

Heiner Müller
»Not Enough for Everyone«
Texts on Capitalism

Edited by Clemens Porschlegel and Helen Müller

Translated by Susan H. Gillespie

SAMPLE TRANSLATION

Heiner Müller, *Not Enough for Everyone. Texts on Capitalism*
Edited by Clemens Pornschlegel and Helen Müller
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FIRST DRAFT

Foreword

DARK COMRADES THE UNIVERSE IS VERY DARK.

AS LONG AS THERE ARE MASTERS AND SLAVES, WE ARE NOT RELEASED FROM
OUR MISSION [CHECK, from *Der Auftrag*].

The foundational principle of the economic and social order that exists to serve the creation of surplus value, in other words capital, is as simple as it is dark. Heiner Müller defined it in 1994/95 with a precise slogan: “And now, in the wealthy countries, face to face with the growing, overpopulated zones of poverty that are coming closer: ‘There is not enough for everyone.’ The consequence is selection.”¹

Müller’s statements on the principle of lack and selection under capitalism – “a few have to die of starvation so the others can eat”² – strike at the dark, negative core of a system of production, labor and consumption that thrives on the existence of permanent imbalances and differences, on competitions, inequalities, poverty and lack. For surplus value is not created as a result of the supply simply meeting the demands, but, instead, of the demands remaining unfulfilled, and this permanently: There will never be enough, no matter how much surplus is available. For markets to be able to create balance there must first be an imbalance – one

¹ Heiner Müller: *Gespräche 3, Werke 12*, 707.

² *Ibid*, 489.

presupposes the other – an acute lack, no matter how artificially it is created. The generative principle of capitalism is precisely *not* the satisfaction of so-called needs. Capitalism’s long-term non-satisfaction is the only thing that guarantees the dynamics of constant value creation. Or, as Marx says:

The simple circulation of commodities – selling in order to buy – is a means of carrying out a purpose connected with circulation, namely the appropriation of use values, the satisfaction of wants. The circulation of money as capital is, on the contrary, an end in itself, for the expansion of value takes place only within this constantly renewed movement. The circulation of capital has therefore no limits.³

Müller’s laconic phrase “There is not enough for everyone” is not a glad tiding. It contradicts the (false, indeed scandalous) optimism of a political-economic system that describes itself as emancipatory, progressive dynamism, as the guarantor of individual freedom, peaceful exchange and general wealth. Müller challenges this self-presentation, with Marx, both theoretically and also – with a traumatized look at history – empirically. In a conversation with Frank Castorf, he traced the historical lines of the reality of capitalist selection – which he made unmistakably explicit in the dramatic text *Germania 3 Ghosts at Dead Man* and the epic poem “Ajax, for Example.” That there is not enough for everyone also means that many die of doing without.

To the Communist *Lebenslüge*⁴ “No one, or everyone,” Hitler responded: “There is not enough for everyone.” Hitler already made this abundantly clear in 1932, in his speech to the Industry Club: The white race’s standard of living can only be

³ Karl Marx: *A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: Random House (The Modern Library), 1906), 169-70.

⁴ Living lie. – Trans.

maintained if that of the other races falls. *Selection*, then and now, remains the political principle of the industrialized states. To this extent, Hitler has won.⁵

In 1994/95, during the decade of the booming *new economy*, of privatized telecommunication, initial public offerings and insane profit margins, of the privatization of public services and of strategic mergers, Müller's statements pointing to the triumph of the capitalist *principle of selection* over the *principle of just distribution for all* fell on deaf, uncomprehending ears. Most members of the German intelligentsia considered them to be postmodern trash-talk or, alternatively, the apocalyptic stage set of a cynical, despairing GDR-dramatist who had just lost his country and his public. Or they denounced Müller as a politically incorrigible Stalinist, a sympathizer with the Socialist Unity Party and State Security Service (Stasi) who (still) understood nothing about democracy, the market economy, freedom, reflexive modernity, human rights, personal responsibility, self-reliance, etc.; and who, moreover, was maliciously ignoring the honest German efforts to come to terms with the past and bring about reconciliation. Wasn't the BMW Group about to support a study that would reveal the story of its complicity with the Nazi regime?

The claim that there was a *systematic* connection between Hitler's mass-murderous selections and the capitalist market economy, between Auschwitz and Deutsche Bank (and also I.G. Farben, VW, Thyssen, Bertelsmann, Audi, Hugo Boss, Oetker, etc.) seemed mad. It was disqualified as an utterly obsolete, erroneous view of history that was irreconcilable with a political consensus that had congealed as evidence, and that ultimately saw the free-market economy and a liberalistic *Open Society* (celebrated by Friedrich Hayek and Karl Popper as an

⁵ Ibid, 634-35. [CHECK: MORE LIKELY *Gespräche* 3]

emanation of pure reason) as the most decisive, indeed only effective opposition to all the totalitarianisms of the 20th century. In the West, the Federal Republic of Germany, the claim that there was an intimate connection between capital and National Socialism had been most recently heard, and rendered illegitimate, in the 1970s, from the mouths of misguided terrorists in the Red Army Faction. The latter did not want to forget (and also lacked the necessary historical differentiation to understand) that (and why) Hanns-Martin Schleyer, the former SS *Untersturmführer* (Second Lieutenant) and later president of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations [CHECK], on April 1, 1943, as an appointee of the Central Federation of Industry for Bohemia and Moravia, had been assigned the task of Arianizing the Czech economy and providing forced laborers for the German Reich.

Müller's more recent claim, in the early 1990s, of a direct connection between the capitalist economy and Hitler-fascism in the capital of the newly reborn German republic could thus appear all more convincingly as a malicious defamation: as theatrical thunder from an individual who was nostalgic for the GDR or – the other side of the critique – as a shameless act of self-marketing by a radical chic author who had erected the international success of theater productions like *Germania Death in Berlin*, *Mauser*, *Hamletmachine*, and *Wolokolamsker Chaussee* on the mountains of corpses created by the World Wars and the camps. In the context of post-nationalism and ecumenical multi-culturalism, of the peaceful German revolution and global world trade, the end of the confrontation between the blocs and the demise of the Communist illusion, Müller's bloody scenarios of catastrophe looked like long-since passé, dusty old documents whose "enigmatic yesterday quality" could only be deciphered with the help of specialized historians.

But then it all turned out quite differently. The GDR had indeed fallen in 1990, but it was not only democracy and freedom that had been victorious, it was the principle of selection too. At the beginning of the 21st century, Heiner Müller’s rule of thumb formula for capitalism – “There is not enough for everyone” – definitely sounds less enigmatic, in any case, than the speeches of the Cold War victors about triumph and prosperity. In the decades since 1990, it is not peace and prosperity, blooming landscapes and childlike, naïve trust in the laws of the free market that have increased. What has increased (apart from the wealth of the rich and super-rich) are unemployment, poverty, wars, social and political violence. Work and jobs have become precarious to a previously unknown degree. Youth unemployment in parts of the European world has reached shameful proportions. Germany has managed to afford a low-wage sector. The worldwide unequal distribution of wealth has massively increased. “The richest one percent of the world population,” according to an Oxfam study from the year 2016, “controls more resources than the entire rest of the world – this is shown by an analysis of the numbers in the *Credit Suisse Wealth Report 2015*. In 2015, just 62 individuals [of whom 53 were men] had the same wealth as 3.6 billion people – the bottom half of humanity.”⁶

Nor has the victory of capitalism over “actually existing Socialism” led to a more peaceful existence either within societies or between them. The questions that emerge, a quarter of a century after the triumph, are different: “Why do people in Saxony applaud the burning of asylum seekers’ housing? Why do 5,000 people march through Zagreb and give the Ustasha salute ‘ready for the fatherland’ – the equivalent of Germany’s *Sieg heil*? Why do young people

⁶ Oxfam, “An Economy for the 1%. How privilege and power in the economy drive extreme inequality and how this can be stopped.” <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/economy-1>.

in Paris fire into packed concert halls?”⁷ Nor had the victory of capitalism led to a global consensus about the telos, or end, of history.

