CHAPTER III

INGEBORG BACHMANN AND HER REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

This chapter then is an attempt at an appraisal of Bachmann: the conflict between the role of a woman writer and the traditional gender role of wife and mother in her own life, as well as the representation of gender dichotomies in her later literary projects culminating in "Malina." This appraisal clearly exemplifies the various concerns of Western feminism discussed earlier, which mostly center around gender antagonisms, the conflict between gender roles, a critique of patriarchy as also the questioning of women's 'place' (Ort) outside of the symbolic order of Western society. The chapter also deals with the feminist literary criticism of Bachmann's work in the seventies which has overwhelmingly drawn attention to the gender specific nature of the male reception, as also issues of women, femaleness and language; women's writing in its difference with that of men, as also the critique of patriarchy and traditional gender roles. Most of this criticism has however helped to further essentialize and universalize 'feminity' and 'femaleness,' rather than question the dichotomous structures underlying Western society and the roots of these structures in the formation of the middle class from the 18th century onwards.
In Bachmann's case, for the feminist critics of the Seventies, she appeared as the representative and forerunner of the current women's literature of the Seventies, the interest in her later narrative works, the 'Ways of Dying' cycle and the "Simultan" stories being a result of various factors: the appearance of the four volume edition of her work in 1978, the feminist cultural criticism and Poststructuralism amongst others.¹

This interest for women's themes could be clearly seen in the symposium on her works in Warschau, where the feminist critic Sigrid Schmidt Bortenschlager, for example in her paper on "Women as Victims" put forward the following three theses for discussion:

Bachmann's Werk sei gekennzeichnet durch Utopie als Vorschein, durch polare Strukturen, (etwa die Dichotomie, Mann - Frau, die für Bachmann in dem Maße wichtiger wird in dem die Hoffnung auf ihre utopische Überwindung abnimmt) und durch alte Vorstellungen von den Geschlechterrollen.²

The feminist critic Christa Gürtler similarly reflected on the image of women, by counterposing Bachmann's Utopia of a female subjectivity beyond the one existing in a capitalist patriarchal context, to that of a male imagined femaleness. Hans Höller too thematizes the endangering of female possibilities of existence with reference to the "Ways of Dying" cycle:

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Nicht zufällig nähert sich Bachmann in "Malina" und in den Fragmenten "Der Fall Franza," sowie "Requiem für Fanny Goldmann," dem Genre des Kriminalromans an; Fauen sind Opfer von Verbrechen, von Verbrechen allerdings die auf "inwendigen Schauplätzen stattfinden. Der Schluß von "Malina" ist daher nicht nur Gewinn des titelgebenden Figur und damit der Fähigkeit weiterzuschreiben, sondern auch gesellschaftlicher und geschichtlicher Skandal des lautlosen Verschwindens der Frau, der auch schon im Gedicht "Die gestundete Zeit" Ausdruck gefunden hat. ³

Christa Gürtler’s detailed work on Bachmann is also within the context of women’s writing, the study itself having been stimulated by the women’s movement, she asserts. The first part of her study elaborates on the various theories of women’s writing, Aesthetics and femaleness, i.e. those of the French theoreticians: Cixous, Kristeva and Irigary besides Claudine Hermann and Brigitte Wartmann, with Gürtler attempting to distinguish between "weibliche - feministische Matriachalische Ästhetik." Interpreting Bachmann’s "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha," "Undine geht" "Malina" and "Der Fall Franza" as reflecting female speechlessness and how Bachmann tries to overcome it, Gürtler writes that both Bachmann and Barbara Frishmuth a later writer, thematisize:
die Sprachlosigkeit, beschreiben Institutionen und Situationer in denen sie sich manifestiert (Erziehung, Ehe, Sexualität, Liebe u.a) aber auch Möglichkeiten ihrer Überwindung. 4

Thus, Gürtler analyses Bachmann's representation of women's speechlessness through (1) Bachmann's critique of the institution of marriage in "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha," (2) the relationship between women's speechlessness and their sexuality, (3) the loss of identity suffered by women as represented in "Malina" (4) the displaced or inverted female discourse as evident in "Der Fall Franza" and (5) a critique of patriarchal society as seen in the "Ways of Dying" cycle: "Malina," "Der Fall Franza" and "Requiem für Fanny Goldmann." Gürtler further attempts to show how Bachmann's and Frischmuth's texts, though they express possibilities of freedom for women as well as possibilities of finding their identities, they do not necessarily represent their success.

Clearly, Gürtler examines the gender problematic in Bachmann's works mainly within the framework of the French feminist theories, for whom language is a major concern. Besides which Gürtler focuses on issues of women's exclusion from the cultural and literary spheres, gender roles and antagonisms.

Of importance for the feminist criticism on
Bachmann has also been pointing out of the anti-women attitude of the male reception of Bachmann, which has been influenced in its judgements even by the private relationships of the writer.

Thus, Ursula Püschel asks in an essay: "Und wer würde es wagen, Freund - oder Liebeschaften eines männlichen Dichters bei der Bewertung seiner literarischen Potenz zu erwähnen."

Other critics Irmela von der Lühe and Kurt Bartsch as well have drawn attention to how the personality of the writer has been instrumental in shaping the male reception of her work, the most glaring example being Peter Horst Neumann's "Vier Gründe einer Befangenheit," wherein he names the four reasons for the prejudice with which he, as well as many other critics of the narrative prose of the author, have been confronted:

kontrollierende Weise: die Weiblichkeit der Dichterin und ihr Sterben.  

Peter Hamm another critic speaks of Bachmann’s "Allüre und Attitude" which occupies her literary contemporaries (and not only them). He writes about her. "Wer Ingeborg Bachmann kannte und heute an sie denkt, wird sich wahrscheinlich nicht zuerst an Zeilen von ihr errinnern, an Gedichtetes, sondern an ihre Haltung, ihr Auftreten, ihr Glanz" Whereas Hans Werner Richter remembers the "Besondere ihres Haltens, 'nervös, sensible schüchtern und scheinbar hilflos." Helmut Strutzmann similarly comments on her gesture of "Haarsträhne beim Lesen aus dem Gesicht streifen," her thin, broken, erotic voice.

Clearly male criticism has been concerned more with the fact of her person, as imagined in male phantasies, something which was bound to have consequences both for her and for her work:

Ingeborg Bachmann, die man unbefangen noch eine Dichterin nennen kannte, war - so man über sie schrieb - die "grande dame" und "femme fatale" der Literature. Dies hatte Folgen. Folgen für das zurückhaltenden formuliert Unbewusste der kritikerlobs.

Gürtler points out that the image the male critics connected her with, was one taken from her own literature: that of 'Undine,' "Ingeborg Bachmann mit Undine vermandt,"
Undine ruft," being titles of two discussions, many others to be found comparing her to Undine, a figure which had often represented male phantasies and was often an image of the male imagination of women. Hans Mayer for example writes on the turn of the century Undine: unerreichtbar, kindhaft, verderblich, durch das Wort und die männliche Vernunft nicht ansprechbar."9 This topos, Gürtler argues, characterised for many the essence of the author, but it probably expresses more about the critics imagination regarding femaleness, these conceptions of femaleness playing an important role in the reception of her prose. Thus Marcel Reich Ranicki writes on her prose collection "Das dreißigste Jahr:"

Im Grunde ist es nur ein einziger Held, ein lyrisches Ich, ..... Diesen also nur scheinbar verschieden Gestalten haftet - ältere Männer nicht ausgeschlossen - etwas Jugendliches und wohl auch Weibliches an.10

With 'female' here meaning 'emotional' which is considered inferior.

Besides Gürtler, Irmela von der Lühe argues that "the experience that no harmony exists between the personal life as a writer and social life as a member of a community runs like a unifying thread through Bachmann's poetic and poetological utterances. Stages of her life and in
particular the journalistic reactions to her life and work are compelling confirmation of this experience.\textsuperscript{11}

She cites the role of "Der Spiegel" in this context, in the attention paid by the literary public to Bachmann: by its title story "Poems from the German Ghetto;" the report about the Frankfurt guest professorship, the review of "Malina" by Gabriel Wohmann, the commentary by Heinrich Böll and the additional report about her death.\textsuperscript{12}

Von der Lühe elaborates on how "Der Spiegel" echoed the press reception of the Frankfurt lectures, reflecting the dissatisfaction, incomprehension, indigination and then open malice for a woman whose behaviour, language, thought and writing can be perceived only as provocation and brusqueness.\textsuperscript{13}

She reiterates that there was thus little scholarly reception of the lectures, whereas the journalistic echo was large, though laudatory only in a few cases such as the report in the "Frankfurter Rundschau" of 27th November, 1959. Von der Lühe draws attention to the fact that even though Gürtler Rühle in "Frankfurter Neue Presse" and "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" reported on the general relationship of the poet to the university and that of scholarship to poetry, he seemed provoked by Bachmann's lectures since he also could not avoid playing off Kaschnitz against Bachmann, by comparing their physical appearance
and public manner. Thus, he made the following observation:

By her secure superior manner and her feminity enhanced by the social air of a lady, Marie Luise Kaschnitz distinguished herself from the image left behind on the podium by her predecessor - the poet Ingeborg Bachmann - Her direct grasp for her manuscript (no searching as in Bachmann's case) characterised the manner of her beginning.¹⁴

Von der Lühr writes how "Frankfurter Allgemeine" came up with:

Then Ingeborg Bachmann stepped up to the podium, turned the manuscript a little, peered near - sightedly at the book she had brought along (Hofmannsthal) put on a pair of glasses and began to speak in a soft voice and with a slight Austrian intonation, hesitantly at times but otherwise with astonishing composure and an almost invariable inflection. It is doubtful whether she could be heard in the back rows.¹⁵

These words, "soft sometimes hesitating, evenly inflected voice," attaining "almost mystic proportions in the press and were repeated in every personal description of hers," this technique, she comments being a favourite of journalist when dealing with women writers "so that every minute detail concerning externalities is recorded while the text of the lecture is virtually ignored. This double
reaction, von der Lüne argues, is a doubly superficial one, positing correspondence between the reputed, insecure hesitating manner of the lecturer and the obscurity of the content.

