HEINER MÜLLER
motif: MASK/METAmorphosis/
METAphor: theatricality/METAtheatricality

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Abstract

The late postmodern texts by East-German playwright Heiner Müller are intricately structured historical-mythological montages characterized by an insurgent fragmentation of 'dramatic action' and a cryptic density of verbal and visual metaphorization. Indeed, Müller's radical dramaturgical approach has been described as the 'poetics of destruction', a term which pertains to the dramatist's own theories about the contemporary exigencies of maintaining the vital social and political function of the theater.

Texts such as Die Hamletmaschine are frequently evaluated as incoherent and abstruse disfigurements of the original from which they are derived. It is the purpose of this study to examine two closely related plays of Müller's late canon -- Die Hamletmaschine (1977) and Der Auftrag (1979) -- and to reveal the striking consistency and coherence of the postmodern dramatist's transposition of a fourfold motif-cluster from Shakespeare's Hamlet.

However, the author's exegetical analyses aim not only at an investigation of Müller's postmodern aesthetical aberrations. They reveal, moreover, how the Shakespearean motif-cluster becomes the marxist's tool to assimilate the historical and political context of the late 1970's from a marxist perspective. The two texts selected from Müller's canon investigate the possibility and the reasons for the failure of the socialist-marxist and the French revolutions. Concurrently, the two dramas focus on the 'authentic' role and function of the intellectual revolutionary in the
The transposition of the "Shakespearean" theatrum-mundi metaphor, furthermore, allows Müller to integrate a coherent metatheatrical dimension into his plays. In Die Hamletmaschine, the dramatist contemplates the social and political function of the theater and of the 'intellectual' theater-maker within the contemporary historical context of 1977. In Der Auftrag, the metatheatrical dimension of the motif-cluster implicitly criticizes the political structure of the theater as an institution as well as the hierarchical mechanisms of conventional theater-making.
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Introduction

The East-German playwright Heiner Müller is possibly one of the most celebrated as well as most controversial literary figures emerging from post-war Germany. He is described as "der sprach-mächtigste und politisch wie theoretisch strengste und anspruchsvollste Dramatiker im deutschsprachigen Raum,"(1) and has often been identified as the most significant and influential German dramatist since Brecht(2). This is not an over-estimation of the writer's position in the contemporary history of dramatic literature and the theater. After almost forty years of productivity, the Müller canon has consolidated the notion that the playwright's talent has to be integrated amongst the greatest literary figures of the 20th century.

His early works display a great affinity to his initial "tutor" Brecht who exerted a creative influence on the young marxist playwright's use of language as well as on his dramaturgical approach. In his later plays, however, Müller moves systematically away from the dramaturgical models he initially used and beyond the confidence in marxist ideology as an absolute and schematized perception of reality and history. In these late works, critics generally recognize his affinity to such diverse writers as Genet, Kafka, Lautreamont, Artaud, and Beckett. The faith in rationalism and in the dialectical evolution of history is replaced with an increasing preoccupation with the irrational and with a pseudo-existentialist and nihilistic vision of man's present and future.

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condition(3). Whereas the style of the plays written in the 1950's and 1960's still exposes the dramatist's roots in Brecht's theories of a didactic theater as well as a tentative adherence to the literary dogma of socialist realism, his late works display a striking kinship to surrealism, neo-expressionism and the Artaudian theater of cruelty.

Heiner Müller was born in 1929 and grew up in a working-class environment as the son of an official of the German social-democratic party and a textile worker. In 1933, his father was arrested and imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp, and, as Müller explains, his "first experience of politics and the state was thus a confrontation with acts of violence."(4) Moreover, his childhood was marked, as he points out, by a strange schizophrenia between the proletarian family background and the "external" political context of German Fascism. Political conflict was thus an integral part of his childhood experience. Shortly before the end of the war, he was commissioned into the 'Reichsarbeitsdienst' and served for a very short period of time in the German army. After the war, he pursued a career as a journalist for several years and began to write first literary works. He was asked to become a member of and to work for the East-German writers' association, and by the early 1950's he began to write for the theater.

Heiner Müller's career has followed a problematic and erratic course. The reception of his oeuvre vascillates ambivalently between the evaluation of the dramatist as an outstanding and unusually gifted poet and the denunciation of his radical approach
to the classics and to the dramatic tradition in general. In the East, he was confronted with his expulsion from the East German writers' association in 1962 (for his play Die Umsiederlin oder Das Leben auf dem Lande), as well as with a fierce ideological critique articulated against him during the 11th plenary session of the SED in 1966 (in response to his play Der Bau). Moreover, in 1973, his adaptation of Shakespeare's Macbeth generated a vehement debate (instigated by Wolfgang Harich) which was taken up even in West-Germany. His work was denounced as, for example, "[eine] modernistische Verramschung und Enthumanisierung des Kulturerbes," he was accused of "literarische[m] Parasitentum" and diagnosed as "[ein] individualistisch-parasitäre[r] Intellektuelle[r]" who suffered from an insincere striving for artistic originality -- "Originalitätssucht"(5). Moreover, his 'ostensible' marxist perspective was increasingly recognized as a manifestation of historical pessimism, which stood in stark contrast to the ideological stance of the society and the state in which he lived and worked. His plays were and still are, to some extent, only sporadically produced. He has earned his livelihood predominantly as a dramaturge and artistic adviser for the Maxim-Gorki Theater, the Berliner Ensemble, and the Berliner Volksbühne.

The reception of the dramatist in the West started fairly late in his career because of cold-war politics and the West's resulting alienation from East-German literature. However, as Marc Silberman points out, the curiosity for the art and literature of 'the other German state' was reawakened with the arrival of an
Ostensible era of detente politics. Müller's early plays, the so-called 'Produktionsstücke,' which depict the processes and problems of building a socialist state, found generally little resonance because of the ideological and political differences between the two Germanies. However, his "Antikebearbeitungen" (*Philoktet*, *Oedipus Tyrann*, *Prometheus*, *Herakles*, *Der Horatier* (Brecht) and *Macbeth*) were welcomed with some interest because they are partially evaluated as a criticism of socialist-marxist politics, as allegories which denounce Stalinist totalitarianism. They are frequently identified as 'disguised' adaptations of classical works, which Müller writes/adapts because of his underlying fear of state censorship. In contrast, his late plays such as *Die Schlacht*, *Germania Tod in Berlin*, *Leben Grundlichs Friedrich von Preußen Lessings Schlaf Traum Schrei*, met with great interest because they explore the "dark" chapters of German history and assimilate the heritage of Prussian as well as fascist ideals and politics, concerning Germans on both sides of the border. From the early 1970's onward, Müller enjoyed an increasing success in the West, and, in artistically very radical circles, he almost acquired the status of a cult-figure. In 1983, for example, the HOT-Theater in Den Haag organized a 'Heiner-Müller-Project', involving 10 productions of theaters from Belgium, Bulgaria, West-Germany, East-Germany, and the Netherlands. On the other hand, he is also repeatedly criticized for his extreme distortions and his 'travesty' of the classical models he is working with (e.g. in *Die Hamletmaschine*) and for his
creation of grotesquely exaggerated caricatures and his disrespectful depiction of historical figures (e.g. in Leben Grundlich) which are described as a manifestation of his perverse and obscene turgescence(10).

Thus, Heiner Müller is surrounded by great controversy both in the East and the West, and, yet, he has simultaneously been awarded a considerable range of prizes for being one of the most talented and innovative postmodern dramatists(11).

For his late plays which assimilate German history as well as for the following texts, Die Hamletletmaschine, Der Auftrag, Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Lanschaft mit Argonauten, Müller's radical aesthetic approach becomes also very important. The literary and theatrical avant-garde in the West welcomes these texts as an unusually innovative and imaginative exploration of dramatic form and as aesthetic aberrations which push the traditional vocabulary of theatrical communication to its very limits. In these plays, Müller proceeds with a systematic and deliberate destruction of traditional dramatic concepts. They are composed of 'synthetic fragments'(12) marked by his radical laconism and the density of both verbal and visual metaphorization. Indeed, the dramatist's style and approach have been described as the 'poetics of destruction'(13), a term which refers back to Müller's own 'theories' about the contemporary exigencies of maintaining the social and political function of the theater which he perceives threatened by an increasing fermentation of the 'status quo'(14).

Indeed, the dramatist's aesthetic choices are largely de-
terminated by his political perspective. During the 1970's, the playwright experienced an intense crisis both as an artist and as a marxist thinker. Evaluating the contemporary social and political reality, he saw himself confronted with the final stagnation of the socialist-marxist 'world-revolution' and with a restoration of pre-revolutionary social conditions and forms of behaviour. His texts become in a sense a measure to explode that condition. In an interview in 1985, Müller explains: "Mein Interesse an der Wiederkehr des Gleichen ist ein Interesse an der Sprengung des Kontinuums, auch an Literatur als Sprengsatz und Potential von Revolution."(15) Thus, it becomes more and more important for Müller to use insurgent aesthetics for a revolutionary purpose. A cryptic text such as Die Hamletmaschine aims at disturbing the theatrical status quo. When critics discover striking affinities to Artaud's theatre of cruelty in these late texts, they confirm Müller's own evaluation of the poet's main contribution. Müller explains: "Wichtig ist bei Artaud, daß er eine große Störung ist. Er hat auf jeden Fall gestört: das naive Selbstverständnis von Theaterleuten und natürlich auch von Autoren, die für das Theater schreiben. Und heute sind einige seiner Konzeptionen sehr gut zu aktualisieren....er versuchte dem Theater eine vitale Funktion zu geben, die es ja im allgemeinen nicht hat. Das ist eine Sache, die, auf ganz andere Weise, auch Brecht beschäftigt hat; denn der meinte, daß man ein Stück nicht an Dramatik messen darf, daß man es vielmehr an der Wirklichkeit messen muß, auf die es sich bezieht. Theater hat keine vitale Funktion, wenn es an Theater gemessen wird."(16)
Thus, Müller uses his radical aesthetics in order to restore the 'vital' social function that theater can have and, moreover, in order to prevent that his insurgent art is 'measured' or evaluated through conventional and 'reactionary' models which, according to him, have become obsolete. For Müller, writing 'literature for the theater' becomes a tool of resistance against the theatrical and thus also the social status quo. "Ich glaube grundsätzlich, daß Literatur dazu da ist, dem Theater Widerstand zu leisten. Nur wenn ein Text nicht zu machen ist, so wie das Theater beschaffen ist, ist er für das Theater produktiv, oder interessant." (17)

Indeed, the dramatist's programmatic aethetical resistance against art and its conventions has not only been the cause of controversy but, moreover, of frequent misunderstanding. His texts repeatedly meet with the general artistic and critical helplessness of critics and theater-people alike. He is 'categorized' as a 'difficult' author(18). That Müller has remained at the center of the most vehement controversy and has nevertheless been evaluated as the 'most important German dramatist since Brecht' is perhaps the most convincing evidence that he is one of the outstanding and possibly most seminal theatrical talents to emerge from post-war Europe.

Thus, Müller's career has followed its own radical [r]evolution: from Brecht to Artaud, from the dramaturgy of a didactic theater to the Surreal, the Grotesque, and the Expressionistic. Although the playwright's diversity may create the initial impression that his canon presents an incoherent myriad of aethetical,
stylistic and philosophical opposites, one can nevertheless detect a thematic unity. Certain themes and motifs are focused on again and again and form the core of the playwright's creative impetus. Indeed, in this context, it is worthwhile to point out that many of Müller's texts undergo a consistent and lengthy process of revision and reworking. Frequently, the playwright integrates passages which he had written twenty years earlier into the texts he writes during the 1970's and early 1980's. Thus, his concerns have largely remained the same and are tested in a new (social-political) context and within a radically different aesthetical approach (19).

One of Müller's central, ubiquitous, and persistent preoccupations is the incident of betrayal (20), which he explores in his early plays, and which surfaces again as a nearly obsessive and self-destructive fetish in the plays he wrote during his crisis in the late 1970's. It is to a large degree the impetus of his writing for the theater as well as of his reflection about the theater. Indeed, the dramatist's consistent focus on the motif can be traced back to one of the most fundamental experiences which has shaped his thinking and has nearly become an emotional obsession. In numerous interviews, Müller recounts an incident from his childhood which has become, in a sense, his personal nightmare which has remained with him throughout his adult life (21):

Müller: "The first image I have of my childhood goes back to 1933. I was four years old. I was asleep. Then I heard some noise coming from the other room and through the keyhole I saw that some men were beating my father. They were arresting him. The S.A.,
the Nazis were arresting him. I went back to my bed, pretending to sleep. Then the door opened. My father was standing in the doorway. The two men beside him were much bigger than he was. He was a very small man. Then he looked inside and he said: "Oh, he's sleeping". Then they went away with him. That's my guilt. I pretended I was sleeping. This really is the first scene of my theatre."

Lothringer: "The first nightmare of history."
Müller: "Yes. My next memory has also to do with my father. I was visiting him in the concentration camp with my mother.... We were standing outside the gate. He was led to the gate by two guards. He looked very small again.... My mother talked to him through the wire. I couldn't talk. Then he was led away. One of the guards said: "Don't worry. Your father will be home soon". He had a very rosy face. He was wearing a uniform. I still have a problem with uniforms. We went home and later on my mother told me that I talked during my sleep for days and weeks....(22)

This experience of father-betrayal and its guilt has consistently shaped the dramatist's writing and his vision. It is indeed the incident which moves him to his intense identification with Shakespeare's protagonist Hamlet who struggles likewise with the experience of father-betrayal and his inability to act upon the ghost's mandate. "For thirty years," Müller explains, "Hamlet was a real obsession for me, so I tried to destroy him by writing a short text, Die Hamletmaschine."(23) This experience is, as he describes, the first scene of his theater, of pretense and illusion. The encounter with pretense, however, is not only a highly personal experience, but also becomes more and more the focus for his reflections about the genre -- theater, which he has chosen as a medium to assimilate his 'personal nightmare'. It is indeed central not only to his creation, but to his choosing the theater as a medium of expression.

In his texts, the theme of betrayal surfaces in the form of
political equivocation and lying (Philoktet and Die Bauern(24)), as brother-betrayal (Die Schlacht and Germania Tod in Berlin), in the verbally and visually metaphorized motif of the mask/face dichotomy, and in the depiction of characters who oscillate ambivalently between (politically) antithetical identities (Der Horatier, Hauser, Die Hamletmaschine, Der Auftrag). For Müller, as a politically committed dramatist, the motif is predominantly of historical and political concern. One of the central themes that the marxist dramatist has explored throughout his forty-year long career is the reflection about the possibility or impossibility of the revolution, whose failure is intricately assimilated through this motif-cluster(25).

But the motif of the mask concerns the dramatist not only with respect to the characters he creates. For him, reality and history have to be dismantled, their 'surfaces' have to be removed as well. Müller explains: "The first preoccupation I have when I write drama is to destroy things. For thirty years Hamlet was a real obsession....German history was another obsession and I tried to destroy this obsession, this whole complex. I think the main impulse is to strip things to their skeleton, to rid them of their flesh and surface."(26) Müller directs his 'Hamletian x-ray vision' onto the characters, reality and history. He aims to capture what is hidden. The idea that something is covered with masks and surfaces is central to his thinking and the theatre becomes a means to strip these masks. Moreover, the process of metamorphosis, the process in which a character and aspects of
reality undergo a transformation and reveal the 'true' identity and the real conditions, becomes the central experience which the dramatist assimilates. These concepts become very relevant for the texts he writes during his crisis in the late 1970's. For Müller, the motifs of mask and metamorphosis become a vehicle for his contemplation about historical change. Evaluating recent socialist-marxist history, he assimilates the fact that the ostensible revolution has in many ways metamorphosed into a restoration of pre-revolutionary social conditions. Indeed, in these late texts, mask and metamorphosis may be considered as philosophical metaphors through which he assimilates his own disillusionment. They may be identified as the nucleus of his disillusioned 'Weltanschauung.'

The two texts which I have chosen for my analysis, Die Hamletmaschine and Der Auftrag, belong to the period of the playwright's severe ideological crisis. They are part of Müller's "artistically most complex, and politically perhaps most controversial and perplexing work."(27) The two plays are "historical-mythological-literary 'montages'"(28) which allow the dramatist to explore the contemporary historical-political reality, the function of the intellectual within that context, as well as the core of his own crisis. Müller transposes a motif-cluster from Shakespeare's Hamlet into both of these works and my study aims to reveal the coherence and consistency of the playwright's assimilation of these Shakespearean motifs and, moreover, to demonstrate in how far they concern Müller's disillusionment as a marxist
Both Marc Silberman and Arlene A. Teraoka point to the fact that scholarly literature on the East-German dramatist has suffered from a general lack of exegetical analyses of his works (29). Thus, in presenting careful and detailed interpretations of two of Müller's late plays, I aim to 'step into the breach' and to fill a prevailing need in Müllerian scholarship.
Heiner Müller's *Die Hamletmaschine* is an aesthetically radical transposition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into our contemporary historical and cultural context. Indeed, the kinship between Müller's uniquely condensed, metaphorized, and physically theatricalized version and the Renaissance text is not easily recognized. The multitude of divergences ostensibly outweighs the scarcity of similarities. This has prompted critics to denounce his work as, for example, a mere manifestation of Müller's "wuchernde[m] Ekel...[und seiner] Auswüchse "(1), of "eine[r] nekrophile[n] Tendenz...,die nun allerdings nichts Poetisches mehr an sich hat, sondern nur noch obszön wirkt."(2), as "ein...plattes...Tendenzstück"(3), and as the proof that "the author has nothing more to say and resorts to quoting literary history and himself: BLABLALBA."(4) Such a fervent rejection of an aesthetically revolutionary text is to be expected, but it ultimately has to be identified as a perhaps rather rash and even unqualified judgement. Müller's unrelentingly insurgent aesthetical and thematic assimilation is in fact the product of a nearly obsessive, thirty-year long confrontation with the Shakespearean original(5), and his radical approach can be traced to his ideas about the aesthetic exigencies of maintaining the social and political function of the theater(6).

Because of the text's aesthetical and philosophical radicalism, critics have repeatedly evaluated *Die Hamletmaschine* as
Heiner Müller's "endspiel"(7) and the dramatist himself admits that he had reached the pinnacle of his crisis as a marxist writer with the writing of his Hamlet-version, after which "one could have only delivered white pages"(8). For the purpose of an analytical dissection, it is first of all necessary to briefly consider Müller's comments about the actual process of writing the text. In an interview with Carl Weber, Müller states that originally he had plans to write a version of the Shakespearean original "based on the situation in a socialist country after the abolition of Stalinism in 1956."(9) Müller explains:

Hamlet is really more a German than a British character....Hamlet truly reflects the situation of the intellectual in German history, a situation which seemed to change after 1945, at least in East Germany. However, in 1956 -- and for me even earlier in the fifties -- it became evident that Hamlet was becoming a topical character again. Quite as Brecht once defined him: The man between the ages who knows that the old age is obsolete, yet a new age has barbarian features he simply cannot stomach....I was interested in the situation of the son of a high-ranking party functionary whose father had been killed under obscure circumstances yet was given an official state-funeral. And furthermore, I was intrigued by a Hamlet in the situation of the Hungarian uprising of 1956....(10)

Indeed, Müller's comments are highly revealing. Remarkable is the fact that he evaluates recent socialist-marxist history as "a new age [which] has barbarian features." Undoubtedly, he is here referring to the Stalinist era as the dark chapter in socialist history which found an end with Stalin's death in 1953 and the official period of "destalinization" in 1956. Moreover, he chooses the historical context of the Hungarian uprising as an example of a
nation's attempt to emancipate itself against Soviet "foreign" policy and the totalitarian "colonization" of its satellite states. In \textit{Die Hamletmaschine}, this historical context is most obviously integrated into the fourth part entitled \textit{PEST IN BUDA SCHLACHT UM GRÖNLAND}. Müller's cryptic title specifies not only the locale for his "drama", "BUDAPEST - PEST IN BUDA," but concurrently assimilates the Shakespearean motif of the disease which erodes the state that is taken over by a corrupt government.\(^{(11)}\)

In part four, he integrates the Hungarian uprising further in his description of an imagined revolution, in which a monument is toppled over: "Die Dekoration ist ein Denkmal. Es stellt in hundertfacher Vergrößerung einen Mann dar, der Geschichte gemacht hat. Die Versteinerung einer Hoffnung....Die Hoffnung hat sich nicht erfüllt. Das Denkmal liegt am Boden, geschleift drei Jahre nach dem Staatsbegräbnis des Gehaßten und Verehrten."\(^{(12)}\) The time reference to the state-funeral which takes place three years prior to the toppling of the monument (in 1956) clearly identifies the described ruler as Stalin\(^{(13)}\). Thus, Müller began the writing of his Hamlet-version with an attempt to transpose the Renaissance original into the historical context of the Hungarian uprising. However, in another interview the dramatist exposes very important details about the writing of the text itself:

\begin{quote}
The initial plan for \textit{Die Hamletmaschine} was to write a variation on \textit{Hamlet}, a play of 200 pages. I filled several entire booklets with early drafts during a vacation in Bulgaria with the distance that separated me with regards to here. While writing, the material shrunk down to fill only eight pages. \textit{Die Hamletmaschine} is made of excerpts. I could not find the [historical-
political] space for all the dialogue I had written. I had the impression that, in all that surrounded me, there was not enough historical substance to write long dialogues. The play rests on a number of experiences I had as a result of the privilege -- because it is a privilege -- which I have in being able to travel in the Western World. (14)

Here, the reductive process of writing Die Hamletmaschine becomes very important. Müller describes that his plan of writing a 200-page Hamlet-version about the Hungarian uprising disintegrated because he no longer found in the contemporary historical-political context of 1977 (the time of the writing of Die Hamletmaschine) the historical substance for a lengthy drama about the revolution. Indeed, in several other interviews, he repeatedly confronts the fact that in the late seventies the socialist-marxist revolution had clearly stagnated and that historical progress had thus been transferred into the "big waiting-room." (15) He acknowledges that for the post-revolutionary generation in East-Germany, "Socialist Utopia is married to Western Consumerism" (16). Thus, he is keenly aware that a general alienation from the original goals of marxist revolution has occurred and has been substituted with a "Western idealization" of private property. The ideals of marxist ideology and theory have been in a sense betrayed by history, by "the praxis" he observes in reality. This development forces the dramatist to reevaluate his position as a marxist writer and intellectual committed to the revolution in a social/political context where apathy and disinterest reign and where the political function of the theatre has been eroded by the intellectual and political lethargy of a general audience. Writing
is rendered purposeless and meaningless. Moreover, the lack of revolutionary interest and apathy erode the very concept that history is evolving toward the projected telos -- communism. Therefore, within this contemporary political context, the writing of a drama about the revolution (the Hungarian uprising) is rendered meaningless. The writer experiences not only a crisis as a marxist but also as a dramatist. His 200-page Hamlet-version shrinks into a text which barely fills eight pages and which assimilates the Hamletian crisis not only within the context of 1956, but moreover within the contemporary context of 1977, in which the protagonist's conflict merges intricately with the crisis experienced by the dramatist.