What began in 1990 was nothing more – here the Marxist diagnosis of the dramatist Müller is more accurate than the speculations of neoliberalism – than another epoch in the history of capitalist crises, which have served up new dramatic collapses, new social conflicts and new nationalisms, along with financial crises of unprecedented scope, ecological and sociopolitical catastrophes, neo-feudal forms of wage slavery and dependence on day labor, and, last but not least, the outbreak of an enormous number of new terroristic wars, carried out with means that are as asymmetric as they are barbaric, and the corresponding streams of refugees: in Africa, Southeastern Europe, Asia and the Near and Middle East. In German daily newspapers, since the financial crisis of 2007, one can find sentences that in the 1990s would have been dismissed as the ravings of left-wing radicals: “In this society, battles over distribution are inevitable. [...] They will determine the daily life of those individuals who have the relatively worst living conditions.”⁸ The Pope, in Rome, makes pronouncements about the state of the world in the year 2014 that in the ears of the boards of directors of the DAX-NIKKEI-NASDAQ-DOW JONES corporations sound like pronouncements of the great Communist enemy itself:

When you see photographs of undernourished kids in different parts of the world, you take your head in your hand, it is incomprehensible. I believe that we are in a world economic system that isn't good. At the center of all economic systems must be man. [...] But we have put money at the center, the god of money. We

⁷ Nenad Popovic, “*Neue Rechte. Ein Gespräch*” (New Rights. A Conversation). In: *Die Zeit*, February 26, 2016, 40.

⁸ Frank Lübberding, “*Verteilungskriege werden unvermeidlich*,” (Wars of Distribution are Unavoidable). In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 18, 2016.

have fallen into a sin of idolatry, the idolatry of money. [...] The economy is moved by the ambition of having more [...]. Now also it is in style to throw the young people away with unemployment. The rate of unemployment is very worrisome to me, which in some countries is over 50%. Someone told me that 75 million young Europeans under 25 years of age are unemployed. That is an atrocity. But we are discarding an entire generation to maintain an economic system that can't hold up anymore, a system that to survive must make war, as the great empires have always done. But as a Third World War can't be done, they make zonal wars. What does this mean? That they produce and sell weapons, and with this the balance sheets of the idolatrous economies, the great world economies that sacrifice man at the feet of the idol of money, obviously they are sorted.⁹

In short, the principle of selection, which Heiner Müller defined in 1995, was anything but an outdated Stalinist chimera. Instead, it was the prophetic description of a murderous historical reality: “There is not enough for everyone.” The consequence is selection. It must be gradually dawning on even the very last partisans of Open Society – however obscurely and uncomfortably – that the formula makes sense.

Speeches that are declared by historical contemporaries to be mad, but that a few years later have all the evidence of reality on their side are, famously, *prophetic* speeches. Prophecies are protest,

⁹ Pope Francis, Interview with *La Vanguardia*, June 14, 2014. <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/catholicnews/2014/06/pope-francis-interview-with-la-vanguardia-full-text/#ixzz34XQikRFJ> (Retrieved May 30, 2016). [CHECK]

not madness. They have – as a glance at the Bible, at Moses or Jonas shows – to do with the destruction of idols, cult practices and ideologies; with the overthrow of routines of perception, the denunciation of injustice and ignorance, with rage at intolerable situations. It is for this reason that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari also defined the figure of the prophet as a figure of anti-imperialist resistance and ideological *betrayal*.

The prophet, the true human being, does not stop his divine raging – that is the positivity of his perspective – he does not stop betraying God, just as God does not stop betraying humanity. [...] The prophet is no priest, he does not interpret. [...] Instead, he senses the forces of what is coming, of the future that is already announcing itself as foretold.¹⁰

Reality, as it is revealed in the semiotic order of prophecy, is in principle the emergence of an historic mandate: to do away with servitude and oppression, to cast out graven images, to establish justice. While the intellectual employees of the world's ruling powers always do nothing more than explaining and analyzing the world within the framework of the established order, prophetic speech aims at something else, something that the established order seeks to prevent with all possible means: *the end of the world as it is* – in a word, at revolutionary collapse followed by an as yet unseen kingdom come beyond the historically given world. A prophetic gaze at reality always also sees – and this immediately evokes accusations of nihilism, destructive rage and megalomania – reality's mortal vulnerability within history. More simply, it takes reality for something that is changeable, transformable, as the world that has come to be, but that can also disappear again. The prophetic gaze is not dependent on that reality – and does not act as its servant.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris, 1980: Mille Plateaux), 155-156. [CHECK standard translation]

That Heiner Müller sees the world with prophetic eyes, that his gaze comes from the world of the *mission*¹¹ and not from the world of the state-supporting intellectual, is clear not only from texts like this one on the *angel of despair: My speech is silence, my song a scream. In the shadow of my wings dwells terror. My hope is the last breath.* It is also revealed in the short formula “There is not enough for everyone.” This is no economic theorem and no academic, theoretical hypothesis, but a refusal, a rejection of the “scary capitalist world” (Gottfried Benn). It is a prophetic gaze that sees the *forthcoming* battles over distribution, as they result from the exclusion of those who have been cast out, for whom it will not have been enough. Because it was already there and foreseeable, Heiner Müller was able, in 1991, to describe in a few lapidary words what since the second decade of the 21st century has been visible reality for all.

[Horkheimer’s vision of the future as a totally administered world and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* are nothing but] the pessimistic variant of the hope that Fortress Europe can be held over time. All these visions deny that the third world is a force, that those at whose cost we live will not look on forever without taking action. For this, no military-economic force is needed. It is quite sufficient if millions of the miserable start to move.¹²

No less prophetic is the gaze that Müller directs at those who don’t want to know anything about the impoverishment they are busily promoting, but who nonetheless – already now, even if no one wants to hear and see it – have been judged:

¹¹ A reference to Müller’s play *Der Auftrag*, translated into English as “The Task” or “The Mission.” The play is available in English as [TK]. –Trans.

¹² Heiner Müller: *Gespräche 3, Werke 12, 7.*

NIGHT FLIGHT FRANKFURT TO TOKYO

Stewardesses tiptoe

Through the flying casket

The corpses sleep

TOMORROW MORNING, IF GOD WILLS

Business¹³

And in fact, there is not enough for everyone. And the way it is – is not good. Looking back, it is clear how imprecise the readings of Heiner Müller’s precisely formulated texts were during the now recently past postmodernity of the 1990s and 2000s; how incomprehensible they were in the context of the nefarious optimism that accompanied the end of the Cold War; how little his images and scenes, his analytical reflections and prognostic observations were able to be taken seriously in a world that considered the critique of capitalism to be a childhood illness from which it had recovered. Müller was regarded as a postmodern dramatist, an embittered loser thanks to the “turn,” the *Wende* that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. He was considered a refractory Stalinist, a reactionary who admired war, a deconstructive engineer of texts, megalomaniacal theater-maker and irrational sneerer at modernity. What was overlooked was only the accurately observing, historically thinking poet, with his uncomfortable messages about the misery of capitalism – this people preferred not to observe so closely.