In the article of "Der Spiegel" dated 20th April, 1959, which appeared after the conclusion of the entire series, Bachmann is once again the "young and attractive poet" whose "reddish blond hair, formerly in an ultra-short page-boy cut" has in the meantime grown longer than it was several years ago, reports in "Frankfurter Allgemeine" being worse:

She was a pitiful creature who appeared to be totally out of place at the podium. Portrayed as shy and insecure, defensive and nervous, the lectures still had "respectable" things to say.

Irmela von der Lühe reiterates that the discrepancy between the concern that Bachmann pursued in her lectures and the interpretation of the press can hardly be exaggerated, though it would be wrong to understand them only as the product of a sensationalism designed to sell newspapers, she cautions, since individual reports differed from each other in style, seriousness and their judgements of the lecture series.

Thus, von der Lühe stresses that though Bachmann's analysis in her lectures speaks of the "I without
Guarantees" of the writing "I" as being gender-neutral it was the press reports which compelled her to correct her misconceptions:

The author and lecturer who analysed her own problem as the problem of poetic existence and who made no distinction between the sexes in the analysis of the situation of the writer and the writing "I" was confronted with the distinction, was forced into it by society and in this case, by the male dominated clique of journalists leading as Christa Bürger points out to Bachmann's second literary project the "Ways of Dying" cycle which Bürger interprets as completing a break not only with the institution art, which has no name for such texts, but with the reigning conception of writing itself, so that Bachmann is concerned with:

Nichts weniger als um die Produktion von Wirklichkeit, zu verstehen zunächst als Aneignung ihrer eignen Geschichte, die die Geschichte einer "niederen Rasse" ist, oder die Geschichte aller Frauen. Schreibend weiß sie: ich werde hier zu meinem Recht kommen.

Other feminist critics have also concerned themselves with the reasons for Bachmann's dilemma, a dilemma, Bärbel Thau for example sees represented in "Malina" namely that of a woman writer for whom it was not
easy to find an identify as a woman writer since she lived and wrote before the new women’s movement of the Seventies.

Thau explains, how from Kuno Raebuer’s remembrance of her it emerges that she grappled long with the traditional female roles of "wife" and "mother":

Ich möchte eine gewöhnliche Frau sein, heiraten und Kinder haben, sagte sie immer wieder. Als eine gemeinsame Bekannte schwanger wurde, sprach sie diese uner müdlich auf ihren Zustand an, wollte alle Einzelheiten genau wissen. "Wenn sie wüßten, wie sehr ich sie beneide" versicherte sie.

So that in 1959 she made a sudden journey to Neapel wanting to marry Hans Werner Henze. Thau argues that later however, with the woman’s question assuming importance in her work also, the life of a married woman appeared totally impossible to her and in 1973 she said in an interview:

Für mich hat es dieses Problem (das der Abhängigkeit der Frau vom Mann B.T.) im Grunde nicht wirklich gegeben. Ich habe von Anfang an gewußt, daß ich gegen die Ehe bin, gegen jede legale Beziehung. Die Ehe ist eine unmögliche Institution. Sie ist unmögliche für eine Frau, die arbeitet und die denkt und selber etwas will.\(^\text{18}\)
If the relationship with Hans Werner Henze, whom she met in the 1952 meeting of Gruppe 47 came to an end, so did the second one with Max Frisch, with Frisch presenting himself as "Sympathischer Versager" in his autobiographical narration "Montauk" Andrea Soll also comes to a similar conclusion:

Frau sein und schreiben werden für Bachmann im Verlauf ihrer schriftstellerischen Entwicklung zu einer Schere, deren Enden auseinanderlaufen schon in ihrem Gedicht "Erkläre mir Liebe" heißt es:

"Erkläre mir, Liebe, was ich nicht erklären kann
sollt ich die kurze schauerliche Zeit
nur mit Gedanken Umgang haben und allein
nichts Liebes kennen und nichts Liebes tun?
Muß einer denken? Wird er nicht vermißt?

Soll elaborates:

Das tradierte Liebesverständnis fordert von einer Frau die Hingabe und Zurückstellung ihrer Persönlichkeit an die (Liebes) Interessen des Mannes. Für die ernstzunehmende künstlerische Arbeit bedeutet eine solche Haltung die Preisgabe aller schöpferischen Fähigkeiten, im Falle einer Schriftstellerin das poetische aus. Die Verweigerung der bedingungslosen Hingabe mit Hilfe der Ratio zum Schutz der kreativen Kräfte erweist
Sich als männliches Prinzip und wird von der Frau schmerzvol als Einbuße ihrer Liebesfähigkeit erfahren.¹⁹

Soll sees Bachmann as representing the results of a withdrawn female emotionality in the narratives of "Simultan" and "Three paths to the Lake":

In einer Verkarstung der Gefühlslandschaften, Mann und Frau können nur freundlich sein und gut zueinander, eine Weile. Frauen und Männer sollten am besten Abstand halten, nichts zu tun haben miteinander, bis beide herausgefunden hatten aus einer Verwirrung und der Verstörung der Unstimmigkeit aller Beziehungen.

Soll concludes that in "Malina" Bachmann joins

Die aneinandergelaufenen Enden männlichen und weiblichen Bewußtseins in dem Kunstgriff der Doppelfigur Ich/ Malina zusammen. Das Strukturprinzip des Romans ist ein Spiegel des von Bachmann selbst erkannten Konflikts in ihrer poetischen Existenz.²⁰

Soll's article, an attempt she writes which marks the "Schnittstellen und Veränderung im Prozeß des Bachmannschen Schreibens in der Gegenüberstellung von weiblichen Lebensverständnis und poetischem Bewußtsein," thus establishes a close connection between the three components: Truth, love and language in her works, with
Bachmann's demand for a new language in literature, she argues being connected to the demand for Truth, "durch ein rigides sprachmoralisches Verständnis im Krausschen Sinne." Thus Bachmann experiences the literary language as the totally Other and

Aus der Erkenntnis, daß die gesuchte dichterische Sprach Grenzland ist, daß jedes Wort die Grenzerfahrung in sich trägt, steigert sich der Sprachtraum Bachmanns noch einmal zum utopischen Kräftefeld.²¹

Closely connected to this trust in the utopian power of the world, is the "durchaus an religiöse Vorstellungen errinnernde Erlösungssehnsucht, die das Bachmannsche Liebesverständnis zutiefst prägt."

And it is the development of the poems from the first to the second volume, that: "die Steigerung der Liebe zur ekstatischen Macht (sich spiegelt), um schließlich in dem 1958 gesendeten Hörspiel" Der gute Gott von Manhattan" ihr ganzes zerstörisches Potential freizusetzen." this ecstasy of love being for Bachmann indivisibly connected with the power of language. Thus for Bachmann, the ecstasy of love: "Steht in der" Gegenzeit" und bezeugt ihre Nähe zur Dichtung; mit der Forderung nach einer neuen Sprache mit ihrer Absage an die Geschäfte der Welt." and in so far as Bachmann "die Liebe absolut setzt gegen die Ordnung der Welt, ist ihr Untergang schon beschlossen."
Other feminist criticism also remains restricted to issues of language, femaleness and Utopia in Bachmann’s work, with Rauch also arguing that: "Bachmann wehrt sich mit jedem Text gegen eine von der Wirklichkeit abstrahierende Vernunft und spricht sich für die Aufwertung von sinnlicher Welterfahrung aus.", for which reason, women are often the focus in her narratives:


Rauch argues that because this unity of the physical and the mental is clearly impossible in existing society, and with the stress being on performance and the female, that is the emotional sensual side of human beings has to be suppressed, Bachmann’s texts contain several Utopian elements: Utopia and femaleness condition each other mutually:

Der Antrieb für einen (Aus) bildungsprozeß der Weiblichkeit der letztlich auch zu einer komplexeren Persönlichkeitsstruktur und

Thus the task of the writer, according to Bachmann lies darin, der Autonomie und Verdinglichung der vorgeprägten Sprache und der daraus resultierenden Entfremdung des Menschen von ihr entgegenzuwirken mit einem ständigen Unterwegs sein zu einer neuen Sprache. Eine neue Sprache kann sich aber erst mit einer neuen Erkenntnis ausbilden. Diese neue Erkenntnis über menschliche Dasein, so könnte man Bachmann lesen, beruht auf körperliche Erfahrung welche in das Denken eingehen muß.25

Characterising the sensual perception of the
world, emotionality and sensibility as traditional attributes of women which have been evaluated as positive and emancipatory by the women's movement. Rauch argues that they have been repressed in human beings in the logoscentred society after the Enlightenment and the development of capitalism, in favour of economic productivity. This finds expression especially in the man-woman relationship:

Weiblichkeit die als die 'neue Erkenntnis' über eine andersartige Erfahrung der Wirklichkeit die Basis für eine der weiblichen Erfahrung angemessene Sprache bildet, profiliert sich gerade in der Beziehung zwischen Mann und Frau; denn hier wird die Notwendigkeit einer eigenen Ausdrucksweise der Weiblichkeit im Kontrast zur rational instrumentellen Sprache, wie sie vor allem von Männern auch in der Privatsphäre gebraucht wird, nur allzu deutlich. 26

Thus Bachmann is seen to be problematising gender relations in this context in almost all her texts, making a critique of language and society in general through it. Since the multiplicity of human relationships as well as the mood nuances within a relationship are no longer grasped by this language, are even repressed, resulting in the division between human contact and experience, for Bachmann, language, reality, Truth and existence influence each other mutually, so that "speech" (Rede) becomes 'Gerede' in
everyday life, this 'Gerede' or the language which Bachmann criticises hindering realisation based on sensual-emotional perception.

Rauch reiterates that Bachmann constructs truth in the Heidegger sense of reality again and again as a language problem. In 'Ein Wildermuth' for example, the judge recognises:

"Da gibt es doch nur lauter Meinungen, schneidige Behauptungen, Meinungen über Meinungen und eine Meinung über die Wahrheit, aber keine Wahrheit."

