

formulierte.

⁶ Die teleologische, auf ein bestimmtes Ziel gerichtete Geschichtsinterpretation, die über Jahrhunderte hinweg von klerikaler und hegemonialer Macht betrieben wurde, stellt eben genau das Programm dar, von dem sich das Bürgertum und der von ihm getragene Historismus abgewandt hatten, um ein eigenes, historisch fundiertes Bewusstsein zu entwickeln.

⁷ Eine ausführlichere Besprechung des Historismus findet sich bei Rüsen. Als anschauliche Beispiele dienen die 1819 gegründete Einrichtung zur deutschen Quellensammlung, die *Momumenta Germaniae Historia*, sowie die französische, 1821 ins Leben gerufene *École Nationale des Chartes*, die sich dem Erfassen, Katalogisieren und Kommentieren des sämtlichen, in ihrer nationalen Geschichte noch präsenten Quellenmaterials widmen.

⁸ Für eine ausführliche Aufzählung sämtlicher verarbeiteter Quellen, siehe Mayer.

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Digging Deep: The Past Revisited in Works of Elfriede Jelinek and Heiner Müller

Dagmar Jaeger

Wie sind wir so geworden, wie wir heute sind?
(Wolf 241).

In a time that seems obsessed with remembering the past by building museums, memorials and monuments,¹ one might ask if this obsession works against a time of general amnesia or if this obsession is the very product of amnesia. In today's culture, the construction of memory cultivates the past for the present. Questions of national and personal identity have arisen that are fundamentally bound to a collective and personal memory. Thus, the way in which we organize the past around us, the content and form of what we remember has to do with who we are and want to be, both as individuals and as a nation. That is to say, a construction of past events for the present that generates discourses of remembrance defining and constituting national identity is nothing less than a political issue.

Questions such as "Who creates and constructs memory?" and "For what purpose?" become important questions to ask in a time concerned with reorganizing its past around itself. These questions, I propose, are essential questions for the two works I would like to discuss here, *Wolken.Heim* by Elfriede Jelinek and *Germania Tod in Berlin* by Heiner Müller. Both texts were written for the theater and both revisit the German past. Both texts reconstruct the past through a collective memory portrayed in collective subjects. I ask how Müller and Jelinek textualize the past; in other words, which memory they activate and for what reason. I ultimately argue that Jelinek's and Müller's reactivation of memory brings to life a suppressed and repressed collective memory. Digging deep into two nations' pasts (East Germany and Austria), which happens in a very literal sense in the two plays, questions a national identity

that for decades freed itself from the fascist past by constructing a memory that left out the links between the past and the present.

David Lowenthal states in his book *The Past is a Foreign Country* that history and memory may be less distinct as types of knowledge than in their attitudes towards this knowledge of the past (213). To reevaluate the notion of history and including memory therewith does not mean that we will have knowledge of the past that is less value-free or innocent. However, doing so problematizes the entire notion of traditional historical knowledge. The elevation of memory is not an expansion of the subjective but rather a conception of the public and the historical; the private and the biographical as indivisibly political.

This elevation of private experiences into the public consciousness is what one might term postmodern historiography (Hutcheon 94). I argue that the postmodern historiography that links the personal and collective memory to public history and national identity is taken up in the works of both Jelinek and Müller. Both writers speak against a collective memory and national identity that does not want to expose its ties to the fascist past, thus concealing a present fascist identity.

The plays under discussion were written during different times and in different countries. *Germania Tod in Berlin* was drafted in 1956 and finished in 1971 in the former GDR. *Wolken.Heim* appeared in 1988 in Austria. *Germania* is a series of shorter scenes portraying the so-called *Deutsche Misere*, Germany's miserable past. These scenes are very often linked to the notion of a failed socialist revolution in Germany in 1918 that brought about the 1949 implementation of socialism in the GDR without a mass base (Fehervary 84). Müller regards the failure of the left, that culminated in the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, as the reason for the continuation of links between the Nazi-Regime and the GDR. The play opens with a dialogue between a man and woman. This dialogue articulates the political-economic contradiction that underlies not only the scene but the entire play. The author analyzes the German past by deconstructing the Germania myth and all forms of historical greatness linked to Germany. In this play, Müller "portrays the movement of German history as a vicious cycle of oppression and violence that, for the lack of a viable revolutionary basis, perpetually revitalizes itself" (Fehervary 87). Thus, Müller's replay of German history does not focus on celebrated kings, Kaisers, and chancellors. What Müller shows is a history of destruction and death (e.g. *Tod in Berlin*).