¹³ *Warten auf der Gegenschräge. Gesammelte Gedichte* (Waiting on the Opposite Bank. Collected Poems) (Berlin [CHECK]: Suhrkamp, 2014), 337.

This volume, therefore, proposes to read the texts again, afresh. To read them not only as the achieved literary work of a classic author, which Müller has meanwhile become, but as an intervention in historical reality and its contradictions, conflicts and wars that has broad, contemporary relevance. The volume contains a collection of lyrical, dramatic and prose texts that form of an anthology of Heiner Müller's works, as well as excerpts from the conversations Müller, from the 1970s, had with representatives of the intelligentsia from East and West about the reality of capitalism. The objective is to provide an accurate rendering of Müller's prophetic gaze, of the lines of conflict and destruction it depicted and predicted, for readers of today, and to render them in a way that is critically open.

The five chapters of this anthology take up specific thematic aspects of Müller's responses to capitalism, which run continuously through the work. In particular, they concern the *confrontation of the blocs*, as they arose following the Second World War (1); the affect of *disgust* in light of the inhuman pauperization and cannibalistic consumption that capitalism engenders (2); capitalistically instrumentalized *language* (3); the question of *religion*, which was and remains virulent (4); and finally the present reality of *war* (5).

Each chapter is introduced by a brief foreword that, on the one hand, attempts to situate the selected texts within Heiner Müller's work, and, on the other hand, seeks to provide a theoretical horizon within which they can be contextualized – perhaps differently than before. In the best case, the chapters should be understood as guides to reading, while the texts from Heiner Müller's work should speak, and speak for themselves. Müller's texts conform to no notion of systematic holism or completeness, and no theoretically worked out aesthetic. It follows that the present selection makes no claim to systematic completeness. At issue is not the reconstruction

of a Müllerian theory of capitalism (there isn't one), but the critical problematizing of a world that deserves to be perceived, thought and changed.

The ordering of the texts according to thematic aspects continues to follow the principle that, in the course of reviewing Heiner Müller's manuscripts, has been identified as his working principle: a gathering, in constellations, of names, thoughts, quotations, times, places, fragments of plays into graphic structures that may come closest to the thought images (*Denkbilder*) of Walter Benjamin: a floating mediation of poetry and reflection, in the sense of intuitive cognition. For as Müller formulated it in 1991:

In the inability of thinking to come to a conclusion also lies the chance of arriving at something different – at a combination of art and philosophy that can no longer be undone. Until now, philosophy had no chance of being dissolved in art, art no chance of being dissolved in philosophy. For centuries this has been the normal state of affairs. Since the end of the Enlightenment, only art remains. Everything else is in ruins, faith and thinking. Now it is becoming possible to bring together what the Enlightenment so carefully took apart. ¹⁴

¹¹ Heiner Müller, *Gespräche 3, Werke 12, 7*.

Chapter 1. Capitalism and the Critique of Capitalism. The Double Betrayal

“Capital is smarter; money is the Wall.” In his “Plea on Behalf of Contradiction,”¹⁵ Heiner Müller cites a “leftwing West Berlin flyer” to explain why, on November 4, 1989, at one of the biggest demonstrations in the history of the German Democratic Republic, he did not give a speech of his own, but instead read out a short statement from an Initiative for the Founding of Independent Trade Unions.

Standing onstage on Berlin’s Alexanderplatz, among leaders of the East German opposition including Friedrich Schorlemmer, Günter Schabowski, Gregor Gysi, Lothar Bisky, Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym, Jens Reich, Ulrich Mühe, Jan Josef Liefers, Steffi Spira and others – all of whom spoke of the matter at hand with varying degrees of deep conviction – Müller calls for solidarity instead of privileges. He concretizes his call by reading the flyer by the Initiative, concluding with his own words: “If, next week, the government should step down, it will be time enough to dance at demonstrations”¹⁶ – and exits.

For months, events in the streets of the collapsing state have been *intruding* into Müller’s rehearsals for “Hamletmachine” at the Deutsches Theater.¹⁷ They have been not so much interrupting the work on stage as shedding a new light on the production, transforming it into a commentary on those very events. “Darkly,” wrote [Benjamin] Henrichs in a review dated March 30, 1990, “Hamlet shines forth above the pale collapse that surrounds him. His loneliness

¹⁵ “Plädoyer für den Widerspruch.” In: Heiner Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht* (War without Battle) (Cologne: Kiepenhauer & Witsch, 1992, 415-19), 425. Cited hereafter as “Plea.” Müller’s response to the vociferous criticism of his action originally appeared in *Neues Deutschland*, on December 14, 1989. – Trans.

¹⁶ See Christoph Rüter, *Die Zeit ist aus den Fugen* (The Time is out of Joint) (Frankfurt: Filmedition Suhrkamp, 2009). Cited hereafter as *Die Zeit ist aus den Fugen*.

¹⁷ See Rüter, “Was man auf der Bühne gesagt hat, kann man nicht zurücknehmen. Christoph Rüter erinnert sich an die Dreharbeiten zu ‘Die Zeit ist aus den Fugen’” (What has been Said Onstage cannot be Taken Back. Christoph Rüter Remembers the Filming of ‘The Time is out of Joint’). In: Rüter, *Die Zeit ist aus den Fugen*, 5-13.

appears boundless, indescribable – the lostness of a thinking human being in a muffled, dawning world.”¹⁸ Müller, in response, laconically: “Stalin’s ghost, which had appeared in the first hour of the production, turned into the Deutsche Bank in the final hour.” Of what was once a tragedy, all that remains now is a German play of mourning¹⁹ in which one ideology replaces another. It’s not by chance that on November 4 the playwright’s eye falls on that flyer by a leftwing group from West Berlin, whose title recurs, as a quotation, in his “Plea on behalf of Contradiction.” And it is not entirely by accident that Müller reads the flyer, with its demand.

“I was on the list of speakers,” he writes in *War without Battle*, with other national prize winners, representatives of the opposition and two functionaries, and when I arrived I had the uncomfortable feeling that a theater is being produced there that has already been passed over by reality [...]. I didn’t know what I should say that wouldn’t have sounded like an afterthought. I was planning to read Brecht’s text “Fatzer, Come” with the demand that the politicians give up control of the state, which no longer has any need for them. I had the text in my pocket, but in front of the 500,000 demonstrators it suddenly seemed silly for me to give a kick to the ailing lion, which would certainly have earned me applause. I drank vodka and waited, unsure of what to do. The cultural

¹⁸ Benjamin Henrichs, in: *Die Zeit*, March 30, 1990, cited in: Christoph Rüter: *ibid.*, 51.