Nevertheless, a close comparative analysis of Die Hamletmaschine and Hamlet uncovers unexpected and truly startling affinities to Shakespeare in what is initially identified as a ruthless disfigurement(17). In Die Hamletmaschine, Müller transposes the motif of role-playing and mask-wearing, the antithesis of seeming and being, the related concept of metamorphosis of identity and reality, and the protagonist's own quest for an identity from the Shakespearean original. He develops them with consistency and intricacy throughout his poetic text, using the theater and theatricality as a central metaphor and histrionic role-playing as an amplification for these themes. Furthermore, the integration of the theatrum-mundi motif allows Müller to evaluate his own position and function as a theater-maker and intellectual within a post-revolutionary socialist society at a
Let us briefly consider the Elizabethan text. Deception is the ubiquitous principle of human interaction in Shakespeare's fictitious world. In Hamlet, Shakespeare explores the dichotomy of appearance and reality, of mask and face, by creating characters who consciously or unconsciously engage in role-playing to achieve their goals. It is a world of spies and counterspies revolving around the figure of the corrupted usurper. Indeed, nearly all of the characters become highly skilled actors on Claudius' political chess-board. The putting on of masks is a central theme of the play.

Shakespeare extends this motif of psychological/social and political role-playing by using the theater as a reflecting mirror for the characters' activities. The ubiquitous use of theatrical terminology, Hamlet's reflections on the purpose and the power of the theater, and the central function of the play-within-the-play all conglomerate as the central metaphor at the nucleus of the text(18). As Thomas F. Laan in his book Role-playing in Shakespeare points out, Shakespeare transforms the theatrum-mundi motif "from a cliche into a fertile source of invention."(19) It allows the dramatist to contemplate the 'theatricality' of the world, and, at the same time, to express his views about the craft, nature and function of the theater. Indeed, one may say that Shakespeare uses his protagonist as a mouthpiece for his 'theoretical' reflections about his craft and its social and political purpose. In this sense, the protagonist's quest for an identity
mirrors Shakespeare's attempt to define and explore his identity as theater-maker. Indeed, the theatrical metaphor acquires a multi-dimensional quality. Because the motif is developed with great coherence and virtuosity, the play oscillates virtually throughout between illusion and reality, between theatricality and metatheatricality. James L. Calderwood describes the Shakespearean effect skillfully: "the reality of illusion and the illusion of reality dissolve and metamorphose like the forms in an engraving by Escher....Uncertain at times whether drama is a metaphor for life or life a metaphor for drama, we find it hard to divide the play of illusions from the illusion of the play." (20)

How, then, are these themes treated in the 20th-century version? In Die Hamletmaschine, dramaturgical approach, character, conflict, plot, and imagery reach in their contemporary theatrical articulation into the realm of the grotesque, the nightmarish and the surrealistic. When interpreting Müller's text one has always to remember that the dramatist chooses to push the Elizabethan original to its imaginative extremities in order to distill its essence for our time. Equally important is the fact that Heiner Müller, as a marxist playwright, assimilates the Renaissance tragedy from a marxist perspective and transposes its "action" into the contemporary political context of recent socialist/marxist history, making allusions to actual historic sites and events. My analysis of Müller's version begins with an investigation of his verbal-textual transposition.

The theatrum-mundi metaphor is integrated into the postmodern
text first of all through the equally ubiquitous presence of theatrical terminology. Moreover, as in Shakespeare's drama, it is mainly the protagonist who shows an alert sensitivity to the deceptive and corrupt "theatricality" of the characters' "behaviour" and of the "events" around him. In parts one and four, the Müllerian Hamlet repeatedly uses theatrical expressions such as:

Auftritt, Gage, Trauerspiel, spielen, Stichwort, tragische Rolle, Schauspieler, Exit, Text verlernen, soufflieren, Drama, Dekoration, Zuschauerraum, Kostüm, Maske.(21)

Thus, as in Shakespeare, the action presented on stage is likened to histrionic activity. However, the continued analysis of Müller's intricate transposition of these motifs has to start with a brief comparison of the dramatists' dramaturgical approach.

Shakespeare manipulates twenty-two speaking characters on his stage, using human interaction as his chief vehicle of communication. We witness a constant chain of action and reaction, both involving mask-wearing and role-playing as an inherent feature of the interaction. Müller, in contrast, reduces his speaking cast to two characters: Hamlet and Ophelia, who express their personal reactions to the situation into which they are placed through monologue. Communication in the form of dialogue does not take place(22), and thus the Shakespearean theme of deception, the dichotomy of being and seeming, of mask and face, have to be theatricalized outside the context of human interaction.

The first example of Müller's radical dramaturgical approach is found in the second half of part one:

In Shakespeare's text, Horatio is the most intimate and respected among Hamlet's friends, while Polonius is possibly the most despised and ridiculed figure, perceived by Hamlet as Claudius' deceitful handy-man. In Müller's text, these two antithetical characters are curiously merged: "HoratioPolonius". Whereas the central conflict of Shakespeare's Hamlet can be identified as the gradual disillusionment with human relationships, Müller's Hamlet has already lived through that process ("Ich war Hamlet."(24)). The postmodern Hamlet (consistent within Müller's radicalized version of the original) finds himself at a further advanced stage of that disillusionment. For the contemporary protagonist fixed and separate identities no longer exist. Indeed, the very concept of identity disintegrates and becomes ambiguous. Suspicious of all human relationships, Hamlet mistakes all faces for masks and is unable to make clear distinctions between originally antithetical characters. He sees himself surrounded by masks, by actors, rather than by faces and real identities. Thus, someone enters as a friend, metamorphoses, and exits as an enemy: "Auftritt Horatio... ..HoratioPolonius....Exit Polonius"(25). Here, Müller pushes the alienation experienced by Shakespeare's Hamlet to further extremes.

But the 'HoratioPolonius' juxtaposition is not the only
example of the modern Hamlet's extreme alienation from the charac-
ters surrounding him. In the same passage, the characters of
Ophelia and Gertrude merge in a similar manner:

[D]ie reizende Ophelia, sie kommt auf ihr
Stichwort, sieh wie sie den Hintern schwenkt,
eine tragische Rolle....Meine Mutter die Braut.
...Hast du den Text verlernt, Mama....Ich werde
dich wieder zur Jungfrau machen, Mutter....Dann
laß mich dein Herz essen, Ophelia, das meine
Tränen weint.(26)

Again Hamlet explicitly identifies the characters around him as
actors; he perceives his former lover as playing a role, "eine
tragische Rolle", which can easily be merged with another role.
The virginal and idolized Ophelia is here transformed into a sex-
ually provocative temptress, "Sieh wie sie den Hintern schwenkt."
Her sensuality is juxtaposed with that of the sexually perverse
mother whose incestuous activities are at the core of Hamlet's
anguish. For Hamlet, virgin/bride/whore/lover/mother merge and
become a type of infernal female proto-identity(27), in which all
former distinctions coalesce. Once again a figure enters and
metamorphoses in front of Hamlet's eyes. Ophelia becomes Gertrude,
Gertrude becomes Ophelia.

Müller extends this theme and approach in the third section,
Scherzo. Here, Ophelia takes the place of Gertrude once more, this
time at the side of Claudius. Both are stepping out of a coffin
which should shelter the dead identity of Hamlet 1. More hor-
rifying, however, is Claudius' subsequent transformation into the
Hamlet-father. The murderer metamorphoses into the victim. Again
Müller merges antithetical characters(28).
The concept of character-metamorphosis can be traced back to Shakespeare's tragedy. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (29), the decay of which is caused by political corruption and equivocation. Hamlet is perpetually surrounded by figures who reveal themselves as equivocal and mask-wearing spies on Claudius' royal chess-board. In essence, the Hamletian experience can be described as the continual discovery of the 'true' faces behind the masks he has hitherto known. In the 20th-century version, the process is merely accelerated. In Müller's drama, the "Danish court" is transformed into a horrific merry-go-round of ambiguous and intangible identities, and, as in Shakespeare's play, Hamlet finds himself at its very center (30).

In Die Hamletmaschine, Müller has thus found a unique and imaginative approach to capture the quintessence of the Hamletian experience, the horror of the inner nightmare. Genia Schulz describes Scherzo as "ein Gruselkabinett der Identitätsmischungen" (31). In his attempt to create a 'postmodern derivative' of the moral metaphor (32) -- the deception motif -- the dramatist creates a world in a constant state of flux. Masks/faces undergo perpetual metamorphoses. For Hamlet, Who's Who? remains the central question without answer.

Thus, in parts one and three, Müller no longer explores these Shakespearean motifs through the realistic representation of the characters' behaviour to one another (as does Shakespeare), but he focuses specifically on expressing Hamlet's perception of the world around him. Indeed, the dramatist confronts the audience
with a 'monologic' version of reality as his alienated protagonist experiences it. All the other characters with whom Müller chooses to surround his Hamlet are not autonomous characters who interact with the protagonist or with one another. In fact, no real interaction or dialogue takes place between Hamlet and the others: the father-ghost, Horatio/Polonius, Ophelia/Gertrude, the dead philosophers, the gallery of dead women, Claudius/Hamletfather, Ophelia/Gertrude/whore, or the Horatio/Angel. They are, moreover, represented as if seen through the distorting eyes of the protagonist.

Thus, the outstanding feature of Müller's dramaturgical permutation is the shift from an objectively presented plot-evolution (in Shakespeare) to a theatrical presentation of the protagonist's subjective (monologic) contemplation and vision of these events (in Müller)(33). The 'events' placed on Müller's stage have already filtered through the (sub-)consciousness of his protagonist(34). The principle of a logically evolving sequence of events is destroyed and replaced by an 'organizing principle' of the (sub-)conscious: free association(35). It appears that Müller has specifically assimilated the Hamletian dilemma and the protagonist's manner of experiencing reality. Indeed the dramatist has ostensibly entered the character's psyche(36). This explains the incoherence of both Hamlet's monologues and of the visual sequences as well as the grotesquely distorted, nightmarish-dreamlike quality of his aberration.

This aspect of Müller's insurgent dramaturgical innovation manifests itself particularly in the play's third section,
Scherzo, which can be described as a 'monologue of images', as a theatricalized version of Hamlet's inner vision (his "mind's eye") of the characters and events around him. Indeed, Scherzo can be recognized as the visual metamorphorization of the protagonist's alienation and anxiety. It is a surrealistic montage of wild, distorted and nightmarish visions of an intangible reality, a dream which Hamlet lives in but cannot govern. Müller, in his radical, innovative approach, theatricalizes (i.e. puts on stage) a stream of consciousness(37), a consciousness preoccupied with the perpetual metamorphosis of both reality and identity.

But, in this context, one other aspect is worth considering. At the beginning of part one -- Familienalbum -- the postmodern protagonist identifies himself first of all as the Hamlet who stood at the shore talking BLABLABLA (words words words) with the surf(38). This setting is, indeed, a highly important signpost for the rest of the play and its interpretation. Although the Renaissance Hamlet is never actually seen at this locale (the beach), the site can be traced to Shakespeare's tragedy. In Act I, when Hamlet meets with the ghost for the first time, the ghost signals Hamlet to follow him so that they may speak in privacy to one another. While Hamlet is ready to follow the apparition, Horatio warns him of the dangers of such an action because of the underlying fear that the apparition may actually be the devil in the former King's disguise:

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord, 
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff 
That beetles o'er his base into the sea, 
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? Think of it.
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath. (I,IV,69-78)

In Act II, Hamlet expresses his doubts:

....The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape... (II,II, 594-596)

In these excerpts from Shakespeare's drama, two items become crucial for the Müllerian Hamlet: the experience of metamorphosis—"And there assume some other horrible form"—and madness. In Die Hamletmaschine, Hamlet remembers having stood at the shore and having talked BLABLABLA. Has Müller thus changed the very premise from which his drama shall 'evolve', while, at the same time, remaining faithful to Shakespeare by 'merely' inverting one of the most decisive situations from which the Shakespearean plot evolves? It appears that the fundamental Hamletian experience illustrated in Scherzo (and feared in Shakespeare's scene) has also taken place prior to the beginning of Müller's play, in the past when Hamlet 'has been' -- "Ich war Hamlet." The event upon which Horatio speculates in Shakespeare's drama has become reality and is stored in the 'memory' of the postmodern Hamlet. Müller's Hamlet had been led to the shore and bore witness to the most horrifying of metamorphoses (just as he does in Scherzo): the ghost of the godlike King assumed "some other horrible form", the face of the father-ghost turned out to be the mask of the devil.

Thus the nightmare of metamorphosis lives at the very core of Die Hamletmaschine. For the postmodern Hamlet, it is the most
fundamental experience from which everything else evolves. Indeed, the mask/face dichotomy is the creative premise for Müller's writing of the play. As in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the metaphor lives at the nucleus of the text. Therefore, consistent with the rest of his play, the dramatist assimilates the 'embryonic' event which gives birth to the Shakespearean plot through his extreme aesthetical aberrations. In his treatment of Shakespearean motifs, Müller displays the faithfulness of inversion.

The second important aspect of the scene at the shore is madness: "And there assume some other horrible form which might deprive your sovereignty of reason and draw you into madness?... The very place puts toys of desperation... into every brain that looks so many fathoms to the sea."(I,IV,72-77)(39) Has Müller's *Hamlet* been drawn into madness by 'the very place' and has his reason been deprived of its sovereignty? If language is the expression of reason, then the postmodern *Hamlet*'s mind has surely been stripped of its ability to 'create' meaning. "Ich stand an der Küste und redete mit der Brandung BLABLABA..."(40) The setting seems to induce the disintegration of language into meaningless babble, the expression of a mind no longer reigned by reason(41). Also in Shakespeare's tragedy, the horror of metamorphosis is at the core of Hamlet's anguish, which, at times, borders on madness. Has Müller merely pushed the mask/face motif, the experience of metamorphosis and its 'consequences' to its 'logical' conclusions? Must his text be considered as the mirror of a brain filled with 'the toys of desperation'? a brain which
has replaced reason with the principle of free association deprived of any logic? This may indeed account for the text's incoherences and contradictions, its fragmentary anti-logic and labyrinthine confusions, its frenzied, irrational and distorting exaggerations, its nightmarish and grotesque madness (42). Must Die Hamletmaschine ultimately be described as the rambling, monologic contemplation of a madman whose central obsession is the perpetual metamorphosis of reality and identity?

The experience of ambiguous identities, however, concerns Shakespeare's and Müller's protagonists not only with respect to others but also with respect to themselves. Both Hamlet's are permeated by self-doubt and are unable to arrive at a singular and coherent concept of identity for themselves. They are not at ease with the 'role' which life demands them to play. This intangibility and ambiguity, and the merging of antithetical identities is present especially within the postmodern protagonist. The inner reality of the Müllerian Hamlet mirrors his perception of the 'outside world'.

In Shakespeare, there is the Hamlet who would like to avenge the crime against the father, and there is the Hamlet who will not do it. Two antithetical identities are merged and force the protagonist into confrontation with his own dual nature, the puzzling mask/face dichotomy within the self. Indeed, the identities Hamlet chooses or is forced to explore are countless and the problem results when he fails to integrate these frequently contradictory roles into an overall identity. From scene to scene he
plays a different role(43).

Also in Müller's version, Hamlet's inability to arrive at a coherent and singular identity echoes throughout the text(44):

Ich war Hamlet....
I'M GOOD HAMLET GI'ME A CAUSE FOR GRIEF....
RICHARD THE THIRD I THE PRINCEKILLING KING....
ZWEITER CLOWN IM KOMMUNISTISCHEN FRÜHLING....
Ich will eine Frau sein....
Ich bin nicht Hamlet....
Ich spiele keine Rolle mehr....
Ich bin der Soldat im Panzerturm....
Ich bin die Scheibmaschine....
Ich bin mein Gefangener....
Meine Rollen sind Speichel und Spucknapf,
Messer und Wunde, Zahn und Gurgel,
Hals und Strick....
Ich bin die Datenbank....
ICH WAR MACBETH....
RASKOLNIKOW....
Ich bin ein Privilegierter....
Ich will eine Maschine sein.... (45)

These excerpts mirror the desperate struggle and infinite confusion of the modern protagonist whose central and unending quest remains to explore a multitude of frequently contradictory roles in order to identify that which escapes identification, the face behind his own masks.

However, Heiner Müller, as a marxist playwright, integrates in his assimilation of the Hamletian identity-crisis a far more encompassing and critical evaluation of the father-son relationship (as portrayed in the Renaissance tragedy) and, moreover, of the role of the intellectual within a socialist state. Indeed, the dramatist uses the Elizabethan original as a foil against which he articulates a critique of the ideology and its correspondent identity-concepts idealized in Shakespeare's Hamlet. In Die Hamletmaschine, both Hamlet and Ophelia are intensely involved in
the attempt to break out of the roles prescribed for them by the Shakespearean play(46). Let us first, therefore, examine the conflict within the male protagonist.

The most crucial difference between the Shakespearean and the Müllerian Hamlet is found in their contrasting attitudes to the father-figure(47). While the Renaissance protagonist is filled with the deepest respect for the father and while he struggles with his inability to fulfill the father-ghost's demands, Müller's "marxist" Hamlet exposes an antithetical attitude. In part one, while remembering the father's state-funeral, he articulates a sharp critique of the former ruler: "ER WAR EIN MANN NAHM ALLES NUR VON ALLEN."(48) Here, Müller transposes a description of the father articulated by the Shakespearean protagonist in Act I:

A was a man, take him for all in all:
I shall not look upon his like again.
(I,II,187-188)

Thus, while the Renaissance Hamlet speaks of the father in terms of perfection -- a prototype of manliness --, Müller's protagonist articulates a critique of the social order the old monarch embodies, "NAHM ALLES NUR VON ALLEN", a hierarchy in which the monarch, perceived from a marxist point of view, represents the proto-type of an exploitive and oppressive ruler, "taking all from all." Müller's Hamlet proceeds with an attempt to redeem the injustice in his distribution of the father's corpse to the wretched and impoverished population:

Ich stoppte den Leichenzug, stemmte den Sarg mit dem Schwert auf....und verteilte den toten Erzeuger FLEISCH UND FLEISCH GESELLT SICH GERN an die umstehenden Elendsgestalten. (49)
Again Müller shows the faithfulness of inversion. The marxist dramatist here changes again the very premise from which the Shakespearean drama evolves, the father-son relationship. This decisive difference is once more apparent in the "scene" in which the son meets with the ghost:

Hier kommt das Gespenst das mich gemacht hat....

From the postmodern Hamlet's perspective, the world is a place where men are caught in a never-ending mechanism of reciprocal butchery, where the father -- the paragon of the courageous warrior -- is also guilty, "Hast du kein blut an den Schuhen"(51). The image of the warrior-patriarch (in Shakespeare, the Hyperion (I.II,140), godlike titan and warrior) is here rejected and criticized. Likewise, the patriarch's authority is renounced along with the mandate of revenge, "Was willst du von mir....was geht mich deine Leiche an." From the very start, the postmodern protagonist refuses to live up to the demands imposed upon him by a prefabricated concept of courage and manliness:

"SOLL ICH WEILS BRAUCH IST EIN STÜCK EISEN STECKEN IN DAS NÄCHSTE FLEISCH ODER INS ÜBERNÄCHSTE MICH DRAN ZU HALTEN WEIL DIE WELT SICH DREHT." (52)

In Shakespeare's tragedy, Hamlet fails to revenge the crime against the father and suffers consequently from anxieties which assault his sense of manliness. In the postmodern text, the situ-
ation is inverted. Müller's protagonist fails to enact the murder of revenge because he questions the very idea of manliness underlying the mandate. The patriarchal order is here equated with exploitation and oppression and perceived as an order in which murder and butchery are customary among those who uphold it.

Müller develops this idea further by providing an ambiguous assignment of roles to the text of part two, ostensibly spoken and enacted by the Ophelia-character: "OPHELIA [CHOR/HAMLET]." In this passage, Ophelia is transformed from the submissive, innocent, and essentially helpless daughter into a woman struggling to emancipate herself against the oppression of the men "who have used [her] on the bed on the table on the chair on the ground." In part two, the 20th-century Hamlet, evaluating and rejecting the oppressor-role, sides with the victims of oppression and articulates [with them] their rebellion, just as he "feeds" the exploited victims, the wretched mass, in part one. Thus, we can recognize Müller's integration of an orthodox marxist stance not only in Hamlet's critical attitude towards the father-patriarch and the correspondent concept of manliness, but also in his attitude towards feminist emancipation.

However, Müller just as carefully destroys any certainty and establishes the idea that the protagonist is essentially caught between an old (patriarchal) and a new (marxist) identity and that the emancipation of the "marxist" Hamlet against the patriarch within him has not been completed. Indeed, the dramatist meticulously creates an ambivalence in his protagonist who seems to
oscillate constantly between his new and his old "role."

In part one, the Müllerian Hamlet rejects the father's role with its inherent oppression and exploitation, its authority and demands. Paradoxically, however, he here displays a contradictory stance in his attitude towards women. He identifies Ophelia not as a victim of male oppression, but he rejects her sexuality and merges her identity with that of the sexually perverse mother, "Sieh wie sie den Hintern schwenkt." Moreover, he engages in the rape of his mother "in his father's footsteps," -- "Jetzt nehme ich dich, meine Mutter, in seiner, meines Vaters, unsichtbaren Spur. Deinen Schrei ersticke ich mit meinen Lippen....Jetzt geh in deine Hochzeit, Hure"(56). Thus, in part one, Müller merges antithetical identities and forms of behaviour: the postmodern protagonist concurrently rejects and assumes the role of the male oppressor(57). His frustration with ubiquitous corruption corrupts him, and, thus, he turns against the women, the victims of patriarchal oppression, whom he regards as whores to be degraded, humiliated, raped, and oppressed. In part two, in contrast, he proclaims his support for their cause. Intangibility and ambiguity are integrated into his character as much as they are present in the characters surrounding him.

The dramatist explores these themes further in the third section of the play. However, because Scherzo consists mainly of very enigmatic image-sequences, I will analyse Müller's exploration of the Shakespearean motif-cluster and the protagonist's identity-crisis at a later point of my discussion which will focus
specifically on Müller's visual theatricalization.

