

**War in Peacetime: Authorship between Bachmann and Ungaretti**

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*The following reflections contribute to an exploration of the “peacetime crimes” in Ingeborg Bachmann’s work by offering an analysis of an episode in her novel Malina. Tracing a hitherto unnoticed allusion to a poem by Ungaretti, the analysis also contributes to a discussion of Bachmann’s poetics of citation. The subtle web of intertextual play and citation that pervades the whole novel de-emphasizes the role of the author in literary history and opens instead a reading space where literature as textual memory, again and again, comes to be actualized.*

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**Introduction - Crimes in peacetime**

Throughout her whole work, Ingeborg Bachmann writes about questions that preoccupied her: about fascism, the Second World War, collective and personal guilt, the Holocaust and the silence about it that followed.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-1960s, she would develop a further question regarding these issues: where does the violence that leads to war come from? What happens to that violence when the war is over? Bachmann was planning several novels and texts, which were to be interconnected and in which she wanted to represent these issues. She named this project “Ways of Dying”—“*Todesarten-Projekt*”—and she went back and forth working on several of the novels, such as *The Book of Franza* and *Requiem for Fanny Goldmann*.<sup>2</sup>

In presenting her plan for the novel *The Book of Franza* (*Der Fall Franza*),

Bachmann develops a complex of ideas that is central to her poetics. She searches for the “virus of crime,” for something that has not vanished after the end of the war, that lingers in this world, that has not disappeared:

“Es ist mir und wahrscheinlich auch Ihnen oft durch den Kopf gegangen, wohin das Virus Verbrechen gegangen ist – es kann doch nicht vor zwanzig Jahren plötzlich aus unserer Welt verschwunden sein [...]”<sup>3</sup>

“I’ve often wondered, and perhaps it has passed through your minds as well, just where the virus of crime escaped to—it cannot have simply disappeared from our world twenty years ago [...] [i.e., in 1945]”<sup>4</sup>

In these pages, written around the mid-1960s, the author refers to a form of “private fascism” and to crimes that persist in peacetime and occur “within the boundaries of law and convention.” It is the task of literature to “uncover” these crimes, and to help comprehend these “ways of dying” (*Todesarten*) that, according to Bachmann, are caused by a situation or by someone, and that take place right “here.” She insists “[...] dass man hier eben nicht stirbt, hier wird man ermordet” (“indeed one does not die here, here one is being murdered”).<sup>5</sup>

In 1971, Bachmann replaces the war/peace dichotomy with a continuity of the two concepts:

Über den Krieg kann jeder etwas schreiben, und der Krieg ist immer schrecklich. Aber über den Frieden etwas zu schreiben, über das, was wir Frieden nennen, denn das ist der Krieg... Der Krieg, der wirkliche Krieg, ist nur die Explosion dieses Krieges, der der Frieden ist.

Anyone can write about war, and war is always terrible. But to write something about peace, about that which we call peace, for that is the war ... War, actual war, is but the explosion of this war, which is peace.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore: “Es ist ein so großer Irrtum zu glauben, dass man nur in einem Krieg ermordet wird [...] - man wird mitten im Frieden ermordet.” (“It is a terrible error to believe that one is only killed in a war (...) – one is being murdered in the midst of peace.”).<sup>7</sup> In Bachmann’s projected “series of novels”, one leitmotif that unfolds from one novel to the next is a meticulous literary exploration of these “peacetime crimes”, crimes

that are part and parcel of our daily lives, yet invisible through normalization. This exploration produced the only novel that Bachmann was able to publish in her lifetime: *Malina* (1971). The moment when “peace” begins to mean “war,” when words begin to connote their opposite, is the moment when the appearance of normality maintained by conventional language begins to fall apart. The etiology of the crimes (and diseases) is therefore inseparable from a critique of existing language, and from the struggle for a new language to describe them. In the context of Bachmann’s novel, this struggle for language takes place within the narrating subject itself. As many commentators have noted,<sup>8</sup> the novel *Malina* sees the creation of a double character, the figure of a double “self,” consisting of a feminine “I,” the first-person narrator, who searches for a language to narrate, and a Mr. Malina, historian and archivist, who listens to and collects the stories told by the feminine “I.”

In the unfinished novel *The Book of Franza*—discussed in greater detail in Sonja Boos’s contribution to this volume—, fascism is situated in the realm of the private: the title character Franziska Ranner is being ‘read to death.’ Her husband Leo Jordan claims for himself the authority to interpret her. Brutally imposing his own interpretations on her and her words, he systematically destroys Franza’s efforts to make sense of her words, her situation, and ultimately herself. Jordan is also said to be working on a book about the delayed aftereffects suffered by concentration camp inmates, while his wife Franza, in trying to escape from him, ends up encountering a medical doctor who has committed crimes during the war: war crimes and peacetime crimes turn out to be intimately connected.

In *Malina*, too, the war crimes of the past are not really past. They persist and reach into the present, and they surface in the book’s second chapter, where the narrating feminine “I” is haunted by nightmares of gas chambers, silencing, and situations reminiscent of deportation and the Shoah.<sup>9</sup> Society itself in its entirety is dubbed “the biggest murder scene” (“der allergrößte Mordschauplatz”), a site of “universal prostitution”, and a “universal black market.”<sup>10</sup> Violence pervades society and impacts the innermost construction of the self. In the whole novel, murder and destruction in the midst of peace are omnipresent themes. But here, what brings about the destruction of the “I” is more elusive than in *Franza*, harder to name, and part and parcel of the ‘everyday’ workings of language, society, and civilization itself.