¹⁹ Walter Benjamin first made the distinction between tragedy and the “play of mourning” in *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997; available in English as *The Origin of the German Play of Mourning*, trans. John Osborne, (New York: Verso, 2003). In opposition to the mythical-vitalistic dimension of tragedy (as Carl Schmitt, for example, celebrated it), Benjamin saw the play of mourning as embodying a dialectical-materialist perspective, to the extent that since the 17th century it mourned both the loss of tragedy and the failure of the political sovereign who was embodied in it. In Benjamin’s construction, the play of mourning duplicates the tragedy in mourning and melancholy, without ever being able to repeat it, because the transcendental third position [CHECK], which once legitimized the sovereign, has become immanent. (See Bettine Menke, *Das Trauerspiel-Buch. Der Souverän – das Trauerspiel. Konstellationen – Ruinen* (The Trauerspiel Book. The Sovereign – the Play of Mourning. Constellations – Ruins) (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010). The mourning in the play of mourning, in this sense, refers to the lost tragic position of the political sovereign, who without this legitimation appears only as comic figure – similar, perhaps, to the political (popular) sovereign in the world of capitalist commodification.

representative of the local city administration wanted to have a discussion with me, in an interview, about the separation of the Communists from power as Communism's only chance. They had understood nothing. Then three young people came up to me with a leaflet they had written; it was a call to create independent trade unions, and they asked me whether I could present it for them because they hadn't been allotted any time on the schedule. The organizers had said the program was so full that there was no more room for them. I saw no reason to say no. So I read it, with a sentence about the separation of the intelligentsia from the population at large, as a result of privileges. [...] That undoubtedly sounded strange coming from my mouth, and it was not a text for 500,000 people who wanted to be joyful [...]. When I stepped down from the podium after whistles and choruses of boos, there was an old monitor standing there, and he said "That was cheap." Stefan Heym also blamed me for the text. For him it was a joyful day. The workers had seen the economic thumbscrews coming; he saw the dawning of a democratic state, at last.²⁰

On that joyful day, Heiner Müller is focusing on something that is bigger than the day in question; bigger than the historical and political events of the era of transition, which mark the end of the *Cold War*; bigger than the debates over the words and positions that accompany those events; bigger than the hope and then the coming of the democratic state, which is to be a state for all the Germans; something that is bigger, even, than German history and German-German

²⁰ Heiner Müller, *Krieg ohne Schlacht. Leben in Zwei Diktaturen* (War without Battle. Life in Two Dictatorships) (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994), 354-55. Cited hereafter as *War without Battle*.

history – bigger because not only twenty years ago, but always, it has only been thinkable internationally, i.e. geopolitically. He is focusing on capital: *Capital is smarter*.

It is a focus that is always double-sided, no matter whether the issues at stake are large or small. On the one hand, Müller's grasp encompasses the two German states; on the other, the world divided by the *Wall* of capital. It is not only the late or later texts, dramatic or lyrical, with their dense, laconic language transecting ever greater and more timeless geopolitical dimensions, that are concerned with capital, and even more with failure, bestial cries, disgust, speechlessness and death; but also with waiting, with messages in bottles and with hope. The innumerable conversations in which Müller engaged during these years also revolve around this hard place, unyieldingly and with dialectical wit. The texts and conversations, as history approached the end of the Cold War, are based on a gaze that, with increasingly skeletal acuity, cuts history down to a model, and that is then as merciless and hard as the world it falls on. For this world, as Müller shows, is not good – not yet, perhaps never: "Truth is concrete. I breathe stones."²¹ The dramatist's eye no longer – conscious of the possibility of failure – falls on what is possible in the future, as it still did in the very early works. Rather – facing failure – it falls on the ghosts that now come, in a larger throng, not only from the past but from the future as well, to plague the present:²² all the *busy-bodies* (Eric Santner) of unceasing consumption. This means that *after* the fall of the Wall the debt that we owe to the dead of the past is now multiplied by our future indebtedness. A situation with no way out.

²¹ Heiner Müller, "Das Gefühl des Scheiterns," (The Feeling of Failure). In: *Die Prosa, Schriften*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999), 61.

²² See Bertolt Brecht, "Der Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer, Bühnenfassung von Heiner Müller" (The Destruction of the Egoist Johann Fatzer, Production Version by Heiner Müller) (Frankfurt am Main: [TK], 1994), 73. Cited hereafter as Bertolt Brecht/Heiner Müller, *Fatzer. Production Version*.

But Müller doesn't only cite the West-berlin leaflet's critique of capitalism ("*My gaze from the window falls on the Mercedes Star*"²³). He also reads aloud the call to found independent trade unions. With this, he inserts himself, as a person of privilege, into the genealogy of the eternally unprivileged – *The workers had seen the economic thumbscrews coming* – in the very tradition of the German workers' movement within which his father and grandfather are also to be located. Father and grandfather, faced with the "double betrayal" (not to mention the much-discussed "betrayal" of the father by his son). Betrayed, first, by Social Democracy, and then by GDR Stalinism and LENINDADA, the son – albeit knowingly – betrayed by the *phantom* of the workers' and peasants' state, which reproduces the very thing it was supposed to abolish, namely the "separation of knowledge and power,"²⁴ and produces, in its place, the ideological caricature of a political idea. This division between power and the intelligentsia, created and fostered by the system, leads both to the fateful separation of the dramatist from his public, whose language he then no longer speaks, and to the privilege that, at the same time, so effectively alienates him from this public that his attempts to speak their language must necessarily miss the mark.

For Müller, nonetheless, the situation offers no alternative. History, which from the perspective of the double betrayal continues to be written as a history of class struggle, will not have come to its end. Rather, it writes itself – in the midst of the Cold War and beyond the end of that war – along the very same wall that divides the world via the relations of ownership and production. In other words: History has not stopped being victorious, or, as Brecht, dialectically, formulates it in his "Fatzler"-fragment: "And from now on, and for a long, long time/ There will

²³ "Ajax zum Beispiel" (Ajax for Example). In: Heiner Müller, *Die Gedichte*, ed. Frank Hörmigk (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998, 292-97), 292. Cited hereafter as *Die Gedichte*.

²⁴ Heiner Müller, "Plea," 270.

be no more winners/ In your world, only/ Losers.”²⁵ In keeping with this tradition, Müller, too, recognizes, with dialectical concision, *capital* as the enemy that in divided Germany has already shown its ugly Janus face: *bestial cries* there, and here.

HEINER MÜLLER, TEXTS

Report on Grandfather (1951)

On July nights when gravity is weak
When his graveyard walks over the wall
The dead shoemaker comes to me
My grandfather, so often betrayed

My grandfather died when I was seventeen. My mother says: He was never sick, only at the end not quite right in his head. Today, five years later, I know what wasn't right.

His father died young. To bury the dead breadwinner, a place in the earth is not free, a wardrobe had to be sold, an heirloom.

[*Werke 2, Prosa 1, 2*]

[In humble circumstances...] (1952)

Clyde Griffiths grows up in humble circumstances. His parents are buskers, members of a sect, “chosen” by God but ostracized by society.

²⁵ Bertolt Brecht/Heiner Müller, *Fatzer. Production Version*, 23. [CHECK CITE]

Clyde becomes a hotel boy, then an employee in his uncle's commercial laundry. Thus he comes to know luxury, glamor a[nd] the happy life of the successful. He fears, because he has experienced it, nothing more than poverty; wishes, his eyes fixed on the life of the wealthy, nothing more ardently than to be part of it. Dreiser then shows how personal ambition, the desire to move up into the ruling class – the petit bourgeois “escape” from the dilemmas of class society – necessarily means betraying one's own, oppressed class.

Faced with the choice between abandoning his penniless and pregnant sister to misery, or foregoing an excursion, he chooses the excursion. But on the return trip a child is run over by the car. And when Clyde, after fleeing the police with his friends, crawls out from under the wreck of the “borrowed” automobile in the snow-covered suburbs of Chicago, his first attempt to get a share of the wealth has failed. So it goes. For the opportunities are no longer unlimited in America, the property has been distributed, the seats have been taken. There are exceptions, but Clyde is not one of them. For this, he is ultimately not brutal enough. He ends up the where he does because he is in between the classes, is ground up by them, and this is the rule. Guilty/innocent – a victim like the drowned seamstress who had to die so he could be free to wed the businessman's daughter, to get ahead – in the end he sits in t[he] electr[ic] chair, instead of the lap of luxury. Society has let him down: He has broken the rules. Murder is no longer among the legitimate means of “getting ahead.”