Truth however can only be experienced sensually (which be experiences only once in the speechless physical communication with Wanda, who in contrast to his talkative wife, has problems in expressing herself: thus silence offers the possibility of a genuine speech in contrast to "Gerede".

A problem for all writers remains how to reproduce sensual experience in language: they construct in images, what does not allow itself to be expressed in the logical-rational language, Bachmann for example making use of Phantasy for expression as is evident in "Das Auge" and also in the:

Aufwertung der Formen von Märchen und Mythen gestaltet Bachmann ihre Phantasie eines repressionsfreien, glücklichen Lebens eines
Auslebens des Lustprinzips das in westlichen Kultur durch das Realitätsprinzip unterdrückt wird. In der Phantasie äußern sich verdrängte Wünsche und die Erinnerung an eine Natur und menschvereinigendes Dasein.

Rauch argues that, what Hebert Marcuse 'in des Befreiung des Lustprinzips und der Entwicklung des Eros für seine utopische Kulturtheorie sieht' and what feminists oriented towards Freud look for in the love-relationships between mother and child, which could serve as model for human relationships, is also anticipated by Bachmann, that is the utopian possibility of a sensually connecting love between people. Though failed love relationships appear to be the oft repeated theme of her texts, 'Malina' is analysed as finally describing the process of "Auflösung einer Beziehung, die die Lebenskraft der Ich - Erzählerin zu bilden scheint. Ihre Fähigkeit zu lieben d.h. ihre gefühlvolle, weibliche Seite wird am Ende durch die Grausamkeit der Wirklichkeit zerstört und das Nicht Erreichen - können eines "Du". Allein die rationale, productive männliche Seite Malina vermag in dieser Gesellschaft zu überleben." The general possibility of love is however represented in the form of Utopia, in the fairy-tale "Die Geheimnisse der Prinzessin von Kagran" for example.

Thus, Rauch concludes, Bachmann thematisizes
love always in close connection with the emotional and thought world of women, that is as part of their femaleness which has become problematic. Silvia Schlenstedt's interpretation does not differ much:

Gesucht wird eine Liebe, die den anderen nicht überwältigt, welche die Isolationen in wechselseitigen selbst entdecken aufhebt, die im Zeichen der Übereinstimmung mit der Natur steht, auch der eigenen.\(^{28}\)

Beatrice Angst-Hürlimann's analysis also draws attention to the parallel between 'love' and 'language' for example in Bachmann's radio-play "Der gute Gott von Manhattan" with the two components "Denken" and "Bild" which could also be called "Denken" and "Dichten" running through her work, the two often appearing as unbridgeable oppositions, with the personal suffering of Bachmann due to this conflict situation between "Denken - Dichten" being expressed directly by her. Her best poems, Beatrice Angst-Hürlimann argues are those which represent a happy unification 'in denen modernes Denken in zeitlose Bilder gekleidet ist und ohne Rest darin aufgeht, "Mein Vogel" for example\(^{29}\)

Susanne Scheibe and Magaret Eifler are amongst other feminist critics who reiterate that 'language' is the theme in Bachmann's work with Eifler pointing out in the case of "Malina."
Der gesellschaftliche Gehalt ist hier in ein künstlerisches Korrelat gebracht: die Auflösung der Geschlechtsbeziehung wird übertragen in die ästhetische Entsprechung des Kommunikationsverlustes.  

and Scheibe continues:

Das Verbrechen, daß der Mensch tagtäglich an der Sprache begeht, in dem er sie vergewaltigt, und zu Floskeln und Phrasen degradiert, entspricht der Vergewaltigung der Frau durch den Mann; ".... und tatsächlich vergleicht Bachmann immer wieder die Rollenexistenz der Sprache und der Frau."

So that it is language which is the really central theme in her literature and:

Die Sprachkonflikte, denen sie sich als Schriftstellerin gegenüber sieht, versinnbildlicht sie als Konfliktsituation zwischen ihren fiktiven Romangestalten, und ungekehrt entsprechen die Schwierigkeiten, die es in zwischenmenschlichen Bereich gibt dem Sprachdilemma, vor dem die Dichterin in ihrer Gesellschaft steht.  

Clear that most feminist critics dealing with Bachmann have focused attention on the gender bias in the male critics reception of her work besides attempting to establish a connection between language, gender relations
and 'femaleness'. These concerns are clearly a reflection of those of Western feminism in general which sees gender antagonisms as a major problem, since for the middle-class feminists in the West the major contradictions they had experienced in the initial stages of the feminist movement as already discussed had been "those between the promises of freedom and equality that liberalism held out to them and the social and psychic determinations that limited women's access to these rights." Thus the solutions to these problems are also sought in a way that only address the contradictions principally as women from such social formations experience them. The solutions sought in this case also lie in seeking interconnections between 'language' and 'femaleness' for example.

The source of Bachmann's concern with language must however also be traced back to the Austrian literary tradition which she inherited. With Austria having begun by 1890 to play an important role in the European innovation movement psychiatry was opened to the writer, which had lead to the questioning of language itself: "It was the irrational which had to be explored, aspect of reality in dreams was grasped and elucidated - continuous meditation, inner monologue added new dimensions to the picture of man valid until then. Through the opening up of the pre and subconscious, the material of the poet himself, language finally became problematic too."
With intellectuals demanding responsibility to the word as a defence against 'feuilletonism' which was typical of the atmosphere towards end of monarchy, especially cultivated art forms of aphorisms, epigrams and the language philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein became significant as reactions to the earliest ethic formulation of aphorisms with Hofmannsthal as author of the Lord Chandos letter, reflecting the deepening scepticism about language, a comprehension of what cannot be expressed and the impossibility of complete communication with others, this scepticism having found strong reflection in the works of later authors like Bachmann, the Austrian tradition of language criticism also finding an extreme representation in Karl Krauss.

Later, the annexation of Austria under Hitler Germany saw the end of an era, with some writers in concentration camps, many immigrating and still others like Stefan Zweig Egon Fricdell and others taking their own life. Thus, after the war writers like Ilse Aichinger emerged whose prose text "Aufruf zum Mißtrauen" in 1946 became the starting point of a whole generation of writers whose work was characterised by a mistrust of pathos and clichee with which language was abused in the Nazi period, so that "mistrust of all coercion .... and of traditionalism which dominated everything; and mistrust above all of oneself became something like a compulsory Programme for the new literary generation."
For this new generation, born between 1915 and 1930, there was no tradition to fall back on, in contrast to the older established authors. They were forced to overcome the isolation from world literature with Bachmann’s work especially her lyrics with its "simplicity of language, new use of language or language exposure use of quotations ironic criticism, inclusion of the absurd use of phonetics and dialect and negation of generally binding concepts that would presuppose an established world order being characteristics of this period." 32

With ‘language’, the concept of ‘borders’ has been of equal importance for Austrian writers for Rilke, Hofmannsthal, Kafka, Freud, Wittgenstein, canetti and Bachmann, since though:

They wrote in German, it was in regions where German was not the dominant language or in places where the presence of social or linguistic groups radically different from their own forced upon them the consciousness of the limits of their own language world.

These writers then, must be read in the context of a confrontation geographically with the linguistic border with High German and historically with the Habsburg Empire so that the poet seems to be writing in a state of permanent exile, legally homeless. 33

Bachmann herself recalls the importance of her
birth in Klagenfurt, a small town near the Yugoslavian and Italian borders:

I grew up in Carinthia near the border in a valley that has two names a German one and a Slovenian one. And the house inhabited for generations by my ancestors - Austrians and Wends, still bears a foreign sounding name. So near the border is yet another border the border of language. I felt at home here and on the other side with the tales of good and evil, spirits from two or three countries. For behind the two mountains just an hour away is Italy. 34

Thus, the critic Mark Anderson draws a connection between "gender, homeland, and borders" in Bachmann's work since she 'always remained conscious of borders physical as well as that of language and of her multi lingual Austrian heritage, "with her poetry reflecting a philosophical language of images," which was fostered also by her study of philosophy which she studied together with law in Innsbruck and Graz. In Vienna it was again philosophy, psychology and German literature where she also wrote her dissertation: "The critical reception of Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy" under the supervision of Viktor Kraft, a follower of Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap of the 'Vienna Circle' representing the Vienna School's battle against German metaphysics. 35
Wittgenstein's philosophy was another strong influence since she saw a similarity in his philosophical project of confrontation with the limits or borders of language and her own, his attention to limits of language corresponding to Bachmann's own view that:

We stand think and speak on this side of the borders. The feeling of the world as a bordered fragment arises because we ourselves, as metaphysical subjects are no longer parts of the world, but rather borders.\textsuperscript{36}

Amongst political events the critic Kurt Bartsch points out, which had an influence on her and on the socialisation of the youth which was growing up in the years between 1932-45 are: the economic depression, massive unemployment the ending of parliamentary democracy of the First Republic of Austria through the Austro fascist dictatorship and the take over of Austria in 1938 by Hitler Germany which proved to be a very traumatic experience for her as pointed out by other critics as well:

This early pain and its effects, Bartsch writes, find expression again and again in her works, especially the narrative "Jugend in einer österreichischen Stadt."

Literary contacts and friendships which influenced her consciousness include: Hermann Hakel, publisher of the journal "Lynkeus"; Hans Weigel, Ilse Aichinger, etc. In 1947 she met Paul Celan with whom she remained closely connected for a long time. In 1960 the journey to the German Democratic Republic with Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Walter Jens, where in Leipzig she met Ernst Block, Stephan Hermlin and Peter Huchel, was considered sensational and scandalous. Later influences include: the Polish author Witold Gombrowicz.

The critic Christa Bürger has however argued that it is the repression of the past—the Nazi past—which is the central motif of Bachmann's literary production. Thus the ambiguity of the images in Bachmann appear to her to be based not in the unity of artistic creation and social reality but deeper in the "Wirklichkeitszweifel" of the Author, so that in her story:"Unter Mördern und Irren" for example she speaks of a "Schandgesetz" according to which everything is done.

The reason for this ambiguity Bürger elaborates lie in the fact that though the generation to which Bachmann
belonged had hoped that after the defeat of Fascism clear values would be possible, they had to recognize that the "Wölfische Praxis" persisted; the problem with this reality being that it does not allow a right kind of life, that one cannot distinguish sharply between the oppressor and the oppressed with reality allowing only broken subjects.