Wolken.Heim is a text that consists primarily of quotes (sometimes left in the original, other times completely altered) that includes a monologue spoken by a collective subject, "wir." In contrast to Müller's play, there is no dramatic dialogue between dramatic characters nor any narrative intervention. Jelinek takes passages from Hölderlin's odes and hymns; she includes Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, construing an authenticity of the German language in contrast to the language of foreigners; she quotes Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* that celebrates racism, she equates Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede* with Nazi ideology, and she quotes RAF letters. By means of these quotes, the writer traces the Austrian/German heritage of fascism back to the nineteenth century. Jelinek stated in an interview: "It [. . .] lies at the heart of a text like *Wolken.Heim*, in which one can see that twentieth-century German history developed from this seemingly innocent history of the nineteenth century" (Bethman 63). Despite contextual and stylistic differences, both texts are very similar in revealing the identity of a collective subject that can not, after being dissected by the authors, hide its connection to fascism.

In both the GDR and Austria, coming to terms with a fascist past meant forgetting it and suppressing any memory of it. As historian Charles Maier writes in *The Unmasterable Past*, Austria has always avoided a painful debate about its Nazi past, which made it possible for a former Nazi like Kurt Waldheim to become state president in 1987 (163).² The Austrians warmly welcomed the Allies decision to regard their country as the first victim of Hitler's Germany, and their enthusiasm for Austria's *Anschluss* was very quickly swept under the carpet. After the war, Austria easily and gladly overlooked its past and constructed a collective memory and national identity that suppressed the remembrance of fascism in Austria. The GDR similarly promoted the myth of a new and purified beginning with no connection or link to the past after the war. The struggle against fascism was actually essential to East Germany's claim to legitimacy. By freeing itself from the memory of Nazi Germany, it defined itself as the new Germany versus the old Nazi Germany that had become West Germany. The "antifascist protective barrier," also known as the Berlin Wall, was legitimized in this very same fashion. The notion of defending oneself against the Fascists, who somehow all ended up in the western part of Germany (Michaels 4), was only possible by severing the link to the past. Moreover, antifascism was transformed into an instrument of Cold War. The anti-Communism of the Adenauer years confirmed the Federal

Republic's essential fascist character (Ward 18).

This "anti-fascist" political culture of both the GDR and Austria is the context in which Jelinek and Müller write. For both playwrights, this fascist memory lies underground, lies suppressed, is *zugeschüttet*. Both writers activate a disinterred memory. With the metaphor of the underground, the dramatists show that the past with its guilt and its victims is hidden away and the connection to it is cut. At the same time, they reveal that this memory lies *untot* in the ground.

The *Schädelverkäufer* in *Germania* literally sells the past that he himself has dug out; namely, he sells skulls:

Gestatten Sie, dass ich Ihnen ein kleines Souvenir anbiete [. . .] Ich habe ihn selbst ausgegraben. Und dreimal abgekocht. Ein sauberes Exemplar. 18. Jahrhundert nach dem Grabstein. Und es ist ein guter Schädel, fühlen Sie die Schläfe. Die Erde bringt es an den Tag. (56)

The skull seller had been a historian, but a mistake in the dating of the Thousand Year Reich (reference to the Third Reich) forced him to leave his profession. He calls himself a "Hinterbliebener" (56), someone who is left behind. In actuality, as a *Totengräber*, he has not left the field of history but digs literally into the fields of the past, the graveyards: "Ich bin ein Hinterbliebener, ich bette um" (57). In doing so, it is he who keeps the memory of the past alive: "Wer weiss, was die Toten mit ihren Knochen anstellen. Ich habe da meine Vermutungen" (57). As someone who digs out the dead, he becomes the bridge between the present and the past, and at the same time becomes immune against forgetting the past: "Seitdem mich die Geschichte an die Friedhöfe verwiesen hat, [. . .] bin ich immun gegen das Leichengift der zeitlichen Verheissung" (57).