The novel *An American Tragedy* appeared in 1925. Today it is as current as it was then. It turns the shattering fate of an individual into a convincing piece

of the history of capitalism in America, and thus contributes to understanding US-imperialism today.

[*Werke 8, Schriften*, 387]

Three Parables (1953/1993)

Two boys each had a bird in the hand. The birds should sing, they said.

Then one made a fist of the hand with the bird.

But the bird didn't sing, just screeched, and that not for long.

The other opened his hand and let the bird fly away.

Your bird has flown away from you, said the first boy.

It is singing, replied the other.

A lecturer in a big hall with many people in the audience was talking about something that affected them all. But the people weren't listening to him. Then he interrupted his talk and asked the crowd whether they were unable to hear him.

No, he was told, you are talking too loud.

A man had made a mistake in his profession. This created a lot of trouble for him.

To improve the situation, he had the choice of either yelling at his wife, who was very quarrelsome, or correcting the mistake.

He killed his canary.

[*Werke 2, Prosa I*, 18 (14?)]

Conversation with Heiner Müller (1966)

GIRNUS There was one more very specific criticism. In your play, Brigadier Barka says of himself, “I am the ferry between the ice age and the Commune.” This remark, some people said – taken together with other statements – suggested that building socialism was a phase filled with nothing but difficulties and sacrifices. The critics said, “You have an image of Communism that is utopian and illusory, but that doesn’t correspond to our reality.” How do you respond to these criticisms, Herr Müller?

MÜLLER This brigadier is someone who has grown up under capitalism, and the play describes how he comes to develop a socialist consciousness. And every controversy over a new perspective and stance toward the world begins, in my experience, generally.

GIRNUS But what do you mean by “ice age”?

MÜLLER Capitalism.

GIRNUS And why do you call it an ice age? This is a metaphor, after all, for most likely you don’t really believe that capitalism flourished during the ice age?

MÜLLER The metaphor stands for a world in which it was not possible for Barka to find human contacts...

GIRNUS ...in which, in other words, there was a freezing of relationships between people, an isolation and alienation? As Marx says in the “Communist Manifesto,” the modern bourgeoisie has left no ties between people except

unfeeling cash payment, and drowned everything else in the “icy water of egotistical calculation.”

MÜLLER And Barka says this at the point in the play where he “thaws,” to remain within the image.

GIRNUS If I have understood you correctly, what the metaphor of the “ferry” is meant to express is that he, Barka, feels like an active force for change, for the transition from the ice age to Communism. Correct?

MÜLLER Yes.

[...]

MÜLLER You are familiar with Goethe’s remark: “Man must be ruined again!”²⁶ Here something positive is formulated negatively. You are referring to way-stations along Brigadier Barka’s path to understanding that the concept of happiness is redefined by the work of building socialism. There is no longer any private, non-committal happiness, no more retiree or consumer happiness. A mistake in the play: The new concept of happiness is assumed, not formulated. That needs to be corrected.

GIRNUS To go back to the starting point of our conversation: Heiner Müller is full of a ferment of metaphors, indeed one can see the whole play as an eruption, an eruptive cascade of metaphors. Now, metaphors are naturally always ambiguous, and so they can also be problematic. Our readers would certainly be interested in knowing what direction you are thinking of taking to complete the work, as you have already suggested you will.

²⁶ CITE Conversations with Eckermann.

MÜLLER One thing is to strengthen everything that reveals the continuity of the German Democratic Republic, and another is to accentuate everything that emphasizes the basic tendency of this development, namely that people increasingly become not the object but the subject of production and history.
[*Werke 10, Gespräche 1, 3-25*]

Wire Mesh or Divisible Freedom (1975)

A German teacher whom I had always considered especially reactionary, a fanatical proponent of “structure,” gave us, as the topic of an essay to prepare for our final state exam, a sentence from Georg Herwegh: “The freedom of the world is indivisible.” That was in 1948, in Saxony, and I don’t know whether he meant to make the exam easy or our life difficult.

What does a person write, on a balcony in Pankow with more sounds from birds than from traffic, even reliably protected by trees from the prying eyes of the neighbors, in an apartment that is just being renovated, and who is working, for the *Spiegel*, of all things, on a review of a book about Chile that has just been published in West Berlin by Rotbuch²⁷ – possibly the most important book since the Putsch, written in political asylum in the Italian embassy in Santiago, in another hour of true feeling “in the midst of a bloodbath,” after three years of work on a hope that since September 1973 has been postponed – not destroyed –

²⁷ Sergei Stoparich, *Wer uns nicht Kennt, Kennt Chile nicht* (Whoever does not Know Us does not Know Chile) (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1975).

and that jackboots have inscribed in our memory with the blood of Chilean workers, peasants and intellectuals.

The categories of literary criticism are rendered questionable by the circumstances of this authoring. Stuparich calls his book a “novel in interrogations.” The interrogations are more document than fiction, and to apply literary criteria to them is to place oneself on the side of the people who are handcuffing prisoners. The unity of politics and literature breaks down under the pressure of an experience like Chile’s – the abyss that opens up between words and deeds, and that Gollwitzer has cited in this context,²⁸ our own schizophrenia as people who speak and write, who can do nothing but our work, which has few consequences and none for the dead. The propaganda value of the book with the awkward travel guide title (in the original as precise as it was untranslatable: *Comprometerse con una clase*²⁹) cannot be separated from its substantive value.

The novel interrogates a farmer who comes to the capital from the south (“I remember, I was dreaming I am falling down from these tall buildings”), becomes an industrial worker (“I will earn a whole lot of money and become a billionaire”), drinks and becomes unemployed. While working as a day laborer in the city, he gets to know the living standard of the wealthy and goes to night school to make up for his lack of education and have the same things for himself.

His grabbing the breast of a woman (“...like I had seen in the movies”) puts an end to his studies – the family grows too fast. He votes for “the

²⁸ Helmut Gollwitzer, “Lehrstück Chile” (Didactic Play Chile), Speech given on September 14, 1973, at the Haus der Kirche, West Berlin. In *Das Argument*, No. 81, 7/8 (October, 1973), 649-52.

²⁹ Committing Oneself to a Class [CHECK TRANSLATION]

conservatives, the ones who guarantee order and respect for authority,” until a stranger “suddenly, in a perfectly calm voice,” calls him a “damned pig and a traitor.” He joins the Unidad Popular, takes part in a land occupation and then in the armed resistance against the Junta, and in December 1973 is “shot while attempting to escape.”

The *vita* documents the chance for underdevelopment to tear open the wire mesh fence of capitalist structures before it becomes tightly woven (“organic”) enough to divide the mass of the exploited into groups of more and less exploited; and the danger this chance faces from the Holy Alliance of traditional patriarchal and fascist military technocracies – the more or less potent, shameful parts of the US-American South.

An example: the appearance of the sacred cow in the chapter on farm occupations. After the owner turns up and threatens the occupiers with police and prison, “something strange happened to me... While the guards were being posted, a cow attracted my attention... for the first time I had the sense that we were on alien turf and property... as if forty years of the owner’s work and accomplishment were embedded in it. I wondered whether we weren’t intruders, disturbing the development that this gentleman in fine clothing and well-shined shoes had started and built up with a lot of understanding. The cow was something like the living proof... The animal was nice and plump, with a full udder, and someone had certainly made sure that on this morning, too, one of the employees would show up with a pail to milk her. This feeling of having illegally

taken possession disappeared only later, when a group of us slaughtered the first cow.”

