TP 4: 386), Trotta protests.⁷⁷ Because readers of newspapers and magazines already know about torture and suffering from countless previous reports, the press's pornographic fixation with human misery can only lead to desensitisation, ‘compassion fatigue’ or total apathy, and ultimately represents the ‘productisation’ of suffering:

Die Haltung, mit der Elisabeth als links-intellektuelle Aufklärerin ihre Arbeit betreibt und mit der sie auch gelegentliche Fälschungen der Berichterstattung rechtfertigt, erzeugt als genaues Gegenteil eine Haltung politischer Lethargie. Nicht nur das Elend, auch der Kampf gegen das Elend wird zum Konsumartikel. Das journalistische Schreiben, das von einem uninformierten und damit unschuldigen Leser ausgeht, ermöglicht einen Zustand von Informiertheit in dem Gefühl der Unschuld. Elisabeths zusätzliche Arbeit als Photographin ist in Trotta's Argumentation äußerster Ausdruck des journalistischen Zynismus, es ist die Ästhetisierung und Perfektionierung des Konsumartikels Elend. (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 102)

The cynical and offensive exploitation of human suffering through the written word is bad enough, according to Trotta. Photography only compounds this offence: “Du liest doch auch [...] alle Berichte über die Folterungen [...], und du liest es und weißt, daß es wahr ist, un menschlich, daß es ein Ende haben muß, und dann möchtest du es vielleicht noch fotografieren, damit Hunderttausende auch sehen dürfen, wie man gefoltert wird. Wissen genügt wohl nicht! (TP 4: 387) As Bannasch notes: “Trotta's Vorwurf ist der des Zynismus, der jeder journalistischen Arbeit zugrundeliegt und gesteigert werde durch die Verwendung von Photographien als Belegmaterial” (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 101). The persistence of the press in parading human suffering only proves, according to Trotta, that its agenda is something other than the mere communication of knowledge and the truth. Thus Trotta challenges Elisabeth's seemingly worthy intention of bringing “die Menschen [...] zur Vernunft” (TP 4: 388),⁷⁸ by disputing the whole notion of “bringing people to their senses”. Here Trotta's critique verges on a critique of the Enlightenment's much vaunted worthy goal of ensuring human progress and the elimination of suffering by the application of human reason: “O zu welcher, welcher Vernunft, wenn sie es bis heute noch nicht getan haben, was hat in Jahrhunderten ausgereicht, sie zur Vernunft zu bringen, und was wird ausreichen, um dich zur Vernunft zu bringen!” (ibid.) The very notion of bringing people to their senses in this way is, according to Trotta, not grounded in idealistic hopes for bettering mankind through the transformation set in train by their press coverage but instead evidence of a deeply cynical and pessimistic view of mankind: “[N]icht ich halte die Menschen für grundschlecht, für bar jeder Möglichkeit, etwas nicht zu begreifen, und für immer verloren, aber du tust es, denn sonst würdest du nicht denken, daß sie außer ein paar Geboten auch noch Reportagen und

⁷⁷ For an extended discussion of the similarities here with the views expressed by Benjamin in relation to “Erfahrungsschwund” and by Siegfried Kracauer in his critique of the pictorial press in the essay “Die Photographie”, see Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 105ff.).

⁷⁸ Note here the discrepancy between Elisabeth's proclaimed ideal of “Vernunft” and her father's observations about the lack of “Vernunft” in her personal life: “Elisabeth wirtschaftete schlecht mit ihrer Gesundheit, und in seinen Stolz über ihr erfolgreiches Leben mischte sich immer eine Sorge, daß sie unvernünftig lebe.” (TP 4: 377)

»hartes Material« [...] brauchen.” (ibid.)

Trotta is the first and only person to successfully challenge Elisabeth's blind faith in the value of her work—the first to force her to think deeply about the moral issues associated with her work and to make her “recognize that her profession is implicated in the injustices she believes she is combatting” (Lennox *Cemetery* 291). Although she is initially unreceptive to Trotta's critique of journalism, her attitude to her work is eventually affected by his views. He therefore literally opens her eyes and “disillusions” her so that she no longer blindly accepts good intentions, talent and skill as justifications for journalistic activity. The impact of his scepticism and his influence is lasting: for example, it is no coincidence that Elisabeth is described as reading the Klagenfurt newspaper reports on the Rapatz case “mit dem leisen Hohn, der immer in Trotta gewesen war und der erst später in sie eingezogen war” (*TP* 4: 397) the morning after a long night of thinking about Trotta and his scathing attack on Willy Flecker's “Gewäsch” and “Jargon” (*TP* 4: 426) and the deceptive innocuousness of the two “Verbrecher [...] aus einem Operettenland” (*TP* 4: 396f.).⁷⁹

Unlike Elisabeth, Trotta does not delude himself in believing that he is alive in any meaningful sense of the word. When Elisabeth berates him for his flight from life—“Du lebst nicht in dieser Zeit, sagte sie erbittert, ich kann nicht mit jemand leben und reden, der sich bloß in diese Zeit verirrt hat und nicht in ihr lebt” (*TP* 4: 389)—Trotta responds with an admission and a counterattack—“Ich lebe überhaupt nicht, ich habe nie gewußt, was das ist, Leben. Das Leben suche ich bei dir, aber ich kann mir nicht einmal einbilden, daß du es mir geben könntest.” (*TP* 4: 389) And unlike Elisabeth (and the other female protagonists in the *Simultan* collection), Trotta has “ein vollkommenes Unvermögen zu vergessen” (*TP* 4: 405) and is completely incapable of escape into “Geschäftigkeit, Kapriziosität oder Flucht in eine Krankheit” (Bartsch *Ingeborg Bachmann* 163).

Tragically and ironically, however, Trotta's refusal to adopt the escape mechanisms that the *Simultan* protagonists resort to decreases his capacity, “vernichtet weiter[zul]eben”. In the end, he commits suicide.⁸⁰ Trotta's fate demonstrates “warum die Frauen es vorziehen, sich an eine schlechte Wirklichkeit, eine Unwirklichkeit zu halten, die Geschichte zu verdrängen oder sich »in die Fremde zu retten« [...], um tätig zu sein” (Schmidt “Beraubung” 498). And so, while the figure of Trotta embodies the positive qualities of insight and integrity in opposition to journalistic values, he reveals himself to be incapable of translating his perception and principles into survival.⁸¹ Trotta may indeed be

⁷⁹ Bannasch sees this as an allusion to Kraus's *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 147).

⁸⁰ Thus Trotta, like Ich in *Malina*, exemplifies Bachmann's “Figuren [...], die daran, daß ihnen die Augen aufgehen über sich selbst, daß sie ihr Eigenes sich zurückzuerobern suchen, zugrunde gehen” (Schmidt “Beraubung” 498). Trotta's suicide demonstrates, as Schmid-Bortenschlager notes, that the “Opfer” in the *Simultan* stories are not always women (“Frauen als Opfer” 93), and goes so far as to suggest that given the strong parallels between Trotta and her father, Herr Matrei might also be seen in similar terms. While their values may represent the same era, there is a significant difference in their personalities: Herr Matrei shows no signs of Trotta's self-doubt and alienation.

⁸¹ Heidelberg-Leonard insists that the figure of Trotta in “Drei Wege zum See” is not only closely associated with Améry but also with Celan whose suicide had a deep impact on Bachmann at the time she was working on this story. According to Heidelberg-Leonard, the impact of Celan's death prompted Bachmann to use “Amérys

“illusionslos” and “hellsichtig” (Thau 58) but he is also as Omelaniuk notes, “one of the quintessential ‘hollow men’ born into the period after the world event which irrevocably destroyed Greater Austria as a political entity” (248)—a man “trapped within Roth’s language of pessimism and despair” (Lensing 62). He thus remains an essentially ambivalent figure in “Drei Wege zum See”. As Thau notes: “Bei Franz Joseph Trotta kann am wenigsten von einer Bewältigung [der alten Ordnung] gesprochen werden; er sieht als Möglichkeit, sich der Unmenschlichkeit und Instinktlosigkeit seiner Umwelt zu entziehen, nur den Selbstmord.” (64)

Branco

A more positive “Gegenbild”, though less elaborated figure, is Trotta’s cousin Branco, who is, as he himself points out, more than just a relative of Trotta’s: “[W]ir waren nicht nur verwandt miteinander, es war etwas mehr.” (TP 4: 458) In many ways Branco is the positive alter ego of Trotta, one who has great empathy and understanding for Trotta’s rootlessness and pain—“Franz Joseph war in Paris nicht zuhause und dann zuletzt in Wien auch nicht, bestimmt nicht, denn er hat immer gerne paradoxe Dinge gesagt, am häufigsten, er sei exterritorial. Sie müssen nicht traurig sein, es war ihm nicht zu helfen” (TP 4: 458). Unlike Trotta, Branco has an “ungebrochenes Verhältnis zu seinem Land und der Stadt, die er als Zuhause bezeichnet” (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 126), and unlike his cousin, Branco is a survivor: he is a “hünenhaft[er], fröhlich[er] Slowene” (TP 4: 391), “verflucht gesund” (ibid.)⁸² and “jemand, der sich traut, weiterzuleben” (Folkvord *Drei Wege* 114). At the same time, he embodies positive aspects of Trotta’s character:

[...] ohne daß ihm durch das schmerzhafteste Erkennen die Lebensfähigkeit verloren gegangen ist. Er ist eine Art Doppelgänger Trotta’s, der aber positive Vorzeichen trägt. Er bildet am Ende der Erzählung eine bewertende Instanz, die dem Erzähler nahe zu stehen scheint. Er wird, anders als sein Vetter Franz Joseph, dargestellt als ein Mann, der einen Weg sieht, der weder zu Grunde geht, noch aufhört wahrzunehmen. (ibid.)