“Die Gesellschaft ist der allergrößte Mordschauplatz. In der leichtesten Art sind in ihr seit jeher die Keime zu den unglaublichsten Verbrechen gelegt worden, die den Gerichten dieser Welt für immer unbekannt bleiben. [...] alle Friedensspiele, so geben sie sich nämlich aus, als wären es keine Kriegsspiele, [habe ich] in ihrer ganzen Ungeheuerlichkeit zu spüren bekommen.”<sup>11</sup>

“Society is the biggest murder scene of them all. In it the seeds of the most incredible crimes are sown in the subtlest manner, crimes which remain forever unknown to the courts of this world. [...] I [have] felt the full effects of these peace games – that's how they're passed off, as if they weren't really war games – in all their monstrousness.”<sup>12</sup>

How are we to understand this? What are these crimes that remain unknown to the courts?

### **War in peacetime - Marcel, the clochard**

One instance of a peacetime crime that surfaces in the novel *Malina* can illustrate, for the purposes of this essay, the sudden virulent indistinguishability between war and peace, and thus the nature of the crimes Bachmann explores in her novel. This is a passage problematizing the “representations of a time that one called the first post-war era” (“Darstellungen [...] von einer Zeit, die man die erste Nachkriegszeit nannte”).<sup>13</sup> The narrating “I” begins to tell the story of a clochard named Marcel, set in the “post-war” time when she herself was in Paris, and when the war was supposedly already a thing of the past:

“In Paris hatte ich meistens kein Geld, aber immer, wenn das Geld zu Ende ging, musste ich damit etwas Besonderes machen [...].

Damals, in der Nähe der **Rue Monge**, auf dem Weg zur **Place de la Contrescarpe**, kaufte ich in dem kleinen Bistro, das die ganze Nacht auf hatte, zwei Flaschen Rotwein, aber dann auch noch eine Flasche Weißwein [...]. Die Männer schliefen oder taten, als schliefen sie, und ich schlich zu ihnen hin und legte die Flaschen nieder, nahe genug, dass ein Irrtum ausgeschlossen war. Sie mussten verstehen, dass sie rechtens

ihnen gehörten [...] Unter den Männern in Paris, aber ich weiss nicht, ob es der in der Nacht aufgewachte war, hieß einer Marcel, nur sein Name blieb mir in Erinnerung, ein Stichwort neben anderen Stichworten wie **Rue Monge**, wie zwei oder drei Hotelnamen [...] Von Marcel aber weiß ich, dass er nicht mehr lebt, und er ist auf eine ungewöhnliche Art gestorben ...<sup>14</sup>

“In Paris I usually had no money, but always, whenever the money was coming to an end, I had to spend it on something special [...]. Back then, in the vicinity of the **Rue Monge**, on the way to **Place de la Contrescarpe**, I bought two bottles of red wine in a little bistro that was open all night, and then a bottle of white wine as well. [...] The men slept or acted as if they were sleeping, and I crept over to them and placed the bottles near enough to avoid misunderstanding. They had to understand the bottles were theirs by right. [...] Among the men in Paris, but I don't know whether it was he who had woken up in the night, there was one called **Marcel**, his name is all I remember, a catchword next to other catchwords like **Rue Monge**, like the name of two or three hotels [...] But I do know that Marcel is no longer alive, and that he died in a most unusual way] ...<sup>15</sup>

At this point, Malina interrupts the effort of the “I” to tell Marcel’s story. She retorts:

“[...] du wirst es noch bereuen, dass Du das sehr wunderliche Ende von Marcel nicht erfahren hast, **denn außer mir könnte es heute schon niemand mehr erzählen.**”<sup>16</sup>

“[...] later on you'll regret you didn't hear the very amazing end of Marcel : **apart from myself, there is nobody who could tell it any more today.**”<sup>17</sup>

What follows after this interruption is a long sequence mixing narration by the first-person narrator with her dialogues with Malina, all with a strong focus on an untellable

violence the “I” experiences. Finally, the narrator returns to the story of Marcel’s death:

“Marcel aber ist so gestorben: Eines Tages sollten alle clochards von Paris aus dem Stadtbild entfernt werden. Die Fürsorge, die alleröffentlichste Fürsorge, die auch für ein anständiges Stadtbild sorgt, ist zusammen mit der Polizei gekommen in die **Rue Monge**, und weiter wollte man nichts, nur die alten Männer zurückführen in das Leben und deswegen zuerst einmal waschen und säubern für das Leben. Marcel ist aufgestanden und mitgegangen, ein sehr friedlicher Mann, auch nach ein paar Gläsern Wein noch ein weiser, widerstandsloser Mann. Es war ihm vermutlich völlig gleichgültig an diesem Tag, dass sie kamen, und vielleicht dachte er auch, dass er wieder zurückkönnen auf seinen guten Platz auf der Straße, wo die warme Luft der Metro durch die Schächte heraufkommt. **Aber in dem Waschsaal, für das Gemeinwohl, mit den vielen Duschen, kam auch die Reihe an ihn, sie haben ihn unter die Dusche gestellt**, die sicher nicht zu heiss und nicht zu kalt war, nur ist er zum ersten Mal nackt gewesen nach vielen Jahren und unter das Wasser gekommen. **Ehe es jemand begreifen und nach ihm langen konnte, war er schon umgefallen und auf der Stelle tot.** Du siehst, was ich meine! Malina sieht mich etwas unsicher an [...] Aber ich spüre wieder einmal die Dusche, ich weiß, was man Marcel nicht hätte wegwaschen dürfen. Wenn jemand in der Ausdünstung seines Glücks lebt, wenn für jemand nicht mehr viel Worte da sind, sondern nur das ‚Vergelts Gott‘, ‚Gott soll es Ihnen vergelten‘, soll man ihn nicht zu waschen versuchen, nicht wegwaschen, was für jemand gut ist, jemand säubern wollen, für ein neues Leben, das es nicht gibt.”<sup>18</sup>