The narrator has seen a ghost, the sacred cow of private property. Ghosts live from the fear of ghosts, which is especially widespread among the underprivileged. Not every ghost disappears when you challenge it or the clock strikes midnight. The best exorcism is to slaughter it.

As I write this, next door on television, capital, with its ads, is letting its tax-deductible sacred cows pass on parade, wondered at by people who, as a result of revolutionary violence, are not able to have the real-life experience that the final solution to the problem of consumption, for capitalism, is always ultimately, in an emergency, to rationalize the consumers out of existence. One does not need to be either a Communist or a member of the Club of Rome to prophesy that these ghosts, too, will not escape the end that is foretold for them.

The novel’s second interrogation is of a married woman from a “well-heeled” family, the daughter of a “progressive humanist” and friend of Allende. Her life story is the story of her life with three husbands, one after the other. The first, with whom she has a “white wedding,” is shocked by her sexual, the second by her political emancipation. She experiences the connection between the maternal bond and machismo. The way women are kept down by motherhood. With the third husband, there would be a place for her, but there is no room for that: Her path leads to the National Stadium, to sexual torture.

Machismo – as I write this, I hear a familiar sound from the street. A woman is crying. I look out the window at the scene, one in which we all appear

from time to time, stiff as a torero facing the attacking bull: “Wait until we get home.” It is a good neighborhood. Variant for less good neighborhoods: “Come home, you!”

The third figure is a radical leftist showing traces of autobiography, and some self-critique – something the author is not much enamored with. He reflects the difficulty of avoiding the mortal sin of socialism: “For the people instead of with them.” It is the speech disorder of left intellectuals in dialogue with the working class, which is reflected, at least in this translation (by Rainer Enrique Hamel), in formal ways: No worker is given as much first-class language as the leftist character.

Political-economic analyses are interspersed along the course of the tragedy, like accents placed there to stem the sense of inevitability. They are relevant not only for Chile: a contemporary commentary on Lenin’s *State and Revolution*. The connection between Allende’s “policy of the soft hand [CHECK],” his refusal, out of loyalty to the principles of parliamentary democracy, to arm the people against the suffocating grip of this same democracy, his illusions about a “people in uniform” and the atavism of the Junta are painfully obvious. With his too-late turn to the machine pistol, Allende has corrected his policy, not too late for Latin America.

[*Werke 8, Schriften*, 130-33]

And much (1975)

As on the shoulders a

Load of logs is

To hold on to.

(Hölderlin)

[And as

A load of logs upon

The shoulders, there is much

To bear in mind.

(Hölderlin, *Hyperion and Selected Poems*, 274-75)]

1.

Eugen Gottlob Winkler, one of Germany's many "premature dead,"³⁰ writes, in 1936, in a text on ERNST JÜNGER OR THE CALAMITY OF THINKING,³¹ that there can be no public debate about the difference between two experiences. In trying to write something like a "Letter on Culture" from the capital of the German Democratic Republic for readers in France, I am struck by the truth of this saying. The undertaking has the degree of difficulty of a description of the dark side of the moon. The media's clichés about dissidence and dogmatism under socialism miss the reality. Reality does not live in the extremes. What is history for the elites has always still been work for the masses. The clichés serve

³⁰ Winkler, a writer, committed suicide in 1936. – Trans.

³¹ *Ernst Jünger oder das Unheil des Denkens*.

the appetite for signals of betrayal sent to capitalism from the opposing camp; they guarantee the good conscience of consumption, and freedom of corruption.

2.

Abroad, in the West, I have occasionally been asked why I remain in the GDR. No one will ask a Frenchman why he remains in France. Which does not speak only *in favor* of the conditions in his country. A citizen of the first French republic, which wrote in its own blood the commandments that today are held up to oppose socialism, had to live and/or die with this question – the difference a matter of punctuation that was decided by the guillotine. The inability to look history in the white of its eyes as the foundation of politics. Brecht, in 1984, in one of his first discussions with students after moving to the Soviet Occupation Zone, said that for twenty years the goal of his theater had been to demolish ideology. He is not the toothless lion as which he is fashionably regarded just because you can make him into the building block of an ideology. The building block performs work within the wall. His attempt to achieve a synthesis of realism and popularity failed. His theater wasn't popular when it was realistic; it was no longer realistic when it was popular.

3.

The discourse on the problems of theater's reception in the GDR needs a context, which is not illuminated by concepts like bureaucracy and censorship. Two different German experiences have congealed into two German states. The

Federal Republic is a company that has been shrunk to profitable size by two World Wars, built on the ground of a reality that is the quagmire of German history. The identity of its population equals the exchange rate of the Deutschmark. The German Democratic Republic: an emergency birth by caesarian, carrying on its back the NIGHTMARE OF DEAD PEOPLES, its ground utopia, with a population that can find its national identity only in the international context, inevitably bound up in an imperial structure that guarantees its preservation and colors its future. Back from devastated Frankfurt, through the shop window of West Berlin, in the sad light of Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse, I am happy that Rosa Luxemburg, Jew from Poland, revolutionary in Germany, is buried on this side of the wall.

4.

Michel Foucault's question, what revolution is worth what price, is a privileged question. When Victor Shklovsky describes Sergei Eisenstein's OCTOBER as the end of commodity production transformed into an image, he knows that this end is experienced by the masses, at first, as a reduction in commodity production. Social security has its price. A population that is immediately subjected to the daily drumfire of advertising for the wonders of capitalism, as the secret garden of desires, does not pay its contribution to the security of the future with cries of joy. Total information becomes a stabilization factor and cements the status quo when it cannot be translated into a practice. The commodity world bubbles over and burns holes in a future that seems like captured booty, until the holes are revealed

to be the image itself. When there is no other choice, I prefer cannibalizing the living to vampirizing the dead.

5.

The space-time of art lies between the time of the subject and the time of history. The difference is a potential theater of war. Here, Foucault's question shows its Janus face. The program calls for the end of elites; the situation encourages privilege. Privileges have to be paid for: The work of intellectuals includes their self-criticism. Only against this background can the critique of the system become productive, are optimism and pessimism both equally a waste of time. The danger is real that important authors write their way out of the reality of the GDR into a no-man's land between overworked functionaries' understandable wish for affirmation and the equally understandable need of an unsatisfied, corruptible public for an outlet – neither of which can be satisfied by art. The education policy and social structure of the GDR produce more talents than the state can use. In the Federal Republic, marketing absorbs the surplus so it does not become useful (in either state).

6.

In the KINGDOM OF NECESSITY, realism and popularity are two different things, but the KINGDOM OF FREEDOM does not come any closer if their synthesis is not attempted again and again under the watchful eyes of the Brecht heirs at the BERLINER ENSEMBLE, or the city fathers at the VOLKSBÜHNE

AM LUXEMBURG-PLATZ, which in the first case is threatened by academic paralysis, and in the second by declining quality. Or in VILLEURBANNE, with the Théâtre Populaire Nationale [CHECK] pushing back against the maelstrom of the media. Theater is seeking its function. The current evasive maneuver, a compromise with the feudalistic structure of (theater) operations, is the misuse of the classics. Back to Molière. Shakespeare as alibi. A material that still shines bright is painted over with a patina in order to conserve a structure it once exploded. Theater will not find its function so long as it consists of the division into actors and public. It lives from the tension between the stage and the auditorium, from the provocation of the texts.

7.