In part four, the playwright amplifies the protagonist's crisis and his oscillation between old and new identities within the political context of the socialist/marxist revolutions (the October revolution of 1917 and the Hungarian uprising of 1956 (58)) as well as the contemporary time-frame of the writing of the play itself, 1977. Here, Müller creates a direct analogy to the Hamletian dilemma of Shakespeare's drama. Simultaneously, however, Müller weaves a very coherent metatheatrical thread through the thematic texture of part four by means of which he theatricalizes his own Hamletian conflict.

Let us briefly examine the metatheatricality of Die Hamletmaschine a little further. As in Shakespeare's text, the role-playing motif and the theatrical metaphor harbour another dimension which is explored particularly in the fourth part of Müller's drama. Theatricality is juxtaposed and merged with metatheatricality. In Müller's text this aspect is treated with greater aesthetical intricacy. Also his drama, in its oscillation between reality and illusion, resembles an 'engraving by Escher'(59). However, in the postmodern text this effect is greatly amplified. Müller adds a few labyrinthine dimensions to the already existing complexity of Shakespeare's 'Escherian design'. His radical laconic style and his tendency to knot and weave, entangle and ravel Shakespeare's motifs makes it
even harder for the recipient of his text to maintain a sense of direction. In Müller's 'Escherian labyrinth' one gets easily stuck between exit and center, between reality and illusion, between illusion and the illusion of illusion.

Thus also Müller uses his character as a mouthpiece for his reflections about the function of the theater and the theater-maker. Behind the mask of the protagonist appears the face of the dramatist. In the 'existential' anxiety of the protagonist/actor about the meaningfulness of his drama, i.e. about the meaningfulness of theater-making, we also have to recognize Müller's anxiety about his role/identity as dramatist. He contemplates his identity and his possible function or futility as an intellectual and theater-maker within a post-revolutionary socialist society. As a committed marxist, Müller faces the choice between action and inaction, between theater-making and the withdrawal from the theater within the social and political context of post-revolutionary 1977.

Moreover, Müller actually writes the process of writing Die Hamletmaschine into the passage as well, which according to him belongs to the process of writing drama: "Es gibt eine Definition des Theaters von Gertrude Stein, die mir sehr gefällt: Für das Theater schreiben heißt, daß alles, was beim Prozeß des Schreibens vorgeht, zum Text gehört."(60) As my analysis will reveal, this dramaturgical approach is concretely integrated into the fourth part of Die Hamletmaschine. In Müller's text, the metatheatrical dimension of the text is
not only a contemplation on the purpose, nature and function of the theater as such but moreover a self-conscious illustration of the processes of writing the text itself.

Thus, part four of *Die Hamletmaschine* acquires an intricate labyrinthine architecture. Indeed, in its perpetual oscillation between various historical time-frames and its concurrent vacillation between a theatrical and a metatheatrical level, the text of part four is really the most complex part of Müller's Hamlet-version.

Let us here resume the analysis of the Hamletian (now also explicitly Müllarian) identity-crisis. Müller starts the writing of part four with an explicit transposition of the Hamlet-action into the historical context of the Hungarian uprising: PEST IN BUDA SCHLACHT UM GRÖNLAND. However, this beginning is soon interrupted with the Hamlet-impersonator's destruction of the "theatrical illusion" through his overt removal of the theatrical mask. Müller pushes the motif of an identity-crisis to further extremes. Here, Hamlet explicitly refuses to accept a role which no longer has any meaning for him, "Ich bin nicht Hamlet. Ich spiele keine Rolle mehr."(61) Therefore, on a 'theatrical' level, the dramatist continues here the concept that his protagonist is refusing the role he is demanded to play. On a 'metatheatrical level', however, he merges simultaneously his own crisis with that of the protagonist. Indeed, he theatricalizes the process and the crisis of writing the text. His Hamlet-version (transposed into the context of the Hungarian uprising) is abruptly suspended(62) and turns
into the metatheatrical contemplation of his futile role as a
marxist playwright, which he abandons in his interruption of the
drama he was planning to write:

Ich spiele keine Rolle mehr. Meine Worte haben
mir nichts mehr zu sagen. Meine Gedanken saugen
den Bildern das Blut aus. Mein Drama findet nicht
mehr statt. Hinter mir wird die Dekoration aufgebaut.
Von Leuten, die mein Drama nicht interessiert,
für Leute, die es nichts angeht. Mich interessiert
es auch nicht mehr. Ich spiele nicht mehr mit....
In seinem Kasten verfault der Souffleur.
Die ausgestopften Pestleichen im Zuschauer-
raum bewegen keine Hand. (63)

Therefore, the postmodern Hamlet/Hamlet-impersonator/dramatist
experiences an anxiety about his 'theatrical' (metatheatrical)
existence which mirrors the existential anxieties of the
Renaissance Hamlet. Disease, death, and decay have also invaded
the 'kingdom' of the Müllerian Hamlet/theatermaker. Here, Müller
extends his metatheatrical equation. The dramatist juxtaposes and
merges not only character and actor, but he applies the same prin-
ciple to his fictional setting and the stage: (as in Shakespeare)
the theater = the world, the world = the theater. The pestilences
reigning in his fictional/real world/theater are apathy and a lack
of interest, depriving the Hamlet-impersonator (Müller) of his
raison d'etre and his world/theater of meaning and purpose. Thus,
in spite of his radically laconic style, Müller succeeds in
developing several ideas concurrently, while always remaining
amazingly faithful to Shakespeare's original. Here, he clearly
confronts his own Hamletian-existential crisis within the post-
revolutionary context of 1977.

However, the dramatist continues his play with a theatri-
calized metatheatrical contemplation of the drama that he would have written and which his Hamlet-impersonator would have enacted:

Ich spiele nicht mehr mit. (Bühnenarbeiter stellen von Hamlet unbemerkt einen Kühlschrank und drei Fernsehgeräte auf...). Die Dekoration ist ein Denkmal. Es stellt in hundertfacher Vergrößerung einen Mann dar, der Geschichte gemacht hat. Die Versteinerung einer Hoffnung.... Die Hoffnung hat sich nicht erfüllt...Auf den Sturz des Denkmals folgt...der Aufstand. Mein Drama, wenn es noch stattfinden würde, fände in der Zeit des Aufstandes statt. (64)

In this passage, it is highly important that stage-hands place a refrigerator (the ice-age?) and three television sets on the stage while the Hamlet-impersonator refers to the Stalin monument (the set for the would-be drama about the Hungarian uprising) as "the petrification of a hope". In his juxtaposition of speech and stage-action (i.e. of the stage-hands), the dramatist theatricalizes an analogy between the Stalinist era and the contemporary pervasion of consumerist tendencies in post-revolutionary socialist societies -- both represent "the petrification of a hope."

Moreover, the dramatist concretely theatricalizes the process of writing the text. The contemporary reality of 1977 (the reality of consumer comfort -- TVs and refrigerators), which lacks the historical substance to make the writing of a drama about the Hungarian revolution meaningful, intrudes upon and erodes his contemplation of the would-be drama.

In the contemplative passage which follows, Müller amplifies the Hamletian identity-crisis within the political context of the Hungarian uprising. Like Shakespeare's indecisive, procrastinating
Hamlet, Müller's 'would-be' protagonist is at odds with politically antithetical roles -- the revolutionary and the government-representative, just as Müller is at odds with antithetical positions concerning the writing of his text:


In Shakespeare, Hamlet is asked to execute that coup d'état which will reinstate a legitimate and righteous government; his inactivity makes him, inadvertently, a handy-man in Claudius' governmental intrigues. Müller's would-be Hamlet experiences in the imagination of the Hamlet-impersonator (dramatist) the equivalent schizophrenic predicament within the context of a contemporary revolution. Müller skillfully emphasizes his protagonist's perpetual oscillation between two antithetical identities through a continual shifting of the point of view in the imagined scene. And both the Shakespearean and the Müllerian protagonists fail to adopt an unequivocal political stance until the final massacre of the drama.

However, this passage harbours further dimensions. First of all the Hamlet-impersonator removes his theatrical mask and
refuses to play his role. Then, however, he partially steps back into the role when speculating what his parts (the revolutionary and/or the government-representative) might be in the case of his drama still taking place. The differentiation between the theatrical mask and the "face" becomes increasingly more difficult as the Hamlet-impersonator undergoes several stages of identification with his role while speaking his text. Here, Müller subtly draws an analogy between the political responsibility of Hamlet's decision-making with that of the Hamlet-impersonator, who oscillates between the affirmation and the rejection of theater-making. Müller, as a politically committed playwright, skillfully and implicitly superimposes a metatheatrical evaluation of the political function of theater-making on his contemplation of the drama which no longer takes place. Indeed, it is nearly impossible for the recipient to distinguish theatricality from metatheatricality, the two "dimensions" coalesce as does the mask and the ostensible face of Hamlet and the Hamlet-impersonator. When can this figure be identified as "Hamlet", when as Hamlet-impersonator?

By creating this deliberate ambiguity between mask and face, Müller 'digests' as usual several motifs concurrently. The actor playing Hamlet and the character Hamlet both vacillate between the awareness of acting out an imposed role and story, their rebellion against that role, and their imaginary identification with that role. The lines between reality and stage illusion are blurred and ambiguous.

Ich bin nicht Hamlet. Ich spiele keine Rolle mehr....Mein Drama findet nicht mehr statt....
Mein Drama, wenn es noch stattfinden würde, fände in der Zeit des Aufstandes statt. Der Aufstand beginnt als Spaziergang....Mein Platz, wenn mein Drama noch stattfinden würde, wäre auf beiden Seiten der Front, zwischen den Fronten, darüber. Ich stehe....Ich blicke....Ich schüttele ....Ich bin....Ich hänge...Ich bin....Ich knüpfte ....Ich bin....Mein Drama hat nicht stattgefunden.... Ich gehe nach Hause...einig/Mit meinem ungeteilten Selbst. (66)

Here, the Shakespearean dichotomy of action/inaction, revolution/counter-revolution, role/identity, is curiously clustered in an oscillation between reality and illusion (theater), between theater-making and the abandonment of it. The Hamlet-impersonator is himself faced with a Hamletian crisis. Paradoxically he is Hamlet on and off stage. Thus, Müller emphasizes and develops (his) the protagonist's struggle with his identity with great complexity. Like the Renaissance Hamlet, Müller's protagonist is torn between acting and the refusal to act out his role (i.e. on stage as "Hamlet", and 'in reality' as the actor playing Hamlet, i.e. as a theater-maker). Also he questions whether to adopt the role of the avenger and revolutionary. Moreover, he too prefers contemplation before action(67). Even when the Hamlet-impersonator's identification with his role seems complete and total -- "Ich bin....Ich hänge....Ich bin....Ich knüpfte...Ich bin..." -- the identification takes place merely as an act of contemplation and is not expressed through concrete action or stage-action. Thus, Shakespeare's action/inaction motif is mirrored in the wavering between reality and stage-illusion of the postmodern Hamlet/Hamlet-impersonator. In Müller's text, the motif is developed with more intricacy and with subtle irony. His procrastinating actor
contemplates the indecision and the schizophrenic stance of the character/role he is to play while suffering from the same predicament at a 'metatheatrical' level.

One may speculate here whether Müller aims to create an 'assimilated version' of the ambiguity surrounding the insanity/sanity of the Renaissance Hamlet, because the dramaturgical strategies of the dramatists are amazingly alike. The Shakespearean Hamlet openly announces that he may think it fit 'to put an antic disposition on' and, from that point onward, the audience (both on stage and in the auditorium) is forced, at any given moment, into an ongoing speculation as to whether Hamlet wears his mask or has stripped it. Is he mad or is he not? (This, of course, has lead to the great controversy surrounding the mental constitution of the Elizabethan character.) Müller's Hamlet, in contrast, announces openly that he will 'take off' his truly 'antic disposition', i.e. his theatrical mask, and, thus, in part four of the 20th-century text, the audience is forced into a similar process of speculation. When does the Postmodern Hamlet/Hamlet-impersonator wear his mask, when does he not?

However, the Hamlet-impersonator (dramatist) suspends his contemplation of the "would-be drama" and withdraws into himself and experiences disgust and repugnance in confrontation with his proneness to passivity and intellectual contemplation -- his pondering over the abandonment of action, acting, theatermaking, just as Shakespeare's Hamlet confronts his inaction. However, for the postmodern actor/theatermaker, it is also a confrontation with
his contemporary historical-political reality:

Mein Drama hat nicht stattgefunden....
Ich gehe nach Haus und schlage die Zeit tot...
Fernsehen Der tägliche Ekel Ekel....
Wie schreibt man GEMÜTLICHKEIT
Unsern täglichen Mord gib uns heute
Denn Dein ist das Nichts Ekel
An den Lügen die geglaubt werden
Von den Lügnern und niemandem sonst Ekel....
....Ekel....
An den Visagen der Macher gekerbt
Vom Kampf um die Posten Stimmen Bankkonten Ekel....
Geh ich durch Straßen Kaufhallen Gesichter
Mit den Narben der Konsumschlacht Armut
Ohne Würde....
HEIL COCA COLA
Ein Königreich
Für einen Mörder....
....Ich bin
Ein Privilegierter Mein Ekel
Ist ein Privileg....
Beschirmt mit Mauer
Stacheldraht Gefängnis
Fotografie des Autors.
....Ich will nicht mehr....
Zerreißung der Fotografie des Autors.
...Ich breche mein versiegeltes Fleisch auf....
...Ich ziehe mich zurück in meine Eingeweide.
Meine Gedanken sind Wunden in meinem Gehirn.
Mein Gehirn ist eine Narbe. (68)

Remarkable in this passage is first of all that the time-frame of this passage can clearly be identified as the time of the play's writing, 1977. Again Müller writes his writing crisis (the process of writing) directly into the text and yet he always remains faithful to Shakespeare by integrating a very Hamletian conflict and very Hamletian emotions into his "protagonist" - the Hamlet-impersonator.

Here, the protagonist/dramatist/Hamlet expresses his nausea in confrontation with the brutal and corrupted reality of the consumer battle, the fight for job positions, votes, and bank
accounts. HAIL COCA COLA. In an interview, the dramatist reveals that the writing of *Die Hamletmaschine* was also greatly influenced by his extended sojourn in the United States in 1975/76 (69). He agrees that "in some ways the play comes from the U.S."(70) Thus, for him, the confrontation with a "healthy" capitalist society leads not only to his "marxist" nausea about the existing conditions, but also to the recognition that even in post-revolutionary socialist societies the "Western idealization" of private property -- consumerism -- erodes the possibility for a continuation of marxist revolution(71).

Moreover, Müller also evaluates the privileged position of the marxist intellectual within the socialist state. For the intellectual committed to marxist ideology and the abolition of all privilege, the awareness that his position as an intellectual is a privileged one constitutes a stark contradiction to his own ideals, "Ich bin ein Privilegierter Mein Ekel ist ein Privi-

leg."(72) The tearing of Heiner Müller's photograph on stage is the theatricalized climax of the dramatist's identity-crisis. Like Shakespeare's procrastinating protagonist, the Müllerian Hamlet is here confronted with his intellectuality as an obstacle to action and revolution, not only because it constitutes a privilege, but, moreover, because in the contemporary political context his intellectual-revolutionary contribution as a playwright is rendered meaningless and absurd. Thus, his very identity as a privileged man of contemplation makes him an opponent to the achievement of the revolutionary ideal -- the abolition of all
privilege. Arlene A. Teraoka describes the Hamletian situation poignantly: "[T]he intellectual is by definition already compromised, Hamlet is inescapably the son of a king."(73) This awareness constitutes indeed the core of the Hamletian-Müllerian crisis, "Meine Gedanken sind Wunden in meinem Gehirn."

Indeed, the metatheatrical dimension of Die Hamletmaschine is in a sense the most brilliant aspect of the text. Given the present social-political context, Müller confronts the futility and meaninglessness of his attempt to transpose the Shakespearean tragedy into the context of a 20th-century political context. The recognition of the impossibility of writing and of theater-making infiltrates the attempt to write a 20th-century Hamlet-version. In Die Hamletmaschine, he theatricalizes the spontaneous interruption of the writing process in part four when the Hamlet-impersonator strips himself of the theatrical mask. The text now becomes a metatheatrical contemplation of the dramatist/theatermaker about the text he was going to write and put on stage and which he abandoned. The would-be drama is only revolving as an act of contemplation within the mind of the theater-maker/dramatist/Hamlet-impersonator.

Concurrently, however, and herein lies the brilliance of the text, this mental conflict of the dramatist constitutes a startling parallel to the Hamletian crisis. The East-German dramatist succeeds in writing a text for the theater, which theatricalizes the impossibility and futility of writing a post-modern version of the Renaissance tragedy which simultaneously
reveals itself as the 20th-century Hamlet-version which ostensibly could no longer be written. Herein lies the paradox of Die Hamletmaschine. The impossibility of writing a Hamlet-version has made the writing of it possible. Müller indeed writes a text about not writing it while writing it(74).

But just as in Shakespeare's Hamlet, this identity-crisis of the intellectual along with its accompanying existential anxieties are concluded also in Die Hamletmaschine with the protagonist's final acceptance of his role as Hamlet and actor/theater-maker. The refusal of action and the proclivity toward contemplation are accompanied by the awareness that even the self-indulgent descent into the abyss of nihilism and nausea, "Denn Dein ist das Nichts Ekel," is a privilege made possible only through the hardship of others:


Precisely this realization persuades the protagonist to act again(76). The 'play' is resumed and proceeds along its 'prescribed' course. The Hamlet-impersonator becomes the character again and enacts his 'revolutionary' (counter-revolutionary) "revenge" just as Shakespeare's Hamlet achieves in the final stages of his tragedy an attitude of readiness.

However, while the Hamlet-impersonator puts on the formerly discarded mask and costume for his 'last' performance, he again shows an acute awareness of his antithetical identities:
Here, Müller again juxtaposes antithetical identities DANE PRINCE MAGGOT'S FODDER FOOL PHILOSOPHER BLOODHOUND. Also in this passage the mask/face dichotomy becomes once more the focus. The fool strips the fool's costume/mask of the philosopher (philosopher/fool) and reveals the 'true' identity behind the mask: a corpulent bloodhound.

But even the ending of the play is a very complex exploration of antithetical positions. When the Hamlet-impersonator resumes his role as Hamlet, he also resumes his role as actor/theater-maker and, therefore, his identity as an intellectual, which he had earlier rejected as a privileged one. His contemplation of the privileged position of the intellectual within a socialist society is concluded with the reaffirmation and acceptance of that privilege. The actor puts on his mask, the dramatist ends his play with a conclusion. Thus, Müller again makes use of the principle of inversion. In essence, the action of the postmodern protagonist -- the continuation of his identity as a privileged intellectual -- is an inaction with respect to the marxist revolution and the achievement of its telos, the abolition of all privilege. But, Müller uses the principle of inversion also at another level. For the postmodern Hamlet/intellectual/theater-maker/dramatist, the resolution of the drama does not lead to the resolution of his
dilemma, but only accentuates it. His action constitutes an inaction, that is a counter-revolutionary one(78), and, thus, the postmodern protagonist's earlier marxist stance is now betrayed and leads to the butchery of those who advocate his former ideological stance, Marx, Lenin, and Mao. For Müller, the identity of a marxist and the identity of an intellectual within the protagonist is a merging of antithetical identites, which he explores without being able to resolve it. Indeed, the schizophrenic juxtaposition of antithetical identites within the protagonist and the dramatist constitutes the core of an unresolved crisis even at the end of the drama. The intellectual/theatermaker upholds his privilege only to reject it. The dramatist here articulates the most severe and pessimistic evaluation of his own action (his conclusion of the play and, therefore, his continued theater-making) which is in itself the object of his critique. He concludes his play with a fierce and unrelenting critique of its being concluded. This is the ultimately paradoxical and contradictory stance portrayed in the play's ending. The ostensible resolution of the protagonist's conflict constitutes concurrently a non-resolution of the dramatist's crisis.

The Hamlet/actor's refusal to play his role ends in failure, and so does his marxist revolution against his own privilege, against oppression and exploitation (for Ophelia in part two and the wretched populace in part one) as well as against the imposition of the patriarchal ideology and its correspondent concept of
manliness, as it occurs in the Elizabethan original(79). By putting on the warrior-armour, the son merges his identity with that of the formerly rejected exploitive and oppressive monarch. Hamlet accepts his privilege, he becomes a man, and the mechanism of reciprocal slaughter is reactivated. Hamlet reintegrates himself according to the model of the patriarchal father-figure (who has blood on his shoes, a bloodhound) and the play ends in the final massacre. The final slaughter can now take place.

Indeed, in this context, it is important to point out that for Müller the true history of humankind starts with the socialist/marxist revolutions, while all of pre-revolutionary history belongs for him to pre-history. The ice-age is, in Müller's vocabulary, a synonym for capitalism(80). Thus, in the play's ending, Müller displays the faithfulness of inversion once more. His protagonist's final action does not lead to the restoration of order and hope in a formerly chaotic and diseased state as in Shakespeare's play. Müller inverts the Shakespearean original most strikingly in the tragedy's ending. Order and hope are substituted for "order" as well as total and unmitigated despair. His play does not end on a note of historical optimism, but with an unyieldingly nihilistic and apocalyptic vision of the future. Because of the intellectual's betrayal of revolutionary ideals, history does not evolve towards the telos -- communism, a society free of privilege and all oppressive and exploitive mechanisms -- but regresses into the age of capitalism, metaphorized on stage as pre-history and the ice-age.
Indeed, the end of *Die Hamletmaschine* has frequently been evaluated as a manifestation of Müller's historical pessimism. His recognition that the contemporary political-historical context can in many ways be identified as the restoration of pre-revolutionary social conditions and forms of behaviour lives at the core of his crisis as a marxist dramatist. It leads him, moreover, to the awareness that his own position within a socialist society is also a return to a pseudo-hierarchical structure where one class (the intellectual 'elite') enjoys privileges in comparison to another class (the proletariat). These ideas become the central concern for many of the plays he writes in the late 1970's. Müller explains:


Here, Müller expresses his disillusionment about contemporary historical conditions. He acknowledges that the telos--communism-- will not be achieved within his life-time, that the revolution has not had enough of an impact. History evolves as usual too slowly to satisfy the revolutionary's demand for real change. Moreover, the recognition that his own position constitutes in a sense an obstacle to the true achievement of revolutionary change only intensifies this pessimistic evaluation of
the present situation. In light of this pessimism with regards to his own life-time, Müller evaluates the optimistic stance of marxist philosophy as a stark contradiction. And it is this contradiction, the antithesis between the time of the individual and the time of history at large, that becomes his central preoccupation. In *Die Hamletmaschine*, he focuses on the dilemma of the individual who adopts the optimistic stance of marxism but finds this evaluation of history challenged by the present social conditions and the impossibility of achieving the goals of the revolution within his life-time. Thus, in his Hamlet-version, the dramatist abandons the optimistic vision of the future and confronts the stark and pessimistic evaluation of the present historical-political context and moreover of his own privileged position as the cause for the failure of the revolution.