“Marcel, however, died in the following manner: One day all the clochards of Paris were to be removed from the city. The welfare office, which is also responsible for the city’s maintaining a decent image, entered the **Rue Monge** accompanied by the police, where they only wanted to reassimilate the old men into life, and the first step consisted in washing them and

making them clean for the same life. Marcel rose and went with them, a very peaceful man, moreover a wise, docile man even after a few glasses of wine. Presumably their coming that day didn't matter to him in the least, and maybe he also thought he'd be able to return to his good place on the street, where the warm air of the Metro wafted up through the gratings. **But inside the washroom, with the many showers for the public good, his turn came too, they placed him underneath the shower** which was certainly not too hot and not too cold, just that he was naked for the first time in many years and under water. **Before someone could understand what happening and grab him, he had already fallen dead on the spot.** You see what I mean! Malina looks at me a little unsure. [...] But I feel the shower once again, I know what it was they could not possibly have washed off Marcel. When someone is living in the vapors of his happiness, when he no longer has many words at his disposal, simply 'God bless you', 'May God reward you', then people should not attempt to wash him, should not wash off what is good for him, should not make him clean for a new life which does not exist."<sup>19</sup>

The peacetime effort is to clean up the city, to get the clochards ready for induction into civilized life. But just as the word "peace" begins to mean "war," so the well-meaning effort to 'take care of' the clochards suddenly takes on ominous overtones and reveals the violence inherent in it. The sudden appearance of a "washroom" equipped with many showers opens a breach between the present and the past of the Second World War by a metonymic transfer (washrooms / gas chambers - Holocaust) that reveals the continuity between the 'peaceful' effort to wash the clochard and the Holocaust, but also with a long list of other acts of "cleansing" throughout history. The war, as this breach suddenly makes clear, was never a thing of the past. It continues with different means. These washrooms are not gas chambers. They are just washrooms. And yet, Marcel immediately dies in one of them. Something about the effort to strip the clochard and to introduce him into "life" as understood by the authorities turns out to be murderous. The workings of civilization themselves turn out to be uncivil and indeed fatal.

### **Wars in peacetime - In memory of**

If we take a further step into a close reading of this episode, we discover a submerged archipelago of corresponding trans-textual breaches. More texts resurface, superimposed layers of citations, fragments, and names reappear and move between past and present, and between different languages: "... his name is all I remember, a catchword next to other catchwords" says the narrating feminine "I" in *Malina*.<sup>20</sup>

Marcel's story is part of a deeper web of repetitions, translations, coincidences, and memories that add more dimensions to Bachmann's passages on the figure of the clochard. The resonance between public showers and the gas chambers of a concentration camp is only a surface marker for much more pervasive cultural processes of repetitions and homologies through which patterns of violence propagate. What happens to Marcel the clochard is not the unique fate of a singular figure, but a symptom, part of a pattern by which historical precedents acquire sudden virulence in the present. The impacts of such fatal actualizations, while they create a singularity every time, will also with high probability continue to give rise to similar types of events, repeated again and again. To understand these, we must learn to read this web of intertextual allusions, memories, repetitions, and literary and cultural echoes that has the power to write the past forth into the present and future, but that also can teach us to understand them.

There is, for instance, the story of another Marcel that may have found its "continuation" in the Parisian story of Marcel the clochard in Bachmann's text: Marcel is also the name of the central figure of a 1916 poem by the famous Italian poet from the hermetic movement, Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970). The title of the poem is "In memoria."

IN MEMORIA

Si chiamava  
Moammed Sceab

Discendente  
di emiri di nomadi  
suicida  
perché non aveva più  
Patria

Amò la Francia  
e mutò nome

**Fu Marcel**  
**ma non era Francese**  
e non sapeva più  
vivere  
nella tenda dei suoi  
dove si ascolta la cantilena  
del Corano  
gustando un caffè

E non sapeva  
sciogliere  
il canto  
del suo abbandono

L'ho accompagnato  
insieme alla padrona dell'albergo  
dove abitavamo  
a Parigi  
**al numero 5 della rue des Carmes**  
appassito vicolo in discesa  
Riposa  
nel camposanto d'Ivry  
sobborgo che pare  
sempre  
in una giornata  
di una  
decomposta fiera

E forse io solo  
so ancora  
che visse

Locvizza il 30 settembre 1916

IN MEMORY OF

His name was  
Mohammed Sceab

Descendant  
of emirs of nomads  
a suicide  
because he had no homeland  
left

He loved France  
and changed his name

**He was Marcel  
but wasn't French**  
and no longer knew  
how to live  
in his people's tent  
where you hear the Koran  
being chanted  
while you savor your coffee

And he didn't know how  
to set free  
the song  
of his desolation

I went with him  
with the proprietress of the hotel  
where we lived  
in Paris  
**from number 5 Rue des Carmes**  
an old faded alley sloping downhill

He rests  
in the graveyard at Ivry  
a suburb that always  
seems  
like the day  
a fair breaks down

