

## A POLITICS OF ENMITY

### *Müller's Germania Death in Berlin*

Give / Me a gun and show me an enemy.

—Heiner Müller, *The Duel*

#### The Cauldron

*Germania Death in Berlin* (1956/1971), together with *The Battle* (1951/1974), *Life of Gundling Lessing's Sleep Dream Cry* (1977), and *Germania 3 Ghosts at the Dead Man* (1995), testifies to Heiner Müller's intense occupation with German history, particularly the history of violence. The play, which consists of thirteen miscellaneous interrelated scenes, generates a certain politics of enmity—a politics whose poetic itinerary has neither an evident beginning nor an end. We thus may well begin in the middle of the play, in a scene titled "Hommage à Stalin 1," and we shall, for the time being, "imagine" (*vorstellen*) "*Snow. Battle noise. Three Soldiers. Their bodies aren't complete anymore. Enter, in the snowstorm, a Young Soldier*":

SOLDIER 2: Comrade, where from?

YOUNG SOLDIER: The battle.

SOLDIER 3: Comrade, whereto?

YOUNG SOLDIER: Where there is no battle.

SOLDIER 1: Comrade, your hand.

*Tears off his arm. The Young Soldier screams. The dead laugh and begin to gnaw at the arm.*

SOLDIER 3 *offering the arm*: Aren't you hungry?

*The Young Soldier hides his face with his remaining hand.*

SOLDIER 1: Next time it's your turn. There is meat for all of us in this cauldron [Der Kessel hat für alle Fleisch]. (20f., 56f.)<sup>1</sup>

What presents itself here in concentrated form is a kind of humor that Müller relentlessly culls from the difference between the literal and the figurative meanings of words and phrases. It is in this sense that a hand ostensibly extended in a gesture of comradeship ("Comrade, your hand") results in an act of dismemberment. Similarly, the infamous Stalingrad "Cauldron" (*Kessel*)—the site of one of Hitler's bloodiest defeats and a turning point during World War II<sup>2</sup>—is literally employed as a "kettle" in which the Young Soldier's arm is cooked and offered to him for his own consumption. This kind of sardonic irony, especially in conjunction with the repeated stage direction "*Laughter*," forms a comic counterpoint to the ubiquitous fear of death felt by those trapped inside the cauldron.<sup>3</sup> And it is from this oscillating dynamic between laughter and death, humor and fright, that a moment of the absurd emanates, not with a sense of a historical nihilism but rather with respect to a peculiar beyond, a moment of *horror* characteristic of the theater of Heiner Müller.

Within Müller's dramatic economy, the *Kessel*, with its *literal* gastronomic and its *metaphorical* military meanings, functions *metonymically* as an affective conglomerate of the tragedies of German history and beyond. To this anachronistic, world-historical battleground, Napoleon, "pale and bloated," enters the stage, and

1. Quotations from Heiner Müller's *Germania Death in Berlin* are followed by two sets of page numbers. The first set, unless otherwise noted, refers to Heiner Müller, *Germania, Germania Tod in Berlin, Germania 3 Gespenster am toten Mann* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001); the second set refers to *Explosion of a Memory: Writings by Heiner Müller*, ed. and trans. Carl Weber (New York: PAJ Publications, 1989). In most cases I have modified Weber's translation, often consulting the other available English translation by Dennis Redmond, *Germania Death in Berlin*, 2002, <http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/Germania.html>. As a rule, with the exception of Heiner Müller's italicized stage directions, all italics are mine.

On *Germania Death in Berlin*, cf., among others, Volker Bohn, "Germania Tod in Berlin," in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch: Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Hans-Thies Lehmann and Patrick Primavesi (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2003), 207–14; Georg Wiegand, *Heiner Müller* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), 88–99; Norbert Otto Eke, "Geschichte und Gedächtnis im Drama," in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 52–58. For a historical contextualization of *Germania Death in Berlin*, see Jost Hermand, "Braut, Mutter oder Hure? Heiner Müllers *Germania* und ihre Vorgeschichte," in *Mit den Toten reden: Fragen an Heiner Müller*, ed. Jost Hermand and Helen Fehervary (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 52–69.

2. The Stalingrad Cauldron was a trap for Hitler's Sixth Army, ultimately defeated by the Red Army in the winter of 1942–43 after 199 days and combined casualties of about 1.5 million.

3. For a penetrating analysis of Müller's poetics of laughter, see Bernhard Greiner, "'Jetzt will ich sitzen wo gelacht wird': Über das Lachen bei Heiner Müller," *Jahrbuch zur Literatur in der DDR* 5 (1986): 29–63; see also Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, "Tragik, Komik, Groteske," in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 82–88.

Caesar, "his toga bloodied and torn," follows after him (21, 57). "*More and more soldiers stagger or crawl on the stage, fall down, remain on the ground*"; additionally—and perhaps not surprisingly for a play titled *Germania* and inspired by the myth of the battle in Ezel's castle—the Nibelungs (Gunther, Hagen, Volker, and Gernot) appear "clad in rusted armor" (21, 57):

GUNTHER *crushing the dead underfoot*: Malingers. Shirkers. Defeatists. Pack of cowards.

VOLKER: They think that when they're rotting, they've done everything that can be demanded of them.

HAGEN *sneering*: They think they are out of it.

GERNOT: They'll be surprised. (21f., 57)

The dead will be surprised, for in a seemingly perennial history of calamity and violence, they are to exercise the rhythm of death and "resurrection" (*Auferstehung*, 31, 66) again and again; this is a rhythm Müller dramatically implements throughout the play, and it repeats itself sometimes "every night" (23, 58).<sup>4</sup> And it is here, in the implacable cycle of horror and violence, that a distinct feature of Müller's theater manifests itself. Not by chance are the Nibelungs *überlebensgroß* (*larger than life-sized*): they are *überlebensgroß*, of course, in the comic respect of their grotesque height as well as in the heroic respect of their Wagnerian pathos.<sup>5</sup> Yet to be *überlebens-groß* in this context is also and particularly significant in that *überleben* is precisely what appears so difficult in the cauldron: "I don't want to die every night," laments Gernot (23, 58). Such discontent appears incompatible with the ways of life and death in the cauldron.

GUNTHER: Take up your swords, all of you Nibelungs.

The Huns are coming back. IN GOD WE TRUST.

*The Nibelungs arm themselves with corpses, or limbs of corpses, and hurl them yelling at imaginary Huns so that an irregular wall of corpses piles up.*

See, Attila, the harvest our swords reaped.

4. On Müller's theater of resurrection, see Günther Heeg, "Totenreich Deutschland—Theater der Auferstehung," in *Der Text ist der Coyote: Heiner Müller Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Brigitte Maria Mayer and Christian Schulte (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 35–50.

5. Müller deems the *Nibelungs* the "most German of all German material and also still a German reality. The *Nibelungs* continues to be performed in Germany" ("Germany Still Plays the *Nibelungs*": Interview with Urs Jenny und Hellmuth Karasek," *Der Spiegel*, May 9, 1983, 196–207). For a discussion of the arguably problematic implications correlating with Müller's evaluation of the Nibelung myth, see Genia Schulz and Hans-Thies Lehmann, "Protoplasma des Gesamtkunstwerks: Heiner Müller und die Tradition der Moderne," in *Unsere Wagner: Joseph Beys, Heiner Müller, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Hans Jürgen Syberberg*, ed. Gabriele Förg (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1984), 50–84; Jonathan Kalb, *The Theater of Heiner Müller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 138–63.

*The Nibelungs sit on the wall of corpses, take off their helmets, and drink beer from their skulls.*

GERNOT: Always the same thing. *The others look at him outraged.*

I'm not saying that I don't want to play along anymore. But what is it all about, actually? (22, 57f.)

The question of what it is all about is taken up by Hagen: "*Because we can't get out of this cauldron*, that's why we keep scuffling with the Huns" (22, 58). The fact that the enemy here is merely constituted of "*imaginary Huns*" appears extraneous; after all, it is not the killing of Huns per se but the *performative dynamics* of enmity that allows for the foundation of a political community, a community germinating from the ethnic or tribal cleansing of the "dastard" (cf. "aus dem Hinterhalt") Huns (22, 58). The political self-identification of the Nibelungs' *Volksgemeinschaft* operates via an imagined contradistinction to the Huns, and it promises to reinvigorate the polity successfully as long as the Huns can be instituted and sustained as the "enemy" in an ongoing drive for tribal purity. The goal is an ethnically "immanent" community.<sup>6</sup> Gernot has not yet entirely understood the rigorousness of this conception of communal politics:

GERNOT: But we only need to stop, and then there's no more cauldron.

GUNTHER: Did he say: stop.

VOLKER: He still doesn't get it.

HAGEN: He'll never learn. (23, 58)

What Gernot has not yet understood is the nature of a certain concept of the political, a concept according to which "to stop"—that is, ceasefire, armistice, peace—cannot actually ensue from withdrawal, for without "the concrete determination of the enemy"<sup>7</sup> not only is it impossible to wage war, but, more importantly, it would be inconceivable to institute peace.<sup>8</sup> Within the poetic space of *Germania* this logic is taken to heart and run through step by step. First, Gernot must be sacrificed:

*The three Nibelungs, in a protracted fight, hack [GERNOT] to pieces. Then they masturbate together.*

VOLKER *masturbating*: I'd like to do something else, for a change. That thing with women, for instance. I've forgotten what it's called. *The Nibelungs laugh.*

6. For an analysis of the societal efficacy of "immanentism," see Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Nancy, *La communauté désœuvrée* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 1986). Cf. also Slavoj Žižek, "Heiner Müller aus den Fugen," in *Der Text ist der Coyote*, ed. Brigitte Maria Mayer and Christian Schulte, 274–98.

7. Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2002), 57. On Müller's poetics of war, cf. Günther Heeg, "Deutschland—Krieg," in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 89–93.