In this context, let us briefly consider the other character transferred from the Shakespearean original. The quest for a new identity is also a part of the Ophelia-character in Müller's drama. Shakespeare portrays a patriarchal society in which Ophelia is caught in Polonius' and Claudius' political manipulations which shall in turn alienate her not only from her lover but also from herself. But she obeys. In contrast, Müller's Ophelia, like the Müllerian Hamlet, also rebels against the role she is to play within the context of a patriarchal society. She is in the constant process of articulating a new concept of her identity, the identity of the contemporary (1977 -- European ?) woman. The dramatist transposes her from the patriarchal Elizabethan society
into the context of the contemporary European Feminist revolution, "DAS EUROPA DER FRAU." In her fight against the male oppressor and the tools of her oppression, her revolution becomes an extension of the socialist/marxist revolutions(82). In part two, Ophelia rejects and negates the woman she has been in Shakespeare's drama:

Ich bin Ophelia. Die der Fluß nicht behalten hat..., Gestern habe ich aufgehört mich zu töten....Ich zertrümme die Werkzeuge meiner Gefangenschaft....Ich zerstöre das Schlachtfeld das mein Heim war....Mit meinen blutenden Händen zerreiße ich die Photographien der Männer die ich geliebt habe und die mich gebraucht haben auf dem Bett auf dem Tisch auf dem Stuhl auf dem Boden. Ich lege Feuer an mein Gefängnis. Ich werfe meine Kleider in das Feuer. Ich grabe die Uhr aus meiner Brust die mein Herz war. Ich gehe auf die Straße gekleidet in mein Blut. (83)

The contemporary Ophelia refuses to accept insanity and suicide as the only alternative to integrating herself into a patriarchal society. In part five, Müller amplifies this theme. Here, Ophelia adopts a mask entirely antithetical to her Shakespearean identity, "Hier spricht Elektra," and her proclamation ends with a terrifying call for unmitigated "hatred, contempt, rebellion and death,"(84): "Nieder mit dem Glück der Unterwerfung. Es lebe der Hass, die Verachtung, der Aufstand, der Tod."(85)

However, her call for rebellion is rendered entirely absurd by her situation. Sitting confined in a wheelchair at the bottom of the deep sea, she articulates her hatred and her projection of a future revenge, while two men in white smocks wrap her into gauze. With Hamlet's regression into his former patriarchal role and its oppressive and exploitive mechanisms, the world is not
only frozen into non-progress, but Ophelia is forced to resume her old role/identity and finds herself again physically oppressed by men. Her rebellion in part two was only ostensibly a success. She walks into the freedom of the streets dressed in her blood, only to find herself in part five once more entirely dependent on her oppressor's choice.

In part two, Hamlet sides with the feminist revolution, but he later betrays that political-philosophical stance and decapitates the marxist leaders in the final massacre, who are, in Müller's drama, impersonated by women. Thus, in Die Hamletmaschine, Müller specifically focuses on the feminist revolution as an extension of the socialist/marxist revolutions of the 20th century. The women Marx, Lenin, and Mao speak a text written by Marx and rebel against the continuation of their oppression as women: "ES GILT ALLE VERHÄLTNISSE UMZUWERFEN, IN DENEN DER MENSCH...."(86) Hamlet's betrayal and counter-revolutionary upholding of privilege is theatricalized not only in the decapitation of the female revolutionaries, but moreover, in Ophelia's immediate external incarceration into the rejected Shakespearean identity. The female character is forced to regress from her 20th-century feminist stance into the patriarchy of the Renaissance tragedy. Driven into insanity and suicide in the Elizabethan original, she is found dead at the bottom of a river. In Müller's version, the 20th-century Ophelia shares an analogous condition after Hamlet's betrayal. She is seen at the bottom of the deep sea surrounded by remnants of the world which lies destroyed above
sea-level -- "Trümmer, Leichen, Leichenteile" -- and is fastened as an insane invalid into a wheelchair by two male psychiatrists(87). In the postmodern drama, male oppression, insanity and death by drowning are thus transposed and theatricalized as a flamboyant and hyperbolic stage-metaphor. The dramatist creates in his last image an extravagant, grotesque and surrealistic aberration. Ophelia is forced to remain who and where she is. However, the intensity of her call for hatred, contempt, death and rebellion is proportional to the indictment and (self-)critique Müller articulates here against the betrayal of the male intellectual protagonist. Ophelia's condition is indeed a theatricalized denunciation of the Hamletian failure.

Thus the struggle to articulate a singular and new identity, the struggle against imposed roles prefabricated by culture and the politics of power, belongs to the central metaphor of role-playing which Müller explores in the two characters he chooses to transfer from the Shakespearean original(88). However, in this context, a crucial difference between the two characters has to be focused on. Hamlet fails in his struggle against his role as a privileged intellectual and readopts his old identity -- the (son of the) patriarch. Ophelia's rebellion, in contrast, fails only because of Hamlet's betrayal of his former solidarity for the feminist-marxist revolution. Even when the reality of her rebellion has been changed into an utterly absurd situation, she continues to proclaim the future success of her emancipatory struggle. Arlene A. Teraoka poignantly describes the essential
difference between the two protagonists' positions: "[T]he Hamlet-player, unlike Ophelia whose body has been the object of abuse and whose experience of exploitation has been personal and physical, enacts a purely intellectual rebellion." (89) Ophelia acquires her strength for and faith in the revolution because of her 'authentic' experience of oppression and exploitation. She does not have the 'option' to betray her revolutionary stance because her struggle for emancipation grows out of her personal need to eliminate the social injustice she has suffered. The Hamlet-figure in contrast "enacts a purely intellectual rebellion," and, moreover, the male intellectual revolutionary fights not for but against his own privilege. For him oppression and exploitation are only intellectual concepts and are not part of his own experience. His emancipatory efforts are in this sense 'inauthentic' especially because his identity as a an intellectual remains a privileged one within the context of a socialist society. Even his contemplative intellectual rebellion against his role remains a privilege because it is only made possible through the hardship of others. This is the fundamental recognition which the Müllerian protagonist confronts. It is the cause for his resignation and his betrayal. His old identity as member of an intellectual elite and his new identity as an intellectual revolutionary are essentially both founded on his privileged social status.

However, at this point, it is necessary to consider the enigmatic image-sequences which are a very important and an integral aspect of the design of the postmodern text. In *Die Hamlet-*
maschine, Müller explores these Shakespearean leitmotifs not only through the spoken text. The most outstanding and intriguing feature of his drama is that he finds a unique approach to theatricalize the mask/face dichotomy and the protagonist's introspective struggle with his own identity. The dramatist articulates these themes through very concrete, very physical metaphors, particularly in the third section of his play:

...die toten Frauen reißen ihm [Hamlet] die Kleider vom Leib. Aus einem aufrechtstehenden Sarg...treten Claudius und, als Hure gekleidet und geschminkt, Ophelia...Striptease von Ophelia... Hamlet zieht Ophelias Kleider an, Ophelia schminkt ihm eine Hurenmaske...Hamlet in Hurenpose...ein Engel, das Gesicht im Nacken: Horatio.

(90)

In Shakespeare, the appearance-versus-reality theme and the masking/unmasking process are integrated into the 'normal' social and psychological interaction between his characters. Müller, in contrast, transforms these themes overtly and explicitly into extravagant and surrealistic visual metaphors. His figures dress and undress one another, exchanging roles/identities. They wear masks and place masks over the faces of others; they assume poses..."Hamlet in Hurenpose." Thus, Shakespeare's text is theatricalized physically in a unique and startling fashion in Die Hamletmaschine. Words become physical metaphor.

In Scherzo, Müller assimilates the protagonist's identity-crisis through the visual theatricalization of the mask/face dichotomy. Also, in his grotesque and surrealistic monologue-nightmare, the postmodern Hamlet oscillates between roles/identities, that is between the former "Elizabethan patriarchal"
and the new "contemporary marxist" identity, between the identities of man, woman and whore, just as he vacillates between politically antithetical roles in the fourth part of the drama. In Scherzo, we can essentially discover his ambivalent attitude toward women as well as a subconscious attachment to the father-figure.

Let us first examine the protagonist's attitude towards women which oscillates ambiguously between the patriarchal and the marxist perspective. On the one hand, the protagonist is aware that his male identity as founded in the patriarchal ideology is in itself a form of oppression. Within the realm of his subconscious, he is thus confronted with his guilt. The scene begins with a procession of the women Ophelia claims to have been and negates in part two: "Gallerie (Ballett) der toten Frauen. Die Frau am Strick Die Frau mit den aufgeschnittenen Pulsadern Die Frau mit der Oberdosis AUF DEN LIPPEN SCHNEE Die Frau mit dem Kopf im Gasherd."(91) It is a procession of the victims of male oppression(92), and the postmodern Hamlet is here confronted at the core of his subconscious with his guilt as a male oppressor. In his surrealistic nightmare, these victims revenge themselves by attacking him and by stripping him of his identity: "Die toten Frauen reißen ihm die Kleider vom Leib."(93) In part two, this guilt had moved the protagonist to side with the victims in their rebellion.

However, in Scherzo, the certainty of this stance disintegrates with Hamlet's next vision. Ophelia/Gertrude dressed and
masked as a whore enters at the side of Claudius. This, in fact, is not the Ophelia of part two but rather the Ophelia of Shakespeare's drama, who is caught within the patriarchal world in Claudius' political manipulations. In Müller's hyperbolic aberration, her 'failure' to articulate her rebellion within the Shakespearean drama manifests itself as a merging of her identity with that of the perverse and whore-like mother. Ophelia becomes a whore in Hamlet's eyes, a political opportunist whose position in the patriarchal world is made possible only through her willingness to integrate herself and accept her role at the side of her oppressor. Indeed, here the Müllerian Hamlet assumes the perspective of the Shakespearean protagonist in his evaluation of Ophelia's position. Let us briefly consider the Renaissance original.

In the 'nunnery scene' of the Elizabethan tragedy, Hamlet displays an equally ambivalent attitude towards his former lover. Ophelia is first identified as a "Nymph in [whose] orisons Be all [his] sins remember'd."(III,I,89-90). Hamlet advises her to "go [her] ways to a nunnery" where alone her chastity, uncorrupted honesty, and beauty could be preserved. However, this stance disintegrates when the Renaissance Hamlet discovers Ophelia's bonds to her father's and Claudius' manipulations ("Are you honest?....Are you fair?" (III,I, 103, 105)). In the subsequent exchange between the former lovers, the line "get tee to a nunnery" acquires a highly ambivalent and ambiguous quality. The meaning of the word "nunnery" oscillates between the literal and
the figurative meaning, signifying at once "convent" and "whorehouse." (94)

Thus, Müller again succeeds in creating a startling derivative of the Shakespearean original. Also the postmodern protagonist displays an ambiguous attitude, oscillating between his sympathy and compassion for the victim's of oppression, who liberate themselves from their condition through suicide, and his degradation, contempt and rejection of the whore-like women who accept their place at the side of the patriarch Claudius/Hamlet-father. Antithetical positions are inextricably merged in the nightmarish and intangible realm of the subconscious.

But in *Scherzo*, the dramatist pursues this ambivalence even further. The postmodern protagonist articulates a wish which can be read on two levels: "Ich will eine Frau sein."(95). Here, the Müllerian Hamlet sides once more with the victims of male oppression in his identification with their rebellion (as he does in part two of the drama). On the other hand, however, this stance is infiltrated by the identity of the old (Elizabethan) Hamlet, who fails to strip himself of the pressures exerted on him by the patriarchal ideology. The spectre of the warrior-father evaluates the newly adopted identity of the son:

"Ich will eine Frau sein."

Hamlet zieht Ophelias Kleider an. Ophelia schminkt ihm eine Hurenmaske. Claudius, jetzt Hamlets Vater, lacht lautlos. (96)

In Müller's pantomime sequence, emancipation metamorphoses into degradation and humiliation. The old patriarchal identity represented here in the father-ghost gains the upper hand. The post-
modern Hamlet's wish for emancipation is here evaluated and scorned from the patriarchal perspective, "lacht lautlos." Within his grotesque nightmare, the Müllerian protagonist is ambiguously caught between the guilt felt for the oppressed women and the guilt felt for rejecting the father's demand and authority. He is schizophrenically torn between his attempt at emancipation and the subconscious evaluation of that attempt as a failure. Within his surrealistic vision, he sees himself transformed into a whore, because within the context of the Elizabethan patriarchal order, his failure to fulfill the demand of the father can be perceived not only as an effeminate tendency within the character but, moreover, as a form of political opportunism.

The imagery of Müller's stage-metaphors can also be traced back to the Renaissance tragedy. Indeed, in Shakespeare's play, Hamlet sees himself degraded to the status of a whore because of his "effeminate" failure to live up to the demands of the father -- the paragon of manliness. Evaluating himself from a patriarchal perspective, he acknowledges his indecisiveness, melancholy, and cowardice. He becomes increasingly disgusted with his inability to act firmly in response to his father's mandate and perceives himself reduced and degraded to the frailty of women:

...Am I a coward?.....
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murther'd
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words...

(II,II,566,578-583)

Here, Shakespeare's protagonist reveals his deep-seated anxiety and self-disgust which find concrete articulation in his comparing
himself with a whore. Acknowledging his effeminacy and cowardice, he perceives himself as a harlot caught, like Ophelia, in Claudius' skillful manipulations, as a political opportunist whose position in Claudius' state is only secured because of his failure to interfere in the ruler's corrupted affairs and to restore the diseased world to a state of order.

Müller's protagonist rejects the role of the patriarch. His conscious adoption of the female identity is not only a marxist revolutionary stance, but it can also be seen as his own emancipation against the imposition of the patriarch's demands. However, by becoming a woman, he is concurrently relieved of the 'manly' burden placed upon his 'unmanly' shoulders -- the act of revenge. In Scherzo, the Müllerian Hamlet thus oscillates between these two perspectives in his subconscious evaluation of his own action. In the postmodern text, remnants of the psychological make-up of the Elizabethan character infiltrate and erode the contemporary attempt of emancipation. The presence of the father-patriarch who laughs silently at the son leads to Hamlet's metamorphosis into a woman/whore -- into a political opportunist because of his inadvertent siding with Claudius' corrupt government -- degraded and despised when seen through the eyes of the patriarch. Müller's Hamlet here exposes a subconscious attachment to the father-figure. He fails to strip himself of the pressures exerted upon him by the old ideology. His marxist emancipation against "the patriarch within him" has not been completed, and thus he vacillates ambivalently between these two identities. Again Müller
emphasizes the coalescence of antithetical and contradictory qualities within his Hamlet-figure. Thus, the Müllerian Hamlet is portrayed as a man whose 'manly face' is painted with the mask of a woman/whore. Shakespeare's allusions to the female weaknesses in his character and Hamlet's disgusted perception of the self degraded to a whore are filtered, in Scherzo, through Müller's marxist perspective and find expression once more in a concrete, visual metaphor. Faces are painted, are covered with masks, and bodies robed in costumes(97).

However, in Scherzo Horatio enters as well with a mask hiding his true identity: "Ein Engel, das Gesicht im Nacken: Horatio"(98). Whore and Angel begin a ritualistic, wild dance. The grotesque and surrealist quality of the moment nevertheless draws attention to the visual theatricalization of the mask/face dichotomy. Hamlet poses in Ophelia's costume as a woman/whore, and Horatio hides behind the mask of an angel. Beneath these masks we are aware of the masks of the Hamlet and Horatio characters, and behind their masks we perceive the faces of the actors. In the postmodern text, Shakespeare's tragedy is momentarily transformed into a surrealist carnival of masks. Müller has found a highly imaginative albeit extreme way to assimilate the Shakespearean motif of mask-wearing through his unique aesthetical aberrations. What Shakespeare expresses through the spoken text and the complex psychological interaction of his characters, Müller puts on stage through his striking visual theatricalization.

Thus, Müller, in his radical laconic approach theatricalizes
with his usual fragmentary anti-logic the quintessential dilemma of the intellectual revolutionary as "the man between the ages" (99) caught inextricably between an old and a new identity, an old and new ideology, between his faces and his masks. In Scherzo, the core of the Hamletian crisis is theatricalized on Müller's stage in a concrete visual stage-metaphor -- in the grotesque masking, stripping and dressing which starts with the dead women's removal of Hamlet's clothes and Hamlet's subsequent adoption of a female-Ophelian identity and his mask-metamorphosis into a whore. Indeed, it would be justified to say that the complexity of the postmodern Hamlet in whom antithetical political stances are layered and intertwined equals the psychological complexity of the Shakespearean protagonist.

However, Müller shows the same approach in the fourth section of his play. While the communist leaders are reciting their lines, Müller's Hamlet makes the decision to step back into his role as the privileged intellectual theater-maker and to bring the play to its conclusion. He explicitly dons the earlier rejected theatrical mask by putting on Ophelia's mask and costume -- the woman/whore identity -- once more. Then he steps into yet another mask -- the mask of the patriarch, the father/ghost's armour -- for the final massacre in which he kills the communist revolutionaries. Here, Müller uses the visual metaphor of Scherzo in an inverted manner. The dramatist evaluates his protagonist's (Müller's) action from a marxist perspective (as the end of the play clearly indicates). The Müllerian Hamlet becomes a political opportunist (whore) by
resuming his "counter-revolutionary" identity as a privileged intellectual theater-maker. The dramatist here theatricalizes his contempt for and rejection of the protagonist's failure and betrayal of the marxist revolution. Once more Müller theatricalizes his themes in flamboyant and extravagant surrealistic stage-metaphors.

Thus Müller is keenly aware of the expressive potential of the stage-image(100). He creates cryptic image-sequences which mirror Hamlet's inner vision of the characters and events around him and which theatricalize Müller's political concerns in a complex, enigmatic and aberrant style. Critics frequently express frustration when confronted with the task of deciphering Müller's strange, surrealistic visual hieroglyphics, especially in the play's third section Scherzo(101). However, the significance of Scherzo should not be underestimated because of interpretive difficulties(102), which arise because Müller shows in his visual theatricalization the same artistic principles and the same radical provocation of the audience's aesthetical sensibilities as in his reductive textual assimilation of the Renaissance text. He merges and juxtaposes, entangles and ravels visual metaphors and motifs. His unique laconic style is perceivable also in his visual theatricalization. The potency of his words equals the power of his stage-images.

A comparative analysis of Die Hamletmaschine and Hamlet exposes that the assimilation of the Shakespearean theme of
deception allows Müller to contemplate once more one of the central leitmotifs which is integrated into nearly all of his plays: betrayal. Indeed, the mask/face dichotomy, the concept that identities are a composite of antithetical and contradictory, intangible and ambivalent qualities, and the perpetual metamorphosis of identity and reality constitute the core of his protagonist's and his own disillusionment as a marxist and as a politically committed playwright. Evaluating recent socialist/marxist history, Müller is confronted with the fact that the marxist revolution has reached a state of total stagnation and that historical progress has metamorphosed in many ways into a restoration of the conditions which the revolution aimed to abolish.

Indeed, the lethargy of the post-revolutionary generation which has lost sight of marxist ideals and which is inclined to idealize Western consumerism forces the dramatist to reevaluate his position within the cultural and historical-political context of the late 1970's. With Die Hamletmaschine, Müller's crisis reaches its climax and particularly the play's end exposes his unmitigated historical pessimism. Moreover, the drama becomes for Müller a direct confrontation with his own dual and intangible identity as a marxist and as a privileged intellectual within a post-revolutionary socialist society. The text is a stark (self-) critique of the 'inauthentic' revolutionary stance of the 'privileged' intellectual within the context of marxist revolutions. The end of Müller's Hamlet-version with history's regression into the ice-age is an uncompromised indictment of
intellectual privilege as a betrayal of marxist ideals.

But at this point, it is necessary to consider the text's enigmatic title. In an interview, the dramatist revealed that the title was given to the text in a more or less accidental manner, when he and his publishers were planning to bring out a collection of Müller's texts which "had to do with Shakespeare"(103). Müller invented the title of Shakespeare's Factory for the entire anthology since he considered that "quite smart". Then the title for his Hamlet-version resulted automatically. Müller also describes that once critics were interpreting the title as an anagram for Heiner Müller, that is Hamletmaschine = H.M. = Heiner Müller, he started to "carefully disseminate" that interpretation.

Although Müller's own explanation focuses specifically on the playwright's close identification with his protagonist as well as on the metatheatrical element of the text, one may also regard the title as a specific reference to the play's ending. The Müllerian Hamlet readopts his role and thereby leads his drama, his "story" and history to its inevitable conclusion. The protagonist gives up his humanitarian rebellion, resigns himself to his powerlessness, and reintegrates himself into the brutal and immutable, machine-like course of history. Thus, one may perhaps discover in the drama's title reverberations of a Dantonesque perception of history as a monstrous and overwhelming grinding mechanism(103). Hamlet abandons his "conscientious cowardice" as well as his marxist ideals and becomes a brutal and dehumanized slaughter-
machine, a cogwheel in a complex and uncontrollable robotic universe -- a Hamletmaschine.

A careful comparison of *Hamlet* and *Hamletmachine* reveals that Müller coherently explores one of the most central Shakespearean motif-clusters which achieves both in the Renaissance text and in its postmodern version a dual purpose. Both Shakespeare and Müller use the theater as a metaphor to explore the dichotomies of appearance and reality, of deception and truth, mask and face, role and identity. The dramatists explore the psychological/social impulse and the political function of role-playing and mask-wearing through their characters and develop this idea further by focusing on the protagonists' introspective quest for an identity.

In both texts, however, the metaphor harbours another dimension. The theatrical contemplation of role-playing of the fictional characters turns to itself and explores the role and function of the theater and of the theater-maker. Thus, the quest for an identity in the protagonists mirrors the dramatists' attempt to define their own identity as theater-makers within a social-political context, that is to assign meaning and function to their activity. The consciousness of the dramatists (while writing) and of the reader and audience member oscillates between two levels of perception: theatricality and metatheatricality.

However, inspite of Müller's radical dramaturgical changes(103), his creation of a 'visual text', and his inclination to push the Elizabethan play to its imaginary extremities -- the grotesque and the nightmarish, the dramatist remains in many
ways surprisingly faithful to the original. Indeed, an analytical comparison between the two texts reveals the unexpected face of the Renaissance tragedy behind the grotesquely distorted mask of the 20th century text.
In Der Auftrag, written in 1979 -- two years after Die Hamletmaschine, Heiner Müller returns to the question of the revolution. This time, however, he chooses to focus on the French Revolution and the attempt to export it to the colonized world, allowing him concurrently to reflect on contemporary attempts and possibilities 'to export' the socialist-marxist revolution to the Third World.