And while his cousin vocally and vehemently attacked the journalistic values that Elisabeth defended, Branco shows by his actions that he stands for a different set of values, distinguishing himself from Elisabeth, for example:

[...] in seiner ruhigen Ernsthaftigkeit, der sich noch Zeit nimmt, um lange auf jemanden zu warten, in Opposition zu seiner Zeit, die von Hektik geprägt ist, in der keiner mehr Zeit hat zu warten, in der man nach persönlichen Schicksalsschlägen gerade drei Tage hat, um wieder fit zu werden. (Dippel 71)

Branco’s values also emerge from the discreet and compassionate way he speaks to (and behaves with) Elisabeth. Thus Branco’s words and actions form a striking contrast to the words and actions of Elisabeth’s lovers, especially Philippe. This contrast is brought out most clearly in the

Wörter [...], die Vernichtung des Freundes am genauesten zu fassen” (190).

⁸² In the same way that Roth’s Branco was cast “als Gegenfigur zur Wiener Dekadenz” (Dippel 71), so too Bachmann’s Branco, “ein Sohn oder Enkel von Bauern oder Händlern, oder waren es Maronibrater gewesen?” (TP 4: 457), represents wholesome, solid peasant values that contrast to the effete, cynical and degenerate men in Elisabeth’s past. He also stands for a happy amalgamation of “Traditionsgebundenheit and Offenheit seiner Zeit gegenüber” and thus represents “einen dritten Weg neben der totalen Entwurzelung Franz Joseph Eugen Trotta’s, Elisabeths oder Nadjas und dem beschränkten Zuhausebleiben eines Herrn Matrie oder auch Mirandas und Beatrix” (Dippel 71f.).

passage towards the end of the story where Branco catches sight of Elisabeth as she is waiting at Vienna airport en route to Paris. At first Elisabeth does not recognise Branco as Trotta's cousin even though she had met him during the time she was involved with Trotta. This failure to recognise Branco reflects earlier suggestions about the superficiality not only of her knowledge and skills but also her relationships, an aspect of Elisabeth that is brought out by the narrator's reference to one of Elisabeth's deceased colleagues as "einer ihrer Freunde, den sie nicht besonders gut kannte, aber sie hatte immer so viele Freunde unter allen" (TP 4: 384). Branco, on the other hand, was only too aware of Elisabeth's existence, and had been in love with her since he first saw her (TP 4: 460). He also knows why Elisabeth remained oblivious to his love: her devotion to her journalistic work and its concomitant frantic social activity had alienated her from a genuine source of love. The extent of Elisabeth's failure and loss is emphasised in Branco's repeated explanation:

Sie waren immer unter so vielen Menschen. Ich meine, Sie waren immer so beschäftigt, und es waren immer so viele Leute um Sie herum [...] Sie waren immer unter so vielen Leuten. Ich habe Sie einmal in Wien gesehen und dann mit meinem Vetter getroffen in Paris, und Sie wissen sicher alles, aber dann habe ich nie mehr etwas von Ihnen gehört. (TP 4: 458)

The way in which Branco reveals his love for Elisabeth is also significant in setting up a number of contrasts. First he demonstrates the depth of his feelings in the physical gesture of taking her hands in his. In that moment, both Elisabeth and Branco refrain from the social banter they would normally engage in: "Sie fragte ihn nicht, warum er nach Moskau flog und was er dort zu suchen hatten, und er fragte sie nicht, ob sie noch in Paris lebte und was sie dort verloren hatte." (TP 4: 459) Instead they gaze silently into each other's eyes in a moment of utopian bliss and mutual understanding: "Dieser Augenblick ist von Einssein und Harmonie bis hin zu gemeinsamen körperlichen Reaktionen bestimmt, und von dem Verzicht auf eine Verständigung durch Worte, die überflüssig wird." (Thau 63)⁸³ Branco's further revelation of his feelings for Elisabeth is also communicated without the assistance of the spoken word. Just before leaving to catch his plane to Moscow,⁸⁴ Branco hands her a note in which he tells her that he has always loved her, thus confessing his love for her in a discreet but spontaneous manner, not burdening Elisabeth with an embarrassing public declaration from a man she barely remembers (TP 4: 460). As O'Regan points out, Branco's note avoids being clichéd on two counts, "first, it is written rather than spoken, in a context where one would expect it to be spoken; second, the

⁸³ As Thau notes in relation to other similar instances of silence in Bachmann's work "Schweigen" provides "Freiraum für wirkliches Erleben zwischen zwei Menschen" (83).

⁸⁴ In the light of the close association between capitalistic materialism and the mass media (as personified by the Parisian Philippe in his imminent marriage into the family of a wealth film tycoon), it is perhaps also significant that Branco lives not in the west but behind the Iron Curtain, in Ljubljana, and is on his way to Moscow—a city, which, in that period, would have been seen as the contrary opposite to the commercial, international metropolis represented by Paris and the other cities frequented by Elisabeth. Folkvord has also noted the significance of this choice of destination, proposing that having such a positive figure travel to a place so far removed from Western society and institutions seems to suggest that it represents a place of greater possibilities for mankind than Elisabeth's major western metropolises. (*Drei Wege* 114f.). Similarly, Omelaniuk sees Branco as "an exponent of the new legitimate communist state" (255) and his travel to Russia as standing for "integration with the larger social body of agrarian communalism in Eastern Europe" (257) and as "symbolically [bringing together] the agrarian communalism of his forefathers (as celebrated by Roth in both *Radetzkymarsch* and *Kapuzinergruft*) into line with modern forms of social and political reality" (262). As Dippel points out, however, Omelaniuk's claim that Branco belongs to an agricultural collective finds no support in the text itself (71).

use of the polite form of the personal pronoun which is unusual in the context of this phrase, reveals an attitude of respect on Branco's part. These are clearly not lightly spoken words." (72) Branco's declaration, however, also demonstrates a level of emotional courage and integrity that Elisabeth has failed to emulate in her own superficial relationships with other men, as well as in her love for Trotta, whom she allowed to drift out of her life. Furthermore Branco's words and actions during his encounter with Elisabeth show his honesty and loyalty: he reveals to Elisabeth that he is married and makes it clear there is no question of him betraying his wife despite his feelings for Elisabeth. Branco's love note can also be seen as a striking contrast to Elisabeth's own writing as a journalist: Branco's message is short, spontaneous and absolutely honest whereas Elisabeth's journalism is long, laboured and contrived. Furthermore, Branco's behaviour at the airport constitutes a stark contrast to the behaviour of Elisabeth's other lovers:

Mann und Frau begegnen einander in Harmonie. Die männliche Körperlichkeit, die in der Erzählung sonst häufig als dominierend und für die Frau bedrohlich dargestellt wird, wird hier ersetzt durch die Darstellung eines Mannes, der zwar körperlich stärker und größer als die Frau aber gleichzeitig behutsam ist. (Folkvord *Drei Wege* 111f.)⁸⁵

In particular, Branco represents a striking contrast to Philippe, who meets Elisabeth at the airport on her arrival back in Paris, but alarms and offends her with his invasively passionate kiss, his "Gier" (*TP* 4: 461) and his subsequent revelation of his betrayal.⁸⁶

Although Bachmann leaves his character rather sketchy, Branco is clearly intended to be seen positively as an ensign of hope for the future. While retaining strong links to the past, Branco also embraces both the present and the future, and so represents "einen dritten Weg neben der totalen Entwurzelung Franz Joseph Eugen Trottas, Elisabeths oder Nadjas und dem beschränkten Zuhausebleiben eines Herrn Matrei oder auch Mirandas und Beatrix" (Dippel 71f.). Although he is the last of the Trottas, "Drei Wege zum See" flags the continuation of this lineage in the reference to Branco's two-month old son (*TP* 4: 451), thus suggesting his role as "eine zukunftsfrüchtige Alternative zu den anderen Gestalten darzustellen, als Repräsentant des einzig lebenswerten Wegs in der Gegenwart" (Dippel 72). Branco also constitutes a positive "Gegenbild" to Elisabeth in his self-awareness, the way he takes responsibility for his actions, and the way he takes care of himself and the

⁸⁵ As Schneider notes, the Branco encounter has been seen as "Ausdruck einer unzeitgemäßen Sentimentalität" (*Kompositionsmethode* 364). Thus Folkvord maintains that while the Branco episode functions as a utopian "trotzdem" much like the "Ein Tag wird kommen" passages in *Malina* (*Drei Wege* 116) it is so idealised and romanticised that it verges on cliché (112). Schmid-Bortenschlager, too, feels that some of the utopian moments in "Drei Wege zum See", such as Elisabeth's idealistic concept of the "new man" border on "Peinlichkeit" ("Frauen als Opfer" 94). Lensing, on the other hand, rejects the accusations of purple prose in the Branco encounter, insisting that the "sentiment of the moment does not degenerate into sentimentality because the occasion passes without any sign of facile realization" (62).