Whereas the *Schädelverkäufer* digs into the past and thus becomes the link between the memory of the past to the present, the subject in *Wolken.Heim* is already underground. It speaks as "Untote" (138), since it is already buried: "Der Boden spricht vom Gestein, in dessen Nischen wir liegen" (146); "Zuhause sein, begraben im Boden wie Gold, Untote [. . .]" (138). This ground, in which the subject lies, is the ground of the past, soaked in blood: "Mit Wolken trinkt das Gewitter dich, du dunkler Boden, Ruhestätte, aber mit Blut der Menschen" (146). In contrast to the *Schädelverkäufer* in *Germania*, who keeps the memory alive by his

activity of digging, the subject in *Wolken.Heim* wants to forget the past that is buried right next to it and claims to be innocent: "Unsere Geschichte ist die der Toten" (144); "Aber wir nicht, wir nicht! Und immer wieder, wie Kinder, schuldlos sind unsere Hände" (141). However, the memory of the past can not be erased. It is the ground itself that spits the subject out and with it the memory of the past:

Wie leergetrunkene Flaschen träufeln auf unsren Boden, der uns aufnimmt und, Untote, wieder ausspuckt. [. . .] Und doch, zur Ruhe kommen wir nicht im Boden [. . .]. Das Ende der Geschichte ist uns misslungen. Sie kommt immer wieder auf uns zu, rasend auf ihren Schienen. Warum stirbt sie nicht? Was haben wir getan? [. . .] Warum wächst ihr die Hand aus dem Grab? Und zeigt auf uns? Wir wollen vergessen werden. (141, 144)

The metaphor of the underground shows that the memory of a fascist past is beneath the surface. In order to create an identity freed from fascism, the subject has to free itself from the memory of it. Both Jelinek and Müller expose the attempt of forgetting the past. They also illustrate that the memory of the fascist past is still there and, though under the ground, can not be silenced. With the *Schädelverkäufer*, Müller shows the link between past memory and present. Jelinek's subject also can not silence the memory of the past: the past does not die, and the trains of Auschwitz roll fast towards the subject who claims to be innocent.

While showing that the memory of the past is suppressed, both dramatists portray a subject that is collective. This collective subject attempts to suppress a collective memory. Müller's subjects are representatives of groups, classes, parties and organizations. The subjects become collective representatives of the very class or group they come from and belong to, like *der Maurer, der Kommunist, der Nazi, der Aktivist*. Jelinek carries the collectivity of the subject even further. In *Wolken.Heim*, the subject has no dramatic role at all any more, speaking in voices and constituting an obsessed "we"-identity. "Wir sind hier," "wir sind wir," "wir sind bei uns zuhaus," "wie wir, wie wir," "wir, wir, wir," "wenn wir, wenn wir, wenn wir." Marlies Janz calls this a "musical critique of ideology" that is revealed in the subject's utterance (127).

In addition to being collective, the subject's fascist identity is exposed in both plays. The subject can not hide its ideology of self-obses-

sion, negation and exclusion of anyone other than itself any longer. In *Wolken.Heim* it says:

Wir sind wir und scheuchen von allen Orten die anderen fort. [. . .] Wir blicken hinüber, den Nachbarn nicht fürchtend, wir treten ihm aufs Haupt. [. . .] Wir sind bei uns daheim. [. . .] Die anderen haben auf eigenem Boden nichts zu sagen. Wir spülen sie fort mit unseren Schläuchen. (139-40)

This subject's German identity is connected with its quest for *Heimat*: "Wir wir wir! Alle diese ursprünglichen Menschen wie wir, ein Urvolk, das Volk schlechtweg. Deutsche!" (145). Heide Helwig calls this an "Eigensucht" of a subject that celebrates itself "als sein eigenes, aus sich selbst gespeistes Sinnzentrum" (401).

Throughout *Germania*, Müller connects twentieth century German fascism with its historical antecedents. The author points to the Prussian-fascist heritage that continues to be part of the GDR identity (Dassanowsky-Harris 15). The play is filled with violence and gory scenes of a *Selbstzefleischung* that shows the characters' fascist identity that aims to exclude. Clown 2 marches into the war with the banner: JEDER SCHUSS EIN RUSS JEDER TRITT EIN BRIT JEDER STOß EIN FRANZOS (46). The *Ehrenkompanie* shouts: "NUR EIN TOTES INDIANER IST EINGUTER INDIANER" (61). Hitler, the epitome of German fascism, is portrayed as a man-eating figure who eats a soldier for breakfast, and who perversely claims that he does not eat blacks (62).

At the same time, however, this fascist subject has an identity that is neither sure of itself nor belongs to itself. In this separation from itself, the subject is in a state of being half-dead. The constant reassurance of one's existence in *Wolken.Heim* ("Wir bezeugen uns: wir sind hier. Uns gehören wir" (138)) shows that the collective subject doubts its existence and insists on the obvious: "Es gibt uns. Es gibt uns" (138). The subject constitutes itself as aggressive, insecure about its own existence, and exclusively turned to itself.