And perhaps only I  
still know  
he lived<sup>21</sup>

*Locvizza, September 30, 1916*

This poem is included in the selection of poems by Ungaretti that Ingeborg Bachmann translated into German and published in 1961. Here is her translation:

IN MEMORIAM

Er hieß  
Mohammed Sheab

Abkömmling  
von Emiren von Nomaden

Er beging Selbstmord  
weil er kein Land  
mehr hatte

Er liebte Frankreich  
und änderte seinen Namen

**Wurde Marcel  
war aber nicht Franzose**  
und konnte nicht mehr  
leben  
im Zelt der Seinen  
wo man dem Singsang  
des Korans lauscht  
einen Kaffee nippend

Und wußte nicht  
anzustimmen  
den Gesang  
seiner Verlassenheit

Ich habe ihm das Geleit gegeben  
zusammen mit der Besitzerin des Hotels  
in dem wir wohnten  
in Paris

**Nummer 5 rue des Carmes**  
schäbiges steiles Gäßchen

Er ruht  
auf dem Friedhof von Ivry  
Vorstadt die immer  
erscheint wie am Tag  
eines aufgelösten Jahrmarkts

Und ich allein  
weiß vielleicht noch  
daß er lebte.<sup>22</sup>

This Mohammed/Marcel, who commits suicide in Paris in 1913, has no homeland, is not French, and no longer knows how to live in his people's tent. He is also incapable of setting free the song of his desolation, of finding words for his predicament.

With this poem, Ungaretti turns poetic writing into an instrument destined to "exorcise death and oblivion," as Francois Livi writes in his interesting publication, *De Marco Polo à Savinio: écrivains italiens en langue française* [From Marco Polo to

Savinio: Italian writers in the French language<sup>23</sup>]. Ungaretti, born in Egypt to Italian parents, recalls his Parisian period, when he had lived in a hotel on 5 Rue des Carmes<sup>24</sup> in the 5<sup>th</sup> district with an old Lebanese friend who had been to school with him in Egypt: Mohammed Sheab. The poem “In memoriam”, which opens his first collection *The Buried Harbour* (*Le port enseveli, Il porto sepolto*, 1916), brings Mohammed’s existence and Mohammed’s/Marcel’s suffering back up from the “buried harbour,” brings it back from oblivion. In “Ungaretti commenta Ungaretti” (1963) the poet writes: “In Memory of,’ the evocation of the suicide of my friend Mohammed Sheab, symbolizes a crisis in society and individuals persisting today, derived from the meeting and clashing of different cultures, from the collision between political traditions and subsequent upheavals, and from the fatal historical development of humanity.”<sup>25</sup>

The poems collected in *The Buried Harbour* are accompanied by dates and topographical indications, the basic elements of a poetic diary.<sup>26</sup> As Bachmann mentions in her afterword to her translations of his poems, Ungaretti had written most of these poems on the front lines during the First World War: “Mitten im Krieg, in Udine, erschienen seine ersten Gedichte”<sup>27</sup> (“His first poems were published in Udine in 1916, in the midst of war.”) The re-evocation of Mohammed/Marcel in Paris serves as a symptom of a “fatal historical development of humanity.” As the introductory poem in Ungaretti’s first collection, it is “in memory” of a time in the youth of two people, who were strangers in Paris and in life: a Lebanese and an Italian, both first in Egypt and then in France, Sheab and Ungaretti. In the midst of war, surrounded by death, Ungaretti remembers the death of his friend. The young Ungaretti believed that war could have resolved his own existential crisis, but “not Sheab’s: that one”– as we are told by Ungaretti in 1963 –“is being resolved in a tragic manner in North Africa.”<sup>28</sup> Mohammed Sheab, the Arab, becomes posthumously the symbol of the repression (*Verdrängung*) of the Algerian War (1954-1962), a “nameless war” for France, as film director Bertrand Tavernier put it in 1991.<sup>29</sup>

So what is the function of this poem and its larger story within Bachmann’s novel? Since she translated it, we can be sure that Bachmann knew the poem well, and that she would have been attentive to the strong resonances between the story of Mohammad and that of Ungaretti himself. We can also trust that both stories would have struck a chord with her, too, since the poem was significant enough for her to include it

in her published selection. Furthermore, when the name “Marcel” returns in *Malina*, it is placed in Paris where Ungaretti’s friend Mohammed/Marcel lived and died. “Marcel” recurs as the name of someone who is lost between cultures and therefore literally “home”-less. There is thus ample support for considering the figure of Marcel, the clochard, as an allusion that evokes Ungaretti’s poem and brings the story of Mohammed Sceab (as well as of Ungaretti himself) into the novel. And a final parallel: Bachmann’s clochard and Ungaretti’s Marcel both died in Paris. And yet, there is a decisive difference here: underscoring the claim that one does not simply “die” here, but is murdered, one also does not simply commit suicide. Bachmann rewrites the “suicide” in the poem as a murder. In *Malina*, Marcel the clochard falls victim to the social machinations that arrogate to themselves the right to “clean” him, to strip him naked, to take control of his life and body and re-form him as they see fit, washed in order to make him “clean for a new life which does not exist.”<sup>30</sup> Even though no murderer can be arrested, and even though the reasons for Marcel’s sudden death remain mysterious, the novel leaves no doubt that he falls victim to a murderous violence. For a moment, in a flash, society itself appears as “the biggest murder scene.” The historical allusion to the gas chambers knots the story of Marcel into a web that links colonialism (the Algerian War, 1954-1962<sup>31</sup>), the First World War (Ungaretti), the Holocaust (washrooms/ gas chambers), and countless other ethnic and other types of “cleansing,” with the simple daily disrespect for the integrity and life of the individual. Bachmann exposes the patterns in which human beings over and over again feel, in a myriad of ways, entitled to take over the lives of others.