⁸⁶ However, Thau observes, in relation to the way in which Elisabeth eventually removes her hands from Branco's, "beinahe erlöst von einer unerträglichen Qual" (*TP* 4: 460), that it remains "fragwürdig, ob eine Beziehung zu Branco möglich und wünschenswert wäre, wenn Elisabeth mehr Zeit und mehr Ruhe gehabt hätte, um auf Menschen einzugehen, denn die Intensität des Gefühls, das zwischen ihnen beiden für einen Moment besteht, ist auf Dauer nicht zu ertragen, ist nicht lebbar. Schon der Augenblick auf dem Flughafen wird unerträglich." (63) In this respect the intensity of the experience echoes that of Wildermuth and Wanda's encounter, which also proves to be unsustainable in the longer term.

others in his life:

Er kennt erstens seine Gefühle genau und äußert sie, obwohl er sich keinen ›Nutzen‹ davon versprechen kann, er übernimmt Verantwortung für sich, indem er sich schließlich doch für seine Frau und seine Familie entscheidet, er kümmert sich zweitens um seinen Vetter vor dessen Tod und er engagiert sich drittens auch politisch, worauf seine Reise nach Moskau schließen läßt. (Dippel 89)

Jean Améry and his essay "Über die Tortur"

The fourth, and most important "Gegenbild" in "Drei Wege zum See" is Jean Améry,⁸⁷ the author of an essay called "Über die Tortur". In this essay, Elisabeth finds "eine deutlich formulierte Kritik an der Gewissenlosigkeit, Skrupellosigkeit und Verlogenheit massenmedialer Informationspraxis" (Kanz "Viel couragierter als unsere Herren" 212).

Viel später las sie zufällig einen Essay »Über die Tortur« von einem Mann mit einem französischen Namen, der aber ein Österreicher war und in Belgien lebte, und danach verstand sie, was Trotta gemeint hatte, *denn darin war ausgedrückt, was sie und alle Journalisten nicht ausdrücken konnten*, was auch die überlebenden Opfer, deren Aussagen man in rasch aufgezeichneten Dokumenten publizierte, nicht zu sagen vermochten. (TP 4: 389, m.e.)

Elisabeth's discovery of this essay, much like Reiter's accidental encounter with *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, has a dramatic emotional and intellectual impact that brings to mind Kafka's image of the "Faustschlag auf den Schädel" that Bachmann quoted in her "Frankfurter Vorlesungen" (W4: 210). "Über die Tortur" is therefore revelatory for Elisabeth in clarifying what Trotta had been trying to impress in so many of their debates about documenting and photographing the suffering of others.⁸⁸

At the same time, because it had been written by a man who had first-hand knowledge experience of torture and therefore enormous suffering, as an inmate of a National-Socialist concentration camps during World War II, Améry's essay "penetrated beneath the surface of journalism's terrible facts and cheap daily horrors" (Nutting 81) and offered an authenticity of expression that journalism might claim or strive for, but can never achieve. Although Améry refers in passing to his disturbance about seeing press photographs of Vietcong rebel soldiers being tortured (Améry *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* 48) and about the torture that took place in French Algeria between 1956 and 1963 (49),⁸⁹ the focus of his essay is his own experience of torture. He refuses, however, to describe the "Wie des Schmerzes" (*Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* 63)—that is, the emotional, subjective side of the experience, which he believed could not be expressed meaningfully or authentically in writing of any kind—not just journalistic writing:

Es wäre ohne alle Vernunft, hier die mir zugefügten Schmerzen beschreiben zu wollen. [...] Der Schmerz war, der er war. Darüber hinaus ist nichts zu sagen. Gefühlsqualitäten sind so unvergleichbar wie

⁸⁷ Améry's name is never mentioned in "Drei Wege zum See": Bachmann assumes that we know or that we will research this "gap" that she leaves in the story. In an interesting literary twist, reviewed the *Simultan* collection for the Swiss newspaper, "Die Weltwoche" on 8 November 1972.

⁸⁸ For discussions of the significance of Améry's essay, see also Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 69–74), Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 130–132; 149f.; 162f.), Heidelberger-Leonard (293f.) and Lensing (69f.).

⁸⁹ Lensing notes the way in which the references to Vietnam and Algeria resonate in "Drei Wege zum See": "The immediate impact of the essay derives from its initial references to torture in the Algerian War and to a letter from Graham Greene protesting the publication of photographs showing incidents of torture in South Vietnam. Algeria belongs to a decisive period in Elisabeth's past, Vietnam looms in her future." (69)

unbeschreibbar. Sie markieren die Grenze des sprachlichen Mitteilungsvermögens. (ibid.)

In an almost Wittgensteinian way, then, Améry delineates the limits of language, by insisting that the only way in which his experience could be meaningfully addressed was in a dispassionate account of “was er war” (ibid.). In exploring “die Frage nach der Mittelbarkeit einer Erfahrung, die sprachlich nicht zu fassen ist” (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 71) Améry makes an important distinction:

[...] zwischen einem unmöglichen Schreiben über das Eigentliche der Gefühlsqualität und einem möglichen Schreiben über Zusammenhänge. Sie lassen sich mitteilen, sind intellektuell erfassbar und vergleichbar. Améry beschränkt sich in seinem Werk konsequent auf ein distanzierendes und analytisches Schreiben. Damit entzieht er zugleich seine Schriften einem Konsum, der sich auf das ästhetisierte Leiden richtet. (103)

Thus, unlike other accounts of torture, which go into almost pornographic detail in documenting the physical and emotional aspects of the experience, Améry’s “schreibende Erinnerung” (Folkvord *Drei Wege* 89) conveys instead the intellectual and spiritual effects of the experience of torture, especially its psychic legacy—how the torture that took place in National Socialist concentration camps “inflicts a death within life from which the victim never fully recovers” (Lensing 69).

Elisabeth responds to Améry’s essay in a number of different ways. First, she is not only emotionally and intellectually moved, but also saddened in the realisation that—precisely because it refrains from (and denounces) the sensational exploitation of human suffering—Améry’s essay will only ever have a limited audience: they are “Seiten [...], die wenige lesen würden” (*TP 4*: 390).⁹⁰ Nevertheless, because his essay had such a deep impact on her, Elisabeth is moved to contact the author, only to discover that she is, most uncharacteristically, lost for words—painfully aware of the unbridgeable gap between the superficial and hastily assembled facts of others’ attempts to portray human suffering (her own and those of her colleagues, for example) and the enormous effort and insight of Améry’s account (ibid.). Elisabeth’s response to Améry is therefore characterized by the same linguistic impotence she experienced when debating journalism with Trotta—an impotence that highlights the limitations of her communication skills, which do not equip her for dealing with matters of depth.

Sie wollte diesem Mann schreiben, aber sie wußte nicht, was sie diesem Mann sagen sollte, warum sie ihm etwas sagen wollte, denn er hatte offenbar viele Jahre gebraucht, um durch die Oberfläche entsetzlicher Fakten zu dringen, und um diese Seiten zu verstehen [...], bedurfte es einer anderen Kapazität als der eines kleinen vorübergehenden Schreckens, weil dieser Mann versuchte, was mit ihm geschehen war, in der Zerstörung des Geistes aufzufinden und auf welche Weise sich wirklich ein Mensch verändert hatte und *vernichtet weiterlebte*. (*TP 4*: 390, m.e.)⁹¹

The concept of “vernichtet weiterleben” that Elisabeth uses here in connection with Améry is, as Folkvord notes, an important one that directly reflects on the way Elisabeth lives her life: it is not only “ein Hinweis auf die Geschichte, die bei Elisabeth keinen Ausdruck findet” but also confirmation of

⁹⁰ Höller draws interesting parallels between “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen” and “Drei Wege zum See”: “Wenn in ihrem ersten Hörspiel die als Schrecken erfahrene Geschichte im Traum der geschichtslosen Sprache der Medien und der Reklame gegenübertritt, so wird in der letzten Erzählung ihres letzten Prosabandes, in *Drei Wege zum See*, die Erfahrung der Tortur dem journalistischen Geschäft mit Sensationen gegenübergestellt” (*Das Werk* 77).

⁹¹ Ironically (in terms of what he is intended to represent in “Drei Wege zum See”), Améry committed suicide in 1978, mirroring the fate of Bachmann’s Trotta.

Elisabeth's story "als Bericht vom Umgang mit einer verschwiegenen Vernichtung" (*Drei Wege* 88). As Trotta pointed out, Elisabeth does a good impression of being alive (*TP* 4: 389) but the reality is very different.