8. See Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, 26.

HAGEN *likewise*: I don't even know anymore what that is, a woman. I think I wouldn't even find the hole anymore. *The Nibelungs laugh.*

GUNTHER *likewise*: War is men's business. Anyway, now the money needs only to be split in three. And we'll find the hole in the cauldron, don't worry. (23, 59)

The associative leap from the necrophiliac act to the "hole in the cauldron" alludes to an exit, a potential way out of the lethal mechanisms of the politics of enmity. Yet the three remaining Nibelungs appear tied up in it, and, accordingly, the persistently erratic role of the "enemy" is passed around one by one, all the way to the end, or in the words of Hermann Göring, "to the last man."<sup>9</sup>

*The Nibelungs laugh. VOLKER tunes his violin.*

GUNTHER: Leave your violin out of this. I know your tricks. He wants to soften us with this song-and-dance routine. SLEEP LITTLE PRINCE SLEEP TIGHT. And then he hauls off and pinches the loot for himself.

HAGEN: Better, we take care of him right away.

GUNTHER: Let's go. *They arm themselves.*

VOLKER: Comrades.

*They hack him to pieces.*

GUNTHER: Now it's only the two of us.

HAGEN: One too many.

*Hack each other into pieces.* (24, 59)

The massacre taking place here on a thematic level involves an unstable role of the "enemy" and invokes far-reaching theatrological correlatives: as a result of the nonpresence of specifiable duels and identifiable antagonisms, the performative/"theatrical" dimension belies the constative/"dramatic" dimension. Theatrical efficacy of the scene seems, in other words, to thwart the determination of and the fight against an "enemy." The *enemy remains undefinable* ("But what is it all about, actually?"), only appears as "mirror-image" (Gernot vs. Hagen vs. Volker vs. Gunther),<sup>10</sup> or proves identical with the battleground (cauldron).<sup>11</sup> An instance commensurate with this interlacing of friends and enemies is epitomized by

9. "Rede Hermann Görings, gehalten am 30.1. 1943 im Reichsluftfahrtministerium vor Abordnung der Wehrmacht," in *Die Nibelungen: Ein deutscher Wahn, ein deutscher Alptraum; Studien und Dokumente zur Rezeption des Nibelungenstoffs im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Joachim Heinze und Anneliese Waldschmidt (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), 180.

10. See "Ein Gespräch zwischen Wolfgang Heise und Heiner Müller," in *Brecht 88: Anregungen zum Dialog über die Vernunft am Jahrtausende*, ed. Wolfgang Heise (Berlin: Henschelverlag Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1989), 194.

11. For a discussion of Heiner Müller's dramaturgy, see Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Das politische Schreiben: Essays zu Theatertexten* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2002), 338–53, here 346; Andreas Keller, *Drama und Dramaturgie Heiner Müllers zwischen 1956 und 1988* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1994), esp. 206–25; Norbert Otto Eke, *Heiner Müller: Apokalypse und Utopie* (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1989), 20–66.

“Stalin,” the “hero” to whom the “Hommage” is devoted, but who also is on a par with Hitler in his role as a mass murderer (“Heil Stalin,” 40, 72). This degree of discursive inconsistency eludes any framework of dramatic conflict. The evaporation of conflictual depth becomes most evident with the transformation at the end of “Hommage à Stalin 1”:

*A moment of silence. The battle noise also has stopped. Then pieces of corpses crawl towards one another and form themselves, with a terrible din of metal, screams, and snatches of songs [Lärm aus Metall, Schreien ...], into a monster made of scrap-metal and body-parts [zu einem Monster aus Schrott und Menschenmaterial]. (24, 59)*

What is rendered indistinguishable here are the processes of human history, natural history, and technology. The symbiosis of “scrap-metal” and “body-parts,” metal and flesh, embodies the politics of “foes” and “friends,” within which all human beings are potential “enemies” in a society resigned to technology. The monster is, on the one hand, machine,<sup>12</sup> yet, on the other, still capable of articulating anxiety and fright (“screams”)—and as long as the “screams” prevail, this “inhuman” being remains an ideologically instrumentalizable correlative for any humanist quest. “Humanism is the ideology of the machine,” Müller hyperbolically states in his autobiography. What he alludes to is the precarious ideological ambiguity of “humanism,” which is always based on principles of selection and exclusion, mechanisms of enmity, and the expulsion of enemies, thereby producing the “inhuman” that proves to be an incessant supplement of “the” human and, perhaps, as we shall see, the most genuinely and inherently “human” there is.<sup>13</sup>

### Ghosts in Müller’s *Germania*

“Hommage à Stalin 1” ends with “*The noise continues into the next scene*” (24, 59); the next scene, “Hommage à Stalin 2,” transmutes this noise into “*Sirens [and b]ells ringing*.” This acoustic transmutation is aligned with a thematic iteration: “PETTY-BOURGEOIS [KLEINBÜRGER] 1: Stalin is dead. / PETTY-BOURGEOIS 2: It took him long enough” (24, 60). Death matters to Müller, yet as already noted, not as a last stop, but as a dramatic impetus for the next “resurrection” (*Auferstehung*, 31, 66) and the next death. As the Nazi brother later says in *Germania*, “Don’t worry, it’s a slaughterhouse, brother. / If you want to see something around here

12. On Müller’s poetics of the machine, see Thomas Weitin, “Technik-Ökonomie-Maschine,” in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 104–8.

13. Heiner Müller, *Jenseits der Nation: Heiner Müller im Interview mit Frank M. Raddatz* (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1991), 43; Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht, Leben in zwei Diktaturen, Eine Autobiographie*, in *Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), 9:244–46.

which has a future / Better go to a factory where they make coffins" (50, 80). Correspondingly, Müller says: "One function of drama is the invocation of the dead—the dialogue with the dead must not come to an end, until they hand over that of the future which has been buried with them."<sup>14</sup> We will return to this notion of a potentiality buried with the dead, a potentiality yet to be actualized. Given this temporal dynamic of death and resurgence, Müller's *Germania* seems to manifest an entire discourse of ghostly figures: Napoleon, "dragging behind him a soldier of his Grand Army by the feet"; Caesar, "his face green"; the "imaginary Huns" and the "larger than life-sized" Nibelungs, transformed into the "monster made of scrap-metal and body-parts." In addition are the "Skull-Seller" (*Schädelverkäufer*) in "Hommage à Stalin 2," the vampire of Frederick the Great in "Brandenburg Concerto 1," the specters associated with the People's Uprising on June 17, 1953 (see 51, 82), and the *revenant* of "Red Rosa [Luxemburg]" appearing in "Death in Berlin 2." These ghosts, still situated in the dramatic discourse of *Germania*, yet already anachronistically hovering in a heterogeneous sphere between the centuries and between "reality" and "fiction," now find support from the specters inhabiting the play's crevices and chasms: specters as they rise amid a temporal, spatial, and stylistic chaos,<sup>15</sup> constituted of countless intertextual references, explicit (as with Tacitus, Virgil, Georg Heym, or Beckett) and implicit (as in the case of Kafka<sup>16</sup> or Brecht<sup>17</sup> or German Arthurian literature).<sup>18</sup> The uncanniness of *Germania*, of course, is largely due to the dramaturgical structure of the dyadic scenes—scenes in which the second, often

14. *Gesammelte Irrtümer*, vol. 2, *Interviews und Gespräche* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag der Autoren, 1990), 64.

15. *Germania Tod in Berlin* amounts to a conglomerate of immense stylistic heterogeneity: the styles employed include historical drama, a citation from Tacitus's *Annales*, lyrical forms such as the ode from Virgil's *Bucolica* and the sonnet by Georg Heym, the surreal "nocturne" "Night Piece," the clownish comic in "Brandenburg Concerto 1," fantastic grotesque tones as in "Hommage à Stalin 1," and Socialist *Aufbauliteratur* (literature of reconstruction) with its typified, often numbered characters in "Workers' Monument" and "Death in Berlin 2." Müller's dramatic art, which increasingly will turn out to be anything but "dramatic," develops its poetic force, its velocity very much based on this eclectic exuberance, situated between manifold styles and centuries.

16. "Tears his jacket off, shows his back, covered with old scars. / Do you recognize their handwriting. It's / Still legible. It was a little faded," says the Communist to his brother in "The Brothers 2" (48, 78f.). Kafka's story "In the Penal Colony" reads: "The Harrow is beginning to write; when it finishes the first draft of the inscription on the man's back, the layer of cotton wool begins to roll and slowly turns the body over, to give the Harrow fresh space for writing. . . . It keeps on writing deeper and deeper for the whole twelve hours. . . . You have seen how difficult it is to decipher the script with one's eyes; but our man deciphers it with his wounds." Franz Kafka, *The Completed Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 149f. (*Ein Landarzt und andere Drucke zu Lebzeiten* [Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1994], 172f.).

17. Cf. the clown scene in "Brandenburg Concerto 1" with the clown scene in Brecht's *Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*.

18. "Oh, don't ever ask me, Lohengrin," Petty-Bourgeois 1 says in the scene "Hommage à Stalin 2" (27, 62). The mention of Lohengrin poses yet another moment of the spectral. For this son of Parzival and knight of the Holy Grail of course requests from the maiden he frees that she must never ask his name. It is not the case that he *does not have* an identity, but that it must not be inquired about and thus must remain strangely undetermined.

concerned with the present history of the GDR, is haunted by corresponding moments in history: the November Revolution, Prussia under Frederick II, the perpetual quarrel between brothers as already found with the Cheruscan brothers Arminius and Flavius, and so forth. Within the poetic space outlined by five couplets and three single scenes, an enormous efficacy of cross-elucidation comes into being, lending itself to an array of constellations in which the performative invocation of specters peculiarly merges with the explicit narrative of ghosts. “*The Skull-Seller has gotten up, he picks up his bag and approaches, tottering a bit,*” we read in “Hommage à Stalin 1”:

WHORE 1: What’s he want.