The gravitational mass of the people, under capitalism a requirement for politics, is its correcting in socialist society. The blindness of experience is the badge of its authenticity. Only the increasing pressure of authentic experience develops the capacity to look history in the white of its eyes – a capacity that can be the end of politics and the beginning of human history. Reading Marx's prediction that stupidity will yet stage terrible tragedies gives no comfort to the victims, but we can do nothing except our work, which has few consequences and none for the dead.

I regret that I have been so general. It is difficult to write without a public and not in verse, from a distance. The devil is in the details, as Hegel learned in Prussia.

Theater is a projection into utopia or it is nothing special. I greet the solitary tree
at the entrance to CHARLES DE GAULLE airport.

[*Werke 8, Schriften, 155-59*]

Hamletmachine (1977)

[...]

Television The daily disgust Disgust

At prepared nonsense. At official cheerfulness

How do you spell GEMÜTLICHKEIT

Give us this day our daily murder

For yours is the void Disgust

At the lies that are believed

By the liars and no one else Disgust

At the lies that are believed Disgust

At the faces of the *Machers* lined

By the struggle for positions, votes, dollars

Disgust A sythed chariot with flashing points

I pass through the streets malls faces

Scarred by the battle for consumption Poverty

Without dignity Poverty without the dignity

Of the knife, the brass knuckles the fist

The humiliated bodies of the women

Hope of the generations

Suffocated in blood cowardice stupidity

Laughter from dead bellies

Heil COCA COLA

A kingdom

For a murderer

I WAS MACBETH THE KING HAS OFFERED ME HIS THIRD CONCUBINE

I KNEW EVERY WORT ON HER HIPS RASKOLNIKOV IN MY HEART

UNDER MY ONLY JACKET THE HATCHET FOR THE/ONLY/SKULL OF

THE PAWNBROKER

In the loneliness of the airports

I take a deep breath I am

Privileged My disgust

Is a privilege

Screened by the Wall

Barbed wire prison

Photograph of the author.

I no longer want to eat drink breathe love a woman a man a child an animal. I no

longer want to die. I no longer want to kill.

The photograph of the author is torn up.

I break open my sealed flesh. I want to live in my veins, in the marrow of my

bones, in the labyrinth of my skull. I withdraw into my intestines. I sit down in

my shit, my blood. Somewhere bodies are being broken so I can live in my shit.

Somewhere bodies are being opened up so I can be alone with my blood. My thoughts are wounds in my brain. My brain is a scar. I want to be a machine.

Arms for grabbing Legs for walking No pain No thought.

Screens go black. Blood from the refrigerator, Three naked women: Marx Lenin

Mao. Each one speaking simultaneously in his language the text ALL

RELATIONS MUST BE OVERTHROWN IN WHICH MAN ... Actor playing

Hamlet puts on his costume and Mask.

[...]

[*Werke 4, Die Stücke, 554*]

THE MAN IN THE ELEVATOR (1978/1979)

I am standing among men who are unknown to me, in an old elevator with metal rods that rattle as we ascend. I am dressed like an employee, or a worker on holiday. I have even put on a necktie, my collar scrapes against my neck, I am sweating. When I move my head the collar tightens around my neck. I have an appointment with the boss (in my thoughts I call him Number One), his office is on the fourth floor, or was it the twentieth; no sooner do I start thinking about this than I am no longer sure. The news of my appointment with the boss (whom in my thoughts I call Number One) reached me in the basement, a vast area with empty cement rooms and signs with instructions for what to do in a bomb attack. I assume it is about a task that will be assigned to me. I check my necktie and tighten the knot. I would like to have a mirror so I can check the necktie with my

eyes too. Impossible to ask a friend how the knot of your necktie looks. The neckties of the other men in the elevator are impeccable. Some of them seem to know each other. They talk softly about something of which I understand nothing. At least their conversation must have distracted me: At the next stop I read on the lintel over the elevator door, with horror, the number eight. I have gone too far, or I still have more than half the way ahead of me. The time factor is decisive. FIVE MINUTES EARLY/IS TRUE PUNCTUALITY. When I looked at my watch the last time, it said ten. I remember my feeling of relief: another fifteen minutes until my meeting with the boss. Next time I looked it was only five minutes later. Now, when I look at my watch again, between the eighth and ninth floors, it shows exactly fourteen minutes and forty-five seconds after ten o'clock: true punctuality long gone, time is no longer working for me. Quickly, I consider my situation: I can exit at the next stop and run down the stairs, three steps at a time, to the fourth floor. If it is the wrong floor this naturally means a perhaps irretrievable loss of time. I can keep going to the twentieth floor and, if the boss's office isn't there, ride back to the fourth floor, assuming the elevator doesn't get stuck, or run down the stairs (three steps at a time), whereby I can break my legs or my neck, precisely because I am in a hurry. I already see myself lying on a stretcher, which at my request is being carried to the boss's office and set up in front of his desk, still ready to be of service, but no longer fit. For the moment, everything is concentrated on the unanswerable – thanks to my previous negligence – question on what floor the boss (whom in my thoughts I call Number One) awaits me with an important assignment. (It must be an important

assignment, or why doesn't he have one of his underlings given it to me.) A quick glance at the watch informs me incontrovertibly of the fact that even for ordinary punctuality it is now already much too late, although our elevator, as is revealed by a second glance, has not yet reached the twelfth floor: The hour hand shows ten, the minute hand fifty, seconds no longer a matter. Something seems to be wrong with my watch, but there is no more time to compare times either: Without my having noticed where the other gentlemen exited, I am alone in the elevator. With a horror that goes to the roots of my hair, I see that on my watch, I can no longer tear my eyes away from it, the hands are spinning past the numbers with increasing speed, so that between one blink and the next more and more hours are passing. I realize that something has been going wrong for a long time already: with my watch, with this elevator, with time. I engage in wild speculations: Gravity is weakening, a kind of stutter in the earth's rotation, like a cramped calf in a soccer game. I regret that I know too little about physics to be able to solve scientifically the glaring contradiction between the speed of the elevator and the course of time that is shown on my watch. Why did I fail to pay attention in school? Or read the wrong books: poetry instead of physics. The time is out of joint and somewhere on the fourth or the twentieth floor (the Or cuts like a knife through my negligent brain) there waits, in a probably vast, thickly carpeted room, behind a desk that has probably been erected at the far, narrow end of the space, opposite the entrance, the boss (whom in my thoughts I call Number One) with an assignment for me, the loser. Perhaps the world will fall apart and my assignment, which was so important that the boss wanted to give it to me in

person, is already rendered meaningless by my negligence. NO LONGER VALID in the language of bureaucracy, which I have learned so well (superfluous expertise!), IN THE FILE that no one will consult any longer because the assignment had to do with the last possible measure to prevent the end whose beginning I am experiencing, locked in this elevator that has gone crazy along with my watch which has gone crazy. Desperate dream within a dream: I have the ability, simply by rolling myself into a ball, to transform my body into a projectile that, breaking through the ceiling of the elevator, catches up with time. Cold awakening in the slowed-down elevator to look at the speeding watch. I imagine the despair of Number One. His suicide. His head, whose portrait graces all official spaces, on the desk. Blood from a black-ringed hole in the (probably right) temple. I have not heard a shot, but that proves nothing, the walls of his office are naturally soundproof, when it was built they thought of this and what goes on in the boss's office is of no concern to the population, power is lonely. I exit the elevator at the next stop and stand there with no assignment, the no longer necessary necktie still ridiculously knotted under my chin, on a village street in Peru. Dried mud with tire marks. On both sides of the street, a treeless plain with a few knots of grass and spots of gray bushes stretch vaguely toward the horizon. To the left of the road a barracks, it looks abandoned, the windows dark holes with shards of glass. In front of a wall with posters advertising the products of an alien civilization stand two gigantic inhabitants. Their backs communicate a threat. I ask myself whether I should go back, I haven't yet been seen. Never would I have thought, during my despairing ascent to the Boss, that I could feel