8.8 The *Simultan* collection itself as "Gegenbild"

Although directly relevant to "Drei Wege zum See", the concept of "vernichtet weiterleben" is also highly significant for the *Simultan* collection as a whole, because all the stories can be understood as depictions of deeply damaged characters and the survival mechanisms that they adopt in order to compensate for, and live with, their emotional and psychological injuries. In terms of content, then, there are important parallels between what Améry achieves in his essay and what Bachmann has undertaken in the *Simultan* collection. Améry's essay is, however, not just important for its narrative and thematic function in "Drei Wege zum See" but also has poetological ramifications for Bachmann's work. As Bannasch observes:

In den durch Améry vorgegebenen Kontext der Überlegungen zu den Möglichkeiten eines wahrhaftigen Schreibens, das auf die Grenze des nicht Sagbaren hinweist und sie respektiert, stellt Bachmann in der letzten Erzählung Elisabeths Bezug auf Amérys »Die Tortur«. Améry und Bachmann widmen sich hier an erster Stelle einer poetologischen Fragestellung. (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 71)

Bartsch, on the other hand, points out the significance of Améry's essay as a validation of Bachmann's own "Verständnis von Literatur als Vermittlungsform subjektiver Erfahrungen gesellschaftlicher Mechanismen" (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 162f.) and as confirmation of the viability of a subjective authenticity that goes beyond the "Anfang der siebziger Jahre vehement geforderten vordergründig politischen und sozialkritischen bzw. dokumentarischen Literatur" (162)—an authenticity that cannot be achieved "durch eine noch so gut gemeinte Dokumentation von NS-Verbrechen noch durch eine wissenschaftliche, d.h., eine bis ins Detail logisch-stringente, empirischer Überprüfung standhaltende Darstellung" (*ibid.*).

Bachmann achieves this in *Simultan*, I believe, in much the same way that Améry does in his essay: by not going into the "Wie" of the damage sustained by her protagonists, and instead providing a literary account of the "Was" of their behaviours and responses, thus allowing (and indeed compelling) readers to think about and draw their own conclusions about that the nature and extent of the emotional, psychological and spiritual damage suffered by the dysfunctional protagonists—damage that in some instances proves to be a precursor to the physical or psychological deaths depicted in *Malina* and the *Todesarten* fragments (for example, Franziska Jordan and Frau Jordan senior).⁹² In this way, both Améry's essay and Bachmann's stories can be seen as "Gegenbilder" of both journalistic content and the journalistic approach, an argument that I elaborate on below.

⁹² As the *Simultan* stories reveal, it is not just the protagonists, but also a number of secondary characters, who are badly damaged, and, in some instances, victims of complete destruction: for example, two of Nadja's friends die in violent circumstances; Guggi in "Probleme, Probleme" has made several suicide attempts and possibly succeeds in the end; and "Drei Wege zum See" features the murder of Elisabeth Mihailovics, the death of a number of Elisabeth's fellow journalists and the suicide of Trotta.

Unmasking and curing "Erfahrungsschwund"

Although the lives of the professionally successful, cosmopolitan Nadja and Elisabeth are outwardly very different to those of Beatrix, Miranda, Franziska Jordan and Frau Jordan senior, all of the characters in the *Simultan* collection prove to be variations on a common theme: women suffering from a distorted relationship to their own body and dysfunctional relationships with men. The *Simultan* women also suffer the common experience of alienation and isolation (either emotional or physical), their stories revealing:

[...] die Probleme des Lebens in verschiedenen Sprachen und Soziolekten, der Entfremdung vom eigenen Körper, der völligen Auflösung des romantischen Liebeskonzeptes, der Fragilität flexibilisierter Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen sowie der Vereinsamung durch soziale und räumliche Mobilität (*Simultan* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld" 160)

These symptoms are, however, merely the visible manifestation of silent and suppressed pain. The silent suffering and underlying sickness of the *Simultan* women is but a reflection of a sick world, depicted *in extremis* in *Ein Ort für Zufälle*. The symptoms of the *Simultan* protagonists are also just the coping mechanisms they have developed in response to a sick world, illustrating, "wie in einer kranken Welt überhaupt zu leben ist" (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 7). Given the alienating pervasiveness of the journalistic media in the women's lives (as demonstrated in this chapter), the women's suffering can also be seen as symptomatic of the "Erfahrungsschwund" that has, according to Bachmann, been brought about "durch die Entwicklung der Massenmedien, durch das Leben aus zweiter Hand" (*Gul* 140). This is a view put forward by a number of scholars, including Schmidt who argues that all the *Simultan* protagonists show clear evidence of "Erfahrungsverlust",⁹³ the symptoms of which include:

[d]ie Unfähigkeit, sich selbst und andere zu verstehen, die Schwierigkeit, sich zu erinnern, das Unvermögen, sich in der Geschichte—der eigenen wie der »großen«—anzusiedeln, Einander-nicht-zuhören-Können, soziale Isolation, Angst, Langeweile oder eine Form von Privatheit, die jenseits jeglichen politischen Verhaltens. (486)

According to Schmidt, Bachmann uses "schlechte Sprache" as a means of directly reflecting the "Erfahrungsschwund" from which the *Simultan* women suffer.⁹⁴

Während innerhalb der erzählten Welt kein gangbarer Ausweg aus der Misere sich auftut, ja vielmehr durch die Konstellationen der Figuren zueinander mögliche Auswege noch zusätzlich desillusioniert werden, erhebt die Weise der Darstellung dessen hartnäckig Einspruch. Es gibt keinen Erzähler [...] mehr, der sich emphatisch entrüstete über die blinde Verfangenheit der anderen. In den *Simultan* Erzählungen wird die »schlechte Sprache« selbst zum Zeugen aufgerufen. Ihre Inszenierung läßt sie selbst zu Wort kommen, sie wiederholt sie—allerdings in einer Weise, die ein leidenschaftliches »Trotzdem« verrät: Sie spricht die Erfahrung aus, um die die Frauen selbst gebracht sind. (499)

In the *Simultan* collection, then, Bachmann uses the language of the journalistic media—"die schlechte

⁹³ Puzzlingly, despite her detailed discussion of the term, Schmidt does not mention Bachmann's interview statement about "Erfahrungsschwund", Benjamin and the mass media. A number of other scholars have also described the plight of the protagonists in terms of "Erfahrungsschwund": for example, Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 9) and Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik* 92).

⁹⁴ Dippel, too, draws attention to the way in which Bachmann uses "schlechte Sprache" as part of her arsenal in attacking the power of the status quo through "Bewußtmachung von Widersprüchen, der schlechten Sprache und von Verdrängungsmechanismen" (127f.). Bannasch makes a similar point about the way in which Bachmann uses "die schlechte Sprache" as a weapon against itself: "[E]s soll auf den Verlust der eigensten Erfahrungen aufmerksam machen. [...]. [Das Gerede] überdeckt die verschwiegenen Geschichten, die vom Leser erst entschlüsselt werden müssen." (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 113)

Sprache”—to not only unmask the “Erfahrungsschwund” that the mass media tries to propagate but also to reveal what the journalistic media are incapable of revealing.

So, too, in discussing the phenomenon of “Erfahrungsschwund” as portrayed in the *Simultan* stories, Dippel points out that the very concept of “Erfahrung” implies a connection to the past, if we define it as “in der Gegenwart aufgehobene Vergangenheit” (35). If we think of “Erfahrung” in this way, then Bachmann’s characters undeniably suffer “an dieser Krankheit der Erfahrungsarmut.” (35) According to Dippel, Bachmann’s suggested remedy for this condition is greater connectivity to the past, particularly through the medium of literature:

Eine Veränderung erscheint in beiden Fällen nur möglich über eine aktive Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit, wie sie anhand von Literatur als »sozialem Gedächtnis« [...] par excellence stattfinden kann. [...] Für die Bachmannschen Figuren [...] hieße die Beschäftigung mit österreichischer Literatur zunächst, die durch die modernen Massenmedien auf ein kurzlebiges Heute verengte Zeitauffassung—verstärkt noch durch das Wegfallen der mündlich vermittelten Vergangenheitserfahrung—aufzuheben durch die Verstärkung des Gestern mit Hilfe von Literatur als kulturellem Speichergedächtnis. (35)

For Dippel, the two stories in the *Simultan* collection that show the possibility of inner transformation in their protagonists, “Drei Wege zum See” and “Simultan”, demonstrate the effectiveness of such connectivity with the past and thereby propose a middle path that neither glorifies the past nor focusses purely on progress and the future, but involves “im Hier und Heute zu leben und zu wirken, aber im Bewußtsein der geschichtlichen Gewordenheit dieser Gegenwart, das eine kritische Distanz schafft, von der aus allein Veränderung denkbar ist” (36). Bannasch, too, stresses the importance of connectivity with the past in Bachmann’s work (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 13). Bannasch, however, sees this connectivity specifically in conjunction with the figure of Branco, who embodies “Charakteristika, die dem krisenhaft erlebten Erfahrungsschwund zuwiderlaufen” (117). Thus when Elisabeth wakes up in a panic in the middle of the night and reaches for Branco’s note, it is more than a gesture of “magische Beschwörung gegen ihren Alptraum vom Krieg” (ibid.)—it is a sign that in having accepted the Vietnam assignment and in deciding to listen only to her “Trotta voices”, Elisabeth will in future not only be taking into account Trotta’s critique of her profession when she continues her career, but will also be influenced by what Branco stands for, namely a rejection of capitalistic values and a solid connection to the past:

Ihr Beschluß zu ihrer Weiterarbeit folgt »nur mehr ihrer Stimme und die ihrer Trottas, die sich diesmal nicht gegen sie richteten« [...]. Arbeiten bedeutet also Zukunft nicht nur die Berücksichtigung der Zynismuskritik Franz Joseph Eugen Trottas, sondern auch den Rückgriff auf die vorgestellte Stimme Brancos. (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 117)

Direct and authentic representation

Another important narrative strategy that Bachmann adopts in the *Simultan* stories is the widespread use of “Erlebte Rede und Innerer Monolog” to facilitate direct insight into the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists (Schneider “*Simultan* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 161). By forsaking the perspective of an omniscient narrator and instead allowing the main characters to reveal themselves via direct speech and the “scheinbar unkommentierten Wiedergabe der unausgesprochenen Gedanken ihrer Protagonistinnen” (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 104), Bachmann’s stories achieve

an immediacy and authenticity that is missing from journalistic content. And they manage to depict pain and suffering without adopting the emotionally exploitative techniques of the journalistic media: “[D]ie Texte des *Simultan*-Bandes [stellen] einen Versuch dar, Leiderfahrungen zu formulieren, ohne dabei Sensationslüsternheit oder politische Gesinnungsäußerungen zu provozieren oder auch nur zu ermöglichen.” (Schneider “*Simultan* und Erzählfragmente aus dem Umfeld” 168)

In allowing the protagonists to speak for themselves (albeit indirectly), the stories also overcome the moral and technical difficulties of writing in a way that avoids the exploitation of victims’ suffering inherent in, for example, Leo Jordan’s studies of the victims of National Socialism (Bannasch *Von vorletzten Dingen* 115). In the *Simultan* stories, Bachmann thus replicates the way in which Améry combines the positions of narrator and narrative subject in his essay on his experience of torture. In *Malina* Bachmann overcame this “Erzählproblematik” by combining perpetrator and victim in the one figure. In “Drei Wege zum See” also, Elisabeth is, as Bannasch observes, both a perpetrator (in exploiting the misery of others in her professional life) and a victim of alienation “von den eigenen Erfahrungen” (111). This enables Bachmann to achieve essentially the same outcome as with the double-figure in *Malina*, while foregoing that specific narrative device and *Malina*’s explicit first-person perspective: “Die unaufgelöste Krise Elisabeths, die Erfahrung des Erfahrungsschwundes, verweist auf das Vorhaben mit und nach *Malina*. Es wird von Bachmann benannt als der Versuch, mit den Lesenden die archäologische Arbeit an den verschütteten Erfahrungen einzuüben.” (115)

At the same time, Bachmann’s technique of allowing the characters to speak for themselves through “erlebte Rede”, helps to establish a more distanced and critical perspective in readers—a technique that differs radically to those employed by the journalistic media, which, Bachmann suggests throughout her literary work, try to deaden and numb the critical faculties of the reader. Holeschofsky describes the effects of Bachmann’s narrative strategy as follows:

Die erlebte Rede mimt die kritiklose Wiedergabe von Gedanken und verbirgt dahinter die erzählerische Intention: die Kritik des Lesers an diesen Gedanken zu provozieren. Sie ist ein Werkzeug der Verstellung für den Autor—mithin das glänzendeste Mittel, eine personal dargestellte Situation ironisch zu beleuchten. [...] Der Leser hat also bereits während des Miterlebens der Gedanken der Figur den charakterisierenden und analysierenden Blick einer über dem Geschehen stehenden Instanz und urteilt, während er erlebt—anders freilich als die Person selbst: Wenn Nadja in der Erinnerung an ihr Verhältnis zu Jean Pierre unverhüllt abschätzig von den »anderen« (Frauen) denkt, denen Enttäuschungen passieren, über die sie sich selbst erhaben fühlt, wenn Beatrix »natürlich« Erich und den anderen Menschen »weit voraus« zu sein glaubt, erkennt der Leser die Oberflächlichkeit solcher Meinungen und damit die unreife Persönlichkeit der Figur. Auf diese Andersartigkeit des Urteilens aber kommt es an, sie ergibt das »Ironiegefälle« zwischen Aussage und erzählerische Absicht.” (476)

The importance of lacunae and uncertainty

Like *Malina*, the *Simultan* stories also distinguish themselves from the information media, which imbue everything with predetermined meaning (as Benjamin lamented), by refraining from foisting meaning onto the reader. In one of her interview statements about *Malina* Bachmann stressed how important it was when portraying characters, “daß man Personen nicht zu Ende definieren darf, so wie einem auch über Personen, die es gibt, keine endgültigen Urteile zustehen. Man muß ihnen einen Spielraum lassen” (*Gul* 54). This approach manifests itself in the *Simultan* stories (as in *Malina*) in

numerous gaps and points of uncertainty, which force readers to fill in the blanks and come up with their own interpretations and conclusions. As a result of this approach, however, there were (and continue to be) widely varying responses and interpretations of these stories,⁹⁵ especially the first and the last whose endings, like the stories themselves, are characterised by “Ambivalenz” and “die noch offene Möglichkeit” (Schmidt “Beraubung des Eigenen” 493)—an ambivalence and openness that is exemplified in Nadja’s two very different responses to the statue of Christ at Maratea. As Dippel points out in relation to Roth’s *Radetzkymarsch* and Bachmann’s *Drei Wege zum See*, it is a defining characteristic of literature, that there is never a single “correct” interpretation, given that there are inevitably gaps in the text that need to be filled by readers (128f.).⁹⁶ In Roth’s and Bachmann’s work, however, that uncertainty and ambivalence is a deliberate strategy on the part of the authors to evade definitive interpretation (128).

Because of such openness of interpretation in “Drei Wege zum See”, many scholars disagree quite vehemently about Elisabeth’s fate in the concluding passage of the story as she contemplates the possible consequences of her decision to take on the dangerous Saigon assignment: “Es kann mir etwas geschehen, aber es muß mir nichts geschehen.” (*TP* 4: 471) Thus, for example, Omelaniuk judges Elisabeth’s decision to go to Vietnam to be a suicide mission (261) and sees in the story only “pessimism” and “continual alienation for the individual and a permanent state of violence on a global scale” (263). Thau is another scholar to see “[d]as Gesellschaftsbild in Ingeborg Bachmanns Spätwerk” as permeated “von einem tiefgehenden Pessimismus” (115). Similarly, Bartsch sees all of the *Simultan* stories except for the title story (whose ending remains, he believes, open) as leading to negative outcomes, with the characters being destroyed and contributing to their own destruction in the same way as Franza in *Der Fall Franza* and Elisabeth Mihailovics in “Gier”. Thus Bartsch sees Elisabeth’s propulsion into a new assignment as dangerous and her final lines as merely representing an attempt, “autosuggestiv den Gleichmut zu gewinnen” (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 168).

Achberger, too, sees Elisabeth’s decision as either literal or metaphorical suicide (*Understanding* 162) and considers that “Elisabeth, like the other protagonists [...] has failed to recognise consciously her devastated condition and the imminent danger she faces” (*ibid.*): Elisabeth’s mental and emotional, if not physical, destruction are foreshadowed in her dreams, even if she tries to deny the truth of this subconscious realisation in the final lines of the story (*ibid.*).⁹⁷ For Schneider also, the Saigon assignment represents an “Auftrag für eine höchst riskante Kriegsreportage” (*Kompositionsmethode* 355), and in Elisabeth’s alarming experience of the blood rushing to her head and heart, Schneider sees a flashback to her encounter at the airport with Branco and a pointer to the inevitability of Elisabeth

⁹⁵ For a summary of critics’ responses, see Beicken, who notes that the publication of *Simultan* resulted in “vielseitige Vorwürfe, die sie zwischen Ambition und Banalität, Kunstanspruch und Kitsch, neuer Klarheit und unlegbarer Verschwommenheit ansiedelten” (202).

⁹⁶ As shown in the previous chapter of this dissertation, this is also true of *Malina*.

⁹⁷ While Brokoph-Mauch also sees Elisabeth’s last assignment as “eine Art Selbstmord”, she also considers it to be an outcome of a newly won inner commitment, prompted by “Überzeugung und nicht mehr der Rebellion” (“Österreich als Fiktion und Geschichte” 195).

ending up in yet another destructive relationship.⁹⁸ According to Schneider, the situation for Elisabeth is ultimately “auswegslos” (*Kompositionsmethode* 368): there are no “Helferfiguren” for her—not her father, nor Branco:

[der] ihr mit seinem überraschenden Liebesgeständnis keine greifbare Hoffnung auf eine neue und diesmal glücklichere Liebesbeziehung [vermittelt], sondern die ernüchternde Erkenntnis, die Liebe gesucht zu haben, wo sie nicht zu finden ist, und sie gleichzeitig übersehen zu haben, wo sie wirklich vorhanden war. (369)

At the other end of the interpretive spectrum, O'Regan stresses the utopian aspects of the story, particularly those of Elisabeth's encounter with Branco (71ff.), which results in “a new decisiveness and sense of direction” (73)—a change that is marked by the way in which Elisabeth ignores Phillippe's words of complaints about her decision to accept the Vietnam assignment and instead listens only to her own voice and the voices of her “Trottas, die sich diesmal nicht gegen sie richteten” (*TP 4*: 470). According to O'Regan, Elisabeth, like Nadja in the opening story of the collection, undergoes a transformation that results in “new strength coupled with a sense of vulnerability as well as a new ability to express her innermost thoughts and feelings” (73). Other scholars to refute the claim that Elisabeth's decision to go to Saigon constitutes a suicide mission include Kanz (“Viel couragierter als unsere Herren” 216) and Mahrtdt, who sees optimism and “ein leidenschaftliches »Trotzdem« in Elisabeth's final thoughts: »... aber es muß mir nichts geschehen«” (*Öffentlichkeit* 270). Similarly, Lensing insists that Elisabeth's readiness to go to Saigon should not be read as a desire to go on a suicide mission and thus “follow in Trotta's 'footsteps' ” (69). Instead, Lensing points out, “the text is ambivalent on this point [...]: the reader may assume that Elisabeth, having assimilated the lessons of Améry's essay, leaves for Vietnam resolved not to commit suicide but rather to produce a photostory without either misrepresenting the war or exploiting its casualties.” (69f.)