And if Ungaretti’s poetry aims to “exorcise death and oblivion,” Bachmann’s novel *Malina* focuses on the struggle to find a language capable of exposing those crimes, to narrate them, and, hopefully, to bring about change. The last verse of Ungaretti’s poem:

**And perhaps only I  
still know  
he lived**

E forse io solo  
so ancora  
che visse

translated by Bachmann as

Und ich allein  
weiß vielleicht noch  
daß er lebte<sup>32</sup>

echoes in the words of the narrating “I” in *Malina*, but with the addition of the problematic of “narrating” it “today”:

[...] außer mir könnte es heute schon niemand mehr erzählen.<sup>33</sup>

[...] **apart from myself, there is nobody who could tell it any more today.**<sup>34</sup>

A complex discussion about past and current events unfolds in Bachmann’s *Malina* without resorting to sociological criticism, politics or philosophical digression. Just the name “Marcel” given to us by Bachmann as a kind of keyword (“his name is all I remember, a catchword next to other catchwords”)<sup>35</sup> is sufficient to expose these multiple layers, and to articulate a profound critique of violence in the most delicate and subtle manner.

### **Authorship and the poetics of quotation**

Bachmann creates a strong relationship between works through allusions, reframings, and citations, attentive at every turn to the potential of what we could call the actualization of literature. With a well-known and by now often cited turn of phrase, Bachmann in an interview articulates a very provocative poetics of quotation. She argues that for her, citations do not exist; rather, she only uses (and gives a new twist to) sentences that she would have liked to have written herself (“[...] ich verwende nur Sätze, die ich gern selbst geschrieben hätte”<sup>36</sup>). The act of repetition is more than a citation of a past memory. It adds a new “use” and “twist” (“ich verwende...”) that brings incomplete, unfulfilled dimensions of earlier works to a new actuality in the present, or simply re-reads them—e.g. by pointing out that a suicide can also be a murder. Italo Svevo, cited by Bachmann in the third of her *Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics* (1959/1960), describes this procedure when he casts the present as the conductor of an orchestra, who gives the cue for pieces of the past to sound: “In die Gegenwart wirkt nur jener Teil des Vergangenen hinein, der dazu bestimmt ist, sie zu erhellen oder zu verdunkeln.” (“The only aspect of the past that has an effect on the present is one destined to

illuminate or obscure the latter”)<sup>37</sup>. In any such actualization, the word, text, or sentence straddles two contexts, neither one of which can claim to fully determine its significance.<sup>38</sup> Found sentences are actualized as we, the living, come to language (*zur Sprache kommen*) in them.

Bachmann’s writing is thus intensely intertextual<sup>39</sup> for a reason: each citation enters into a new context governed by a precise and self-reflexive logic that not only invokes the past, but also gives it new significance. Each quotation plays an essential role for the understanding of the new context into which it is inserted, on which it comments, to which it speaks, and in which it assumes a new value. The act of quotation actualizes the text, recasts it, and infuses it with a new breath. In her *Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics* Bachmann refers to “literature as utopia,” to literature as an art which “sets the Incomplete in motion” (“bringt das Unvollendete in Gang”)<sup>40</sup> Musil called this “a lost important statement” (“eine verloren gegangene wichtige Äusserung”)<sup>41</sup>, a possibility that got lost, but can be taken up again today. Literature is utopian precisely because it is never closed, never complete, always ‘*unvollendet*.’ Bachmann’s use of names and fragmentary quotations leads us to discover new possibilities for a cited figure or a cited work. The first name Marcel connects Bachmann’s text to another poetic context that goes beyond the German literary tradition. This act of transfer, allusion, and translation, this movement between languages, cultures, and contexts, often remains indiscernible to the monolingual and mono-contextual reader, who cannot be expected to recognize the first name of a person that alludes to an Italian poem.

The story of Marcel, whose death is recalled by Ungaretti during the First World War in 1916, and thus by a poet who himself had moved between cultures, is evoked and reinterpreted again by Bachmann after the Second World War, and just after what she calls the “first escape” of the narrating feminine “I” from Vienna to Paris. The movement of people between languages and cultures, the movement of words and sentences between contexts, is not the exception, but the rule. There is no firm ground on which we could plant ourselves with both feet. “Clochard” derives from the verb “clocher,” to “halt, limp, hobble” from the Latin word *cloppus* “lame” and *cloppicare* “to limp.”<sup>42</sup> In this sense, we are all clochards, crossing from context to context, and so do all of our sentences and texts. There is no originary and unified authorial intention or meaning in a bit of text, because language and history live in what and how we repeat,

cite, and transform it again and again—today.