A similar dilemma Bürger argues appears in Wolfgang Koeppen's novel "Der Tod in Rom" in 1954 the feeling of being bound to one's parents through an uncanny, sinister, doubtful nearness and separated through a horrified distance. Bachmann does not try to cut away from the fate or psychic dowry of the family: knows that the Truth of the family is also her own, but pays for this attitude by an unbearable ambivalence of feeling. She hates the small Fascisms lived daily by the family and knows herself to be a part of it (ich will geliebt sein um alle); she wants to see (it) and not see (it).

This ambivalence in feeling, Bürger argues determines her processing of reality (Wirklichkeitsverarbeitung) in total. The brokeness of the piece of Art which originates in such a way is then the expression of the bad conscious of the modern artist, who must make a compromise with reality.

Bürger interprets this breaking up and the bad conscience as connecting the literature of the post war years to the Romantics which allows a danger of the
aesthetic Modernism to be recognised: the "Verselbständigung of the Art object that the artistic process is used only as technique to adapt reality in such a way that it would be transparent and intransparent at the same time.

Though the generation which began to write in the 50s and did not have to carry any responsibility for the terror of Faschism had hoped for the end of Faschism they had withdrawn however after a short period of Euphoria characterised by a belief in the power of the word to a resigned attitude: the explanation for this resignation lying in the sensitivity of the politics of re-education, perpetuated by the Allies, the collective Guilt being oriented more towards forcing the young Intellelegensia into a strained accomplicement with the generation of their elders than a discussion of the Nazi past. Thus, the 1952 meeting of the Gruppe 47 appears to Bürger to be a climatic turning point the surrealistic mythic speech form being the expression of a dilemma the techniques and processes of the aesthetic modernism as created by the young writers at this meeting then fulfilling the function of exoneration as well. They allowed the writers to speak of the social reality of the present and the experiences of the past, that is of Restauration and Faschism without having to name them by a name. 38

Bürger further argues that Bachmann's conception
of language must be seen as well in the context of her Wittgenstein and Heidegger reception. Thus:

Die Sprache kann nur über Tatsachen sprechen und bildet die Grenze unserer meiner und deiner Welt. Die Entgrenzung der Welt geschieht wo die Sprache nicht hinreicht und daher auch das Denken nicht hinreicht. Sie geschieht, wo sich etwas "zeigt" und was sich zeigt, ist das Mystische, die unaussprechliche Erfahrung.

Thus Bachmann’s early poetry appears as an attempt to bring this ‘unaussprechliche Erfahrung’ into existence through image. And in her Frankfurt Poetic Lectures Bachmann asks about the historical possibilities of the writer wanting change and understands this under the term "Literature als Utopia" her Utopia however is one of language:

Hatten wir das Wort, hätten wir Sprache, wir brauchten die Waffen nicht.

The romantic longing for the resolution of the world through Art, the pathetic conjuring of a "Ausdrückstraum" which the writer dreams as representative for mankind, point to the historical placing of Bachmann, her position within the "Engagement" discussion of the 50s. The conception of the autonomy of Art held at that time a specific understanding in the form of the power of
powerlessness, Bürger writes, with the writers placing the subversive Force, the triumph of mankind's voice (der menschlichen Stimme) with which the Author speaks against the power of reality.

What however distinguishes Bachmann from many writers of her generation is the existential Passion with which she expresses the problems of conception of Art: she wants simultaneously to speak the Truth, (die Waheheit sagen) she persists with guilt questions in Art, she speaks against the division of 'morality' and Art, in the autonomy aesthetics and can think of Art as the total Other which comes into existence when the lighting has been put off. Thus, the legend as Wittgenstein's life appears to her as a paradigm of her own.

As explanation for why Bachmann stopped writing poems, something which male critics found very difficult to accept Bürger writes: Bachmann stopped writing poems at that moment when she discovered that in them it is not "das unaussprechliche (....) das mythische (........)" which appears but much more her own sovereign access (Verfügung) over the Art Forms. What however this access could merely produce are: works of Art. Thus, the lyrical "I" although it knows itself to be competent in matters of poetry although it has command over art forms it doubts on the meaning of its artistic activity, since measured against the weight of reality, the work on language appears as
superfluous as that of Art handicraft. And because the lyrical "I" threatens to lose itself in the effort of the aesthetic task because it can neither help itself nor intervene in the reality it damns the business of poetry and its own work.

Thus Bachmann inquires about the legitimacy of aesthetic activity, is concerned about an "I" which attempts to have mankind's voice heard, and about Art as being about change. Her task she sees in the changing of language which has to precede the changing of the world:

Keine neue Welt ohne neue Sprache.

Thus, the contours of another world (....) as Fragment in literature.39

With the 'Ways of Dying' cycle, Bachmann is seen to be completing a break not only with the institution Art which has no name for such texts but also with the reigning conception of writing itself.40

It is with the 'Ways of Dying' cycle and the two narratives "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" and "Undine geht" of the first volume "Das Dreißigste Jahr" published in 1961, that a great deal of feminist criticism has concerned itself as already stated since it is in these that Bachmann's critique of gender relations in a patriarchal society and the question of women's subjectivity are clearly expressed.
This chapter then further attempts a brief analysis of this criticism as well as Bachmann's representation of the gender problematic and its possible resolution in "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha", "Undine geht" and "Malina" as being one which though it explores the process of imagining a female self undefined by the traditional constraints of the female role, does not basically question the traditional dichotomies of male and female culture and nature rationality and feeling, masculine and feminine. Rather by assuming them to be given, and by their further embodiment helps them gain new power.

Further, by her valorization of feminity and the feminine principle, as theorised later by the French theoreticians Bachmann risks an essentialization of these social constructs, rather than understanding them in their historical context and their variation in different social formations and classes. In "Der Fall Franza" Bachmann's uncompleted novel however, she has represented gender relations as changing historically, besides representing gender in its interconnection with racism and imperialism.

Amongst the feminist criticism on "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" is Christa Gürtler's analysis of the narrative which interprets it as representing an attempt at 'overcoming of speechlessness' through the possibility of a relationship between women. Whereas Beatrice - Angst Hürlimann, analysing it under the subtitle 'Love' argues
that more than love, of importance to the protagonist Charlotte is the fact, daß sie sich und ihr Geschöpf' (in this case the other women Mara) neu schafft.

Through loving Mara, Charlotte would like to put her idea into reality:

Ich will Mara nicht, weil ich ihren Mund, ihr 'Geschlecht' mein eigenes will .... Ich will mein Geschöpf, und ich werde es mir machen ..... Dies ist meine Idee (32).

And by loving her:

Wenn Sie Mara lieben könnte, wäre sie nicht mehr in dieser Stadt, in dem Land, bei einem Mann in einer Sprache zu Hause, sondern bei sich.

The sphere of validity of the term 'zu Hause sein' being raised from a geographical place over the man woman relationship to that of language as the actually decisive condition for existence, as in four of her other narratives 'Alles' amongst them with Charlotte in this case seeking the way essentially through a new form of love.41

For Christa Gürtler however the narrative is of interest because

Sie schon lange vor Begin der Frauenbewegung der siebziger Jahre entstanden ist. Viele darin aufgeworfene Probleme und Hoffnungen, die eine Frauenbeziehung belasten, scheinens gegenwärtige Diskussionen vorwegzunehmen.
Gürtler therefore attempts comparisons with contemporary theoretical and literary texts.

Thus Gürtler sees the title itself, with its reference to the Old Testament as signalling the representation of a step in sin and ruin,

Wofür die gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe noch heute häufig angesehen wird. The attempt at escape at heterosexual relationships is seen by society as ruinous since it threatens the norms. Bachmann appears to have taken on this attitude in the beginning as expressed by her frequent use of the colour red. 42

The girl Mara, who simply remains seated after the party is over in Charlotte a pianist's house, and who attempts to seduce her, wears a red skirt and has red hair. The whole room appears to be full of uncertain red tones, the red of Mara's skirt becomes a 'Todesrot' - for her. Having missed the opportunity of sending the girl away from the apartment they go together to a bar in which again everything is red 'höllenrot'. She is afraid of being seen there, since she has taken a step out of the normal order of society. In the bar, Mara begins to dance for Charlotte:

Mara entfaltet ihre Verführungskünste. Sie stellt in einen graziösen Tanz ihren zierlichen Körper zur Schan.

They hold hands and begin to address each other
with 'Du'. After the visit to the bar they go back again to Charlotte's apartment and again she finds no words to send Mara away. In the beginning she offers resistance to Mara’s embracing:

Während Charlotte's eigener Körper ihr in dieser Umarmung auf einmal größer und stärker als sonst vorkommt, füllt sie zum ersten Mal jene Umkehrung der bisherigen Verhältnisse, durch die sie an den Platz des männlichen Partners gelangt.

Although her feelings, her instinct and her head offer her no instructions to accord with the situation, it excites her to see herself and her own behaviour towards a man reflected in the girl’s actions:

So also waren ihre eigenen Lippen, so ähnlich begegneten sie einen Mann ....

In all the tactics which Mara uses Charlotte is able to recognize herself and see through her opposite. She had once said exactly the same words 'Ich bleibe’ to someone.

Then Mara begins first to shout and then to break glasses and dishes with Charlotte watching it all, the pieces symbolically representing Charlotte’s life especially her marriage with Franz:

Unsere Wohnung, die Ehe ihre Welt ist für
Charlotte fragwürdig geworden. Ohne daß es ihr bisher bewußt geworden ist, ist sie bereits auf der Suche nach einer neuen Form, sue allem aber auf der Flucht vor der über kommenden Form der Ehe.43

The apartment no longer exists for Charlotte as she ascertains that there was 'kein Stück von ihr in dieser Wohnung (G200)', since Franz had selected all the furniture Franz having determined their marriage. The destruction of the glasses and dishes free Charlotte:

Nichts mehr erschien ihr unmöglich, wieso sollte sie nicht mit einem Wesen von gleicher Beschaffenheit zu leben beginnen. (G198)

Charlotte thus finds herself right at the border, the old form has become invalid and she has still not stepped into a new one, this freedom however lasting for only a moment, a moment of total silence immediately after which both make an attempt to find speech so that they can really speak to each other. However as she tries to express this, it dawns on her that no words exist for the possible new truth between them.