YOUNG BRICKLAYER: That’s Santa Claus. Missing something?

SKULL-SELLER: A beautiful couple. Allow me to offer you a little souvenir.

*Pulls a human skull from the sack. WHORE 1 screams.*

A memento mori for the new home. IN THE MIDST OF LIFE WE ARE /

SURROUNDED BY DEATH. I dug him up myself. And boiled three times.

A clean specimen....

SKULL-SELLER *sits down at team leader’s table*: I work deep underground. So to speak. We’re moving cemeteries, unbeknownst to the public. Reburying, as it is called in the language of the bereaved [Umbetten, wie es in der Sprache der Hinterbliebenen heißt]. I am a bereaved person [Ich bin ein Hinterbliebener], I rebury. (30f., 65f.)

Müller, no doubt, is a skull-seller himself.<sup>19</sup> Unremittingly he piles up corpses;<sup>20</sup> time after time he lets the dead rise. Frequently, like the Skull-Seller, he reburies them to or from entirely different graveyards, that is, to or from entirely different plays: for instance, in the case of “Red Rosa” (and her *Doppelgänger* “Siegfried a Jewess from Poland” in *Germania 3 Ghosts at the Dead Man*) or the Nazi and his Communist brother (and the brothers “A” and “B” in *The Battle*) or the Nibelungs (also staged in Müller’s prologue to Jürgen Flimm’s production of Hebbel’s *The Nibelungs* as well as *Germania 3*). The Skull-Seller is “a bereaved person” (*ein Hinterbliebener*) and as such [*ein*] *naher Angehöriger eines Verstorbenen* ([a] close relative of a deceased person).<sup>21</sup> The word *Angehöriger* corresponds to the verb *angehören* and denotes, according to the etymological dictionary “Teil von etwas sein” (to be part of something).<sup>22</sup> An *Angehöriger* is “part” of a family, and when his/her relatives

19. My use of the name “Müller” refers, needless to say, to an authorial voice, not the psychological constituency of the dramatist or the “private individual” Heiner Müller.

20. In his translation of *Hamlet* in collaboration with Matthias Langhoff, Heiner Müller translates Hamlet’s famous words “as this fell sergeant, Death, / Is strict in his arrest”—epigrammatic in our context—as “der Tod ist ein Beamter und / Verhaftet pünktlich” (Müller, *Shakespeare Factory* [Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1989], 2:121).

21. Gerhard Köbler, *Etymologisches Rechtswörterbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 189.

22. *Ibid.*, 18.

die, s/he is part of something that no longer exists in its entirety, is perhaps half or one third or one fourth, and so on of what it was before; yet the *Angehöriger* appears, with respect to his/her identity as kins(wo)man, as quasi material, or as “Whore 2” points out, a “ghost,” a ghost precisely in his/her role as *Hinterbliebene* (25, 66). On a different level, Heiner Müller, skull-seller within the scope of his profession as a dramatist, is also a *Hinterbliebener* in that he literally “stands behind” (*bleibt hinter*) the *Gestalt* (“figure,” 24, 60) of the Skull-Seller, concealed behind a mask, ensconced without disclosing his authorial identity. And it is precisely from this hiding place that Müller brings to bear his morally uncommitted quest: “I cannot read morally, just as little as I can write morally.”<sup>23</sup> “We work nights. Under the influence of alcohol, because of the danger of infection. [Wir arbeiten nachts. Unter Alkohol, wegen der Infektionsgefahr],” the Skull-Seller says ambiguously (32, 66). The Skull-Seller counters the hazard of getting infected with the disinfectant alcohol. The work “under the influence of alcohol” guarantees a certain “immunity” (“I have become immunized,” 32, 66). It is in a similar vein that Heiner Müller’s own close examination of the conflagration of history (we will return to this question) requires immunity against infectious diseases such as “sentimentality” or “piety.” Not by chance, a “Drunk” (*Betrunkener*) in “Hommage à Stalin 2,” appearing strikingly inconspicuous, “reconstructs” the horrors of the Cauldron of Stalingrad, after “Hommage à Stalin 1” dealt with nothing else:

DRUNK: . . . In Stalingrad  
 They’ve cooked me tender. That was more than war.  
 We would have eaten grass. But I did not  
 See any grass. We didn’t ask a bone  
 If it came from a horse, or rather: I  
 ONCE HAD A GOOD COMRADE.  
 But man gets used to everything. Who’s sitting here.  
 I was the only N.C.O.  
 Who was commander of a company.  
 The Captain croaked, and the Lieutenants too.  
 We got finally out of the cauldron  
 All of us twenty-four, except for ten.  
 I got them safely out. . . .  
 TEAM LEADER: You ought to know.  
 DRUNK: Oh yes, and just today  
 I’ve met one. He’s with the government.

23. Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 220f. On Müller’s autobiography, cf. Jost Hermand, “Diskursive Widersprüche: Fragen an Heiner Müller’s ‘Autobiographie,’” in *Mit den Toten reden*, 94–112; Gerd Gemünden, “The Author as Battlefield: Heiner Müller’s Autobiography *War without Battle*,” in *Heiner Müller: ConTEXTS and HISTORY*, ed. Gerhard Fischer (Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag, 1995), 117–27.

State-Secretary, or whatever they call it now.  
 That boy has got it made: Way up he is.  
 But right away he recognized me. You, Boss?  
 Always the same, says I. And he: Come on  
 Let's celebrate. I went along. His wife  
 Spit fire when we tried to *reconstruct*  
 With beer on her parquet floor our cauldron  
 Of Stalingrad. He locked her in the kitchen.  
 And then we *reconstructed* our cauldron.  
*And after the fourth bottle* I ask: Could you  
 Still crawl on elbows, Willi, you old pig.  
 And what shall I tell you, you won't believe this:  
 He could, and how. That well I drilled them boys. (29, 63f.)

The drunk man's contention "We got finally out of the cauldron" is illustrated by a "*re-construction*" that amounts to no less than an actual *enactment*. And perhaps because the Drunk, like the Skull-Seller, is so well disinfected ("after the fourth bottle") and has gotten "accustomed" (*[sich] gewöhnt*) to the horrors, he feels incited to "*re-construct*" or compulsively repeat the traumatic experiences from the cauldron once again, this time graphically:

DRUNK *pours beer on the table*: This is the Volga. Here is Stalingrad.  
 TEAM LEADER: That is my beer.  
 DRUNK: Not interested, huh.  
 The war isn't over. It's just starting. (29, 64)

"The war . . . is just starting" appears to be the motto permeating Müller's *Germania*, rendered possible by Müller's imperturbability, his *Einverständnis* with the killing, the violence, the horrors: "You must be complicit with the violence [Du mußt einverstanden sein mit der Gewalt], with the atrocity, so that you can describe it."<sup>24</sup> Again and again the dead must "rise" (*auferstehen*) (31, 66), and die and "rise": "One must unearth the dead, again and again, for only from them can one obtain the future."<sup>25</sup> This is Müller's understanding of the "memento mori" (30, 65). Müller writes: "SO THAT SOMETHING CAN ARRIVE SOMETHING HAS TO GO THE FIRST SHAPE OF HOPE IS THE FEAR THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE NEW IS HORROR [SCHRECKEN]."<sup>26</sup> The German word *Gespenst* derives etymologically from the Old High German *spanan*, meaning

24. *Ich schulde der Welt einen Toten: Gespräche / Alexander Kluge-Heiner Müller* (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 1995), 60.

25. Müller, *Jenseits der Nation*, 31.

26. Heiner Müller, "Notes on *Mauser*," in *The Battle: Plays, Prose, Poems by Heiner Müller*, trans. Carl Weber (New York: PAJ Publications, 1989), 133.

“reizen, verlocken, überreden,”<sup>27</sup> and it seems as if the most spectral dimension of the cultural text of horror<sup>28</sup> read and written by Müller lies in the fact that he, Müller, paradoxically demonstrates a propensity to perpetuate what he aspires to scrutinize: the involuted history of violence.

## The Thalidomide Wolf

The grotesque-humorous scene “The Holy Family,” integral to our question of the politics of enmity, stages Hitler in the biblical role of the father and redeemer, Joseph Göbbels as Maria, and the “enormous” personified “Germania” as midwife of the childbearing Göbbels and progenitor of Hitler (see 35, 69). The action does not take place in Nazareth but in the *Führerbunker*. Alleged “traitors” infiltrate *Germania* (see 22, 58; 28, 63; 45, 76; 50, 81; 51, 81), and “Hitler” indubitably fears them to the point of paranoia. In conversation with Göbbels he explains:

[Röhm] was a *traitor*. . . . The little slut. . . . I shot the entire magazine into him. . . . You were holding him, do you remember. You and Herrmann. Also a *traitor*. I’m surrounded with *traitors*. . . . Everywhere they are lying in wait for me. There. And there. *Walks faster and faster back and forth, always whirling around suddenly*. They are behind me. They won’t dare to confront me. They are keeping themselves in my back. You see. But I’ll get all of them. Providence holds its guiding hand over me. (35, 68f.)

The ramifications of the imputation of treachery emerge inconspicuously:

GUARD: Upstairs, a dog ran by [the *Führerbunker*].  
 HITLER: You hear that, Joseph. They are disguising themselves. They won’t dare anymore to confront us openly. But I see through their tricks. I see through everything. A dog. Laughable! Continue.  
 GUARD: He pissed in the grass. That’s all, my Führer.  
 HITLER: Keep your eyes open. The enemy is everywhere.  
 GUARD: Yessir, my Führer. *Exit Guard*. (34, 68)

The enemy also figures as a dog in Carl Schmitt’s *Theory of the Partisan*, a work that Müller, in the context of his later intensive studies of Schmitt, called a “key text” (*Schlüsseltext*) to his thinking.<sup>29</sup> Schmitt writes:

27. Duden’s *Das Herkunftswörterbuch: Etymologie der deutschen Sprache* (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 1992), 237.

