

# **Hamletmachine**

**Heiner Müller**

1

Family Album

I was Hamlet. I stood at the coast and spoke with the surf BLABLA, behind me the ruins of Europe. The bells rang in the state funeral, murderer and widow a pair, the council in goose-step behind the coffin of the High Cadaver, howling in poorly paid grief WHOSE IS THE CORPSE IN THE CORPSE TRAIN/FOR WHOM IS HEARD THIS LAMENTING STRAIN/THE CORPSE IS OF A GREAT/GIVER OF ESTATE the framework of the people, work of his statecraft HE WAS A MAN TOOK THEM ALL FOR ALL. I stopped the funeral train, pried open the casket with my sword which broke the blade, with the blunt remainder I succeeded and distributed my dead maker FLESH AND FLESH GLADLY JOIN TOGETHER before the surrounding guise of misery. The grief turned to rejoicing, the rejoicing into smacking, on top of the empty casket the murderer mounted the widow SHOULD I HELP YOU UP UNCLE OPEN YOUR LEGS MAMA. I laid on the ground and heard the world turning her rounds in step with the decay.

I'M GOOD HAMLET GI'ME A CAUSE FOR GRIEF\*

AH THE WHOLE GLOBE FOR A REAL SORROW\*

RICHARD THE THIRD I THE PRINCEKILLING KING\*

OH MY PEOPLE WHAT HAVE I DONE UNTO THEE\*

LIKE A HUNCHBACK I DRAG MY HEAVY BRAIN  
SECOND CLOWN IN THE SPRING OF COMMUNISM  
SOMETHING IS ROTTEN IN THIS AGE OF HOPE\*  
LET'S DELVE IN EARTH AND BLOW HER AT THE MOON\*

Here comes the ghost that made me, the axe still in the skull. You can keep your hat on, I know you've got one hole too many. I would my mother had one too few when you were in the flesh: I'd have been spared. Women should be sewn shut, a world without mothers. We could slaughter each other in peace, and with a bit of confidence, if life becomes too long for us or our throats too tight for our screams. What do you want from me? Is one state funeral not enough for you, old deadbeat? Do you have no blood on your shoes? What do I care about your corpse? Be happy that the handle is sticking out; perhaps you'll go to heaven. What are you waiting for? The cocks have been slaughtered. Morning is cancelled.

SHALL I  
BECAUSE IT'S CUSTOMARY STICK A PIECE OF IRON IN  
THE NEAREST FLESH OR THE NEXT NEAREST  
TO LATCH ONTO IT SINCE THE WORLD IS SPINNING  
LORD BREAK MY NECK WHEN I FALL FROM  
AN ALEHOUSE BENCH

Enter Horatio. Confidant of my thoughts so full of blood since morning is curtained by the empty sky. YOU COME TOO LATE MY FRIEND FOR YOUR PAYCHECK/NO SPACE FOR YOU IN MY TRAGEDY PLAY. 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, who wants to sleep with his daughter, the charming Ophelia, she comes on her cue line, see how she shakes her ass, a tragic role. HoratioPolonius. I knew you were an actor. I am too, I play Hamlet. Denmark is a prison, between us grows a wall. Look at what's growing out of the wall. Exit Polonius. My mother the bride. Her breasts a bed of roses, her womb a nest of snakes. Have you forgotten your text, Mama? I'll prompt:  
**WASH THE MURDER OFF YOUR FACE MY PRINCE/ AND MAKE EYES AT THE NEW DENMARK.** I'll make you into a virgin again, Mother, so that the king can have a bloody wedding. **THE MOTHER'S WOMB IS NOT A ONEWAY STREET.** Now, I tie your hands behind your back with your bridal veil since I'm disgusted by your embrace. Now, I tear apart the wedding dress. Now you must scream. Now I smear the rags of your wedding dress with the earth my Father has become, with the rags your face your belly your breasts. Now, I take you, my mother, in his, my father's invisible tracks. I strangle your scream with my lips. Do you recognize the fruit of your body? Now go to your wedding, whore, bright in the Danish sun which shines on the living and the dead. I want to stuff the corpse in the toilet so that the palace chokes in kingly shit. Then let me eat your heart, Ophelia, which cries my tears.