After the ending of the old form, Charlotte is now in a position to create her new world:

Es sollte zu gelten anfangen was sie dachte und

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meinte und nicht mehr gelten sollte, was man sie angehalten hatte zu denken und was man ihr erlaubt hatte zu leben (G200).

She ponders on her possibilities:

Wenn sie mit Mara zu leben begäne ...... Dann würde sie lieber arbeiten zum Beispiel. Sie würde den Platz des überlegenen Partners einnehmen, dem sich der andere in blinder Hingabe unterwirft. Mara würde sie sich unterwerfen können, sie lenken und schieben können,"

She would be someone, "für den sie das Maß aller Dinge war ......, jemand vor allem, dem es wichtiger war, mit ihren Gedanken zu denken, als einen eigenen Gedanken zu haben". Clearly Mara is to be objectified by Charlotte. For Charlotte the moment of "Schichtwechsel" has come. She can now make the old images invalid and plan out the new;

"Denn es war ja die Welt der Bilder, die, wenn alles weggefegt war, was von den Geschlechtern abgesprochen worden war, noch blieb. Die Bilder blieben, wenn Gleichheit und Ungleichheit und alle Versuche einer Bestimmung ihrer Natur und ihres Rechtsverhältnisses längst leere Worte geworden waren und von neuen leeren Worten abgelöst geworden würden."

Jene Bilder, die, auch wenn die Farben schwanden

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und Stockflecken sich eintrugen, sich länger hielten und neue Bilder zeugten. Das Bild der Jägerin der großen Mutter und der großen Hure, der Samariterin, des Lockvogels aus der Tiefe und der unter die Sterne versetzten (G211).

However, Charlotte’s claim to a "Neu gründung scheitert weil ihr die neuen Bilder und die Sprache nicht zur Verfügung stehen."

Ich bin in kein Bild hineingeboren ..... Darum ist mir nach Abbruch zumute. Darum wünsche ich ein Gegenbild, und ich wünsche es selbst zu errichten. Noch keinen Namen. Noch nicht Erst den Sprung tun, alles überspringen, den Austritt vollziehen, wenn die Trommel sich rührt, wenn das rote Tuch am Boden schleift und keiner weiß, wie es enden wird. Das Reich erhoffen Nicht das Reich der Männer und nicht das der Weiber. Nicht dies, nicht jenes. (G211-212) To take a step into the uncertain and not know "wie es enden wird" this is Charlotte’s understanding. However she does not succeed in this leap (Sprung).

Though for Charlotte all her lovers are now dead she does not love them anymore even Mara now says: "Ich bin tot" as they lie together on the bed in the bedroom.

Wußte Charlotte, daß es zu spät war zu allem ....
Sie waren beide tot und hatten etwas getötet (G213).

Though Charlotte is for moments close to grasping the Other, even she does not succeed in holding the moment:

Danach hatte sie sich wieder geeinigt mit einem Mann auf Güte, Verliebtheit, Wohlwollen, Fürsorge, Anlehnung, Sicherheit, Treue, Allerlei Achtenswertes das dann nicht nur im Entwurf stecken blieb, sondern sich auch leben ließ.

That is, she had once again remembered convention and limited herself to it. So that she knows clearly now, that the Absolute does not allow itself to be lived consistently. 44

Of interest to Gürtler is the gender specific nature of language, so that she makes a comparison between Bachmann's "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" and Christa Wolf's 'Selbstversuch,' in which:

Die in einen Mann verwandelte Frau ist dauernd mit dem Problem der verschiedenen Sprachen konfrontiert: Neugier ist eine Untugend von Frauen und Katzen während der Mann enkenntnischungrig und wissensdurstig ist (Christa Wolf Selbstversuch p. 126)

Only because of the experiment in sex change does the woman become conscious of the difference in the thought
and speech between men and women. And so she rejects the masculine Order, criticises it and recognising the inability of men to love, lets herself be changed back again into a woman.

Thus, Gürtler sees a similarity in Bachmann's critique of patriarchal society and 'die als Utopie formulierte Überwindung des Gegensatzes zwischen Mann und Frau. 45

Manfred Jurgensen makes a similar interpretation of the narrative connecting Bachmann's main concerns: Gender, language and Utopia together, so that: "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" handelt von Bewußtseinsverhältnis zum eigenen Geschlecht. Charlotte gerät in Versuchung, das Mädchen Mara zu lieben.

Jurgensen does not consider lesbian love to be an 'Abart' of a heterosexual normality, but a Schöpferische, freigewählte Alternative, als das Erlebnis einer neuen, volleren menschlichen und persönlichen Erfüllung als die Erfahrung einer individuellen Zärtlichkeit, als der Eros Gleichberechtiger und Ggleichartiger bietet sich als Ausbruch aus einer männlich mörderischen Sexualität an.

Like Gurtler, Jurgensen argues that Charlotte is
conscious of the revolutionary character of a reorientation of the so called reality through lesbian love. Since Charlotte however knows that "auch sie die Liebe" Maras als ihre Beute (211), das Mädchen und den Geschlechtspartner als ihr Geschöpf behandeln würde daß sie in einer Welt der Bilder ebenfalls ein Gegenbild errichten könnte. So wäre die Frauenliebe denn nichts anderes als ein Schichtwechsel der sie die Welt Übernehmen lassen würde.

The connection between love and language is once again clear:

Bartsch comes to a similar conclusion:


Sie geht jedoch nur einen Schritt Richtung Gomorrha und kehrt zurück in die gegebene soziale Ordnung - wie in anderen Erzählungen läßt Bachmann ihre Leser auch hier mit einem Bild der Trauer über die Notwendigkeit, einen Persönlichkeitsanspruch aufgeben zu müssen. Sie (Charlotte und Mara) waren beide tot und hatten
etwas getötet.

Interpreting the narrative as a 'Widerspiel des Unmöglichen mit dem Möglichen' of a 'absoluten Freiheitsbzu. Liebesanspruch and sozialem Konformitätsdruck', he argues that 'das Wunschverhalten ist korrigiert durch Sachverhalten:

Der Ausbruchsversuch wird nur vorübergehend in der Phantasie durchgespielt. Charlotte fürchtet daß der Wahnsinn einer neuartigen Beziehung 'ohne Ende' und in der Alltagspraxis nicht lebbar sein könnte.47

Rather than establish a connection between love and language within the narrative, Sigrid Weigel's interest, as already discussed in the last chapter is Bachmann's 'Schreibweise' a literary deconstruction parallel to that of Roland Barthes, so that Bachmann's Frankfurt Poetic lectures appear as a continuation of Barthes' essay. 'Am Nullpunkt der Literatur', in which he substantiates his conception of 'Schreibweise', Bachmann expressing in her own 'Sprachduktus' what Barthes formulates as concept. The novel. "Der Fall Franza" is thus interpreted as an expression of such a "'Schreibweise', die erzählt und im Erzählen die Strukturen des Erzählens zerstört".

so that

For the narratives of the volume "Das dreißigste Jahr" too, Weigel argues that it is the three concepts. 'Sprache, Ordnung and Geschlecht' which are important and are used by Bachmann for example in the narrative "Alles."

Um die Struktur zu beschreiben die die ersehnte Erlösung der Welt durch einen neuen Menschen verhindert.

'Austreten aus dem Geschlecht' Weigel writes is the Leitmotif of the narratives and is also apparent in "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" this gender motif however:


For Weigel then, it is the place (Ort) of the women outside of the dominant cultural order which is of importance so that the reason that the narratives in the volume "Das dreißigste Jahr" are written predominantly from a masculine perspective, is to be sought in the fact that
woman according to Lacan;

Aus der symbolischen Ordnung ausgeschlossen ist bzw, wie Irigany and Cixous aus der Perspektive der Frau formulieren daß sie keinen Ort in der herrschenden kulturellen Ordnung hat. The woman for example the wife Hanna in "Alles" takes over the function of initiating the small boy into the masculine order: the narrative however is not about her.48

And in "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" where the narrative is about the woman as subject it is only possible to represent it as a 'Schichtwechsel' in which the woman Charlotte takes over the place (Ort), the view and the strategy of the man and makes Mara into her creature. In Mara the other woman she sees the mirror image of her own self before the 'Schichtwechsel' that is the image of woman as she exists today: "deformed geschwätzig dahinredend mit Worten ohne Muskel" (W2/198). As escape from this situation there is no concrete utopia only the perspective:

Nicht das Reich der Männer und nicht das der Weiber: Nicht dieses nicht jenes.

The action then in "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" takes place at two levels. As outer happening it is the meeting of two women and the question of a possible relationship between them. And as inner, in a 'inwendigen
Schauplatz', it is the meeting of a woman with herself. Weigel explains:

Die Konstellation der Erzählung die Frau, die sich in einer, anderen Frau spiegelt und in der fremden auf das Eigene als Andere stößt, ist heute in der feministischen Literaturkritik als Schreibweise der sich selbst verdoppelten Frau bekannt

Which could have been suggested by Lacan's mirror stage. Thus "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha:"

Könnte dann auch als Erzählung über den ersten Schritt zur Konstituierung eines weiblichen Ich gelesen werden. Im Gesamtwerk Bachmanns nämlich nimmt diese Erzählung den Platz ein von dem aus die Konstituierung einer weiblichen Erzählperspektive ihren Anfang nimmt.49

A similar methodology is apparent in Ritta Jo Horsley's interpretation of "Undine geht" and "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" wherein Bachmann is analysed in relation to Poststrukturalism and the French theorists so that the limitations inherent both in Bachmann's handling and in the theories of the French feminists emerge clearly.