28. Lehmann, *Das politische Schreiben*, 365.

29. Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 213.

When the internal, immanent rationality and regularity of the thoroughly-organized technological world has been achieved in optimistic opinion, the partisan becomes perhaps nothing more than an irritant. Then, he disappears simply of his own accord in the smooth-running fulfillment of technical-functional forces, *just as a dog disappears on the highway*.<sup>30</sup>

Müller, who in another context speaks of “the rebirth of the revolutionary out of the spirit of the partisan,”<sup>31</sup> will question Schmitt: “The partisan in an industrialized society may be a dog on the highway. But it depends how many dogs come together on the highway.”<sup>32</sup> In *Germania*, soon after the first appearance of the dog that Hitler believes he has unmasked as the enemy, once again a dog, in the Schmittian sense of the dog as enemy, shows up. The Guard reports meaningfully: “The dog ran by again. He pissed again” (35, 69). No doubt, dogs matter to Müller, and *Germania* is full of them (see 15, 52; 18, 54; 20, 56; 36, 69; 37, 70). Notably, the dogs in *Germania* are accompanied by numerous other animals: the “*Thalidomide wolf*” is in “*sheep’s clothing*” (39, 71); Hilse’s *Krebs* creeps no less than five times over a single page (39, 84). And there are mice crawling through Müller’s play, so small that they are virtually invisible as they hide behind words: “We smashed the guns against the curbstones,” the “Old Man” remembers of the failed revolution of 1918–19; “we crept back into the holes we lived in [krochen zurück in unsre Mauerlöcher],” *Mauerlöcher* that, in contiguity with *krochen*, for good reason may be (mis)read as *Mauselöcher*. A few lines down the page Müller implements the image of bird and cage: “A funny bird.... He’s looking for a cage.... You’ve got to have luck. Bird, you are in luck. There goes a cage, he’s looking for a bird” (9, 47). Kafka, among whose aphorisms Müller finds this enigmatic image,<sup>33</sup> generally appears to inspire the Müllerian art of metaphor.<sup>34</sup> “Art,” Müller writes, “is perhaps also an experiment in ‘*becoming-animal*’ [*Tierwerdung*] in the sense of Deleuze’s and Guattari’s book about Kafka.”<sup>35</sup> Still before Deleuze and Guattari, Walter Benjamin noted: “[Kafka] often attributes the behavior patterns which are of most interest to him to animals.”<sup>36</sup> The question of “*becoming-animal*” (*Tierwerdung*), a question of

30. Carl Schmitt, *Theorie des Partisanen: Zwischenbemerkung zum Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1975), 80 (*Theory of the Partisan: Intermediate Commentary on the Concept of the Political*, trans. G. L. Ulmen [New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2007], 77).

31. In his speech given upon the reception of the Kleist-Prize, Müller writes: “The figure of the ghost-driver [*Geisterfahrer*: also wrong-way driver] belongs to the highway” (*Jenseits der Nation*, 62).

32. Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 273.

33. “Ein Vogel geht einen Käfig suchen.” See Franz Kafka, *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer und andere Schriften aus dem Nachlaß* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1994), 231.

34. *Der Bau* started as a play adapted from the novel by Erich Neutsch, and, as Müller writes, moved increasingly in the direction of the story by Kafka. “It became increasingly metaphorical, more and more of a parable” (Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 153).

35. Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 247.

36. Walter Benjamin, *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), 2.3:1261f.

significance in Müller's work, must be seen in the context of his occupation with the barbarian mechanisms of selection as characteristic of humanist ideology, which declares the human being "an enemy of human kind."<sup>37</sup> Humanist ideology disparages the enemy as "inhuman," thereby, as already indicated, invoking something genuinely "human," which continuously exists between the representative paradigm of "the" human and its *negativum* as inevitable supplement of society. Müller is interested in the "inhuman," which obstinately is engendered in the context of societal processes of decontamination or purification. The inquiry into the "inhuman" beyond moral concerns ("at least...[the] established and socially integrated morals") lies at the center of his conception of art.<sup>38</sup>

Notably, the action taking place in "The Holy Family" is a very festive one. Even "the three Magi of the Occident" (the Western Allies France, Great Britain, and the United States) have come from afar, and they have brought "presents," for what is about to be born here is nothing less than West Germany (see 38, 71). Yet in the context of the actual delivery the unexpected occurs:

*Long scream from Göbbels.*

GERMANIA:... Gentlemen, it's time. Where's my forceps. Why don't you give me a hand.

*Germania applies the forceps, pulls, MAGI 1 pulls at GERMANIA, 2 at 1, 3 at 2.*

HITLER: My people!

GUARD OF HONOR: GERMANY AWAKEN! SIEG HEIL!

THREE MAGIS: HALLELUJA! HOSANNA! *A wolf howls.*

Germania and the three Magi fall on their behinds. Before them stands a *Thalidomide wolf* [Contergan-Wolf]. *Startled.* Oh.

*GERMANIA gets up, pulls a family-size box of SUNIL from her midwife's bag and pours detergent over the wolf. White Light. The wolf stands in sheepskin.*

*GÖBBELS dances like a whirling dervish. GERMANIA screams.*

HITLER *laughs.* (38f., 71)

The popular German detergent Sunil quickly whitewashes the Fascist wolf so that it appears as a democratic wolf. Yet it seems as if during pregnancy Joseph Göbbels took the medication Thalidomide, the ominous drug predominantly recommended to pregnant women as an antiemetic to fight morning sickness and as a sedative. As a result of the side effects associated with the drug, Göbbels gives birth to an infant with a condition called phocomelia, that is, "abnormally short limbs with toes sprouting from the hips and flipper-like arms" (dysmelia) or, in

37. Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 246.

38. *Ibid.*, 247.

other cases, missing limbs or internal organs (aplasia).<sup>39</sup> The Fascist malformation of the West German Thalidomide wolf is ostentatiously ignored by the three Magi: "THE THREE MAGI *assuming the position of the three monkeys*: HALLELUJAH! HOSANNA!" (35, 72). They neither smell nor see nor hear the fascism still so alive in the Federal Republic of Germany. Hitler, disappointed with Germany's future, gets at Germania's, that is, "Mama's," throat: he "tortures Germania" and finally kills her with a "cannon" (35, 69; 39, 71f.). "*Curtain with the explosion*" (39, 72).

As with Kafka, one no doubt could say for Müller that the animal metaphors relentlessly displace their "signifiers"; that is to say, Müller's animals no longer "represent" human beings but rather decide things among themselves. In this sense Müller's conception of "becoming-animal" seems largely indebted to Kafka, and yet it appears—when Müller's art is most Müllerian—that the moment of becoming-animal presents us with a *radicalization* of Kafka. Indeed, one cannot read Müller's animals "without realizing" (*ohne überhaupt wahrzunehmen*), as Benjamin noted in Kafka, "that they don't stand for humans at all" (*daß es sich gar nicht um Menschen handelt*).<sup>40</sup> The West German Thalidomide wolf, malformed progeny of Nazi Germany's "racial"-ethnic selection machinery, maintains its idiosyncrasy with respect to a notion of "inhumanity" inevitably associated with *Auschwitz* (a word crucial to Müller's understanding of "humanism"). This is not to say that any "humane" society, perhaps any society at all, could ever dispense with the politics of selection and exclusion; indeed, the inhuman capacity equally determines the "progressive" potential of "the" human as it establishes, intimately linked, its perversity (as is metaphorized by the "Thalidomide wolf").<sup>41</sup> What distinguishes the "metaphor" of the Thalidomide wolf from Kafka's "metaphors" is that whereas Kafka's animals merely *forebode* Auschwitz, Müller's malformed Thalidomide wolf *knows* of Auschwitz. In an interview with Alexander Kluge, Müller problematized the transformation of human beings into animals, plants, and stones in the poetics of Ovid—a characteristic equally pertinent to Kafka—and said: "The motif of metamorphosis is... what makes the matter theatrical [Das Verwandlungsmotiv ist das was... die Sache theatralisch macht]." <sup>42</sup> Perhaps we can provisionally turn Müller's observation about Ovid upon Müller's *Germania* in that the *radicalization* and *distortion* of transformation as explored here is what makes Müller's matter theatrical.

39. Trent Stephens and Rock Brynner, *Dark Remedy: The Impact of Thalidomide and Its Revival as a Vital Medicine* (New York: Perseus, 2001), 61–78; David J. Bloch, *The Fundamentals of Life Sciences Law* (Washington, DC: American Health Lawyers Association, 2007), 4.

40. Benjamin, *Aufsätze, Essays, Vorträge*, 2.3:1261f.

41. Cf. Jean-François Lyotard, *L'inhumain: Causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), 10. For a discussion of "the inhuman" in Müller, see Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, *Das Theater des "konstruktiven Defaitismus": Lektüren zur Theorie eines Theaters der A-Identität bei Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht und Heiner Müller* (Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2002), 578–82.

42. "Heiner Müller in Time Flight," [http://muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu/en/video\\_record.php?f=110](http://muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu/en/video_record.php?f=110).

### Silence. Pause.

The politics of enmity finds one of its most embroiled variants in the scene “The Brothers 2.” The scene takes place in a prison in the GDR—allegedly *the* prison “GDR”—among murderers, saboteurs, Nazi criminals, and a Communist. The People’s Uprising of June 17, 1953, starting in East Berlin, is the backdrop for the encounter of a Communist, who in the Gestapo’s torture chambers was forcefully converted into a Nazi, and his nonconformist Communist brother, who is also imprisoned by the new Communist regime:

NAZI *steps forward*: He’s my brother.

SABOTEUR: The Red?

GANDHI *laughs*: IN MY HOMETOWN IN MY HOMETOWN  
THAT’S WHERE WE MEET AGAIN.