2

## THE EUROPE OF WOMAN

*Enormous room.\* Ophelia. Her heart is a clock.*

OPHELIA [CHORUS/HAMLET]

I am Ophelia. The one the river didn't keep. The woman at the gallows The woman with sliced arteries The woman with the overdose SNOW ON HER LIPS The woman with her head in the gas oven. Yesterday I stopped killing myself. I am alone with my breasts my thighs my womb. I smash the instruments of my imprisonment the chair the table the bed. I destroy the battlefield that was my home. I rip open the doors so the wind can come in and the cries of the world. I smash the window. With my bloody hands I tear the photographs of the men I loved who used me on the bed on the table on the chair on the floor. I set fire to my prison. I throw my clothes into the fire. I unearth the clock that was my heart from my breast. I go onto the street dressed in my blood.

3

### SCHERZO

*University of the dead. Whispers and murmurs. From out of their gravestones (lecterns) the dead philosophers throw their books at Hamlet. Gallery (ballet) of dead women. The woman at the rope The woman with the sliced arteries, etc. Hamlet regards them with the attitude of a museum (theater) visitor. The dead women rip the clothing from his body. From an upright coffin with the inscription HAMLET I step Claudius and, dressed and painted like a whore, Ophelia. Striptease by Ophelia.*

### OPHELIA

Do you want to eat my heart, Hamlet. *Laughs.*

HAMLET *hands in front of his face:*

I want to be a woman.

*Hamlet puts on Ophelia's clothes. Ophelia paints a whore's mask for him, Claudius, now Hamlet's father, laughs without a sound, Ophelia blows Hamlet a kiss and steps back into the coffin with Claudius/Hamlet Father. Hamlet in whore's pose. An angel, his face on the back of his head: Horatio. He dances with Hamlet.*

VOICE(S) *from the coffin:*

What you killed you should also love.

*The dance becomes quicker and wilder. Laughter from the casket. On a swing, a madonna with breast cancer/crab. Horatio opens an umbrella, embraces Hamlet. Freeze in the embrace under the umbrella. The breast cancer radiates like a sun.*

4

## PEST IN BUDA BATTLE FOR GREENLAND

*Room 2, destroyed by Ophelia. Empty armor, axe in the helmet.*

## HAMLET

The oven smokes in peaceless October.

A BAD COLD HE HAD OF IT JUST THE WORST TIME\*

## JUST THE WORST TIME OF THE YEAR FOR A REVOLUTION\*

Cement in bloom goes through the suburbs

Doctor Zhivago weeps

For his wolves

## SOMETIMES IN WINTER THEY CAME INTO THE VILLAGE

### AND MANGLED A FARMER

*Takes off mask and costume.*

## HAMLET ACTOR

I am not Hamlet. I don't play a role anymore. My words have nothing more to tell me.

My thoughts suck the blood out of the images. My drama is cancelled. Behind me the set is being built. By people my drama doesn't interest, for people it doesn't concern. It doesn't interest me anymore either. I won't play along anymore. *Unnoticed by the Hamlet Actor, stagehands arrange a refrigerator and three television sets. Sounds of the refrigerator. Three television programs without sound.* The set is a monument. It depicts a man who made history, a hundred times enlarged. The petrifaction of a hope. His name is interchangeable. The hope didn't come true. The monument lies on the ground, razed by those who succeeded him in power three years after the state funeral of the hated and worshipped one. The stone is inhabited. In the spacious nose- and ear-holes, creases of skin and uniform of the smashed statue dwells the poor population of the metropolis. The uprising comes at an appropriate time after the collapse of the monument. My drama, if it would still take place, would happen in the time of the uprising. The uprising starts as a stroll. Against traffic regulation, during working hours.

The street belongs to the pedestrians. Here and there, a car is turned over. Nightmare of a knife-thrower: slow drive down a one-way street to an irrevocable parking space surrounded by armed pedestrians. Policemen, if they stood in the way, are swept to the roadside. When the train nears the government district it is stopped by a police line. Groups form, out of which speakers arise. On the balcony of a government building a man in badly fitting clothes appears and begins to speak. When the first stone hits him, he retreats behind the double doors of the bullet-proof glass. The call for more freedom becomes the cry for the collapse of the government. They start to disarm the police, storm two, three buildings, a prison a police station an office of the secret police, hang a dozen of the rulers' henchmen by their feet, the government appoints troops, tanks. My place, if my drama would still take place, would be on both sides of the front, between the fronts, beyond them. I stand in the sweaty stench of the crowd and throw rocks at the police soldiers tanks bulletproof glass. I look through the double doors of bullet-proof glass at the crowd moving forward and smell the sweat of my fear. Choked by nausea, I shake my fist at myself who stands behind the bullet-proof glass. Shaken by fright and contempt, I see myself in the oncoming mass, foaming at the mouth, shaking my fist at myself. I hang up my uniformed flesh by my feet. I am the soldier in the gun-turret, my head is empty under the helmet, the scream choked under the chains. I am the typewriter. I tie the noose when the ringleaders are hanged, I pull away the stool, I break my own neck. I am my own prisoner. I feed the computer my data. My roles are spit and spittoon knife and wound tooth and throat neck and rope. I am the databank. Bleeding in the crowd. Breathing again behind the double doors. Secreting word slime into my soundproof speech bubble over the battle. My drama didn't happen. The script has been