Thus Horsley's attempt is to show how "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" explores the process of imagining a female self undefined by the traditional constraints of the
feminine role thus representing an early version of the much more complex inscription of this theme in Malina - with Charlotte recognising that: the structures of heterosexual relations as they are reflected in the various systems of the culture from language to marriage to mythic patterns have prevented her from coming into her realm as a free and creative subject.\textsuperscript{50}

Like Poststrukturalism and the French feminist theory Horsley reads the text as revealing a view of the particular cultural systems of language, gender and myth as part of an overarching structure which shapes our perception and interpretation of reality. With Charlotte having to break through the many forms of the cultural order that have structured her subjectivity as a woman if she wants to create a new and self determined identity.

But although she attains a more distanced perspective on these structure through her encounter with Mara and by contemplating the subversive erotic relationship the younger woman proposes the entrenched power of the order is ultimately too great to be overcome. Since Charlotte’s subjectivity has been too thoroughly shaped by the memory of her heterosexual past and she admits "daß es zu spät war zu allem". (213) Unable fully to liberate herself from the earlier patterns she cannot imagine an identity that would be other than a distorted reversal of those structures however much she may desire such a 'Schichtwechsel'.

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Thus the underlying polarity of psychological and cultural categories which inform this text and critically limit Charlotte’s consciousness are exposed since Charlotte and Mara express opposing sides of the dualisms of thought and feeling, work and love, civilization and nature, masculine and feminine, with Charlotte’s inability to integrate the feminine qualities of Mara into her own identity or her vision of a new creation appearing to be a key to dilemma posed by this story, through this is not explicit.

Horsley interprets Charlotte’s failure to overcome the dominant culture’s division of reality into polar qualities and its denigration of the feminine side of the dichotomy as anticipating the struggle of the feminine Ich to assert itself in the face of the powerful and hostile male order in "Malina" besides foreshadowing that novel’s despair at overcoming ‘das Schizoid in der Welt’ which allows only the rational masculine side of the personality to survive.

Like Weigel Horsley reads "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" as Bachmann’s first experiment at constituting a Female Ich, a figure, however not terribly different from the male intellectual protagonists of her other early fiction, an individual who has analysed and rejected as inferior the conventional feminine role as defined by society and who remains aligned with the dominant masculine
values of rationality, logical linear language, power and work, the figure of Mara being a projection of a radically different feminine other a mysterious element outside and subversive of her social identify which virtually by definition must remain alienated and objectified rather than integrated into her own subjectivity.51

The underlying dualisms built upon the original opposition of feminine and masculine are thematised more explicitly however in "Undine geht" although it focuses less exclusively on the exploration of the potential parameters of a new female subjectivity than that story with "Undine geht" presenting a subtle and complex challenge to the categories and values associated with the feminine masculine dichotomy in western culture under its protest against the treatment of women in a male dominated society. Thus the mermaid Undine is an embodiment of the feminine as linked with nature, the human, the erotic and the unarticulated unconscious in contrast to the male domains of civilisation, power and rationality.

In "Undine geht" Bachmann is seen to have anticipated French feminism and Poststructuralism in her representation and partial deconstruction of these fundamental cultural forms using for example the traditional Undine myth to disrupt underlying assumptions and reverse values as well as to call into question the dominant values of the masculine side of the dichotomy and announce the end.
of a very old pattern of feminine submission to this male order.

Drawing on the similarity like other feminist critics between French neofeminist theory, Poststructuralism and the early Bachmann in their sharing of the belief that language is the most fundamental expression of a deeper all pervasive order of human symbol systems, Horsley attempts to read "Undine geht" as writing that anticipates the three tasks of 'écriture feminine' that is:

To disclose and analyse the forms and dynamics of women's repression in the male imaginary, to disrupt through their writing the phallogocentrism of male discourse and to create a new feminine writing based on women's primary experience and analogous to their bodies and sexuality. The analysis centers around the figure Undine as the feminine principle (besides her other identities); the plural identities of Hans the text itself and the representation of Undine's Eros, as the source and content of her speech as not being subject to laws of prudence, caution morality or use value outside of itself 'weil ich zu keinem Gebrauch bestimmt bin' which is in keeping with the French feminists project to write the body, to give voice to female sexuality.

Undine as feminine principle appears as a representation of the repressed realm of freedom and desire
her siren call "den Muschelton die Windfanfar" (255) by which she calls men away from their place in the order of civilisation, with Bachmann however rendering a more complex perspective of this traditional myth of the feminine. Her manifestation of the feminine principle reflecting awareness of her status as a construct of male culture. By operating self-consciously with traditional associations and constructs the text reveals their culturally determined rather than naturally given quality. Moreover by giving voice to the usually silent feminine principle the repressed other of male culture "Undine geht" reveals a critically different view of the dominant culture from her position outside of it.

Thus Bachmann interprets and revises features of the Undine myth according to her subversive perspective; to finally announce the end of this myth of the feminine through her refusal to continue its eternally repeated plot: "Ich werde nie wieder kommen nie wieder 'Ja' sagen und 'Du' und 'Ja'" (253-254).

Bachmann's Undine with her perspective from outside this world as the feminine other become subject has been able to reverse the established valorization of men and their culture and the corrupt order of those who participate in it, excoriating men in their relations with women and in the institution of the family as being exploitative, materialistic, cowardly, hypocritical and
lacking in passion (255-256).

"The male order assigns women a marginal place as use objects subject to patronization and betrayal, and their individual identities are subsumed by the mutually entrapping roles conferred by their men "die ihr die Frauen zu eurren Geliebten und Frauen macht, Eintagsfrauen, Wochenend-frauen, Lebenslangfrauen" (255).

Men's language is also a deceptive one, both to women and with other men. By contrast Undine renders the feminine principle positive, as the power that would undermine the prevailing corrupt order by questioning the entire world of social roles and institutions, this reversal of the usual hierarchy being one part of the task set by the French feminists.

Bachmann also deconstructs the traditional materials by revising its features to suit her own critical purposes. In contrast to the original Undine figures she neither sees nor gains a soul though her union with the male. This Undine refuses to subject herself to the authority or terms of male society, rejecting marriage or any other conventional role available to women in heterosexual relationships as mutually dishonest. Instead she insists upon following her own law of private loneliness not to be shared or diminished by taking on the cares of her lovers in their inauthentic social identities (259). Undine thus succeeds in subverting stereotypical aspects of the
myth of the feminine as dependent and subordinate to male superiority and authority.

Bachmann has also changed the traditional death of the fickle male lover at a fatal kiss from Undine to the symbolic survival of a corrupt and sterile culture. Instead, by objectifying and dismantling its workings and by announcing Undines departure, Bachmann signals the end of a culturally constructed definition of the feminine. Further, since Undine's story ends up being circular rather than linear: "Ich machte mit der Hand ein Zeichen für Ende. Für das Ende, das kein Ende findet. Es war nie zu Ende" (258) it subverts the logic of conventional thought and expectations thus fulfilling the second task of ecriture feminine. Undine's figure is also a complex one with Bachmann herself identifying it as an abstract principle in an interview.

"Die Undine ist keine Frau auch kein Lebewesen sondern um es mit Büchner zu sagen die Kunst ach die Kunst".

Undine is more than just abstract principle, symbolic construct of poetry, the unconscious, emotion, the feminine, she is also the individual female subject lamenting the way she and other women have been betrayed and marginalized by men expressing ambivalence towards the power, values and institutions of the male order, defining
an existence of freedom and autonomy in contrast to conventional male or female roles. The boundaries between the different significances of the subject Undine are never very clear. Undine also seems to be shifting perspectives between the oppositions Undine/Hans, feminine other/masculine subject, ich/Du so that she seems to see herself simultaneously as the other and One with the closing part of the text reiterating this ambiguity strikingly, since it is no longer clear who is speaking and who listening.

Thus, the boundary between the two selves is blurred in the lyrical closing too, since subject and object of the call are included in the same sentence:

Beinahe verstummt, beinahe noch den Ruf hörend.
Komm. Nur einmal Komm. (263)

This longing for union which concludes the text reflects both the identification of the two sides as parts of a whole and the recognition that unity or integration is impossible, representing Bachmann's sense of the tragically divided self.52

Clearly the problem with "Undine geht" (and later with Malina) in its representation of the gender dichotomies is that "despite its multiple deconstructions of the traditional material, "Undine geht" never explicitly challenges the dualism that pervades it. Instead, by
hypothysing the traditional dichotomies into female and male figures it reaffirms a dualistic model. By assuming the oppositions of culture and nature, rationality and feeling logical discourse and poetic utterance, social order and ecstasy of freedom and masculine and feminine as given" and by their further embodiment they gain new strength, this being the dilemma apparent in the project of French feminists as well amongst others. By their valorization of a concept of women based on assumed common biological and psychological qualities they also risk perpetuating traditional categories that prescribe and limit women's actual possibilities.

The need instead for feminists is to question the underlying dichotomous structure itself so that women's thinking like Undine's does not remain caught in the logic of these categories and they are not faced with unacceptable choices such as that between self denying male identification and a marginalized mystified feminine Other.53

"Malina" the completed novel of the 'Ways of Dying' cycle has been read using a similar deconstructive methodology by the critic Sara Lennox, as the absence of a female voice and as illustrating the feminist theory which has evolved since its publication in 1971 'to explain why, within western discourse, women are permitted no voice and subjectivity of their own.'54
Thus, not a single of the authors mentioned in 'Malina' is a woman, there being "no female narrative voice" for Bachmann: she explains in an interview in 1972:

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

Thus at the end of the novel, the female "I" disappears into a crack in the wall and only 'Malina' is left, the last line of the novel being: "It was murder." these then being the "Ways of Dying" experienced by the female "I" and the cause of her destruction as told in Malina's male voice.

Basing her deconstructive methodology on the Lacanian and Derridean theories of phallocentrism and logocentrism Lennox reads Bachmann's work as showing "that the destruction of women," though it is a "destruction they accept themselves, is a necessary consequence of the order in which they live". However as they are destroyed they
speak cry out rebel: their desire will not be completely contained, "this linking with Lacanian and Derridean theory having its basis also in Bachmann's essays and critical writing and her understanding about language, about speech and about the role of Eros. Her essays for example. "identify ways of speaking already outside the categories of western reason". The speech of the body for example as discussed by Bachmann in her essay on Georg Groddeck who originated the term "It" which represented such speech.