As Müller points out in a note preceding the text of Der Auftrag, he bases his play on motifs from the short story "The Light on the Gallows" by Anna Seghers(1). Thus, as in Die Hamletmaschine, he once more utilizes material with which he has been aquainted and which has held his attention for a long period of time. His poem "Motiv bei A.S." written in 1958(2) reveals that already twenty years prior to the writing of Der Auftrag, Müller had been inspired by Seghers' story and that some of the motifs and themes, which he assimilates in the play, had already preoccupied him then. It is indeed worthwhile to briefly investigate here why the material of Seghers' story reinspires him to resume his writing in 1979, even though he had experienced a creative crisis with the writing of his "endspiel"(3) -- Die Hamletmaschine -- two years earlier when he proclaimed that the time for "constructive dejection", the time for "putting the head into the sand (sludge stone)" had come(4).

Müller's crisis as a marxist thinker and writer living late
in the second half of the 20th century reaches its pinnacle in *Die Hamletmaschine* and is only partially and very tentatively overcome in the plays following it, as we witness a very gradual transformation in his political-historical perspective. In *Die Hamletmaschine*, Müller confronts the problem of a stagnating socialist revolution; he portrays the "petrification of a hope", a time when the drama of the revolution "no longer takes place"(5). The ending of the play with history's regression into pre-history and the ice-age surely justifies the critical evaluation of the text as a manifestation of Müller's "Geschichtspessimismus."(6) Two years later, however, the possibility of revolution -- of historical transformation and progress -- again preoccupies him, this time with a new focus: the Third World. In this context, Müller's interview "Walls" of 1981 with Sylvere Lothringer is particularly revealing:

There is a line by Jim Morrison: "Live with us in the forests of Asia..."....The changes or reforms that are necessary in our countries are very much dependent on the development of the Third World. It's like a big waiting-room, waiting for history. And history now is history of the Third World with all the problems of hunger and population...For me there's only one definition of communism -- to give everyone similar chances. That means there must be universal history...(7)

The problem is that utopia and history are now growing further and further apart. It has become impossible to envisage utopia within the historical process. Utopia now stands beyond or besides history, beyond or besides politics...(8)

The West is waiting for the crisis of the Soviet Empire and the East is waiting for the final crisis of capitalism...I'm waiting for the Third World. Both sides are waiting for the Third World. It is the great threat for the West and the great hope for our side...(9)
In Die Hamletmaschine, Müller confronts the dilemma of the Marxist intellectual who is placed into a post-revolutionary socialist society where "Socialist Utopia is married to Western Consumerism", where utopia and the future lie, for young couples, in the slow accumulation of material comfort(10). The lethargy of the post-revolutionary generation which has lost sight of Marxist ideals combined with an overwhelming state-bureaucracy have led to a "stalemate situation"(11) for world revolution and have captured history in the "big waiting-room." Within this 'socialist context', the Marxist intellectual-writer is forced to re-evaluate his position within a socialist society as well as the possible function or futility of his intellectual-revolutionary contribution as a playwright. In Die Hamletmaschine, the dramatist's evaluation of theater-making is mediated through the voice of his Hamlet-figure, but can clearly be identified as the nucleus of Müller's own crisis: "my words have nothing to tell anymore. My thoughts suck the blood out of the images. My drama doesn't happen anymore. Behind me the set is put up. By people who aren't interested in my drama, for people to whom it means nothing. I'm not interested in it anymore either....The stuffed corpses in the house don't stir a hand."(12).

In Der Auftrag, the writing about and for the revolution has found a tentatively and cautiously opened exit out of Müller's own "big waiting-room", the time he needed for "constructive dejection" and "to put the head into sand, sludge, stone"(13). Anna Seghers' material offers thematic textures and a historical con-
text which allow Heiner Müller to explore his present political-revolutionary perspective. The possibility of historical progress is reconsidered with the playwright's focus on the Third World. However, as a detailed analysis of the play reveals, the marxist dramatist evaluates the conventional European concept and 'model of a revolution' and questions the validity of the attempt to export it to the Third World. Thus, the two plays are closely related in that they represent a crisis and its (albeit very tentative and ambivalent) turning-point.

Even aesthetically, Der Auftrag signals the resolution of the crisis. The text is considerably less radical than Die Hamletmaschine. Müller admits that he had reached a point with Die Hamletmaschine after which "one could have only delivered white pages" and that with the text of Der Auftrag he had taken "a step backward, in order to proceed in another direction."(14) Although Müller still integrates many allusions into his text, Der Auftrag is no longer a tightly woven fabric of Shakespearean, literary, cultural and historical citations and allusions as Die Hamletmaschine. Themes and motifs are not as intricately entangled and amalgamated, conventional logic is not as insurgenlty fragmented into a complex "Escherian architecture" in which orientation by non-rational association provides the only tentative possibility of finding an exit to this multi-dimensional labyrinth. In Der Auftrag, Müller adheres to structuring his text as a surrealist montage-collage of dialogue, soliloquy and prose passages, of pantomime sequences and dream-like representation of events.
However, his rhetoric no longer consists of his previously minimalist-laconic hieroglyphics, which coalesced in *Die Hamletmaschine* in their extreme density into an enigmatic literary cryptograph, a great obstacle for conventional textual interpretation.

Indeed, the aesthetical radicality of *Die Hamletmaschine* is proportional in its intensity to the intensity of Müller's crisis as a writer. Written at a point where the dramatist states that the aesthetic "molotow-cocktail is the last bourgeois cultural experience" (15), the radical text becomes the only means to explode a fermenting status quo, the lethargy and stagnation he encounters in the contemporary political and cultural context. Radical aesthetics constitute, in a sense, the only justification allowing the marxist writer to vindicate his writing as an aesthetically revolutionary act, the only means available to him to confront the assault of the experience of futility and purposelessness of his writing. In *Der Auftrag*, on the other hand, the excessive clench of an aesthetic and ideological spasm is cautiously and provisionally unlocked, because the emancipation of the Third World as the next step of world revolution justifies his writing (about the idea and the continuation of revolution) as a political-revolutionary act.

However, *Der Auftrag* can also be identified as an immediate sequel to *Die Hamletmaschine* on a purely literary level. Outstanding about the relationship between the two texts is the fact that Müller integrates the central motif-cluster, which he had trans-
posed from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to *Die Hamletmaschine* also into his next text. The mask-face dichotomy as a metaphor for the leitmotif of betrayal, the related concept of metamorphosis of identities and of historical-political reality, and the metaphor of theatricality along with its metatheatrical dimensions constitute, as much as in *Die Hamletmaschine*, the central metaphor at the nucleus of the text(16).

But in what concrete aspects does the reality of *Der Auftrag* resemble the 'monologic vision' theatricalized in Müller's Shakespeare adaptation? One of the strongest correspondences between the two texts is the motif of the mask-face dichotomy, the quest for a new identity, and the notion of the intangibility of (often antithetical) identities. Indeed, Müller seems to have cautiously established an ambivalence of the concept of identity by creating in nearly all characters a unity of antithetical and contradictory qualities. Masks and faces are often not clearly distinguishable and frequently merge.

The first example of the motif of betrayal is found in the character of Antoine. When the sailor arrives to deliver Galloudec's letter, Antoine denies his former identity as the person who had bestowed the commission of exporting the revolution to Jamaica upon the three revolutionaries. Later in the scene, however, he is moved to abandon his mask and to reveal himself not only as a former commissioner of the revolution, but as a man in whom the external actions of a traitor and counter-revolutionary are ambivalently merged with the internal identity of a disil-
lusioned revolutionary. Political circumstances have moved him to abandon the revolutionary cause and to accommodate himself to a life lived in material comfort: "Mit vollem Mund redet es sich leichter über eine verlorene Revolution."(17) However, his betrayal of the revolution is not merely a consequence of his opportunism, but rather of the profound disillusionment experienced in confrontation with an historical-political metamorphosis: "Die Freiheit führt das Volk auf die Barrikaden und wenn die Toten aufwachen trägt sie Uniform. Ich werde dir ein Geheimnis verraten: sie ist auch nur eine Hure."(18) The recognition that the revolutionary ideal "freedom" metamorphoses in the historical process into its antithesis -- the uniformed guardian of an authoritarian order (an allusion to "the reign of terror" ?) -- constitutes the impetus of his disillusionment. Yet paradoxically he also maintains the hope that one day the revolution may succeed: "Frankreich braucht ein Blutbad, und der Tag wird kommen."(19) Disillusionment and hope are paradoxically merged in this figure, which forces him to live ambivalently with his cynicism toward the revolution and the idealized memories of a heroic past:

Aber hier ist was leer, das hat gelebt. Ich war dabei, als das Volk die Bastille gestürmt hat. Ich war dabei, als der Kopf des letzten Bourbonen in den Korb fiel. Wir haben die Köpfe der Aristokraten geerntet. Wir haben die Köpfe der Verräter geerntet.(20)

In the present, he lives with antithetical identities as well as emotions, with the guilty conscience of a traitor and counter-revolutionary (his visions of the ghosts of Sasportas and Galloudec) and the pride of the rebel who helped to expurgate
treaon and reactionary forces. Thus, Heiner Müller carefully merges antitheses -- revolution/counter-revolution, hope/ disillusionment, heroism/cowardice in the figure of Antoine.

With the sexual intercourse between Antoine and his wife, the Angel of Despair(21) enters, who speaks in antithetical metaphors(22) and in whom we can recognize a similar ambivalence. For Antoine, sexual ecstasy becomes a measure to forget and escape both the memories of his disillusionment as well as the guilt of his betrayal. Paradoxically, however, the sexual act harbours concurrently the seeds for the reawakening of the revolutionary consciousness:


Arlene A. Teraoka points out with accuracy that in "Auftrag, despair shows...two faces: it is a self-dissolution, a total forgetting which essentially leaves the continuity of oppression unbroken, and, alternatively, it is the explosive promise of revolution... Antoine, the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary is visited by an angel signifying both. "(24) Again, Müller clearly aims to merge antitheses, to deliberately create intangibility and ambiguity.

The playwright's strategy can again be discovered in the collective monologue of the three revolutionaries and the "rehearsal-
of-the-masks scene", which follows it.

Müller starts the theatricalized memory of the revolution on Jamaica with a textual fragment in which the voices of the three revolutionaries, Debuisson, Galloudec, and Sasportas, are united in a collective monologue as the unified voice of the revolutionary force -- unified in the hope to bring "[den] Schrecken der Throne, die Hoffnung der Armen"(25) to the island of slavery. However, in the scene immediately following it, this collective monologue disintegrates into a dialogue in which the three revolutionaries, as individuals, express antagonistic attitudes concerning the encaged slave withering under the hot sun in the middle of the market square. The attitudes expressed here give emphasis to the fact that in spite of the characters' collective fight for revolutionary ideals, equality is still not achieved even among them, because of their differences in race and cultural background(26).

Galloudec: "Wir sind nicht hier, um einander unsere Hautfarbe vorzuhalten, Bürger Sasportas.
Sasportas: "Wir sind nicht gleich, eh wir einander nicht die Häute abgezogen haben."(27)

Thus, the unity of the revolutionary collective is here revealed as a mask behind which 'individual faces' and thus conflicting revolutionary perspectives are disclosed. Müller seems to draw focus here to the fact that revolutionary unity dissolves at the moment when specific and individual decisions have to be made, and that it falters because the identity of the revolutionary, which essentially oscillates between an old and a new identity, between an old and a new age, struggles to eradicate tensions and prejudices belonging to an old social order. On an individual basis,
the objective of the revolutionary can here be identified as the quest for a new identity (as was the case with the Hamlet and Ophelia characters of Die Hamletmaschine), which is highly dependent upon specific social conditions. Debuisson, the intellectual, reasons: "Das war ein schlechter Anfang."(28)

In the passage following this conflict, Müller develops this idea more concretely by using the mask/face dichotomy as a metaphor for this oscillation between old and new identities. Debuisson leads himself, Galloudec and Sasportas through a rehearsal of their masks, which are meant to hide their revolutionary mission and thus to ensure the successful outcome of their efforts. However, these masks are in fact partially the pre-revolutionary "faces/identities" of the protagonists to which they were accustomed in the context of the old hierarchy: Debuisson - the well-educated son of a slave-owner (a doctor and intellectual), Galloudec - the peasant, and Sasportas - the slave. However, in each case, the mask in its entirety presents an amalgamation of the actual old identity and an attitude toward the revolution, which in the context of the old ideology and social order would have been part of the characters' old identity. For example, in the case of Debuisson, it is an undeniable fact that he is the one he was ("Ich bin der ich war"(29)), i.e. an educated slave-owner's son who returns "in den Schoβ der Familie, um sein Erbe anzutreten"(30). However, the attitude toward the revolution articulated through the "mask" is an antithesis to his actual present belief. He has not returned to Jamaica, "nachdem die
Schrecken der Revolution ihm die Augen geöffnet haben für die ewige Wahrheit, daß alles Alte besser als alles Neue ist" (31), which would have been an attitude expected from him within the ideological frame of the old hierarchy. The same observation can be made with respect to the relationship between mask and face of the other two characters.

However, for the three revolutionaries, the antithesis of mask and face is not as clear and unambiguous as would be expected. As before, the rehearsal of the masks/roles reveals that the interaction between the characters is still largely determined by these "old identities" and the resulting tensions which arise between them, i.e. old identities are only ostensibly overcome through the "brotherhood in the spirit of the revolution".

Firstly, Debuisson assumes in this scene the role of the theater-director, the "master of the rehearsal", controlling and correcting the others' in their enactment of their roles (32). Thus, he still assumes an authoritative position, while the other two characters seem to accept the notion that they need the guidance of his authority. However, Müller establishes fine nuances here. Debuisson indeed reveals that he is ideologically still very closely related to the "old order". Assuming the position of the "master" in the rehearsal, he immediately assumes that role in reality as his answers to Sasportas, the slave, reveal:

Sasportas: Hat die Revolution nicht gesiegt auf Haiti. Die schwarze Revolution.

Here, the interaction between the two characters oscillates ambiguously between theater-illusion/rehearsal and reality. The position of Debuisson is highly ambivalent as he elicits "truthful" responses from Sasportas, who feels the need to defend his race and skin colour against the ideology of the master-class articulated by Debuisson. Indeed, in the rehearsal scene, the master plays the master, and the slave plays the slave. Masks and faces merge for a moment, and become for the audience indistinguishable. In his claim that "Auf Haiti herscht der Abschaum", Debuisson discloses that the old master-slave ideology is in fact to a large extent still his own; he shows his disrespect and disdain for the black race, an attitude much more appropriate for the slave-owner's son than for the revolutionary fighting for the abolition of slavery. Müller accentuates this ambivalence at the end of the scene with the arrival of the gigantic negro:

Debuisson: Das ist der älteste Sklave meiner Familie. Er ist taub und stumm, etwas zwischen Mensch und Hund. Er wird in den Käfig spucken....Dann wird er mir die Schuhe küssen, er leckt sich schon die Lippen, und auf seinem Rücken mich, seinen alten und neuen Herrn, in das Haus meiner Väter tragen, grunzend vor Wonne...(34).

Again Debuisson's ostensibly authentic attitude toward blacks is exposed as he describes the faithful slave as an amalgamation of man and animal. The revolutionary ideals of equality and brotherhood seem not to apply to the black slaves of his father's estate,
Debuisson's former subordinates. Instead of compassion for the victim of oppression and the white man's ideology, Debuisson shows aversion and loathing. Thus Müller carefully establishes the notion that Debuisson's identity oscillates ambiguously between the old and the new, mask and face, theatrical illusion and reality.

But the same principle holds true for the figure of Sasportas. Galloudec twice draws attention to the fact that also for Sasportas the close relationship between mask and face, which renders his present identity as a "black among white brothers for the revolutionary cause" rather ambiguous:

Galloudec: Dir sollte es nicht schwer fallen, den Sklaven zu spielen, Sasportas, in deiner schwarzen Haut....

Ich weiss, dass du die schwerste Rolle spielst. Sie ist dir auf den Leib geschrieben. (35)

And Sasportas, himself, reveals that his old identity as a black slave influences his relationship to his white fellow-revolutionaries in a very fundamental manner:

Sasportas: Beim nächsten Mal werde ich dir mit dem Messer antworten, Bürger Galloudec. (36)

His aggressive responses to both Debuisson and Galloudec reveal also within him an ambivalent merging of mask and face, of old and new identity.

Thus, Müller establishes strange and intangible identities for the two figures who represent the antithetical poles of master and slave in his cast of characters; he emphasizes that the old ideology and its hierarchal order are deeply rooted in the mech-
anisms of human interaction along with psychological tensions and prejudices. Indeed, it is these old identities which erode the collective mask of the revolutionary force represented in the revolutionaries' collective monologue at the beginning of the scene.

In his next "scene", Müller makes a phrase articulated by Debuissone into a "collective contemplation" on the nature of Revolution and Death and their ostensibly inextricable inter-relationship:

\[
\text{DIE REVOLUTION IST DIE MASKE DES TODES DER TOD IST}
\text{DIE MASKE DER REVOLUTION DIE REVOLUTION IST DIE MASKE}
\text{DES TODES DER TOD IST DIE MASKE DER REVOLUTION DIE}
\text{REVOLUTION IST DIE MASKE.} \ldots \ (37)
\]

Antithesis and its reversal constitute the nucleus of this relationship, in which the dramatist presents two antithetical attitudes toward revolution: a cynical and disillusioned one, and one full of hope and optimism. If the revolution is the mask of death, i.e. if the true identity of revolution is death, then the futility and senselessness of the fight for revolutionary ideals is here poignantly articulated. The victims of revolution have died a hopeless and ill-spent death for death alone and for a world to be reigned by the antitheses of their ideals. If death is the mask of revolution, however, i.e. if the true identity of death reigning during revolution is the revolution -- the attainment of revolutionary ideals, then the victims are justified. The hope and optimism that conditions are indeed changeable through revolutionary sacrifice are expressed in the "second half" of Müller's antithetical axiom. Thus the dramatist exploits the mask motif
once more to draw attention to the essentially ambivalent and contradictory interrelationship of death and revolution which are inextricably connected to one another. Masks (i.e. illusion) become faces (reality), and vice versa in a process which, in essence, cannot be reduced to conform with either "half" of the dramatist's formula.

Following this introduction of the theatrical mask-wearing and role-playing motif in the rehearsal scene, Müller continues his play with three scenes in which the theater is used as a verbal and visual-theatrical metaphor in the form of a-play-within-a-play. In a radio interview for Deutschlandfunk, Müller reveals the thematic importance of the metaphor of theatricality for Der Auftrag:

The French Revolution...didn't interest me as much as a historical event, however it did as 'theatre' as a revolutionary model that had an especially large arsenal of theatrical forms, among other reasons there was the relatively wide discrepancy between the intentions of the protagonists and the real mechanism, the real objectives....It is of course the only model for revolutions in Europe, or the -- now as ever -- classic model from which we can 'read' fairly accurately the progression and the wrong moves of other, subsequent revolutions.."(38)

Here, Müller's comments indeed support the thesis that he deliberately aims to create ambivalent characters who are caught between their revolutionary intentions, their old identities and the "real mechanisms" and objectives which belong still to the old order and ideology, as has been shown above. His observation that the French Revolution interested him as 'theatre', as a revolutionary model that had a "large arsenal of theatrical forms" explains his portrayal of the revolutionaries' efforts as "the
drama of the exportation of the revolution to Jamaica," starting with the initial rehearsal of the masks, three scenes which constitute "the performance," and a later scene in which the masks are explicitly removed and the "illusion" destroyed with the arrival of the news about Napoleon's take-over and Debuissone's disillusionment and betrayal. Thus, in the scenes which constitute the "drama of the revolution," Müller portrays the attempt of his three main characters to export the French Revolution to the colonized world overtly as a theatrical act, as theatre(39), and thus as an illusion.

But let us investigate the theatrical nature of these scenes in detail: the Return of the Prodigal Son, the Theatre of the Revolution, and Sasportas' coronation and subsequent condemnation of Debuissone. Remarkable is first of all that each scene is preceded by a pantomime sequence, an elaborate costuming and masking ritual (bodies and faces are painted, figures undress and dress one another, dog and tiger masks are worn(40)), in which the slaves of Jamaica prepare the "actors" for their performance. Thus, the presented action is always explicitly identified as a theatrical presentation. The characters with whom we are acquainted from the previous "rehearsal scene" now become actors performing "their drama" by immersing themselves into a sequence of stage metamorphoses with the ease and flexibility of the theatrical trade.

Highly important in this context is the fact that the "stage set" for Müller's play-within-the-play (in three acts) remains constant throughout. It consists of a throne, a footstool (to be
 impersonated by an actor), and a large entourage of "slave/ courtiers" who serve as stage-hands and aid in the rapid metamorphosis from one theatrical reality to another, occurring "between acts". With the throne as the central stage-property, the set can be recognized as a stage-metaphor for the old hierarchy and its ideology, for the social structure which still shapes the political reality on Jamaica and which the revolution aims to abolish.

Within this hierarchal structure, the drama of the revolution takes place, which in essence turns into a veritable merry-go-round of identities (which is strikingly similar to the experience of Müller's Hamlet-figure in Scherzo of Die Hamletmaschine, but is here presented as an objective reality), in which "reality" becomes a perpetual metamorphosis with ever-changing character-constellations, while the stock-roles of the hierarchal structure -- the master, and his subordinates-- remain constant and are "impersonated" in sequence by the star-actors, the main characters of Müller's drama. The concept of true and constant identity is here systematically destroyed and rendered intangible as a figure metamorphoses into its antithesis from one scene to another. Every man has the potential to play almost any part, and his role/identity is entirely dependent upon the social-political context in which he lives.

At the outset of the drama, in the scene entitled "Return of the Prodigal Son", Debuisson, Galloudec, and Sasportas are undressed and costumed to impersonate the mask/roles, which they
had rehearsed in the preceding scene. Debuissou is dressed as a slave-owner, Galloudec as "the faithful servant of his most gracious master" becomes a slave-keeper, and Sasportas is costumed as a slave. The rehearsed masks are thus clearly consolidated and hierarchical ranks firmly established. The throne, however, is occupied by FirstLove. Subsequently, Debuissou is systematically seduced and enslaved into the old hierarchical order. He is made a slave of the old ideology, before he can actually assume his "old role", that of the master. The old hierarchical ideology is personified in the figure of FirstLove, who articulates phrases strikingly similar to Debuissou's: "Sieh dir meine Sklaven an, und deine, unser Eigentum. Ihr Leben lang sind sie Tiere gewesen. Warum sollen sie Menschen sein, weils in Frankreich auf dem Papier steht."(41) Her enslavement of Debuissou is portrayed as a sadomasochistic seduction/torture, as an act of nemesis for Debuissou's betrayal of the old order. In her sadomasochistic and vengeful ritual, Müller focuses again on (nearly prototypal) hierarchical mechanisms which are deeply rooted within the psychological and sexual "power-structures" of human interaction(42). Master and slave are uncovered as archetypal roles within a biological/sexual reality -- "Die Sklaverei ist ein Naturgesetz, alt wie die Menschheit."(43) -- which forms the nucleus and the matrix of the hierarchal structures observed at a political level. Galloudec, on the other hand, forsakes the role of the faithful servant of Debuissou and becomes the leader of the man-hunt, while his subordinates -- the slaves -- impersonate the bloodhounds
behind their bloodhound masks.