lost. The actors hung up their faces on the nails in the dressing room. In his box the prompter festers. The stuffed corpses in the house don't move a hand. I go home and kill time, at one/with my undivided self.

Television the daily nausea Nausea

At prefabricated babble

At decreed cheerfulness

How do you spell GEMÜTLICHKEIT

Give us this day our daily murder

For thine is the nothingness Nausea

At the lies that are believed

By the liars and no one else Nausea

At the lies that are believed Nausea

At the marked faces of the manipulators

By their struggle for the positions votes bank accounts

Nausea a scythed chariot with sparkling points.

I go through streets supermarkets faces

With the scars from the consumer battle poverty

Without dignity poverty without dignity

Of the knife the knuckles the fist

The humiliated bodies of women

Hope of generations

Stifled n blood cowardice ignorance

Laughter from dead bellies

Hail COCA COLA

A kingdom

For a murderer

I WAS MACBETH

THE KING OFFERED ME HIS THIRD CONCUBINE

I KNEW EVERY BIRTHMARK ON HER HIPS RASKOLNIKOV AT HEART

UNDER THE ONLY COAT THE AXE FOR THE/ONLY/SKULL OF THE

PAWNBROKER

In the loneliness of the airports

I breathe again I am

A privileged person My nausea

Is a privilege

Sheltered by walls

Barbed wire prison

*Photograph of the author.*

I don't want to eat drink breathe love a woman a man a child an animal anymore.

I don't want to die anymore. I don't want to kill anymore.

*Tearing of the author's photograph.*

I break open my sealed up flesh. I want to live in my veins, in the marrow of my bones, in the labyrinth of my skull. I retreat into my intestines. I take a seat in my shit, my blood. Somewhere bodies are being broken so I can live in my shit. Somewhere bodies are opened so I can be alone with my blood. My thoughts are lesions in my brain. My brain is a scar. I want to be a machine. Arms to grab legs to go no pain no thoughts.

*Black television screen. Blood from the refrigerator. Three naked women. Marx Lenin Mao. Speaking at the same time, each in their own language, the text THE MAINPOINT IS TO OVERTHROW ALL EXISTING CONDITIONS ... Hamlet Actor puts on costume and mask.*

HAMLET PRINCE OF DANES AND MAGGOT'S GRUB  
STUMBLING HOLE TO HOLE AND AT THE LAST  
TOO LISTLESS AT HIS BACK THE GHOST THAT MADE  
HIM GREEN AS OPHELIA'S FLESH IN CHILDBED  
AND SHORT BEFORE THIRD CROW A FOOL TEARS UP  
THE JESTER'S CAPE OF THE PHILOSOPHERS  
A HEAVY BLOODHOUND CRAWLS INTO THE ARMOR

*Steps into the armor, splits the heads of Marx Lenin Mao with the axe. Snow. Ice Age.*

5

FIERCELY AWAITING/MILLENNIA/IN THE FEARFUL ARMOR *Deep sea. Ophelia in a wheelchair. Fish debris corpses and corpse pieces go by.*

OPHELIA

*While two men in lab coats wrap her and the wheelchair from bottom to top in gauze bandages.*

Here speaks Electra. In the heart of darkness. Under the sun of torture. To the cities of the world. In the name of the victims. I reject all of the semen that I received. I turn the milk of my breasts into deadly poison. I take back the world that I bore. I suffocate the world that I bore between my thighs. I bury it in my shame. Down with the joy of submission. Long live hate, contempt, rebellion, death. When she walks through your bedrooms carrying butcher knives you'll know the truth.

*Exit men. Ophelia remains on stage motionless in the white wrapping.*