COMMUNIST: My brother the traitor. *Silence*.

You’ve made quite a career.

NAZI: So did you.

*Pause. Noise of a crowd outside. Rhythmic beating on steam pipes  
in the prison that continues throughout the following scene.*

SABOTEUR *at the window*: It won’t take long now anymore.

COMMUNIST *at window*: What’s that?

SABOTEUR: That is the people rising up. (46f., 77f.)

Two words almost get lost in this passage, two words that make all the difference: “*Silence*” and “*Pause*.” What do “*Silence*” and “*Pause*” signify here? What do they omit while perhaps expressing all the more perspicuously? When the Communist says: “My brother the traitor. You’ve made quite a career [Mein Bruder der Spitzel. Du hast es weit gebracht]”; when he, in other words, accuses his Nazi brother of having betrayed their common Communist cause, a betrayal, of course, equally directed against the anti-Fascist self-conception of the GDR, within which Müller writes, if such an accusation is succeeded by “*Silence*,” then this silence implies a great deal: conjectures perhaps as to the reasons that led the brother to comply with the Fascist enemy; perhaps the silence denotes a reference to the many Communists murdered by Nazis; and perhaps it alludes to the struggles among the parties of the Left during the Weimar Republic with their fatal consequences, the rise of the Nazi Party and the fratricide. Yet the ambiguity of this “*Silence*,” its precarious meaning, is brought to bear only in light of the subsequent lines and the eerie “*Pause*”:

COMMUNIST: My brother the traitor. *Silence*.

You’ve made quite a career.

NAZI: So did you.

*Pause.*

The uncanny (and from the perspective of GDR censors actually outrageous) does *not* preside in the Nazi's accusation against his Communist brother ("So did you")—an allusion to both of their failed careers in the service of opposite and opposing ideologies that lead both to an encounter in the same prison cell. The audacity in those few lines lies in the fact that Müller, in his putative role as the author, refuses to intervene by virtue of his authorial authority—refuses to intercede as an omniscient narrator, withholding comment in order to suggest that the Nazi's insinuated comparison of his career with that of his brother in the GDR is ridiculous if not absurd. Instead Müller performatively corroborates the Nazi's constative parallelization by leaving the Nazi's infamous assertion uncontradicted. He offers only an abysmal "*Pause*"—a "*Pause*" accompanying the Communist's purportedly equally valid "*Silence*," and he does so precisely at a point where, from the party-political perspective, a political if not moral intervention would appear imperative. In short, what happens here is between the lines—between the discourses of state-political doctrine and Fascist doctrine—and it happens in the blink of an eye: it is the coming into being of a voice denying political loyalty or accountability to anyone. In this speechlessness, or rather because of this speechlessness, a destructive potential is revealed that otherwise would be tamed or veiled by the deadening power of civilized speech.<sup>43</sup>

## The Brothers

As the increasing clamor of an angry mob signals an uprising ("*Noise of crowds louder. Word-salad of FREEDOM GERMAN KILL THEM HANG THEM*"), the conversation between the brothers becomes more complex:

NAZI: The Night of the Long Knives. *Do you remember.*

I stood at your door. And I was your brother.

*Holds out his hand. The brother doesn't take it.*

But my brother had no hand free.

I am your brother.

COMMUNIST: I don't have a brother.

NAZI: Better switch off the light, brother. The Reichstag

Is burning bright enough. This is the Night

Of the Long Knives. (47, 78)

43. Cf. also the interview titled "Episches Theater" between Heiner Müller and Alexander Kluge, [http://muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu/en/video\\_record.php?f=106v](http://muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu/en/video_record.php?f=106v). On Müller's poetics of silence, see Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, "'...Die Wolken still / Sprachlos die Winde': Heiner Müllers Schweigen," in *AufBrüche: Theaterarbeit zwischen Text und Situation*, ed. Patrick Primavesi and Olaf A. Schmitt (Frankfurt a.M.: Theater der Zeit, 2004), 247–56.

Here Müller references the scene “The Night of the Long Knives” from his play *The Battle*,<sup>44</sup> involving a quarrel between two Communist brothers,<sup>45</sup> one of whom, after being arrested, tortured, and released by the Gestapo, is shunned by his brother and Communist comrades, who suspected him of being a traitor and possibly disclosing their identities under torture. Not long after, the Communist again is captured by the Gestapo, again tortured; but this time, already an outcast, he submits himself to the enemy (see 48, 78). If one follows the reference in *Germania* (1956/1971) to *The Battle* (1951/1974)—“Do you remember”—an ineluctable discrepancy evolves: in *The Battle* the brother who allegedly defected to the Nazis asks his Communist brother to kill him (“Give me what I ask for: To be dead”), and it appears that the fratricide does indeed follow: “I killed the traitor who’s my brother, him” (S 473, 142). Yet in *Germania*, which seems to resume where the scene in *The Battle* leaves off, the murder never transpires:

NAZI: When I left your door and went into the  
 Night of the Long Knives and the revolver  
 Fell from your hand onto the floorboards  
 Louder than any shot I’ve heard before  
 Or since, and the bullet for the traitor  
 For whom your brother begged on his knees  
 Stayed in the barrel. (49, 80)

If, only provisionally, we extend the dialogue between the two brothers into a dialogue between the two scenes, the question that arises is what to make of the Communist’s statement “I don’t have a brother” (47, 78). Notably, the brother does *not* suggest that once he had a brother whom he murdered and therefore has one *no longer*. That is to say, the sentence does not read, “I don’t have a brother *anymore*,” but rather, “I don’t have a brother.” It thus seems to allude to a moment and a time

44. “A: And when the Reichstag burned, the night turned day / In the door my brother stood, I look away. / B: I am your brother. / A: Are you sure. / And if you are, why are you coming here / Before my face, your hands all red / Of our comrades’ blood. If three times you were dead. / B: That’s what I want, brother, that’s why I came. / A: You call me brother. I won’t listen to that name. / Between us there’s a knife, they call it treason / And it is you who forged it. / B: And if it’s me and if my hand is red / Give me what I ask for: To be dead” (471, 141). Quotations from Heiner Müller’s *Die Schlacht* are followed by two sets of page numbers. The first set refers to Heiner Müller, *Die Schlacht*, in *Die Stücke*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2001); hereafter abbreviated as S. The second set refers to *The Battle: Plays, Prose, Poems by Heiner Müller*, ed. Carl Weber (New York: PAJ Publications, 1989). On *The Battle*, see also Frank-Michael Raddatz, “Die Schlacht,” in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 274–77.

45. The grotesque encounter between the two brothers as worked out in *The Battle* (“The Night of the Long Knives”) as well as *Germania Death in Berlin* (“The Brothers 2”) found a model in Brecht’s *Vorspiel* to his *Antigone* adaptation, set during the last days of the fighting in Berlin in April 1945. Here the diametrically oppositional reactions of two sisters in response to the death of their brother, murdered by the SS, are examined in light of their own lives, which are suddenly at stake should they be identified as the sisters of the presumed deserter—a situation, as in Müller, of tragic antinomies and equivocal moralities propelled by the confusions of war.

“when the Reichstag burned, and the night turned day” (S 471, 141), a time when the Communist *inwardly* deprived himself of his brother, and in consequence never actually had and never actually killed a brother. Beyond this intertextual reference—this ruptured reference—an abundance of political complexities comes into being. “Twenty years ago” the Communist forsook his brother after he had been tortured by the Gestapo and—*presumably*, yet not *actually*—committed treachery; and it was precisely the resulting ostracism that rendered the brother, in the course of his second “interrogation” by the Gestapo, an easy prey to the Nazis and victim to himself:

B: I bought—where there’s a dog there is a skin—  
 The brownshirt, carousels turn always right  
 You swing the truncheon and the victims groan.  
 That’s past. I looked deep down into myself.  
 The night of the long knives is asking who  
 Eats whom. *I am the one and I’m the other.*  
 There’s one too many. Who’ll cross out the other.  
 Take the revolver, do what I can’t do  
 So I’m a dog no longer but a corpse. (S 472f., 143)

The Communist reduces his brother’s “*I am the one and I’m the other*” to a narrative of friends and foes, thereby stigmatizing the brother as “traitor”:

A: While our comrades in the basements screamed  
 And long knives cut their swath across Berlin  
 I killed the traitor who’s my brother, him. (S 472f., 143)

The fatal implication of this all-too-simple designation of his brother as “traitor” now turns against the Communist: under the impression that the uprising has been quelled by Russian tanks (“*Noise of crowd decreases and is quickly fading in the distance. Noise of moving tanks,*” 51, 82), the other inmates unite against the Communist in order to kill him. It is only at this moment of extreme danger that he seems to conjure a “truth” he had denied to his brother (S 472, 142):

COMMUNIST: Those are the tanks. The ghost has vanished [Der Spuk ist vorbei].  
 NAZI: One of them should at least perish today [Wenigstens einer soll dran glauben heute].  
 GANDHI: He doesn’t want it any different. He won’t  
 See Communism anyway.  
 COMMUNIST: Who am I.  
*The three attack him.* (43, 82)

Expressed at a moment when he fears his own death, the Nazi brother’s comment “*I am the one and I’m the other*” corresponds with the Communist’s “Who

am I,” a comment also uttered in a moment of existential peril. The phrase “Who am I” is succeeded by a period rather than a question mark, since at this moment of imminent danger, certain power-political circumstances, beyond psychological motivation, concretize to an ineffaceable “truth” concerning his very own condition: for the inmates attacking the Communist, he is the suppressing state-socialist, a “traitor” (*Vaterlandsverräter*) and “Russian stooge” (*Russenknecht*). In that role, hearing the crowds outside getting louder, he screams to the prison guards: “Why don’t they shoot at them. This can’t be true. *Hammers against the door*. Comrades, defend the prison. Shoot now, shoot” (50, 81; 49, 79). In contrast to the state-Socialists who imprison him—people with whom in odd ways he keeps faith—he is a dissident and thus considered, like his Nazi brother, an “enemy” of the Socialist state (see 46, 77). Only now, at the moment of crisis, an understanding evolves according to which the question “Who am I?” very much amounts to conceptions of being-referred-to-as and being-described-as in the sense of “Who’ll cross out the other” (S 472f., 143). In Müller’s theater, the term “enemy” proves to be a vagrant constant, an unreliable signifier, not bound to any stable semantic content. The image of the enemy finds an “actual” (rather than “symbolic”) materialization on the Nazi’s back: engrained as scars resulting from the wounds inflicted by the Gestapo’s henchmen, later “freshened up” by the state-Socialists:

*Tears his jacket off, shows his back, covered with old scars.*

Do you recognize their handwriting. It’s

Still legible. It was a little faded

After twenty years, but your friends

Freshened them up, from the old maketh the new

So that my brother has something to read. (48, 78f.)