Eros too, is important for Bachmann as source both of resistance to this social order and of the possible articulation of some alternative to it. 'with the subversive power of Eros being associated with the mysticism to which she refers in the Wittgenstein essay, a mode of articulation beyond the borders of language. This understanding about Eros resembles the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Block as well: love is a concrete Utopia which points towards some future social order less hostile to human happiness.

For Lennox then, the dilemma that Bachmann confronts and represents in 'Malina' involves women's place in the symbolic order or rather awareness of oneself as a contradiction in terms which involves the possibilities for a woman to write about women, when exactly what she wishes to assert makes her own position as wielding the pen impossible. Like the other American critics Sandra Gilbert
and Susan Gubar Lennox argues that linked with this writing which is necessary to examine the possibility of the female articulation of subjectivity, there is also a need for a different reading, a re-vision by feminist criticism as envisaged by Adrienne Rich as well.

This different reading involves for example reading 'the different story than the one the figure 'I" intends: subterranean themes like that of the 'Pierrot Lunair motif' and 'the story of the Princess of Kagran which anticipates her love affair with Ivan' which 'run below the apparent narrative.' Of importance to such a reading are also the relationship of the 'I' with Ivan as structuring the novel and an analysis of the various dreams, as well as her desire to write even when she is awake.

The names of the two figures themselves are not clear: Malina appears to be the first name of a woman but is identified in the initial cast of characters as the last name of a man. The 'I' has no name at all and Bachmann clarifies in an interview that:

Malina ist the double of the Ich and that he represents male subjectivity, a position which a woman must occupy, a guise which she must assume, according to the rules of this social order, if she is to possess any subjectivity at all.

Malina being 'the persona', women must assume when
they enter the project world; they must become the genderless (that is to say male) liberal bourgeois subject, suppressing their female qualities with Malina also being the voice in which Bachmann mostly narrates the only voice available to professional and academic women.

Malina has other functions too, as a kind of reality principle: he pays the bills, remembers appointments etc., and is also the calm and soothing voice of male reason who comforts her when she awakens in terror from her night mares.

It is Ivan however, the lover, in relationship to whom the 'I' constitutes itself, who is more important, with the first longer portion of the novel "Happy with Ivan", describing their love affair. The middle section "The third man" deals mainly with the 'I's dreams of persecution in which her father plays the major role and in the last section "Of last things", the relationship with Ivan begins to come to an end, the disappearance of the I is prepared.

Ivan can also be understood as a kind of double for the 'I' who resides in the female psyche and represents the tyranny of romantic love, of compulsory heterosexuality whose laws women accept and interiorise.

Like Hans in 'Undine geht' Ivan a 'john' appears to be a more or less interchangeable male lover, with
Bachmann making it clear in the final section of the novel that "for women loving a john is a far from idyllic or utopian experience, nor does it allow women the exploration and elaboration of their own sexuality and eroticism."

Here Bachmann has also deliberated on love as it exists:

Die ganze Einstellung des Mannes einer Frau gegenüber ist krankhaft obendrein ganz einzigartig krankhaft, so daß man die Männer von ihren Krankheiten gar nie mehr wird befrien können. Von den Frauen könnte man höchstens sagen daß sie mehr oder weniger gezeichnet sind durch die Ansteckungen die sie sich zuziehen durch ein Mitleiden an dem Leiden. (269).

According to Lennox's reading, the 'absences' in the love affair are equally important. Love is rarely mentioned, sex never discussed, with the 'I' determinately refusing 'to concede her own unhappiness.' The 'I' will also not break with Ivan since he is the presence that makes it possible to constitute reality, a 'fix' which must be renewed for it to have its effect on here

Ich denke von Ivan. Ich denke an die Liebe. An die Injektionen von Wirklichkeit. An ihr vorhalten, so wenige Stunden nur. An die nächste, die stärkere Injection (III 45)
This 'I' is thoroughly female in this relationship, but it is a feminity which is socially defined, offering her no more access to an authentic female voice than the assumption of Malina’s male subjectivity and it has to be Ivan who assures her entry into language.

Denn er ist gekommen um die Konsonanten wieder fest und faßlich zu machen, um die Vokale wieder zu öffnen damit sie voll tönen, um mir die Worte wieder über die Lippen kommen zu lassen, um die ersten zerstörten Zusammenhänge wiederherzustellen und die Probleme zu erlösen, und so werde ich kein Jota von ihm abweichen.....

(32 - II)

This language, in which Ivan permits her speech is however one in which women are allowed existence only in relationship to men and have no independent voice of their own at all, with Ivan placing 'a variety of limits on the Ich's right and ability to speak'.

Conversations between them are thus mostly 'boring' and 'banal telephone calls' with the I, desperate to answer the telephone, maintaining however, in an attempt to protect herself from him that she has no time to talk.

Though the 'incomplete sentences: example sentences, fatigue sentences, curse sentences expose the self deception in the I's assertion that she is happy with Ivan, he insists that she proclaim her happiness with him in
the language that she may speak in, with the 'I' vowing obediently to rejoice in, and write about the bliss which this affair has brought here, whereas he forbids her 'to continue writing the drafts of the 'Ways of Dying' he has found in her apartment. However, despite Ivan's pressure, the 'I' is not happy 'since she is not totally subsumed in the ideology of romantic love through which her identity had been constituted and does not write that book 'EXSULATE JUBILATE' Instead her story speaks through her unhappiness, a sickness which moves towards madness.

The 'I' cannot tell her other story, since no language exists in which she can tell it. The lack of a coherent narrative is thus deliberate on Bachmann's part, Lennox argues, the central thematic concern structuring the traditional novel the relationship of the individual to the social world is missing here this being a reflection of the lack of coherence available to the 'I'. The complexity of the novel, its interconnectedness, so that there's almost no sentence which does not refer to another one, Lennox reads as logic of association and both/and, rather than of causality and 'either/or' which might be a subjectivity which does not do violence to itself by asserting its self identity but concedes its disunity and non-synchrony, since a feminist voice however it finally constitutes itself will need to admit that which the binary oppositions of logocentricity haven't wished to permit within present patriarchal discourse.
The middle dream section also expresses what the I can not say, the various themes of the dreams helping in understanding the constraints of consciousness. The father figure, the 'I''s 'persecutor' and tormentor is the figure responsible for the 'I''s destruction with Bachmann explaining:

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

Thus the first dream shows the father clearly as the 'perpetrator' of the 'Ways of Dying', murder being accomplished in various ways. In the second dream she is gassed in a gas chamber, later she is transported to Siberia with other Jews. She is frozen in ice and plunged into fire, subjected to electro shock, buried under an avalanche, electrocuted and eaten by a crocodile.

The dreams also refer often to incest with her father, a connection she regards with abhorrence, though Melanie another of her doubles is pleased enough at the advantages of the relationship.
In the opera her father directs and she recognises that in the duet she is to sing with a young man, it is 'only his voice (which) could be heard anyway, because my father wrote the voice for him alone and naturally nothing for me, because I don't have any training and am only supposed to be displayed.'

She is denied speech in other ways as well: he will not permit delivery of letters to her friends and tries to gain control of the sentences dried on her tongue as she dies of thirst.

There is however constant resistance to her father on the part of the 'I' and she refuses to be murdered:


The 'third man' too, like the other two prevents her self-articulation, Lennox comments, but the 'I' at least asserts her right of refusing their definition of her:

Aber in einer anderen Sprache sage ich: Ne! Ne! Und in vielen Sprachen: No: No: Non! Non! Njet! Njet! No! N'em! Ne'm! Nein!

Denn auch in unserer Sprache kann ich nur nein sagen, sonst find ich kein Wort mehr in einer Sprache. (176)
The many letters written by the 'I' are also expression of her desire to write, to articulate herself which cannot be fulfilled.

Other subterranean themes which tell a different story than the one the 'I' intends are to be seen in the 'Pierrots Lunaire' motif for example which recurs throughout the novel and which may help understand the one extended narrative running in italics through "Malina", the story of the Princes of Kagran which anticipates her love affair with Ivan.

Attached to the fairy tale are further fragments of a vision of a perfect society in the later portions of the first chapter:

"A day will come on which women have golden red eyes, golden red hair, and the poetry of their sex will be created again....." the return of this golden age, Bernd Witte argues, emanates quite obviously from women, Several pages later, however, the word 'women' is replaced by 'people', the arrival of paradise being linked to the condition that 'their hands will be gifted for love.'

Thus, composed to, and subversive of Malina's patriarchal subsumption of women, there appears to be a
feminist utopia of sensual pleasure and erotic joy. When asked for her own vision of utopia it is this narrative that Bachmann refers to:

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

For most critics however, both male and female the problems connected with an interpretation of the novel seem to arise mostly from the attempt to understand it in terms of exactly those categories that Bachmann is trying to subvert. For the male critics it poses an even greater problem: the gender bias in the reception of "Malina" being even more evident here than for her prose. Helmut Heißenbüttel for example reads the novel as the story of a Neurosis:

Was Ingeborg Bachmann erzählt, ist eine Krankenheitsgeschichte .... Denn diese ist nur noch einmal und ich hoffe zum letzten Mal, die Geschichte einer schönen Seele.
Heißenbüttel also speaks of a rejection of the social reality of the objective, socially-conditioned existence and of the absolute claim to domination by a emotionalised subjectivity which makes integration in the social context impossible.

Gabriel Wohmann criticises the novel just as negatively under the title "Nachtwald voller Fragen" which appeared in 'Der Spiegel' in 1971.