Beicken is another scholar to emphasise positive aspects of the *Simultan* stories, “die Anlaß zur Hoffnung geben, daß die Verheerung des Einzelnen in diesem Zeitalter der unstimmigen, zerstörerischen Beziehungen ein Ende haben wird” (210). For Nutting, too, “Drei Wege zum See” is an essentially optimistic story, with Elisabeth being unique among Bachmann's later protagonists in being able to step out of the murderous “»Reigen« of Viennese society” (85). Like Lensing, Nutting emphasises the open-ended nature of the story and strongly rejects the view that the conclusion “presage[s] her suicide” (86).⁹⁹ In Nutting's eyes, Elisabeth is a changed person by the end of the story, acquiring “a greater moral acuity that has made her more receptive to the veracity of a Trotta in

⁹⁸ Thus Schneider insists: “Der mit Elisabeth gründlich vertraut gemachte Leser wird hier am Werkende kaum noch daran zweifeln, daß Elisabeth durch eine weitere problematische Liebesbeziehung [...] fast genauso leicht zugrunde gerichtet werden könnte wie durch die heikle berufliche Mission in der südvietnamesischen Hauptstadt.” (*Kompositionsmethode* 366)

⁹⁹ Schmid-Bortenschlager also sees the ending as open, as either “Rettung” or “Selbstmord” (“Frauen als Opfer” 92), in the same way that in “Simultan” Nadja perceives at different times the statue of Christ as either “zum Auffliegen oder zum Abstürzen bestimmt” (*TP 4*: 141). Indeed, Schmid-Bortenschlager believes that Bachmann avoids “eindeutige Festlegungen” (93) in all the *Simultan* stories. Pichl, too, rejects negative interpretations of Elisabeth's dream, insisting instead on the openness of the ending (“Verfremdete Heimat” 450). For an excellent summary of the wide (and conflicting) range of interpretations, see O'Regan (2ff.).

herself" (86). Thus, for Nutting, Elisabeth's closing lines—"Es ist nichts, es ist nichts, es kann mir doch gar nichts mehr geschehen" (*TP 4*: 471)—signal "her determination to persist on a path that has become her own" (86). Bannasch, too, insists that Elisabeth experiences personal transformation. According to Bannasch, Elisabeth's transformation, which parallels that of Nadja's in "Simultan", is precipitated by her encounter with Branco at the airport—the "Wendepunkt der Erzählung" (*Von vorletzten Dingen 47*), and it is the utopian and positive nature of this encounter that flows over into Elisabeth's decision to go to Saigon.

In her analysis of the story, Dippel lists numerous aspects that support either an optimistic or a pessimistic interpretation. On the optimistic side, Dippel cites utopian moments like Elisabeth's quiet joy while swimming in the lake, and her encounter with Branco, which would appear to lend credence to the view that her decision to go to Saigon is a step in a new, positive direction rather than a longing for death (136). Elisabeth's decision to go to Saigon should therefore not necessarily be seen as an act of desperation but in terms of a determination to approach her journalistic profession differently, by either abandoning her objectivity or by allowing the subjects of her pictorial reports to speak for themselves instead of speaking for them (135). On the other side of the debate, however, there are, as Dippel notes, an equal number of arguments that support a more pessimistic interpretation of "Drei Wege zum See" and the other stories in the *Simultan* collection (136), as discussed earlier in this section.

Openness and uncertainty is, as mentioned earlier, for Bachmann, perhaps more than for many other writers, a key narrative strategy. For Bachmann, the role of literature was to engage us in a constructive and active way—to make us think and come to our own conclusions and develop our own insights in response to what we read. And thus, the answers and interpretations will always be subject to that personal engagement. The quandary that most readers face is, I believe, encapsulated in the paradoxical concept of "vernichtet weiterleben" referred to in connection with the Améry essay: do we, as readers, focus on the negativity and pessimism of damage (and indeed implied fatality) in the word "vernichtet", or do we focus on the positive aspect of survival that is embodied in "weiterleben", which, it could be argued, is the final word in the compound expression and thus the more important? For my own part, I am inclined to focus on the more positive interpretations, certainly in relation to Nadja and Elisabeth, whose behaviour shows evidence of personal transformation, even if the sustainability and longevity of those transformations remains an open question at the end of the story.¹⁰⁰ While Franziska and Frau Jordan senior, are undeniably and conclusively "vernichtet" (as are Trotta, Elisabeth Mihailovics and a number of other unnamed characters in the *Simultan* stories),¹⁰¹ and

¹⁰⁰ Despite doubts that she could ever again find someone of "ausschließliche[r] Bedeutung", Elisabeth retains a utopian hope: "Eines Tages konnte dann etwas anderes kommen, aber nur dann, und es würde stark und mysteriös sein und wirklich Größe haben, etwas, dem jeder sich unterwerfen konnte." (*TP 4*: 424)

¹⁰¹ Some scholars insist that Miranda, too, dies at the end of "Ihr glücklichen Augen". This view, however, assumes that "und sie denkt zuletzt" (*TP 4*: 273f.) are her final words before dying, rather than her final words before the glass door hits her in the face, knocking her unconscious—an equally valid reading of the ending.

Beatrix and Miranda show no indication of insight or change, the prospects for Nadja and Elisabeth are, I believe, less definitively bleak, with the stories revealing at the very least the potential for awareness and meaningful transformation. Because their stories frame the collection as a whole, I believe that Bachmann's intention was to have these more optimistic—or potentially optimistic stories—set the overall tone for the collection.

8.9 In summation

As the foregoing analyses show, references to the journalistic media, particularly the press, are woven throughout the short prose of Bachmann's *Todesarten* period, varying from discreet background references to newspapers and radio (as well as the consumer products that they promote in their advertisements) as part of everyday life to damning judgements on the negative impact of the journalistic media.

In *Ein Ort für Zufälle*, “Ihr glücklichen Augen” and “Das Gebell”, the allusions to the mass media are scant but nevertheless consistent with the negative portrayal of the journalistic media in *Malina* and Bachmann's earlier work. “Simultan”, too, has few overt or extended references to journalism, but does make a direct association between the journalistic media and the protagonist's feelings of professional and personal alienation. “Probleme, Probleme” represents a more overt and extended critique, showing how the journalistic media not only promote superficial and materialistic self-indulgence through advertisements but through editorial content as well, and thereby encourage “Selbstbetrug”, escapism and the denial of uncomfortable truths that might lead to a more authentic way of living. “Drei Wege zum See” represents the most extended and overt critique of the journalistic media in Bachmann's work. The journalistic media are portrayed as pervasive, invasive, alienating, malevolent, offensive and exploitative. Journalistic content is shown to be misleading, inadequate and largely irrelevant to our lives, and journalists (and other employees of the culture industry) are depicted in an extremely negative light as either marginally competent, hopelessly naïve, consciously hypocritical or treacherous and exploitative professionals.

Bachmann's portrayal of the press in Bachmann's work post-*Malina* is therefore not only a continuation of the critique of journalistic content and journalists in her earlier work (particularly, *Malina*) but also provides, in “Drei Wege zum See”, a significant intensification of that critique. As we have seen elsewhere in Bachmann's work, however, this attack on the journalistic media is balanced by positive counterimages that underscore the shortcomings of the journalistic media while proffering a positive alternative, the most important of which is the unnamed figure of Jean Améry and his essay “Über die Tortur”.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

As demonstrated in the foregoing study Bachmann's literary work is suffused with a clearly discernible and pointed critique of the journalistic media that is evident both within and across genres from the poems and radio plays of the early fifties to the last story in the last work to be published in her lifetime. As an industry, Bachmann suggests, journalism produces content that constitutes an artificial construct that is of no relevance to people's lives but pretends to be otherwise and therefore represents a fraud on the reading public. Journalism is a pervasive, addictive and invasive medium that entices us with promises of greater knowledge of the world around us as well as solutions to our immediate problems, but in fact alienates us from ourselves and isolates us from others, thus aggravating our alienation. Instead of enlightening us, journalistic content only exacerbates our confusion and distracts us from the truth of our lives.