### Parisian topography and the memory of literature

Yet another system of cross-references, finally, unfolds a Parisian topography that situates Marcel's story in the fifth arrondissement in Paris, a system further overdetermined by the fact that Bachmann shared this topography with Paul Celan. Ungaretti's poem "In Memoria," is placed in a constellation with Celan's poem "La Contrescarpe" (1963)<sup>43</sup>, to which Bachmann also alludes (and which evokes, among other things, the *Kristallnacht* and the Holocaust), but also with Bachmann's own poem "Hotel de la Paix" (1957). Together, these form a dense literary topography which leads the reader to explore further traces: Ungaretti's Marcel lived in the rue des Carmes (5<sup>th</sup> arr.), which, just like Bachmann's rue Monge, where the "I" in *Malina* encounters Marcel, begins at the Boulevard St. Germain. The rue Monge hugs the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, while the short rue des Carmes, which already ends at the rue des Écoles, via its natural extension (the rue Vallette) points directly at the Panthéon. There, on the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, Bachmann had stayed in December 1956 in the Hôtel de la Paix,<sup>44</sup> at 6 rue de Blainville, a short street, one end of which opens onto the Place de la Contrescarpe, and on the other, via the rue de l'Estrapade, leads to the rue d'Ulm, where Celan was working at the École Normale Supérieure. All of the poems and characters are thus situated in tight proximity to each other by these topographic references. Concerning the allusions to Paul Celan, these are only very few of a great many in the novel *Malina* (1971), such as the allusions to Celan's poems from *Mohn und Gedächtnis* in "The Mysteries of the Princess of Kagran" (*Malina*, first chapter), and some of the dreams in the second chapter. The story of Marcel in *Malina* feeds into this web of references to Paul Celan, not only because of the Parisian topography, but in many other ways. Paul Celan, too, came from another country, changed his name, moved between languages, and suffered long-term damages from a war that never ceased to haunt him. And in this sense, like that of Marcel, Paul Celan's death in Paris is a suicide that was murder.<sup>45</sup>

As Judith Schlanger puts it in *La mémoire des œuvres*,

“[...] cultural memory allows the coexistence of elements that are different in many ways, and of different ages. They appear together because they exist in the present state of memory, but they do not derive from the same past.”<sup>46</sup>

The various historical past times lodged in the memory of literature are called up in Bachmann’s work, and they serve as a rich reservoir that we can draw on as we, in an “act of taking charge,”<sup>47</sup> create our actuality today.

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Translated from the French by Claire-Anne Gormally and Barbara Agnese

<sup>1</sup>One could invoke, for instance, the poem “Early Noon” (“Früher Mittag,” 1952), which notes that “seven years later,” after the end of the war, the executioners are still in power; or the story “Among Murderers and Madmen” (“Unter Mördern und Irren”) in *The Thirtieth Year* (*Das dreissigste Jahr*, 1961). For more on this topic see my article “La présence de la Shoah et le problème de sa représentation dans l'oeuvre de Ingeborg Bachmann”, in *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah*, 201, 2014, 459-478.

<sup>2</sup>The project “ways of dying” was only reconstructed and edited in the critical edition by Dirk Götsche and Monika Albrecht, published in 1995: « *Todesarten* »-Projekt, Munich/Zürich, Piper 1995. Large sections of it were, however, already included in the third volume of the first posthumous edition *Werke* in 4 Bänden (1978).

<sup>3</sup>Bachmann. *Der Fall Franza*, in *Werke*, III. Ed. by C. Münster, Ch. Koschel, I. v Weidenbaum, Munich/Zurich: Piper, 1982, 341.

<sup>4</sup>Bachmann, *The Book of Franza*. Transl. from the German by Peter Filkins. Evanston, Ill.: Hydra Books / Northwestern U.P., 1999, 3.

<sup>5</sup>*Malina*, in: *Werke*, III, 256; for the translation, compare *Malina: a Novel*, Transl. by Philip Boehm. With an afterword by Mark Anderson, New York: Holmes & Meier 1990, 155; translation modified.

<sup>6</sup>Bachmann. Interview with Dieter Zillinger, 1971. In: Bachmann. *Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden. Gespräche und Interviews*. Ed. by C. Koschel / I. von Weidenbaum. Munich/Zurich. Piper 1983, p. 70. (My translation)

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 89. (My translation)

<sup>8</sup>For example Hans Höller *Ingeborg Bachmann. Das Werk. Von den frühesten Gedichten bis zum « Todesarten »-Zyklus* (1987) ; Sabine Grimkowski-Seiler, “Das erzählerische Ich und sein Doppelgänger. Zur Erzählstruktur im Roman *Malina*,” in: *Il confronto letterario*, 14, 1991, 51-60.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Christine Steinhoff, *Ingeborg Bachmanns Poetologie des Traumes* (Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2008).

<sup>10</sup>Bachmann. *Malina: a Novel*, 172, 173.

<sup>11</sup>Bachmann. *Malina*, in: *Werke*, III, 276.

<sup>12</sup>Bachmann. *Malina: a Novel*, 182.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. *Malina*, in: *Werke*, III, 261 (*Malina. A Novel*, 172). The narrating “I” mentions a trip to Paris that she undertook in the years after the war. This could be an autobiographical reference to a journey to Paris (where she visited Paul Celan) and to London that Bachmann undertook in October 1950. See Bachmann / Celan. *Herzzeit. Ingeborg Bachmann – Paul Celan. Der Briefwechsel*, eds. Bertrand Badiou, Hans Höller, Andrea Stoll and Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2008), 16-21.

<sup>14</sup>*Malina*, in: *Werke* III, 264-265; emphasis mine.

<sup>15</sup>*Malina: a Novel*, 174-175; translation modified; emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup>*Malina*, in: *Werke* III, 265; emphasis mine.

<sup>17</sup>*Malina: a Novel*, 175; translation modified; emphasis mine.

<sup>18</sup>*Malina*, in: *Werke*, III, 282-283; emphasis mine.

<sup>19</sup>*Malina: a Novel*, 186-187; translation modified; emphasis mine.

<sup>20</sup>*Malina: a Novel*, 174.