Elke Atzler has summed up the "Malina" reception as follows:

Sowohl in der journalistischen Kritik als auch in der Literaturessayistik ist die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Roman mit wenigen Ausnahmen gekennzeichnet:

a) durch mangelnde Sachlichkeit,
b) durch vulgär biographische bzw. vulgär - soziologische Interpretationen,
c) durch einander widersprechende Fabeldeutungen.
d) durch mangelnde Kohärenz zwischen stilistischer Analyse und inhaltlicher Fabelstimung.
e) durch Unterschätzung der ästhetischen Qualität und Eigenart 'Malina's.
f) durch Nichtbeachtung der gesellschafts-kritischen Tendenzen, der Zeitrepräsentanz.
g) durch die Nichtzurkenntnisnahme des 'weiblichen
Diskurses,' der für den Roman konstitutiv ist. 56

Gabriel Bail too, in her reception of 'Malina' argues that the interpretations of the male critics 'scheitern alle daran daß sie sich der Dichotomie politisch/privat bedienen und beides als sich gegenseitig ausschließlich auffassen. Ist also der Text als 'privat' (innerlich, subjektiv etc.) eingestuft kann es folglich gar nicht politisch sein'. Thus Joachim Kaiser 'vermerkte als 'ungeheurlich ..... die Distanz dieses todesmutigen Märchens zu allem politischen, welt verändernden soziologischen ' insgesamt'. Whereas Blöcker rejected the 'concrete irrationality', the precise soul-Exhibition of the work and Reinhard Baumgart spoke of 'Introspection jenseits vom Kriesverkehr gesellschaftlichen Nutz-und Zweckdenkens ....' with Rudolf Hartung confirming the 'Rückzug aus der Welt auf die Innerlichkeit der erzählten oder des erzählenden Subjekts.

The second wave of criticism starting in the middle of the Seventies had Ingrid Riedel and Ellen Summerfield interpreting the novel as 'Frauenroman' with Summerfield criticising the 'Innerlichkeitse receptorion' as follows:

Die innere Welt setzt doch eine äußere Welt und eine Grenze zwischen beiden voraus was sowohl in den heutigen Naturwissenschaften, wie auch in der modernen Philosophie und Psychologie in Frage gestellt worden
ist ..... die landläufigen Einteilungen der Welt in Subjekt
und Objekt, Innenwelt und Außenwelt, Körper und Seele
(wollen nicht passen).57

Later feminist criticism, that by Bail and Gürtler
reads the novel as a reflection of 'female loss of
identity', with Gürtler interpreting "Malina" as 'als, in
sich gefestigter Mensch' whereas the 'I' leads an uncertain
existence is not sure of her identity, with love
representing the power which would help overcome the
suffering of humans, because of society.

However, since love is always betrayed in practice
by Ivan (or other men), it leads to the self destruction of
the woman whose whole existence centres around this love.
Love thus leads the woman essentially to a loss of identity,
since the woman cannot realize herself as subject in a way
suitable to herself.

Thus,

In der fiktiven Realität ist es für das Ich nicht
möglich in der Liebe die Identität zu finden. Ivan liebt
sie nicht,

with the father figure also attempting to posses
the 'I' and to murder her, frustrating all her attempts to
find her language and her identity and to free herself.
Domination of the man over the woman proves to be identical
in Patriarchy with that of the father over the daughter, as
expressed in the image of 'the cemetery of the murdered daughter's. It is perpetual war, in which the one wins, the other is destroyed. This fight is also subject to the gender relations and for Bachmann there is no doubt that the women always lose. Though the 'I' believes in the beginning .... ich werde siegen in diesem Zeichen, the sign being love, Ivan, the female 'I' is defeated, it is not needed in this society.

Though Gürtler reads in 'Malina' and the 'I' the confrontation between the two poles 'reason, productivity' (masculine) and 'feeling, self destruction', (feminine) she argues that Bachmann is not concerned with the destruction of the masculine/rational principle, but with equalization, with the Utopia of androgynous Ideals in the fictive reality. However, the attempt to unite these two opposing poles in one person fails, and the last sentence of the novel reads:

'Es war Mord'

Thus it is not possible for the female 'I' to live in patriarchy, it is murdered. Gürtler, like the other feminist critics, is thus concerned with "das Wiederherstellung eines ursprünglichen eigentlichen Frauseins und um die Gewinnung einer Übereinstimmung mit sich selbst.\textsuperscript{58}

Margret Eifler also draws attention to the 'under
valuation of the novel's theme in the reception, so that one classifies 'Malina' as the 'Love story' of an unhappy woman, as confession of a painful passion, which implies that one is confronted here with the typically female outpouring of a failed love relationship of the author'.

This she argues, allows:

Es der Kritik nun die Reduktion vorzunehmen: der Roman wird abgetan als 'altmodisch' unzeitgemäß, 'autobiographisch, man spricht von einer 'klischenhaften Grundkonstellation. von einem 'wortreich umhäkelten Wortraum' von einer 'neuen Bachmann schwimmend zwischen Banalität und literarischen Ambition'.

For Eifler, however, the relevance of the novel lies in the fact that:

Sie nicht mehr so sehr ein Fiktionskorrelat sucht, als vielmehr ein in der Sprache selbst liegendes Korrelat.

Running through Bachmann’s work Eifler argues is the 'existential' view of the Existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger:

Daß der Mensch seinem Dasein nach ein in die Welt 'Geworfenes' ist, ein angstgefülltes Alleinsein zu bestehen hat, eine zeitliche endliche Kreatur ist,
die, durch 'das Vorlauf en zum Tode' aufgerufen
wird zu ihrem eigensten Sein können.'

Thus, the 'Malina' reception:

Die Übrige Kritik das epochale Aufreißen eines
neuen Stoffes und damit das existentiele
Grunderlebnis dieser Autorin nicht erkannte oder
erkennen wollte.

The fundamental task the novel seeks to fulfill being:

'die endgültige Aufkündigung einer möglichen
Beziehung zwischen Mann und Frau zu konstatieren.
Der Zustand der Liebesbeziehung wird bloßgelegt:'

For Bachmann:

'ist die Zeit der Bewußtwerdung angebrochen, den
bis heute beibehaltenen Sozialisierungzprozeß der Frau
abzuschütteln; ihre Erniedrigung durch die rollengeprägte
und gesellschaftsakzeptable Gebrauchsfunktion als
Gebärmut ter und verfügbares Sexualobjekt, als prokreatives
Instrument oder rekreative Denkpause der Männlichkeit, muß
ein Ende finden. 'Malina' ist nicht länger Dokument
weiblichen Liebesmasochismuses.' The book is a
proclamation: 'Versklavende Liebe muß negiert werden.'

The basic theme therefore is no longer the:

'quälende Verlassenwerden der Frau, sondern um ihr
Verlassen des Mannes, nicht mehr um die Entschugung,
sondern um die Absage der Frau an den Mann'.

In this reaction then, Bachmann appears to have converted a "bedauerlichen, aber wesentlichen Grundzug feministischer Selbstbehauptung zu poetischen Substanz", the epistemological process with in the text being progressively constructed: In the first and second chapters the author shows the 'Versklavung und die Versklavtheit der Frau', her historical function as 'mother', as 'rape-victim,' as 'prostitute'. The third chapter gives a sort of temporary solution to this misery.

Thus, in the first chapter the perception of love varies for Ivan and the 'I':

Ist für Ivan Liebe eine sexuelle Entspannungspause, ist es für die Ich Gestalt eine Passionogeschichte des 'ständigen, sanften, schmerzlichen Gekreuzigseins'. (M.179)

The second chapter describes the reasons for this misrelationship between man and woman:

Sie legt Tiefenschichten mythologischer, psychologischer Prängungen frei. Er ergibt sich das Bild einer patriarchalischen Allmacht, eines gottgleichen Dominanzwesens der Macht und Rache, dem Bachmann diesmal aber nicht einen geopferten Sohn, sondern eine sich widersetzende Tochter
gegentüber stellt. Die Weiblichkeit untergeht in diesem Kapitel die Bewußtwerdung ihrer versklavten Sozialisation und beginnt vorzuschreiten zu einer kämpferischen Selbstbehauptung.

The third and last chapter concerns itself mostly with the relationship of 'I' figure with 'Malina' Here too:

... dreht es sich nicht um eine Harmoniemöglichkeit zwischen männlichem und weiblichem Wesen, sondern lediglich um eine Alternativmöglichkeit. Die Unvereinbarkeit der Geschlechter wird hier nämlich als unvermeidbar erklärt als endgültige Erfahrung gesehen. Es gibt keine Auswege, keine Ausflüchte mehr, nur noch die sich entziehende Absage.

Literarisch eingeführt hat die Autorin diese Idee in das zentrale Motiv des Gespaltenseins. Malina und das Ich werden präsentiert als zwei verschiedene Hälften einer Person, wobei der männlichen Teil letztlich wieder ausgewinnt. 59

Bärbel Thau similarly equates gender relations with gender dichotomies, so that 'female emotionality, spontaneity and disorderliness' are in opposition to 'male intellect and logic'. Also represented in the 'Ways of Dying' cycle is the destruction of 'femaleness,' this destruction however being a consequence of and within the context of the socio-economic situation of the Restauration

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period, the 'Ways of Dying' cycle reflecting various aspects of the critique which had been directed increasingly at the expanding industrialised society and its deformation of human beings.

Analysing the texts and figures along these lines, Thau argues that in 'Malina' for example Bachmann describes:

die Problematik dieser Gesellschaft im Spiegel des Bewußtseins des weiblichen Ich, der durch seine anteilnehmende und sensible Wesensart Unrecht und Verletzungen besonders stark empfindet.

Whereas 'Malina' as the masculine figure, since he represents rationality, objectivity and 'lack of feeling' which are the basis for survival in any society, is alone capable of survival, life for the 'I' is almost impossible; this being a reflection of the tension between emotionality and rationality experienced by Bachmann herself. This danger of suppressing certain parts of the 'I' in favour of rationality being a danger faced by women who want to achieve something in a male dominated society.60 Clearly, the feminist reception of Bachmann's later prose, as well as Bachmann's own representation of gender is one that concerns itself to a large extent with gender antagonisms, the feminist critics for example dealing in detail with the nature of the gender-bias in the male reception.
Bachmann's own representation of the gender problematic too, as seen in the novel "Malina", and the two narratives "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" and "Undine geht", mostly centers around gender antagonisms and gender roles, with the gender dichotomies being represented as the two poles 'Emotionality, nature, Art, feminine' etc, as opposed to 'Rationality culture, science, masculine', with love a sensous erotic love being the subversive force which can breach the "Schizoid der Welt" and language helping to bring about change.