9.1 Journalism as "Betrug"

This study established a theoretical and historical context for Bachmann's literary portrayal of the journalistic media by providing an overview of Austrian and German "Pressekritik", and showing how the critique of the culture industry by the influential Frankfurt School represented an extension and intensification of views propounded over four centuries of "Zeitungsdebatte" by those who saw the press as "Gefahr" and "Lüge". Against this background, an analysis of Bachmann's theoretical and personal statements about the journalistic media revealed an explicit scorn for the press's proclivity for "Phrasen", "Ansichten" and "Meinungen" and deep concern over the dangers of the increasingly apparent phenomenon of "Erfahrungsschwund", that was, according to Bachmann, exacerbated by the mass media. Although Bachmann makes no explicit assertions regarding the truthfulness or otherwise of the journalistic media in her extra-literary pronouncements, her views on the relationship between writing and truth revealed at an implicit level that she saw in literature an antidote for the "Erfahrungsschwund" and misuse of language that was perpetuated by the mass media. For Bachmann, the role of literature was, "die Menschen dorthin zu bringen oder mitzureißen, in die Erfahrungen, die die Schriftsteller machen und die ihnen durch die gefährlichen Entwicklungen dieser modernen Welt weggenommen werden" (*Gul* 140).

While Bachmann barely mentions the journalistic media in her theoretical and personal statements, a different picture emerges from her literary work, where her frequent references to journalists and journalism draw attention to the journalistic media as ubiquitous and pervasive institutions in our lives. This is amply evident in Bachmann's work from the sheer number of allusions to the press in its various manifestations, that is, to press content (both editorial and commercial) and to employees of the press as well as to consumers of journalistic content. Although the pervasiveness of the journalistic media is referred to quite explicitly in some instances, in others this aspect of the journalistic media only emerges implicitly from the way in which journalistic content is so much a part

of everyday life, that this pervasiveness, because of its banality, often goes unnoticed and hence allows the journalistic media (and other forms of the mass media) to become an unquestioned, and even overlooked influence: part of the background scenery of life. Accordingly we find references to newspapers and periodicals being delivered (“Die Zikaden”, “Drei Wege zum See”) and purchased on the street or at railway stations (“Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, “Drei Wege zum See” and *Das Buch Franza*); newspapers and periodicals being read in cafés (in *Malina*, “Das dreißigste Jahr” and “Der Schweißer”), at the hairdresser’s (“Probleme, Probleme”), on the bus (“Drei Wege zum See”), at the tram stop (*Malina*) or at home (“Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, “Undine geht”, *Malina*, “Ihr glücklichen Augen” and “Drei Wege zum See”). Sometimes newspapers and magazines are read for information or entertainment (“Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, *Malina*, “Drei Wege zum See”, *Das Buch Franza* and “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”) and sometimes they are read for vocational or educational purposes (Nadja in “Simultan”). Sometimes the press is a source of gratifying news (when, for example, the protagonist of “Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt” finds his name in the paper as a man, who has achieved the pinnacle of success); occasionally it is the source of unintentional humour (“Drei Wege zum See”); and sometimes it is the source of sad, distressing or alarming news (“Herbstmanöver”, “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, *Malina* and “Drei Wege zum See”). In all its guises, the press appears to be everywhere. The subtly pervasive nature of the press is as much a feature of Bachmann’s literary work as it is in real life. Even on the remotest of islands there is no escape from the press, as we see in “Die Zikaden”. Similarly, but less markedly, the journalistic medium of radio, too, is shown to be part of everyday life in Bachmann’s work with references included in “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, “Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, “Der Schweißer”, “Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt”, “Unter Mördern und Irren”, *Malina*, “Das Gebell” and “Drei Wege zum See”.

What is most striking about Bachmann’s numerous allusions to the journalistic media is that they invariably portray journalists and journalistic content in an explicitly (and often scathingly) negative light. While a few are portrayed as unfortunate victims (in *Das Buch Franza* and *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*), in almost every other instance, journalists are either offensive, manipulative and incompetent hacks (Mühlbauer); inept but well-meaning amateurs (the regional press in “Drei Wege zum See”); dilettantes who fall into the profession by chance (the protagonist in “Das dreißigste Jahr” and Elisabeth in “Drei Wege zum See”); mindless automatons working in depressing and debilitating environments (Ich and her colleagues at the “Nachrichtendienst”); foolish or naïve idealists, who sacrifice their lives needlessly (Elisabeth’s colleagues who die on dangerous assignments); or vicious, exploitative, hypocritical, corrupt, malevolent and sometimes even murderous professionals (“Der gute Gott von Manhattan”, “Unter Mördern und Irren” and “Drei Wege zum See”). They produce content of mind-numbing predictability and unoriginality (“Das dreißigste Jahr”, *Malina*, “Drei Wege zum See” and *Das Buch Franza*) and often unwittingly (“Gier” and “Drei Wege zum See”) or worse, knowingly, distort the truth (“Drei Wege zum See”).

In fact, a major thrust of Bachmann’s literary critique of the journalistic media is an attack on

the press's claims to truth. Bachmann's literary portrayal of the journalistic media suggests that, far from providing readers (or listeners) with meaningful or useful information that will broaden our understanding of the world, the journalistic media construct and propagate material that is largely irrelevant to our daily lives (*Das Buch Franza*, *Malina*, *Ein Ort für Zufälle* and "Drei Wege zum See") or misleading and deceptive ("Herbstmanöver", "Die Zikaden", "Ein Wildermuth", *Malina*, *Das Buch Franza*, *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*, "Probleme, Probleme", "Drei Wege zum See" and "Gier")—thus representing, as Ich contends in *Malina*, "Betrug" (TP 3.1: 591f.). While not all of Bachmann's literary references to the press are as strongly stated as this, her overall depiction of the journalistic media shows them not only as falling far short of a meaningful and truthful reflection of the world but also as undermining the prospects for individuals to perceive the truth of their own lives. The journalistic media are, Bachmann suggests, like the "Eintagsfliegen" and "Kosmetiker" that she refers to in "Holz und Späne": they give the impression of being an innocuous part of everyday life and of little consequence. In reality, however, they represent the most insidious of dangers—by indoctrinating us with their way of thinking and removing us from our own direct experience of things, they take away our language and thus our lives, as Elisabeth points out in "Drei Wege zum See" in her insistence, "daß man die Menschen umbringt, wenn man ihnen das Sprechen abnimmt und damit das Erleben und Denken [d.h. Erfahrung]" (TP 4: 421). Bachmann draws attention to this aspect of the journalistic media and the advertising industry by highlighting the way in which they encourage us to avoid facing up to, and dealing with, discomfort by allowing ourselves to be distracted with pseudo-activity in the form of sport ("Die Zikaden", "Der gute Gott von Manhattan", "Der Schweißer" and *Malina*); by brainwashing us with political propaganda ("Holz und Späne"); by numbing us with the mindless platitudes and reassurances of the advertising industry ("Reklame", "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", "Der gute Gott von Manhattan", *Malina* and "Ihr glücklichen Augen"); and by tempting us with escapist solutions like travel ("Herbstmanöver" and *Malina*), narcissistic self-indulgence and literal or metaphorical sleep ("Die Zikaden" and "Probleme, Probleme") or what is now sometimes referred to as "retail therapy" ("Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", *Malina*, "Drei Wege zum See" and "Probleme, Probleme").

Journalistic content feeds on, exploits and aggravates our existing anxieties by dwelling on "bad news" stories that deal with scandal, accidents, disasters, illness, death, violence and other forms of human suffering ("Herbstmanöver", "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt", "Ein Wildermuth", *Das Buch Franza*, *Requiem für Fanny Goldmann*, *Malina*, "Probleme, Probleme" and "Drei Wege zum See"). Such content makes us more susceptible to the lures of the materialistic, consumption-based pseudoproblems and pseudosolutions of modern capitalism ("Herbstmanöver", "Reklame", "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", "Der gute Gott von Manhattan" and *Malina*) and distracts us from the real pain and the real problems of our lives. In distracting and engrossing us, journalistic content isolates us from those around us ("Ein Wildermuth", "Simultan" and "Drei Wege zum See") and keeps us disempowered and enslaved to a status quo that cruelly punishes transgressors ("Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", "Der gute Gott von Manhattan" and "Der Schweißer"),

who are caught in an eternal present of increasing alienation and helplessness, working in unhealthy environments or trapped in counterproductive behaviour patterns of denial and/or monotonous conformity (“Holz und Späne”, “Ein Geschäft mit Träumen”, “Auch ich habe in Arkadien gelebt”, “Der Schweißer”, *Malina*, “Simultan”, “Probleme, Probleme” and “Drei Wege zum See”). Journalistic content contrives to disconnect us from the past, especially our own (“Herbstmanöver”, *Malina* and “Drei Wege zum See”), thus alienating us from our own histories—the source of real “Erfahrung” in the form of “in der Gegenwart aufgehobene Vergangenheit” (Dippel 35), as opposed to the vicarious, second-hand experience foisted on us by what Adorno and Horkheimer referred to as the “Kulturindustrie” and what Enzensberger called the “Bewußtseins-Industrie”. In this way, the journalistic and other media undermine our attempts (or even our awareness of the need) to reflect on the key questions of our lives, namely, “wo wir stehen oder wo wir stehen sollten, wie es mit uns bestellt ist und wie es mit uns bestellt sein sollte” (*W 4*: 196).