The scars inflicted by the Gestapo on the brother’s back are freshened up by the state-Socialists, yet in both cases these scars are “true,”<sup>46</sup> signifying a violent “truth” about Nazism in one case, a violent “truth” about state-socialism in another, the latter restoring the violent truth of the former, refreshing it by means of yet another *process of inscription*. The Communist’s brother, tortured by the Nazis as “Communist,” and stigmatized by his comrades as “Nazi,” again, is beaten by the state-Socialists as “Nazi.” This persistent conflation of the seemingly established dichotomies of friends and foes—the ongoing moments of description and inscription—amounts to a certain indistinguishability between guilt and innocence, between traitors and betrayed. Political discourses begin to falter, and the bases for moral judgments evaporate. This, however, essentially correlates with

46. The corresponding scene in *The Battle* reads: “A: Your shirt is brown, that is the truth today. / B: The truth today. You want to read it, brother. / Three weeks long I have been the paper he / Wrote his truth on, your enemy and mine. / *Takes off the brownshirt. On his chest a swastika formed by / fresh scars.* / And what was left of him who was your brother / Is the traitor” (S 472, 142).

Müller's dramaturgy. If bourgeois drama was specific with respect to variants of intersubjective confrontation, Müller's subject is deprived of the enemy. That is to say, instead of the presentation of a dialectically or oppositionally evolving *action*, the front lines are rendered diffuse and eviscerated—as typified by the Nibelungs, whose struggle follows no logic other than the programming of the very monstrous machine into which they themselves ultimately transform.<sup>47</sup>

The politics of enmity, seemingly instituting historical trajectories reaching from the mythical time of the Nibelungs over Tacitus's *Germania* to the divided German workers' movement and divided postwar Germany, comes to a halt in the scene "Night Piece," where the temptation of a continuous, teleological conception of history is subjected to a surreal experiment.

### The Human, Who Is Perhaps a Puppet

"Night Piece," inspired by Brecht's *Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* and Beckett's *Actes sans paroles*,<sup>48</sup> negotiates the grotesque situation of a *struggle without a definable enemy*:

A human stands on stage. He is larger than life-sized, perhaps a puppet. He is dressed in posters. His face is without a mouth. He regards his hands, moves the arms, tests his legs. A bicycle, from which the handlebars or pedals or both or handlebars, pedals and seat have been removed, rides quickly from right to left over the stage. The human, who is perhaps a puppet, runs after the bicycle. *A threshold rises from the stage floor. He stumbles over it and falls. Lying on his stomach he sees the bicycle disappear. The threshold disappears unseen by him. When he stands up and looks around for the cause of his fall, the stage-floor is flat again. His suspicion falls on his legs. He tries to tear them out in a seated position, on his back, standing. The heel against buttocks, holding the foot with both hands, he tears the left foot off, then, falling on his face, lying on his belly, the right leg.* He is still lying on his belly, when the bicycle slowly moves past him from left to right over the stage. He notices it too late and cannot crawl fast enough to catch it. Pulling himself up and supporting his swaying trunk with his hands, he makes the discovery that he can use his arms for locomotion, if he swings his trunk, pushes forward, following with his hands, etc. He practices the new mode of walking. He

47. The violence immanent in the German revolutionary workers' movement, including its intrinsic paradoxes, lies at the center of "The Brothers 2" and appears within *Germania*'s narrative topography as a *revenant*, a ghost already flitting through Tacitus's *Annales*. The fight between brothers here takes shape as that between two Cheruscan brothers yelling at each other across the waters of the Weser River. Flavius, "serving the Roman army," shouts from one bank of the river, and Arminius, putatively more patriotic than his brother and certainly more confident about his moral superiority, stands on the other bank. Yet in truth it seems as if Arminius accuses Flavius of being a "deserter" and "betrayers" (45, 76) as a way of coping with his own feelings of distress. The last sentence mentions only in passing that "Arminius was to be seen, threatening and challenging to combat: *he used the Latin tongue freely in his discourse, having once commanded a force of his countrymen in [the Roman] army*" (45, 76).

48. Cf. also Kalb, *Theater of Heiner Müller*, 166.

waits for the bicycle, first stage left, then stage right, at the gates. *The bicycle doesn't appear. The human, who is perhaps a puppet, tears off his left arm with his right and his right with his left, simultaneously.* Behind him the threshold rises from the stage floor to the level of his head, this time so that he doesn't fall over. From the gridiron comes the bicycle and remains standing before him. *Leaning against the head-high threshold, the human, who is perhaps a puppet, watches legs and arms, which lie widely scattered all over the stage, and the bicycle that he cannot use anymore.* He cries one tear with each eye. (52f., 82f.)

Much can be observed in this short passage. With respect to our question about the politics of enmity, it is striking that the dismemberment takes place in the absence of a visible enemy. The "human, who is perhaps a puppet," seeks to attain the bicycle, yet like the Nibelungs in their struggle, he merely fights what could be described as his alter ego, a person within himself, on the one hand, and the battlefield, in particular the ominous "threshold," on the other. While from our reader's perspective we can follow the first rising of the threshold and its disappearance, the human, who is perhaps a puppet, *cannot* see it, given that his perspective appears limited at that moment. Of course, what perpetuates the autodestructive procedure is the chase after or striving for the bicycle, an undertaking bringing about warlike consequences: that is, the loss of the limbs. And yet, what is missing is a *definable external enemy*, an ostensible condition once again precipitating fundamental correlatives on the performative level. A whole series of theatrical moments, showlike and playful, thwart the dramatic and thrust it aside: the motive of the puppet, the grotesque humor and clownish elements (such as the mechanical autodestruction), the crawling, the locomotive walking, moments of astonishment, perplexity, surprise, the irritation, the "suspicion," most of all, the horror or fright (*Schrecken*):

Two Beckett-spikes are moved in at eye level from left and right. They stop at the face of the human, who is perhaps a puppet; he need only turn his head once to the right, once left, the spikes take care of the rest. The spikes are withdrawn, each with an eye on the tip. Out of the empty eye cavities of the human, who is perhaps a puppet, lice crawl, spreading themselves black across his face. He screams. The mouth originates with the scream. (53, 83)

What is to be fathomed here—as was the case with the "screaming," "larger than life-sized" Nibelungs (24, 59)—is that the condition of the "larger than life-sized" (52, 82) human who is perhaps a puppet amounts to an experience of *crisis*. Asked about his understanding of the term *Schrecken*, Heiner Müller responded: "The instance of truth, *when the enemy appears in the mirror*."<sup>49</sup> Yet even the image

49. "Ein Gespräch zwischen Wolfgang Heise und Heiner Müller," 194.

of the “enemy” appearing in the mirror describes an ostensible dimension that proves untenable under close scrutiny: for what emerges beyond the militaristic terminology of “friends” and “enemies,” beyond any political discursiveness, is the *horror*, the *screaming*,<sup>50</sup> the experience of an in-between, between awareness and sorrow, consciousness and suffering.<sup>51</sup> The specificity of the existential experience of the “human, who is *perhaps* a puppet,” is rooted in the “*perhaps*,” for in spite of the “human’s” likely aspiration toward autonomy, he remains “puppet,” shrinking in the shadows of its own angst. The creaturely position of the human, who is perhaps a puppet, resonates, as we shall see, with Heiner Müller’s paradoxical authorial role.

### Hilse’s Cancer

The last variant of a politics of enmity discussed here brings the final scene of *Germania*, “Death in Berlin 2,” into focus. The scene takes place in a Berlin hospital, where, somewhat reminiscent of the Garbe figure in *The Scab* (*Der Lohndrücker*), Hilse, a bricklayer, has been hospitalized; his injuries appear to be the result of his refusal to participate in the workers’ strike of June 17, 1953—a stance that had provoked skinhead youths to throw rocks at him. The incident occurs in an earlier scene, “The Workers’ Monument”:

[HILSE] works. Youth, skinheads, with bicycles....

THIRD YOUTH: Hey. *Sudden idea*. Can you dance, Grandpa?

*Improvises a rock tune, throws in rhythm. The others join in.*

*All three throw stones in Rock-Rhythm at the Bricklayer.*

ALL THREE: Yeah—

THIRD: You are learning, pop.

FIRST: And faster, pop.

SECOND: Don’t fall asleep, pop.

THIRD: No quitting on us now....

*Hail of stones and finale. The Bricklayer collapses.*

SECOND: Looks like a workers’ monument [Arbeiterdenkmal].

FIRST *walks up to the Bricklayer*: Man. The guy is gone.

SECOND: Did you see anything?

50. The “scream” or “shout” is gesture, in that, in the words of Jacques Derrida, it has not yet been entirely frozen by “the articulation of language and logic”; as such it relates to “the aspect of oppressed gesture which remains in all speech, the unique and irreplaceable movement which the generalities of concept and repetition have never finished rejecting” (Derrida, “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978], 240).