In the following scene, the hierarchal constellations are entirely reversed as identities metamorphose into their antitheses. After the pleasure and the pain of the sexual initiation into the old order, Debuission becomes the master on the throne, while FirstLove become "his slave" and footstool. Sasportas and Galloudec are costumed and masked as Robbespierre and Danton. The Theater of the Revolution -- a-play-within-a-play-within-a-play -- is performed as a "court-entertainment" for the "monarch" Debuission and his attendants/slavesstage-hands/extras.

In this scene, Müller creates a grotesque parody of the French revolutionaries Robbespierre and Danton(44). The revolution is portrayed as an infantile and idiotic power-struggle between two intellectuals, who attempt to win the support of the populace (impersonated by the crowd of slaves) through mutual and reciprocal accusation. The populace is presented as a crowd entirely oblivious to the rhetorical manipulations of "their leaders" and willingly participates in the reciprocal decapitation without resort to discriminate against or in favour of either side. It is represented as a mute and ignorant crowd enslaved through the rhetorical authority of their intellectual "masters." Here, Müller aims to expose the "arsenal of theatrical forms" and "the wide discrepancy between the intentions of the protagonists and the real mechanism, the real objectives..."(45) which, in his opinion, constitute the "wrong moves" which have become the classic model of European revolutions.
The intention of the revolution -- the emancipation of an oppressed, dehumanized and silent majority -- is here exposed as theatrical, and underneath a "real objective" can be discovered, i.e. the intellectual undermining of the authority of a "fellow-revolutionary," which nevertheless is pursued under the label "revolution." The revolution stagnates as a forum for the debate of revolutionary politics turns into a grotesque circus in which the "Man without Abdomen" (the intellectual) becomes the object of sensational ridicule, the main attraction. Politics are abandoned for theatrics(46), the fight for revolutionary ideals turns into the fight for intellectual dominance not only over the populace at large but even over a "brother in the spirit of the revolution." Müller's parody can be recognized as an exposure and critique of the hierarchal mechanisms and power-struggles, which erode the revolutionary efforts and intentions of the prototypical intellectual revolutionary(47).

But, in this context, another detail acquires great importance. Again Müller carefully creates an ambivalence with respect to the mask/faces of the actor-characters: "SasportasRobespierre" and "GalloudecDanton". By merging mask and face, he succeeds in making a concrete analogy between the theatrical illusion (the "portrayal of the French Revolution") and "reality" (the attempted exportation of the revolution to Jamaica). The hierarchal mechanisms portrayed "on stage" are also integral to the interaction between the revolutionaries on Jamaica. Müller had already made allusions to this aspect in the rehearsal scene through the inter-
action between Debuissone and Sasportas, and he also amplifies this idea in the scene following the Theater of the Revolution.

With the next scene, another theatrical metamorphosis takes place. Debuissone, the enthusiastically applauding monarch, is dragged from the throne and Sasportas, the slave, put in his place, while Galloudec becomes the footstool. Again, roles are reversed, the constellation of figures permutes, and identities become their antitheses, while the hierarchal structure remains constant. Sasportas, stripped of the mask of Robespierre, accuses Debuissone of being a master and property owner (ironically while sitting on the throne) in a great tirade, not unlike the great speeches heard in the theater of the revolution (albeit not as infantile and grotesquely polemical, but rather serious and emotional). Again the emancipation of the oppressed is abandoned for the accusation of a fellow-revolutionary. The fight for freedom, brotherhood, and equality turns into a combat of intellects. Hierarchal roles are merely reversed and not abolished, even among the revolutionaries. Herein lies the essential "wrong move" of the revolution.

However, Sasportas articulates a critique of exactly this approach — a revolution led by intellectuals who, by virtue of their intellectual authority, enslave the populace into their theories, and whose privileged position has to be recognized moreover as another form of exploitation: "Unsere Schule ist die Zeit, sie kommt nicht wieder und kein Atem für Didaktik, wer nicht lernt stirbt auch ....Wir verurteilen dich zum Tode....Weil deine
Gedanken weiß sind....Wer schwitzt für eure Philosophien. Noch dein Harn und deine Scheiße sind Ausbeutung und Sklaverei." (48) Here, Sasportas recognizes that the authority of the intellect becomes an obstacle, a hierarchal mechanism, undermining the true achievement of revolutionary ideals by colonizing and exploiting the naivite and ignorance of the people, who are working -- sweating -- for the philosophies of the intellectual class (49). Arlene Teraoka accurately describes the standpoint articulated by Sasportas:

Debuisson, the former slave-owner and educated white man of Europe, is rejected as a carrier of revolution. The white revolution, a contradiction in terms, is a revolution of "tote[n] Ordnungen, in denen der Rausch keinen Platz hat"; it is a ..., a stale intellectual experiment which neither grows out of nor redeems the real experience of oppression, indeed, which suppresses the powerful natural forces of life." (50)

Ironically, however, Sasportas, himself, is inextricably immersed in the "European tradition", its intellectual debate (as his speech shows), and its hierarchical mechanisms. In this scene, he merely mimicks the behaviour of the character Robbespierre (SasportasRobbespierre) whom he just impersonated on the stage of the Theater of the Revolution. Indeed, he all too willingly assumes the role of the master on the throne making Debuisson his slave. As long as he continues the revolutionary fight under the banner of the "European model" (which shall change in a later scene), the hierarchical structure will remain the same.

In this sense, the attempt of the three revolutionaries to export the French Revolution, founded on the political philosophies of the "white continent", to the colonized, uncivi-
lized, and oppressed world becomes in itself an intellectual colonization and an ineffectual repetition of a European model, which is portrayed as already eroded by intellectual hierarchical and oppressive mechanisms (51).

In essence, then, Müller uses the metaphor of theatricality to portray the nature and quality of the French Revolution. The play-within-a-play is the theatricalization of a failed revolution and an exposure of the reasons for its failure, the "wrong moves." The hierarchical structure and its ideology, metaphorized on stage through the stage set -- throne, footstool, and crowd of slaves -- is never changed or abolished, but remains constant while the characters play out antithetical identities without recognizing that a true change can only occur if these roles, prescribed by an old ideology, are themselves abolished and if the political and psychological mechanisms of oppression are eradicated instead of being incorporated into revolutionary tactics. Revolution as a quest to establish a new identity for both the historical-political reality and the subjects living within its context -- the characters -- is here revealed as an illusory, theatrical metamorphosis. The drama of the revolution takes place only to reveal itself as drama.

Thus, theatrical metamorphosis becomes here a metaphor for historical change, which hides behind the mask of theatrical illusion the face of an old, ubiquitous and constant hierarchy. In this context, Müller's description of the theatre becomes crucially important: "The Theatre, the House of Lust, the Chamber
of Horrors of Metamorphosis."(52) This antithetical formula describes in fact the dilemma of the revolutionary for whom the possibility of historical change -- the metamorphosis of revolution -- is the very essence of his raison d'etre -- "his lust", and for whom its antithesis -- the metamorphosis of restoration -- is the horror, his disillusionment. In Der Auftrag, Muller portrays historical change as a perpetual permutation of figure-constellations within a permanent hierarchical structure and its cast of neatly-defined stock-roles. The dramatist uses the concept of theatrical metamorphosis as a vehicle for his contemplation on the nature of historical progress and revolutionary effort, as well as for the exploration of the psychological mechanisms which constitute the matrix for the observed and criticized political structures.

With the next scene, Muller deliberately destroys the relative coherence, chronology and unity of his play by inserting an anachronistic monologue spoken by a 20th-century character. Muller here establishes a clear analogy between the French Revolution and its attempt to export emancipation to the colonized world and the possibility to export the socialist-marxist revolution to the Third World, today. The "drama of the revolution" ends abruptly. Debuisson is not given the chance to respond to the rhetorical challenge posed by Sasportas, which would complete the symmetry of the scene, according to "the model" of the previous scene.
However, the scene nevertheless refers back to Sasportas' accusation. It is the monologic contemplation of a Debuisson-like character (53), who is placed into the contemporary post-revolutionary context of a socialist society. In the figure of the office clerk, Müller creates another pseudo-Hamletian character, whose "alienation" from the revolutionary task is the immediate consequence of an exaggerated and parodied intellectuality (54). Caught up in the detailed analysis of his situation, the protagonist misses his chance of meeting with his boss, and will thereby remain forever ignorant of his revolutionary task. However, the experienced stagnation of the revolution as a complete and total alienation from the revolutionary task is also portrayed as the immediate consequence of an overwhelming and hierarchical bureaucratic apparatus. The office clerk acknowledges:

Vielleicht geht die Welt aus dem Leim und mein Auftrag, der so wichtig war, daß ihn der Chef mir in Person erteilen wollte, ist schon sinnlos geworden...GEGENSTANDSLOS in der Sprache der Ämter, die ich so gut gelernt habe (überflüssige Wissenschaft), BEI DEN AKTEN, die niemand einsehen wird, weil er gerade die letzte mögliche Maßnahme gegen den Untergang betraf. (55)

Arriving by pure "technological coincidence" in a Third World environment, the character finds himself confronted with the "unrevealed task" of exporting the revolution to the uncivilized wilderness of Peru. In this environment, the protagonist becomes hyper-conscious of his position as a white European intellectual who is alienated from his revolutionary task, and he recognizes that his capability of speaking the language of bureaucracy - "überflüssige Wissenschaft" does not equip him to communicate with
the inhabitants of this country. Within this initially threatening and unknown environment, the character recognizes his fundamental futility and purposelessness and walks into the wilderness.

This anachronistic scene is integrated at a crucial point in the drama. It relates back to Sasportas' speech in that the protagonist of the "kafkaesque" elevator monologue and the environment in which he works expose exactly those aspects which Sasportas rejects in his accusation of Debuisson. The described bureaucratic environment can be identified as a dead order in which life and intoxication have no place "tote Ordnung, in denen der Rausch keinen Platz hat" (56), and in which an exaggerated intellectuality is the direct cause of the clerk's failure to export the revolution to the Third World. While the clerk is intensely immersed in the rational and pseudo-scientific diagnosis of his situation and the possible solutions to his dilemma, which leads to his missing the chance to receive his mission, Sasportas recognizes that there is no "Atem für Didaktik, wer nicht lernt, stirbt auch" (57). He thereby points to the fact that the time for revolution is more pressing and should not be wasted in intellectualizing.

On the other hand, the monologue relates back to the "story" of three revolutionaries on Jamaica because it is in many ways a projection of the "future" disillusionment and betrayal of Debuisson.

In the last scene of Der Auftrag, Müller's drama ends in the open conflict between the revolutionary perspectives of the three protagonists. Debuisson, as theater-director and "intellectual
authority", officially pronounces the end of the play, and thereby abandons the attempt of a revolution on Jamaica as a "theatrical illusion." For him, with the arrival of the news about Napoleon's take-over, the illusion is stripped away and reality becomes again what it was: "a home for masters and slaves," while the theatrical masks put on in the "rehearsal scene", the old "pre-revolutionary" identities, have now metamorphosed into faces:


Remarkable, in this context, is the fact that Debuisson uses the mask/face metaphor as a vehicle to contemplate the political transformation he is confronted with in the same manner in which Müller uses theatrical metamorphosis to contemplate the nature and possibility of historical change. Debuisson articulates his disillusionment through the metaphor:

...die Sklaverei hat viele Gesichter, ihr letztes haben wir noch nicht gesehen, du nicht, Sasportas, und wir auch nicht, Galloudec, und vielleicht war, was wir für das Morgenrot der Freiheit hieltten, nur die Maske einer neuen schrecklicheren Sklaverei... und vielleicht hat deine unbekannte Geliebte, die Freiheit, wenn ihre Masken verbraucht sind kein anderes Gesicht als der Verrat: was du heute nicht verrätst, wird dich morgen töten... aus der Bastille in die Conciergerie, der Befreier wird Gefängniswärter... (59)

Here, Debuisson exposes striking affinities to Antoine, the weary intellectual revolutionary in France ("Die Freiheit führt das Volk auf die Barrikaden, und wenn die Toten erwachen trägt sie Uniform... sie ist auch nur eine Hure" (60), as the experience of
metamorphosis constitutes the very core of their disillusionment.
In Debuisson, Müller creates thus another Hamletian protagonist who shows an acute awareness of the mask/face dichotomy, a duality which erodes the concepts of truth, reality, and identity, and replaces them with the intangible and ambiguous. The apprehension that identities and historical-political realities have the potential to metamorphose spontaneously into antitheses makes even his past contribution to the rebellion ambiguous:

Vielleicht habe ich nur meine Hände gewaschen,
Sasportas, als ich sie in Blut getaucht habe für unsere Sache... (61)

With the political transformation in France, the revolutionary is thus deprived of the sense that history and reality can be controlled and shaped by man, by a revolution. Debuisson recognizes man as the object and not the subject of historical change(62):

Dein Tod heißt Freiheit, Sasportas, dein Tod heißt Brüderlichkeit, Galloudec, mein Tod heißt Gleichheit. Es ritt sich gut auf ihnen als sie noch unsere Gäule gewesen sind, den Wind von morgen um die Schläfe. Jetzt weht der Wind von gestern. Die Gäule sind wir. Merkt ihr die Sporen im Fleisch... Und wir brauchen unsere Zeit jetzt, um die schwarze Revolution abzublasen, die wir so gründlich vorbereitet haben in Auftrag einer Zukunft, die schon wieder Vergangenheit ist wie die andren vor ihr. (63)

The faith that a change of man's condition is possible in the future is here replaced by the recognition that the future metamorphoses perpetually into the past, and the past stands for the pre-revolutionary world, "eine Heimat für Herren und Sklaven"(64), where slavery is the natural law, "ein Naturgesetz", beyond and out of man's control. Thus, the experience of metamorphosis
destroys the intellectual's faith in his own power and explodes
the very ground of philosophical certainties he is standing on:

Denk darüber nach, eh du deinen Hals riskierst für
die Befreiung der Sklaven in einen Abgrund, der
keinen Boden mehr hat seit dieser Nachricht...und
vielleicht ist der Stern schon auf dem Weg aus den
Kälten des Weltraums, ein Klumpen Eis oder Metall,
der das entgültige Loch in den Boden der Tatsachen
schlägt, auf dem wir immer neu unsere gebrechlichen
Hoffnungen pflanzen. Oder die Kälte selber, die
unsere Gestern und Morgen zum ewigen Heute friert.

(65)

For Debuissou, the conflict within him acquires cosmic propor­
tions. Again the motif of the ice-age (Die Hamletmaschine),
history's recurring regression into pre-history represents the
extremity of pessimism and disillusionment experienced by the
intellectual. However, the intellectual, the man of reason, cannot
live with uncertainty. His long speech is a manifestation of his
desperate attempt to control his experience through reason. Unable
to live with the ambiguous and intangible, the intellectual
struggles to gain back the ground of certainties he was standing
on. Thus, his faith in historic change turns through his disil­
lusionment into the certainty that change is impossible:

Dein Fell bleibt schwarz, Sasportas. Du, Galloudec
bleibst ein Bauer....Ich lache über den Neger, der
sich weiß waschen will mit der Freiheit. Ich lache
über den Bauern,, der in der Maske der Gleichheit
geht. Ich lache über den Stumpfsinn der Brüderlichkeit,
der mich, Debuissou, Herrn über vierhundert Sklaven,
ich brauche nur Ja zu sagen, Ja und Ja zur geheiligten
Ordnung der Sklaverei, blind gemacht hat für dein,
Sasportas, dreckiges Sklavenfell, für deinen vier­
beinigen Bauerntrrott, Galloudec... (66)

Indeed, here, the ideals of the revolution are referred to as
masks, which describes them as illusions behind which the old
values of the hierarchical "Naturgesetz" are hidden. Debuisson acquires a new vision of certainty which replaces the blindness and naivete of his faith in the possibility of revolution. The nucleus of the problem is really the inability of the intellectual protagonist to accept the dualities -- mask/face, revolution/restoration, new/old, the concrete/the intangible, rationality/irrationality, thesis/antithesis -- with which he is confronted. His need for certainty can only be satisfied by reducing the dichotomy to one half, by replacing one "certainty" for another. The European intellectual rooted in the tradition of rationality fails to draw the conciliatory and harmonizing circle around the schizophrenic ying and yang of the "cosmos" he is living in. Therefore, a historical period of restoration becomes for him history's insurmountable and irreversible regression into the ice-age.

Thus, another parallel to *Die Hamletmaschine* can be found in *Der Auftrag*. In the figure of Debuisson, Müller creates another Hamletian protagonist, a character living "between two epochs" in the 'schizophrenic' mind-frame of revolution, when one set of political-philosophic ideas and ideals is meant to substitute another. He focuses again on a character whose revolutionary contribution can, in essence, be identified as his rejection of the privileges accredited to him through his 'natural rank' as an intellectual (member of a privileged class) in the old hierarchic order. Revolution for these characters is not the acquisition of a new freedom (as in the case of Ophelia and Sasportas),
but the rejection of an 'old and freer freedom' to ensure the formation of a new political order. And as in Die Hamletmaschine, the protagonist reverts to betraying the revolutionary ideals at a time when historical progress has stagnated and old hierarchical structures have reestablished themselves.

Müller contrasts the disillusionment of Debuissoon, with the attitude of the other two revolutionaries, who fail to understand the new "certainties" Debuissoon acknowledges:

Galloudec: Das geht mir zu schnell, Debuissoon. Ich bin ein Bauer, ich kann nicht so schnell denken...


They are paradoxically saved from the experience of disillusionment by both their lack of insight into the historical process and the absence of the need to control experience through reason. They have no need to indulge in rational analysis or to reflect on the nature of historical change(68). For them, the revolutionary quest on Jamaica remains a goal to be pursued as long as they themselves -- as slave and peasant -- continue to suffer from the oppression of a hierarchical ideology:

Sasportas: ...solange es Herren und Sklaven gibt, sind wir aus unserem Auftrag nicht entlassen. Was hat der Generalputsch in Paris mit der Befreiung der Sklaven auf Jamaica zu tun, die unser Auftrag ist. Zehntausend Männer warten auf unsern Befehl....Sie sind bereit zu töten und zu sterben....Was geht diese Männer Paris an, ein ferner Steinhaufen, der eine kurze Zeit lang die Metropole ihrer Hoffnung war...(69)

Du hast mir eine Fahne zerrissen. Ich will mir eine neue schneiden aus meinem schwarzen Fell.... Ich gehe in den Kampf bewaffnet mit den Demütigungen meines Lebens. Du hast mir eine neue Waffe in die
While the horrifying experience of metamorphosis erodes the faith of the intellectual revolutionary and forces him into resignation, the experience of humiliation and oppression provides its victim, Sasportas, with the impetus and strength to continue the fight for emancipation in spite of political-historical set-backs. In this aspect, Sasportas exposes striking affinities to the Ophelia of *Die Hamletmaschine*, who, made into an invalid in her wheelchair and suffocating under muffling bandages, articulates her faith that the future will bring her vindication in spite of the extremity of her fundamentally absurd condition, and in spite of her total and absolute confinement and powerlessness. She gains her strength and faith from the sheer brutality she is made to experience as a victim of male oppression. Thus, in the figures of Ophelia and Sasportas, who have no privileges to sacrifice, the dramatist creates two characters who acquire through the direct and physical experience of oppression an authentic strength and impulse for their liberation.

However, in its denouement, *Der Auftrag* presents a radical change from the end of *Die Hamletmaschine*, which signals the dissolutin of the extreme crisis Müller was going through in the writing of the Shakespeare adaptation. While the betrayal of the Hamlet-figure leads to the immediate set-back of Ophelia's emancipatory efforts in *Die Hamletmaschine*, Debuisson's betrayal of the revolutionary cause on Jamaica has no immediate consequence
for Sasportas and Galloudec. In fact, it leads to their final and authentic emancipation from the European tradition which causes the failure of the intellectual revolutionary and constitutes in itself a colonizing and oppressive force. Under the new banner for their emancipation which Sasportas cuts out of his "black coat", Galloudec and Sasportas march into the battle of the revolution "bereit zu töten und zu sterben." (71) Debuisson, in contrast, is left to live with the horror and the lust of the seduction of betrayal and the shame of wanting to live life in the happiness, which is only made possible through the oppression of the happiness of others: "Ich will mein Stück vom Kuchen der Welt. Ich werde mir ein Stück herrausschneiden aus dem Hunger der Welt. Ihr, ihr habt kein Messer." (72) He is left in solitude, pleading for his execution because the shame of betrayal and the memory of metamorphosis (i.e. of the mask/face dichotomy which pervades a world he needs to reduce to unambiguous certainties) will from this moment onward haunt him as much as they haunt the other European intellectual of the beginning of the drama, Antoine (73):

Bleibt. Ich habe Angst, Galloudec, vor der Schönheit der Welt. Ich weiß gut, daß sie die Maske des Verrats ist. Laßt mich nicht allein mit meiner Maske, die mir schon ins Fleisch wächst und es schmerzt nicht mehr. Tötet mich bevor ich euch verrate. Ich fürchte mich, Sasportas, vor der Schande auf dieser Welt glücklich zu sein. (74)

Arlene Teraoka, in her interpretation of Der Auftrag, describes the crucial influence of Franz Fanon's two works The Wretched of the Earth and Black Skin, White Masks on Müller's political-historical perspective (75):
Fanon shows that the Manichean world view of Black vs. White inevitably breaks down in the experience of violent revolution. The conclusion of The Wretched of the Earth is a call for the black man to leave the European model of progress and civilization, to find something different, to create a new history for man. [The Wretched pp.311-316.] The earlier work Black Skin, White Masks also ends with the abandoning of the Manichean structure at the base of the - here psycho-existential - black problem, and the uncovering and adoption of the universality of human experience....Sasportas too will come to learn that revolution is not a matter of blacks taking the places of and mimicking their white European masters, but of abolishing masters and slaves wherever they may be. (76)

And thus Der Auftrag does not end with the stark, apocalyptic and pessimistic images of Die Hamletmaschine, where history regresses into pre-history and the ice-age, and where the victims of oppression are forever incarcerated in the depth of the deep-sea, forever condemned to non-action through the counter-revolutionary action of oppressive forces. In the text following his "endspiel", Müller provisionally and very tentatively implicates the existence of a force which can move history out of the "big waiting-room"(77):

Sasportas: Aber der Tod ist ohne Bedeutung, und am Galgen werde ich wissen, daß meine Komplicen die Neger aller Rassen sind, deren Zahl wächst mit jeder Minute, die du an deinem Sklavenhaltertrog verbringst oder zwischen den Schenkeln deiner weißen Hure. Wenn die Lebenden nicht mehr kämpfen können, werden die Toten kämpfen. Mit jedem Herzschlag der Revolution wächst Fleisch zurück auf ihre Knochen, Blut in ihre Adern, Leben in ihren Tod....Ich, das ist Afrika. Ich, das ist Asien. (78)

However, here too, it has to be recognized that the dramatist again takes great care to establish the ambivalence of identities. Debuisson, as much as he struggles with the experience of disil-
lusionment, reveals paradoxically that in his dreams the hope for the potential of revolution reawakens:

Debuisson's anachronistic dream (which projects him again into the 20th century) finishes with a biblical citation from the Book of Matthew (Matthew 28: 2-3) relating the story of Christ's resurrection. Müller, thus, creates an ambivalence within the subconsciousness of his disillusioned and resigned protagonist, in whose dreams the hope for a future humanitarian world is not forever eradicated, but reawakens. In this aspect, Debuisson again curiously resembles Antoine, who also has a vision of an angel in the transport of the sexual act, a figure in whom betrayal, forgetfulness and escapism are ambivalently merged with the reawakening of revolutionary consciousness. In full consciousness, however, Debuisson will have nothing to do with something he now identifies as an illusion "Ich will das alles nicht mehr wissen." (80) Thus Müller carefully creates the notion that within his intellectual protagonists, hope and disillusionment are curiously juxtaposed as antitheses at the subconscious and conscious level of their identity.