Müller's protagonists Hilse and Clown 2 similarly do not belong fully to themselves. The figure Hilse suffers from cancer and ultimately dies from it. Helen Fehervary writes that "the pervasive cancer of German history has crippled him, invaded his body and mind, and made him 'only one half' of himself: a dis-human. It is this internalization of the oppressive German past that kills Hilse" (86). In the last scene of

Germania, Hilse talks about this cancer. "Wenn du mich fragst, mir gehts nicht gut. Aber ich bin bloss die Hälfte von mir, die andre hat der Krebs gefressen. Und wenn du meinen Krebs fragst, dem gehts gut." Later, Hilse remarks: "Wir sind eine Partei, mein Krebs und ich" (76). The cancer has become part of Hilse and has slowly consumed him. What is left of Hilse is a *Fremdkörper*, something other than himself. Another example of how Müller depicts the state of identity is the figure Clown 2. As Wolfgang Emmerich points out, the Clown's identity, like Hilse's, is practically non-existent (122). He is crippled in such a way that he literally can not stand on his own feet. Clown 2, who is on his hands and knees, states: "Ich kann nichts dagegen tun. Es haut mir die Beine weg. Es kommt von innen. Es ist eine Naturgewalt" (46). The only way he finally can stand up is by swallowing a cane. In the implantation of a foreign subject, Clown 2 is robbed of any belonging to self. In both cases, Müller shows that the subject is replaced by either cancer or cane. Jelinek carries this lack of belonging to self even further: the subject is not even sure if it really exists. In either case, the subject becomes *untot*; it carries something that is not of itself. It is half-dead, half-alive.

It is in this state of being half-dead or half-alive that the subject attempts to hide Fascism in another way. The subjects of both plays are either defined partly (as in *Germania*) or fully (*Wolken.Heim*) by quotes. When they use quotes, the subjects only reproduce utterances of the past. This language becomes merely reproduction; it is used artificially. A half-dead subject utters dead language that is de-historicized. The reproduction of language by means of quotation naturalizes the historical and the political. Thus, the subject can claim a historical innocence of its past yet again.

Via the exposure of the loss of memory in their plays, the dramatists reveal the perpetuation of a deeply rooted fascist heritage that the two nations continually must come to terms with. How have we become who we are? The amnesia that is exposed via the metaphor of the underground and in the subjects themselves is in no way innocent. The loss of memory is essential to the attempt to hide what East Germans and Austrians, according to Müller and Jelinek, always have been: fundamentally fascist.

Notes

¹ For further discussion, see Huyssen and Young.

² For an extensive discussion on the Waldheim-affair, see Mitten 65-73.

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Colonizing Bodies in Ingeborg Bachmann's "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha"

Anca-Elena Luca

In her first collection of stories, *Das dreißigste Jahr*, Ingeborg Bachmann introduces "moments of reflection, lyrical impressions, monologues, tightly composed images to suggest a radical rebellion against that 'worst of all possible worlds' in which the protagonists find themselves" (Achberger 10). "Ein Schritt nach Gomorrha" is one such story that exemplifies this yearning for renewal, for another order, for "salvation," which, though glimpsed for a moment, is clearly unattainable (Achberger 11). Classified as a feminine *Schöpfungsgeschichte*,¹ Bachmann's story also lends itself to feminist interpretation.² Further, it points at the uncomfortable traces of colonialism, politics, and power from the former Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire, which are still present in the culture and politics of everyday Austrian life in the early 1950s.

An accomplished piano player and the wife of an influential academic, Bachmann's protagonist Charlotte has tried in vain to find fulfillment and purpose in the norms and values of the Viennese aristocracy. The increasing apathy of this culturally sophisticated though decadent class has a suffocating effect on Charlotte's desire for love, which, due to its intensity and unusual passion, collides with the self-sufficiency, indifference, and pride of her husband and friends. Although on the outside Charlotte has learned per the rigid rules of aristocratic etiquette to act as the accomplished and refined woman en vogue, she remains on the inside a little mysterious girl, whose untouched heart is desperately struggling with lack of purpose and fulfillment. The emptiness and meaninglessness in Charlotte's life are reflected by the bareness of her apartment: "Im Zimmer: die verrückten Stühle, eine verknüllte Serviette auf dem Boden, die gedunsene Luft, die Verwüstung, die Leere nach dem Überfall" (143). This void is abruptly filled as Mara, a Slovenian³ studying in Vienna, offers