51. On the pivotal notion of the “creature,” see Rainer Nägele, “Klassische Moderne,” in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 152–54; cf. Klaus Teichmann, *Der verwundete Körper: Zu Texten Heiner Müllers* (Freiburg: Burg-Verlag, 1989), esp. 91–93.

THIRD: A work place accident.

SECOND: Yeah, piecework is murder.

*The Three exit quickly.* (42–44; 74–76)

The Bricklayer Hilse (an allusion to Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Weavers*)<sup>52</sup> is stoned into a "workers' monument," tragically embodying the contradictions of the Socialist system. He keeps faith with the Socialist mission as putatively manifested by the state and, in this sense, disparages the striking workers as "traitors to the working-class" (*Arbeiterverräter*, 28, 63); but ironically it is precisely this kind of thinking in terms of friends and foes that fails to do justice to the "Young Bricklayer." Hilse never wonders why the Young Bricklayer takes part in the strike, although he seems sympathetic to the Socialist state and leaves no doubt about his return to work ("Here, hold my trowel until I'm back," 42, 74). It is this kind of ambiguity Hilse appears incapable of grasping, an ambiguity, in fact, implied in the scene's title, "Arbeiterdenkmal" ("Workers' Monument"): the word, of course, proleptically refers to the fossil *monument* "Hilse," made, it seems, for eternity but not for today's problems. On the other hand, "Arbeiterdenkmal" entails the imperative "Arbeiter, denk mal!," an imperative Hilse cannot hear or will not hear.

Surprisingly, then, Hilse is hospitalized ("Death in Berlin 2") *not* because of the rocks thrown at him but because of a hidden tumor indicative perhaps of a malignant tumor intrinsic to the revolutionary movement:

*Cancer Ward. Hilse. The Young Bricklayer.*

YOUNG BRICKLAYER: How are you, Old Man.

HILSE: I am not well. But I'm only one half

Of me, the cancer ate the other half.

And if you ask my cancer, he is fine.

YOUNG BRICKLAYER: I didn't know that. I was thinking

It was the bricks they had piled on your bones

At our building site two weeks ago

Because you didn't want to strike.

HILSE: That's what I thought, too. I know better now. (54, 84)

While Hilse and the Young Bricklayer first assume that *exterior class enemies*, the adolescent provocateurs, had injured Hilse, it is, in fact, an externally invisible

52. Hauptmann's play thematizes the uprising of the Silesian weavers of 1844, a historic date for the German proletarian movement's self-conception and a precursor as part of the official history of the GDR. Müller's Hilse figure implicitly refers to Hauptmann's Hilse, a Silesian weaver who, based on his religious understanding, refuses to participate in the weavers' uprising and, hit by a stray Prussian (that is, reactionary) bullet, ultimately dies, like Müller's Hilse, by the end of the play. For a Faustian reading of Müller's Hilse figure, see Karl Heinz Götzte, "Und keiner will der Kapitalist sein': Faust als Maurer in Heiner Müller's Stück *Germania Tod in Berlin*," *Cahiers d'Études Germaniques* 42 (2002): 319–37.

tumor that is the real threat to the proletarian icon. Ironically, the external attack provides the occasion for the discovery of the internal malady. The rocks thrown at Hilse constituted a mere *occasion* for the carcinoma to be discovered by the doctors. Not by chance, “cancer” is a conventional metaphor for a societal state of *enmity* (erupting in riots, turmoil and insurgencies),<sup>53</sup> such as the People’s Uprising of June 17, 1953, an event *without a visible external enemy*. “Cancer was never viewed other than . . . metaphorically, *the barbarian within*,” Susan Sontag writes in her study of disease as metaphor (*Illness as Metaphor*, 61). “The disease itself is conceived as . . . *enemy*” (66).<sup>54</sup> It is precisely the internalization that allows for a conceptualization of the invisible enemy, thereby bestowing meaning on what seems to defy understanding. What, to hasten this line of thought, impedes the mission of the Socialist state are *not* the “skinheaded” teenage troublemakers “with bicycles” (42, 74); they merely precipitate an understanding of the violent aspects inherent in the revolutionary movement—its tragic paradoxes as epitomized by the Russian tanks putting down the uprising of June 17, tanks sent for the protection of the “republic of workers” against its workers (see 51f., 82). Given this background, the metaphor of cancer adds yet another point in Müller’s theatrolgy of the *unascertainability of an external adversary*, displacing identifiable conflicts with a more ambiguous, figurative dimension. Seconds before his death, Hilse conjures up “the red banners . . . over Rhine and Ruhr,” envisioning the idea of a proletarian revolution throughout Germany (57, 86). But ultimately this merely remains the hallucinatory dream of an old man on his deathbed, a dream dying with him.

In contrast to the fossilized and terminally ill “workers’ monument” Hilse, the Young Bricklayer has come to terms with real socialism (*Realsozialismus*). He allows himself to unmask his beloved, “Whore 1,” the “Holy Virgin,” metaleptically figuring as the Communist Party (55f., 84f.): “What shall I do. She’s a whore,

53. The figurative definition of *cancer* reads, according to the *OED*: “Anything that frets, corrodes, corrupts, or consumes slowly and secretly.” By contrast, “the earliest literal definition of cancer,” Susan Sontag writes, “is a growth, lump, or protuberance, and the disease’s name—from the Greek *karkinos* and the Latin *cancer*, both meaning crab—was inspired . . . by the resemblance of an external tumor’s swollen veins to a crab’s legs; not as many people think, because a metastatic disease crawls or creeps like a crab” (Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978], 10).

54. Needless to say, “modern totalitarian movements, whether of the right or of the left, have been peculiarly—and revealingly—inclined to use disease imagery. . . . Stalinism was called . . . a cancer. . . . As was said in speeches about ‘the Jewish problem’ throughout the 1930s, to treat cancer, one must cut out much of the healthy tissue around it. . . . To describe a phenomenon as a cancer is an incitement to violence. The use of cancer in political discourse encourages fatalism and justifies ‘severe’ measures” (Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, 82–84). Conversely, the metaphors employed in descriptions of cancer as a disease are frequently drawn from military terminology: “Cancer cells do not simply multiply: they are ‘invasive.’” “With the patient’s body considered to be under attack (‘invasion’), the only treatment is counterattack.” “Cancer cells ‘colonize’ from the original tumor to far sites in the body. . . . Rarely are the body’s ‘defenses’ vigorous enough to obliterate a tumor that has established its own blood supply and consists of billions of destructive cells.” “Treatment,” Sontag writes, also “has a military flavor. Radiotherapy uses the metaphors of aerial warfare; patients are ‘bombarded’ with toxic rays. And chemotherapy is chemical warfare, using poisons. Treatment aims to ‘kill’ cancer cells (without, it is hoped, killing the patient)” (64f.).

you know" (54, 84). Notwithstanding this insight, the whore "Party" inhabiting real socialism does not forfeit any of her utopian beauty, the beauty of an "angel" indeed: "And now the crazy part: / It's just the way it was before. I'm drunk / The moment I catch sight of her" (55, 85). While old Hilse's conjured apparition, "Red Rosa [Luxemburg]" (56, 85), seems to come from the past, the specters invoked by the Young Bricklayer arrive from the future: "She is pregnant. She says it's mine" (56, 85). Ghosts do not differentiate between past and future, and so the legacy of Red Rosa seems unscathed; she may turn up any moment, but not as part of a vestal communism, like that which the cancer-ridden Hilse seeks to uphold irrespective of blatant contradictions. As it emerges in a "dialogue with the dead" and the unborn,<sup>55</sup> Red Rosa's role can only be that of a *potentiality*: as an event of novelty, an uncanny potentiality for the new.<sup>56</sup>

### Malfunction of the Müller-Machine, or the Drama of Surgery

What thus far has emerged as a politics of enmity in *Germania Death in Berlin* frequently appeared threatened, dramaturgically decelerated, and performatively undermined: undermined in the form of volatile attributions of "the" enemy, as with the seemingly cloned Nibelungs; vexed by confrontations of indistinguishable friends and foes ("The Brothers 2"); unsettled in the autodestructive struggle of a subject without a definable enemy ("Night Piece"); internalized as "metastatic" enemy ("Death in Berlin 2"), and so forth. What permeates all of these cases is a *discursive undefinability of "the" enemy* and a concurrent emphasis on the performative. For all the explicitly manifested strains of violence in *Germania* that are rhetorically eroded, one cannot help but get the impression of a certain fascination on Müller's part with the presented violence. Not by chance, the German Rotbuch edition of *Germania Death in Berlin* depicts on its cover a *New York Times* front page featuring articles on the convicted murderer Gary Gilmore and Japanese emperor Hirohito.<sup>57</sup> Müller dissipates all doubt as to his disinterest in any sort of moralizing critique of the slaughter, the gore, the brutality; indeed, he feeds it, and he colludes in it. "You must be complicit with the violence [Du mußt einverstanden sein mit der Gewalt], with the atrocity, so that you can describe it," runs the already-cited statement Müller made in an interview with Alexander Kluge. According to Müller the repeated incision in the scar is necessary, for "scars . . . of ancient wounds" are

55. Müller, *Jenseits der Nation*, 31. On Müller's incessant invocation of specters, see Hans-Thies Lehmann, "Heiner Müller's Spectres," in *Heiner Müller: ConTEXTS and HISTORY*, 87–96.

56. "An uncanny sentence from Brecht's *Fatzer*-fragment, which I cannot get out of my head these days: JUST AS GHOSTS CAME BEFORE OUT OF THE PAST / SO NOW LIKEWISE OUT OF THE FUTURE" (Müller, *Jenseits der Nation*, 62).