The same ambivalence can be discovered in Galloudec at the
Again Müller merges antitheses in a figure, which makes the attempt to arrive at a clear identity for the character an impossibility. In Galloudec, the contempt for the slaves "die faule Masse schwarzen Fleisches", the stereotypical attitude of a slave-keeper (the mask he had put on in the Return of the Prodigal Son scene) "das... Fleisch, das sich nicht bewegen will außer unterm Stiefel", and the weariness of the revolutionary who wants to detach himself from his mission "was geht mich die Sklaverei auf Jamaica an" are curiously juxtaposed with his reaffirmation of the fight for the emancipation of the oppressed slaves, when he accompanies Sasportas into the continued revolution.

But also in Sasportas, we can discover this intangibility. As he walks away with the clear affirmation that "solange es Herren und Sklaven gibt, sind wir aus unserm Auftrag nicht entlassen"(82), he holds the potential within him that instead of an abolition of hierarchical roles, his revolution will only accomplish a reversal of roles, that the memory of humiliation and oppression will make an enemy out of his fellow-revolutionary, that the old identities with their prejudices and psychological mechanisms will forever determine the interaction between the white man and the black man, master and slave. The anger he had
previously shown toward Debuisson and Galloudec, "Beim nächsten Mal werde ich dir mit dem Messer antworten, Bürger Galloudec." (83) and "Wir verurteilen dich zum Tode, Victor Debuisson. Weil deine Haut weiß ist. Weil deine Gedanken weiß sind unter deiner weißen Haut." (84) is his strength and impetus, but has the potential to lead only to the creation of a reversed mechanism of oppression.

This paradoxical ambivalence has to be identified as a reluctance of the dramatist to affirm or negate any authoritative position on the subject he portrays. Also Arlene A. Teraoka recognises this "inherent ambiguity on the thematic level" which blurs the "fronts clearly and irreconcilably drawn in Die Hamletmaschine" (85). On the one hand, Der Auftrag is again an intense confrontation with the failure and betrayal of the ideals of revolution by the intellectual revolutionary as well as by the model of European revolutions. The play thus portrays a starkly pessimistic perspective of European history. On the other hand, the possible hope and optimism of a successful and authentic revolution is presented in the emancipation of the victims of oppression, who reject the foundations of the European revolutionary model and take up the quest for rebellion under a new, non-european banner.

Moreover, this ambivalence is accentuated with the ending of Der Auftrag, because the already uncertain element of hope for a successful revolution (an ambiguity accomplished through the creation of intangible identities) is pitched against the beginning of the play, which has already illustrated the final
failure of Sasportas' and Galloudec's rebellion. In an interview with Horst Laube, Müller explains:

Für mich war es nach Hamletmaschine, wo...man sich selbst auch wieder dingfest und verfügbar macht, entscheidend, davon wegzukommen vielleicht auch durch eine diffuse Bewegung, die nicht an einer klaren Perspektive oder Intention festgemacht werden kann. Eine Bewegung, in einen Raum mit Fragen, für die ich keine Antworten parat habe. (86)

Thus the deliberate creation of the duality of pessimism and optimism is the dramatist's new strategy which allows him to ask questions and to consider provisionally and very tentatively the possibility of an authentic revolution without arriving, however, at affirmed and concrete answers. The dramatist oscillates in the intangible realm of "Geschichtsoptimismus", rooted in his identity as a marxist thinker, and "Geschichtpessimismus", which is the result of his critical analysis of the French and the Socialist-Marxist revolutions, and his exploration of the oppressive psychological mechanism -- master-slave -- inherent in human interaction.

For the white European revolutionary intellectual-theater-maker, Heiner Müller, the task of the present is to confront through a collective remembrance (Erinnerung an eine Revolution is the subtitle of the play) the failure and the betrayal of the intellectual revolutionary quest, and the acknowledgement of the "wrong moves" of the European liberation movements. Concurrently, the 'revolutionary' task of the present can be recognized as the tentative consideration and exploration of the possible existence of a successful force, in the mold of Fanon's theories, which can
accomplish the emancipation of the oppressed without resort to
the models of an essentially alien and colonizing intellectual
tradition.

Müller: I'm waiting for the Third World (87)

But, in Der Auftrag, the central motif-cluster of the
mask/face dichotomy and the metaphor of theatricality harbours
just as in Die Hamletmaschine a metatheatrical dimension. In his
Shakespeare adaptation, Müller confronts and criticizes his
position as a privileged intellectual and his own activity as a
theater-maker within the context of a post-revolutionary socialist
society as a form of betrayal of the socialist-marxist revolution.
In Der Auftrag, he focuses, in contrast, on the institutional
structure of the conventional theater and the process and mech-
anisms of theater-making.

He starts his metatheatrical reflection with the "rehearsal
scene", in which he portrays the processes and mechanism of
theater-making within a hierarchal structure. The intellectual
Debuisson by virtue of his authority as an intellectual assumes
the role of the theater-director who guides his actors, Sasportas
and Galloudec, through the rehearsal of their masks. Sasportas and
Galloudec, on the other hand, still all too familiar with their
"old" identities as slave and peasant, explicitly respect and
welcome his molding of their revolutionary-theatrical effort.
Thus, the dramatist here focuses on the organization of an old
hierarchical structure which also pervades the conventional
process of theatrical rehearsal.

This aspect is further explored in the representation of the "performance scenes" of Der Auftrag. In the first scene, FirstLove assumes the role of the director, who manipulates her main actors -- the three revolutionaries -- and a crowd of slaves/extras in her theatricalized enslavement of Debuisson. The action is always explicitly identified as a theatrical act through the elaborate costuming and masking rituals which occur at several intervals in "her drama" (the masking of the three revolutionaries, the masking of the slaves as bloodhounds, and the masking of herself as tigress). Her position on the throne as "the director" who is in complete control of the drama taking place establishes a concrete analogy of the political hierarchical structure of Jamaica with the hierarchical structure of theater-making. The various strata of this structure are concretely established as the revolutionaries act out the main roles of the drama, while the slaves assume the roles of "secondary" importance -- those of extras, stage-hands and audience --, and are thus functioning merely as the servants who aid in the success of the performance.

In the second scene - The Theater of the Revolution - this structure is again established with Debuisson's transfer to the throne, while Sasportas and Galloudec act for him once more. Crucial in this context is also the fact that the crowd of Jamaican slaves in this scene enacts the role of the people of France, who are portrayed as ingnorant, naive, and uncritical -- as a blind and bloodthirsty mob.
Thus, Müller consciously criticizes on a metatheatrical level the theater as a conventional institution and theater-making as a process of human interaction by creating a replica of the social-political strata of the Jamaican hierarchy and the hierarchical mechanisms of interaction, which exist within its context. It is indeed no accident that the 'theatrical ranks' of the participants in this "drama" -- director, main actors, extras and stage-hands etc. correspond directly to their social-political "roles" determined by the structural organization of the political context in which they live. In a perverted sense, the theater in its institutional organization holds up the mirror to (its own) hierarchical nature. Here, Müller implicitly criticizes the institution and structure of the conventional theater in a drama which advocates the abolition of these hierarchical ranks.

In Die Hamletmaschine, the metatheatrical dimension focuses on and criticizes the dramatist's identity and purpose as an intellectual theater-maker. In Der Auftrag, in contrast, Müller's metatheatrical concern shifts to the political organization of the theater itself and exposes the precipitation of hierarchical structures within the institution which for him, as a politically committed theater-maker, is paradoxically a vehicle for revolution-making.

Thus Der Auftrag can be identified as the immediate sequel to Die Hamletmaschine on several levels. Heiner Müller integrates the central motif-cluster which he had transferred from the Renaissance tragedy to Die Hamletmaschine into his "sequel" with
startling coherence and consistency. Moreover, he creates in his new protagonists figures who expose striking affinities to the Hamlet and Ophelia characters of his Hamlet-adaptation.

However, in this context, it is necessary to briefly consider the dramaturgical differences between Hamletmaschine and Auftrag. In his drama about the French Revolution, Müller reverts to dramaturgical principles which he had consciously rejected in his Shakespeare adaptation: dramatic dialogue and its presentation of dialectic positions, an assortment of characters present on stage (and not, as in the case of Die Hamletmaschine, a projection of the consciousness of the protagonist), and the suggestion of dramatic action starting with the revolutionaries' putting on of the masks, a sequence of scenes in which their 'collective goal is pursued', and ending in the removal of the masks at the end of the play(88).

Thus, Müller reverts from the theatricalization of a highly subjective and monologic vision in Die Hamletmaschine to an ostensibly objectified theatrical portrayal of reality. However, startling correspondences exist between the 'realities' portrayed in the two texts, i.e. the reality of Der Auftrag, objectified through the theatrical presentation of the interaction occurring between members of a cast of autonomous characters, nevertheless discloses undeniable affinities to the reality of Die Hamletmaschine, portrayed as if filtered through the distorting eyes of the Hamlet-figure. The ubiquity of the mask/face dichotomy and the experience of the perpetual metamorphosis of both
historical-political realities and human identities (identities, in whom antitheses and contradictions are inextricably merged) can be recognized as the central experience not only of Müller's characters, but rather as the experience which has inspired both the writing of Die Hamletmaschine and Der Auftrag. The progression from portraying a subjective vision in one drama and making its essence an objectified reality in the text following it signals not only Müller's continued preoccupation with the Hamlet-myth, but it reveals, moreover, the extent to which the vision of the Hamlet-figure has really been assimilated by the dramatist and has thus become a reality identified as 'objective'.

Indeed the preoccupations of the Müllerian protagonists -- the Hamlet-figure and Debuissone -- are here revealed as the core of the dramatist's own crisis. The perpetual (historical) metamorphosis of reality, the awareness of the essential duality of "identity", as well as the horror of a highly autobiographical experience of betrayal(89) all conglomerate and become the Hamletian-Müllerian nightmare.
NOTES

Introduction:


3. cf Schulz, 16.


6. cf Silberman, 21.

7. cf Silberman, 23. In this context, it is worthwhile to point out that although Müller affirms that it was his intention in the case of Philoktet to portray the present 'stalemate' situation of the socialist-marxist revolution (see Heiner Müller, Rotwelsch (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 1982) 37), he fervently rejects the notion that his adaptations are a "Rückzug," see Walter Höllerer, "Geschichtspessimismus oder Geschichtsoptimismus, das sind nur zwei Begriffe für Geschichtsunkenntnis. Heiner Müller im Dialog." Sprache im technischen Zeitalter 100/103(1986/87) 206.


11. The prizes Heiner Müller has been awarded: Heinrich-Mann-Preis (with Inge Müller)(1959); Erich-Weinert-Medaille (1964); BZ-Kritiker-Preis (1970 and 1976); Lessing-Preis (1975); Mühlheimer Dramatikerpreis (1979); Georg-Büchner-Preis (1985); Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden, together with the composer Heiner Goebbels (1986). See Theo Buck: KLG-preface.

12. see " Brief an Martin Linzer" europäische ideen 13(1975): 11-12.


14. In this context, one of Heiner Müller's poems may be of interest: 

   ALLEIN MIT DIESEN LEIBERN
   Staaten Utopien
   Gras wächst
   Auf den Gleisen
   Die Wörter verfaulen
   Auf dem Papier
   Die Augen der Frauen
   Werden kälter
   Abschied von morgen
   STATUS QUO

   in Heiner Müller, Germania Tod in Berlin (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1977) 28.


16. "Geschichte und Drama. Ein Gespräch mit Heiner Müller." BASIS Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur Band 6 (n.p., 1976) 61. English translation: "Artaud is important because he is a great disturbance. He certainly disturbed: the naive self-appreciation of the theaterpeople and, naturally, also of the authors who write for the theater. And today, some of his concepts can actually be
well realized....he attempted to provide the theater with a vital function, which it generally does not have. That is something which also preoccupied Brecht, albeit in a very different way; because he believed that a play should not be evaluated according to dramatic concepts but rather according to its relationship to the reality to which it refers. Theater does not have a vital function, when it is measured against theater." [my translation].

17. "Literatur muß dem Theater Widerstand leisten. Ein Gespräch mit Horst Laube (1975)." Gesammelte Irrtümer 18. English translation: "I fundamentally believe that literature exists to offer resistance to the theater. A text is only productive or interesting for the theater when it is written in a manner in which it cannot be produced according to conditioned and conventional theatrical processes and models." [my "free" translation].


20. cf "Deutschland spielt noch immer die Nibelungen," 196-200, and Wieghaus 7-14.

21. cf "Deutschland spielt noch immer die Nibelungen," 198; Rotwelsch 29, 30; also Walter Höllerer, 198.

22. Rotwelsch 29, 30.

23. Rotwelsch 43.

24. cf Schulz, 37.

25. The motif is also a great personal and intimate concern as the following poem about his dead wife reveals:

GESTERN AN EINEM SONNIGEN NACHMITTAG
Als ich durch die tote Stadt Berlin fuhr
Heimgekehrt aus irgend einem Ausland
Hatte ich zum erstenmal das Bedürfnis
Meine Frau auszugraben aus ihrem Friedhof
Zwei Schaufeln voll habe ich selbst auf sie geworfen
Und nachzusehen was von ihr noch da liegt
Knochen die ich nie gesehen habe
Ihren Schädel in der Hand zu halten
Und mir vorzustellen was ihr Gesicht war
Hinter den Masken die sie getragen hat
Durch die tote Stadt Berlin und andere Städte
Als er bekleidet war mit ihrem Fleisch.

Ich habe dem Bedürfnis nicht nachgegeben
Aus Angst vor der Polizei und dem Klatsch meiner
Freunde.

in *Germania* Tod in Berlin 30.

26. Rotwelsch 43.


28. ibid

29. cf Silberman, 26; Teraoka, 12.

**Die Hamletmaschine**


2. Michael Schneider, "Vom Prinzip Hoffnung zum Prinzip Hoffnungslosigkeit," *Den Kopf verkehrt aufgesetzt oder Die melancholische Linke. Aspekte des Kulturzerfalls in den siebziger Jahren* (Darmstadt/Neuwied: Sammlung Luchterhand, 1981) 212. German translation: "a necrophilous inclination...which now, however, has lost all its poetic quality and whose effect is merely obscene." [my translation].


7. Die Hamletmaschine has frequently been referred to as Heiner Müller's "Endspiel" by critics who acknowledge not only his stark, nihilistic and total abdication of any possibility for historical progress or revolution, but, who, moreover, evaluate Müller's own comments about his writing and the contemporary political-historical situation. That Die Hamletmaschine is considered as his "Endspiel" has also greatly been influenced by Theo Girshausen's (ed.) book Hamletmaschine. Heiner Müllers Endspiel (Köln: Prometh Verlag, 1978), which was published shortly after Die Hamletmaschine and includes several very good essays about the text and the failed attempt to produce the play at the Kölner Schauspielhaus.


10. ibid 137, 138.

11. The second half of the title of part four is just as enigmatic and displays the same kind of oscillation between the Renaissance original and modern history. SCHLACHT UM GRÖNLAND: here Heiner Müller assimilates modern history and intertwines it with the 'history' of Shakespeare's drama. In 1953, the time of Stalin's death and the immediate historical context of the Hungarian uprising, Grönland became an integral part of the Kingdom of Denmark. Thus, Müller draws here an analogy between the integration of Grönland and Hungary's struggle against the 'totalitarian colonization' of the Soviet Empire. The modern history of Denmark -- Denmark being the locale for Shakespeare's drama -- is here integrated into the title and achieves a strange oscillation between the drama Müller was going to write about the political situation in Hungary and the Renaissance text. Moreover, Grönland is mostly an icy and inhospitable environment, and, thus, Müller uses his ice-age metaphor here too. At the end of Müller's drama, the Hungarian revolution ends with the ice-age. The battle is fought against the recurrence of the ice-age and ends in failure.


For all the German quotations taken from Die Hamletmaschine, I will also provide an English translation from and page references to Carl Weber's translation (ed. and trans.) in Heiner Müller Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1984). Here: "The set is a
monument. It represents a man who made history, enlarged a hundred times. The petrification of a hope....the hope has not been fulfilled. The monument is toppled into the dust, razed by those who succeeded him in power three years after the state funeral of the hated and most honored leader." 56.


15. Rotwelsch 11.

16. ibid 24.

17. cf Schulz, 154 : "Ein Nicht-Drama, und zwar trotz aller Fremdheit verblüffend analog dem des Elisabethaners, hat noch expliziter, unter Verzicht auf den Dialog selbst, Müller geschrieben."


19. Laan, Preface (see note 18)

20. Calderwood, 30 (see note 18)

21. Die Hamletmaschine, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95.

English translation: "entrance, honorarium, tragedy, acting, cue, tragic role, actor, exit, forgetting the lines, prompting, play, stage-set, auditorium, costum, mask." [my translation], Carl Weber's translation: 54, 55, 56.

22. The short verbal "exchange" between Ophelia and Hamlet in
Scherzo resembles a dialogue, but is merely a monologic projection of a dialogue within Hamlet's subconscious. The point is explained later in greater detail in my analysis.


Enters Horatio....Horatio, do you know me?
Are you my friend, Horatio? If you know me how
can you be my friend? Do you want to play
Polonius....HoratioPolonius. I knew you're an
actor. I am too, I'm playing Hamlet....Exit
Polonius.

24. ibid 89.

English translation: "I was Hamlet," 53.

25. ibid 90, 91, English translation: 54.

"Enters Horatio...HoratioPolonius....Exit Polonius."

26. ibid 90, 91, English translation, 54:

"[T]he delightful Ophelia, here she enters right
on cue, look how she shakes her ass, a tragic
character....My mother the bride....Have you
forgotten your lines, Mama....I'll change you
back into a virgin mother....Then let me eat your
heart, Ophelia, which weeps my tears."

27. cf Schulz 151, and Teraoka 115.

28. In this context it is worthwhile to point out that Heiner
Müller has only transferred those characters which in their
juxtaposition constitute a stark antithesis. This point, in fact,
supports that the merging of antithetical identities is one of the
central ideas which he aims to explore in his Hamlet-version.

Jenkins, London: Methuen, 1982) 215 (I, V, 90). All quotations from
Hamlet are taken from this edition and I will specify them only by
providing references to act, scene, and line numbers.

30. cf Guntermann, 46.

31. Schulz, 151, German translation: "a chamber of horros in
which identities amalgamate."

32. Müller's cryptic metaphorization of the theme of deception is
not easily decoded and thus often overlooked. For example, "Mit

33. Several critics have investigated the monologic quality of the text. See, for example, Theo Girshause's, *Hamletmaschine...Endspiel*, the essay by Ulrich Zaum, "Zwischen Dichtung, Bekenntnis und bürgerlicher Avantgarde"; also C. Bertram "Machine morte..."

34. cf Bertram 209.

35. cf Guntermann 41, 42.


37. cf Schulz 150.

38 *Die Hamletmaschine* 89.

39. see *The Arden Edition of Hamlet*: the editor points out that Dover Wilson has actually found another instance where Shakespeare uses this particular setting in similar manner (*Lear* IV, VI, 67-72), in footnote for lines 69-70, p. 213.

40. *Die Hamletmaschine* 89, English translation, 53:

   "I stood at the shore and talked with the surf BLABLABLA."

41. cf Bertram 309.


43. Wendy C. Sanford in her excellent analysis of the theatrical metaphor in Shakespeare's tragedy emphasizes the importance of the motif and of Hamlet's role-playing, (id.) *Theater as Metaphor* 3.

44. cf Guntermann 43, 45.

45. *Die Hamletmaschine* 89 - 96, English translation, 53-57:

   I was Hamlet....
   I'M GOOD HAMLET GI'ME A CAUSE FOR GRIEF....
   RICHARD THE THIRD I THE PRINCE-KILLING KING....
   CLOWN NUMBER TWO IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM....
   I want to be a woman....
   I'm not Hamlet....
I don't take part anymore....
I am the soldier in the gun turret....
I am the typewriter....
I am my own prisoner....
My parts are the spittle and the spittoon
the knife and the wound the fang and the throat
the neck and the rope....
I am the data bank....
I WAS MACBETH....
RASKOLNIKOV....
I am a privileged person....
I want to be a machine....

46. cf Teraoka 98.

47. I am indebted to Arlene A. Teraoka for her many perceptive
observations concerning the role-playing theme which she examines
specifically within the context of Müller's ideological approach
to the motif, "The Entropy of Bourgeois Drama: Die Hamletmaschine,
in The Silence). My analysis focuses more specifically on Müller's
aethetical assimilation of the Shakespearean motif, which can,
however, not be achieved without the consideration of the
dramatist's political perspective.

48. Die Hamletmaschine 89, English translation:

"HE WAS A MAN, TAKING ALL FROM ALL."
[my translation]

49. ibid 89, English translation, 53:

I stopped the funeral procession, I pried open
the coffin with my sword....and I dispensed my
dead procreator FLESH LIKES TO KEEP THE COMPANY
OF FLESH among the wretched populace around me.