homesick for the elevator that was my prison. How should I explain my presence in this no man's land. I have no parachute to show for myself, no airplane or automobile wreck. Who could believe me that I came to Peru in an elevator, before and behind me the road, flanked by the plain that stretches toward the horizon. How should any understanding be possible, anyway, I don't know the language of this country, I might as well be a deaf mute. It would be better if I were a deaf mute: Perhaps there is pity in Peru. All that remains for me is to flee to someplace hopefully empty of people, perhaps from one death to another, but I prefer hunger to the murderer's knife. In any case, I have nothing with which to purchase my freedom, flat broke with my little bit of cash in the alien currency. Fate has not even vouchsafed me the chance to die on assignment, my cause, as the employee of a deceased boss, is a lost cause, my assignment locked in his brain, which will not be issuing anything further until the vaults of eternity are sprung open, whose combination the world's wise men, this side of death, vainly seek. Hopefully not too late. I undo the knot of my tie, whose correctness cost me so much perspiration on my way to the boss, and conceal the offensive accessory in my jacket. I almost threw it away – a trace. Turning around, I see the village for the first time; mud and straw, through an open door a hammock. Cold sweat at the thought I might have been observed from there, but I see no sign of life, the only moving thing a dog that is rooting around in a smoldering garbage heap. I have hesitated too long: The men detach themselves from the poster wall and cross the street diagonally, without looking at me at first. I see the faces above me, vaguely black the one, the eyes white, the gaze obscure: The eyes have no pupils. The

other one's head is made of gray silver. A long, calm gaze from eyes whose color I cannot make out, something red shimmers in their depths. The fingers of the heavily hanging right hand, which also seems to be made of silver, are twitching, the bloodstreams shine forth from the metal. The silver man passes behind me and follows the black man. My fear vanishes and is replaced by disappointment: Am I not even worth a knife, or a stranglehold by hands made of metal. Did the calm gaze, which was directed at me for the length of five steps, not contain something like contempt? What is my crime. The world has not come to an end, assuming this here is not another world. How do you carry out an unknown mandate? What can my assignment be in this desert place on the far side of civilization. How is the employee supposed to know what is going on in the mind of the boss. No science in the world will retrieve my lost assignment from the neurons in the head of the departed. It will be buried with him, the state funeral that may already be getting underway does not guarantee resurrection. Something like serenity announces itself inside me, I hang my jacket over my arm and unbutton my shirt: I am going for a walk. Ahead of me the dog runs across the street, one paw across its snout, the fingers are pointed toward me, they look burned. With a threat that is not aimed at me, the young men cross my path. Where the road disappears into the plain, a woman stands, in a posture that suggests she has been waiting for me. I stretch my arms toward her, how long has it been since we touched a woman, and hear a male voice say THIS WOMAN IS A MAN'S WIFE. The tone is final and I keep walking. When I turn around, the woman stretches her arms after me and bares her breasts. On a railroad embankment overgrown with grass two boys

are working on something that is a cross between a locomotive and a steam engine, it stands on a spur that goes nowhere. I, the European, see at first glance that their labor is in vain: This vehicle is not going anywhere, but I don't say this to the boys, work is hope, and continue walking through the landscape that has no other work than to wait for the disappearance of humanity. Now I know what my purpose is. I throw off my clothes, externals no longer matter. At some point THE OTHER will come toward me, the antipode, the doppelgänger with my face of snow. One of us will survive.

[*Werke 2, Prosa I, 94-101 (72-76?)*]

Mülheim Speech (1979)

I regret that I cannot be present at this event, the more so since one of my works is the occasion for this year's gathering.³² The rehearsals for the premiere of an older play are at a point where my participation is needed more than usual, and besides that I have started work on new play. In this situation, my appearance in Mülheim would cost me more than just two days of work. I therefore ask your understanding for my decision to forego the visit.

The wish to hear something from me about the theater of today causes me some embarrassment. The reality of the drama, of theater, is always the present, and in the present situation, to name examples of more or less equal value, Hamlet

³² CITE The manuscript of Brecht's unfinished drama "Fatzer" was discovered in Mülheim an der Ruhr, where it is performed annually in Heiner Müller's adaptation. Heiner Müller considered it to be Brecht's most important work. -Trans. [CHECK]

is more relevant to me than Godot; Wallenstein more important than Mother Courage. I am talking about plays, not authors. I am still, and repeatedly, more interested in Brecht's "Fatzer"-fragment than in Shakespeare's "Winter's Tale." That the classical texts still work has to do with their reservoir of utopia; that they cannot be written any more, or once again cannot be written, with the endangerment or disappearance of utopia. The subject of more recent drama is a human race that is – whether "already" or "still" is a question of one's political standpoint – reduced. Many of the best minds and huge industries are now working to make humanity disappear. Consumerism is training of the masses in this process, every consumer product a weapon, every supermarket a training camp. This sheds light on the necessity of art as a means to make reality impossible. The gravitational mass of the people, under capitalism a requirement for politics, is its corrective in a socialist society, the blindness of experience the badge of its authenticity. The media's clichés about dissidence and/or dogmatism miss the reality; reality does not live in the extremes. What is history for the elites has always still been work for the masses. The clichés serve the appetite for signals of betrayal sent to capitalism from the opposing camp; they guarantee the good conscience of consumption, the freedom of corruption. [NOTE; REPETITION] Only the increasing pressure of authentic experience develops the capacity to look history in the white of its eye. The space time of art is between the time of the subject and the time of history, the difference a potential theater of war. My difficulty in dealing with dramatic productions in your other German state lies in my post-bourgeois experience with another subject and another

history. The black drama in the USA is less foreign to me than the capitalist plays of mourning of Botho Strauss, in which history appears only in its absence, as a void, or as the movement of capital, which is invisible to the eye, anxiety about the standard of living as religious experience. Thomas Bernhard's black humor, which in recent times is handled like dynamite by sensitive critics who fill them with their private sadness, remain a series of grimly affirmative jokes as long as theatrical market forces drive all the mourning out of the texts. My solidarity belongs to Franz Xaver Kroetz and his heroic attempt to uphold Communism as the middle way in the political vacuum that is the center of your world, although my experience shows it to be more like its Other. In both German states, drama is a wider field than the theaters are prepared or in a position to explore; an institution like the Mülheim Theater Days is all the more to be welcomed, since it at least makes possible the illusion that in the Federal Republic, too, there is a broader interest in the production of contemporary drama in the German language. On the whole, writing plays has once more become a lonely business, idle discussions have turned the theories gray; which can only be changed by politics and not without the political contribution of art.

Since FATZER'S WALK AROUND THE CITY OF MÜLHEIM,³³ which reflects in angry sentences on the connection between war and business, it is likely that property relations have changed much in Mülheim. To this extent, the playwriting prize is something like an indulgence. My hope is a world in which works like GERMANIA DEATH IN BERLIN can no longer be written because

³³ *Rundgang des Fatzer durch die Stadt Mülheim.*

reality no longer provides the material for them. In this sense I thank the city of Mülheim for the prize.

[*Werke 8, Schriften*, 159 f.]