57. See Kalb, *Theater of Heiner Müller*, 144.

also “scars that cry for wounds [Narben die nach Wunden schreien].”<sup>58</sup> What suggests itself here is a predicament according to which Müller propels and perpetuates the bloodshed he poetically seeks to probe. Given this precarious double bind, what then, one may ask, are the implications of Müller’s *Einverständnis* with this violence under scrutiny? And what is the efficacy of Müller’s deliberate abstention from any moral commitment?

In a somewhat uncanny television interview with Kluge, which was televised in 1995 under the title “My Rendezvous with Death,”<sup>59</sup> Heiner Müller recounts a recent experience of undergoing surgery as a treatment for his throat cancer: Müller elaborates on what was removed from his esophagus and on the nature and intricacy of the seven-hour-long operation. He describes how he learned to make certain sounds again, to eat and swallow, and so on. What adds to the uncanniness of the interview is the sound of Müller’s still-debilitated voice, a condition not preventing him from smoking a Montecristo cigar. “Heiner Müller describes a *dramatic intervention* [*dramatischen Eingriff*] in his life: the removal of the esophagus,” an incipient intertitle reads. There is a certain correspondence between Müller’s experience as cancer patient and his performance as a writer, a correspondence between the surgical intervention (*Eingriff*) on Müller’s body and his own *Einverständnis* with the barbarism of history. Müller’s flesh is subjected to the hands of the surgeon, in German *Chirurg* (*cheirourgos*, in Greek *cheir*, “hand,” and *ergon*, “occupation, work”), the one who “works” with his “hands,” a *Handwerker*.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, an intervention takes place under the typing hands of the dramatist Müller, a “surgical” intervention in the cultural text of history. Müller is concerned with what it means to “to open up / mankind’s arteries like a book / to leaf through the bloodstream [Der Menschheit / Die Adern aufschlagen wie ein Buch / Im Blutstrom blättern].”<sup>61</sup> To leaf through the bloodstream, however, is possible only from a clinical, “immune,” perspective, that of a machine, as it were (32, 66). In his autobiography, he writes: “Art holds and requires a bloody root. Complicity with the horror, with the terror is part of the description [Das Einverständnis mit dem Schrecken, mit dem Terror gehört zur Beschreibung].”<sup>62</sup> *Einverständnis* implies a certain readiness for complicity, for to read violence always inevitably means to write violence, to perpetuate violence, in some cases with the professional fascination that a surgeon may feel about the idiosyncrasies of a tumor.

Given this backdrop, the position of the writer is a tenuous one. In fact, Müller himself alludes to the aporetic situation in retrospective comments about his

58. Heiner Müller, *Wolokolamsker Chaussee II: Wald bei Moskau*, in *Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 5:202.

59. [http://muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu/en/video\\_record.php?f=116](http://muller-kluge.library.cornell.edu/en/video_record.php?f=116).

60. *Das Herkunftswörterbuch*, 110.

61. Heiner Müller, *Anatomie Titus Fall of Rome: Ein Shakespearekommentar*, in *Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 5:99.

62. Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, 227.

surgery: “The truly interesting question is to what extent one becomes an *instrument*, a *vehicle* [Interessant ist eigentlich, wie sehr man Instrument wird, ein Vehikel].” During the removal of his esophagus, Müller became a “vehicle” under the hands of the surgeon—a mere instrument. His body becomes the “text” of a surgical dissection. Yet the surgeon himself only acts in response to the tumor, a violence beyond his reach, and from this perspective the surgeon also is a mere vehicle of a violence “assigned” to him in his professional role. This *medial position* is one pertinent to Müller in his professional role as a dramatist. On the one hand, he presents violence, instrumentalizes it according to his theatrically motivated working strategy, operating *einverständlich* on the corpus of the German history of violence. On the other hand, Müller himself is only a vehicle seeking to diagnose the tumors of German history. Even though the politics of enmity pervading *Germania* are frequently left in suspense, Müller still beckons and bequeaths violence, irrespective of discursive boundaries, regardless of history’s perpetrators or its victims.

This paradox, innate to Müller’s conception of *Einverständnis* (i.e., his readiness to put forth the very violence he seeks to explore), finds an oblique explication in his use of the *surgical* term *darstellen*:

I asked one of the doctors present about the course of the operation. And he responded: Well, there are at first [a cross section through the body and then a vertical transaction, and then there is . . . another transaction by the neck], and then we display the stomach [und dann stellen wir den Magen dar]. This vocabulary is interesting, the display of the stomach [die Darstellung des Magens]. That is to say, everything that constricts the view of the stomach is being cut away. That is the meaning of display [Das heißt darstellen].

The “display of the stomach” (*die Darstellung des Magens*) during the course of the removal of the esophagus signifies an act of cutting away tissue around the stomach, for the purpose of display as well as—Müller doesn’t go on to explain this—for the purpose of the “mobilization” of the stomach (*die Mobilisierung des Magens*), that is, the flexibility of the stomach in order to pull it up and stitch it to the remaining esophagus.<sup>63</sup> What matters in our context is that the surgical term *darstellen* denotes a destructive momentum, inherent in any surgical intervention, in the removal of a tumor and in the recovery of a patient. The surgeon extracts and displays (*stellt dar*) Müller’s stomach, he violently intervenes in the body’s texture with the ultimate goal of curing Müller; similarly, Müller’s art of *Darstellung*, bloody as it may be, ultimately serves to analyze a possible transgression or at least an understanding of the atrocity, the massacres, and the internecine struggles. Needless to say, the surgeon’s craft is an ensanguined one, yet *moral* considerations

63. Cf. A. F. Chernousov, P. M. Bogopolski, Y. I. Gallinger, et al., eds., *Chirurgie des Ösophagus: Operationsatlas* (Steinkopff: Darmstadt, 2003), 57, 209.

regarding the destructive nature of his performance appear—within the professional boundaries—as mistaken as the application of moral standards to Müller's ferocious dissections of the cultural text of violence. To be sure, Müller might take the effectiveness of his proclaimed "war against the audience" into consideration,<sup>64</sup> or perhaps he doesn't; in contrast, the surgeon very much has to reckon with the necessity of an aggressive intervention such as that of surgery.<sup>65</sup> The point is that *moral* concerns address neither the work of the surgeon nor that of the dramatist Heiner Müller; they would be entirely obtrusive during an operation or the writing of a play, and at times they would be fatal.

### Heiner Müller: Death in Berlin, or Conversation with a Ghost

My dialogue with Heiner Müller, who died of cancer on December 30, 1995, ten months after the eerily romantic elaboration in "My Rendezvous with Death," continues a series of "resurrections" (*Auferstehung*, 31, 66) that run through *Germania*. "I am not well. But I'm only one half / Of me, the cancer ate the other half," Hilse says to the Young Bricklayer in the cancer ward. Similarly, Müller describes his condition after the removal of his esophagus as "life with half of the machine." Whether as preoperative whole machine or postoperative half a machine, *being-machine* appears to be the *sine qua non* for Müller's poetic operations, his *Eingriffe*, surgical interventions in the cultural text: reading as machine, writing as machine. It is in this sense that Müller is interested in the "experience" of being operated on: "When you know, there is a date on which you either die or live, then that is a new situation, a new experience. And I was by all means interested in it as an experience."<sup>66</sup> Müller publicized his conversation with Kluge, sharing his elaborations on the expectation of death (a death that indeed was to take place some months after) as a kind of interview performance,<sup>67</sup> spoken from the stylized perspective of the author, including pictures from the intensive care unit. And by publicizing his "Rendezvous with Death," Müller seems to have added yet another scene to *Germania Death in Berlin*. Following those killed during the November Revolution (see 7, 45), "Germania" slain by Hitler (see 35, 67), the Communist's death

64. *Gesammelte Irrtümer* 2:20.

65. While *moral* concerns get to the core of neither the surgeon's nor the dramatist's work, doctors around the world, not without controversy, to be sure, still take the Hippocratic Oath pertaining to the ethical practice of medicine.

66. The very "command of one's own life" is what interests Müller in the death of Seneca, on which he also wrote a poem. In the face of governmental control over death, Müller remarks with regard to Seneca's suicide: "The only possibility to administer death oneself was to kill oneself, before one is being killed" (*Ich schulde der Welt einen Toten*, 17, 22).

67. Müller deemed interviews "performances," which is why he allegedly did not edit them. See Müller, *Gesammelte Irrtümer*, 2:155. See also Christian Schulte, "Wahrnehmungen am Nullpunkt der Sprache: Notizen zu Heiner Müller und Alexander Kluge," in *Der Text ist der Coyote*, 189–96; Olaf Schmitt, "Verausgabung, Opfer, Tod," in *Heiner Müller-Handbuch*, 62–69, here 68.

in the Berlin prison (see 52, 77), those killed during the People's Uprising on June 17, 1953 (see 51f., 82), the death of Hilse in the cancer ward, and the death of Red Rosa (whom he hallucinates rising from the Berlin Landwehrkanal [see 56, 86])—following all these *deaths* in *Berlin*, the play, begun in 1956 and published in 1971, seems to be continued by Heiner Müller's death in 1995. Müller, dead in Berlin, alive in his text, continues to haunt the pages, and with his spectral voice from the interview we can hear him shouting: "One must accept the presence of the dead as dialogue partners or dialogue disruptors—the future emerges solely from the dialogue with the dead."<sup>68</sup> But if we are to accept Müller as "dialogue partner or dialogue disruptor," then we might do so not in the sense of a past connected to the future, not in the sense of a future re-presenting ideas and projections, but in the sense of a potentiality inscribed in *Germania*, one perhaps not less uncanny than the many specters hovering throughout Müller's play. That is to say, we may accept the dead Müller as interlocutor, but with a full understanding of the radical uncertainty of the unrepresentable as the most genuine of presentations, including dialogical presentation. That alone may be all that is possible, though perhaps entirely natural when in conversation with a ghost.

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68. "Necrophilia is the love of the future," Müller writes (*Jenseits der Nation*, 31).