50. ibid 90, English translation, 54:

Here comes the ghost that made me....Women should
be sewed up -- a world without mothers. We could
butcher each other in peace and quiet, and with
some confidence, if life gets too long for us or
our throats too tight for our screams. What do you
want of me? Is one state-funeral not enough for you?
You old sponger. Is there no blood on your shoes?
What's your corpse to me?

51. cf Teraoka 95, English translation: "Is there no blood on
your shoes?" 54.

52. Die Hamletmaschine 90, English translation, 54:
SHALL I AS IS THE CUSTOM STICK A PIECE OF IRON INTO THE NEAREST FLESH OR THE SECOND BEST TO LATCH UNTO IT SINCE THE WORLD IS SPINNING.


54. English translation 55.

55. cf Schulz 151.

56. Die Hamletmaschine 91, English Translation, 54:

"Now, I take you, my mother, in his, my father's invisible tracks. I stifle your scream with my lips.... Now go to your wedding, whore."

57. cf Teraoka 109.

58. cf Guntermann 49, and Teraoka 98.

59. Caulderwood's metaphor, see note # 20.

60. From the interview entitled "Mauern" with Sylvere Lothringer in Rotwelsch 80. English translation: "There is Gertude Stein's definition of the theater which I like very much. Writing for the theater means that everything which happens during the process of writing belongs to the text." [my translation].

61. Die Hamletmaschine 93, English translation, 56:

"I'm not Hamlet. I don't take part any more."

62. see the quotation from an interview with Müller in which he describes the writing process, my essay p.3 and 4.

63. Die Hamletmaschine 93-95, English translation, 56:

"I don't take part any more. My words have nothing to tell me anymore. My thoughts suck the blood out of the images. My drama doesn't happen anymore. Behind me the set is put up. By people who aren't interested in my drama, for people to whom it means nothing. I'm not interested in it anymore either.... In his box, the prompter is rotting. The stuffed corpses in the house don't stir a hand."

64. ibid 93, English translation, 56:
"I won't play along anymore. (Unnoticed by the actor playing Hamlet, stagehands place a refrigerator and three TV sets on the stage...) The set is a monument. It presents a man who made history, enlarged a hundred times. The petrification of a hope....the hope has not been fulfilled....After an appropriate period, the uprising follows the toppling of the monument. My drama if it still would happen, would happen in the time of the uprising."

65. ibid 94, 95, English translation, 56:

"My place, if my drama would still happen, would be on both sides of the front, between the frontlines, over and above them. I stand in the stench of the crowd and hurl stones at policemen soldiers tanks bullet-proof glass. I look through the double doors of bullet-proof glass at the crowd pressing forward and smell the sweat of my fear. Choking with nausea, I shake my fist at myself who stands behind the bullet-proof glass. Shaking with fear and contempt, I see myself in the crowd pressing forward, foaming at the mouth, shaking my fist at myself. I string up my uniformed flesh at the heels....My parts are the spittle and the spittoon the knife and the wound the fang and the throat the neck and the rope."

66. ibid 93-95. English translation, 56:

"I'm not Hamlet. I don't take part anymore.... My drama doesn't happen anymore....My drama, if it still would happen, would happen in the time of the uprising. The uprising starts with a stroll....My place, if my drama would still happen, would be on both sides of the front, between the frontlines, over and above them.... I stand....I look....I shake....I am....I string up....I am....I tie....I am....My drama didn't happen....I go home...at one/with my undivided self."

67. cf Schulz 155.

68. Die Hamletmaschine 95-96, English translation, 56-57:

My drama didn't happen....
I go home and kill the time....
Television The daily nausea Nausea....
How do you spell GEMÜTLICHKEIT
Give us this day our daily murder
Since thine is nothingness Nausea....
Of the lies which are believed
By the liars and nobody else....
....Nausea....
Of the mugs of the manipulators marked
By their struggle for positions votes bank accounts
Nausea....
I walk through streets stores Faces
Scarred by the consumers battle Poverty
Without dignity
Hail COCA COLA
A kingdom
For a murderer....
....I am
A privileged person My nausea
Is a privilege
Protected by torture
Barbed wire Prisons
Photograph of the author.
I don’t want...anymore....
Tearing of the author’s photograph.
I force open my sealed flesh....
I retreat into my entrails....
My thoughts are lesions in my brain.
My brain is a scar.

69. Hamletmaschinen and Other Texts 9 (Preface by Carl Weber, ed. and trans.)

70. "Vivre la contradiction," 50 [my translation].


72. Die Hamletmaschinen 96, English translation: 57:
"I am a privileged person. My nausea is a privilege."
also: cf Teraoka 102, 103.

73. Teraoka, 102.

74. Most of the essays in Theo Girshausen's (ed.) book Hamletmaschinen discuss the metatheatrical dimension peripherally in its relationship to Müller's crisis as a writer. The fact that he actually assimilates the Shakespearean metatheatrical dimension and thereby remains faithful to the original is generally overlooked. Moreover, the fact that he writes the process of writing into the text as well has not been explored or recognized by any of the critics.

75. Die Hamletmaschinen 96, English translation, 57:
Somewhere bodies are torn apart so I can dwell in my shit. Somewhere bodies are opened so I
can be alone with my blood.

76. cf Teraoka 108.

77. Die Hamletmaschine 96-97, English translation, 58:

HAMLET THE DANE PRINCE AND MAGGOT’S FODDER

......

AND SHORTLY ERE THE THIRD COCK’S CROW A CLOWN
WILL TEAR THE FOOL’S CAP OFF THE PHILOSOPHER
A BLOATED BLOODHOUND’LL CRAWL INTO THE ARMOUR

78. cf Teraoka 109.

79. cf Teraoka 104-109.


"I had the same illusion about the period of time needed for the evolution as our politicians. I too believed that it would all happen much faster. And then you realize that it will take longer than your lifetime....and that disappointment leads to another contradiction -- the lifetime of the individual is in contradiction with history, the time of the subject and the time of history at large. This contradiction grew more and more dominant in my texts. We now live with that contradiction."

[my translation]

In this context, it may also be of interest that Müller refers to Die Hamletmaschine as " a pamphlet against...illusion," particularly "the illusion that one can stay innocent in this world." in Nicholas Zurbrugg, "Post-Modernism and the Multi-Media

82. cf Teraoka 110-112, and Schulz 150, 156.

83. Die Hamletmaschine 91-92, English translation, 54-55:

"I am Ophelia. The one the river didn't keep... Yesterday I stopped killing myself....I smash the tools of my captivity....I destroy the battlefield that was my home....With my bleeding hands I tear the photos of the men I loved and who used me on the bed on the table on the chair on the ground. I set fire to my prison. I throw my clothes into the fire. I wrench the clock that was my heart out of my breast. I walk into the street clothed in my blood."

84. English translation: 58.

85. Die Hamletmaschine 97.

86. ibid 96, English translation, 58:

"THE MAIN POINT IS TO OVERTHROW ALL EXISTING CONDITIONS IN WHICH MAN...."

87. Heiner Müller discusses his Ophelia-figure in detail in Weber "The Despair and the Hope", 140.

88. cf Teraoka 98.

89. Teraoka, 101.

90. Die Hamletmaschine 92, English translation, 55:

The dead women tear his [Hamlet's] clothes off his body. Out of an upended coffin, labeled Hamlet 1, step Claudius and Ophelia, the latter dressed and made up like a whore. Striptease of Ophelia....Hamlet dresses in Ophelia's clothes, Ophelia puts the make-up of a whore on his face.... Hamlet poses as a whore. An angel, his face at the back of his head: Horatio.

91. ibid 91, English translation, 54, 55:

"Gallery (ballet) of dead women. The woman dangling from the rope The woman with the arteries cut open The woman with the overdose SNOW ON HER LIPS The woman with her head in the gas stove."
92. cf Teraoka 115.

93. Die Hamletmaschine 92, English translation, 54:

"The dead women tear his clothes off his body."


95. Die Hamletmaschine 92, English translation, 55:

"I want to be a woman."

96. ibid, English translation: 55:

"I want to be a woman."
Hamlet dresses in Ophelia's clothes. Ophelia puts the make-up of a whore on his face, Claudius - now Hamlet's father - laughs without uttering a sound.

97. In this context, it is also worthwhile to point out that the metaphor of the 'painted face' occurs repeatedly in Shakespeare to illustrate the mask/face dichotomy.

Claudius in an aside employs the metaphor:

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
(III,I,51-53)

Hamlet accuses Ophelia:

I have heard of your paintings well enough. God has given you a face and you make yourself another
(III,I,144-146)

Claudius speaking to Laertes in Act IV:

Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?
(IV,VII,106-108)

Thus Shakespeare's verbal metaphor becomes a visual metaphor on Müller's stage.

98. Arlene Teraoka discusses the angel-figure in great detail and examines its relationship to Walter Benjamin's Angelus Novus, 116.

99. see note # 10.

101. cf Schulz 151-152, Teraoka 114, Guntermann 42, 48.

102. A. Teraoka refers to Scherzo as "the bizarre relic of an obsolete dramatic, historical, ideological order," 114, and G. Schulz: "Es ist nicht möglich, alle Bedeutungselemente dieses kaum verständlichen Textes anzugeben, oder ihren Zusammenhang stringent zu entwickeln," 151-152.


Der Auftrag:


3. Die Hamletmaschine has frequently been referred to as Heiner Müller's "Endspiel" by critics who acknowledge not only his stark,
nihilistic and total abdication of any possibility for historical progress or revolution, but who, moreover, evaluate Müller's own comments about his writing and the contemporary political-historical situation. That Die Hamletmaschine is considered as his "Endspiel" has also been influenced by Theo Girshausen's (ed.) book Hamletmaschine. Heiner Müller's Endspiel (Köln: Prometh Verlag, 1978), which was published shortly after Die Hamletmaschine and includes several very good essays about the text and the failed attempt to produce the play at the Kölner Schauspielhaus.


5. Weber 56.

6. Müller's ostensible historical pessimism has caused great controversies in the GDR, because his plays seem to criticize and negatively evaluate marxist ideology and the teleological vision of history's progression toward communism. However, also Western critics face difficulties in combining the 'historical vision' explored in the plays with Müller's own adamant identification with marxist ideology and its socialist history in the Eastern bloc. "Geschichtspessimismus" and "Geschichtsoptimismus" are two terms which describe Müller's highly ambivalent "historical vision", in which Marxist utopia is coupled with a highly critical evaluation of history, revolution, its failures.


8. ibid 23, 24.

9. ibid 25.

10. ibid 24.

11. ibid 37.


13. see note no.4.


15. see note no.4.

16. A. Teraoka acknowledges that the motif of the mask is the central metaphor of the text without, however, basing her own detailed analysis on that recognition, see Arlene A. Teraoka The Silence of Entropy or Universal Discourse. The Postmodern Poetics
of Heiner Müller (New York: Peter Lang, 1985) 141.

In this context, it is also worthwhile to point out that Müller made the motif a central theatrical sign in both of his productions in East-Berlin and particularly in his Bochum production. Cf. Henning Rischbieter, "Die Wörter & Die Zeichen, Heiner Müller, Nina Ritter und Erich Wonder inszenieren Heiner Müllers Auftrag in Bochum", Theater Heute 4 (1982): 7-12, and Martin Linzer, see note no. 14.

17. Heiner Müller, Der Auftrag in Herzstück (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1983) 45. I will also provide an English translation of all the German quotations from Der Auftrag; for the most part, I will quote in my notes from Carl Weber's English translation: Carl Weber, ed. and trans., Hamletmaschine and Other Texts for the Stage by Heiner Müller (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1984), and I will also provide the correspondent page references. Here: "It's easier to talk about a revolution lost when you've got a full mouth." 86.

18. ibid 45, English: "Liberty leads the people to the barricades, and when the dead awaken she is in a uniform." 86.

19. ibid 46, English: "France needs a bloodbath, and the day shall come." 86.

20. ibid 45, English: "But in here something is empty that was alive. I was there when the people stormed the Bastille. I was there when the head of the last of the Bourbons dropped into the basket. We have reaped the heads of the aristocrats. We have reaped the heads of the traitors." 86.

21. In this context, A. Teraoka's discussion of the Angel of despair as a derivative of Müller's figur "Der Glückloser Engel" and its relationship to Walter Benjamin's Angelus Novus is very revealing, see Teraoka, The Silence, 132-135.

22. Indeed the whole passage attributed to the Angel/Antoine's wife is nearly entirely composed of antithetical metaphors. Müller here clearly aims to accentuate the antithetical and contradictory as a main feature of this character.

23. Auftrag 46.47, English: "I am the Angel of despair. With my hands I dispense ecstacy, numbness, oblivion, the lust and the torment of bodies. My language is silence, my song the scream. Terror dwells in the shadow of my wings. My hope is the last gasp. My hope is the first battle. I am the knife with which the dead man cracks open the coffin. I am the one who will be. My flight is the rebellion, my sky the abyss of tomorrow." 87.

25. \textit{Auftrag} 47, English: "the terror of the thrones, the hope of the poor." 87.

26. cf Teraoka, \textit{The silence} 137.

27. \textit{Auftrag} 48, English: Galloudec: "We are not here to recriminate each other with the colour of our skin, Citizen Sasportas." Sasportas: "We're not equal as long as we haven't stripped each other's skin." 88.

28. ibid 48, English: "That was a bad beginning." 88.

29. ibid 48, English: "I am the one I was." 88.

30. ibid 48, English: "into the womb of his family to take possession of his estate" 88.

31. ibid 48, English: "after the horrors of the Revolution openend his eyes to the eternal truth that everything old is better than anything new." 88.

32. cf Genia Schulz, "Der Auftrag" in Heiner Müller (Stuttgart: Sammlung Metzler, 1980) 160, and cf Teraoka \textit{The Silence} 141


34. ibid 50, English: Debuisson: "That is the oldest slave of my family. He is deaf and mute, a thing between man and dog. He is going to spit into the cage....Then he will kiss my shoes, he is already licking his lips, you see, and on his back he will carry me, his old and new Master, into the house of my forefathers, grunting with bliss." 90.

35. ibid 49, English: Galloudec: "It shouldn't be hard for you to play the slave, Sasportas, in your black skin....I know your role is the most difficult to play, Sasportas. It's written all over your body." 89.

36. ibid 49, English: Sasportas: "Next time I'll answer you with my knife, Citizen Galloudec." 89.

38. Weber 82, 83.

39. Hans-Thies Lehmann identifies Georg Büchner's Dantons Tod as the origin for the use of the theatrical metaphor in "Dramatische Form und Revolution".

40. We can here clearly recognize a strong theatrical parallel to the masking and costuming rituals of Die Hamletmaschine, particularly of the third section Scherzo.

41. Auftrag 52, English: "Look at my slaves and yours, our property. All their lives they've been animals. Why should they be humans because it is written on a piece of paper in France." 91.

42. In his play Quartett (1981), Müller makes the exploration of hierarchical relationships his central focus; he lays bare the psychological mechanisms of master-slave relationships through his portrayal of sado-masochistic role-playing between a man and woman.

43. Auftrag 52, English: "Slavery is a law of nature as old as mankind." 91.

44. cf Teraoka, The Silence, 147, 148, and Lehmann, "Dramatische Form und Revolution", 111.


46. In this context, also Müller's remarks about the theatricality of power are very revealing: "Power is getting to be more and more spectacular and unreal. It becomes power-play. Its theatrical elements are increasingly clear. Nobody's really got power anymore and that is something you can play around with." in Rotwelsch, 36.

47. cf Teraoka, The Silence, 147, 148.

48. Auftrag 56, English: "Our school is Time, it doesn't repeat itself and there is no breath to spare for didacticism, whoever doesn't learn is going to die too....We sentence you to death...because your thoughts are white....Who sweats for your philosophies. Even your urine and your shit are exploitation and slavery." [Here I slightly altered Carl Weber's translation.] see 93.

49. Here, it may be of interest that Müller regards even Lenin's policies as a form of colonization: "Lenin's idea that the German revolution was near because revolution was bound to happen first in industrial societies didn't prove true. The German revolution failed and he had to give up on the idea of revolution or implement it in one country only. And since there was no other object, it meant colonizing your own population." in Rotwelsch 37;
also cf Teraoka, *The Silence* 166.

50. Teraoka, 148.

51. Arlene A. Teraokas book *The Silence of Entropy* focuses particularly on Muller's critique of the Enlightenment and she identifies it as the most important theme in his late plays, particualrly *Leben Grundlich*, *Die Hamletmaschine* and *Der Auftrag*.

52. Heiner Muller, "Brief an den Regisseur der bulgarischen Erstaufführung von *Philoktet* am Dramatischen Theater Sofia" in id. Herzstück (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1983), 103. [my translation; the German original: "Das Theater...Lusthaus und Schreckenskammer der Verwandlung."]

53. The elevator monologue was indeed spoken by the actor who played the role of Debuissson in both productions of *Der Auftrag* in Berlin and Bochum under Muller's direction; see the reviews listed in note no. 16.


55. *Auftrag* 59, English: "Perhaps the world is falling apart and my task, so important that the Boss wanted personally to assign it to me, has already become meaningless...NOT OPERATIVE in the administrative language I've learned so well (useless knowledge!) ON FILE where no one will check anymore because the task concerned precisely the last possible action to prevent the destruction." 95.

56. ibid 56, English: "For the sake of your dead institutions where ecstasy has no place." 93.

57. ibid 56, English: "breath to spare for didacticism, whoever doesn't learn is going to die too." [Here I slightly changed Carl Weber's translation; see 93]; also cf Teraoka 150, 151.

58. ibid 63, English: "Each to his own freedom or slavery. Our play is over, Sasportas. Watch out when you take off your make-up, Galloudec. Maybe your skin will come off with it. Your mask, Sasportas, is your face. My face is my mask." 97.

59. ibid 65, 66, English: "slavery has many faces, we haven't seen its last one yet, not you, Sasportas, and neither have we, Galloudec, and what we believed to be the dawn of freedom was maybe only the mask of a new, even more hideous slavery...and your unknown love, freedom, when all her masks are exhausted, has probably no other face after all but treason: what you won't betray today, will kill you tomorrow....from the Bastille to the Conciergerie, the liberator turns into the jailer." 98.

60. ibid 45, for English translation, see note no.18.
61. ibid 66, English: "Perhaps I only washed my hands, Sasportas, when I was steeping them in blood for our cause." 98.

62. cf Teraoka The Silence, 158; in this context, see also Rotwelsch, 28, where Müller describes his wanting to be a subject of history, rather than an object.

63. Auftrag 66, English: "Your death is called Liberty, Sasportas, your death is called Fraternity, GallouDEC, my death is called Equality. They were good to ride when they were still our nags, the winds of Tomorrow brushing our temple. Now the wind is blowing from Yesterday. The nags, that's us. Do you feel the spurs in your flesh....And we need our time now to call off the black revolution we prepared so thoroughly in the name of a future that already has become the past like the others before it." 98, 99.

64. ibid 62, English: "a home for masters and slaves." 96.

65. ibid 66, 67, English: "Think about it, Sasportas, before you risk your neck for the liberation of the slaves into an abyss that has no bottom anymore since the arrival of this message....and perhaps the star is already on its way from the cold of outer space, a lump of ice or metal, that will knock the terminal hole into the proverbial bottom of facts where we keep planting our feeble hopes again and again. Or the cold itself which will freeze our yesterdays and our tomorrows into an eternal today." 99.

66. ibid 68, English: "Your hide will stay black, Sasportas. You, GallouDEC, will remain a peasant....I laugh at the nig...
want to cut myself a new one from my black hide....I will enter the battle armed with the humiliations of my life. You have handed me a new weapon and I thank you for it." 100.

71. ibid 64, English: "ready to kill and to die." 97.

72. ibid 68, English: "I want my piece of the cake of the world. I will cut myself my piece from the hunger of the world. You, you don't own a knife." 99.

73. cf Teraoka, The silence, 164.

74. Auftrag 69, English: "Stay. I am afraid, Galloudec, of the beauty of the world. I know very well it is the mask of treason. Don't leave me alone with my mask, it is growing already into my flesh and doesn't hurt anymore. Kill me before I betray you. I am afraid, Sasportas, of the shame to be happy in this world.

75. According to A. Teraoka, Müller has acknowledged Fanon's influence, cf The silence 210 note no.5.

76. Teraoka, The silence 138.

77. Müller, Rotwelsch, 11.

78. Auftrag 69, English: "But death is of no importance and at the gallows I will know that my accomplices are the negroes of all races whose number grows with every minute that you spent at your slaveholder's trough or between the legs of your white whore. When the living can no longer fight, the dead will. With every heartbeat of the revolution flesh grows back on their bones, blood in their veins, life in their death....I -- that is Africa. I -- that is Asia." 100.

79 ibid 67, English: "Yesterday I dreamed I was walking through New York. The neighbourhood was dilapidated and uninhabited by whites. On the sidewalk in front of me, a golden serpent rose up and when I crossed the street or rather the jungle of seething metal that was the street, another serpent arose on the other sidewalk. It was a radiant blue. I knew in my dream: the golden serpent is Asia, the blue serpent, that is Africa. When I woke up I forgot it again. We are three worlds. Why do I know it now. And I heard a voice say: AND BEHOLD THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE FOR THE ANGEL OF THE LORD DESCENDED FROM THE HEAVEN...." 99.

80. Auftrag, 68, English: "I don't want to know all that anymore." 99.

81. ibid 63, English: "....I have risked my neck for a year and more....and all that for a lazy mass of black flesh that won't move except when kicked by the boot, and what business of mine is the slavery in Jamaica, anyway, I'm a Frenchman after all -- Wait,
Sasportas -- but I want to turn black on the spot if I understand why all that shouldn't be true anymore and cancelled and no task for nothing anymore, because in Paris a general is getting cocky." 97.

82. ibid 64, English: "As long as there are masters and slaves, we won't be released from our task." 97.

83. ibid 49, English: "Next time I'll answer you with my knife, Citizen Galloudec." 89.

84. ibid 56, English: "We sentence you to death, Victor Debuisson. Because your skin is white. Because your thoughts are white under your white skin." 93.

85. cf Teraoka, The silence 123.


English: "For me, it was important after Die Hamletmaschine, where I make myself apprehensible and available again, to escape just that; maybe even through a diffuse gesture, which cannot be bound to a clear perspective or intention. A movement into a sphere of questions for which I have no answers." [my translation].

87. Rotwelsch 25.

88. cf Teraoka, The Silence 123.

89. Müller describes again and again in countless interviews how, as a four year old, he had betrayed his father, who was arrested by the Nazis: "...the Nazis arrested him. I went back to my bed and pretended to sleep....I pretended I was sleeping. This really is the first scene of my theatre." in Rotwelsch, 30.
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