<sup>21</sup>Giuseppe Ungaretti, *Selected Poems*, Bilingual edition. Transl. *introduction, and notes* by Andrew Frisardi (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2002), pp. 12-15; emphasis mine.

<sup>22</sup>Ungaretti, transl. from Italian by Ingeborg Bachmann, in: *Werke*, vol. I, 520-523; emphasis mine.

<sup>23</sup>François Livi, “Ungaretti et le français : la langue de l'avant-garde?”, in F. Livi (ed.), foreword by Christian Bec, *De Marco Polo a Savinio: écrivains italiens en langue française*, 147.

<sup>24</sup>This was a hotel, 5 rue des Carmes, between the rue des Écoles and the Boulevard St.Germain. Today, a commemorative plaque can be seen at 5 rue des Carmes (Hotel des Carmes) : “Dans cette maison avait vécu durant l'été 1913 Giuseppe Ungaretti, poète italien (1888-1970) ». (“The Italian poet Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970) lived here in the summer of 1913”). See Alain Dautriat, *Sur les murs de Paris. Guide aux plaques commémoratives* (Paris: Éd. de l'Inventaire, 1999), 49.

<sup>25</sup>[...] *In memoria*, rievocazione del suicidio del mio compagno Mohammed Sceab, é il simbolo d'una crisi della società e degli individui che ancora perdura, derivata dall'incontro e scontro di civiltà diverse e dall'urto e conseguenti rivolgimenti tra le tradizioni politiche e il fatale evolversi storico dell'umanità. Giuseppe Ungaretti. “Ungaretti commenta Ungaretti” (1963). In: *Vita d'un uomo. Saggi e interventi*, a cura di M. Diacono e L. Rebay (Milano: Mondadori, 1974), p. 819; (first published in: *La Fiera Letteraria*, XVIII, n. 37, 15 sept., 1963, p. 1-2 et XVIII, no 38, 22 sept. 1963 p. 1-2). (My translation)

<sup>26</sup>Each of the poems of this volume, Ungaretti's first, is tagged with the date and place of composition. Two of the poems were written in December, 1915, and twenty-eight were composed between April, 1916, and September, 1916. “Il porto sepolto” forms one of three parts of a larger collection, *Allegria di naufragi* (1919; *The Joy of Shipwrecks*). The

“harbor” that is “buried” alludes to Alexandria of Egypt, the city where Ungaretti was born. The harbor became mythic for Ungaretti. Like the lost city of Atlantis, the legendary harbor came to represent the depths of the human psyche for him. In Bachmann’s selection and translation of Ungaretti’s poems, just like in the Italian original, the poem titled “Il porto sepolto” (“Der begrabene Hafen”, “The Buried Harbor”) follows immediately after the poem “In memory of”: the poet finds, so to speak, the words for his memory in the buried harbor, as expressed in the first lines of the poem: “Der begrabene Hafen / Dort kommt der Dichter an / und wendet sich dann zum Licht mit seinen Gesängen” [...], *Werke*, I, op. cit., 525 [The buried harbour / The poets arrives there/ and then returns to the light with his songs].

<sup>27</sup>Bachmann, *Werke* I, 616. (My translation, BA).

<sup>28</sup>“Ungaretti commenta Ungaretti” (1963), op. cit., 819 : “[...] in memoria di quelle crisi che mi avevano portato ad accettare quella guerra credendo che quella guerra potesse risolvere la mia crisi, non quella di Sceb: quella di Sceb la stanno risolvendo tragicamente nell’Africa settentrionale i popoli della sua lingua.” (My translation)

<sup>29</sup>Bertrand Tavernier, Patrick Rotman, *La guerre sans nom*, documentary film, 1991 (GMT productions, Little Bear, Canal plus). See also Patrick Rotman/Bertrand Tavernier, *La Guerre sans nom. Les appelés d’Algérie* (Paris, Seuil 1992).

<sup>30</sup>Bachmann. *Malina: a Novel*, 187.

<sup>31</sup>This happens in 1963 for Ungaretti, and it is also a factor for Bachmann, who translates Ungaretti in 1961, but who already in 1956 had spent the month of December in Paris, where she felt oppressed by the “backlash of the political events” (of the Algerian war). Cf. the letter to K. Piper from December 1, 1956, quoted in Albrecht, Monika, Götttsche, Dirk (eds.), *Bachmann-Handbuch*, 8; (my translation).

<sup>32</sup>Bachmann. *Werke*, I, 523.

<sup>33</sup>Bachmann. *Malina*, in: *Werke* III, 265.

<sup>34</sup>*Malina: a Novel*, 175; translation modified.

<sup>35</sup>*Malina: a Novel*, 174.

<sup>36</sup>Bachmann, *Wir müssen wahre Sätze finden*, 71.

<sup>37</sup>Bachmann, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, in: *Werke*, IV, 230. (My translation)

<sup>38</sup>On this, see also Barbara Agnese, *Der Engel der Literatur. Zum philosophischen Vermächtnis Ingeborg Bachmanns* (Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1996), 254-255.