9.2 Optimism and “Gegenbilder”

What is evident from the foregoing study is that Bachmann’s lament about journalism as a purveyor of “Phrasen” and “Meinungen” in her theoretical writings does not translate into a major thematic focus in her literary portrayal of the journalistic media. Numerous scholars have addressed the issue of “Sprachproblematik” in relation to Bachmann’s oeuvre,¹ especially in connection with her critique of “Gauersprache” in everyday life, but my analysis of Bachmann’s work reveals that, while there is much *implied* “Sprachkritik” in Bachmann’s portrayal of the way in which the journalistic media deceive or mislead us, it only rarely emerges specifically in conjunction with the journalistic media. The few exceptions include Ich’s handling of Mühlbauer’s trite and clichéd questions, Elisabeth’s disgust for sensationalistic headlines like “Eifersuchtsdrama auf Millionärsvilla” (*TP 4*: 467), Herr Matri’s bemusement over expressions he finds in the newspaper, and Trotta’s gibes at the language of Willy Flecker (*TP 4*: 426).

Instead, Bachmann’s literary work is more concerned with the issues of deception, distraction, alienation and enslavement that is associated with the journalistic and other mass media. Read against the findings of Chapter 3, the focus of Bachmann’s literary critique of the journalistic media therefore proves to be very much in line with the main lines of argument put forward by Kraus and Benjamin (to whom Bachmann explicitly referred in her extra-literary pronouncements and whose views on the mass media were very similar to those of Adorno and Horkheimer) as well as the media critique of Hocke and Enzensberger (who were contemporaries and close friends of Bachmann)—all of whom contended that the mass media constituted a form of mass “Betrug” that enabled the powerful few to keep the powerless majority blinded and enslaved to the status quo.

¹ For a good introduction and overview of this area, see Eberhardt (“Sprachphilosophie und poetologische Sprachreflexion” 214ff.). See also Angst-Hürlimann, Fehl, Hapkemeyer (*Sprachthematik*), Jurgensen and Mauch (“Ingeborg Bachmanns Erzählband *Simultan*”).

While the Frankfurt School's critique of the culture industry suggests that the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against the individual in the battle against the juggernaut of mass capitalist society and holds out little hope for the possibility of rebellion or escape from this system of mass enslavement, Benjamin retained his belief in the power of art to support the process of insight and thus the prospect for change. Similarly, Enzensberger insisted that while the situation was grim, resistance was nevertheless possible. This is a view that Bachmann seems to share, for, notwithstanding the damning picture of alienation and psychological impairment (and sometimes murderous death) that emerges from her portrayal of contemporary society, Bachmann also provides many examples of those who see through and turn their backs on a world ensnared in the deceptive machinations of the journalistic media (Jennifer in "Der gute Gott von Manhattan", Reiter in "Der Schweißer", Ich in *Malina* and Trotta in "Drei Wege zum See"). Although such rebellion costs them their lives, the price of insight and resistance is not always so high. Thus, we have, from the earliest of Bachmann's poems through to her last piece of published prose, examples of those who are "dis-illusioned" and thus manage to wake from their metaphorical slumber (the poetic persona in "Herbstmanöver") and those who refuse to succumb to slumber in the first place (the poetic persona in "Reklame", Robinson and Benedikt in "Die Zikaden"); those who see through the media's web of deceit (Undine in "Undine geht", the poetic persona in "Holz und Späne"); those who retreat from the status quo and survive (the protagonist in the prose version of "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", Wildermuth in "Ein Wildermuth", Malina in *Malina*); and those who achieve moments of grace and insight,² even if only transiently (Laurenz in the radio play version of "Ein Geschäft mit Träumen", the narrator in "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt", the protagonist in "Das dreißigste Jahr", the narrator in "Unter Mördern und Irren", Nadja in "Simultan" and Elisabeth in "Drei Wege zum See"). The number of examples listed here justify Bachmann's rejection of the accusation of "grundloser Traurigkeit" and "eine Art Resignation" in her work (and support my contention at the beginning of this dissertation that Bachmann's position is essentially one of hope and optimism). As Bachmann insists: "Eine Resignation überhaupt nicht. Ich selbst bin ein Mensch, der nie resigniert hat, [. . .] sich das gar nicht vorstellen kann." (*Gul* 118)³

This line of argument finds further support in the findings of the present study that point to the many "Gegenbilder" that Bachmann casts in opposition to the malevolent influence of the journalistic and other media, the most extended and significant of which are, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8: the figure of Malina in *Malina*; *Malina* itself as a literary work; Amery's essay "Die Tortur"; and the *Simultan* collection as a literary manifestation modelled on Amery's views on, and approach to,

² A number of scholars have described these moments as utopian. Thus Thamer refers to Bachmann's "utopische Gegenentwürfe (215). See also Achberger (*Understanding* 16), Bannasch (*Von vorletzten Dingen* 4), Bartsch (*Ingeborg Bachmann* 29f., 35, 40, 42f., 46ff., 52, 60, 65, 73, 81, 115, 163f., 197 et passim), Baumgart ("Ihr Menschen! Ihr Ungeheur!" 438), Folkvord (*Drei Wege* 55, 111f., 116f.), Höller (*Das Werk* 14, 40, 94, 126), Mahrtdt (*Öffentlichkeit* 203), Oehlmann (59), O'Regan (3ff.), and Pilipp ("Tabus und Utopie").

³ See also Bachmann's passionate belief in the power of literature as expressed in "Das Gedicht an den Leser (*W* 4: 307).

authenticity in writing. In positing these “Gegenbilder”, Bachmann effectively asserts that, while the journalistic media represent “where the truth lies”—in the sense that a medium which purports to be a source of factual and authentic information is in fact mendacious—we find in literature *where the truth lie*, in the sense of *this is where we might look for truth and authenticity in our lives*. As Bachmann insists paradoxically: “Die Tatsachen, die die Welt ausmachen – sie brauchen das Nichttatsächliche, um von ihm aus erkannt zu werden” (*TP 2*: 134).

Given the intensity of her focus and her often vitriolic exposé of the journalistic media, it is tempting to see Bachmann’s portrayal of the journalistic media as part of an almost personal vendetta against the press, but there is clearly nothing didactic or proselytising about her approach, for Bachmann was, as she herself insisted, no writer of “Programm Musik” (*GuI*, 99).⁴ Instead, I see Bachmann’s engagement with the theme of journalism as part of her overall mission “über die Zeit zu schreiben”, as she put it in an interview with Toni Kienlechner (“Gespräch mit Ingeborg Bachmann” 103), and “ein möglichst breit angelegtes Panorama ihrer Zeit, ein Porträt ihrer Gesellschaft zu schaffen [...]” (Dippel 64). Bachmann’s portrayal of journalism is also integral to her irrepressible commitment to “Veränderung” by means of “neuer Wahrnehmung, neuem Gefühl, neuem Bewußtsein.” (*W 4*: 195), and to think things through in ever new ways in the face of overwhelming historical forces:

Es ist so leicht zu sagen, wir »akzeptieren« diesen oder jenen Kurs, aber die Welt, die erniedrigt, hat nur einen Kurs, der Hunger nur einen, die Unwissenheit nur einen, und wir schmoren in unseren kleinen Wirtschaftswundern und Kunstwundern, aber die Geschichte ist eine Dampfwalze, die stark ist, und wir sind stark, nicht, wenn wir »eingehen« auf das Gegebene, sondern wenn wir weiterdenken. Mein ganzes Bemühen ist: weiterdenken. (Bachmann *Henze Briefe* 268)

While many aspects of Bachmann’s critique of the journalistic media seem negative and pessimistic, this too is part of her self-confessed aim as a writer: to stand up for “Gerechtigkeit, [...] Wahrheit, [...] Freiheit” (*ibid.*), by drawing attention to and criticising that which threatens or undermines those key moral values, and then indicating a new direction that we might take to sustain and invigorate those values. As Bachmann explained in a letter to her close friend, Hans Werner Henze, in August 1965:

Und Dein Bemühen kann nur sein, noch einen und noch einen Ton finden für die Freuden, die Verzweiflungen, die Richtung vor allem. Ich glaube, wir haben nur die Richtung zu exekutieren, das ist es, sie anzuzeigen, wir haben ja nur ein kleines metier, ein sehr schönes, freies, und *man muss in seinem metier negieren und dann die Richtung geben*. (*ibid.*, m.e.)

⁴ As Herrmann observed in 2000, although Bachmann herself rejected the “tagespolitische oder ideologische Vereinnahmung ihrer Texte”, her texts were nevertheless read as “programmatische und zeitgemäße Reflektionen gesellschaftlicher Zustände” and attracted the particular interest of feminist studies from the mid-1980s as “Dokumentationen weiblichen Leidens an der— >patriarchalen< —Gesellschaft” (“Poetik der Kritik” 49).

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¹ For background information on this film (produced for television), see Achberger (*Understanding* 177).

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² This press clipping was one of a large batch kindly provided to me by Jörg-Dieter Kogel of Radio Bremen in 1999. Recent attempts to determine the page number and to validate the dates stamped on some of those press clippings have proven unsuccessful.

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³ It has not been possible to determine the page number of the Zimmermann press clippings, which were provided by Radio Bremen.