<sup>39</sup>Gerard Genette’s restricted conception of intertextuality as the actual presence of a text within another is not very useful for reading Bachmann’s texts. Already in earlier texts, e.g. in her poem “Früher Mittag” (1952), Bachmann articulates a critical commentary of the time (in this case the post-war era) by means of intertextual allusions. She cites classics of German literature such as Goethe’s “Der König von Thule” and Wilhelm Müller’s “Lindenbaum” from Schubert’s “Winterreise.” These references, however, through their actual presence in the text, not only embody the literary tradition before the Holocaust, but also contribute images that, through the comparison with other images in the poem and the resulting contrast, immediately

destabilize that tradition in light of the recent trauma of the war. (Cf. Eva B. Revesz. "Poetry after Auschwitz. Tracing Trauma in Ingeborg Bachmanns Lyric," *Monatshefte*, 99, n 2, 2007, 202.) Contrast and intertextuality can also be effected, as in the novel *Malina*, via the presence of languages other than German, for example "in fuoco d'amor mi mise" or "To the only begetter" (*Malina*, Werke III, p. 95). In those cases, it is also the foreign nature of the text that attracts our attention. Through her multilingual text, Bachmann suggests an irruption, an intrusion, or simply a memory. The text is not immediately intelligible, translatable, and its origin is not clear, yet it stands out through its foreign nature in the body of the work.

<sup>40</sup>Bachmann. *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, in: *Werke*, IV, 268.

<sup>41</sup>Bachmann mentions this sentence in her Essay on Musil "Ins Tausendjährige Reich" from 1954 (*Werke*, vol. IV, op.cit., 28). The passage is found in: R. Musil, "Gedanken zu einem Vorwort" ("Thoughts about a Preface") in: *Gesammelte Werke in neun Bänden*, ed. by A. Frisé, (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981<sup>2</sup>, vol. V, 1818.

<sup>42</sup><https://archive.org/stream/etymologicaldict00bracrich#page/84/mode/1up> and <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clochard>. At first glance, all of these deaths and murders seem to be only indirectly related to the narrator of the novel herself. Yet the introduction of her memories about her "first escape" to Paris indicate that she, too, is a *clochard*. In *Malina*, the story of Marcel is immediately preceded by the otherwise strange detail that during her "first escape from Vienna," the narrating "I" experienced a sudden pain in her left foot, so that she temporarily could not step on it. She, too, limps. Like the *clochards*, at that moment she also suddenly uses the word "God." The *clochards'* fate is not only that of someone who has left one country or one language and never arrived at another, who is called by another name in a different language, or who is two persons in one, torn ("*Zerrissene*") in an extreme tension that is not livable ("lebbar", *Malina*, Werke III, 248). It is the fate of all of us who confine the words within only one language, but need the life and utopia of the possibilities which are still open. To articulate those, we constantly need to step out of one context and into another.

<sup>43</sup>Celan, Paul. "la Contrescarpe", in: *Die Niemandsrose* (1963), *Gesammelte Werke*, I (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), 282-283.

<sup>44</sup>Bachmann, "Hotel de la Paix" (1957), in: *Werke*, vol. I, 152. Vgl. *Bachmann-Handbuch*, 8.

<sup>45</sup>Paul Celan died in 1970 by drowning in the river Seine, possibly by jumping off the Pont Mirabeau, which is located near where Celan was living in the last period of his life (6, av. Emile Zola, in the 15<sup>th</sup> arrondissement in Paris). *Celan-Handbuch*, p. 15: „In der Nacht vom 19. zum 20. April 1970 hat Paul Celan, wahrscheinlich am Pont Mirabeau, den Freitod in der Seine gesucht." This location opens yet another link in the chain of intertextual allusions that we cannot follow in detail any more, but that lead from Apollinaire, Ungaretti's friend, all the way to Bachmann. Guillaume Apollinaire's poem "Le pont Mirabeau" is cited by Bachmann in her poem "Die Brücken" (1953) and in her

*Frankfurter Vorlesungen*. (On this, see Sabine Gölz, "'Pont Mirabeau... Waterloo Bridge...' A Contrastive Reading of Apollinaire's 'Le Pont Mirabeau' and Ingeborg Bachmann's 'Die Brücken'." in: Gisela Brinker-Gabler, Markus Zisselberger (eds), *If We Had the Word. "Ingeborg Bachmann. Views and Reviews* (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 2004), 47-92). Born in Rome, Apollinaire was a friend of Ungaretti's during the latter's Parisian period, had received and liked Ungaretti's poems (*Il porto sepolto*, Udine 1916, included in 1919 in *L'Allegria*), and had written his own war poems in April 1918: *Calligrammes. Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre 1913-1916*. Apollinaire had translated Ungaretti's "In memoria" into French in 1917, one year before his own death, under the title "Dédicace du port enseveli," see Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet (8 place du Panthéon), Fonds Pierre Reverdy, Autograph manuscript, French translation of Giuseppe Ungaretti's poem. Autograph. note at the back of the 2<sup>nd</sup> page. Manuscript featured in a collection of texts proposed by the periodical "Nord-Sud." Donation by Marguerite Maugt.

<http://www.calames.abes.fr/Pub/#details?id=FRPALME0000000000300-138-1-70-1>. For the publication of the translation of the first version of this poem translated into French by **Apollinaire** see Franca Bruera, *Apollinaire & C. Ungaretti, Savinio, Sanguineti* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1991), "Apollinaire traduttore di Ungaretti," 29-30. Francois Livi had published this translation, ascribing it to Ungaretti himself, 1990 in: *Revue des études italiennes*.

<sup>46</sup>Judith Schlanger, *La mémoire des oeuvres*, 114 : "[...] la mémoire culturelle fait coexister des éléments qui sont divers à beaucoup d'égards, et divers aussi par leur âge. Ils sont présents ensemble, puisque ils coexistent dans l'actualité de la mémoire, mais ils ne proviennent pas tous du même passé." (My translation)

<sup>47</sup>Judith Schlanger speaks of an "acte de prise en charge," *ibid.*, 116.

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